

# International VIEWPOINT

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## International VIEWPOINT

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# Mandela free but apartheid remains

**WHY was Nelson Mandela imprisoned for 27 years? The question is all the more worth asking at a time when a euphoric consensus is developing on the return of South Africa to the family of democratic nations.**

**Nelson Mandela did not spend 27 years of his life in prison because he was for the armed struggle or because his movement worked with the Communist Party. He was locked up for such a long time for something both much simpler and much more dangerous for the system — he symbolised the demand of all black people to be considered as full South African citizens and to benefit from universal suffrage.**

**PETER BLUMER**

**I**F SUCH a simple demand led the South African regime to imprison Mandela for such a long time it is not because it is composed of complete idiots, unable to understand all the advantages that parliamentary democracy could bring for the South African economy.

Apartheid is not a simple dictatorial aberration lasting from 1948 to today. It is the legacy of the preceding period of colonization of the country and has constituted a particular mode of capitalist development, simultaneously structuring the relations between "races" and the relations between classes. The principal peculiarity of South Africa is not apartheid but a specific socio-economic history, which produced this racial segregation.

It is obviously necessary to incorporate into this analysis secondary factors like the colonial heritage and the reactionary stupidity of the Afrikaaner settlers. But none of this can explain the totality of the system and its persistence over decades.

That is why it is still necessary to refer to these socio-economic facts to understand what is happening now and assess what is being referred to today as the dismantling of apartheid.

Certain authors have characterized apartheid as "racial capitalism" in order to illustrate the manner in which the system intermingles racial and class criteria. The existence of a large black petit bourgeoisie under late apartheid does not alter the fundamental fact that the system has been maintained and reproduced in order to provide cheap labour.

This mode of social regulation was shot through with all kinds of contradictions. But these only began to truly destabilize the system when, in the course of the capitalist development of the country, it was

necessary to expand the internal market and increase the supply of skilled labour. The era of reforms began when it was necessary to amend and then get rid of the basic rules which reserved a whole range of jobs for white workers alone.

With this change, beginning in the late 70s and early 80s, the coherence of the system brutally collapsed. But it was far from easy for the system to reform itself, for the social antagonisms had reached such a degree that each breach threatened to stimulate new levels of audacity from the black mass movement. There was a general strike in Natal in 1973 and a youth uprising in the towns of the Transvaal in 1976, then in the Cape in 1979.

## A period of large-scale confrontations

After 1982 a qualitative new stage was reached, and the country entered a period of confrontations of great breadth. Thus in the course of the 1980s the economic and political elements of the crisis of apartheid became entangled. But to understand what is currently happening it is necessary to bear in mind this double constraint for the South African bourgeoisie — the new needs of capitalism and the revolutionary upsurge of the masses — and not to think that it has been pushed towards change solely by the pressure of struggle<sup>1</sup>.

To believe this would be to underestimate the reserves which the ruling class disposes of in entering into negotiations and to misjudge the present relationship of forces. In his speech of February 2, De Klerk clearly explained that "a changed dispensation implies far more than political and constitutional issues. It cannot be



pursued successfully in isolation from problems in other spheres of life which demand practical solutions. Poverty, unemployment, housing shortage, inadequate education and training, illiteracy, health needs..." This speech closes the years of debate at the summit of the state on the "deregulation" of apartheid and the need for socio-economic reforms.

Certain bourgeois liberal circles have been calling for these reforms for some years, but it is very significant that now it is the head of both the state and the National Party who is saying and doing it. Thus, any idea that De Klerk is dragging his feet under constraint would be erroneous. On the contrary, we must expect important changes in South African society.

But this does not mean that we should join in the chorus of those who are already celebrating the dawning of an era of reconciliation and consensus. There will be reforms, certainly, but South African society is obviously going to remain a class society.

The democratic liberation movement has never confined itself to calling for a few institutional measures. All the political currents, whatever they are, have advanced, along with their democratic demands, more or less radical social demands. A society without apartheid cannot be reduced simply to the adoption of universal suffrage. All the institutions

1. Amongst recent studies, see in particular Fuad Cassim, "Growth, Crisis and Change in the South African Economy" in "After Apartheid", Centre for South African Studies, University of York, London 1988.

would have to be definitively de-racialised, that is to say that references to "race" would have to be removed from all institutions<sup>2</sup>. Rights would have to be exactly the same for everybody, which would mean no more discrimination in the right to property, that the Bantustans would be abolished....and so on. But beyond these obvious points; what would the general philosophy of equality mean in a capitalist society?

At the constitutional level firstly, the negotiations will deal with the question of universal suffrage. Until now all the organizations of the liberation movement have demanded a system of "one person, one vote". Taken literally this would mean that there would no longer be an electorate subdivided according to race, that the "Africans" would vote like the others (including the population of the Bantustans), that anybody could be a candidate and be elected in any election and in any constituency. Such an institutional reform would end up immediately and de facto in a Parliament with a black majority.

**Replacement of system of racial groups**

On this point, the negotiations will be about some kind of juridical compromise. Already for two years the government has explained that it is necessary to replace the system of racial groups by that of groups freely entered into (for housing or schools, for example). In his speech of February 2 De Klerk said "it is clear that a system for the protection of the rights of individual, minorities and national entities has to form a well-rounded and balanced whole". What he is referring to is not elementary democratic rights such as the free practice of culture or language or religion, but the search for some kind of constitutional means which offers the white minority a particular right of control or of veto<sup>3</sup>.

The objective of the white leaders will be to find a constitutional formula recognizing formally the principle of "one person, one vote" but resulting, thanks to certain mechanisms (constituencies or rights of veto or a double chamber) in a specific guarantee for the white electorate.

The other major stake in the negotiations will be the future of the Group Area Act, and, as a consequence, segregation in education. Here also, there will undoubtedly be spectacular reforms. In this sphere objective reality has, in any case, already changed irreversibly — some entire urban zones have been officially opened to the black population for lack of power to change what was already a reality. On the other hand, nothing indicates that the envisaged reforms are going to make the black ghettos disappear and modify the town planning of apartheid. Will the price of land not in any case constitute another

means of segregation?

There will undoubtedly be an increase in wages and an extension of the black petit bourgeoisie. But this will generate an aggravation of social differentiation within the black communities. There will be a new land ownership law but this will culminate, amongst other things, in the accelerated capitalization of small black agriculture with dramatic consequences for the great majority of the poor in the rural zones. Finally, none of this will amount to a "non-racial" South Africa. The system will be reformed, not revolutionized.

There remain other unknown factors. First there are the Bantustans which the negotiations must sooner or later deal with. A genuine dismantling of the "homelands" will mean nothing less than the end of the long history of the "reserves". Some 20 million people are classified as "citizens" of the ten Bantustans and 13.8 million live there permanently. To get rid of them as socio-economic entities would necessitate a radical agrarian reform which would eliminate the duality between the capitalist agriculture of the white areas and the subsistence micro-agriculture in the Bantustans and which would allow a far-reaching redistribution of land. It would be necessary also to get rid of all the particular political systems which have given birth to these social formations and their specific public administrations<sup>4</sup>. It would be necessary again to dismantle their armed forces and police. What upheavals might be envisaged in the short term as a result of this? How can these changes be brought about whilst avoiding popular explosions due to impatience and the upsurge of revolutionary demands?

**Integration of armed forces not to be expected**

There is also the question of the armed forces — a unitary non-racial South Africa would necessitate a non-racial army at every level of the hierarchy...Moreover, unlike what happened in Zimbabwe, the massive integration into the existing army of the military wings of the ANC and PAC is not to be expected.

Further problems could be listed. All these questions touch on structural aspects of the South African state. For example, Nelson Mandela, in his first speech in Cape Town, reaffirmed the objective (contained in the Freedom Charter) of the nationalization of the mines and other key sectors. Subsequent events will show how this demand evolves in a country where more than 70% of the economy is in the hands of the monopolies. But nationalizations in themselves raise the problem of the nature of the institutions and the rupture with the apartheid state. The Bantustans, the nature and composition of the forces of repression, the different items of legisla-

**De Klerk in the "new international climate"**

"THE dynamic developments in international politics have created new opportunities for South Africa as well. Important advances have been made, among other things, in our contacts abroad, especially where these were precluded previously by ideological considerations....

"These developments will entail unpredictable consequences for Europe but they will also be of decisive importance to Africa. The indications are that the countries of Eastern and Central Europe will receive greater attention while it will decline in the case of Africa....

"The collapse, particularly of the economic system in Eastern Europe, also serves as a warning.... Those who seek to force this failure of a system on South Africa should engage in a total revision of their point of view. It should be clear to all that it is not the answer here either....

"The government is prepared to enter into discussions with other Southern African countries with the aim of formulating a realistic development plan. The government believes that the obstacles in the way of a conference of Southern African states have now been removed sufficiently."

**(South African Prime Minister De Klerk to SA parliament on February 2, 1990)**

tion, the financial system, land rents and so on will reveal the depth or the superficiality of the reforms.

In Transkei, 80% of the rural population live below the household subsistence level, and one child in seven dies before the age of five. Less than 20% of the house-

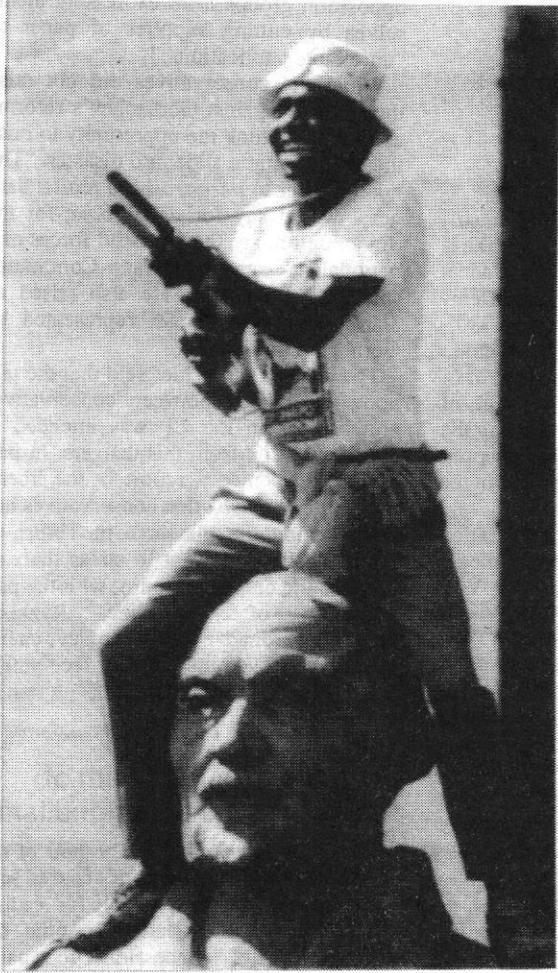
2. This is why the majority of organizations raise the demand for a "non-racial" rather than "multi-racial" South Africa.

3. Unhappily the phrase of Nelson Mandela according to which the ANC must "address white demands for structural guarantees to prevent black domination", is a concession made to the project of the National Party. The formula is repeated on several occasions and echoes De Klerk's worries about preserving the rights of "minorities". Obviously nobody proposes a racist domination of black over white, but Mandela's formula is serious because in the South African context it implies also opposition to any upheaval in social relations.

4. Four of these Bantustans have been declared "independent". As a proof of the new climate, General Holomisa, the new leader of Transkei, authorized the activities of the UDF before De Klerk and has demanded that the "reintegration" of Transkei into South Africa be considered.

5. Race Relations Survey, p. 190, Johannesburg, 1989.

6. Ibid. (without the Transkei), page 270.



drinkable water and the women spend two hours a day collecting it. Official estimates concerning housing in South Africa in the year 2000 envisage, in today's conditions, a shortfall of 3.2 million houses for the black population and 181,000 for the whites<sup>5</sup>.

In 1988 the rate of success in the matriculation examinations was 96.1% for white students, 95.1% for Indian, 67.8% for Colored, and 57.9% for black<sup>6</sup>. The latter figure has fallen to 42% for the 1989 examinations.

In 1987, according to the government, a black industrial or service worker (outside of mining) would earn, on average, 593 Rands<sup>7</sup>, a Colored 738 Rands, an Indian 1061 Rand, and a white 1,956 Rand.

All these figures show perfectly the nature of apartheid — class divisions and racial classification are intermixed. In a capitalist society which had formally abolished all racial laws, it would require decades before such a heritage would disappear.<sup>8</sup>

But even if the South African bourgeoisie has the intention of carrying through reforms, it will be very careful not to cut off the branch on which it is sitting!

It is necessary then to have no illusions about the political process underway. Certainly the government has drawn the lessons of the uprisings of 1984-87. It has

also made a balance sheet of its setbacks when it sought constitutional reform outside of negotiations including the ANC<sup>9</sup>. It also wants social peace to encourage a revival of investment in the country. But the South African bourgeoisie is not for all that being "driven" to make the reforms — it has understood for a long time now the need to change its system of domination. It is not in a position where it must make dramatic concessions to save the market economy and it maintains the initiative on the terrain of negotiations. That is why the constitutional reforms will not imply major socio-economic upheavals.

The question of compromise is thus posed. Already articles can be seen in the international press explaining that both De Klerk and the ANC have to guard against their "extremists".... To make an equation between the fascist extreme right and these currents in the mass movement who stress the

insufficiency of the reforms is in itself a scandal. But it is even worse to identify the end of racial oppression with De Klerk's project to reform the system. Is it "to fall into extremism" to demand that there are no specific constitutional rights for the white population? Is it irresponsibility to demand the complete dismantling of the Bantustans and a radical agrarian reform? Is it reckless to think that the oppression of the black population will remain inasmuch as the great mass of the exploited will also be overwhelmingly black?

The negotiations then are going to be a very decisive phase for the mass movement and all the political movements. The factors which have led the ANC to the negotiating table are well known — a new world situation marked by the new Soviet policy and the strategic impasse after the great movement of the years 1983-87. But this does not mean that the ANC is monolithic and approaches the new situation in a homogeneous manner. Moreover, its hegemony over the majority of the mass movement does not mean there are not other genuinely representative forces in the liberation movement<sup>10</sup>. It must, furthermore, contend also with the existence of reactionary movements like Inkatha, the Zulu organization of Buthelezi, president of the Kwazulu ban-

tustan<sup>11</sup>.

The mass movement remains vigorous, if considerably weakened in relation to 1984-87. But the negotiations will not be taking place in a revolutionary situation. For the great mass of militants the problem can no longer be "negotiation or revolution". The political situation and the relationship of forces has changed. Consequently, the key question will rather be knowing how to use the new situation to preserve the mass movement and give the vanguard the means to get a second wind.

The negotiations are moreover going to be very long. Presented under the form of a round table seeking, by common consent, to "change" South Africa, they will inevitably take the form of a long transition during which each organization will be tested on its capacity to discipline its members and sympathizers.

It is extremely important that the negotiations are not secret, that the mass movement and all the organizations have the means of knowing what is said and what is done. And it is important that the workers' movement involves itself in these debates and advances its own immediate programme, which should include the following:

- A constituent assembly elected on the basis of "one person, one vote". All democratic freedoms immediately. Immediate abolition of all racist laws and all fetters on trade union rights. Abrogation of current labour legislation (LRA).

- total destruction of the Bantustans.

- nationalization of the mines and the big capitalist firms, with trade union organizations having the right of veto on their management. Redistribution of land and agrarian reform.

- dismantling of all repressive forces. Immediate disarmament of fascist groups.

- unity and independence of the trade union movement in relation to all political movements

- rejection of all international pressures on the progressive organizations, whether from Washington, London or Moscow. ★

7. 1 rand = £0.25/\$0.40

8. It is very pertinent in this respect to see the situation of black and Chicano people in the United States today, despite formal equality.

9. This is notably the case with the tri-cameral system with white, Colored and Indian chambers, which has done nothing to defuse the crisis.

10. This was evident at the Conference for a Democratic Future last December where an important part of the delegates and the audience represented independent left forces and were very restive about the negotiations process and the "Harare Plan" (*Weekly Mail*, Johannesburg, December 15, 1989). The past period has also seen a considerable strengthening of the Pan Africanist Congress.

11. A situation of civil war between Inkatha and the militants adhering to the progressive organizations (notably the ANC) has existed for several years in the Natal region. There are now dozens of deaths every week. Everyone is agreed that Nelson Mandela can play a decisive role in the negotiated settlement of this crisis.

