

# International VIEWPOINT

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## Crisis of *perestroika*



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# International VIEWPOINT

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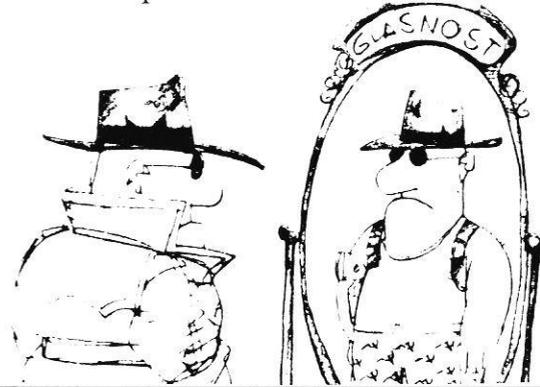
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# Lynch mobs and Zionism

**WHAT IS represented by the attacks on Arabs after 14 Israelis were killed in the bus attack?**

First of all, I should make the point that this incident and other such attacks on Israeli civilians by Arabs have been the actions of individuals. But the attacks on Arabs have been organized by groups such as the organization of Rabbi Kahane. Moreover, they have had some links with the state apparatus.

## ■ What sort of links?

Although the Kahane group is not represented in the Knesset, a similar one, Mole-det [Fatherland], founded by this general who calls for the "transfer" of the Arabs, is. Both groups are officially recognized in Israel.

There are also the Jewish settlers who have the right to carry arms. And they use these weapons in attacks on Arab people.

## ■ How widespread among the Israeli population were violent reactions to the bus incident?

It's obvious that there is a widespread reaction, especially through the Zionist press. But it is ultrarightist groups that exploit such incidents. They act not only against Arabs in the occupied territories but also against Arabs in the pre-1967 borders.

The fact is that those who perpetrate such attacks are never punished. When they are caught, they just get a couple of days in jail. For example, take the case of Rabbi Levinger, an ultra-rightist among the settlers. When he was brought before a court, they addressed him as "reverend," and asked him what day it suited him to appear.

## ■ What's the attitude of the Zionist establishment to these attacks?

The establishment is behind these attacks in a certain way. You can see that in their attitude toward those who commit the acts. A group of Zionist terrorists got political prisoner status and a third of their time off for good behavior. But the only accusation against Derech ha-Nitzotz [a Jewish far left group] was political, that they were linked to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. And they got no amnesty and were put in with common-law prisoners.

There is collusion between the rightists and the establishment. There is no difference in this respect between the Likud and the Maarakh [Labor Party]. The general who founded Moledet came from Maarakh. This collusion is a sort of incitement to terrorist acts against Arab people.

■ It looked, however, from the attacks on Peres [the Maarakh leader] at the funeral of the bus incident that the ultra-right was trying to use the reaction to the attack against Maarakh.

**OMAR SAKHNINI, a Palestinian member of the Revolutionary Communist League, the section of the Fourth International in the Israeli state, gave the following interview to Gerry Foley in Paris in mid-July. This was during the wave of attacks on Palestinians that followed the deaths of 14 Israelis on a bus forced off the road by a Palestinian youth.**

**Since this time also there has been more a more talk about a breakup of the broad coalition government and new elections.**

The Zionist establishment is in the position of being an sorcerer's apprentice. The Gush Emunim [Bloc of the Faithful, the organization supporting the Jewish settlements] and the Nahalim [Pioneers, the guard in the settlements] were created by the establishment. And there are all sorts of laws that open the way for the acts that are being committed.

Although the establishment won't call officially for pogroms or officially encourage lynch mobs, all the Zionist institutions and laws are an incitement to such actions.

## ■ Which party do you think will win if there are elections now?

Likud. They might even get an absolute majority, and not have to accept a coalition. If Likud falls a bit short of a majority, getting around 50 seats, it would definitely rather have a coalition with the religious parties than with Maarakh, which always demands major posts in the government. What has been happening is that Maarakh has been doing the dirty work for Likud on both security and economic questions.

As regards the last coalition, if Likud went into a coalition with Maarakh, it wasn't because Likud could not accept the conditions of the religious parties but because Maarakh had accepted their conditions. So, they preferred a broader coalition.

## ■ So why do they want to drop the coalition with Maarakh now?

In the last period, Maarakh has been declining more and more. And if Likud gets the chance to govern alone, with Maarakh, which is its main competitor, they won't pass it up. They are more aggressive now because the *intifada* is no longer on the rise. It is continuing, but it is stagnating.

The Likud has the advantage over Maarakh that it has a relatively clear position on the future of the territories, while Maa-

rakh has very deep internal contradictions over this question. So, Likud has a historical opportunity to establish itself as the main Zionist party.

## ■ What would the consequences of a Likud victory be for the Palestinian resistance?

In peace-time conditions, there is not much possibility for cracking down harder than they are now. Any further step would go beyond the limits of international acceptability.

## ■ To what extent has the rise of Islamic fundamentalism divided the *intifada*?

The division has existed from the outset between the left Palestinian groups and the fundamentalists. But this is now leading to different signals being given, different dates for strikes and so on. The fundamentalist current is more and more presenting itself as an alternative to the PLO groups.

At the mass level, this polarization is deepening. One result of this is that when the Unified Leadership calls for a general strike, there is a general strike. When the fundamentalists call for a general strike, there is also a general strike.

## ■ What are the issues involved in this polarization?

There are many levels. One is religion and the place of religion. That goes from general ideology to everyday life. And there are political issues, mainly after the PLO's acceptance of United Nations Resolution 242, which is rejected by the Palestinian people.

## ■ That is, what's attractive about the fundamentalists is that they seem to be the most intransigent?

That and religion. The fundamentalists do a lot of social welfare work.

For example, before the recent elections in Um El Fahem [one of the main Pales-

tinian centers in pre-1967 Israel], they did a videotaped interview with the local chief, a former member of the CP, without telling him who they were. They asked him a lot of questions about the fundamentalists, and he said that there were just destructive. They were able to make him look foolish. They said, in effect, look at what they are saying about us and then at what we are doing. We have done much more than they have.

■ **What does the Palestinian left fear from the fundamentalists?**

The left's main fear is of losing its popular support. The fundamentalists are on the rise. There is a homogeneous fundamentalist current. And on the other hand, the left is declining and divided. The other aspect is religious repression. For instance, now that the fundamentalist current controls Um El Fahem, women have to be careful about the way they dress. You cannot drink anything alcoholic.

■ **What differences are there among the fundamentalists? Are some more radical than others?**

There is no form of Islamic fundamentalism that can be considered left-wing. On the surface, you cannot find differences among them on the main issues. There is no central leadership of the fundamentalists, but rather different local leaderships. There are no links with Iran, although the Islamic revolution had an impact on the upsurge of fundamentalism among the Palestinians. The fundamentalist current has no international representation. They have no representation abroad, although they have supporters.

A general difference has developed between the fundamentalists in Israel proper and in the occupied territories. In the former, the fundamentalists now have a clear political line. They call for an Islamic state in all of Palestine. In the occupied territories, the fundamentalists are still putting their emphasis on religion and avoiding taking a clear political position.

■ **Is the leadership clerical or lay?**

The religious institutions used to be dependent on the state, as is usual for Sunni Muslims. That means Jordan for the West Bank, but the Zionist state inside the pre-1967 borders. One effect of the rise of the fundamentalist movement was to emancipate the religious layer from the state.

The fundamentalist current spread mainly among the youth. And many young people became religious leaders, sheikhs, and that changed the whole situation. They cut the links with the state and started taking their salaries from the movement itself. They consider it a matter of pride that they liberated Islam from the Israeli authorities.

■ **the Palestinians — in particular the loss of wages suffered by workers from the occupied territories who used to work in Israel — having any effect on the *intifada*?**

People understand that it is a long-term struggle. But there is no doubt that the weakest point of the *intifada* is economic. West Bank workers are more and more obliged to go back to work in Israel. There is no real help from outside.

On the other hand, there is a need for the Palestinian workers in Israel. For example, the attempt in Ashkelon to oust the Palestinian workers led to a breakdown in all the municipal services. The Israelis had to give it up after a day or two.

■ **How has the Communist Party responded to the uprising?**

The position of the CP traditionally has been that it accepted the Israeli state, but defended the civil rights of the Arabs in Israel. They have not questioned the character of Israel as a Jewish state. Their first reaction to the *intifada* was to say that it was for the occupied territories. It is only recently that they have begun referring to the Arabs in Israel as Palestinians. The *intifada* deepened the contradiction in their line, and led to a disillusion of growing numbers of Palestinians with them.

Many people left them, some even going to the fundamentalists. This bitterness is well expressed by a CP member I talked to who said, "We have done as much for the *intifada* as the Swedish CP." That is, they have offered support and solidarity, but no more than the Swedish CP might do. They have not been a part of the struggle.

■ **Are any of them moving to the left?**

There is a polarization. The overwhelming majority of the party is Palestinian, but the leadership is shared equally by Jews and Palestinians. Among the Palestinians, there is a radicalization, although this has so far not taken the form of organized groups breaking away. Those radicalizing to the left are still in the party, but are raising more and more questions.

On the other hand, there is a trend to the right among the Jewish members. They are getting closer and closer to the Zionist left.

■ **To what extent has the *intifada* overcome divisions between Palestinians in the occupied territories and in Israel proper?**

At the beginning of the *intifada*, there was the Day of Equality, which was marked by demonstrations in the Palestinian communities within Israel of a sort not seen since 1948. Those mobilizations were followed by a very harsh repression. But the CP, which is the main leadership of the Israeli Arabs, has been more effective than the repression in restoring the division.

■ **What is the basis of the CP's hold then?**

It has not suffered the same sort of repression from the Israeli state as the nationalists. At the same time, it gets important support from the outside, from the Soviet Union, which enables it to maintain a large apparatus. Moreover, it has a continuity going back before the formation of the Israeli state. Also, after 1948, the Palestinians in Israel were defeated, and demoralized, and suffered a setback in consciousness.

Potential rivals of the CP on the left have made important tactical errors, such as taking an abstentionist position toward elections. The nationalists have also generally refused to accept Jewish members.

■ **What are the main activities of the Fourth International section in the Israeli state?**

We are trying to develop a secular democratic front to contest elections, involving Abna 'l-Balad [a left nationalist organization], currents from the CP and others.

If such a coalition is formed, it will have the problem of the law passed before the last election that requires recognizing the Jewish character of the state in order to be allowed to run for the Knesset.

If this attempt to form a coalition fails, we will call for a vote for either the CP or the Progressive List for Peace, without making a distinction between them. We also have plans to participate in the upcoming trade-union elections in the Histadrut in order to expose this organization as not being a real trade union and to call for the formation of real trade unions.

■ **Is there any new radicalization among Israeli youth?**

About a year ago, a group appeared, mainly high school students, called "the Mole." They are working very closely with us. The main recruitment to the section is coming now in this milieu. This development has led to a major increase in membership for the first time in many years.

■ **Are these Jewish youth?**

Yes. But recently two groups of young people from Palestinian villages have also gotten in touch with them. The Mole group is decentralized, a movement. That makes it easier for such groups to affiliate. An outstanding feature of this group, besides its combativity, is that it supports the *intifada* totally.

■ **So the section's main orientation is toward young people?**

Yes. But we are also doing politically important work in Yesh Gvul, a protest organization among reserve soldiers; and in the Women's Committee for Palestinian women prisoners. ★

# Irish workers reject austerity

**THE JUNE 15 general election in the South of Ireland produced a hung Dáil (parliament), the fourth indecisive result in five contests since June 1981.**

**JOHN MEEHAN**

**T**HE MAIN highlights of the election were:

- A setback for Fianna Fáil, the governing bourgeois party that has traditionally most exploited nationalist sentiment. Fianna Fáil entered the election holding 81 seats out of 166, an overall minority of four. This time it secured an identical share of the vote — 44.1% — but only 77 seats (a minority of 12), being now set to govern facing a combined opposition of 89.

- An even worse result for the right-wing alternative offered by a pact composed of Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats (PDs). Fine Gael made a gain of four seats, going from 51 to 55, but the PDs fared disastrously. The PDs' share of the poll plunged from 11.8% to 5.5% — a near fatal drop — and they lost eight seats, going from 14 to six. Nearly all of these losses were to their "allies", Fine Gael. For this and other reasons discussed below, the Fine Gael/PD "marriage" is heading for an early and acrimonious divorce.

- A sharp swing to the left. The Labour Party and the Workers' Party [formerly the Officials] gained three seats each. The Greens came from nowhere to win a substantial vote, and now enter the Dáil with one seat. The most sensational result of the election was in the western county of Roscommon. An independent candidate opposed to the downgrading and threatened closure of the local hospital won the seat from Fianna Fáil.

- A poor performance by Sinn Féin (SF), the republican organization. SF won 1.2% of the poll and no seats. This compares with 1.99% in the February 1987 election, itself a bad result. The loss is partly accounted for by the fact that they put up less candidates, but overall SF made zero impact. Given that there was a notable protest vote going in other directions, Sinn Féin is even more isolated than it was two years ago.

At the time of writing, Fianna Fáil and the other right-wing parties are negotiat-

ing to sort out the mess delivered to them by the voters. Some sort of deal will undoubtedly be worked out. Fianna Fáil's choices boil down to two: a deal with either Fine Gael or the Progressive Democrats. (Both Labour and the Workers' Party have ruled themselves out of any coalition with the right wing parties.)

## Turmoil and faction fights in the right

A Fianna Fáil/PD deal would be rich with irony. The PDs were only formed four years ago, after splitting from Fianna Fáil. It was the end result of a faction fight within Fianna Fáil dating back to the eruption of a mass struggle for national liberation in the North of Ireland in 1968. Fianna Fáil claims its major aim is the securing of a united, 32-County Ireland, and the removal of the British presence from the Northern Six-County enclave. This claim was put to a severe test by a revolutionary uprising of the oppressed Catholic minority in 1968. Fianna Fáil was thrown into a tailspin: one wing, including current FF leader Charles Haughey, sought to control the upsurge by dealing directly with leaders of the Northern insurgency. Charges were made that a number of FF leaders, including Haughey, were involved in gun-running; and there were a number of sackings from the government. Haughey and his allies, principally Neil Blaney, were then unsuccessfully tried. The current leader of the Progressive Democrats, Des O'Malley, was a leading member of the anti-Haughey faction in Fianna Fáil.

In the following years, Haughey won the leadership of Fianna Fáil in 1979, but had to fight off a number of attacks from O'Malley in the 1980s. Eventually, O'Malley lost the internal battle, and formed the PDs with three other anti-Haughey dissident Fianna Fáil TDs [members of parliament] in 1985. Besides the issue of national unity, the PDs also considered Haughey unwilling to adopt a sufficiently harsh austerity policy.

In reality this made the Progressive Democrats little different from the other main bourgeois party, Fine Gael. However, this would have been a very unattractive image to the voters, a case of "old wine in new bottles". So the PDs claimed that they were "mould-breakers", enthusiastic advocates of tax cuts, privatization, virulent anti-nationalism and so on. They did well in the 1987 election, winning 14 seats. But their gains were almost entirely at Fine Gael's expense. The effect was a Fianna Fáil minority, rather than majority, government. This government, under the Progressive Democrats' *bête noir*, Haughey, proved to be the most right wing for decades. Fianna Fáil carried out a ruthless attack on health services, cuts in public expenditure, institutionalized extradition of political offenders to Britain and the Six-County enclave — the list is endless.

## Fine Gael — a political vampire

This Haughey government had a very easy time in the Dáil, as the only consistent opposition came from the Labour Party, the Workers' Party and three independent TDs. Early on in the life of this government, Fine Gael leader Alan Dukes announced at the Tallaght Chamber of Commerce that he would not bring down Fianna Fáil on important issues: Fine Gael's "Tallaght Strategy" of "constructive opposition" was born. Dukes also said he intended to "screw the PDs".

O'Malley was left on the sidelines like

# Extradition

## MEANS MORE



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the emperor with no clothes. Sometimes the PDs went along with the two big right-wing parties and the "Tallaght Strategy", at other times they indulged in opposition for its own sake. The inconsistency was so blatant that their opinion poll ratings started to tumble. Additionally, they found that, to their chagrin, Haughey had become the "flavour of the month" with big business. Big money had backed the PDs in the early days; in the last two years it has gone to Fianna Fáil.

With an election looming, the Progressive Democrats made one last despairing effort to save their necks. They formed a pact with Fine Gael. It was not an unqualified success!

The PDs are obviously poor students of Irish political history. Fine Gael's share of the poll has always been far too small for them to form a government on their own. They have always needed coalition partners. Between 1970 and 1987, Fine Gael was in permanent coalition with the Labour Party. As a result, Labour consistently lost support, and Fine Gael grew in strength. By 1987, Labour had gone so low and Fine Gael's financial proposals were so far to the right that Labour jumped from the sinking government ship. Labour barely survived the February 1987 election, gaining only 6.4% of the vote — its lowest share since 1933 (and second lowest ever since the 1921-23 Civil War!).

