

# International VIEWPOINT

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FOR OR  
AGAINST  
THE MARKET  
ECONOMY?



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# After the Sandinista election defeat

**THE FSLN'S DEFEAT on February 25, 1990, will have a profound impact on the revolutionary left, especially in Latin America. The Sandinista revolution's victory in 1979 meant, in many respects, the beginning of a recomposition of these currents. It ushered in a stage of transformations in the relationship of forces between imperialism and the national liberation struggle and between the reformist left and the revolutionary left within the workers' movement. While the period that opened on July 19, 1979, is not closing today, its future appears more uncertain after the Sandinista election defeat.**

**SERGIO RODRIGUEZ**

**T**HE CRISIS in the post-capitalist countries is exerting a pressure when it comes to defining different strategic hypotheses. For the majority of the revolutionary left, what is called the "socialist camp" played a fundamental role. It was the backup of the revolution. These currents complained in private about the bureaucrats in the East, but publicly and officially they maintained a totally uncritical attitude. Today, the "socialist camp" no longer exists as such, and this has left a sort of political void, since the processes in the East have not yet defined a clear position toward imperialism and the struggles of the third world.

The FSLN's defeat will be used by the imperialists and the Latin American national bourgeoisies as new evidence of the failure of socialism and the pointlessness of revolution. According to them, the revolution has not only been incapable of getting the Nicaraguan economy out of underdevelopment but, what is more, it has plunged the country into the worst crisis in its history. Now they are going to try to make us pay the bill, and that can have repercussions on some sections of the revolutionary left.

It has to be stressed that this defeat represents a victory for the imperialists' policy of "low-intensity conflicts." While it is true that the counter-revolution has been crushed militarily, the Sandinistas paid a high price in this area, as well as in the economic and social spheres. While the contras were never able to win the support of the masses, which would have enabled them to establish themselves in a zone under their control in Nicaragua, they nonetheless paved the way for the victory of the National Union of the Opposition (UNO).

The human costs of this war are staggering — more than 50% of the Nicaraguan

budget has been devoted to defense, 70,000 people have been killed and thousands of people wounded; almost all Nicaraguan families have lost someone, had a family member injured or suffered material loss. This weighed heavily on the minds of the people who voted for the UNO, thinking that in that way they could stop the war and abolish Patriotic Military Service.

Facing the war-weariness of the population, the Sandinistas were forced to move up the elections in a search for legitimacy and a political hold that would prevent the US imperialists from pursuing their policy of aggression. "The FSLN's aim is to win the elections by 70% in order to hold onto a majority in the executive and the parliament. In order to accomplish that, the president is using a language that all Nicaraguans can understand, the language of baseball: "You have to hit the ball not to the right or to the left but toward the center."

This quote reflects quite accurately the electoral strategy chosen by the Sandinistas. The objective was to get a strong majority by using simple language, stripped of any left-wing undertones, in a campaign without military uniforms. But this antidote was not effective enough to allay the fears of a large section of the population, who cannot be called anti-Sandinista but who doubted that the Sandinistas were able to stop the war.

Another key element in this defeat is the economic situation afflicting the country.

The growth of hyper-inflation has thrown the whole economy into turmoil. The figures speak volumes. In 1985, inflation was already 334.5% annually; in 1986, it was 747.4%; in 1987, 1,347.2%; in 1988, it reached the incredible rate of 36,000%; and in 1989, it fell to 1,700%. This illustrates well the pressure on the Nicaraguan economy. Of course, it has been the poor masses above all who have paid the price for the Sandinista government's economic management.

In his book *Nicaragua*, Oscar René Vargas wrote: "The gross domestic product declined to the late 1950s level, while the per capita domestic product plunged to the level of the 1940s. According to the official figures, if in 1980 buying power was 100, at the end of 1988 it was 3.7. This shows the plummeting standard of living of the population. This element can have an effect on the vote in the February 1990 general election." This prognostication proved more correct than the author thought.

## Inflation continues despite adjustment policy

Even though the inflation rate was reduced in the first half of 1989, thanks to an adjustment policy in the best traditions of the IMF, the standard of living of the masses has not improved. Inflation reached 792% at the start of the year, but wages increased only by 120%. Still worse, the price index for necessities rose by 927.56%. Inflation did not affect all products equally; the household basket was particularly hard hit.

This policy, experienced by all countries in Latin America, was applied differently in Nicaragua. While the IMF has imposed austerity programs as conditions for new credits, Nicaragua has not gotten access to any kind of financing. US military aid to El Salvador was \$1,630.8 million between 1983 and 1987, and \$3,769.8 million for the rest of the region. Nicaragua has not gotten a penny (according to the figures of the Congressional Research Service and the Agency for International Development). If foreign financing was equal to 100 in 1985, in 1988 it was only 12.75.