# Debates erupt at Soviet CP plenum

**THE DEEPENING CRISIS of the Communist Party and of bureaucratic rule in the USSR opened the way for some sharp exchanges at the plenum of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in early February. The meeting served as a barometer pointing to stormier weather ahead.**

**GERRY FOLEY**

**I**N THE first place, the plenum came on the heels of the military occupation of Azerbaijan, the first use of the Soviet army for large-scale repression since the start of Gorbachev's reform course. Secondly, it came on the eve of a series of key elections, notably in the Baltic republics, that will test the ability of the Communist Party to defend its power and its political objectives by political means.

One of the major confrontations at the plenum was over the Lithuanian Communist Party's declaration of independence (with the obvious aim of regaining political credibility, after it was swept from the boards by Sajudis in last year's election for the Congress of People's Deputies). The Soviet CP leadership clearly was not prepared to give the Lithuanian CP so wide a margin for maneuver. It sponsored a split in the party, giving support to a Moscow loyalist group calling itself the Lithuanian Communist Party (on the Platform of the CPSU).

Finally, on the eve of the plenum, the authorities gave tacit support to a mass demonstration in Moscow against the conservatives. It drew over 100,000 participants, and set a new watermark in mass mobilization in the Soviet capital. Despite the fact that the march was encouraged by the authorities, many of those who participated expressed at the very least a lack of confidence in the Soviet chief: "Gorbachev stop fooling the people," "Gorbachev, whose side are you on."

*Moscow News* stressed the breadth of the demonstration, mentioning many independent groups: "For the first time, we saw marching side by side representatives of the Memorial Group, the Democratic Union, the anarcho-syndicalists and

the Union of Democratic Youth, the soldiers union *Shchit* ("Shield"), the Sakharov Movement, the Cadets (Constitutional Democrats) and the Democratic Communists, RUKH [the Ukrainian People's Front], the Democratic Platform of the CPSU, the Social Protest Movement and the People's Front of Georgia." RUKH supporters carrying the flag of the independent Ukrainian republic were reportedly quite prominent in the demonstration.

At the plenum itself, the demonstration was referred to both positively and negatively. In the debate on February 7, V. I. Mironenko, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Komsomol, said: "We have to understand finally that the hundreds of thousands of people on Manezhnaya Square were not a motley crowd, as someone said on the first day of our work, but the people. It was the people, who give power and take it away. It was the people who are demanding decisive measures to improve their situation."

## Leading conservatives forced to resign

The conservatives were apparently still on the defensive in the apparatus. In the days before the plenum, a series of unreconstructed local party bosses resigned (in Tiumen, Volgograd and Chernigov); the discredited Leningrad boss Soloviev was expelled, and *Moscow News* ventured to present a critical profile of the conservative leader Yegor Ligachev. *Pravda* published an article that denounced former Azerbaijani boss Ghaidar Aliev in the most violent terms.

The conservatives did not speak out against abandoning the constitutional guarantee of the "leading role" of the Communist Party, which was presented as a major advance for the reformers. But this had become something of an artificial issue. This provision was added to the new Soviet constitution adopted in 1977. It changed nothing in reality. The single-party system was established and maintained without it.

The provision had already been removed in the Baltic republics, as a result of the shattering of the single-party system in fact by the rise of the People's Fronts. However since then commentators in the Estonian and Latvian literary weeklies *Reede* and *Literatura un Maksla*, close to the People's Fronts, have argued that the local parties dropping this clause has gone hand in hand with an antidemocratic offensive by other means

and maneuvers, such as trying to prevent opposition groups from expressing themselves by cutting supplies of paper to "unreliable publications."

While the conservatives did not raise their voices against Gorbachev's reforms as such, they took the opportunity to raise the alarm about a slide into disaster. "The main danger to *perestroika*, a mortal danger I would say for *perestroika*, for the Soviet union, are the powerful forces of a nationalist, separatist, anti-Communist sort," Ligachev said. He also raised an alarm about the danger represented by German reunification.

The conservative chief said that the talk about a division between conservatives and liberals in the CP was intended to divert attention from this dangers. In particular, he denied a report in the liberal magazine *Ogonyok* that conservatives had been behind the massacre in Tbilisi on April 9, 1989: "I want to stress that...on April 7, the entire Politburo, with the participation of Gorbachev, Ryzhkov and...Shevardnadze and Yakovlev, unanimously approved the political recommendations having to do with the evolution of events in Tbilisi."

## The primrose path of concessions to nationalism

Yakovlev, apparently a *bête noir* of the conservatives, found himself accused several times of being responsible for leading the Lithuanian CP leadership onto the primrose path of "concessions" to separatism, nationalism and so on.

Soviet ambassador to Poland, V. I. Brovnikov, delivered a prolonged peroration about the slide to ruin: "We keep trying to show that the people are for *perestroika*, but let me ask, what kind? Is it for the kind that in less than five years has plunged the country into an abyss of crisis, sent it to the devil, alongside whom we have come face to face with rampaging anarchy, with the degradation of the economy, with the grimace of general ruin and a collapse of morals." A number of speakers talked about the party's loss of authority and members.

V. K. Mesyats, the first secretary of the Moscow district committee, said: "Today, Communists are asking us: Why is the Central Committee of the CPSU taking a defensive position, why isn't it opposing the demagogues and falsifiers, why is it temporizing with those who carry party cards in their pocket and oppose the line of the party? In our opinion, the time has come to take a position and to say who is who! Who is really a supporter of *perestroika* and who is using *glasnost* to further their own group and political ambitions, for seizing power outright."

Further on, he said that his district committee of course supported *perestroika*, "but a lot of what is going on today, comrades, looks very much like a rampage of unhealthy passions, anarchy, skillfully

whipped up by the leaders of all sorts of groups and unions of an anti-Communist orientation. All this is putting strong psychological pressure on people, arousing just anger and worry. I don't know, I might be mistaken, but this is not the democracy, the *glasnost* for which the April 1985 plenum voted. Our indecisiveness is being seen as weakness... Things have gone too far. Isn't this one of the main reasons we have not gotten the economic results expected?"

The second secretary of the Kazakhstan party, V. G. Anufriev, made a sharp attack on the CPSU leadership: "The party congress has to be moved up, because the present Central Committee and Politburo no longer have the authority to make crucial decisions. Some of their members should think of leaving. Who, comrades, is to answer for the breakdown of the unity of the party, for its ideological collapses, who is going to answer for the events in Eastern Europe that no one wants to discuss here? They have destroyed our buffer zone... But today already they are raising territorial and material claims, wrecking our consulates, defiling the graves of our soldiers and our shrines, humiliating a great country. And once again we are throwing away millions there, robbing our own people."

### Leading official opposes foreign aid

"We offer hospitality to these Mazowieckis and other fellows. We don't need to feed foreign countries so that they will have a better life. We have to assure that things are better here than in their countries and then they will come here themselves and offer us their friendship. Who will tell us comrades, how much Angola, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Vietnam and Cuba cost us? Everything should be given to Soviet people, and that should be written in the program."

However, some top government figures talked as aggressively about the need for "order" as the conservatives. For example, the premier, N. I. Ryzhkov, said: "Hundreds of thousands of refugees have been deprived of their homes and accuse the government of being unable to defend their personal security and property. There are laws against stirring up inter-ethnic conflict, but they are not being applied. There are laws for fighting crime, but their effectiveness has been reduced because the law enforcement agencies have literally been overwhelmed by a wave of unbridled criticism...."

"It has to be said forthrightly that any attempts by the law-enforcement agencies to assure order, even in the framework of the existing laws is immediately described



On January 23, in "sovereign Latvia" there was no paper for non-Communist party publications. (Banner reads "All power to the Soviets") — from *Literatura un Maksis*

as an attack on democracy, an attack on *glasnost*. At the same time, the people are rightly worried that the organs of power are not taking decisive action to stop growing manifestations of lawlessness."

Kriuchkov, the head of the KGB appointed by Gorbachev, said.

"In practice, we have gone into a period of political struggle, in which our many opponents do not shrink from any means. State and national education, work collectives, the youth and mass media are becoming an arena of struggle. We were not ready for this struggle."

### Wide variety of forces accused of destructive activity

"Recently, the ideological face of various forces has become uncovered — from ultraleftists, to social democrats to open nationalistic anti-Communists and even monarchists. Many of them are generating destructive antisocialist activity. If formerly, they adopted pro-*perestroika* slogans, today as a rule they reject the policy of the CPSU and aim openly to seize power. Moral terror, threats, physical attacks are being unleashed against soviet and party workers, against those who do not agree with them."

"They seek to discredit the party, the organs of power, the armed forces, the peace-keeping forces. As a means of accomplishing their aims they have chosen to whip up nationalist passions, provocative mass actions, destabilizing the state power...."

"*Perestroika*, the idea of *perestroika* and the means for implementing it, is by no means an opening for disorder, irresponsibility and anarchy. It is not an opening for the expression of extremism, including political extremism. Otherwise, *perestroika* could turn into a tragedy for our country, whose consequences would be hard to foresee. Years would be necessary to repair the damage."

"We consider extremism unacceptable."

In any form it implies violence. Isn't it time to declare with all clarity and decisiveness what our attitude is to violence and the means of achieving political aims and ambition?

"In the recent period, we have been confronted with violence in various regions of our country and in various spheres of public life. It is clear that you can't quell extremists with sermons. That only fires them up. All of us are for political methods of solving problems, even socially acute ones. But if these methods prove insufficient, then force has to be met with force."

Gorbachev's proposals for a strong presidential government fitted in with the view expressed in the various round tables of experts published in the Soviet press that a firm hand is needed to carry through the reform process. They are also in line with the general strategy of trying to create a parliamentary, constitutional façade for bureaucratic domination. Moreover, they correspond to the fact that the party as a machine of rule has been weakened by the reforms, and the contradictory pressures they generate. For example, the leaderships at various levels are being pushed to try win political support, and at the same time they risk the thunders and worse of the top if they make concessions to mass pressure. The sad fate of the majority of the Lithuanian CP is the latest example of this.

### Strong presidential regime rejected

However, conservative Central Committee members who decried the lack of strong authority in the country opposed the proposals for a strong presidential regime. They do not in fact appear in the new party program published in the February 13 issue of *Pravda*. This issue could have much more concrete importance than the question of the constitutionally guaranteed "leading role" of the party.

A strong presidency in the hands of Gor-

bachev would not only be a bonapartist dictatorship over the country; it would be a dictatorship over the party itself. That would not only be to the detriment of the factional interests of the conservatives, but would in fact undermine the party as an instrument of rule.

Furthermore, simply from the standpoint of political realism, the party bosses have good reason to doubt that Gorbachev now has the political authority to make such an institution work. One speaker, Yu. A. Gan'kovski, secretary of the party committee at the Nizhnevartovsk oil and gas combine, raised the question openly if Gorbachev did not already have too many responsibilities.

The leading radical reformer, Boris Yeltsin, took the opportunity of the plenum to put forward a whole program for reforming the party, the first point of which was abolishing democratic centralism, at least as it has been understood, and to replace it "with general democratic principles assuring genuine pluralism in the party, guarantees of rights for minorities, freedom of opinion for party members and citizens of the country and their right to defend their positions, political rights and individual freedom."

### Yeltsin presents ten-point program

He presented ten points. The second was "rejecting the apparatus as an instrument of power". The sixth was moving away from a vertical structure in the party toward horizontal groupings based on functional and territorial units. He also called for permitting tendencies and factions, as well as for putting the party-controlled media directly under the authority of congresses... "It is improper for the decision about whether an editor or TV director stays or goes to depend on the whim of party secretaries." The final point called for "moving from the unitary principle of building the state and the CP toward a voluntary union of peoples and a voluntary union of the Communist parties of the various republics."

Yeltsin cast the only vote against the new party program, reportedly because it did not go far enough in the direction of reform.

In fact, a number of speakers criticized it for vagueness; one even called it "weepy." The text published in the February 13 *Pravda* was largely a collection of glittering generalities.

The new program's promises of democracy were belied by the brutal treatment meted out to the Lithuanian CP. Following a harsh denunciation of the local party leadership by Gorbachev, the plenum voted to condemn the decisions of the Lithuanian CP's recent Twentieth Congress and to give support, in particular material support, to a breakaway group, the Lithuanian CP (on the Platform of the CPSU). The Lithuanian CP leader, Brauskas, was

either reduced to incoherence by the brutality of the attack, or his remarks were denatured in the official version, which quotes him time after time as stammering, "there is nothing I can say."

Y. V. Palackis, the secretary of the Central Committee, however, was quoted as arguing that the breakaway group were neo-Stalinists:

"When Vadim Andreevich Medvedev [Gorbachev's high priest for ideological questions] came to us before our Twentieth Congress, in a closed session... a squall of attacks were launched at our guest. And these attacks were not against Comrade Brauskas and Berezov but on *perestroika* and the present leaders of our party....

"Among our opponents, I think there are many who have no taste for the *perestroika* CPSU. The CPSU of Brezhnev, and further back than that, is more to their liking."

It does seem likely that only the most Stalinist elements of the Lithuanian party would have opted for a breakaway group totally isolated from the local population and completely dependent on Moscow. (One speaker felt a need to say, for instance, that the new party "has a social base"). Although Gorbachev backed this group, it is hardly likely that he is its favorite person.

### Instructive fate of Brauskas leadership

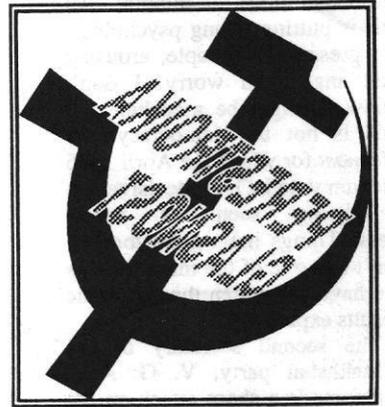
The fate of the Brauskas leadership is a good example of the dilemma of the reform line. He was put in as general secretary when the previous Lithuanian CP leadership failed to stop the rise of the national-democratic movement by repressive means. He succeeded in gaining enough political credibility to keep the local Supreme Soviet from adopting a sovereignty resolution modelled on the Estonian one.

But then the national democratic movement became disillusioned with him, and the CP was buried in the elections for the Congress of People's Deputies. Now, after being forced to make new concessions to regain credibility, his patrons in Moscow have cut off his branch, just before the decisive elections for the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet.

This case does not do much to lend credibility to Gorbachev's recent verbal concessions to the right of self-determination.

In fact, at the plenum also, Latvian party secretary Vagris complained about economic maneuvers designed to sabotage Latvian economic autonomy, which was supposed to go into effect from the first of this year.

In general, neither the plenum or the new program adopted offered any "political" solution to the problems raised, and overall it seems that despite the retreat of the conservatives, Gorbachev came out of it further weakened. ★



### Explosion in Tadjikistan

HARDLY was the Soviet CP plenum over before Gorbachev faced a new explosion of national resentment in a Central Asian republic. This time it was in Dushanbe, the capital of Tadjikistan. The spark was a rumor that Moscow was giving apartments to Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan, when the shortage of housing is acute. The anti-Armenian aspect became clearly anti-European. However, it should be remembered that large scale pogroms developed in Uzbekistan against the Meskhetian Turks, who were forcibly settled there by Stalin, despite the fact that they are a people of Muslim tradition, like the Uzbeks themselves.

While the blowup in Tadjikistan, by all accounts, had a pogromist aspect at the start, it seems to have quickly taken on a general political character directed against the government. The demonstrators called for the resignation of the local CP leadership, a demand which they won; and raised something like a political platform — the closing of a polluting aluminum factory, street signs in Tadjik, dissolution of the local repressive forces, as well as the opening of butcher shops conforming to Muslim religious laws. Anti-European feelings have been fueled by the fact that the standard of living is far lower than in the European republics, just as it is lower for the original population than for at least a very large part of the Russians living in the republic. Clearly the rebellion against national oppression has now become well established in the non-European republics, and it seems that it may spread like a prairie fire. ★

# Lithuania: perestroika faces test of free elections

"THE PARTY and state leadership will not allow the Union to disintegrate" thundered Mikhail Gorbachev responding to the decision of the Lithuanian Communist Party at its 20th Congress on December 17, 1989 to become an "Independent party with its own programme and statutes". Gorbachev also told the all-union CP Central Committee meeting over Christmas that this decision was illegal and that the independence movement was the work of "separatists and nationalists" as well as an "attack on my reform policies."

He proposed that the Supreme Soviet examine the "legitimacy of the existence in the country of organizations and political movements carrying out separatist activities and sowing nationalist terror." Signalling the gravity of these developments, Gorbachev cancelled all meetings with foreign visitors; the Tokyo stock market shuddered.