### Wheelings and dealings in the Dail

Calamities like this regularly happen to Fine Gael's coalition partners — Alan Dukes's party is a sort of political vampire, sucking the blood of its "allies". The Progressive Democrats are their latest victims.

In the recent elections the only PD survivors — all six — are ex-Fianna Fáil opponents of Haughey. Most of the losers had a Fine Gael background, and it is clear that their local party machines were very weak.

The ideological reasons for the original split between O'Malley and Fianna Fáil have vanished, and a fresh election could spell the end for the PDs. Their only realistic way of preventing further mauling is a deal with their old factional enemy, Haughey. There must be a bitter taste in O'Malley's mouth: he set out to prevent a Haughey government and has ended up making it inevitable!

### Fianna Fáil plan for more attacks on living standards

All the same, this election was also a setback for Fianna Fáil. The party had earned high praise from the capitalist media for its "tough" policies, and was regularly showing ratings of 50-54% in the opinion polls. The "Tallaght Strategy" secured their position in the Dáil, but Haughey was afraid that Dukes and O'Malley would eventually withdraw support and force an election in circumstances unfavourable to Fianna Fáil. This was because the cutbacks were starting to meet a lot of angry and determined opposition, and there was a possibility that Fine Gael and the PDs might hop onto an anti-Fianna Fáil bandwagon. Also, FF is planning further attacks on living standards in the autumn, and they calculated that they would need a stable parliamentary majority for four years to insulate themselves from the likely reaction.

This manoeuvre blew up in Haughey's face. Health cuts became a major issue in the campaign, and the Fine Gael/PD alliance tried to exploit the voters' justifiable

anger. They made a proposal to spend £60 million (about \$98m) over the next two years to cut waiting lists, combined with calls for sacking "administrators" and "non-medical" personnel. As can be seen from the results, this position did not convince many people and opened the door to the parliamentary left. The "Tallaght Strategy" was thrown back in the faces of Fine Gael and the PDs. Fianna Fáil tried to wriggle out of trouble by saying that the last two years were part of a previously unheard-of grand strategy. The cuts were necessary to "restore order to the national finances", and we are now entering the alleged "next phase" of development.

This is moonshine. From the early 1970s, the 26-County State has slide further and further into debt. Since the early 1980s, all bourgeois governments have pushed through a very tough austerity policy, with the alleged aim of cutting the debt. In fact, the debt has continued to grow, and under Fianna Fáil has gone over 150% of Gross National Product (GNP). In this situation any right-wing government will continue an escalating austerity policy, notwithstanding the wishes of the voters.

### Unseemly faction fighting in the right

The unseemly faction fighting among the right-wing parties has a material basis: capital demands a further attack on living standards, which threaten the parties' popular support, and there is a constant attempt to pass the blame from one party to another, and even from one party faction to another. It is obvious that this squabbling will continue, and probably intensify.

The overall effect is to place a question mark over right-wing politics in general,

## European elections

ELECTIONS for the European parliament were held on the same day as the general election. The results were further bad news for the right. Fianna Fáil (FF) lost a seat in the Connacht/Ulster constituency to Neil Blaney, who was forced out of FF at the beginning of the 1970s when he was accused of running guns to nationalists in the North of Ireland. He has retained some of the nationalist and populist appeal of the older Fianna Fáil. Blaney stood on an anti-cuts and anti-extradition platform.

In Munster, Father Paddy Ryan shocked the pro-imperialist media commentators who were gloating at Sinn Féin's poor general election performance. Ryan was arrested in Belgium last year on the basis of British extradition warrants. Thatcher led a gutter press campaign against Ryan, making several wild "conspiracy" charges. Fr Ryan went on hunger strike in Belgium rather than go and be framed in Britain, and the Belgian government caved in and sent him to the 26 Counties.

Ryan received massive popular support in Ireland, especially in his native county of Tipperary. Fianna Fáil decided it could not risk handing Ryan over — but they

may still bring forward charges under legislation allowing Irish people to be charged in the 26 Counties for offences against British law! Ryan has not set foot in Britain for years. His "conspiracies" are supposed to have been committed in various other countries he has visited in the last 20 years.

Ryan took the political initiative by running in the Munster Euro-constituency on an anti-extradition/anti-cuts platform, and took 30,394 first preference votes — more than the respective totals of both the Labour and Workers' Party candidates. Ryan's share of the vote was 4.4%. This initiative was made independently of Sinn Féin, who stood down their candidates in Ryan's favour.

The result shows that there will be a major problem for Fianna Fáil if they proceed against Ryan. His campaign also demonstrates unequivocally that the only possible road forward for the national liberation movement will involve the building of a broad-based anti-government coalition. It does not involve "lobbying" of Fianna Fáil and pleading with FF anti-extradition dissidents to "stay in and fight".

Hopefully, this lesson has been well learned in the entire anti-imperialist movement. ★

and leave an opening for left oppositional forces to grow. In this broader sense, the "real" election result was a net loss for the right-wing parties (FF/FG/PD) of eight seats, and a net gain of eight seats for the left (Labour/WP/others). This trend will probably continue so long as the left holds its nerve and stays out of formal coalitions with the right, and avoids deals or support for capitalist minority administrations and so on.

### National question did not feature prominently

It would be foolish to believe that the Workers' Party and Labour leaderships will meet the expectations placed in them by voters looking for a fightback. However, it is important to recognize why they are gaining support (along with the Greens and independents), and why Sinn Féin are getting marginalized.

As was said earlier, Labour emerged battered from almost 20 years in coalition with Fine Gael in 1987. During that time they lost a lot of working class support to the Workers' Party, especially in Dublin. (Indeed, the WP outpolled Labour in the capital by 11.4% to 9.5% in this election.) But the Workers' Party can no longer grow at Labour's expense: both parties are committed to staying out of coalition. The two Workers' Party gains from Labour in this election are unlikely to be repeated. In one constituency, a Labour TD died leaving no obvious successor; in another, the Labour TD retired from the Dáil to run (successfully) for the European parliament. Thus, only one of the WP's three gains was at the expense of the right. By contrast, all five of Labour's gains were from the right, and usually the result of working class disgust at the effects of austerity.

Secondly, Labour candidates came close in a number of Dublin working-class constituencies and are likely to consolidate their position for the next contest.

Thirdly, although the national question did not feature prominently in this election, it is a potentially lethal problem for the Workers' Party. Most working-class people still support Fianna Fáil because of its nationalist history. The parliamentary left has an appalling record on this question, especially during the years of coalition with Fine Gael. But that, too, has begun to change since the collapse of the 1987 FG/Labour coalition. Labour personalities have begun to take positions against extradition, Section 31 (which bans Sinn Féin from TV and radio), or victims of British frame-ups such as the Birmingham Six, and so on. The process was taken further when the leading left-wing Labour TD, Emmet Stagg, announced at a public meeting that his party had a new position of support for British withdrawal.

So far this has not amounted to anything very substantial, but the door has been

opened to socialists willing to take up these issues. The election was marked by Workers' Party enthusiasm for "left unity", and this struck a responsive chord. However, they do not include the North on this agenda — in fact, WP leader De Rossa denounced Stagg as a "fascist" for his speech on British withdrawal.

However, the Workers' Party's electoral base is very soft on this issue. In the few cases where WP candidates were eliminated behind Sinn Féin candidates, it was noticeable that SF got a fairly reasonable transfer vote. The Workers' Party are quite well aware of this difficulty, and usually avoid the issue in their literature.

But in the new post-coalition era, the WP are starting to experience competition from Labour candidates who take some sort of stand on the national question. In De Rossa's own constituency, a Labour candidate who opposed the threatened extradition of a local man nearly took a second left seat. Such incidents are likely to be repeated in the future.

### Sinn Féin marginalized in election

As for Sinn Féin, they played almost no role in this election. Their vote was bad in both the general and the European elections [see box]. A radicalization has begun, and the republicans are on the sidelines. There were plenty of warnings for SF two years ago after the 1987 election in the South of Ireland. At that time I said that:

"The campaign exposed weaknesses in SF's electoral strategy. The republicans have a perspective of building up a base through steady work on local community issues, and eventually becoming a credible national alternative as a result of the accumulated gains of this work. The outcome of these elections should dispel these illusions." (See *IV* 116, March 23, 1987.) I was too optimistic. Sinn Féin tried to run exactly the same type of campaign this time, only on a much smaller national scale, with fewer members and less enthusiasm.

I also expressed worries about the emergence of "ultra-left militarist adventurism", and these proved well-founded. For the last few months the IRA has been playing a cat-and-mouse game with the British army, placing explosives on the Dublin-Belfast railway line. Besides the trouble it causes passengers it is putting railworkers' lives at risk. The operation has allowed pro-imperialists like the Workers' Party to go onto the attack in the 26-County trade-union movement. The "campaign" was renewed by the IRA a couple of days after the election.

There have been far worse "errors" than this in the last couple of years, and they occur regularly. There is no doubt that this increases SF's isolation in the 26 Counties. SF activists sometimes respond by saying "it is not an issue on the door-

steps". This is a facile answer. In Ireland people do not engage in arguments during election canvasses — invariably they give you a friendly reception and wish you well. Sinn Féin rarely argue for the armed struggle outside the pages of their own publications, or in the far-left milieu.

The trap of the armed struggle has gone alongside a failure to take on the leadership of the trade-union movement. Shortly after the 1987 election, Haughey negotiated a deal with the union bureaucracy that gave him a perfect cover for his right-wing policy. One can understand why reformists like the Workers' Party and Labour, who are materially linked to this bureaucracy, avoid this thorny issue. It is disgraceful, and it is a big contradiction with their electoral propaganda.

But what about Sinn Féin? Nothing was heard from them on this during the election, and in the past few months they have failed lamentably on one very serious issue. Trade-union militant John Mitchell was witchhunted first out of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and then from his own union, the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union (IDATU). The reason was opposition to Mitchell's efforts to unionize low-paid Catholic workers in the North and his practical activity on issues like extradition. It was Mitchell's union that backed a long-running strike in 1986 by a group of women workers over the stocking of South African produce in Dunnes stores.

### Sinn Féin abstains from defence campaign

Mitchell had political differences with Sinn Féin, and it is arguable who was right and who was wrong. But to any militant not blinded by sectarianism and opportunism it was obvious that Mitchell had to be defended from a bureaucratic attack. SF abstained from this struggle, citing their political differences with Mitchell as an excuse. In the end, Mitchell lost his fight and made a financial settlement with the union. This occasioned much sectarian jibing from SF activists. Apparently it was a "sell-out" for Mitchell to make a settlement after the fight was lost. It is a pity that the witchhunters, including ex-SF vice-president Phil Flynn, don't attract similar hostility from the republicans.

Sinn Féin's hypocrisy will cost them: if one of their members is witchhunted, will other socialists have the right to cite "political differences" as a reason for abstaining from a defence campaign?

In the long term this is a terrible sign, because any development of the political struggle will involve a head-on struggle with the bureaucracy. It is a bureaucracy that has even floated the idea of "critical support" for a minority Fianna Fáil government. The voters have shown that they have more fire in their bellies. That should encourage all who are working for a workers' republic in Ireland. ★

AROUND  
THE  
WORLD



CUBA

**A sinister page in history**

GRANMA's editorial July 9 on the execution of four Cuban officers for drug trafficking confirms — if there were any longer any need for that — that the Castro leadership has just written one of the most sinister pages in its history. In a style we had thought belonged to the past, the editorial writer assailed as "counter-revolutionary vermin," those who dared to doubt that this trial "was the cleanest that could be imagined," which should be self-evident because "when the party speaks, not a single word, not a single comma departs from the truth."

In a telegram sent on July 11, we (Claude Llabres, Gilles Perrault, Claude Poperen, Giovanni Russa Spena, François Maspero, Massimo Gorla, Janette Habel, Siné, Alain Krivine, Felix Damette, Michael Loewy) called for a stay of execution. This appeal reflected our doubts and questions.

When the death penalty has been abolished by capitalist governments, the leadership of a country that claims to be socialist has not hesitated to shoot four of its former military leaders. Is the Cuban revolution so besieged, is a civil war at the gates, is foreign intervention imminent?

Justice was summary. According to *Granma*, Ochoa's involvement in drug trafficking was only discovered on June 12. He was executed on July 13. Contrary to what Fidel Castro said, the guarantees of a democratic and fair trial were not assembled. Neither the Military Court of Honor made up of 47 generals and admirals nor the Court Martial nor the Council of State in which sit 30 of the country's main leaders made it possible to guarantee the rights of the defense. Everyone spoke. But not a single voice raised the slightest doubt about the justification of this procedure.

First of all, why was there a need for a special court, for summary jurisdiction, as in time of war? It is true that Ochoa did not protest. In terms that sent a chill down our spines, he absolved "the supreme commander, the party, the government and the armed forces and promised that his last thought would be for Fidel and the revolution."

8 The big play given over TV to the dramatic hearings (where Ochoa's children were present) was inhuman and indecent,

to say nothing of being a perversion of democratic openness. There were many questions we would have liked to see put to Ochoa. For example, what did he mean precisely when he said, "You mumble when you get an order, and the time comes when you think that every order that comes from a superior officer is bad. On this slippery slope, you develop an independent way of thinking and end up believing that you are right."

What was the purpose of this drug trade? Did Ochoa act for strictly personal or for military reasons? How could the authorities have been unaware of this for two years?

The monopoly of power held by the Castro leadership, its rejection of any challenge, the arbitrariness in judicial decisions, the lack of critical reporting and the conformism of the main leaders cannot but inspire doubt and scepticism. Historical experience weighs too heavily for any leaders to be taken at their word, even Fidel Castro.

Never has the powerlessness of the workers — denied any possibility for monitoring the actions of the regime — been so clear. In seeking to control a proliferating bureaucracy but also control the masses, to fight against corruption without changing the political mechanisms that have engendered it (the single party, rejection of political pluralism, encouragement of "yes men"), Fidel Castro is trying to square a circle.

The threat of exemplary execution even of the most corrupt officials is only a confession of weakness. To solve the contradictions he faces, the *leader maximo* up until now has been able to count on his prestige and charisma. Everything indicates that this has come to an end. ★

Janette Habel

SOUTH AFRICA

**Upington 26 resolution**

A DRAFT resolution has been launched by the Upington Support Committee, which was formed to assist 26 people given savage sentences on the basis of a vague charge of association (see *I/Vs* 165 & 166). The committee is calling on organizations throughout South Africa to adopt it. The text is as follows:

The Upington 26 trial was the result of protests by the inhabitants of Paballelo,

Upington, in November 1985 against the high rents, inadequate housing, inferior education, lack of jobs, low wages, social injustices, racial victimization and high-handed action of the "authorities".

A peaceful protest meeting was broken up by teargas. This led to the police shooting and the death of a pregnant woman, Miriam Blaauw, who was on her way home from the shop after buying bread and milk. This incensed the community and a huge crowd was further angered after a policeman, "Jetta" Sethwala, shot an 11-year-old boy in the neck. He was set up and was found to have been killed by the butt of his own gun.

The use of the highly controversial doctrine of "common purpose" at the extremely lengthy trial of the Upington 26 that finished in May 1989 led to 14 of the accused being sentenced to death, 6 to lengthy jail sentences, and the restriction and detention of many others. The "common purpose" doctrine has sinister implications in that anyone present at any event deemed illegal, whether a passer-by or otherwise, may be convicted. It has the effect of undermining and smashing any democratic protest or demonstration if an "illegal" common purpose can be found.

● We pledge our solidarity with the just and democratic demands of our fellow oppressed in Paballelo in their struggle against all injustices.

● We note that the case of the Upington 26 is not an isolated one: the Sharpeville 6, the Addo 4 and the Bisho 12 were all tried under the controversial doctrine of "common purpose".

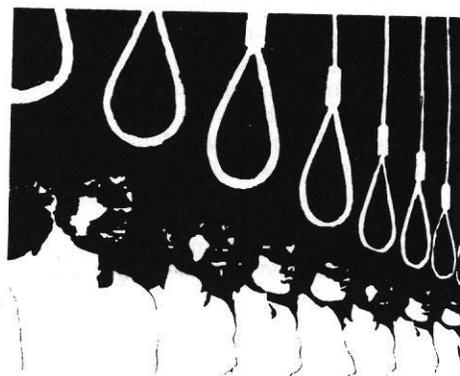
● We call on all the oppressed and exploited to rally in support of the Upington 26 and to assist their families and dependents with financial, educational, material and moral support in their time of need.

● We demand the immediate and unconditional dropping of all charges and the release of the Upington 26, the Sharpeville 6, the Addo 4, Bisho 12 and all political prisoners and detainees.

● We demand an end to capital punishment.

● We resolve to rally all sections of the oppressed around these demands and to fight for a democratic, non-racial society free of exploitation and oppression.