## The election results

**For the presidency and vice presidency: Daniel Ortega and Sergio Ramírez, 40.8%; Violeta Chamorro and Virgilio Godoy, 54.2%. In the legislative elections, the FSLN got the majority of deputies in three regions, Estelí, North Atlantic and South Atlantic. In all, it got 39 deputies against 51 for UNO. The Social Christian Party and the Movement for Revolutionary Unity (MUR) got one deputy each.**

**The FSLN was also bested in the municipal elections, holding on to only two major cities — León and Estelí. It lost Managua, Chinandega, Matagalpa and Granada. It nonetheless retains a presence in most municipal councils. ★**

It has to be understood that the currency flow from agricultural exports has also shrunk. In 1979, it was \$565.5 million, while in 1988, it was \$235.7 million. The adjustment policy applied in Nicaragua was quite special in the sense that it did not even enable the country to capitalize.

The grip of imperialism is more obvious in Nicaragua than in any other Latin American country. The economic blockade policy has proved its effectiveness for a poor small country such as Nicaragua. In view of this situation, the question can be raised whether another economic model was possible in Nicaragua. Some might be tempted to think that the solution lay in nationalizing the majority of the means of production in order to keep market criteria from operating in an anarchic way. But this solution is utopian.

Nicaragua is a very small country with one of the lowest levels of industrialization in the world, with a small productive capacity concentrated mainly in agricultural exports. The adjustment policy applied was not ideal. Some aspects could have been corrected, in particular as regards the reinvestment of profits. But the fundamental terms of the problem remain.

What imperialist pillage represents has to be clearly explained. Otherwise nothing can be understood about what is happening in a country like Nicaragua that is trying to carry out a deepgoing revolution and which is experiencing grave difficulties in building a different sort of society. If we add to this the problem of the war, the picture is complete.

The question is complex. The imperialist countries have experienced a substantial change in labor relations. Economic reconversion has combined big technological transformations and deepgoing changes in the organization of work. The challenging of Taylorism has opened the way for a new sort of organization in the factories, which has led to a substantial increase in the productivity of labor. All this has been accomplished without the working class in the imperialist countries being able to oppose it.

### Transformation in labour process necessary

Today, the economic adjustment policies applied in other Latin American countries also make necessary such transformations, but in the context of a disastrous economic crisis. The productivity levels have risen so much that they are sinking these economies deeper and deeper into underdevelopment. This situation concerns the Nicaraguan economy also, because the reorganization of labor does not affect only industry but also agriculture. The levels of labor productivity set by Japan, West Germany and so on are higher than in the past.

**4** In this situation, the strangulation by imperialism of a revolution in a poor country in the third world can only be

avoided by a timely and firm counterattack by the workers in the developed countries. The revolution of the poorest countries in the third world can only advance with the support of the workers of the imperialist countries.

This does not mean that the Sandinistas have not made mistakes in the economic sphere, and more particularly in the social sphere. The existence of a layer of members of the state apparatus enjoying a series of privileges became an obnoxious reality. The opening of shops for diplomats (the "*diploitiendas*"), where certain Nicaraguan functionaries, thanks to special tickets, could buy at below market prices, provoked the anger of the most disadvantaged. Che Guevara had already warned against this danger. We do not think, however, that there was a crystallized bureaucratic social layer in Nicaragua but the pernicious effects of such phenomena in a devastated country cannot be denied.

The weakness of the mass organizations formed after the revolution was another key element in the FSLN's defeat, as well as the relationship between the state, the party and the masses. The big popular organizations have suffered from the economic policy put into practice. They have thus found themselves facing a dilemma. They had either to mobilize pressure able to alter the government's economic policy or endorse it and thereby become mere instruments of the state in the eyes of the people.

### Face to face meetings with the people

Two attitudes developed. The "face to face with the people" meetings were often prepared with the express objective of putting pressure on the president to change, even partially, the wages or credit policies. Daniel Ortega in fact modified a series of economic measures. But these meetings were also the occasion for endorsing and hailing the economic policy, and therefore provoked a negative reaction from the masses.

This discontent was neither channelled or organized by UNO. In my opinion, it still is not. But a mute, barely perceptible negative attitude took hold. Daniel Ortega's wind-up campaign rally in Managua brought together hundreds of thousands of people (500,000, according to the most modest sources). There were also big mobilizations in Masaya, León and other places. However, many of those who participated in them did not vote for the FSLN but for UNO. Some must already have decided to vote for Violeta Chamorro and the legislative and municipal council candidates on her slate.

The vote in the three elections was, moreover, quite even. Nonetheless, all these people took part in the FSLN's rallies. There are two explanations for this. People voted for UNO thinking that the

FSLN would win the elections but that it was necessary to create a counterweight to the FSLN, or that they went to the rallies under constraint. They did not take part because someone in particular forced them, but simply because of the state's weight on the society and the existence of an official government party. Latin Americans are quite familiar with such situations.

I by no means want to make a comparison between Nicaragua and the totalitarian regimes in East Europe. Nothing would be more wrong than that. But the FSLN reduced the problem of building a democratic country to the question of multipartyism and elections with universal suffrage and a secret ballot. There was no development of a democracy of another type — for which embryonic forms were present at the start of the revolution. But that was fundamental.