COLIN MEADE

THESE THREATS were followed by a visit by Gorbachev and a high-level team to Lithuania in mid-January. The visit resulted in the Soviet leader offering an olive-branch: everything, even independence might be possible as long as it took place in the framework of the new legitimacy — Gorbachev as president over an elected Supreme Soviet — that the Soviet leader is trying to establish as the backbone of a new political order in the Soviet Union.

Rather than relying on direct repression, Gorbachev hoped, and continues to hope,

that economic pressures, combined with the full conservative weight of the dominant forces on the world scene, most of whom who fear "chaos" in the Soviet bloc and elsewhere as the postwar order crumble, will create a climate in which "emotional" nationalist hotheads will see "reason".

The economic line of attack — Lithuania is economically integrated into the USSR; independence would be disastrous — was constantly used by Gorbachev and his team during the visit. While Western Europe was uniting, Lithuania was planning to secede from the USSR — against the grain of history, they argued.

Meanwhile the flagship of the Soviet liberals, *Argumenty i Fakty*, (No 3, 1990) emphasized the Lithuanians' international isolation by devoting its front page to a series of excerpts from editorials from authoritative

Western newspapers, praising Gorbachev's statesmanship in confronting the Lithuanian issue head on. The *Washington Post* acclaimed his virtuoso performance in Lithuania and urges the Lithuanians to consider Gorbachev's arguments seriously (*Guardian Weekly* January 21). As US President George Bush commented on January 24, against a background of falling stock markets "...it is in our interest that *perestroika* succeed and go forward."

A third manoeuvre against the Lithuanian independence movement is attempts to play on the fears of non-Lithuanians (see *IV* 173). At the meeting between Gorbachev and LCP activists on January 13 a delegate V. Pavlovich, describing himself as a "worker" insisted that there had been no workers at the LCP conference that had taken the decision to split from Moscow. People, he claimed, were being subjected to nationalist pressures and persecution, and there was an atmosphere similar to that in Germany in 1936-37. Furthermore, the LCP had been collaborating with anti-socialist groups.

Pavlovich was going to support a new breakaway party, whose creation flowed from the fact that 160 delegates (against 855) at the 20th LCP congress had voted against a wholly independent party and for "an independent party inside a renewed CPSU."

## Stalin's role in introducing "socialism"

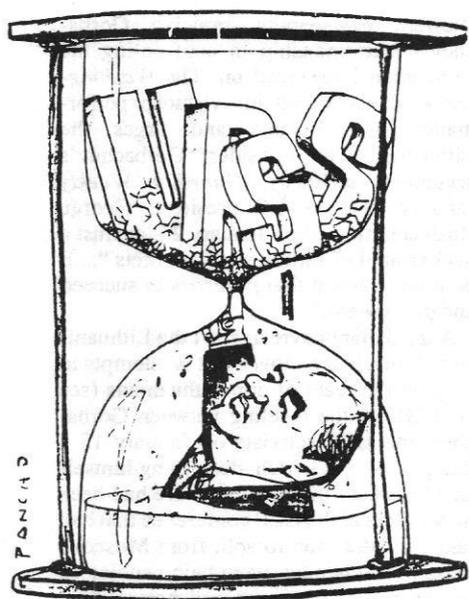
A representative of this new provisional anti-independence LCP, M. Burokyavicus, speaking at the February plenum of the CPSU Central Committee reiterated Pavlovich's arguments, stressing in particular his positive assessment of the role of Stalin's Soviet Union in establishing the "socialist system" in Lithuania.

It is unlikely, however, that any of this will stem the nationalist tide in Lithuania. The decision of the LCP to declare its independence from the CPSU was a result of its crushing defeat by the nationalist Sajudis movement in elections for the Congress of People's Deputies in March 1989 (*IV* 161). As LCP leader Algirdas Brazauskas explained to Gorbachev at the January 13 meeting, only an independent party could regain the confidence of the people and avoid disaster in the elections to the Republic's Supreme Soviet elections on February 24.

He also insisted that independence was an unavoidable aspect of democratization in a situation where national self-determination had been violated by the forcible incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union as a result of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939.

At the same meeting, the head of the Lithuanian government's nationalities programme, a Karait Jew, countered suggestions that Lithuania was in the grip of unreasoning nationalist hysteria by citing





the achievements in the government since 1987 in providing cultural facilities for minorities. An effort was being made to assist in the reconstruction of the rich Jewish cultural institutions that had existed in the capital Vilnius before the Second World War. Further support to the Lithuanian cause came from a Russian delegate, Z. Valtsevich who appealed to the Republic's non-Lithuanians not to let themselves be manipulated and opposed attempts to split the LCP.

At the February CPSU plenum, Brazauskas tried once more to explain to the delegates that, by identifying with the nationalist demands, the LCP had reestablished itself and "overcome its crisis". But even this appeal to the basic interests of the assembled *nomenklatura* fell on deaf ears: the CC gave its formal support to the anti-independence LCP which, the CC resolution states, upholds the principles of internationalism.

It seems that confrontation cannot be avoided despite Brazauskas' evident desire for compromise and whatever the result of the elections.

As Brazauskas explained, for a majority of his republic's inhabitants, sovereignty "means, above all, a politically independent government for the Republic," a concept fundamentally at variance with any proposal that reserves power over Lithuania's fate in the hands of central Soviet institutions.

The elections will be the first multiparty elections to take place in the Soviet Union and respect for their outcome will show not only the attitude of the reformist CPSU leadership to the national question, but also to any expression of the popular will that falls outside a certain framework. It seems likely that the new legitimacy will turn out to be, not the embodiment of the principle of self-determination, but a new means of thwarting it. ★

## Gorbachev redefines perestroika

A LONG ARTICLE by Mikhail Gorbachev was published in the November 26 issue of *Pravda*, entitled "The socialist idea and *perestroika*." It represented a considerable effort by the Soviet leader to give some theoretical coherence to his reform projects. This article is quite likely more important than his book, which appeared in 1987. And in fact, the article introduces significant corrections and innovations with respect to the book. This is understandable — Gorbachev wrote his article after the extraordinary events of the past year.

LIVIO MAITAN

**G**ORBACHEV has to face a very difficult situation within the USSR. He is under attack from opposite directions — from the conservatives, who have not laid down their arms; and from those who reproach him for not adopting more boldly and more rapidly the measures necessary for transition to a market economy on a large scale.

At the same time, the Communist parties of Eastern Europe are proving one after another incapable of mastering the crisis situations in their countries and of offering, to say nothing of coming up with any long-range, medium or even short-term perspectives. All this forced Gorbachev to reformulate his own ideology to establish at least a few firm points to hold on to.

### There is no alternative says Gorbachev

The primary argument he puts forward in defense of *perestroika* is that it is the only possible solution. There are not, according to him, any "alternative conceptions." At most, one can talk about "two points of view that stand out today most clearly." The first is that of the defenders of the "command-administrative system." The second is that of those economists and intellectuals who "start from the supposition that the past has totally discredited the option of October and propose "the capitalization of the society."

Both "points of view" are unacceptable to Gorbachev and all those who reject the perspective of capitalist restoration — which would end the domination of the bureaucracy as a privileged caste —

but who at the same time realize that any retreat or new "stagnation" could only aggravate the crisis further and finally provoke real social and political explosions.<sup>1</sup>

In the second place, Gorbachev tries to play down the present crisis by placing it in a broader historic perspective. After all, he writes, "the seven decades since the revolution are a historically short time for the formation of a full-fledged new society." *Perestroika* itself has to be seen "as a long stretch on the historic road of socialism," and "the renewal of socialism underway is a process that will last more than decades and extend into the twenty-first century." Overcoming structural contradictions, such as the division between town and country and the "class differences" between workers and peasants, can only be conceived of as a long-term objective.

### The authority of the Marxist classics

Thirdly, appealing to the authority of the classics, Gorbachev responds to the criticisms that he has not sufficiently clarified his economic conceptions and more generally his project for society. "The founders of Marxism never troubled themselves to invent the concrete forms and mechanisms for building the new society," he writes. They limited themselves to putting forward "a general theoretical model of the tendencies of social development."

In a positive form, Gorbachev relaunches the conceptions already expressed in his book, while including, as I said, some new elements. He now rejects as "unacceptable" the definition of *perestroika* as a "revolution from above." This definition would imply a division of society into a

"summit" that decides and a "base that applies the ideas, directives and orders of the summit." But the aim of *perestroika* is to build a "truly democratic and self-managed" society, in which bureaucratic centralism would be replaced by democratic centralism, that is, "formal centralism" would be replaced by "real and effective centralism."

Such a society would give value to the freedoms traditionally presented as "formal," that is, the democratic gains that form part of the "values of human society," and combine the potentialities of "direct democracy" with the mechanisms of representative democracy.

### Economic competition between systems

Regarding economics, the article explains that it is necessary to change the conception of the nature of the economic competition between capitalism and socialism held by his predecessors. "What takes on a decisive importance is not the qualitative growth of production or the amount of products per capita (although in some sectors, agriculture for example, such an objective is not removed from the agenda) but an economy of resources, the technological level, a guarantee of information."

Gorbachev goes on to stress again the need to set new priorities. In particular, he reaffirms the choice of reconverting defense plants and "increasing the percentage of consumer goods in overall production." Still more significant, he explains that it is necessary — and not only for the USSR — to leave behind "the old model of industrialization that absorbs enormous natural resources and consumes

constantly growing quantities of raw materials and energy."

It is above all in the historical analysis of Soviet society that Gorbachev has something new in store for us. In his 1987 book, he still justified to a considerable extent the decisions made over the six decades, and notably made only a very partial criticism of forced collectivization and the type of industrialization imposed in the Stalin era. He begins his recent article by saying:

"At the outset, we thought that the problem was essentially and only to correct certain deformations of the social organism, to perfect the system created in the previous decades, which overall had held up. Today, we start out from the need to radically overhaul our social structure, from the economic foundations to the superstructure."

### Historical continuity of bureaucratic system

This has led him to denounce, in his own way of course, the historical continuity of the bureaucratic system. While he still accords an "enormous value" to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, he immediately adds that despite the corrections made in that era, the "mechanism" remained "fundamentally unchanged." It changed still less in the Brezhnev era. In fact, the article puts in question the euphemism for this period that he himself invented, "the era of stagnation."

Thus, there has been an evolution in Gorbachev's analysis and criticism of Stalinism. They are taking on broader dimensions. It is possible that future changes will lead him to make further

readjustments. But it should be noted, in any case, that he has not evolved substantially on two fundamental points. First of all, as regards the party, the article stresses the new tasks that he must accomplish and the necessary separation between its functions and those of the state. But despite everything that has happened in the other East European countries and in the USSR itself, he maintains the idea of a "single-party system." [Subsequently he made further concessions on this, notably at the February 1990 CPSU plenum — see p. 6]

Secondly, the article puts forward an absolutely correct criterion — which we have always thought to be self-evident — that "we cannot do without a genuine analysis of the realities of life, of the present state of the society, of its driving forces and its contradictions." But he does not draw any conclusions from this in his assessment of the bureaucracy, which is still not analyzed and exposed as a social layer deriving privileges from its monopoly of political power. The definition of *perestroika* as a "revolution" remains, therefore, a metaphor, without any real content.

As a corollary of this "lack," which in reality is an indicator of the nature of the Gorbachev leading group itself, the crucial phase in the rise of Stalinism continues to be presented in a fundamentally false way.

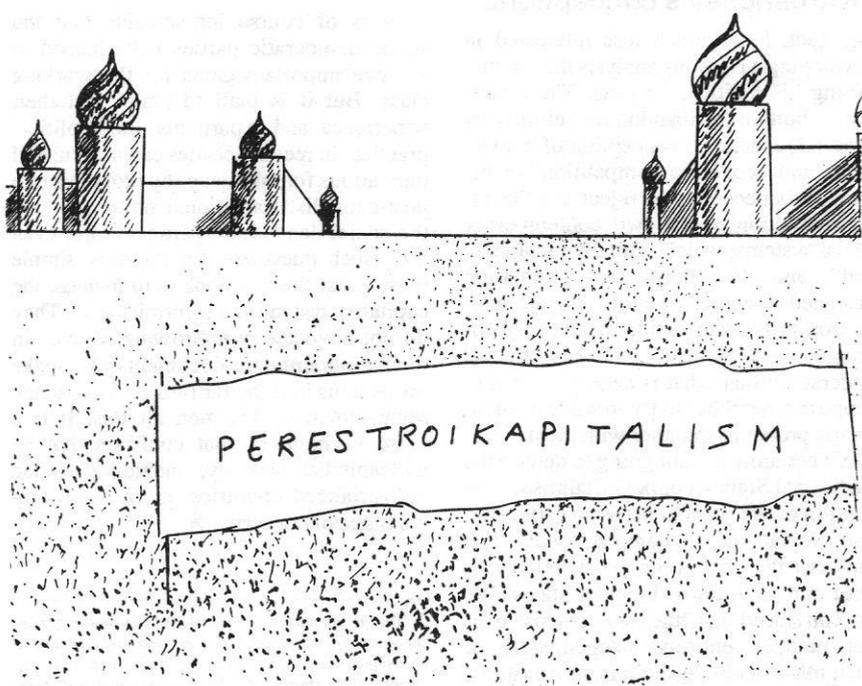
### Revolution in advanced countries

Gorbachev notes that Lenin and the Bolsheviks relied on a victory of the revolution in countries more advanced than the USSR, and he says correctly that, even if such revolutions did not take place, power could not be relinquished.

However, he does not make the slightest allusion to the debate over socialism in one country and its real content. He gives a false explanation when he says that "Stalinism adroitly took advantage of the revolutionary impatience of the masses, of the utopian and leveling tendencies characteristic of any mass movement, of the vanguard's aspiration to achieve the desired aim as soon as possible." In fact, it was the weariness engendered by the vicissitudes of the civil war and the defeats in Europe that favored the rise of Stalin and his bureaucracy (who, moreover, far from advocating leveling, condemned "petty-bourgeois egalitarianism"). More generally, the struggle waged by Trotsky and the Left Opposition is completely ignored.

In reality, Gorbachev seems to endorse, if only implicitly, an interpretation that is not new, and which now has many cham-

1. In opposition to those who question the historical value of the October revolution, Gorbachev correctly puts forward the argument that "the concrete alternative was not a bourgeois democratic republic, but an anarchic uprising and a bloody dictatorship of the militarist forces, the establish of a reactionary and antipopular regime."



PERESTROIKA CAPITALISM

pions. The alternative to the choices imposed by Stalin, according to this view, was prolonging the NEP (in which the free market played a big role) indefinitely, on the basis of the suggestions sketched by Lenin in his January 1923 notes on cooperatives. A serious debate on this question would no doubt be interesting. Both those who defend this idea seem to forget that after a certain time the NEP underwent an extremely grave crisis that threatened the very bases of post-revolutionary society. Trotsky's analysis of this cannot simply be wiped off the ledger. Those who do not agree with it should take the trouble to offer the most concrete arguments possible. But as a general rule they make no effort whatever to do so.

### NEP experience has little relevance today

In the second place, whatever judgment should be made of the situation in the 1920s, the USSR today is structurally different, and any reference to the problems of the NEP years would have very little relevance. Similar considerations apply to Lenin's celebrated notes, which however do furnish some very valuable indications as regards the approach to the peasant question. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that Lenin advocated cooperatives not as a form of privatization but rather as a form of peasant self-management. In the context of maintaining state (or collective ownership), they were to counterbalance what had become the excessive weight of the private sector.

Coming to another important subject, Gorbachev develops further his analysis on the situation of capitalism and his definition of an overall strategic perspective. Here some quotations are necessary. Gorbachev explains first that "Marx underestimated the capacities for self-development of capitalism, which managed to absorb the gains of the technological and scientific revolution and to set up economic and social structures able to assure its vitality and build a relatively high level of welfare for the majority of the population in the developed capitalist countries."

Capitalism is even supposed to have succeeded in playing a leading role in the "cultural *perestroika*" that he has carried out "on the basis of advanced technologies and economy of raw materials and energy." Finally, as a result of the internationalization of production and the transnationalization of the economy, its structure has changed markedly, just as "the nature of capitalist ownership has profoundly changed."

It is understandable that after decades of stereotyped descriptions of capitalism that corresponded very little to reality, Gorbachev feels the need to draw a more realistic picture. But, to use a well-known expression, he bends the stick too far in the other direction. He forgets, for exam-

ple, that the "internationalization of the economy" reflects a tendency of capitalism that Marx analyzed perfectly well, and that all the changes that have occurred in the forms of ownership have in no way diminished the fundamental reality of private ownership of the means of production or the mechanisms of the profit drive.