To get in touch with the support network in South Africa, contact: Upington 26, c/o The Rural Worker, SACHED, 5 Church Street, Mowbray 7700, South Africa. ★





**4 NEWS FROM THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**

WESTERN EUROPE

**Euro-election results**

**ELECTIONS** for the 518 seats in the European parliament were held on June 18, with a number of the Fourth International's sections standing against candidates and participating in slates:

■ In Belgium, the Socialist Workers' Party (POS/SAP) won 10,116 votes in Wallonia (compared to 10,471 in 1984). In Flanders, the section participated in a joint slate, the Regenboog, which won 26,471 votes. This alliance also included the Belgian Communist Party (KPB); Doorbraak, a wing of the Christian workers' movement; and a series of well-known cultural, intellectual and trade-union personalities.

In spite of the unitary nature of the Regenboog campaign, it was still unable to make a real breakthrough as an alternative left force, in spite of some significant results, notably 1.4% in Antwerp and 1.1% in Ghent. Nevertheless, the Regenboog slate was able to show that it represented a real perspective to the left of the Socialist Party. The other main far-left organization, the Belgian Workers' Party (PTB, of Maoist origin), refused to participate in the Regenboog and its vote fell generally.

■ In Italy, the list presented by Democrazia Proletaria included comrades from the Italian section of the Fourth International, the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR). The slate won 1.3% of the vote, but lost support in Rome and Milan to the Greens' "Rainbow" slate, which won 2.4%. (This latter list was supported by some of DP's leaders — see IVs 163 & 164.)

■ In Greece, the International Communist Organization (OKDE-Spartakos) won 7,500 votes, or 0.1%.

■ In Portugal, the comrades in the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR) won 32,000 votes, or 0.8%, winning 4,000 votes more than in the previous Euro-election. Their results included 4,000 votes in Oporto and 8,000 in Lisbon, where they won votes at the expense of the UDP, an organization of Maoist origin, whose vote fell from 80,000 in 1984 to 44,000 in this election.

■ Finally, the Revolutionary Socialist Party in Luxemburg practically doubled its vote, with just over 0.6% of the poll. ★

FRANCE

**Anti-imperialism? Ça ira!**

AN ESTIMATED 30,000 people marched through the centre of Paris on July 8 demanding the abolition of the third world debt, and an end to colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. The target of their indignation was the summit of the world's seven richest countries that took place on July 14-15 in Paris, an event which many saw as an insult to the memory of the French Revolution.

The demonstration, supported by a wide range of organizations and individuals (see IV 166), represented a massive united mobilization against imperialism. The largest contingent on the march — over 5,000 people — was that of the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR, French section of the Fourth International) and its sister youth organization, the JCR. In the evening around 200,000 peo-

ple enjoyed a free concert at the Place de la Bastille. The following day militants met to discuss and hear speakers on the three themes of the protest, among them Portugal's Otelo de Carvalho.

The spontaneous enthusiasm of the march and concert were a welcome contrast to the pompous and elitist official celebrations of the bicentenary of the French Revolution which took place the following weekend. The mobilization was widely discussed in the French media and stirred debate in the ranks of France's ruling Socialist Party. French President Mitterrand was reportedly angered by this challenge to his pose as a friend of the third world.

At the end of the weekend well-known French writer Gilles Perrault announced the launch of an international appeal aimed at bringing together "the vast movement on every continent in favour of the cancellation of the debt". ★

USA

**Spanish language a "security threat"!**

**MARK CURTIS**, a member of the Socialist Workers' Party sentenced to 25 years on trumped-up charges of burglary and sexual assault, has been refused the right to receive material in languages other than English, even language manuals and dictionaries, by the prison authorities.

Curtis, who speaks Spanish, worked in a plant where there were many Spanish-speaking workers. He was badly beaten up by police at the time of his arrest because of his association with Hispanics. A campaign of protest against this prohibition has forced the prison officials to retreat. The following article is from the June 23 issue of *The Militant*, a weekly that reflects the point of view of the Socialist Workers' Party:

On June 13, authorities at the state prison in Anamosa, Iowa, finally turned over his Spanish-English dictionary and *501 Spanish Verbs* to political frame-up victim Mark Curtis....Prison officials had argued that non-English materials are a "security" threat because the prison does not have the personnel to review such literature.

"This victory in the fight to allow Curtis and other prisoners to receive written materials in languages other than English is a result of the international protest campaign we've waged for the past month," said Defense Committee leader John Gaige.

"This success should cause all of us to redouble our efforts to flood the warden's office with protests demanding that Curtis — and all prisoners — be allowed *all* non-English language material of their choice, including material that had been previously denied."

Protests should be addressed to: John A. Thalacker, Warden, Iowa State Men's Reformatory, Anamosa, Iowa 52205. Copies to: Attorney General Thomas J. Miller, Hoover State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319; Paul Grossheim, Director of the Department of Corrections, Capitol Annex, 523 E. 12th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50309; and the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311. ★



## Bureaucracy faces widening crisis

GORBACHEV's reform project seems to have reached a turning point with the miners' strikes. In interviews broadcast over Soviet TV on July 20, strike leaders indicated that they had no intention of disbanding the strike committees.

GERRY FOLEY

**T**HE miners' action comes in the context of a general crisis of *perestroika* and reflects it. In the last period, statements by Soviet officials have more and more acknowledged that there is disappointment with the reforms. In an interview in *Pravda* of July 17, for example, Minister of the Interior V.V. Bakatin, while defending *perestroika* as the only solution, pointed to a generally worsening social situation:

"Legal, financial and [labor] contractual discipline has fallen. Crime has increased. At times, outrageous economic waste has appeared....The cooperatives milieu has offered new possibilities for criminal elements. Speculation has increased shortages. Inflation is growing....A sharp social differentiation according to income has begun".

### "Polarization and differentiation accelerating"

In his June 18 report to the Central Committee, Gorbachev himself said: "The fact is that criticism and discontent with *perestroika* are growing. A polarization and differentiation...is accelerating."

In this context, the Soviet chief has tried to present the demands of the miners as in effect calling for a speedup in *perestroika*. One demand of the miners, however, Gorbachev felt compelled to challenge openly. In his report to the Central Committee on July 18, he noted that the strikers were demanding the suppression of certain cooperatives. "Shutting them

# Perestroika and employment

THE MASSIVE STRIKE by Siberian miners that started on July 10 marks a gigantic step forward for the movement for a democratic revolution in the Soviet Union. The miners have demanded not only better wages and conditions but new elections to their local soviets and union organizations, and a new Constitution by November. Leadership of the strike is reportedly in the hands of an independent workers' committee.

The strike may also challenge the project of the liberal wing of the bureaucracy and their intellectual supporters. The theorists around Gorbachev view egalitarian "prejudices" and the right to work as crucial obstacles to their plans. While some Soviet newspapers are attempting to portray the strike movement as a sign of support for the official version of *perestroika*, the strikers have also been warned that their action may lead to an "uncontrollable situation with unpredictable consequences".

The following article looks at the progress and impact of the Soviet bureaucracy's attempts to "rationalize" the use of labour.

DAVID SEPPO

down is of course easy," he said, "but is that the best path?" Such "cooperatives" often seem to be privatization wolves in social sheep's clothing.

Up until now, the workers have suffered from Gorbachev's market and productivity reforms. The miners seem, at least in one respect, to have begun to challenge them, as well as poor living standards imposed on them by long-standing economic, environmental and social mismanagement.

The reform process first began to get out of hand with the rise of movements for national-democratic rights, starting in Armenia and the Baltic republics. They were the icebreakers of independent mass organization. These movements have continued to grow and radicalize and more and more are arising. Before the outbreak of mass workers' strikes, they had already created an atmosphere of crisis.

In his report to the CC, Gorbachev cited three main tests coming up for *perestroika*: the CC plenum on the national question scheduled for the end of July, the elections for local and republic soviets scheduled for the spring of 1990 and the second session of the Congress of People's Deputies. In particular, defeats for the CP in the elections for the republic supreme soviets could represent a serious

political challenge, since these bodies are formally sovereign.

### Concession to national- democratic movement

Since the elections the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet, still entirely in the hands of the CP, has made a big concession to the national-democratic movement, voting a sovereignty law similar to the one voted by the Estonian Supreme Soviet in November. In its time, the Estonian action set off a howl in the official Soviet press. Now, official spokespersons have begun to refer to the Estonian and Lithuanian laws as "interesting experiments."

It is symptomatic of the regime's retreat that in the front-page report in the July 20 *Pravda* of the USSR Supreme Soviet session, Gorbachev's speech, centering on the miners' strikes, was followed by a statement of M. Shakhnov recalling that in the Congress of People's Deputies he had demanded an inquiry into the suppression of the December 1986 protests in Kazakhstan against the replacement of Kazakh leader Dinmuhamed Kunaev by a Russian. At that time, the regime tried a general crackdown on "nationalist deviations." Now it has once again put a Kazakh in the top position. ★

**F**EW PEOPLE would dispute the claim that Soviet enterprises are over-staffed and that economic efficiency requires a certain redistribution and hence mobility of labour. On the other hand, Soviet workers have come to see the *de facto* job security that existed under the "command system" as an acquired right.

It has therefore been officially recognized that the removal of this right under the market reform requires the establishment of guarantees that dismissals will be made for economically justified reasons and with due consideration for social concerns, that those dismissed will not suffer unduly as a result of the transition to a new job, and that the reform will not lead to structural unemployment. But concrete policy has not so far made good these fine words. An analysis of the reasons for this sheds light on the social nature of *perestroika*.

### Official estimates of millions of redundancies

Under the economic reform, which is only in its first stages and whose ultimate destination is unforeseeable, it has been officially estimated that at least 16 million workers and white-collar employees (out of an active population of 131 million) will be made redundant by the end of the century.<sup>1</sup> In 1988, one million jobs were cut in institutions and enterprises.<sup>2</sup>

So far, most of the cuts have been made through natural wastage — the elimination of posts already vacant. But as the effects of the "cost-accounting" (*khosraschot*) regime make themselves increasingly felt, the situation will change dramatically. According to one report, many factory directors would be prepared to fire from one quarter to a third of their staff, if they could distribute the savings among the rest.<sup>3</sup>

Being forced to leave one's factory, and possibly one's town and region, and to retrain in a new profession is not a pleasant experience in any circumstances. Soviet workers clearly do not like this change, even though the prospect of being made redundant is still distant for most.

In a survey of 55 enterprises conducted in 1986-7, less than 15% of the respondents were prepared to entertain the prospect of moving to another enterprise, and then only if they could keep the same trade and income. Only 5% expressed readiness to move to another town.<sup>4</sup> Commenting on letters in reaction to an article on employment, the director of the State Planning Commission's Research Institute concluded sadly that "we have a simplified understanding of guarantees: to get work in the same profession and same enterprise".<sup>5</sup> The authorities readily admit that the staff reductions will cause "emotional turmoil and disappointment" and that a "serious psychological restruc-

ture is necessary and unavoidable".<sup>6</sup>

This should not be taken to mean that Soviet workers are inherently conservative, determined to hold onto their "privileges" even at the expense of economic and social progress. All the evidence shows that the workers are as fed up with the old system as any group. But attitudes toward the present reform — and to the loss of job security in particular — are strongly influenced by the question of social guarantees.

A joint party-government-trade union resolution published on January 20 last year states that staff reductions must be decided on a democratic basis, with the participation of labour collectives in an atmosphere of openness. The worker must be given two month's notice and if s/he cannot be found a job in the same enterprise, or refuses one, s/he is eligible for two and possibly three months pay. Thus unemployment benefits are being restored almost 60 years after they were abolished along with the official elimination of unemployment. The resolution also provides for the establishment for the first time of a nationwide system of job placement, retraining and vocational guidance.<sup>7</sup>

Workers' interests are further guaranteed, at least in theory, by the new Law on the Socialist Enterprise, which provides for election of managerial personnel and the establishment of elected labour-collective councils with broad powers of control and participation in management. Also, a new draft law on trade unions emphasizes their primary role as defenders of workers' interests, a role that the trade-union press has also been trying to resurrect.

But the sad fact is that four years into *perestroika* none of these guarantees yet exist. Democratization of enterprise management and of trade unions has, with very few exceptions, not happened.<sup>8</sup> As for measures of retraining and placement, they too remain within the realm of good intentions. As one worker from Pavlograd put it: "In our job placement bureaus, pompously called 'centres', the information is old, and the bureaus have no authority. As a result, there is no one to help you find a job".<sup>9</sup>

### No alternatives to official proposals

It is also worth noting that none of these new laws and policy decisions were taken in a genuinely democratic manner. While some public discussion generally has occurred — and this is progress — the discussion has centred on draft laws or policy proposals formulated and handed down from above. There have been no alternative proposals. As a result the discussion, at best, results in changes of detail. And once the discussion ends, the final decision remains with the bureaucratic authorities. But this is

the case for the economic reform as a whole — except for details, it has never been the subject of a public debate confronting different alternatives which are then put to a vote.



A careful reading of the Soviet press leaves no doubt that, in the absence of genuine control by the workers, abuses abound in the process of reducing staff. Decisions are often made behind closed doors without the workers being consulted. Over the past two years, managers have begun to indiscriminately fire people of pension age, many of whom had chosen to continue working to supplement their meager pensions.<sup>10</sup>

### Women and the elderly are often first targets

Similarly, workers close to pensionable age are being fired or "pushed out" early. In the above-cited survey, 50% of those affected by staff reductions had been working for 20 years or more.<sup>11</sup> Many complaints come from the handicapped and women with small children, who have the legal right to be away from work to tend sick children. "It seems that questions of staff reduction are being resolved with increasing frequency at the expense of women," writes *Rabotnitsa* [Woman Worker].<sup>12</sup> These dismissals may or may not be illegal, but Soviet specialists agree that the pressures created by the "cost-accounting regime" to get rid of less productive workers will affect these categories of workers.<sup>13</sup>

An abuse which has become widespread with the new wage reform is the arbitrary demotion of workers to lower skill categories. This is an illegal, but convenient, way for management to meet the requirements of the wage reform that calls for basic wage rates to be raised through economies in the enterprise. Management merely claims that the enterprise does not have jobs requiring high skills, and the workers are forced to comply or quit. When questions are asked, the standard answer is "we are reorganizing".<sup>14</sup>

The workers have no institutionalized

1. *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, January 21, 1988.

2. *Trud*, January 20, 1989.

3. *Pravda*, July 18, 1987.

4. I.E. Zaslavskaya and M.V. Moskvina, "Kto ostanetsya po porogom prokhodnoi?" ("Who will remain on the threshold?"), *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya* 1, 1989, p.40.

5. V. Kostakov, *Kommunist* 14, 1987, p.24.

6. *Trud*, January 28, 1988.

7. *Pravda*, January 20, 1989.

8. See D. Seppo, "Massive Rise in Labour Conflicts", *IV* 160; and D. Mandel, "Revolutionary reform in Soviet Factories", *Socialist Register* 1989, London, Merlin Press, 1989.

9. *Sobesednik* 20, May 1989, p.5.

10. *Trud*, May 9, 1989.

11. Zaslavskaya and Moskvina, *ibid.*, p.38.

12. *Rabotnitsa* 12, 1988, p.16.

13. Zaslavskaya and Moskvina, *ibid.*, p.42.

14. *Trud*, January 20 and May 14, 1989.

means of defense against unjust dismissals. A press report of a conference organized by the Central Council of Trade Unions (CTUC) in January 1989 concluded that "just as before, no dependable mechanism for defending people exists on the state level".<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the working group on employment of the CTUC and State Committee on Labour reported in mid-May that there were numerous abuses involving staff reductions, and, in an understatement, complained that those dismissed unjustly, "often do not find support in their trade union committees".<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, the bureaucratic apparatus, which is supposed to be the prime target of reductions, has been able to profit from the situation. Ministries that claim to have reduced staff through natural wastage, upon closer inspection, are found to have included in their calculations not only their own personnel but that of their subordinate enterprises. As a result, in some cases the bureaucratic apparatus has actually grown. The State Committee for Supply, for example, increased its personnel by 4,000.<sup>17</sup>

The savings from personnel reductions in enterprises have also disproportionately benefited management. If the average nominal wage for workers rose by around 10% in 1988 (with inflation running at about 8%), that of managerial personnel has risen 20-30%. The CTUC-State Committee on Labour working group concluded that the salaries of inflated managerial staffs in enterprises are being paid at the expense of reductions in worker personnel".<sup>18</sup>

As for the retraining and job placement measures, no one at the January CTUC conference had any idea of how many people would have to be retrained, over what period, and what training facilities are available. The figures are not there because a year and a half after the resolution was passed there is still no national body responsible for collecting information for retraining.