When Gorbachev speaks of the "self-development of capitalism," he uses a euphemism that enables him, among other things, to slide over the fact that in the 1930s capitalism went through a crisis that it managed to get out of only thanks to the Second World War and to say nothing about the concrete preconditions of the prolonged boom of the 1950s and 1960s.

Moreover, the Soviet chief is at least a little offhand in talking about the relatively high level of welfare of the majority of the population of the industrialized countries, when over the last decade they have been experiencing a prolonged stagnation, which has involved mass unemployment, impoverishment of large sections of the working class and other poor strata, and a constant erosion of the social gains of the previous decades, as well as attacks on democratic institutions.

What is more, in alluding to the worsening of "world problems," Gorbachev does not say a single word about the tragedy of the underdeveloped countries, which in fact is the result of the "self-development" of capitalism and its inherent mechanisms. The fact that such a problem is barely taken up in an essay that pretends to be a broad overview speaks volumes about the seriousness of Gorbachev's approach.

### Abandonment of Khrushchev's conceptions

In fact, he is much less interested in developing a rigorous analysis than in justifying his political projects. These consist, at bottom, of abandoning definitively even Khrushchev's conception of coexistence and economic competition. In his view, it is necessary to reject any "head-on opposition of the two contemporary social systems, which is totally metaphysical" and to adopt "an orientation designed to achieve a more organic integration in the worldwide process of economic development." It has to be understood that what is needed is "not to 'oppose others' but to try to solve the economic problems together with them."

We certainly are not going to defend the traditional Stalinist or post-Stalinist conception of the conflict between capitalism and Socialism, a "campist" view that replaces the contention of social forces with one of states or blocs of states. We are convinced that "the two systems" cannot function entirely independently of each other, and that there is an inevitable interaction, if only through the world mar-

ket. This, by the way, is why we reject the utopia of "Socialism in one country."

However, the conclusion that Trotsky drew from this during the famous debate of the 1920s and that revolutionary Marxists draw from it today is that overthrowing capitalism as a worldwide system is the essential precondition for building a real socialist society. To the contrary, Gorbachev thinks that the "two systems" must become more and more integrated and together achieve "the common objectives of all humanity." It goes without saying that such a perspective cannot be put forward without obfuscating the nature of capitalism itself. That is what explains Gorbachev's approach.

Finally, the article comes back to the idea that "socialism takes many forms, like life itself." This is an almost banal notion, which as such could not be challenged by anyone. But once again, you have to see what conclusions are drawn from this. For Gorbachev, this is an opportunity to relaunch his opening to the social democracy:

"From this standpoint [that is, from the standpoint of the manifold forms of socialism], we also take up the experience of the social democracy. We consider and judge appropriately its contribution to developing the values of socialism, to carrying through partial reforms that have favored increasing the welfare and social guarantees of working people in many capitalist countries of the West. We are examining with interest the rich, but not unequivocal experience accumulated by the social democracy, and we are trying to use what suits the conditions of our society."

### Social democratic parties achieve important gains

It is of course indisputable that the social democratic parties have helped to achieve important gains for the working class. But it is hard to claim that their experience, and in particular their political practice, in recent decades can offer useful indications for taking up the problems of a post-capitalist transitional phase. In fact, the social democratic parties do not even pose such questions, for the very simple reason that their outlook is to manage the capitalist system in a reformist way. They do not advocate overthrowing it, even in their programmatic documents that make projections into the far future.<sup>2</sup> Gorbachev seems to have forgotten all this. It is a lapse of memory that confirms that an anticapitalist strategy, including in the industrialized countries, is hardly within his range of concerns. ★

2. This is the case, for example, of the new programmatic document adopted by the Socialist International at its last congress. (Analysis of this document will appear in the spring 1990 issue of *International Marxist Review*.)

# The future of communism

AT THE start of December 1989, the West German weekly, *Die Zeit* brought together 25 experts to ponder that fashionable topic: the end of Communism.<sup>1</sup> The participants could be grouped together into three categories. The large majority were right-wing social democrats or left-wing or centre-left liberals from both East and West, who support Gorbachev's reforms and are fervent partisans of the market economy — "humanized" by dose of state intervention. The main representatives of this current were the leaders of the (West) German Socialist Party (SPD), Brandt, Schmidt and Bahr; the West German president von Weizsäcker; a leader of the Swedish social democrats; the main ideologist of Solidarnosc, Bronislaw Geremek; one of the leaders of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), Segre; Ralf Dahrendorf, a former director of the London School of Economics; the Hungarian ambassador in Bonn; and the Soviet economists Bogomolov and Shmellov.

ERNEST MANDEL

**T**HE SECOND category was of those who were sceptical about Gorbachev, including the director of *Le Monde*, André Fontaine, or unashamed partisans of capitalist restoration, like Henry Kissinger, the American banker George Soros and one of the heads of the Deutsche Bank.<sup>2</sup>

The third category consisted of three participants who were basically hostile to capitalism; the doyen of East Germany's Marxist historians, Jürgen Kuczynski; the director of the Soviet weekly, *Ogonyok*, Viktor Korotich, and the West German left Social Democrat, Irving Fischer.

The transcripts of the debates amount to some 200 pages of a paperback book. Only one of those taking part, Professor Jürgen Kuczynski, confidently affirmed, with conviction and passion, a faith in the future of Communism. Everybody else was of the opinion that Communism was finished. But one thing that is scarcely credible: in all these 200 pages, not a single mention by anybody of the working class or the workers movement today! Even Jürgen Kuczynski, author of many works on the history of the situation of the workers in many countries, managed the feat of defending the future of Communism without referring even once, to the working class, to the workers struggle or the workers movement.

Anybody the slightest bit educated knows that Communism is not the product of the October revolution or the Cuban revolution. It was born as a current within

the modern workers movement, rising up against capitalism. The first Communist organization, Gracchus Babeuf's Society of Equals dates from 1796, not from 1917. The Communist Manifesto was published in 1848, not 1958.

The experts assembled in Hamburg were certainly aware of this elementary truth, from which a conclusion clearly flows: one cannot deal with the subject of Communism by referring only or above all to what is happening in the USSR, Eastern Europe or China. It is also necessary to look at what is happening and will happen in the capitalist countries, whether the imperialist metropolises or the countries of the so-called Third World.

But these politicians and ideologues are wholly taken up with their search for a consensus with the bourgeoisie, a consensus that can only be built on the maintenance of a reformed capitalism. Thus they have to try to make out that the future of Communism can be divorced from the intrinsic contradictions of capitalism and the dynamic of workers' struggles and the workers movement.<sup>3</sup> Anybody who pointed out that such a divorce is absurd would have certainly broken the consensus at the Hamburg round-table. They would have been accused of risking "destabilization".

However such an accusation is based on a misunderstanding that dates from the French Revolution. The modern proletarian class struggle, or that of its immediate predecessor, the "Fourth

Estate" is not the product of some "doctrine" nor of the efforts of "subversive agitators" (or "hidden ringleaders"). The same goes for the class struggle of their adversaries, the bourgeoisie of all shades.

These class struggles result from the inevitable and irrepressible conflicts of interest embodied in the given social and economic conditions. It is the reality of the class struggle that gave rise to the theory of class struggle and not the other way round.

## Hitler pursued the bourgeois class struggle

Foaming with rage, Hitler railed against the "Jewish Marxist" theory of the class struggle. But when he suppressed the trade unions and all workers organizations; when he imprisoned and murdered their militants, when he proclaimed that the bosses had to be sole masters in the enterprises in the name of the "leadership principle" (Führerprinzip), he was in practice conducting an implacable and terrorist class struggle against the wage earners and in favour of the capitalists.

Mrs. Thatcher sincerely detests the doctrine of the class struggle. But she wages the bourgeois class struggle with every breath, 24 hours out of 24, even if her methods are far less violent than Hitler's.

The real subversive forces are not agitators calling for revolution. The real destabilizing actions are such things as enterprise closures; the sacking of workers; the speeding up of the work process; periodic attacks on wages; the growth of social inequality to the point where it provokes a revolt; the hellish misery of the "Third World"; the death each year of 16 million children from hunger and curable diseases and the denial of a minimum of dignity and elementary rights to 100s of millions of human beings. The social forces that cause these things do not do so out of innate malice or blindness. They do it because the logic of capitalist society leads them to act in this way, under the threat of losing their fortune and possibilities for increasing it, that is to say, for

1. Previous fashionable topics have been Reagan's "Evil Empire" and "totalitarianism that is spreading constantly and which nothing can destroy." Not much is left of all this now.

2. The American press has made a lot of noise about an article by an unknown author, signing themselves X. The letter proposes as an alternative to the Reagan/Bush line of "partial detente" with the USSR, a policy of fundamental distrust of Gorbachev, the pursuit of the Cold War and accelerated growth in armaments.

3. The representative of the Swedish Social Democracy explicitly stated that: "It is necessary to give capitalism a human face." All the references are to *Die Zeit*, December 29, 1989.

accumulating capital.

This is why there will be a proletarian class struggle for as long as there is capitalism. And this is why this class struggle will always give rise to a political current that will look to go beyond immediate demands and combine these with an attempt to replace capitalism with a more humane form of society.<sup>4</sup> And because of this, the future of Communism is assured, for as long as capitalism exists.

Even better: capitalism lives under a curse. Not only do its internal contradictions tend to periodically get worse and give rise to explosive crises of all kinds. It is also unable to grow and develop without the proletariat, that is to say its own grave-digger, growing and developing at the same time. The future of Communism is founded on this growth in the proletariat, resulting from the development of capitalism itself. There are many more wage workers today than at any time in the past.

**Long-term tendency to stronger workers movement**

The long term tendency is towards the strengthening and not the weakening of the organization, cooperation and solidarity of the wage-earners. This can be shown by looking at the comparative numerical strength of trade unions in 1850, 1900, 1950 and 1990, at the breadth of their actions, including general strikes. Such a comparison will reveal that, with few exceptions, in every country, the rising tendency over a century or half-century neither fluctuates nor recedes.

Socialism means the reconstruction of society on the basis of *freely accepted* cooperation and solidarity, not imposed in any way, and these are qualities that the proletariat gains through its own organizations. Socialism is the same as the "rule of the freely associated producers", to recall another of Marx's formulas.

The proletariat brings together these qualities, inculcated by bourgeois society, with the economic and social strength to carry through the reconstruction. It is the proletariat, and only the proletariat that produces society's wealth.<sup>5</sup>

This capacity has not been weakened, but strengthened by the third industrial revolution. In fact, the wage-earners of the energy sector, telecommunications, electronics, banking, teaching and health-care are today becoming one of the principal pillars of the trade union movement, something that is true also of the totality of workers in the public sector. They often have an even greater ability to paralyze the capitalist economy than the workers in the mines, iron and steel, cars or construction.

Nonetheless, as a consequence of the lying propaganda of the Stalinist and post-Stalinist bureaucracies, repeated by the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries and by the international bour-

**UNION DES SYNDICATS OUVRIERS DE LA SEINE**



geoisie for its own ends, the Communist project has become identified in the eyes of a part of the international proletariat and for a large part of world public opinion, with a supposed "really-existing socialism" in the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, North Korea and elsewhere. Now that the crises of all these societies is exploding, the bourgeois, social democratic, and neo-social democratic ideologues in the post-capitalist countries are able to proclaim that this real crisis also represents the bankruptcy of Communism and Marxism.

From a strictly objective point of view, it is easy enough to refute this idea. What

is collapsing in the USSR and elsewhere is Stalinism rather than Communism, Leninism or Marxism. Stalinism is a product of the counter-revolution, not of the revolution. Stalinism, in order to triumph, had to physically exterminate the party of Lenin and trample 90% of his ideas underfoot — not to speak about the ideas of Marx. The fact that despots like Stalin and his successors have made formal reference to Lenin and Marx<sup>6</sup> does not justify identifying them with those heralds of emancipation. The fact that the despot Bonaparte made reference to the French Revolution does not at all justify making the authors of the Declaration of the Rights of Man or the

4. It is depressing to see the highly educated participants in the Hamburg round-table repeating the most threadbare banalities, that cannot stand up neither to an objective reading of Marx and Lenin's writings nor any study of the practical activity of the organized movement before the Stalinist dictatorship. Among the other platitudes Marxists — like all ideologues — are accused of envisaging the "end of history". Marxists, more modestly, in fact envisage simply the end of pre-history during which humanity remains in the grip of the miserable struggle for subsistence and the obligation to engage in compulsory labour. The real human drama, really human history, only begins when humanity is emancipated from these conditions. Those who

consider such emancipation utopian, have to fall back on the myth of original sin.

5. A "post-industrial society", in the sense of a "post-proletarian society" would imply that food, clothing, housing, domestic appliances, pharmaceutical products, telecommunications, schools, hospitals, transport without which no thinker or ideologue could survive, would be 100% produced by robots and not by human producers.

6. Before his death, our old comrade Zimir, one of the rare survivors of the Soviet Left Opposition, produced an excellent refutation of these supposed theoretical references in his book "Le Stalinisme et son prétendu 'socialisme réel'" (La Brèche, Paris, 1985).

Jacobins responsible for the corruption, the White Terror, the suppression of civil liberties and the hundreds of thousands of victims of Napoleon's wars. Furthermore, no person could in good faith suggest, on the basis of texts and actions, that the practice of Stalin, Stalinism and post-Stalinism and the ideologies that have sought to support them, flow in any way whatever from the teachings of Marx.

But the thinking of the working masses arises from their experiences of life and struggle, refracted through ideological-political influences and organizational loyalties. There are no big social layers untouched by such influences. And that is why the image that the masses used to have of a Soviet Union on the way to realizing the socialist project now rebounds against Communism.

The idea that the disenchantment of the masses with the Soviet reality is a product of imperialist propaganda — or Khrushchev's revelations and *glasnost* — has no real basis. Anti-communist propaganda was far more virulent in the years immediately after the October revolution, but at the time it did not have a big impact on the advanced workers.

The rejection of the "Soviet model" by these same workers is the product not of propaganda but of an understanding of a depressing reality. This understanding is then modified by the drawing of a false identity, which reverses the previous uncritical attitude to the Soviet Union, China and so on.

### False Identification of Stalinism and Communism

Yesterday, people said "yes" to Stalinism because it was falsely identified with Communism. Now, these same people say "no" to Communism because it is identified — no less falsely — with Stalinism. This false identification will not put a stop to the tendencies towards Socialism inherent in massive workers struggles any more than Stalinist indoctrination and bureaucratic gangrene could suppress such struggles before.

But the ideological factor will certainly be a brake for the moment. The scepticism aroused by the bankruptcy of Stalinism goes together with the scepticism resulting from the integration of Social democratic and neo-social democratic reformists into bourgeois society. This integration has become manifest in the eyes of the majority of wage-earners, including those who vote for the Social Democrats. These are votes for the lesser evil, not the expression of an illusion that the SPs is aiming to abolish capitalism through reforms.

But life itself, the real movement of history, inspires tendencies that will allow this scepticism to be overcome. First of all, in a number of countries, a new workers movement has already arisen in recent years, born from the awakening of a rela-

tively young working class that is burdened by neither Stalinism nor traditional reformism.

This new workers movement is not marked by the sense of historical failure and scepticism that characterizes so much of the old workers movement. It tends towards a challenge to bourgeois society in its totality. This is the case in Brazil, in South Africa and in South Korea. It is at least possible that the same phenomenon can take place in Mexico, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Egypt and the United States.

### Development of anti-bureaucratic currents

In a series of countries where the workers movement is still in the grip of the traditional bureaucratic apparatuses, a growing fraction of the trade union movement is progressively freeing itself from that grip. It is beginning to adopt broader aims under the pressure of objective conditions. If the influence of the revolutionary socialist currents grows in these movements, the socialist project will progressively regain its mass credibility. This would have a major effect in stimulating the debate in the traditional mass workers parties, above all if the vanguard forces are able to correctly apply the united front policy, in different forms and in different combinations with the development of a mass movement already partly emancipated from the grip of the traditional apparatuses.

Finally, the development of impetuous mass movements in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and the real if slow growth of the mass movement in the USSR and several other Eastern European countries shows the contradictory nature of this crisis of credibility. In all three sectors of the world revolution the rejection of Stalinism and bureaucratic manipulation is freeing and will free colossal forces, that can be reorientated in the direction of emancipatory actions, challenging bourgeois society in its totality.

This whole contradictory project is an expression of the self-critical and self-correcting capacity of proletarian revolutions that Marx already underlined in "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte". This too is a guarantee of the future of Communism.<sup>7</sup> More, it implies the possibility, even probability of victory.

**But on one condition; that the Communists/Revolutionary Socialists free themselves once and for all from every theory and practise that involves a substitutionist, paternalist or authoritarian attitude to the emancipation movement of the workers.**

Communism is the aspiration for a more humane and more just society for the great majority of the human race. It is the aspiration for a society qualitatively superior to capitalist society. Insofar as the contradictions that tear capitalism

apart are at work, and lead to crises, a socialist classless society appears also as a more rational form of society.

The balance-sheet of capitalism in the 20th century cannot only be drawn with reference to the average standard of living of the American population or Swedish and West Germany social security — in any case to a large extent conquests of the workers movement.

There is also the terrible miseries of 80% of the inhabitants of the "Third World". There is also the two world wars that have cost nearly 100 million lives. There are also the "local" wars since 1945. The "local" war unleashed by the pro-imperialist forces in Mozambique has cost 900,000 dead. There are also grave economic depressions. There is also the Fascism and semi-Fascism of numerous military dictatorships. There is also torture, which is institutionalized in more than 50 countries.

Marxists, starting with Rosa Luxemburg, were right to sum up the future of humanity at the start of this century in the phrase: "Socialism or barbarism". Before finding its most hideous expression in the Nazi crimes, the rise of barbarism had already been shown in the crimes of colonialism, including those of Japanese militarism and in the racist doctrines that support these crimes by dehumanizing their victims.

Since the start industrial capitalism has developed as a combination of progress and regression, of productive forces and destructive tendencies<sup>8</sup>. At first the former carried more weight than the latter. But with the coming of the imperialist epoch, the latter began to overwhelm the former.

### Exorbitant price of continued development

This does not mean that the productive forces, whether mechanical or human, stop developing. In fact, they can experience extraordinary growth, as was the case during the period from the end of the 1940s to the start of the 1970s (in some semi-industrialized countries, the 1970s and the start of the 1980s). But the price of this development has become increasingly exorbitant.

The clearest expression of the reversal of the tendency has been the appearance of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons during the Second World War. Their massive use would mean — and has meant since the end of the war — the physical destruction of the human species. The multiplication of nuclear power sta-

7. Victor Korotich correctly underlined at the Hamburg round-table: "If *perestroika* succeeds, it [socialism] must triumph! It would give socialist theory an even greater authority." (We would say: if *glasnost* is generalized by a victorious political revolution from below — EM).

8. See the passages in Volume 1 of Marx' Capital on the dual nature of the machine.

tions holds out the same risk in the case of large-scale "conventional" warfare. Thus the prevention of world or continental wars, whether nuclear or conventional, becomes the primary strategic objective for the workers movement, including its communist component.

The strategic conclusion that it is necessary to draw from the danger of extermination implicit in the danger of war in the presence of nuclear power stations, is that the only real and definitive guarantee of the survival of the human race is that all factories and laboratories capable of producing heavy armaments should be taken over by the producers themselves. It is for an agreement by these producers to cease the production of these arms and to immediately destroy the existing stocks.

Yesterday the dilemma was "socialism or barbarism". Today it has changed into: "socialism or death". This is the most profound imaginable motivation for Communism.

The same conclusion flows from the other mortal threats weighing on humanity, above all the threat of destruction of the environment and the danger of a disastrous extension of hunger and epidemics in the "Third World" (and not only in the Third World).

### Control must pass into the hands of the wage-earners

These dangers cannot be finally removed if the control of production and distribution of wealth continues to be in the hands of social forces and governments that pursue the goal of private power and enrichment and which are thus compelled to pursue uncontrolled and uncontrollable forms of growth. Control must pass into the hands of the wage-earners and their allies, the working peasantry, who have the will and the ability to subordinate all partial interests and all growth to cooperation in the interests of the whole of humanity.

For the first time since the coming of Stalinism the flag of liberty, the broadest democracy, both direct and representative, anti-militarism, indeed the categorical imperative, is starting to pass into our camp, the camp of Revolutionary Socialism.

Liberty; political and economic equality; solidarity and social justice; including on a world scale; radical anti-militarism; radical defence of the environment; respect for human rights — make up an unbeatable combination. These are the big propaganda themes on which we should hammer away, combined with immediate and transitional demands and political projects that translate these ideas into everyday life. Such a programme is the definitive guarantee of the future of Communism. ★

# Stalinism in the bankruptcy court

AT THE END of January 1990, GDR prime minister Hans Modrow made a spectacular speech to East Germany's unelected parliament, the "Volkskammer". He explained why elections had to take place much sooner than May 6, as previously envisaged. The new date is March 18. In the same speech he proposed the formation of a "government of national unity" together with the parties and opposition groups represented at the "round table" (see IV 175, December 11 1989).

MANUEL KELLNER

**M**ODROW outlined some of the elements of the structural crisis gripping the country: numerous strikes in support of pay and social demands which cannot be met because there is not enough money, which together with the lowering of productivity through "working too slowly" are leading the economy towards imminent disaster; general security which can no longer be guaranteed because of the activities of certain groups of citizens against others, including threats of assassination, and because of the paralysis of the authorities; the fact that 58,000 people have left the country to go to West Germany in the first four weeks of this year alone, a tendency that continues to become more pronounced, and is throwing the functioning of essential services into question.

In the first weekend of February, the same Modrow explained a change seen as equally spectacular, at least in the Western media: he pronounced himself in favour of the rapid realization of the unification of the two Germanies. Christa Luft, the Minister of the Economy, spoke of a reform which would lead, as early as this year, to the replacement of the GDR's Mark by the West German Deutschmark. The head of the GDR's state bank expressed his readiness to change the institution which he heads into an affiliate of the West German Federal Bank (Bundesbank).

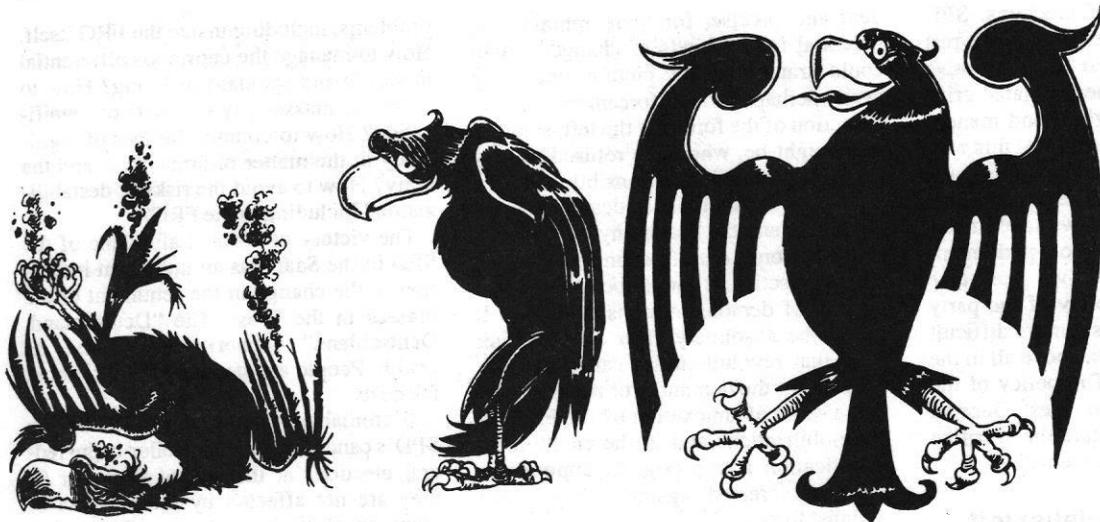
So far as military alliances are concerned, Modrow

proposed a reunified neutral Germany. But he changed the latter position only two days later, expressing his agreement to a reunified Germany of which at least the Western part could remain a member of NATO.

The explanation of these changes is the combination of the internal crisis of a system in full decomposition with a systematic policy of destabilization, pressure, crude interference and blackmail on the part of West German capital, state and political parties.

At the beginning of November 1989, the SED had 2.7 million members. Now, less than a million remain. More and more members continue to leave the ranks of the party, with not just cells, but organizations covering neighbourhoods and entire towns dissolving themselves. In more than a quarter of districts, the local authorities have also ceased to exist. Berghofer, the most well known personality of the rightist and pro-western wing of the opposition within the party, has resigned from the party expressing his sympathy for Social Democracy, and even the part of the (ex) SED which constituted the grass





roots administrative cadre of the party-State has been seriously affected by the process of catastrophic decomposition. The ex-SED now calls itself the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) after being called the SED-PDS for some time. But that will do nothing to halt the party's accelerated decomposition.

Nearly 1.2 million people have signed the appeal of progressive intellectuals like Stefan Heym and Christa Wolf for a logic of economic and political development alternative to that of Western capitalism, reviving the values of antifascism, Socialism and solidarity. But the policy of the SED-PDS itself in no way encourages this line of thought. The policy of the government consists in defending step by step what remains of the powers and apparatus of the former regime, in covering up as best they can the manoeuvres of disinformation by those responsible for the repressions and frauds of that regime, and in reacting visibly only under the immediate pressure of popular anger, for example in the matter of the Stasi, the secret police who once kept the entire population under surveillance.

### Negative perspectives of government

At the same time, the government has set itself the perspective not of a democratically planned economy, not the perspective of the safeguarding of social gains and their development according to popular needs, not the perspective of a political system superior in real democracy to the bourgeois parliamentary regimes, but rather the perspective of a "social market economy", in strict liaison with Western capital, involving closer and closer collaboration with West Germany at the state level.

This will involve diverse forms of property or big industrial "mixed enterprises", where up to 49% and in some cases even more will be in the hands of the West Ger-

man bosses, with the aim of achieving a competitiveness on the world market comparable with that of the most advanced imperialist economies, through methods privileging all the individualist forms of "motivation" to work — inequality of wages, fear of bankruptcy of unproductive factories etc.

It is clear that with such a policy there has been no chance of encouraging the confidence of the working class in itself, of organizing itself in an autonomous fashion, of beginning to take in hand the management of the enterprises in a spirit of collective solidarity, the taking of strategic decisions in the matter of priorities and methods of production, of beginning to take in hand from below the destiny of the country and establishing the basis for the construction of a better society.

It is necessary to add to this that the great majority of opposition groups which emerged from the November revolution, of which the initial nuclei existed before this formidable mass movement, have evolved clearly to the right and have shown themselves definitively incapable of elaborating an alternative perspective. All, except the United Left (Vereinigte Linke), which has quickly corrected its initial error, now have representatives in the government, eight ministers out of 27, and without portfolios. The function of this entry into government is clear; to safeguard a maximum of stability for a very short period of transition towards total capitulation before West German imperialism. For these people, it adds up to doing their best to keep the workers in a state of morale which can nourish the hope of West German capital of finding in the GDR docile and suitable objects of exploitation. It is very possible that this is an illusion! An illusion, however, well nourished by the political (un)consciousness created by the decades of bureaucratic dictatorship in the name of Socialism.

For the negative development of the majority of the opposition, the split in "New Forum", which was by far the most

important oppositional formation in November 1989, is an apt symbol. During its recent congress, a small minority left the meeting room, completely disappointed and frustrated. This minority was precisely the generation of first representatives of "New Forum" in November, including Barbel Böhley, those who expressed in the most authentic fashion the profound democratic aspira-

tions of the mass movement which shook the regime to its foundations. They left the conference because the political positions of the "New Forum" were transformed totally by the new (and overwhelming) majority; for a united Germany; for the acceptance of annexation by West Germany; for a market economy with some social elements, and even against the right of veto of workplace delegates against the decisions of management, which would evidently discourage potential investors. Moreover, before this congress the "New Forum" had organized a good number of meetings with entrepreneurs and representatives of West German bosses.

The new Social Democracy, for its part, was also initially composed by people with genuine links to the democratic aspirations of the insurgent masses. The apparatus of the West German SPD has done everything to transform this SPD into the SPD of East Germany, into a little brother remote controlled from the West. This is no exaggeration.

### SPD leads nationalist flag-waving

The East German SPD is at the same time the political force at the centre of the flag-waving euphoria and the nationalist cul-de-sac of December (excepting the Fascists and quasi-Fascists) and the opposition party which is most solidly for stability, public order etc. It already has important material resources, when the other opposition groups have not yet even the beginnings of means of proper publication or other means of political functioning.

Without consultation with the other oppositional groups involved in the Round Table, the Social Democrats negotiated with the government and the SED-PDS leadership to elaborate the new line — the earlier election date, the "government of national responsibility" etc. Why? Certainly, because the SPD feels itself the best prepared organizationally, and the best supported by the political conjunc-

ture, to face the test of elections. SPD leader Ibrahim Böhme explained the rest in an interview given to the alternative journal "Taz". When the journalist criticized the eclectic behaviour and maneuvering of the SPD and contrasted this with the initial ideal of the construction of a superior democracy, the new apprentice politician Böhme told him with the sincerity of those new to bourgeois parliamentary manipulation, "Now, we must take responsibility for the policy of the party and the state. This makes it more difficult to retain certain theorems, above all in the matter of democracy". The policy of the delivery of the GDR to West German imperialism will necessitate the sacrifice of a good many more "theorems".

### Elements of socialist left emerge

Without giving more details, it should be clear that, apart from the small United Left, grouping some 600 members, who are, moreover, quite heterogeneous and at the beginning of consolidating themselves; some other little socialist groups with Marxist convictions; the feminist groups organized in part in a federation; the ecologist movement divided into a party wing and a grass roots movement wing; the left minorities in certain opposition groups like "Demokratie jetzt", and rank and file groups like the group "Für Frieden und Menschenrechte", the political scene in the GDR now, a month before the elections, is not very encouraging.

There are some ex-SED-PDS currents which are in the process of coming out of the PDS and which could play a positive role in a broader regroupment of the forces of the left. But their political and programmatic demarcations are not very clear and their evolution is not clear.

At the time of writing, it is not even certain if the most combative forces of the United Left, or the other forces which describe themselves as socialist, will succeed in forming a small alliance capable of presenting any sort of credible electoral slate. Through the massive intervention of the West German Christian Democrats, the conservative groups, including "Demokratischer Aufbruch" have already formed a common alliance, the "Alliance for Germany", and all the established parties of the FRG now have counterparts in the GDR.

When the round table, at the initiative of opposition groups without direct big brothers in the West, decided recently to forbid the direct intervention of West German politicians in the GDR's electoral campaign, the representatives of the West German parties immediately reacted by saying they would ignore this ban.

Certainly, significant and surprising changes could still take place, even before March 18. To interpret the different aspects of the political feelings at the level of the masses, it is necessary to be pru-

dent and precise, for there remains the potential for all kinds of changes which could transform the picture, including even perhaps a reinforcement of the attraction of the forces of the left, small as they might be, who have refused to play the card of "national responsibility".

Despite the nationalist demonstrations at Leipzig and the hegemony of the sentiment that only reunification represents a real perspective, it should be said that the number of demonstrators is declining. It should be absolutely clear on the other hand that revolutionaries can absolutely not support the demands for reunification in the sense of annexation by the FRG. In the mobilizations and in the euphoria of reunification a true pogrom atmosphere has been created against all left and socialist forces.

Cries of "Reds out!" are common, and this is one of the more moderate slogans. The agitation of fascist and ultra-reactionary groups is tolerated. Behind all this there is certainly confusion, and the illusion that annexation by West German capital will bring about a rapid amelioration of the standard of living! But on the other hand all the political forces in the East as in the West speak of the "sacrifices" necessary to build the basis of an efficient capitalist economy!

### Strike movement wins partial victories

The protest movements are a self-defence reflex which should be supported, even if they do not reflect an advanced consciousness in the matter of the political alternative for the type of society to construct. These strikes have already in part won their demands and obtained important pay gains. The congress of the federation of official trade unions, the FDGB, where for the first time the majority of delegates were genuinely elected, threatened to call a general strike if the government did not concede, amongst other things, the right to strike, the right of veto against enterprise managers and so on.

Alongside the structures of the FDGB there is a beginning of a movement for workplace councils as organs of defence of the immediate interest of workers and of control over the negotiations enterprise managers are holding with West German capitalists. But it is a beginning, and little is clear as yet. The United Left has held its first discussions with the most combative trades unionists of the FRG, but undoubtedly this has only affected a minority until now. There have also been initiatives for independent trade unions, but it is unclear what chance they have of succeeding.

The West German government, for its part, seems a little taken aback by the pressure for rapid unification, which naturally poses diplomatic, military, conceptual, but also economic and political

problems, including inside the FRG itself. How to manage the enormous differential in wages and standard of living? How to make the masses pay the costs of reunification? How to counter the loss of legitimacy in the matter of armaments and the army? How to avoid the risks of destabilization? Including in the FRG?