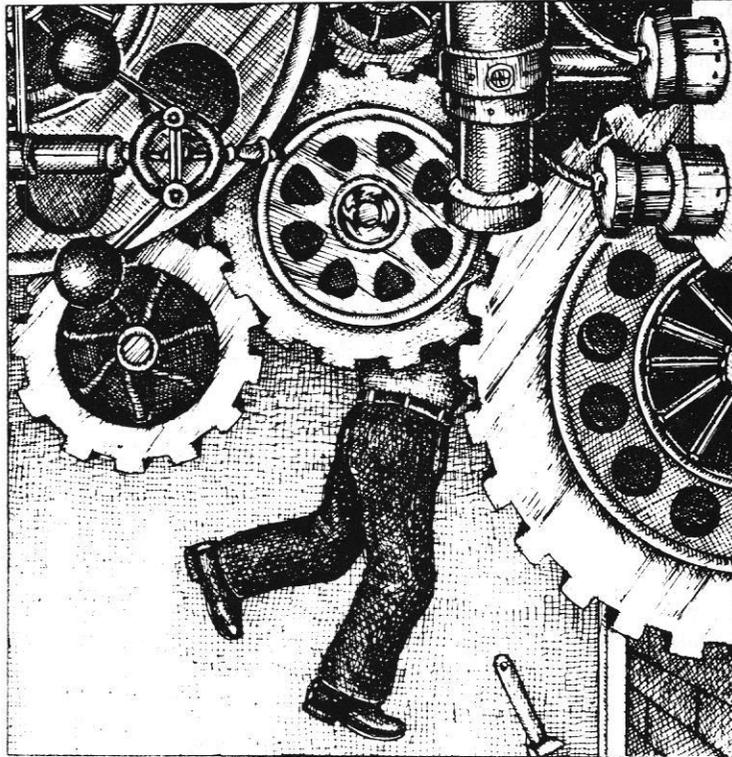
In 1988 there were 1,240 local functioning job placement bureaus, and their number is supposed to double in 1989. But enterprises are not obliged to report job openings to them, nor are they obliged to hire workers sent by the bureaus, which, anyway, are not known for their zeal. As before, the vast majority of people find jobs on their own,

through notices on gates or by word of mouth.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, they must do this, according to the labour code, within three weeks or else risk losing important benefits that depend upon a continuous work record.

Indeed, the failure to revise the labour code to provide guarantees, at least on paper, only adds to the threat felt by the workers at the loss of traditional job security. At present, the size of the wage, the allocation of housing, subsidized vacations, payments from the enterprises' social funds and various services depend to a large extent on length of service at the given enterprise.<sup>20</sup>

### "Long-forgotten times are repeating themselves"

One of the proposed means for dealing with staff reductions in industry is to shift workers to professions and sectors that are short of labour: construction, services, loading. Of course, practically none of the employees of Moscow's



bureaucracies who have lost their jobs have moved to the service sector. Wages and conditions there are very bad, and prestige extremely low. Transfer of excess labour to regions of labour shortage, another solution often cited, comes up against similar problems: people do not willingly move to areas where social conditions — food supply, housing, health care — are poorer than where they currently live. New immigrants to Siberia, a region of acute labour shortage, find shacks instead of houses waiting for them.

The report of the January CTUC con-

ference concluded: "The developing labour resource situation, if we underestimate it, is pregnant with the most serious social consequences. And in this case, time is working against us".<sup>21</sup> These concerns are echoed in workers' letters. "It looks as if long-forgotten times are repeating themselves" writes one Muscovite.<sup>22</sup> "Layoffs, cost-accounting — these words ring with increasing alarm in women's letters", *Rabotnitsa* notes.<sup>23</sup>

In the absence of guarantees, loss of security is bound to be very disturbing, even if, as noted, most workers do not yet feel a direct threat to their jobs. This is not just a question of compassion for those dismissed. Even those who keep their jobs are materially affected. The market reform, the loss of job security and the spectre of structural unemployment necessarily change the balance of forces in the enterprise, providing management with powerful new means and incentives for controlling labour and intensifying its exploitation.

Is this perhaps the reason why the promised guarantees have not materialized? The slowness with which the government has moved in this area suggest, at the very least, that workers' interests are not uppermost in the reformers' minds. This reform from above reflects the concerns of the social forces that have shaped it: the bureaucracy (at least its more far-sighted, dynamic elements) a part of the intelligentsia and perhaps, in the short run, the most highly skilled workers. The working class is not an active participant in the reform process, though the official discourse surrounding the reform reflects the regime's fears that the workers may emerge as a political force.

The final results of the reform process will depend on the correlation of forces both within the bureaucracy and between the bureaucracy and the working class. But the logic of this market reform itself is clear: it requires a real labour market — enterprise manage-

15. *Ibid.*, January 20, 1989.

16. *Ibid.*, May 14, 1989.

17. *Ibid.*, January 20, 1989.

18. *Ibid.*, January 20 and May 14, 1989.

19. *Ibid.*, January 20, 1989.

20. Zaslavskaya and Moskvina, *ibid.*, p.39; *Sobesednik* 5, 1989, p.5.

21. *Trud*, January 20, 1989.

22. *Pravda*, January 21, 1989.

23. *Rabotnitsa* 12, 1988, p.16.



## Growing struggle in West German CP

THE NINTH CONGRESS of the German Communist Party (Deutsche Kommunistische Partei — DKP) took place on January 14/15, 1989, marking a significant watershed in the history of the West German communist party. The developments and discussions have broadened in the period since the conference.

A radically anti-Stalinist minority, the "Renewers", are planning a broad conference for this autumn involving non-DKP forces. The DKP leadership has responded by denouncing the minority for organizing a party within the party, while minority supporters have been removed from leading bodies. DKP-associated organizations for young workers (SDAJ) and students (MSB), strongholds of the minority, are in the grip of a real crisis of identity and are facing splits.

The sharpening crisis of the DKP offers increasing opportunities for joint work and dialogue between a large part of this party and revolutionary socialists.

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ment must have the flexibility to hire and fire in response to market stimuli. At the same time, in the logic of the reform, some measure of unemployment is a good thing (if one can get away with it politically), since it provides the missing negative incentive, the "stick", to labour productivity and discipline. Moreover, for unemployment to play this role, life in the reserve army must not be too comfortable.

Even if the regime's discourse rejects this, one has to admit that its practice so far fits this logic well. The report on the January CTUC conference made this clear:

"How many times have we heard and read in official documents the just words that it is impermissible to allow 'even the slightest hint of unemployment', to allow the person to be kicked out onto the street? But are there really guarantees that nothing of the sort will happen?"

Some members of the intelligentsia, unlike official spokespeople, have openly called for a "little unemployment" as an incentive to better work. Shmelev, a well-known advocate of radical market reform, has openly called for a "small reserve army of labour", hastening to add "that the state, of course, would not leave [it] to the whims of fate". And he explains this by the need for a stick with which to discipline the workers.

"Let us not close our eyes to the economic harm caused by our parasitical certainty in guaranteed work. Today it seems that everyone understands that we owe our lack of discipline, drunkenness and slipshod work very much to excessively full employment....The real threat of losing one's job is not at all a bad medicine for laziness, drunkenness, irresponsibility."<sup>24</sup> (Gorbachev has praised this article, while distancing himself explicitly from this passage).

### "Inevitable Incentives to jettison surplus manpower"

The sociologist T. Zaslavskaya is only somewhat less brutal: "The changeover of enterprises to the system of self-financing inevitably creates incentives to jettison surplus manpower. The question is: which workers will an enterprise release first? Obviously, not the best ones, but the worst, the least capable, such as those who have a drinking problem or those whose discipline is not beyond reproach".

Zaslavskaya, like Shmelev, adds that "we must find a solution and make sure these people are put to work".<sup>25</sup> If such statements, which date from 1987, were once seen as provocative, lately sociologists seem to take it for granted that unemployment will be a familiar element of the social landscape.<sup>26</sup>

Experience with the market reform outside the Soviet Union confirms this logic. This year, the Hungarians have taken the

final plunge: after moving cautiously, but steadily, over the past few years to undermine the idea of job security as a right, the regime has announced, along with the introduction of unemployment benefits, major economic changes that, by conservative estimates, will eliminate 50,000 to 100,000 jobs in state enterprises that are not making profits.<sup>27</sup>

In Yugoslavia, where large-scale unemployment has existed for many years, enterprise self-management has meant that those already working could safeguard their jobs. But now, following the same logic as Hungary, the regime has decided the only thing it could — that Yugoslavia's crisis is due to an insufficient use of the market. It is, accordingly, moving to undermine self-management in order to establish a real labour market. As the prime minister states recently: "It is necessary to deregulate all those areas that do not require state regulation and have to do with the market in goods, capital and labour. I foresee problems. Social tensions may serve as the basis for all conservative [*sic*] forces to rally....against the new system".<sup>28</sup>

### Bureaucracy's answer to "command economy" crisis

Employment is only one area, albeit a central one, affected by the economic reform. But our analysis of this question leaves no doubt that this is the bureaucracy's reform (which does not mean that a certain part of the bureaucracy and some of its old methods of rule will not have to be sacrificed — hence the resistance from this quarter). It is the bureaucracy's answer to the crisis of the "command economy". In contrast, any working class response would place democracy at the centre of the economic system, making social solidarity, based upon social decision-making and a concern for social justice increasingly prominent as the motivation for economic actors.

This working class alternative has appeared in the public debate mostly in the form of veiled criticism by a handful of Marxist economists of the regime's reform.<sup>29</sup> Although these ideas are still marginal and generally dismissed as utopian, as they surely must seem from an administrator's point of view, they will surely cease to be so once the working class mobilizes politically. There are some grounds for optimism on this score.<sup>30</sup> ★

24. *Novyi Mir*, June 1987, p.149.

25. *Soviet Economy* 3, 1987, p.315.

26. A.I. Kravchenko, "Zabastovki v SSSR: novaya sotsial'naya real'nost'", *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya* 1, 1989, p.30.

27. *New York Times*, February 9, 1989, A-14.

28. *Montreal Gazette*, March 17, 1989, F-4.

29. See for example, D. Mandel, "La perestroika et la classe ouvrière" in *L'homme et la société* 2-3, 1988, pp.134-7; and the article by Iu. Soukhotine in *Interventions* (Montreal), Summer 1989.

30. D. Seppo and D. Mandel, *ibid.*

**T**HE DKP is one of the small West European communist parties. Its limited influence may lead people to think that it is politically unimportant. Yet the DKP has been and remains the strongest force in West Germany laying claim to a class-struggle programme and Marxism. Its weaknesses and problems cannot be separated from those of the workers' movement and the left in both West and East Germany. A short historical survey is needed to put present developments in context.

### CP demands "anti-fascist democracy" after the war

Among the ruins of Hitler's defeated fascist regime and of German imperialism in the Second World War, the only possible perspective that the new or re-emerging parties could inscribe on their banners was that of socialism.

There could be no dispute that big capital had helped Hitler seize power or that there was a connection between capitalism, capitalist crisis and Nazism. Not only the Socialist Party (SPD) in the Western zone but even the Christian Democracy (CDU) in its "Ahlemer Programme" demanded socialism — however spuriously.

The only party that called for anything else was the German Communist Party (KPD). They demanded an anti-fascist democracy. Even so, this formula meant one thing in the Soviet-occupied zone, out of which emerged the German Democratic Republic (DDR — East Germany) and another in the Western Zone.

In the Soviet zone, the power of the Red Army's bayonets ensured the transformation of the economic system on Soviet lines. Here the KPD's slogans might seem like clever propaganda. In the Western zones, on the other hand, power lay with the Western allies, and the KPD was an opposition party. Here its solution of an anti-fascist democracy meant dropping an alternative, anti-capitalist perspective (which was off the agenda for the foreseeable future).

But this correct political evaluation of the KPD's programme after 1945 should not be allowed to obscure the fact that this party put up a courageous opposition. Most of the political questions around which it fought were directly tied to the interests of the state and party leaderships in the DDR and the Soviet Union, but this does not change the progressive nature of the demands. Here we should especially recall the KPD's campaigns against rearmament, against the militarization of the new West German imperialism, against the formation of the Bundeswehr [West German army] and the central role of the KPD in the movement against the atomic bomb.

For a long period of time — in reality up to the present day — the West German bourgeoisie considered the communist

party to be its main enemy. In 1956 the KPD was banned, and Marxism and communism were declared to be "unconstitutional". This prohibition has never been rescinded. It should not be forgotten that many members of the now illegal KPD were prepared to go to prison for their beliefs. Moreover after 1968, the majority of victims of the *Berufsverbot*<sup>1</sup> were members of the DKP, the party's legal reincarnation.

The founding of the legal DKP in 1968 was in strict organizational and political continuity with the old illegal KPD. It was necessary, however, to present the new party in such a way as to avoid it being declared illegal. Instead of "Marxism-Leninism" there were "the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin". The strategic perspectives of the party were in the tradition of the neo-Menshevik, Stalinist stages theory. Before it was impossible to think about socialism, it was necessary to fight for an "anti-monopoly democracy". The foundation of the legal party was made possible by the new political relationship of forces created by the youth radicalization. Many of the new members came from the radical student milieu, making up a significant part of its reformist wing.

The DKP had at its disposal many members who, as representatives, negotiators and factory councillors in the workplaces and unions, managed to win it a basis of personal support and recognition. It is symptomatic that they rarely actively opposed the social-democratic leadership of the unions, and indeed often protected them from criticism from the left.

### Strong ideological and material links with GDR

A basic characteristic of the DKP has always been its strong ideological and material connections with the party and state leaderships in the GDR (and hence in the Soviet Union). West German anti-communism could always draw strength from the lack of attraction of so-called "actually-existing socialism", referring especially to the absence of democratic freedoms. The social gains would not count for much as a counter argument, given a situation in the West marked by an economic boom and constantly rising living standards for wage earners.

The small membership and especially the derisory electoral appeal of the DKP have been due above all to its identification with so-called socialism. Another factor, however, and one perceived by fewer people, is the DKP's lack of a credible strategic alternative to that of the social democrats, either at the general level or in trade union struggles. Even so, its organizational capacities and its influence in the mass movements — most recently the peace movement — have always been much greater than its electoral influence.

At the ninth DKP congress in January this year the party leadership came up

with a membership figure of 47,000. This means an officially admitted loss of 10,000 members since May 1986.

According to the security services, the membership is 38,000. The fact is that only a part of the members are active and the level of activity is declining. A positive aspect — and unique in West

Germany — is that 43.7% of the membership are women, which is explained perhaps to some extent by the fact that work in the neighbourhoods offers the DKP favourable conditions for involving women politically. Apart from the loss of members, the continuation of sharp controversies and the development of an oppositional minority in the party and the party leadership are clear signs of the crisis of the previous conceptions of the party and of its policy and, to an extent, of its programmatic identity.

Before the congress two controversial documents on the "situation in the party" were submitted to the leadership. The majority of the leadership is trying to respond to the crisis under the slogan *Bewahren und erneuern* ["Preserve and Renew"]. They promise more internal democracy, increased openness to "new questions" and the development of a more attractive political profile. The minority does not talk about preserving, only of renewal. Their priority is internal democracy, but in a more radical form than the majority of the leadership is ready to contemplate. They demand a radical break with the Stalinist past, and a merciless accounting for the history of the Stalinist crimes. Both these controversial papers were published for the membership and anyone interested, while the whole controversy is being conducted in the press and in a new bulletin, *Mitglieder-Informationen* ["Information for Members"]. This is in itself a revolution for the DKP compared to past practice! Previously it was not possible to "deviate" from the views of the leadership — whether

1. *Berufsverbot*: laws preventing "enemies of the constitution" from holding allegedly sensitive jobs (for example, teaching).



internally or publicly — without running the risk of expulsion or other forms of discipline.

By way of a strategic perspective, the leadership produced a common project — “West Germany 2000 — Proposals of the DKP for a peace and reform alternative for the 1990s”. A feature of this

document, which is currently undergoing a process of detailed amendment, is the emphasis on “global questions of humanity”, to which the class struggle and the socialist perspective must be subordinated. (This is what it amounts to, even if many describe the relations between questions of humanity and class questions in a more complicated way.) These questions of humanity are, in the first place, world peace, the struggle against destruction of the environment and against world hunger. The analysis takes as its starting point a new “revolutionary period” in which all these questions are posed anew and in a very sharp form. It is claimed that it is possible to solve these questions of humanity together with a section of the imperialist monopoly capitalists since this part has an objective interest in the solution of these all-human questions.

The renewers are not opposed to this “radicalization” of reformism and stages theory — quite the opposite. They — or at least the majority of their previously well-known spokespersons — want to strengthen and expand this orientation.

However it was clear at the Ninth Congress that this tendency is connected with the previous dogmatic responses of the DKP on many questions. Thus, for example, until recently “socialist” nuclear power plants were considered “good” nuclear power plants. It took Chernobyl to change the DKP’s position. General opposition to nuclear power was adopted by the DKP for the first time at the Ninth Congress.

Gorbachev and the new situation in the USSR are, of course, a crucial factor in the crisis and debates in the DKP. Previously everything in the “socialist camp” was praised and defended against any criticism, whether from the bourgeoisie or the left. Criticism of so-called socialism

was always dismissed as slander. Then suddenly along comes the leadership of the glorious USSR and proves the critics right! Even more, they reveal a state of affairs far worse than many of the outside critics had described. They also call into question an important part of the official account of the party’s history.

Furthermore the hopes of many members who joined after 1968 have been disappointed. The power of the monopolies has not been pushed back, the influence of the party has not grown, the Green Party has by far surpassed the DKP in the role of an established radical-democratic opposition in Parliament, the new radicalizations of the youth have bypassed the DKP-related organizations. It would have been surprising if there had not been a crisis.