The victory of Oskar Lafontaine of the SPD in the Saar was an important indication of the change in the sentiment of the masses in the West. The "Deutschland, Deutschland" euphoria has passed its zenith. People are starting to worry about the costs.

Lafontaine, who is certain to be the SPD's candidate for Chancellor in the federal elections at the end of this year (if they are not affected by the prospect of common elections in the two Germanies, which has already been discussed...) has cleverly played a double card; that of resentment against "those who come here from the East to take our houses, our standard of living etc." and that of a nationalism moderated by considerations of social justice, of responsibility, of consciousness of the danger that a destabilization and a huge exodus could create.

### Mood against euphoria of reunification

With this line, the SPD spectacularly defeated the parties of the coalition government in Saar, and recent opinion polls published in *Der Spiegel* confirm that since the beginning of the year there has been a very marked tendency against privileges for refugees coming from the East, against the euphoria of reunification without regard for the financial consequences and so on. It is an ambiguous change of consciousness, but important nonetheless.

The radical and revolutionary left in West Germany is beginning slowly to reorientate itself and regain its capacity to respond, modest as it is. The rejection of the nationalist wave and any project of colonisation and of reinforcement of German imperialism begins to combine with projects of mobilization around concrete demands with allies in different areas, for example at the level of anti-militarist demands.

The first links have been made to contribute to workers' capacity for resistance by those who are going to pay the cost of unification, if this is not stopped by a great leap forward in the combativity and the self-organization of the workers of the GDR.

The idea of solidarity from below, from beyond all frontiers, against the dictatorship of the apparatuses and the laws of profit, against the birth of a new German imperialist super-monster and for a renewal of a socialist emancipatory project remains an idea against the current, but it bases itself on real contradictions in the current situation. ★

# Crisis of the "Swedish model"

SWEDEN is often presented, above all by social democrats, as a country that has successfully charted a "third way" between capitalism and bureaucratic "socialism". This image took a knock on February 8, when the social democratic government of Invar Carlsson announced proposals for a two-year price freeze, and a strike ban, in an attempt to control inflation and "restore competitiveness". The ensuing political storm has now led to the resignation of the government.

These developments are taking place against a background of a powerful strike movement and deepening discontent with the ex-government's overall policies, as the following article, written before the government's fall, explains.

MARIA SUNDVALL

**N**ATIONAL strikes involving 100,000 public workers have been announced; a national strike of bank workers, and a recently concluded national teachers' strike; a wave of spontaneous workers' protests for higher wages and against government policies; falling figures in opinion polls for the governing Social Democrats; the announcement of a new workers' party; increased crisis for the old "new left" — the political situation in Sweden, traditionally so stable, has been changing rapidly over the last few months.

During January and the first days of February there have been a series of wild-cat strikes among public sector workers, starting with 600 hospital workers in the psychiatric ward of Malmö East hospital on January 17. Other workers in psychiatric wards throughout the country followed suit, as well as bus drivers, firemen and others.

## Storms brewing among public sector workers

The workers demanded higher wages, putting pressure on the government and on their own negotiators presently involved in national negotiations on wage contracts. As a result of this pressure, the national federations in the public sector have given notice of strikes, involving local transport (including Stockholm underground), municipal childcare and hospital administration. Unless agreements are reached, these strikes will begin on February 14.

In background of these spontaneous strikes was also anger against the tax reform decided last year — a tax reform

which will mean big reductions in taxes for high income groups and small reductions for low wage earners. Those small reductions will, however, be wiped out by the simultaneous increases in direct taxes, such as VAT, increased rents and so on. To this should be added the government budget presented at the beginning of January, which advocates a wage freeze which will affect public workers most of all, since they are at the start of two year contracts. The government has at the same time threatened to break earlier Social Democratic promises like granting child care to all children by 1991 and the introduction of a sixth week of vacations, if the wage earners are not "responsible" in their demands. Also, lately the government has taken further steps to the right on issues like the question of nuclear power and the reception of refugees in Sweden.

## Social Democrats at twenty year low

These factors explain the present widespread discontent and anger with the right-wing policies of the Social Democratic Party since its return to power in 1982. This right-wing development has successively eroded the workers' base of the Social Democrats. In the latest opinion polls, the Social Democrats are down to their lowest level in more than twenty years, being supported by only 34% who supported a party and only 28% of all the people interviewed — a record 17% did not express support for any party! In the last general elections in 1988, the Social Democrats got almost 44%.

On January 21, 1989, 20-30 trade union activists, most of them from the rank-and-

file trade union movement for higher wages and against austerity called the "Dala rebellion" as well as discontented social democrats launched a call for a new workers' party. They call themselves the Workers' List and will organize a conference at the end of Spring to form the party. They center their call on three themes: against austerity and in defence of social services; defence of the environment, and against racism. The response in the workplaces has already been positive, in some places even enthusiastic.

The Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International, has welcomed the formation of the Workers' List, seeing it as a genuine and necessary break from social democracy. The SP is discussing how it will be able to contribute to the strengthening of this new alternative.

At the same time the organized left with Stalinist traditions is being shaken by the effects of events in Eastern Europe. The small pro-Moscow party, APK, has turned its daily — Northern Lights — into a weekly and lost its youth organization, which recently decided to cut links with the party. The remnants of the Maoist current, the Solidarity Party, decided in November not to dissolve, but has in practise done so, since at the same time it shut down its paper.

## Strange position of Eurocommunist party

More importantly, the VPK, the Eurocommunist party, which got 5.9% of the vote in the last elections, is in a strange situation: increased support in opinion polls and at the same time a total crisis, with loss of members, internal debates over contacts with the CPS in Eastern Europe, and criticism of the party's repeated compromises with the government on austerity measures.

The VPK leadership has responded to this situation by making a public proposal for a broader left party, talking about possible electoral alliances for the general elections of 1991 and inviting non-members to write contributions and present motions to the coming party conference in May.

The idea of a broader party could cover perspectives wholly different to those of the VPK, ranging from those who want to make alliances with bourgeois forces and have a parliamentary center of gravity, to those who realize the need to become more involved in mass campaigns and seek unity on the left. As a result of the VPK initiative a first meeting has recently been held between the leaderships of the VPK and SP to discuss the possibility of strengthened united work on concrete issues in the class struggle. ★

# Turmoil in the French Communist Party



**I**NTERNAL opposition in the French Communist Party (PCF) has always crystallized around two issues: internal democracy and the "socialist countries."

In 1976, the 22nd Congress seemed to be opening a new period: the "Soviet" model was renounced, the dictatorship of the proletariat abandoned, Eurocommunism was the vogue and the intellectuals were to be permitted a certain latitude.

Those who went in wholeheartedly for this new "self-management" strategy made only one mistake: believing that it would be put into practice. After the break-up of the Common Programme with the Socialist Party (PS) in 1977, the PCF retreated into an unprecedented sectarianism, founded on the "globally positive balance-sheet" of the "socialist" countries (1979). The intellectuals were told to shut up.

In successive waves, the PCF lost numerous cadres and experienced militants, and managed to cut itself from the mass of intellectuals.

## Use of union prestige fails to halt electoral slide

At the electoral level, both nationally and locally, the figures are pitiless. Even the excessive and dangerous use of the prestige of the CGT (General Labour Confederation — the union central close to the PCF) to support PCF candidates could not halt the decline.

The electoral crumbling became unstoppable after 1979, against a background of a zig-zag policy in which phases of radical-sounding sectarianism have alternated with total opportunism, including the uncritical participation of four PCF ministers in the first Mitterrand government (June 1981-July 1984). These twists and turns bewildered the electorate and destroyed the PCF's image as a serious and stable party.

The party's daily, *l'Humanité*, does not let a week pass without producing figures and clever comparisons that prove the reassertion of the PCF's influence. Furthermore a leaflet has been distributed in several million copies to support this idea. But the truth is that the PCF is no longer a national force. There are whole regions, such as Doubs (the department in which

**NOTHING is going right any more for the French Communist Party (PCF). Its militants and cadres are reeling from continued electoral decline, the zigzags of the leadership and the crisis of the "socialist" camp. After the expulsion of one opposition current, Juquin's "renovateurs", the PCF finds itself confronted by a new internal opposition, the "reconstructeurs".**

**JEAN VERSAILLES**

the Peugeot factory at Sochaux is situated, with 23,000 workers), le Finistère, l'Hérault, Paris, Le Mans and several of the (traditionally communist) suburbs where the PCF is no more than a group and the refusal of the leadership to admit this only discredits the party further.

This collapse has considerable practical consequences. Finances, fulltimers, and carve-ups in the municipalities, all collapse as soon as control of a town is lost.

The leadership is refusing to face up to its political responsibilities. It accuses journalists, the PS, the right, bosses, and so on, and tries to blame its own militants for their "lack of enthusiasm". According to the leadership, society has moved to the right. In fact, since 1986, there have been numerous struggles, which, even if only involving certain categories, have been long, massively supported and creative in their self-organization.

## Party's leading bodies lose authority

This accumulation of electoral and political failure has undermined the authority of the Political Bureau and Central Committee. It is probable that a majority of rank-and-file militants are in favour of a complete change in the leadership. This leads to political paralysis. The traditional success of *L'Humanité's* festival in September 1989 cannot hide the absence of political themes on the stands. Only the Young Communists, who keep going thanks to concentrating on a campaign against apartheid, came across as an organization that knew why it existed.

The homogenization of the party is no longer assured by the theoretical education of the militants. In the course of the years, the length of party schools has been

shortened and the content purged. In the same party, enthusiasts for unity with the PS coexist with others whose sole joy is to criticize the Socialists. Because of this, drawing up the lists for the municipal elections in March 1989 was a painful process that has left lasting wounds in many party organizations.

The party is trapped by two insoluble contradictions: its attitude towards the Union of the Left (with the SP) and the issue of the "socialist" countries. The electoral road to socialism requires agreements with the PS in every local, regional and national election, with mutual standing down.<sup>2</sup> For some, any attempt by the PCF to mark itself off from the PS appears like an attack on unity, while, for others, the PCF seems to be bending the knee before a social democratic government that is increasingly discredited by its austerity policies.

## Neither in the majority nor the opposition

In fact, the PCF, which wishes to be a "a party of struggle and of government", has not found any way of translating this into actuality, and ends up twisting and turning in response to each new development. Thus the communist deputies find themselves "neither in the majority, nor in the opposition."

The balancing act proves fatal. Unlike the Italian CP which has managed to occupy the social democratic terrain, there is no space to the right of the PCF. Thus, from time to time, it comes out with terrifying declarations of revolutionary intent. But, since this is all words, the party ends up losing credibility on the right and on the left.

The second problem is *glasnost*. The more revelations this produces, the more the PCF has to try to justify its total support for Stalin and Brezhnev. PCF leader Georges Marchais has verbally supported

1. In the November 1946 legislative elections, the PCF gained 28.60% of the votes. In the first round of the presidential elections in 1969, the PCF's score was 21.50%. In 1981 they got 15.48%; while in 1988 their vote had fallen to 6.85%.

2. In France, presidential, legislative and municipal elections take place over two rounds. The tradition is, in the second round, to stand down in favour of the best placed candidate of the left. Many municipalities and departments are administered in common by the PCF and PS.

*perestroika*, his "friend" Gorbachev and has even tried to claim paternity for the idea. ("At last" as the leaders say today, as if they had been calling for such changes for years). Even so, it is impossible to hide the fact that the PCF strenuously denied the existence of a profound crisis in the Soviet bloc until 1985.

To be of any benefit to the PCF, the Gorbachev effect would have to be accompanied by a thorough self-criticism and change of leadership personnel. But the apparatchiks cannot bring themselves to do this. Thus, on the one hand, the PCF supports *perestroika*, while on the other hand denies it, reaffirming "the contribution of socialism to the historic movement in these countries". It restricts itself to admitting "divergences" (even "very serious") with "certain communist parties".

To cover its tracks, the CC voted unanimously for a text on the "socialist" countries that dares to say "we did not know everything". This has not prevented the PCF from reiterating its idea of the "globally positive balance-sheet" and talking about socialism's "crisis of growth", even after the Romanian events whose violence shook the militants and lower levels of the apparatus.

At the end of January, for the first time, Marchais gave the party's position on the implosion of the "fraternal parties" in the East, a statement that turned into an "explanation" of the events there: careerists renounce socialism, and, after sabotaging it, adhere en masse to the social democracy.

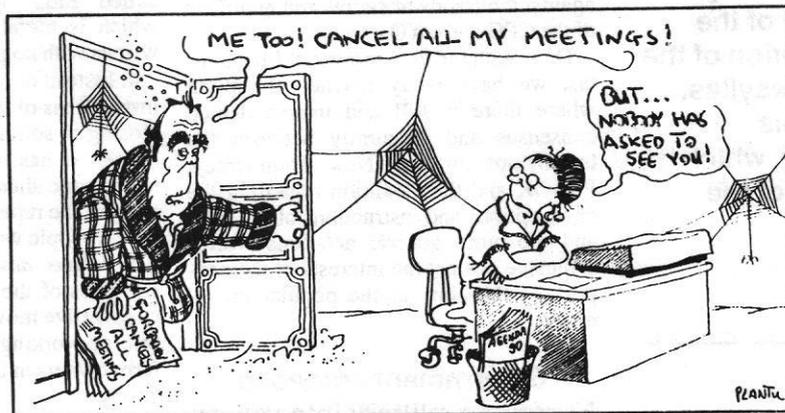
All this has led to political chaos, in which the militants go off in all manner of directions. In the mass organizations, like the CGT entire sections of the leadership are following their own line. Local elected representatives more and more openly take their distance from the hazards and discredit associated with the national leadership.

Inside the CC itself, several voices have spoken up. Inside the Secretariat itself, Charles Fiterman, the eternal silent oppositionist, has timidly put his head over the parapet, after years of watching his friends get shot down. Although he is the most popular communist leader, his past as a minister makes him suspect in the eyes of the rank-and-file. Marchais is engaging in trench warfare, denouncing "those who are ready to sell off the revolutionary policies of the PCF" for an alliance with the PS.

Fiterman and his supporters are ultra-legalists and are not ready to offer clear

perspectives for action. The crisis has reawakened forces who have already broken with the party. Pierre Juquin<sup>3</sup> wants to link up with the Greens, who, however, do not want to link up with him. CGT officials are being sucked in by the PS. Disorientated by their failure at the European elections, the *renovateurs* [Juquin's supporters] who retain local positions are divided. A third claim to be part of the "presidential majority". Others are trying to maintain a communist identity and are seeking to meet up with the *reconstructeurs*.

This latter current warrants special attention. Held together by long-term cadres from the time of the Resistance, the movement is marked by organizational and political seriousness. It is a public faction, with a journal, pamphlets, local



offices and a presence in some three quarters of the country. It has its own international contacts, with, for example, the pro-*perestroika* minority in the West German CP.

In the municipal elections, the *reconstructeurs* kept their positions, including where people who had been expelled were standing against official PCF candidates. In the Doubs, they crushed the official list in the Senatorial elections in September. Some militants continue to control important parts of the apparatus at a local, and even departmental level.

The original feature of this current is that it brings together, through the Association for Research and Initiative for Self-Management and Socialism (ARIAS), people expelled and members of the PC in a perspective of a struggle for a radical transformation of the party.

Their main political axes are:

- The main battle is in the PC, "the" party of the workers. They demand, without spelling it out, the right of tendency and want to build a "common home" for all the communists<sup>4</sup>.

- Denunciation of Stalinism and support for *perestroika* go hand in hand with classical reformist theoretical amalgams that see Stalin as the logical inheritor of

Lenin and Marx.

- The Italian CP is taken as a model. Their political thinking is Eurocentric.

- The historical failure of a "certain type of communism" implies a free debate, and unity in action, including with Trotskyists.

- The political perspective is a government of the Union of the Left, that really meets the workers' demands.

The PCF leadership is unable to frontally attack this dissidence. It finds pretexts for striking out at individual militants or structures without directly meeting the challenge.

It does not seem likely that they will win the fight to change the PC. The Congress in December 1990 will be decisive for them. Meanwhile, their tactics will sooner or later come up against insuperable contradictions — the political needs of those who no longer have a party card; tiredness among oppositionists; insidious repression...a new programmatic and organizational stage will open.

Last year, for the first time, Editions la Brèche, the publishing house of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International had a stand at the annual fête of *l'Humanité* which took place September 8 to 10, 1989 in Paris. The presence of well-known Trotskyists like Alain

Krivine at the fête led to numerous debates among the militants.

The existence of these questionings and multiple currents has created a new situation. Although up to now, no revolutionary Marxist current has emerged, numerous sectors in or near the PCF have broken with sectarianism and ostracism, especially where the LCR is concerned. This allows new debates, new explanations and non-sectarian actions such as the July 8, 1989 demonstration<sup>5</sup>.

Along with the signs of self-management that have characterized the social struggles since 1986, the collapse of Stalinism, whether in the East or in France, is making direct contacts between the social vanguards and Trotskyism easier. ★

3. Pierre Juquin, ex-party spokesperson and member of the Political Bureau and leader of the *renovateur* current left the PCF in Autumn 1987. He ran in the May 1988 presidential elections, with the support of the LCR. After his campaign's poor result, he drifted away from the *renovateurs*, who went on to found their own organization (MRC).

4. On the initiative of the LCR, an important demonstration against the debt, apartheid, and for independence for the remaining colonies was organized in Paris on July 8, 1989. (See IV 166, 167).

# Resignation of Communist Euro-MP

**THE crisis of the Greek Communist Party has worsened since the establishment on November 21, 1989 of Zolotas' national unity government, in which the CP finds itself in a strange alliance with Greece's main right-wing party. A recent sign of the crisis is the resignation of the Euro-MP Dimitris Desyllas. We publish below his resignation of letter, which is also a denunciaion of the EEC.**

## DOCUMENT

**T**HE MAIN reason which led me to the decision to withdraw from the Communist Party of Greece (CPG) and the Coalition of the Left and Progress and to dissociate myself from their policies are, briefly, as follows:

I agreed with the formation of the Coalition and did everything in my power to assure its success in the June and November elections because I believed in the commitments and declarations of the CPG:

a) That it would be a broad socio-political coalition to defend the interests of the people, to fight for national independence and to advance the democratic and socialist rebirth of Greece.

b) That it aimed to promote the independent role of the Left with respect to the bankrupt two-party system.

c) That within the Coalition, the ideological, political and organizational independence of each political force, including of course the CPG, would be assured.

Unfortunately, the hard reality of recent political developments has proved the opposite:

a) The Coalition has essentially been restricted to a coalition at the top, and is characterized by closed processes and decisions by the leadership and some public figures from the political world of the past.

b) The Coalition has become a supple-

mentary and reinforcing the policy of the ruling class and the two poles of the two-party system, whitewashing the image of the New Democracy party after the June elections and that of the PASOK party the November elections.

c) The CPG leadership has abolished in practice the ideological and political independence of the Party, while at the same time it has carried out mass expulsions, removal from office and slander against thousands of cadres and members of the CPG and CYG.

Thus, with the government of Mr. Zolotas, we have today reached the point where there is full and unprecedented consensus and unanimity between the leaderships of the New Democracy, PASOK and the Coalition regarding the basic options and instructions of the EEC and the more general neo-conservative offensive against the interests of the people and the aims of the popular movement.

## Government agrees to European military integration

Specifically, the leadership of the CPG, within the framework of the Coalition, has:

1. Agreed to the military integration of the EEC. It did not even demand withdrawal of the application made by A. Papandreou (with the consent of Mr. Mitsotakis) for Greece to join the cold-war Western European Union (which imposes the maintenance and updating of nuclear weapons), despite the international and European climate which favours the promotion of our national independence and the withdrawal of the US bases.

2. Agreed to the monetary integration of the EEC. This implies a long-term or permanent austerity programme for the working people, placing the economy on the EEC "automatic pilot" and the reduction or abolition of any national sovereignty in charting economic, incomes, credit or monetary policy. It is not at all accidental that Delors *stated publicly* (and no one denied it) that all three Greek parties agreed to the economic and monetary union of the EEC.

3. Instead of informing the working people and organizing their struggle *against the new, broader forms of exploitation being introduced by the multinationals and the EEC with the single internal market* (that is, restriction of free collective bargaining, short-term con-



tracts, flexible working hours and wages, and reduced social security, retirement benefits and rights and so on) all it did was put forward abstract social-democratic slogans about the "unified social field" of the EEC. Then it confined itself to demanding a "social dimension" in the single internal market and finally the so-called EEC "charter of social rights" which is merely a declaration of vague wishes with no practical value.

4. Instead of opposing the directives and instructions of the EEC with respect to the closing or selling off of *problematic businesses*, it has, with the Zolotas government, gone ahead to carry them out, along with all the repercussions which they have on the people working in these firms.

5. *It has downgraded* in practice the struggles of the farmers' trade union and cooperative movement and underrated the role of working small and medium-sized farm owners in the formation of social alliances.

## Mandate to fight against 1992 and EEC

6. The workers, farmers, people in trades and small businesses, and the working people in general, voted for us in the elections for the European parliament so that we would *fight against the neo-conservative instructions and policies of the EEC and 1992 and not end up saying "yes" to everything Mr. Delors proposed.*

This is why I decided to dissociate myself from this policy, which is being discredited every day in practice, and become an independent. While remaining loyal to the meaning and commitment implicit in the popular vote, I will, as an Independent Left Member of the European Parliament, do everything in my power, together with the workers, farmers, working people, activists of the Left and the grassroots of PASOK and all the social movements, to promote the formation and development of a militant popular movement against the effects of 1992 and against the EEC itself.

If this movement exists as a vital reality with 20% of the vote and four Euro MPs in Denmark (a country with a high living standard) I am certain that in Greece, which is already in last place (no.12) in the EEC, this movement is even more necessary and realizable. ★

AROUND  
THE  
WORLD

## MEXICO

**Advances for Ford workers**

IN THE JANUARY 29 ISSUE of *International Viewpoint* we reported on a conflict between the workers at the Ford subsidiary in Mexico and their corrupt leaders and the transnational company, which was trying to violate a series of rights and gains won by the Mexican workers. Although this conflict has not been resolved, in this issue we can report a series of advances. If they continue and deepen, they can very well lead the Ford workers to a great victory. It would be an unprecedented one in the recent hard-fought struggles of the Mexican working class to drive back the offensive of the bosses and the government, who are trying to solve the economic crisis on the backs of the workers.

In recent days, the following gains have been made — the removal of Héctor Uriarte as general secretary of the union; the jailing of Guadalupe Uribe and nine of his gunmen for the brutal attack that left compañero Benigno Cleto dead and 11 other compañeros wounded; recognition by the Mexican Workers' Confederation (CTM) of the committee of the workers involved in the struggle as a body with full powers to negotiate and win a favorable agreement.

To counter these advances, however, the CTM and the company have resorted to a series of maneuvers designed to block any further gains for the workers. For example, they immediately replaced Héctor Uriarte with his deputy, an individual who will undoubtedly do everything in his power to prevent new advances by the workers.

In this new situation, on Saturday, February 10, the workers held a general assembly in which they made a general balance sheet of their struggle. At the same time, to prevent the company and the CTM from finding new pretexts to claim that legal relations had been broken off, they decided to go back to work.

But the return to work did not take place in a vacuum or unconditionally. The workers managed to get an agreement on guarantees from the

management, which while minimal, enabled them to ward off the threat of a ruling that legal labor relations had broken down and resume work with some favorable conditions.

Unfortunately, the outcome remains uncertain. The limitations of the guarantees are shown by the fact that the company has refused to reinstate those compañeros most deeply involved in the movement and by the strong police presence that is still being maintained in the factory. Thinking that they might face this sort of pressure, the workers agreed to hold another assembly on February 17. We hope that we will be able to report its results in the next issue of *IV*.

In the present conditions in Mexico (a sharp offensive from the government and the bosses trying to reorganize the economy, a working class on the defensive that has not been able to mount a general fightback against this offensive), the struggle of the Ford workers, without any exaggeration, is a historic and heroic one. A victory for these workers will break the starvation course of official policy and could well lay the bases for a broad and pluralistic social movement that could find a people's democratic solution to a crisis that has gone on for several years. Therefore, it is urgent to maintain and



redouble the campaign of publicity and solidarity with the Ford-Mexico workers.

Protests must be organized in every country in front of Ford factories, and messages demanding respect for the rights of Mexican workers sent to Ford Motor Company, Mexico at Paseo de la Reforma #333, Mexico, DF. Messages should also be sent to the official residence of Mexico's president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, at Los Pinos; to the labour secretary, Arsenio Farrel Cubillas at Periferico Sur #4271, Zona Postal 20. Messages in support of the Ford workers' struggle should be sent to Dr. Lucio #103 Edificio Orion A-4 Despacho 103, Mexico DF or faxed to 2 86 89 26 or 2 86 89 76 with prior notification to Sr. Raul Escobar, telephone no: 5 78 15 56. ★

## SRI LANKA

**Terror against the left**

THE Assistant District Committee Secretary of the Sri Lankan Trotskyist organization, the NSSP in Matara, Chandaradasa Ranasinghe, who was a United Socialist candidate in the recent elections, has been missing since December 22, 1989.

While on his way back to his residence from Matara Town, it is suspected that, along with others, he fell into the hands of a joint police-army search for suspected "subversives". Information received at NSSP headquarters reveals that he has been under interrogation by the Matara police.

Both the army and the police authorities in reply to the inquiries made about him, have denied his arrest. But the information received shows that he was in police custody at Matara between December 22 and 26. Comrade Vasudeva Nanayakkara, the MP for Ratnapura District has been assured of his presence somewhere, but the authorities decline to disclose the source of this information citing security reasons.

On December 26, 1989, late in the evening the Party Centre received a telephone message, in which someone claiming to be attached to the Defence Ministry stated that after his arrest Ranasinghe was questioned about the weapons handed over to him by the government.

It is evident that he is continuing to be interrogated, perhaps for the following reasons:

1. At the time of his arrest he had on him some forms from Amnesty International the Red Cross Society.
2. In the 1982 Presidential elections he had campaigned for the election of Rohana Wijeweera, the leader of the [radical Sinhala chauvinist organization] JVP.
3. His youngest brother was a JVP suspect who is a wanted person and is now in hiding. The government authorities, in order to force his parents to hand him

over, set their house on fire. This matter also has been reported to the Matara police by Comrade C. Ranasinghe, who is identified in the area as a consistent anti-government activist.

Comrade Ranasinghe has been an active participant in struggles against terrorism and in defence of basic democratic rights. Because of these activities he has been the subject of death threats.

We appeal to you to express your vehement protests against the abduction of Comrade Ranasinghe, and for his immediate release. It is also necessary to demand that the authorities reveal his exact place of detention.

Copies of protests, petitions and telegrams should be sent to the following addresses:

His Excellency the President — Presidential Secretariat — Colombo.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Defence Ministry — Colombo.

General Cyril Ranatunge — JOC no. 61, Sir Ernest de Silva Mawatha, Colombo 7.

Also notify: Dr. Vickramabahu Karunaratne, General Secretary NSSP, 17 Barrack Lane Colombo 2.

(See IV 170,172,173 for further details of the wave of repression hitting the left in Sri Lanka) ★

### European railworkers meeting

THE Italian railways want to introduce driver-only trains throughout the network, following the lead of the French railway company, SNCF. In France the tactic of the management was to tie driver-only trains to the introduction of rail radio. In Italy, there is anarchy on the airwaves, and commercial radio prevents any worthwhile radio contact. There will therefore be no such sweetener in Italy. The rank-and-file are getting ready to fight against driver-only. A "united national engineers' coordination" has been formed capable of calling out 80% of the workers in this category on strike.

The management and union organizations, who are ready to discuss strike "regulation" do not want to recognize the coordination, which called a new 48 hour strike on January 28. The review *Ancora in Marcia*, although not the official organ of the coordination represents its backbone, and most politically aware current.

*Ancora in Marcia* started up in 1908 and is the review of the engineers in the railworkers' union. Banned by the fascists in 1926, it reemerged at the liberation as the organ of the drivers in the CGIL (pro-Communist Party union federation). The union leadership suppressed it in 1979,

arguing that the measure was a blow against corporatism but in reality aiming to break formally with the traditions of the Italian workers movement. It was resurrected yet again in 1982 as a journal of political and union news. Half of the engineers have subscriptions to the review, which has both a wide influence and a broad coverage.

On January 11, 1990, *Ancora in Marcia* organized a European conference on safety in Florence. Good organization, including simultaneous translation would have allowed Europe-wide participation. However only two representatives of the German DGB and some 20 from the French railworkers' National Liaison Committee made the trip. The British engineers' union sent a message, as did the French CFDT federation. The French CGT sent some documents. This is not much, two years before 1992 and the single European market.

The French Liaison Committee' representatives have known *Ancora in Marcia* since the 1986-87 strikes in France. The two currents have kept in touch. The French explained how the transition to driver-only was imposed region by region starting in 1979 as and when radio lines were put in, and how the union organizations had failed to react in time to organize the struggle against this measure.

The Normandy region was on strike alone for three weeks, and this experience was at the origin of the rank-and-file coordinations that emerged in 1986.

The Italian engineers have many ideas for the future and for safety on the European railways. They are proposing to organize a demonstration at Strasburg and hope that other European railworkers will take part.

In Florence French and Italian railworkers discussed common problems without difficulty. Two railworkers from Sotteville les Rouen, just back from Bucharest, recounted their experiences on their "train for Romania". The railways are the irrigation channels of Europe, and the railworkers can play a central role in the fight for a workers' Europe. ★

# INPREKOR

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# Who really won the Chilean elections?

AS PREDICTED, Chile's presidential elections on December 14, 1989, resulted in a clear victory for the opposition candidate — Patricio Alwyn, a Christian Democrat, obtained 55.2% of the votes. There was, then, no second round and Alwyn will become president on March 14 of this year. Despite the results, the system of elections to the parliament and senate established by the dictatorship with the aim of excluding the left has functioned perfectly. Overall the opposition did not obtain the working majority which it had set its sights on in either chamber. Thus, it is legitimate to ask today who the real winners of the election were.

ORLANDO SIERRA

**T**HE CHILEAN bourgeoisie breathed a sigh of relief — the fall of the dictatorship could have been much worse. When the extent of the popular mobilizations between 1983 and 1986 is considered<sup>1</sup>, the right can take heart from having been able to restore order through ceding the presidency of the republic to the wiliest of Christian Democrat leaders, at the same time assuring itself a majority in the senate and a blocking minority in the national assembly. The stock market certainly understood this, registering a rise of 5% 24 hours after the general elections. The doyen of Chilean bosses, Manuel Felin, characterized the results as "satisfactory".

## Candidate of military decisively defeated

Certainly, the regime's favoured candidate for president, Herman Büchi, was well beaten, obtaining only 29% of the votes (Pinochet, in the plebiscite of October 1988, managed 44%). But could it have been otherwise? This former Minister of Finance had been associated with radical cuts in the health and education budgets, the secret financing of repressive services, and the decline of old age pensions to a point below the minimum level necessary to survive — winning over the voters was obviously going to be an uphill task for him. In reality, Büchi was, for the right, nothing more than a stopgap to be sacrificed without remorse in an election which it knew all along to be lost.

In this context of debacle, there was plenty of room for a potential godsend like "Fra-Fra" Errazuriz, who had been responsible for gathering in a considerable portion of the "yes" votes in last year's referendum<sup>2</sup>. But this racketeer with a

troubled past, who made a fortune thanks to the financial support he was able to win from the military regime, is strong only in rhetoric. His all-purpose demagoguery finally had only a limited effect, and did more damage to Büchi than to the opposition candidate.

The "president of all the Chileans", Patricio Alwyn, is then placed at the centre of the institutional game by his victory on December 14. But is he arbitrator or hostage? Having withdrawn, but not very far, the armed forces watch, with Pinochet at their head. The regime is henceforth a coin with two sides, civil and military.

## Ancien regime pledges support to Alwyn

Whatever Alwyn's role, the bourgeois parties have wasted no time in pledging allegiance to the newly elected president. Even the Independent Democratic Union (UDI), the black guard of "Pinochetism", has promised Alwyn that it will form "a loyal and constructive opposition". But it is above all in the ranks of National Renewal, where the majority of the partisans of a regime on the road to extinction are grouped, that the Christian Democrat president has a right to expect the collaboration necessary for a painless transition.

Flanked on his left by an ever more moderate Socialism (the rest of the left did not gain representation in parliament) and on his right by wolves disguised as grandmothers, Alwyn will have plenty of room to proceed with the negotiation of the end of the regime. If he succeeds, the bourgeoisie could rediscover a new equilibrium.

What about the amnesty law adopted in



1978 to throw a veil over the crimes committed in the first years of the regime? The new authorities have already announced that it is technically impossible to abrogate. The liberation of political prisoners? Everything will depend on whether they are guilty of crimes of opinion or "crimes of blood" (the armed struggle against the dictatorship). The demands of the workers? The future minister of finance, Alejandro Foxley, has already counselled patience — "you can expect no miracles in the next few years...".