The DKP opposition is held together by the issue of internal democracy. Any discussion of fundamental perspectives would produce a differentiation. The new climate of discussion and the new readiness to work with others, including with forces to the left of the DKP, are positive aspects.

Women in the party — as was also apparent at the Ninth Congress — are struggling for more influence and for feminist ideas and aims to become established in the DKP. The congress decided that women should fill elected posts in proportion to their percentage of the membership. The women want to go further and establish a quota of 50% — which is by no means unrealistic.

Only a small minority in the DKP want to change the policy in a leftward direction, putting forward a more clearly anti-capitalist profile together with more democracy and a more attractive vision of socialism. Nonetheless this small minority exists and, if collaboration with the renewers and other critical forces from the majority is important for revolutionary socialists, the possibility for political dialogue with the small left-oriented minority is naturally of greater significance.

### Who is the mountain and who the prophet?

The Marburg professor and DKP leftist Georg Fuelberth is one of this small minority. He intended to make a speech to the Ninth Congress that he was not able to deliver for reasons of time. But *Sozialistische Zeitung* [paper of the United Socialist Party — VSP] put its pages at his disposal. His contribution begins: “Communist parties are never complete. The Bolshevik Party existed in Russia from 1903 onwards. In February 1917 it had 24,000 members. It grew tenfold in a few months.

“But it was only in July 1917 that it carried through a fusion with an important group of outstanding revolutionaries, the Mezhrayonka organization of Anatoly

Lunacharsky, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseyenko and Leon Trotsky. Unlike then, it has not been easy for a long time to decide who is the mountain and who the prophet — ourselves or other leftists.”



At the end of his presentation Fuelberth criticizes the renewers, whose struggle against sectarianism, for more party democracy and for a democratic model of socialism he supports. He criticizes them for their lack of anti-capitalism and for their illusions in a wing of the monopoly bourgeoisie. Nonetheless he does not seem to see the programmatic continuities between these theories and the classical Stalinist stages theory. Even so, the quoted passages clearly show possibilities for a dialogue.

### A “Socialist Congress” is on the cards

Meanwhile, Fuelberth has taken part in a meeting of the “radical left” where organizations such as the formerly semi-Maoist Kommunistischer Bund (Communist League) and the VSP, as well as left Greens such as Ebermann and Dittfurth, who are critical of the Greens’ adaptation to parliamentarism, agreed on a further meeting and wider collaboration. A “Socialist Congress”, overreaching organizational boundaries, is on the cards.

The DKP officially invited a small revolutionary socialist organization, the VSP, to its Ninth Congress. This would not have been possible before. We were thus able to see for ourselves the growing self-confidence of the DKP members, as well as the determination of about a third of the 650 delegates (the opposition is even stronger in the party’s ranks) to carry the process of questioning further, in particular as regards the reappraisal of history.

In many towns the VSP works closely today with the DKP in the workplaces and the environmental movement. Joint discussion meetings have been held on the question of socialism and the unity of the left.

Most DKP bookshops now carry every kind of leftist literature especially if it is critical of Stalinism, as well as specifically Trotskyist literature, such as the *Red Book about the Moscow Trials* by Leon Sedov recently published by ISP-Verlag. In Stuttgart, things have even reached the stage of an alliance at the local level in which left Greens, the DKP, the VSP and others are endeavoring to work out a common platform for elections and action.

All of this is new, positive, and for anyone who has a clear memory of the 1970s, rather sensational. But it should not be forgotten that many DKP members have dropped out or resigned, and that the majority of those who remain face a decisive question: that of the revolutionary perspective. H

# CPGB: Facing up to "new times" with old politics



AS THE Soviet people went to the polls on April 2, and Mikhail Gorbachev prepared to visit Britain, one of his most ardent supporters in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) pronounced the international communist movement dead. Martin Jacques, a member of the CPGB's political committee and editor of its monthly journal *Marxism Today*, wrote an extraordinary article in the *Sunday Times* entitled "Eurocommunism goes into decline". In it, he presented a brief summary of the fortunes of West European communism since the heady days of the mid-1970s when, according to him, "the communist parties of Italy, France and even Spain seemed on the verge of power".

MICK ARCHER

**O**NE REASON for the failure of the Eurocommunist experiment, Jacques argued, was the divisions which beset many of the parties that embarked on this course: "For most, Eurocommunism proved too big a break with the past; the price was division and fragmentation". More fundamentally, he continued, Eurocommunism provoked a crisis of identity for these parties: "They no longer believed in violent revolution. They believed in a gradualist, parliamentary road to socialism. So what made them particularly distinct from common or garden socialist parties? Eurocommunism was nothing less than a challenge to the historic division in the European left brought about in the wake of the Russian revolution" (sic).

For these parties, the arrival of Gorbachev was an extraordinary moment, Jacques explained, which both confirmed many of the criticisms they had made of Stalinism, dating in many cases back to the events in Hungary in 1956, and at the same time represented a metamorphosis of Eurocommunism itself:

"Gorbachev will not be the salvation of Western Europe's communist parties. He heralds the end of the old East-West division. His slogan is interdependence. There will be no special relationship between the CPSU [Soviet CP] and other

communist parties. The international communist movement is dead. Gorbachev envisages a relationship between a range of political forces and traditions. His vision is pluralistic .... Gorbachev is the sequel to Eurocommunism .... Gorbachev, like Eurocommunism, further erases the distinctive character of communist parties and serves to emphasize discontinuity in the communist tradition".

## Social-democratization of the CPGB

Erasing the distinctive character of European communism is something Martin Jacques and the CPGB know a thing or two about. Indeed, the CPGB preempted many of its European counterparts in affirming a gradualist, parliamentary road to socialism as long ago as 1951.<sup>1</sup> What the advent of Eurocommunism made possible was an open fight within the CPGB by a group, including Jacques, who wanted to take this process further. Instigated in 1975 around a series of revisions to the *British Road to Socialism* (the CPGB's programme), this fight has resulted in two organizational splits in the party<sup>2</sup> and a thorough social democratization of what now remains of the CPGB. En route, Jacques and his co-thinkers have shed many of the basic theoretical positions of

a Marxist party and are now set to turn the screw still further through a so-called *Manifesto for New Times*.

"New Times" is the leitmotif of the CPGB: the unifying theme of a radical revision of the party's analysis of contemporary British society. While a detailed evaluation of this analysis is outside the scope of this article, it is only possible to understand the CPGB's response to Gorbachev in the context of its own political evolution, which New Times best encapsulates. This is summarized in two discussion documents recently issued by the party — *Facing Up to the Future* (*Marxism Today*, September 1988); and *Manifesto for New Times*, published in June this year.

## The "new order" and the "appeal of Thatcherism"

The starting point of this analysis is that society is in transition to a new phase of development. While the exact shape of this "new order" is not pre-determined, its outline is already clear. The economy will have at its core information technology and micro-electronics. The workforce will be fundamentally reorganized around this new technology: the "new order" will be about flexibility, team working and service-sector work. There will be a core of full-time workers and a growing number of part-time service-sector workers. Women will make up half the workforce by the 1990s, but they will be mainly confined to low-skill, low-wage occupations.

In the "old order", mass consumption was linked to mass production. In the "new order", new divisions within the workforce and more flexible production are producing increasingly segmented consumption, and more diverse forms of social life. Innovation, product differentiation and quality have become more important for the way companies organize and for the way they compete. Internationally, the power of the nation state is in decline with the rise of international financial markets, and the power of global companies.

Thatcherism's appeal is that it has recognized these changes and it is the only force "which appears to have a strategy to modernize the economy". The decay of the "old order" has "culminated in a structural crisis for the post-war social-democratic project.... Its economic managerialism was incapable of tackling Britain's deeper economic malaise — low productivity growth and failing competitiveness. Its political structures were unable to contain mounting social conflict

1. See "Open warfare in the CPGB" by Mick Archer in *IV* 69, February 11, 1985.

2. In July 1977 a split took place in the CPGB, leading to the formation of the New Communist Party (NCP). More recently, the wing of the party organized around its daily paper, the *Morning Star*, "re-established" themselves as the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) at a congress on the weekend of April 23/24, 1988.

over the distribution of failing growth. Its paternalism left it unable to respond to aspirations of greater choice and more flexible state services. Its social conservatism tried to muffle a range of social upheavals, from feminism to punk, which were irrepressible".

Thatcherism has embarked on a "conservative modernization" of British society. At the centre of its political drive is a combination of individualism and authoritarianism. Its individualism, drawing on right-wing, libertarian ideas, reveres flexibility, efficiency, choice and self-sufficiency, as opposed to rigidity, waste and lack of choice exemplified by national and local state provision.

The left has to move onto this new terrain. It has to provide a common reference point for a progressive social coalition as it did in the 1930s around the popular fronts. "Most of the left's imagery, programme, forms of struggle, resonate with the ideas of the old order or "Fordism" — standardization, scale, homogeneity, mass consumption, mass production, mass housing, all within a national economy. In future, the left's imagery, programmes and struggles will have to flow from the new order or "post-Fordism" — flexibility, diversity, differentiation, decentralization, internationalization".<sup>3</sup> In short, the

left must provide an alternative vision of a progressive restructuring of society, a "socialist modernization".

To succeed in this, the left has to construct an alliance of social forces made up of diverse class and social interests. "Class in modern capitalism is not the product of a single polarization between a ruling class, which owns the means of production, and a working class of wage labourers. Class is produced by the intersection of different kinds of exploitation, which produce different class positions within the workforce.

### "Contradictory class locations" increasing

"The working class is that class which has no productive assets to counter capitalist exploitation at work. But the development of post-war capitalism has produced a great swathe of wage earners and the self-employed, who control some kind of productive asset — skills, knowledge, organization power over production — as part of the means of production. They are both exploited and exploiters. An increasing number of people in modern capitalism occupy these 'contradictory class locations'. And this complexity has increased with the new divisions created by the transition to the 'new order'".<sup>4</sup>

The programme for the "new order" advanced by the left has to therefore take these developments on board. Its twin themes should be democracy and modernization. It should "expand decentralization, diversity and choice, but within a reinvigorated culture of collective responsibility.... It must be economically modernizing, embracing the new technology revolution. It must be socially modernizing, fashioning new forms of social welfare to match the needs of modern workers and families. It must be politically modernizing to reform Britain's political structures to match a more plural, diverse society in which there is a strong desire for greater decentraliza-

tion of state power. It must be internationally modernizing. Rather than attempt to resurrect the power of the nation-state, it must seek international alliances to exert control over the international setting for democratic modernization in Britain".

However, as both documents make clear, what is being discussed here is not a programme for socialism but a programme for a distinctive stage in the development of society towards socialism in which the principles that guide socialist struggle can extend their influence.

"Those principles are, at root, about a democratic, pluralistic, self-managing socialism in which people take responsibility for the forces which shape their lives. It must be a socialism which lives and grows with people's everyday lives. For socialism is not centrally about a party, or the state, but about empowering people to take control of their lives."

The CPGB's analysis is about more than contemporary British society. As the *Manifesto for New Times* states, one of its central characteristics "is the globalization of production, power and politics"<sup>5</sup>, and it is within this framework that the CPGB approaches the advent of *glasnost*, *perestroika* and Gorbachev.

The Russian revolution of 1917, the manifesto states, "...bequeathed a tarnished socialism, a socialism in which the individual and civil society have been subordinated to the state and the party. We reject the models of the authoritarian Eastern European socialist states, which are riven with inefficiency, corruption, inequality, centralized control, repression and environmental despoliation.

### "A worldwide process of radical renewal"

"The aim of *perestroika* is to confront this legacy and completely renovate Soviet society. It is creating the first opportunity for communists and socialist across the world to talk the same language, to heal the disastrous rifts and estrangements caused by Stalinism, the cold war and later the period of stagnation under Brezhnev. With *perestroika*, the Soviet communists are part of a worldwide process of radical renewal."

So New Times — or the economic, social and political processes underlying it — is seen as a major contributory factor to this radical renewal in the Soviet Union



The meaning of New Times: "reforging individualism"!

**THE MEANING OF NEW TIMES**

new times are not just about post-Fordism as an economic system, they are about reforging us as individuals, and reforging our Stuart Hall of new times.

**Marxism Today**

3. The concept of "Fordism" and the analytical method underlying the CPGB's analysis of post-Fordism claim as their antecedent Gramsci's essay, "Americanism and Fordism". See *Selection from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1971.

4. In fairness to the CPGB it has to be said that these formulations, which appeared in "Facing Up to the Future" subsequently disappeared from its "Manifesto for New Times" after three of the eight party members responsible for drawing up the first document disassociated themselves from its "failure to recognize the centrality of the class struggle in capitalist Britain today". See the letter from Marian Darke, Bill Innes and Monty Johnstone in *Marxism Today*, October 1988.

5. The concept of global values in the CPGB's analysis draws heavily on the speeches of Gorbachev, in particular his speech to the United Nations on December 7, 1988.

itself. As the epochal changes associated with this transition to a new phase of development impinge on the Eastern European economies, they too are faced either with moving onto the new terrain or with stagnation and eventual collapse.

As Monty Johnstone explained in the November 1987 issue of *Marxism Today*: "The new law on state enterprises (due to come into operation in January 1988)... provides for a new economic structure to replace the old highly centralized administrative system developed under Stalin. That model, under which the Soviet Union became industrialized, fought the war and reconstructed after it, has long been recognized to be bureaucratic, unwieldy, wasteful and totally unsuited to the modern, sophisticated, consumer-oriented economy that the Soviet Union wants to become, with much greater responsiveness to the market."

What is explicitly attacked in these accounts, then, is not socialism as such but a particular variant of it containing elements the CPGB sees as common to the post-war communist tradition in Eastern Europe and the post-war social-democratic tradition in the Western European states — namely its economic managerialism; its centralized, bureaucratic character; and its lack of flexibility.

### Rehabilitating market mechanisms East and West

So, at the level of the economy, the CPGB favours rehabilitating market mechanisms East and West. In the July 1988 issue of *Marxism Today*, space was given over to reprinting substantial extracts from an article by Fedor Burlatsky that originally appeared in the Soviet literary magazine *Literaturnaya Gazeta* in April of that year. In it, Burlatsky states that the Soviet Union has always had two

models of socialism that in practice competed with one another: war communism and the New Economic Policy (NEP). The former, he argues, reflected quasi-anarchist views about the possibility of a "leap" into socialism expressed through "orders, force, depriving peasants of their produce and the elimination of the normal exchange of the products of their labour". The latter, on the other hand, "was based on a commodity economy where different types of enterprise competed with each other — state, cooperative, private — and where the peasants freely sold their produce on the market and bought manufactured goods in return".

### "An era of technological revolution"

In Burlatsky's view, the crisis in the USSR is a crisis of this first model of socialism. "This form is approaching its end, it is showing its lack of effectiveness in an era of technological revolution. In extreme situations, especially during the civil and the great patriotic wars, centralism and state coercion played their part in the mobilization of any move forward in economic, social and cultural life. And it has to change in a slow and well-thought out manner, into a new form which could be called 'public, self-managing socialism'."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, for the CPGB the impact of *New Times* heralds a growing convergence of East and West as both social systems edge their way towards a new international settlement. As the *Manifesto for New Times* explains, the progressive politics of the 1990s can only succeed if it breaks the demarcation lines which separated the components of the post-war settlement. Indeed, the manifesto identifies four principal forces behind the major international realignment which it says is taking

place: globalization of economic relations; a growing recognition of the new global challenges facing humanity, especially the danger of total human destruction through nuclear holocaust or environmental and ecological catastrophe; the break-up of the bi-polar, super-power world of the cold war; and the acceleration of Europeanization. In each case, *perestroika* and *glasnost* are viewed as integral to the developments that are taking place.

Firstly, the globalization of economic relations has undermined the notion of two separate, competing international economies. The 1990s will see an increasing interaction between the two, demanding a restructuring of international agencies, and new forms of cooperation and joint venture. "The opening of the Soviet economy to greater international investment and trade will lead to a lowering of other barriers which divide Europe. This could open an alternative focus for political alliances....The USSR is likely to enter the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and, along with India and China, could become a focus for a new progressive international alliance, which could regenerate the United Nations (UN) and other international institutions."

Secondly, the global challenges facing humanity necessitate a new international environmental settlement which will involve the Soviet Union and lead to "new and increased importance for democratically controlled and representative agencies: a transformation in the UN, World Bank and IMF".

### Multilateralism: "A genuine route to disarmament"

Thirdly, Gorbachev's foreign policy initiatives have accelerated the break-up of the old binary blocs. "The Soviet Union has abandoned its military and hegemonic ambitions in the Third World. It intends to allow the East European countries, which are key to the Eastern bloc, to go their own way. Meanwhile, Gorbachev has created the momentum for a process of

6. It would be wrong to conclude from this, however, that Burlatsky regards Stalin's methods to have been inevitable. In the article cited he states:

"The point is that at the very inception of the movement for emancipation there was a struggle between two tendencies: the social democratic one (in our case, Bolshevism), and war communism. The latter was very strong in our party. It commanded a firm base in a backward consciousness and in the authoritarian-patriarchal political culture of the masses. Almost half of the members of the politburo of the party central committee were at one time or another close to 'left communist' ideas. In this context, special attention needs to be given to the work of Bukharin and other leaders who understood the meaning of Lenin's political legacy, and the new approach to socialism. For behind this lies the question of whether there was an alternative to Stalin's methods of industrialization, collectivization and the consolidation of the industrial and military might of our country."