## Chilean people celebrate their victory

It remains to be seen if the Chilean people, who flooded into the streets of the big towns on December 14 and 15 to celebrate their victory will accept without reaction the betrayal of that victory. But their capacity for intervention and their independence in relation to the bourgeoisie's project depend on their organizations and the orientation of their leaderships. Indeed, it is there that the shoe pinches, for the Chilean left is itself "destabilized" by

1. Days of popular protest (protestas) against the regime took place from 1983 onwards. Faced with mounting popular opposition, the military regime decreed a curfew in November 1984 and violently repressed the demonstrations (there were some deaths and hundreds of wounded).

2. In the plebiscite of October 5, 1988, which he himself had called on the question of his remaining as head of the regime, General Pinochet was rejected by 54.68% of the voters against 43.04%.

an unprecedented crisis.

The result of the parliamentary elections was disastrous for the parties of the left, which obtained only 23% of the votes. At the beginning of the 1970s, Popular Unity represented 45% of the votes<sup>3</sup>. The loss of influence is indisputable, even if it is necessary to balance it against the reflex of the "useful vote" which worked in favour of the Christian Democracy, and by the electoral legislation concocted by the dictatorship so as to block the access of the workers' parties to parliament. None of the 17 Communist Party candidates were elected, and the two principal leaders of the non-Communist left, Luis Maira and Ricardo Lagos, who were candidates for the senate, were defeated.

Reflecting a deeply rooted electoralism the leaders of the left had to wait for an electoral defeat to proclaim in unison that "a serious self-critical balance-sheet is now indispensable"! In fact, the crisis goes well beyond an electoral reverse, and has several fundamental causes.

### The Impact of the East European revolutions

There is the collapse of the bureaucratic regimes, witnessed directly by the Chileans. Almost every home today possesses a television. The fall of the Berlin Wall or the Romanian revolution have been immediately experienced in all their sharpness.

Chile is no longer as isolated as was once the case. Questioned by the facts — and by their members — the traditional leaders, whose dependence on Stalinism has been reinforced by exile, have been unable to give satisfactory replies. Volodia Teitelboin and Clodomiro Almeydo, respectively general secretaries of the CP and a faction of the Socialist Party, were in East Berlin only a matter of months ago to celebrate the anniversary of the GDR's founding at the side of Erich Honecker!

Pressed by history, the leaderships have resorted to all kinds of political contortions to find their feet again. They have taken as their own the feeblest justifications which are accompanying, like a funeral chant, the twilight of the bureaucrats; "we are the precursors of *perestroika*".

But everybody knows that the Chilean CP approved without any problem the intervention in Czechoslovakia and the invasion of Afghanistan...

But the left is also paying the price for the zigzags in its orientation. When a pre-revolutionary situation began to open up in the wake of the protests from 1983 to 1986, it was never able to implement its policy of "popular rebellion". Yielding to radical pressures, particularly from the youth, the CP created an armed wing, the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front (FPMR), which rapidly exerted a mass influence in the *poblaciones*. Had the hour of insurrection come?

In 1986, however, the Communist leadership drew back, and left thousands of people without orientation. The arms supplies stored up at great cost in the north of the country were not distributed — it was the security services who were finally to seize them. A year later, the majority of the FPMR broke with the CP.

This lack of the will to pass on to a higher stage of struggle then explains the relative ebb which the popular movement has experienced in the following period. The bourgeois opposition has been able to occupy the high ground, and impose its "negotiated solution", through participation in the plebiscite of 1988. The Socialists made the turn rapidly, but the CP and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) came later and were deprived of all autonomy in the electoral struggle. And finally, their support for Alwyn, without doubt tactically justified, was agreed in the most opportunist fashion possible, without any accompanying campaign for popular demands. It is hardly astonishing then that rank-and-file militants, above all in the CP, were hard to mobilize during the electoral campaign.

### Turmoil grows within the left parties

Many Communist militants, critical of their leadership, have demanded the holding of an extraordinary congress. The MIR, already fragmented into three independent factions, is experiencing a debate whose conclusion is uncertain. Only the Socialist Party, henceforth reunified, seems in good shape although this could well be only temporary. The third largest parliamentary force, present in the government where it has five ministers, it is experiencing a full social democratic mutation, and has renounced the "left" orientation that has characterized it during its 60 year existence. But is it capable of durably reconciling the interests of its electors with the austerity policy announced by the authorities?

If an axis for the political recomposition of the workers' movement does not appear rapidly, the decline of the left as well as its fragmentation will accelerate.

On the other hand, the bankruptcy of Stalinism and the social-democratization of the SP open up sufficient space for the construction of a new party, which could draw its inspiration from the experience of the Brazilian PT. In fact, the real game has not yet begun, and everything is possible. ★

3. Salvador Allende, a Socialist and candidate of Popular Unity was elected president of the Republic in 1970. Popular Unity comprised the Communist, Socialist and Radical parties as well as the Christian left and the Movement of Action for Popular Unity (MAPU). On September 11, 1973, a military coup took place which banned all the parties of Popular Unity.

**F**URTHERMORE, in the past six months the legal Nicaraguan opposition, the UNO, whose stated objective is to overthrow the Sandinistas, has received an enormous amount of US economic aid. The UNO has been given \$7m by the American Congress and private groups. The USA has also profited from the Gorbachev-Bush accords (reaffirmed at Malta in December 1989) which permit the US to intervene as they see fit in Central America. The Soviet spokespeople have restricted themselves to verbal protests against the invasion of Panama while repeating their confidence in Bush's readiness to arrive at a negotiated settlement in the region.

Despite all these obstacles, the Sandinistas seem set to win the elections. The cause of their likely success: the desire of the majority of the Nicaraguan people to continue their revolution that was established here ten years ago by a massive and sustained popular uprising led by the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN).

In the latest opinion polls, the FSLN received a little more than 50% support, while UNO gathered less than 25% of voting intentions.

### Extreme polarization of main parties

During the last few months, the FSLN has noticeably increased its advantage over the UNO. The polarization between the two parties is extreme, and all the other parties together received only 5% support. The percentage of those who have decided to vote, without having made a definitive choice, has risen to 20%. It is these floating voters who are the main target of the parties' campaigns. According to the journal of the Nicaraguan Jesuits *Envio*, which takes a critical pro-Sandinista line, there are, despite the FSLN-UNO polarization, four basic strategic choices on offer: "Besides the two basic options, that of the ultra-right UNO who say: 'liquidate the revolution' and the FSLN who say: 'consolidate the revolution', there are two other main electoral options: that represented by the centre parties, among them the Christian Social Party that says: 'reform the revolution' and that of the three ultra-left parties (the MAP-MD, the MUR and the PRT) who say: 'radicalize the revolution'" (*Envio*, November 1989).

Let us look at these four options in turn.

**The UNO:** The UNO consists of a range of parties from the hard right who have supported and even helped to organize the Contras, to two small "historic communist formations" the PSN and the PCdN. The UNO is supported by the employers' organization, the COSEP. The candidates for president and vice-president, chosen after strong internal tensions, are without doubt the most presentable pro-American choices: Violetta

# The choices facing Nicaragua

**ON THE EVE of the Nicaraguan elections on February 23, life is certainly not easy for the Nicaraguan people. Inflation was 1,600% in 1989 and wages have not kept up; some 700 people were assassinated in 1989 by the Contras, who, despite their difficulties remain able to strike out murderously, thanks to US aid; American imperialism is becoming more and more aggressive in the region — with the invasion of Panama, continuation of massive aid to the extreme right in El Salvador, support for the Contras, new provocations against Nicaragua, such as the irruption of US soldiers into the house of Nicaragua's ambassador to Panama and the attack by a US warship on a Cuban cargo vessel on February 1.**

**ERIC TOUSSAINT**

Chamorro and Vigilio Godoy were members of the Government Junta with the Sandinistas, the former until April 1980, the second until Spring 1984. The UNO programme is for the liquidation of the revolution through the eviction of the Sandinistas from all positions of power and the "dismantling of the army" (sic)

To win the population to its side, the UNO puts itself forward as the representative of the interests of the masses pauperized by the policies of the Sandinistas. Its formulations on reversing the agrarian reform are cautious — "We will reconsider the expropriations case by case and will distribute state lands to peasants who need it."

The UNO is capable of mobilizing thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of supporters in several regions of the country, often in forms that recall the far right-wing demonstrations in Chile in the 1970s: demonstrations with empty cooking pots. But it has managed to pull behind it only a minority of the population and its crowds are smaller than those drawn by the FSLN. Furthermore the UNO is handicapped by the tensions between the 11 parties that make it up. But it is above all its total dependence on the US and the most reactionary bosses, along with its links with the Contras, that restrict its ability to profit from the social discontent, despite the campaigns of its daily *La Prensa*. The support of their prin-

cipal spokespersons for the US intervention in Panama was a terrible blow to their credibility in the eyes of many who had previously been hesitating.

Although unlikely, a UNO victory would deal a heavy blow to the revolution. Nonetheless, it is not quite certain that the Sandinistas would accept the dismantling of the state established in June 1979, starting with the Sandinista army. According to *Le Monde* (February 9, 1990), the Interior Minister Tomas Borge, one of the nine commandants, has declared that "the army would refuse to obey again if there was a UNO victory. A success for the opposition would mean a return of the dictatorship and the army 'would relaunch the armed struggle against Somozism'." In the case of a UNO defeat, it is equally improbable that the USA would abandon their aggressive attitude to the Sandinistas. Rather, the US would demand of the Sandinistas that they themselves unravel the revolution. Even then, the US would not abandon their intention to overthrow the regime established in 1979.

Despite real popular dissatisfaction over some aspects of the economic realities in Nicaragua, and over some of the economic and social choices made by the Sandinista authorities in the past two years, the majority of the population is probably aware that only a new victory for the FSLN can prevent politicians total-

ly dependent on the USA coming to power.

The Sandinistas, despite the economic sabotage orchestrated by a significant part of the private capitalist sector, have decided to maintain a mixed economy, and have decided to follow a policy of limited but real concessions to the bosses of industry and the agro-export sector. The Sandinistas give several reasons for these policies: rejection of a state and bureaucratized socialism (they use these terms repeatedly); the desire not to cut themselves off from the EEC countries, and from the social democratic governments in Europe and Latin America; and the attempt to get the USA to lift the economic blockade.

## Degree of administrative bureaucratization

However these concessions, combined with a definite degree of bureaucratism that has developed in the Sandinista administration (without reaching the situation in the so-called socialist countries, such as the Soviet Union or China) sometimes lead to criticisms from the regime's rank-and-file support. An example is this statement from a rank-and-file Sandinista:

"The gringos, the yankees? They will never change. I see that the Contras are continuing their attacks, killing people. Wasn't Bush Reagan's second-in-command? Now, he is getting the CIA involved in the elections...I am a Sandinista, but I think that there has not been enough firmness here, notably with those who, although born Nicaraguans, have their hearts with the gringos. Listen to me: the Contras killed a son and the two smallest are often poorly, not because of any disease, but for lack of food, because I don't earn enough. The plan of the government economists is no good...."

"It is true that the war is the main cause of the problems, but it does not explain everything. Some are spending the equivalent of three salaries, and live like millionaires, when I cannot buy batteries for my radio. We need more equality, I say, because the revolution ought to make us more equal. Am I wrong? I say to my wife: it wouldn't take much for us to see here some wives of government members go out well dressed up, get together with the wives of the bourgeoisie, and organize bingo and poker sessions to raise money for charity for us." (Felix Lopez, textile worker, interviewed by *Envio*, July 1989)

This worker, without any doubt is going to vote Sandinista. But, like so many others, he is not ready to give a blank cheque to the authorities.

**The FSLN:** Daniel Ortega and Sergio Ramirez hold one or two meetings every day, often apart, in order to make sure that they have met the population even in the most remote parts of the country. There is a high level of popular participation at

these meetings.

Until the start of December 1989, the offensive of the FMLN in El Salvador was at the centre of Daniel Ortega's discourse. He enthusiastically envisaged the extension of the Central American revolution. The Bush-Gorbachev meeting in Malta and the summit of the five Central American presidents at San Isidro in Costa Rica on December 11 and 12 have led to the Sandinista leadership's adopting an essentially diplomatic attitude, even if solidarity with the FMLN is systematically affirmed. This turn, made under international pressure, has not been made without creating a certain unease, reinforced by the US intervention in Panama. Nonetheless the Sandinista leaders affirm the desire to pursue their socialist orientation within the framework of a mixed economy, non-alignment and political pluralism. They systematically present this last aspect as the anticipation by the Sandinista revolution of what they call the process of democratization in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Orlando Nunez has declared in the *Barricada* of December 23, 1989; "The fall of the Berlin Wall has no significance for the Nicaraguan revolution, for we were born without a "wall". On July 19, 1979, we overthrew simultaneously the Somoquist wall and the Berlin Wall because we were born out of a democratic, pluralist revolution. The Sandinista revolution appears as the most advanced expression of what is considered as the renewal of the socialist world. The difference is that we have done this from the beginning and we have had no need of a process of rectification".

### Sandinista leaders walk a tightrope

In other respects, the Sandinista leaders walk a tightrope insofar as the dilemma between deepening a socialist orientation and more important concessions to the minority capitalist sector is concerned. Jaime Wheelock (Minister of Agrarian Reform) says that "not a single square centimetre of land from the agrarian reform will be transferred to the capitalist sector". Luis Carrion, Minister of the Economy, affirms in substance that the big social reforms have in the main been completed (during a meeting with Costa Rican private entrepreneurs in November 1989).

The Centre is constituted essentially by the Social Christian Party (PSC) which, after boycotting the 1984 elections, and participating in the founding of the UNO (the group of 14), finally withdrew, reproaching the UNO for its wish to eliminate Sandinism and its total dependence on the USA (these criticisms have led *La Prensa*, the UNO's daily, to refuse the PSC's campaign the slightest coverage in its columns). The candidate of the PSC, Erick Ramirez, is supported by the Social Christian Popular Party (PPSC), which



has also left the UNO (the PPSC had 6 deputies in the outgoing national assembly). Steedman Fagoth and Brooklyn Rivera — "Miskito leaders" at first allied to the Sandinistas, who passed over to the camp of the Contras before returning to Nicaragua to benefit from the amnesty — are backing the PSC.

Finally, also supporting the PSC is Eden Pastora, ex-Sandinista commandant, and ex-leader of the Contras based in Costa Rica, the ARDE. The PSC favours an eventual governmental alliance with the FSLN, under certain conditions.

### Far left fiercely denounces San Isidro accords

The far left: The policies of the Sandinistas in relation to imperialism (such as the signing of the San Isidro accords on December 12, 1989) and the private sector are fiercely denounced by the three far left lists contesting the elections; the Popular Action Movement (MAP — ex-Maoist), the Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT — affiliated to the Morenist International Workers' League) and the Revolutionary Unity Movement (MUR).

The MAP is the oldest of these organizations, having participated in the armed struggle against Somoza with its own specific military organization (the MIL-PAS).

It organizes a small trade union (Workers' Front) and has a semi-daily newspaper (*The People* which has appeared every two days since summer 1989). It also has two deputies in the outgoing National Assembly.

The PRT is a smaller organization but has a certain trade union and student implantation.

Both the PRT and MAP share a hostile attitude to the FSLN which they characterize as in substance a petit-bourgeois party in the process of reconstructing the

bourgeois state destroyed by the masses in July 1979. The MUR, formed more recently, (little more than a year ago, by former militants of the FSLN and other left parties including the PCdN) adopts a more nuanced attitude than the other two parties. Whilst declaring themselves in favour of a radicalization of the revolution, and criticizing the bureaucratic deformations of the FSLN, it does not rule out an alliance with them to constitute a working majority if necessary.

### Criticisms and proposals of far left

Given the extreme polarization of the vote on February 25, it is highly unlikely that these three formations will obtain a high percentage of the vote (the polls give them around 2% of those intending to vote), but it is not impossible that one or two of them will have a deputy elected to the new Assembly. In any case, whatever the result of the election, the FSLN must take account of the criticisms and proposals of the far left.

The electoral process in Nicaragua is, by far, the most democratic ever to have taken place in any country of Central America.

The electoral law is, in many respects, more advanced than in the so-called Western democracies; financial aid to all parties (including those who have not been elected to the outgoing assembly) from the Supreme Electoral Council, the possibility of access for all parties to the TV and radio....and at the end of the electoral process, proportional representation amended to benefit the smaller parties (each party which achieves 1% of the votes is guaranteed two deputies to the 96 member assembly!)

Twenty parties will participate in the electoral campaign and there are 10 candidates for the presidency — because the UNO consists of 11 separate parties. ★