The idea that Bukharin could have provided such an alternative has been suggested by, among others, Tariq Ali in his book *Revolution from above: Where is the Soviet Union going?*



nuclear disarmament, and made the first moves to open up the Soviet Union's relations with the Far East. The Soviet Union is looking outwards, to integrate itself within the international economy. In parallel, Gorbachev is promoting a new internationalism of cooperation, co-development and humanism, building on concepts advanced by some developing countries, peace movements and non-aligned governments."

One of the obvious consequences of this, the manifesto goes on to say, is that Gorbachev's initiatives on nuclear arms have opened up multilateralism as a genuine route to disarmament. Or, as Martin Jacques puts it in an article in the April 1989 *Marxism Today*, "What is needed is a new disarmament initiative from the Left which combines unilateral, bilateral and multilateral measures".

### An alternative European defence strategy

Finally, Europeanization holds out the hope of a new international settlement based on a unified Europe, East and West. "The great artificial closure of the iron curtain could be brought down to allow the creation of a Europe which includes Prague as naturally as it includes Paris." Here again, a new dimension would be added to the left's disarmament policy. "US bases, for instance, will probably only be removed through developing an alternative European defence strategy, which does not rely on the United States."

The idea of Gorbachev, *glasnost* and *perestroika* being an integral part of a global political realignment is not shared by all British communists, however — least of all by the old Stalinist wing of the CPGB which split from the party and is now organized separately in the Communist Party of Britain (CPB). It is this organization that now controls what was the party's daily newspaper, the *Morning Star*. While little real analysis of the developments in the Soviet Union have appeared in the *Morning Star's* pages, the CPB has given space to the official statements of the Soviet leadership, up to and including its public criticisms of Stalin's "crimes". However, in the first issue of its theoretical journal, *Communist Review*, it did attempt to situate these developments in the context of what had gone before.

In an article entitled "Revolutionary Renewal" by John Hoffman, the author asked the poignant question: "Why not *glasnost* in 1917?" The answer is a convoluted one, but it illustrates the steps taken to marry recent developments with a sympathetic defence of Stalin's role. At the heart of their solution to this riddle is a series of novel conclusions concerning state power in post-revolutionary society.

According to the CPB, civil war, counter-revolution and foreign intervention "...made a much greater degree of concentrated state power necessary than the

Bolsheviks had anticipated (or indeed thought desirable)". Moreover, it was this that led Lenin in the second edition of *State and Revolution* published in 1918 to declare the simple idea of a workers' state as an abstraction and to refer to the Soviet Union at that time as a workers' state "with a bureaucratic twist". But, the author goes on to explain, "Lenin, it seems to me, makes this point not (as his critics suppose) because some kind of perversion of an original 'ideal' is tragically underway, but because the painful years following the revolution have made it clear that *all* states are relatively authoritarian, the proletarian state included". [Emphasis in original.] In other words, "What is true in the immediate aftermath of 1917 is also true of the decades which follow the revolution. Harsh concentrations of power are essential if the new order is to survive: conditions, in a word, are scarcely ripe for implementing policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*."

True, Hoffman continues, the NEP represented a tactical retreat from this. But the crucial question that it couldn't answer was how to industrialize. It was this question that Stalin tackled head-on, in a manner which "...brought out the best and the worst in this complex political leader". Stalin was correct to push for the construction of heavy industry as quickly as possible and, as Gorbachev explained, it was here that he made his "incontestable contribution to the struggle for socialism".

But Stalin's formidable capacity to organize and his powerful political will had its dark side too — his rigidity and dogmatism. Centralization was extended to all sectors of the economy, including agriculture. The authoritarianism of the period generated "uncritical and idealized conceptions of the state". Yet, "These phenomena, though alien to socialism (that is, deeply harmful to its progress), occur nevertheless within the framework of socialism. They express in a particularly stark and tragic form the contradictory character of the socialist state."

### "One form of subjectivism spawns another"

How this situation persisted for three decades after Stalin's death is also explained. Rigidity and dogmatism, it seems, produced their opposite: "One form of subjectivism spawns another. Radical conservatism provokes radical utopianism; dogmatic pro-statism engenders voluntaristic anti-statism." Between Stalin's death and *glasnost* the pendulum has simply swung to and fro.

*Glasnost*, then, broke this vicious circle, but that should not be taken to mean that what we are witnessing is the emergence of democracy in the USSR for the first time. Rather, as Lenin explained, "democracy, viewed dialectically, is a transitional form of the state". What we have seen in

the USSR is the political process becoming increasingly social in character as the concentrated coercion of the state is dissolved into the public self-government of a communist society.



In summary then: "*Glasnost* and *perestroika* renew, develop and extend Soviet democracy; they do not create it. The USSR has always been democratic, even, it has to be said, during the Stalin period. What the Stalinist form of socialist policy demonstrates is not the absence of democracy, rather the historic (and tragic) consequences liable to flow from situations in which the working class is a relatively weak and immature ruling class, a ruling class unable to exert any direct control over its own state."<sup>7</sup>

### Discontinuity versus revolutionary renewal

So, for the two wings of British communism, Gorbachev, *glasnost* and *perestroika* represent polar opposites. For the CPGB, as stated earlier, Gorbachev emphasizes discontinuity in the communist tradition, whereas for the CPB, Gorbachev is part of a revolutionary renewal. But for both wings the organizational consequence of the twists and turns of the Soviet bureaucracy has been a steady haemorrhaging of party members such that, today, their combined forces number less than 10,000.<sup>8</sup> Nor has the process of fragmentation inside the CPGB exhausted itself yet. As the letters pages of the party's monthly discussion bulletin *News and Views* attests, there is yet more to come.

Will this mean the denouement of the CPGB itself, a further erosion of its distinctive character, as Martin Jacques puts it himself? Certainly, if *New Times* is anything to go by this is an option the CPGB contemplates (some would say hopes for) itself. "Finally, it is almost certain that this sort of realignment will require significant changes in the contours of party political opposition. That could in principle mean the creation of an entirely new progressive socialist party for the new times, incorporating a range of existing parties. The reality is that it will probably involve some form of federation or strategic alliance between the opposition parties: Labour, the Social and Liberal Democrats, the nationalists and the Greens. If such an historic realignment is required no opposition party will be able to escape its responsibilities and consequences, and that includes the Communist Party." ★

7. This lesson has not been lost on the newly-formed CPB. In the reports to their first congress long-time Stalinist Derek Robinson explained that the CPB would be based on democratic centralism that was "incompatible with any form of factionalism or factional-type activity".

8. The membership of the CPGB was 8,542 in July 1988, down from 10,350 in July 1987. The membership of the CPB at the time of its founding congress (April 1988) was 1,591.

# Trotskyists and Left Socialists seek common slate with Danish Communist Party

## INTRODUCTION

NEGOTIATIONS have been underway for some time for a common socialist slate for the next Danish parliamentary elections between the Danish section of the Fourth International, the Socialist Workers' Party (SAP); the Communist Party; and the Left Socialists (VS).

In some local elections, common slates along the same lines have already been formed. The first concrete step on the national level was an agreement for collecting the more than 20,000 signatures necessary to get the list registered. The SAP has just completed its part, gathering more than 10,000.

After the Minister of the Interior recognizes that the signature requirement has been met, the constituent parties of the common slate will be able to run candidates for all 175 seats in the Danish parliament. Thus, the SAP will run in every district.

The distribution of seats among the three parties will depend on the ranking of the candidates in various election districts. The Communist Party is organizationally by far the strongest of the three. But it has been electorally weak, and has been out of parliament for some time.

The VS, a multi-tendency far-left party, also suffered a sharp drop in its vote in the last elections, falling below the two per cent required for representation in parliament.

The party-political picture in Denmark is complicated by the existence of two big reformist parties, the Socialist People's Party (SF) and the social democrats. The SF developed largely out of a break from Stalinism in the 1950s, which included both leftward and rightward moving currents. The latter eventually became predominant, and a left wing split away at the end of 1967.

The SF is now an electoralist party with little in the way of activist organization. But it has continued to be seen as the only credible left alternative to the socialist democrats.

The following interviews with spokespersons from the three components of the common socialist slate were given to Gerry Foley in Copenhagen in mid-May.



**Interview with Søren Søndergård, leader of the Socialist Workers' Party (SAP), Danish section of the Fourth International**

**H**OW do you define this project of a common slate with the Left Socialists and the Communist Party?

It involves electoral collaboration on a minimum platform. When we judge it from the standpoint of the SAP, we see that this platform as a whole places the slate to the left of the Socialist People's Party (SF).

■ What does "to the left of the SF" mean concretely?

Further left on such key issues as the EEC, NATO, on incomes policy — where the SF more and more accepts the incomes policies — and on the shorter workweek.

This is not a socialist platform. It is not in any sense a revolutionary platform. It is a platform with a lot of good concrete demands. It also contains some glittering generalities that we do not think are very useful, such as saying that we want peace on earth and cooperation and things like that. But the CP wanted this sort of thing and so we did not want to get stalled over that.

■ The CP spokesperson said that the platform should not be explicitly socialist but should have a "socialist dynamic."

That is the idea in the heads of some CP leaders. But when they say that they are thinking of a very long period, one that goes through a stage of anti-monopolistic democracy, a stage in which the capitalist wild animals will be tamed, and in which good capitalists will help create a new democracy.

If we had worked out this program alone, we would have done it differently. We would have focused on concrete demands linked to the mass movement, linked to concrete struggles. This is also because we wanted to make this slate an expression of struggle outside parliament.

Of course, this agreement permits each party to put forward its own candidates in



government opened up the possibilities to buy summer houses in Jutland [the peninsular part of Denmark]. So, it seems that a good part of Jutland will be bought by Germans.

■ **That is, the Jutlanders move out because there aren't any more jobs, and retired Germans move in?**

Yes. What has been discussed in some parts of the trade-union leadership and by industrial leaders is that we should have some industrial locomotives that could draw the Danish economy behind them. They have tried to carry out fusions to create some big industrial companies, for example Nordic Insulin, a drug company. It is one of the biggest in Denmark today, but in comparison with its German counterparts, it is very small. The biggest company in Denmark has 5,000 employees.

■ **If the slate elects people to parliament, what attitude will it take toward the social democrats on the question of forming the government, particularly if the social democrats form a coalition with the Radicals?**

That question is still being discussed. We think we have agreement with the VS on it. We think that it has to be absolutely clear that this slate is totally against a coalition government including both workers' parties and bourgeois parties, even small bourgeois parties. If there is a majority of bourgeois forces in parliament, the working class parties' role should be that of a clear opposition, not collaborating with the so-called center.

We think the CP has a different sort of inclination. The CP will not rule out the possibility that, under certain circumstances, it would be better to support, or help to create a social-democratic government allied with some of the small bourgeois parties, rather than have a government of the big bourgeois parties. Here there is a clear disagreement.

What we agreed about is that any seats we win should help to establish a government of the workers' parties, and that the slate will support such a government insofar as it implements workers' policies. The slate will not support it just because it's a government of workers' parties.

■ **What's the possibility of this electoral alliance becoming an alliance in action, say in the trade-union movement?**

There we have to be careful because on the one hand it is a goal for this slate to have actions outside parliament. But, at the same time, we don't want to limit unity in action to the members and supporters of these parties.

We also want to include workers who are not supporting any particular party, social democrat workers, SF workers and even workers voting for bourgeois parties.

more power to the institutions of the EEC. We want to build a common fight between workers in Denmark and workers in Europe for saving the environment and against social cutbacks.

In Denmark, for example, when petrol contains additives that can destroy your brain, there has been a law saying that there had to be a warning. But that's not allowed any more in the EEC, and so it's not allowed any more for Denmark because it's considered a "restraint on trade." To fight things like that, we want to make alliances with people in other countries on the basis that it is not Danish laws that should be worse, but those in other countries that should be better.

We are against the idea of the Single European Act and also against the alternative that has been offered, the Workers' Single Act. We are against that because we think that every working class must fight for as much as possible. And if we have this idea of a Single Act now, it will mean that the workers in Denmark, perhaps the workers in Germany, should slow down their struggles to allow the Portuguese to catch up. And that's totally wrong.

■ **What about this general aspiration for unity, the slogan of the United States of Europe.**

We don't use the slogan of the United States of Europe, because it is misunderstood. In Denmark, it is not just 40% but maybe 95% who are against the EEC developing into a supernational structure, a European state. So, raising a slogan of a United States of Europe, even a Socialist United States, is not very clever.

■ **But what about the big political question? The EEC poses the question of the unity of Europe, but on an undemocratic basis. What is the democratic alternative?**

It is already clear that Denmark is not strong enough to survive in the so-called Internal Market. The whole debate in Denmark has been what to do about this problem. They don't know the exact figures, but between 40 and 120 billion kroner are going to be removed from the control of the Danish state when the Internal Market comes. Because you can't have very high taxes on cigarettes here, if you can just ask someone in Germany to send you cheaper ones. So, they will have to drop all such taxes. So, they are saying that there will have to be big social cutbacks in order to make ends meet.

The government is talking about plans for putting Denmark in a situation where it can function in this Internal Market. But the reality is that we will be totally dependent on foreign capital, because all the big factories are being bought by American, Swedish and German capital.

So, we can foresee a situation where Denmark would be eliminated as an industrial nation, deindustrialized. The

the election, and you don't have to constantly answer the question of whether people are wasting their votes by voting for you and whether you have a chance to top the 2% barrier. In fact a lot of people expect this slate to go over 2%. And for the first time, a force with some credibility is saying some good things, which have a broad hearing in the population. For example, it will be the only slate clearly rejecting the EEC. And 40% of voters, the majority of the social democrats, want Denmark to leave the EEC.

■ **The vote against joining the EEC in the referendum was 45%. The CP said that although the overall opposition is now less, it has become more polarized in class terms.**

I don't think that's so. The opposition then was also working-class, but it is true that the CP at that time ran a people's front campaign, where they tried to build on small capitalists and so on. They built the People's Movement against the EEC and gave concessions in order to hold onto these small capitalists. But they never succeeded. It was the shadow of the bourgeoisie, because not even the petty bourgeoisie was there.

■ **Have you discussed the European elections?**

There hasn't been any discussion of this, because there is a clear disagreement. The CP is in the People's Movement, and is very strong there. The first candidate of the People's Movement is a member of the CP Central Committee. The Left Socialist Party joined the People's Movement a year or two ago, with the explanation that the People's Movement had changed, that it was not so nationalistic but was more oriented to international collaboration. We think this is an incorrect judgment.

But the Left Socialists have a candidate on the slate of the People's Movement. We are not in the People's Movement, and it is impossible for us to run a candidate of our own, because in the Euro-elections, all of Denmark is one constituency. And to put up candidates, you have to collect 60,000 signatures. We are calling for a vote for the VS candidate on the People's Movement slate.

■ **Will you be putting forward a program on the EEC elections.**

Yes. It's on different levels. On the general level it is against the EEC and for a Europe of the workers and small farmers. That's what we want. The question is how to get there. And what we say is that the main contribution Danish workers can make to fighting the EEC is to get Denmark out of it, because that would be a clear message to workers in other countries that the working class in Denmark does not accept the EEC.

In addition, we have some more specific demands such as opposition to giving

What we can and want to do is to use this agreement to initiate united-front activities that also include others.

What we would say is that the possibilities with this alliance are better. It's not a guarantee, and it's not clear it will establish more activities. But the possibilities are better, both because it represents a real force, and also because we can use this common platform as a point of departure for taking initiatives on the things mentioned in the platform. The pressure for this has already resulted in a lot of local slates in municipal elections. Some of them have initiated real actions.

■ **How much does this bloc lead to actual political discussions among the three parties?**

The political discussion has been very much on the level of the leadership. Among the rank and file, the discussion has been mainly over whether or not it is a good idea to have the alliance. In the CP paper over the last year or two, there has been enormous discussion about it. Every day there have been a few contributions on this question. But we want now to try to develop the political discussion about this. There is agreement that there should be meetings and conferences.

■ **So, you don't have a lot more contact with the VS and CP ranks than you did?**

Not nationally, but on the municipal level there has been a lot more political discussion: Should socialists accept tax increases? What can we learn British municipal struggles, from Liverpool, Manchester, the Greater London Council?

■ **What attitude do you take to the Greens?**

You must not compare the Danish Greens with the German Greens, because the Danish Greens are clearly a non-socialist, non-working class phenomenon.

When environmentalism first became popular, these issues were taken up by the SF and in the left, so for a long period the socialist movement in Denmark has been green. Thus, it was very clear that if there was room for a green party in Denmark, it would have to try to get bourgeois-minded people who were concerned about the environment. That is what they have tried to do. The problem the Greens have had is that the old established petty-bourgeois party, the Radicals, appealed to the same people. But now that the Radicals are in the government, they are being discredited and opening up space for the Greens.

This is why our slate has to give a clear answer on the environment. We have a chance to win people who are not traditionally linked to the working-class movement because we can stress that the only way to save the environment is to

attack private ownership. If we are successful in this, we have a real chance of stopping the Greens.

■ **In terms of this alliance, there have been differences between you and the VS in the past over unions. Do you think those differences have been overcome?**

Yes. They can be political differences. But there are no differences over whether we should work in the unions, that we should try to build up class-struggle left wings in the unions. In fact, some comrades in the VS are leading important unions, the brewery workers' and the catering workers' unions.

The national leader of the catering workers is a member of the VS. And this union has led very good campaigns against MacDonalds, who do not want to hire union members; and in support of immigrant workers, who very often work in hotels and restaurants.

■ **How does your electoral alliance fit into your longer term strategy?**

There are two elements in our strategy. One is to achieve regroupment on the far left, to create a stronger revolutionary party. The other is to bring about a broader change in the face of the workers' movement as a whole.

We don't see this alliance immediately as building a stronger revolutionary pole. Of course, there is a connection, because if the Left Socialists and ourselves are able to work together and have the same attitude toward a reformist party, as we see the CP, then of course that would make it easier to carry out a revolutionary regroupment. We are engaged in a process of revolutionary regroupment with the VS and some smaller groups.

And then there's the question of much broader change in the workers' movement, where the CP is a factor, as is the SF. The question there is which way for the workers' movement as a whole. This alliance is neither a revolutionary regroupment nor that sort of broad change, but it is linked to both of them.

Concerning the change in the CP, the problem from our point of view is that the people who are most in favor of cooperating with the left and for this alliance are the Renewers, whose political positions are also going in the direction of the SF. The Renewers tend to say that there are "survival questions" that are more important than class struggle.

There are really big contradictions in all this. So, you could ask: why make this alliance now, why not wait? If we want to be a part of this discussion, if we want to win as many as possible for a working class point of view, the best way is to take initiatives like this.

■ **What do you think are the perspectives for the CP?**

We cannot offer any guarantees of

where this will lead, where the CP will end up. What we can say is that we are participating on our own program and on a common platform that is acceptable. We will fight for all the positive aspects. The best thing of course would be if the development of the CP changed.

Some of the CP traditionalists see now that Gorbachev is attacking something they believe in. They don't like this idea of factory closures, of linking wages to productivity. They fight against that in Denmark. Now they see Gorbachev doing the same in the Soviet Union. So many of them say that Brezhnev was better. Many of them are good people, class-conscious people in terms of the Danish class struggle. It is clear that either one of the two main currents in the CP will capitulate, or sooner or later there will be a split.

■ **Of course, you cannot predict how things will go in the Soviet Union.**

But I don't think that anything that happens in the USSR can prevent a split in the Danish CP. Whatever happens in the Soviet Union, it will not change the situation in the CP.

■ **Not even if Gorbachev loses and a neo-Stalinist comes to power?**

Then there will be an immediate split in the Danish CP. A very big group would go to the SF immediately. They would drop every idea of communism. What they are doing now under the cover of Gorbachev is dragging the CP toward positions closer to the SF.

So much has been said about Stalin, so many lies have been exposed, that they can't just go back. Only a small section of the party would follow a shift like that, a thousand at most.

■ **The VS put a lot of stress on the antagonism between what you might call the petty-bourgeois sectors of the party and the trade-union activists, like the conflict in Britain between the *Morning Star* and *Marxism Today*.**

The workers and trade-union activists tend to be traditionalists. The intellectuals and political activists tend to be the Renewers. It is clear that there is a social division, and that the so-called Stalinists, or traditional wing of the CP, are based more in the unions. The Renewers want to engage in politics. So, they cannot use empty phrases about working together with the social democracy for anything.

If they want to work with the social democrats in parliament, they have to get into parliament first, which makes it necessary to negotiate with the VS and SAP. So they do that. Talk about collaborating with the social democracy is of no use.

On the other hand, in the unions there is the social-democratic bureaucracy. And who do the CP militants or trade-union leaders or bureaucrats deal with? With the social democrats first and foremost. So for

them it is not empty to talk about the necessity of relations with the social democracy. For them, this talk about the VS and the SAP is a bit strange, because there are not so many unions where we have significant forces.

In this sense you can understand why

the Renewers are keen on this alliance and the trade-union people are more sceptical.

But I think this will change, because I think now that many of the trade union leaders now understand that if they don't do it, they will be out of politics. ★

## "A life or death question for the CP"

**Interview with Poul Petersen, secretary of the Left Socialists' (VS) Political Committee**

**WHAT IS the purpose of this common slate?**

The objective is to get into parliament with 3% or

4%. The condition for this is to create a dynamic on the left. The problem is that for several years now the left has been represented by the SF, which is a reformist socialist party, and very near to the social democrats.

There have been several small parties further to the left, revolutionary parties, such as the VS and SAP. But none of these parties has been able to get over the 2% hurdle to get into parliament. That has dampened the optimism on the left, and lowered expectations. So if we can create an alternative with some prospects, we might get in with 3% or 4%.

**■ Do you have plans for a broad campaign committee that could include unorganized people in the work of the campaign?**

That is what we plan. But first we have to get enough signatures. You have to get

about 20,000 signatures to stand for parliament. This is so new that we will have to wait until after the summer to see what can be done.

But of course a movement will have to be built to back the list. Because if it is only on the parliamentary level, it will not last long. I don't think that there will be a common campaign committee in the first election. It depends on the Communist Party, because it's them who from the start insisted on the independence of the parties. We and the SAP called for united work on a united platform.

**■ It seems as if it will be hard to involve unorganized people if there are three different campaign committees.**

Yes, it will. But this is a life or death question for the Communist Party, because of its internal problems, and the suspicion of CP members toward VS and SAP, especially SAP.

**■ What perspectives for the future do you envisage?**

I see it as a part of the development on the left, what we call a regroupment process. Because at the moment it is difficult to imagine how the left will look in five years. I have even talked to leading cadres of the Communist Party who say that they don't really know whether the Communist Party will exist in five years because they have a big, very reformist wing who could just as easily be members of SF. And they've got the old Stalinists, the traditionalist, orthodox Communist Party members. They can see that there's going to be a split.

**■ Does the division in the Communist Party run between trade-union and political activists?**

More or less. But you also see that there is a feeling among the trade-union activists of the need for united work. They see at least that

what we are going to do on the parliamentary level is necessary. But they do really hate those intellectual, middle layer, activists and thinkers in the CP.

I have talked to a lot of them, and what they in fact say is "We also think that Stalin was a horrible person, but we can't accept that there was no socialism in Russia at the time. Because if we accept that, all that we have fought for is nothing, and we can't live with that."

They can't take all those question marks. They want to carry on their work as usual, and they also want to adapt to the new times and developments. That's why they are prepared for a sort of alliance with those in our party who stand for class war against those who are softer. That's a peculiar development.

**■ You find that your relationship is better with the union activists than with the Eurocommunists?**

Yes. It's a funny thing, because originally we made an alliance with the Renewers to get this project. But as the process has been going on the alliance has moved more to the left than the Renewers would like. That's why in a way there is an alliance with the trade-union layer in the CP.

**■ A lot of the discussion for this common program seems to be around questions like NATO and the EEC.**

Yes. That's because the Communist Party does not want to go to the left of the policy of the peace movement.

**■ You get this trend in favor of staying in NATO in the Italian CP as well.**

Yes, but in Denmark this trend is in the SF. We had such a trend in the VS four years ago but they left and went to SF.

**■ What about the EEC?**

There is more agreement on that. We are all against the the European union. But the Communists want to stress the anti-union politics, and VS and SAP to stress the demand for leaving the EEC, but in the end we have come to an agreement on getting out of the EEC.

The Communists cannot risk being alone in not stressing that, because there is a popular feeling in the working class that we should get out of the EEC as quickly as possible.

**■ What alternative do you offer to the EEC other than just a return to national sovereignty?**

That's a problem. That's being discussed in our party at the moment because we are affiliated to the People's Movement Against the EEC, and their alternative is EFTA [the European Free Trade Association].

The VS's argument is that out of the EEC we have better possibilities for the



class struggle. In my opinion, the negative side of this might be isolating ourselves from the class struggle in Europe. There is an isolationist tendency in the Danish population, especially among the working class.

■ **Do you think the anti-EEC vote has increased? What would the vote be today if there were another referendum?**

It would be less. Not because the anti-EEC feeling is weaker but because people can't see the alternative. If you say, OK we can just leave and affiliate to EFTA, it's not really an alternative. What you have to say at the same time is that we have to join Europe in another way. Everybody knows that.

■ **For the past period the CP has been mainly interested in the social democrats. Going into this bloc means breaking their *de facto* bloc with the social democrats. Do you think that that's the way they're going?**

Yes. And that's a problem for a lot of the trade-union activists in the Communist Party. But those I have talked to say that in fact they realize that they have to change their line. They can see that the development of the social-democratic party is so right wing at the moment that it is no longer possible for them to bloc with it and SF.

■ **How much of an impact have the events in the USSR had on the CP?**

This creates a lot of problems for their members because nothing is certain anymore. That paralyzes them.

■ **If the countries that have had planned economies appear to be abandoning them and taking a leaf out of Thatcher's book, does that pose a general ideological problem in Denmark?**

I remember a few years ago, there was an attempt to get a common program with the radical dockers and other forces, and there was general opposition to including the demand for nationalizations, since this was considered unpopular and outdated.

■ **What position does this program take on nationalizations?**

It is not mentioned, as far as I remember. But we have talked about it, and all three parties are in favor of it in different ways. On the other hand, there is resistance to demands for nationalizations among the working class. That's the problem.

■ **Is the question of immigrant workers an important issue for the coalition?**

We stress that very much, both anti-racism and anti-fascism.

■ **This raises the question of Common Course. If their vote is a left vote — which is questionable — they would be an important component of a common socialist slate.**

Yes. The problem is that it is a populist party that wants to make a bridge between red politics and petty-bourgeois politics, and they have had this attitude toward immigrant workers and refugees that is sometimes purely racist, but at other times it just facilitates racism.

We have said that if they are going to join the alliance, they have to publicly change their politics. Otherwise we don't want to have anything to do with them.

■ **One side of the impact of the changes in the Soviet Union is obviously to break down the CP's barriers against the left, but it also breaks down the barriers to going further to the right.**

Yes, and that's why it has been so important for us to draw the alliance to the left.

That's why, for VS, we have accepted several things that in reality we don't want. But if we get the alliance now, we have a handle on them, because they cannot go as far to the right as they would do in six month's time.

In reality, a large part of the CP membership stand for SF politics, and would like a fusion with SF.

■ **That means that the discussion between these two wings in the CP will tend to focus on this electoral program.**

Yes. And that is a lot better than other possible focuses.

■ **Can you talk to the CP rank and file?**

Yes, we can. But our problem is we have had so much to do and so few resources that we haven't been able to act as we should. Members have done it, but we have not done it as a party, but we could have a large influence.

I have been invited several times to come to local CP branches to talk about the alliance. That has never happened before. And then we talk about everything — Poland, Hungary, everything.

■ **Does the question of Trotsky and the Left Opposition come up much?**

No. But it will. In the Communist Party it has to.

■ **If they ask you about that, do you defend the tradition of the Left Opposition?**

Yes. I do, because it is my tradition. But it is not the tradition of the VS as such. I have never been in the Trotskyist movement, but from the first time I started to think about the Russian revolution,

I was a Leninist and Trotskyist in that sense. ★

**"I think that it is much easier to discuss with Trotskyists or Maoists now"**

**Interview with Anker Schjerning, member of the Executive Committee of the Danish Communist Party**

**H**OW DOES the Communist Party evaluate the progress on achieving a common slate?

The Communist Party of Denmark has not yet taken the final decision. Our members will have to decide whether the party will participate in the elections on our own slate or on a common slate with the other forces.

In our understanding, this is not an alliance but electoral cooperation. It is a cooperation for the time being between these three parties. The two other parties have already decided at their congresses. Our party will decide in the course of the next few months.

■ **This type of electoral cooperation has been discussed in Denmark for a number of years, and this is the closest that it has come to realization. What has made this possible now, rather than some years ago?**

I think that international developments have had some influence, the development in the Soviet Union for instance, the problem of democracy in the socialist countries. Those problems that divided the Communist Party from other parties of the left, particularly the Left Socialist Party, no longer exist. Our position on human rights, the participation of the people and the role of the party are changing.

I also think that some differences from the late 1960s and the 1970s are fading. At that time the students and the radical youth groups were very active, and influenced the left forces. They dominated the VS, and they had a lot of notions that they could defend the working-class's interests better than the workers themselves. Our party had many reservations about such student socialist groups. I think these problems from the past are not forgotten but they are greatly diminished. We think for instance that the VS has more realistic points of view now concerning the conditions of the working class than they had ten or fifteen years ago.

■ **There was an article in Moscow**

**News some time ago saying that it was not true that the Trotskyists were traitors, and that it was possible to accept Trotskyists in united-front work.**

I think that it is much easier to discuss with Trotskyists or with Maoists now. And I think the main problem in our relations with the SAP is not their international relations, but rather our disagreements on national policy.

My opinion is that they have a small-group, sectarian evaluation of some of our national problems, for instance in the peace movement. In the VS, there has been a small group that has held that the Communists were still Stalinists. But Trotskyism as such in my opinion is not a problem.

■ **What about the issue of the EEC?**

On this issue, there is agreement among the three parties. I think that all three parties are active in the popular movement against the EEC.

■ **And NATO?**

I don't think there is much difference between the three parties on the principles. All the parties want Denmark to leave NATO. But there is a difference in my opinion in that the Communist Party has been much more involved in the broader peace movement. The platform of the peace movement is against the policy of NATO, but it does not demand that Denmark leave NATO immediately.

We have had discussions here about whether we will close the slate to people who are active against NATO's policies but who, for the moment, do not want Denmark to leave. The Communists want to open the slate to all forces in the peace movement that are active against NATO policy.

■ **The Italian CP has a position in favor of staying in NATO and trying to transform it. Is there any sympathy for that view in the CP here?**

No. We think that the Scandinavian countries could have a stronger influence on international peace and disarmament policy outside NATO. But we think that as long as Denmark is in NATO, the popular forces in the NATO countries should work together and that we should press the Danish government to make proposals inside NATO against militarist policies.

■ **Some communist parties have ideas about the possibility of transforming the EEC, about democratizing it and using its institutions to further progressive politics. Is there any sympathy for that view in the Danish CP?**

No. Of course, we think that we should strengthen cooperation between the trade unions and working-class and progressive people across the borders. But we are against strengthening the institutions of

the EEC, and we think that the Danish working class has better possibilities for influencing the national institutions than the EEC institutions.

Of course, as long as we are unable to stop the integration policy, we cannot be indifferent to the EEC institutions. They have a lot of money. When the Nicaragua Committee and other forces seek money and resources from EEC budgets for projects in Nicaragua, or for Green projects, we of course support them.

■ **What about the differences between the VS, the SAP and the CP over the Easter strikes a few years ago. Is that still a problem?**

Not in my opinion. The important thing is the policies today and in the future. The new thing is the fact that the parties can have a dialogue over political events.

At the end of 1987 the VS's and the Communist Party's commissions began to meet to discuss different things. Before then we only discussed in the trade-union movement. We did not sit together around a table to discuss the Easter Strikes, for instance, as parties. This is a new thing, and a hopeful one in my opinion.

■ **How do you see the development of this electoral cooperation. I understand, for example, that in the upcoming campaign you are not proposing that there be a united campaign committee. Do you see that as a possibility for the future?**

If the cooperation goes well, and the parties in the process of dialogue come closer to each other and other forces, then of course we could take the next step to conduct common election campaigns. But we have to start from the beginning.

■ **But it will be difficult to call on unorganized people to join three different campaign committees.**

Yes. It has been a difficult process. I think that one of the difficulties was that the SAP and the VS started from a very high level, and then moved downwards. They started with the idea that the three parties should take the initiative to make a socialist unity slate, a kind of new electoral organization, that would have a very broad platform and conduct a common campaign and take common positions.

We started with the idea that the three parties should continue as three independent parties, and find a minimum platform and try to move up from that. One of the successes is that the two other parties have realized that it was not possible to start from this high level of unity.

■ **What if you elect someone to parliament? What attitude would you take toward the government? Would you vote for the social democrats to organize the parliament?**

Yes. All the parties have agreed that we should recommend to the head of state,

the queen, to ask the leader of the biggest working-class party — the social democrats — to head up the government.



■ **Would you support a coalition of the social democrats with the left radicals?**

That's one of the things we have discussed. In our opinion, it depends on the concrete situation, and it depends on the movement and the political basis in the population. We will only support a social-democratic government for the good things and not all the things they do. And that's also something we have discussed with the SAP and the VS.

In my opinion, they are making too big a thing of this Radical party. Our real problem is not the Radical party, our real problem is the social democrats. Do the social democrats want a real working-class policy, a real popular policy, a policy against NATO, or do they want cooperation with the ruling classes? That's the real problem.

I don't think that the SAP's formulation is correct politically, because they say that this small Radical party will be able to dominate the social democrats. In my opinion, the real problem is inside the social-democratic movement itself.

■ **What are the possibilities of extending this cooperation to the trade-union field?**

This list opens the possibility that forces other than parties could nominate candidates — individuals, trade unions, unemployed movements or environmental groups. So, this slate opens possibilities to bring trade-union forces into politics in a new way.

I'm sure that the trade unionists supporting the Communist Party and the VS and the left forces will look with a lot of sympathy on this slate. And I am also sure that many social democrats and SF people will also like this project, because many people have criticized the small Communist and Left Socialists for being responsible for 4 % of the vote not being represented in parliament, and for the possibility that we could have a workers' majority among the people but not in the parliament.

■ **Do you propose getting peace organizations to endorse this list?**

We don't think that peace organizations as such will endorse it, but that individuals working in the peace organizations could participate.

■ **You think the list should have a clear reference to socialism?**

No, not explicitly. Such forces must realize that the real opponents of their green ideals or their peace ideals are the capitalist forces, and they have to draw corresponding conclusions about the need for people's power and socialism. ★

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### Right to strike legalized....and restricted

ON APRIL 29, 1989 the Soviet trade union daily *Trud* published a proposed law that would make it legal for Soviet trade unions to organize strikes. The term "strike" is not used. It is clear that the legalization is a consequence of the increasing number of strikes in the Soviet Union and the sympathy that they have met with in the media and public opinion.

But at the same time the legalization also contains a restriction of the right to strike already expressed by other decrees. Thus, according to *Moscow News* of May 14, 1989, a decree has just come into force (after deliberations in the Supreme Court in the course of which only one judge voted against) that equates strike pickets with "demonstrations in a public place" and therefore considers them illegal if they are not previously authorized by the municipal authorities. ★

### Partial media rehabilitation of Trotsky

ON APRIL 21, 1989, *Pravda* published long excerpts from the memoirs of Raymond Robins about the first years of the Soviet regime. Robins, an American, knew Lenin well. These excerpts include the following remark: "Lenin and Trotsky came to power on the basis of five words: All power to the Soviets."

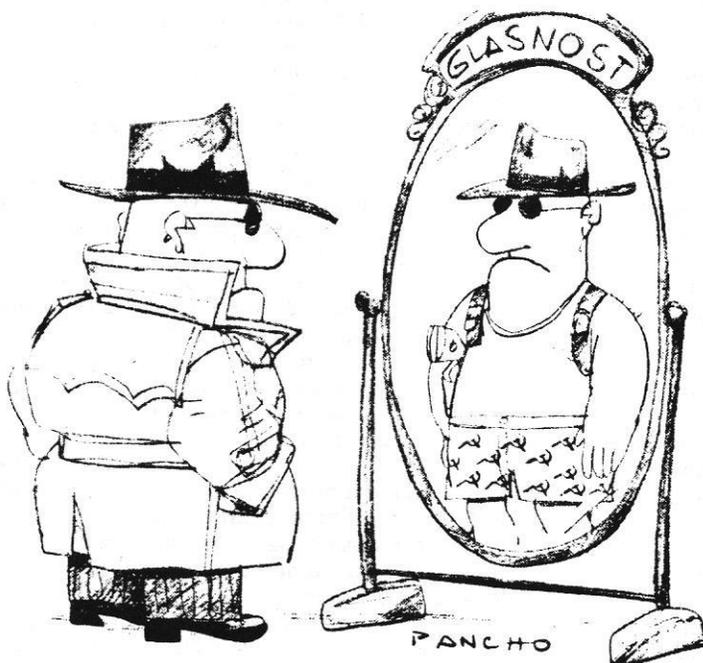
On April 20, 1989, the *Review of Books* announced the presentation of a talking book on the 1917 revolution containing a speech by Trotsky, described as a "brilliant orator" and a "tribune of our revolution", whose writings allow us to "understand Leninist logic".

The same week, the weekly *Ogonyok* published three texts of "Memoirs of Lenin" by Karl Radek, Grigori Zinoviev and Leon Trotsky.

At the same time the review *Argumenty i Fakty*, a weekly intended for the education of Communist Party cadres, printed pictures of busts of Lenin and Trotsky, made by a British artist in the early 1920s, on opposite pages. The journal quoted the words of the artist that "Trotsky was worshipped by the Red Army".

According to an opinion poll conducted by the German weekly *Der Spiegel*, and reprinted in the Flemish socialist daily *De Morgen* on June 7, 1989, 20% of Muscovites have a positive opinion of Trotsky, and 23% a negative opinion. On Stalin the positive opinions are 13% and the negative 66%. On Bukharin, the positive opinions rise to 50% and the negative opinions fall to 9%.

In view of the fact that Bukharin has been officially rehabilitated and has become something of a cult figure in the media, while Trotsky continues to be strongly criticized, the judgement on Trotsky can be considered unexpectedly favourable. ★



### The crimes of Stalin

THE WEEKLY of the Association for Cultural Relations with Ukrainians Living Abroad, *News from the Ukraine*, published in its May 1989 issue an article entitled "Let us make a solemn oath" concerning a mass demonstration that took place in the forest of Bykivnya near to Kiev, where a mass grave of victims of the NKVD [secret police] has been discovered. So far the remains of 7,000 bodies have been uncovered.

The co-president of the Ukraine Memorial Association, Les Tanyuk, stated during the meeting: "The cream of the people of Kiev and the Ukraine are buried here. The peoples' commissars, the military leaders, the Cheka officers, intellectuals, the leader of the Party, Panyas Lyoubchenko and his wife, the writer Ivan Mykytenko, the academician A. Krymsky, the writer Ludmilla Starytska-Chemiakhivska. This place is the site of the martyrdom of Ukrainian culture." Another speaker declared: "The fact that it is only now that we have been able to learn the truth about Bykivnya shows that 1937 is not the distant past. Stalinism is still alive. It holds back the progress of *glasnost* and attacks its own people with shovels, as happened on April 9, 1989 when the meeting in Tbilisi [the capital of Georgia] was broken up."

A letter from Andrei Sakharov was read at the meeting. It includes the statement: "Let us make, today, a solemn promise that we will do everything in our power to prevent this country ever again moving back — even if only slightly — to the state of hypocrisy, lying, falsification, cruelty and fanaticism in which it has lived for so long, and from which we have gradually begun to free ourselves." ★

### The "State of laws" and its contradictions

THE LEGAL basis for the arrest and sentencing of numerous oppositionists in the Soviet Union was the notorious Article 70 of the penal code which condemns not only actions but also writings guilty of "anti-Soviet agitation" or "slandering Soviet [i.e. state!] institutions". For a long time liberal intellectuals and some of the more radical Gorbachevites have been conducting a vigorous campaign for the suppression of Article 70. They have just won a partial victory. A decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of April 8, 1989, effectively revises the penal code as regards

"crimes against the state".

However, although it removes the most outrageous aspects of Article 70, the decree continues to outlaw "calls for changing the Soviet political and social regime in contradiction with the Constitution" and "defamation or discrediting of state organs and social organizations". The editorial offices of newspapers, radio and television have received a large number of letters criticizing these stipulations, pointing out that they contradict the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

Thus, in *Moscow News* of May 21, 1989, the jurist Nina Beljiava writes: "How are we to understand the idea of 'appeals to change the social and state system'? Are we not already engaged in changing the social and political regime, given that we have embarked on a profound political and economic reform, involving new property relations, the separation of powers, the introduction of new democratic institutions?" ★

### Missing medicines

ACCORDING to *Moscow News* of June 4, 1989, the Soviet pharmaceutical industry meets less than 50% of the requirements for medication. Some 30% of the medication distributed is imported. Only 75-80% of the needs of people with diabetes, tuberculosis, asthma and heart diseases for medication are met.

The conditions of poverty, helped by social inequality, lead to a dual system of health care. There is one for the mass of the people increasingly cut off from access to medication, and another for the bureaucrats and the new rich, who can get all the medicines they need, whether through "connections" and "the mutual exchange of services" (the "grey" market), or simply by paying high prices.

The creation of a network of private production, import and sale of medicines will not resolve the situation. By legalizing the "grey" and black markets it will increase inequality and social injustice.

A real solution would be a change in investment policy, that is to say an increase in the amount of hard currency committed to imports of medicines and an increase in the funds allocated to the development of scientific research and the production of medicines in the Soviet Union.

This would only need small sums compared to the total hard currency reserves and productive investments of the USSR. *Moscow News* estimates the total increase in hard currency payments required at 100 million roubles. No new enterprises have been built in this sector for 15 years. Modernization would cost a billion roubles.

When we realize that 30 billion roubles have been allocated for the gigantic petro-gas plant at Tyumen — judged ruinous by both economists and ecologists — it becomes clear that the issue is one of the choice of priorities, and not a lack of

resources that would be reduced by the "market economy".

Why not let people vote on the question: What is most important? Sufficient free and effective medicines or irresponsible, megalomaniac projects like that of Tyumen? ★

### Pensioners in poverty

"WHY ARE tens of millions living below the poverty line while others are living in luxury?" asked Boris Yeltsin at the Congress of People's Deputies on May 31. According to Gorbachev there are more than 40 million Soviet citizens living below the official poverty line, some 35 million of whom are people living on various kinds of fixed pension.

On June 7 Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov announced a rise in the minimum pension to 70 roubles per month, which is the minimum wage.

War veterans and veterans of labour were also promised improvements. However, according to *Ogonyok* in February 1989, the new law will not come into operation until 1991. ★

### The shredder at work?

A JOINT Polish-Soviet historical commission has been at work on the "blank spots" in the history of Polish/Soviet relations. The secret pacts agreed in August 1939 between Hitler and Stalin concerning the absorption of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union and the partition of Poland are proving a particular problem. According to the Commission:

"From collections of German diplomatic documents published in the West, it

may be concluded that an additional protocol formed a part of the pact. The original of this protocol has not been found in the Soviet archives..." ★

### Democracy versus production?

ON JUNE 26 the Soviet press agency TASS reported the suspension of live coverage of the proceedings of the Congress of People's Deputies. According to Anatolii Lukyanov, interest in the broadcasts resulted in a 20% fall in industrial output! From now on the public will only be able to see "edited highlights" of their legislature at work. ★

### Unemployment causes conflict

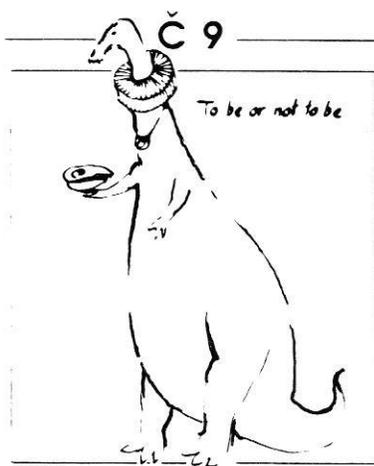
UNEMPLOYMENT among young Kazakhs has been cited by Soviet sources as a reason for the clashes between Kazakhs and immigrant Caucasian oil-workers in Novyi Uzen' in Western Kazakhstan in mid-June 1989 that led to five or more deaths.

According to the chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh Republic, Magda Sagdiev, some 1,500 to 2,000 young people in the town of 56,000 were unemployed.

Management, concerned to meet plan targets at the lowest possible cost, preferred to bring in labour from outside rather than pay the training and infrastructural costs of using local labour. The chairman of the republican State Committee on Labour and Social Problems, Nedirmamed Alovov, commented that at least part of the unemployment resulted from lay-offs caused by the introduction of the *khosraschot* [cost-accounting] economic policies. ★

## CZECH INPREKOR 9

June 1989



### Contents:

- "Are Trotskyists the last of the dinosaurs?"
- Draft IEC resolution on the USSR
- Petr Uhl's critique of the manifesto of the Movement for Civic Liberty (HOS)

Write to: Czech Inprekor,  
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93108 Montreuil, France.

# Severe blow to woman's right to choose

THE US SUPREME COURT decision announced on July 3 in the case *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* has, as expected, severely limited a woman's right to abortion (see IV 162). By upholding key provisions of the Missouri law in question, the court has invited individual states to limit the ability of all women to exercise this right.

In addition, the Supreme Court will hear three new cases this fall that will give it further opportunities to abolish the right to abortion altogether.

TERESA MARTINEZ

**B**Y A VOTE of five-to-four, the right to a safe and legal abortion, as established in 1973 with the case *Roe v. Wade*, has been compromised. States may now prohibit the use of public funds, public employees, and public facilities to perform abortions not necessary to save the life of the woman. The justices also ruled that states may require doctors to test for fetal viability after 19 weeks.

With a ban on public funding, legal abortion is nearly eliminated as a choice for young and poor women who rely on public health care. It could also limit access for many women who would otherwise have no problem obtaining abortions at private facilities because the private/public distinction is practically nonexistent in US health care. Most "private" hospitals and clinics receive a small amount of public aid that would qualify them under this new prohibitive law.

Another provision of the Missouri law prohibiting public financing of abortion counseling was also upheld, but applies only to state officials who distribute the funds and not to health care providers. However, in some places, even without a law, public health care employees are already being instructed not to discuss abortion as an option, thus already beginning to curtail the free exchange of information.

The most menacing and symbolically significant provision of the ruling is that which requires fetal viability testing. The court did not offer guidance as to what is to be done if viability is established, but it is widely agreed that the woman would be forced to continue the pregnancy. The scientific community maintains that the point of viability is 24 weeks. With the new ruling, the court has upset the so-called "balance" between the rights of the woman and the fetus that was established at 24 weeks in the *Roe* decision. The jus-

tics failed to make an actual ruling on this question, however, creating a legal vacuum that threatens to allow the state to take control of a woman's body from the moment her egg is fertilized.

The tests to be used to determine fetal viability, which are basically useless until the 28th week of pregnancy, are sometimes dangerous, are very expensive, and delay abortions by often critical weeks. In the US, less than 1% of abortions are performed after the 20th week, so this restriction could actually have little practical application. It is, however, psychologically potent — encouraging conservative state legislators to enact further restrictions and discouraging doctors from providing abortion services.

## More restrictions expected in the fall

Three more abortion cases are due before the Supreme Court this fall. One from Illinois would require abortion clinics to have expensive equipment unnecessary for the conduct of safe abortions. This would force most clinics to close and, even without overturning *Roe*, render meaningless the constitutional protection of abortion rights. This nightmare is actually a real possibility, because the court could examine the case on what it calls a "rational basis," a very relaxed form of judicial review.

Two other cases, from Minnesota and Ohio, involve parental consent. Among other things, the states are asking that the provision allowing the woman to exercise a "judicial bypass" of parental consent be declared unconstitutional. The Supreme Court will probably rule in favor of these restrictions.

The future of abortion rights, as well as most civil rights, in the US Supreme Court is not very bright. After the court rules, it is then up to the politicians in

each state, the legislators and governors, to chart the course of the state laws.

Both anti-abortion and pro-choice organizations are preparing to fight within the confines of this system. Anti-abortion groups are arranging to introduce restrictive measures on the right to choose in most states. Pro-choice groups are encouraging representatives to vote against this legislation and are also lobbying to have bills introduced that would preempt any new restrictions.

## Danger of concentrating on legislative arena

Pro-choice groups, namely the National Organization for Women (NOW) and National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) are organizing to take advantage of popular opinion in favor of the right to choose and of the groundswell of support they have received since the April protests by translating it into electoral victories for pro-choice candidates.

Even in the context of the US electoral system, this is not a prudent strategy because only about one-fourth of those eligible to vote ever do so. Many of the women and men mobilized for the April protests and subsequent demonstrations are among those non-voters. The support of these people, along with that of the urban poor and people of color, could be lost if the fight for reproductive freedom is limited to the legislative arena.

The anti-abortionists have vowed to keep up their harassment of clinics, and pro-choice activists are ready to keep defending them. The only action taken on the offensive thus far is that a small coalition of clinics has started to circulate videotapes and books that teach women how to perform their own abortions.

The *Webster* decision is also likely to have international effects. It is believed that anti-abortion groups in European countries dominated by the Catholic Church will be given a new impetus by this decision. It is also likely to adversely affect the fight for abortion rights in a few countries where abortion on demand is not available. Women in developing nations will be hit by this ruling not only psychologically, but also financially, because of the increasingly precarious status of US aid to international family planning organizations. Women all around the world who are struggling for freedom of reproductive choice can no longer look to the US as an example, or can do so only to see what is possible when a popular struggle is not maintained and rights in a capitalist society are taken for granted.

But the fight in the US isn't over yet, and the popular mobilization continues. The growing struggle for reproductive rights should expand to encompass all the other rights that are being limited and eliminated as part of the social program being engineered by the plutocratic US leadership. ★