The great masses of people cannot accept an economic policy and a war like the one in Nicaragua without being able to make decisions about them directly. The identification between the masses and the state was not destroyed, but in the absence of direct links, the majority of workers in the countryside and the cities did not understand the reasons for certain economic measures.

### Creating conditions to resist Imperialist aggression

Today, the FSLN needs to maintain the objective of building democratic people's power. Only such a government can create the conditions to resist an imperialist policy of aggression by making the workers the masters of their history and their future. In the present conditions in Nicaragua, regaining the government by parliamentary means may even come through the consolidation of such a power.

The result of the elections surprised not only the FSLN but also UNO. The discussions in this alliance have always been focused around the place the legislative candidates of the various components are to have in the regional slates and the designation of the first five names on the slate. UNO expected to get about 33% of the votes. Several days after February 25, it was still unable to establish the bases for forming a stable government and preventing a civil war at the same time as crushing the FSLN's influence in society.

This incapacity is bound up with UNO's nature. It was possible to form this coalition only thanks to the pressure of the US government. Newspapers such as the *Financial Times* (February 28) characterized UNO as "a motley alliance supported by the United States." The coalition goes from the National Action Party (PAN) of the extreme right to the Communist Party of Nicaragua (PCdN) of Stalinist origin. Immediately after the election, the vice president elect, Virgilio Godoy, expressed

his disagreement with the person named by Violeta Chamorro to negotiate the transition with the Sandinista government, saying that he considered himself best able to do this job.

Godoy is not just megalomaniac. These disagreements reflect differences that exist among the UNO forces. In his campaign wind-up speech, Godoy directly threatened the members of the Sandinista government, declaring that after February 25, he was going to "make them pay the bill." To the contrary, Violeta Chamorro understood that a confrontationalist position was totally counterproductive. She has identified herself with the current that directly represents the interests of the United States, which is led today by Alfredo César of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), who belonged to the Sandinista government and then joined the contra leadership.

This current wants to carry through a transition to change the nature of the state apparatus without going through a civil war. It is trying to gain at least a good part of the power before taking more radical measures against the Sandinistas by using a trump card, the legality of UNO and the legitimacy of the election.

Here the FSLN runs up against a limitation that is easily explainable in the context of the

imperialist aggression. In an attempt to gain recognition, the FSLN signed the San Isidro accords, thereby accepting a conception of the state according to which the legality and legitimacy of regimes flow directly from the ballot box. From this standpoint, the Cristiani government in El Salvador is legal and legitimate because it is the outcome of an electoral process, even though the biggest political force in the country did not take part and though the president got only 20% of the vote.

Still worse, according to this doctrine, a government can do anything it wants if it is elected. If it slaughters the leaders of the mass movement, if its army murders six Jesuits, if it bombs the population indiscriminately, that is not so bad, since it was elected.

This view obscures the difference between legality and legitimacy. Alfredo Cristiani and Violeta Chamorro have been elected according to "actually existing" laws in their countries, but that does not mean that they are legitimate. The legitimacy of a revolution or a social movement flows precisely from the loss of legitimacy of a governmental institution. In other

words, legitimacy expresses and includes the problem of political hegemony within a society. The legitimacy of Violeta Chamorro's government is compromised by the support it gets from the United States.

In Nicaragua, we are seeing two forms of legitimacy side by side, the legitimacy that flows from the results of the February 25 vote and that which flows from the July 19, 1979, revolution.

It is important to understand this situation. The Nicaraguans have not voted en masse against the Sandinista revolution. They voted against the government's administration and economic policy. But they have not voted for the imperialists' political schemes. They have voted



Waiting to vote in Managua on February 25

against the war, but not for the contras.

They have not voted against the agrarian reform, or against the right of poor people to be masters of the plot of land where they live, or against the nationalization of the banks, or against the monopoly of foreign trade. They have still less voted against the right to strike or assistance for old people. They have not voted either against the Sandinista People's Army, even if they do not want any more obligatory military service.

These two legitimacies thus stand in confrontation. The FSLN is obliged to accept the election result, but also — as its leadership has said — to defend the gains of the revolution. The road between these two legitimacies is strewn with contradictions and with blind turns. The problem of the army is obvious.

There are three possibilities as regards the Sandinista People's Army, which sum up the three different scenarios of confrontation possible between these legitimacies.

The FSLN may think that it will inevitably have to wait six years before returning to government. In that case, it would

no longer be the party of the July 19 revolution and would become a social democratic party. According to this assumption, the FSLN would no longer act in the interests of the gains of the revolution and above all would accept the dissolution of the army.

There is little chance that this hypothesis will take form. The attitude taken by the FSLN, by its leadership and its ranks, after the announcement of the election results points in the opposite direction. I, therefore, remain optimistic about the impossibility of such a hypothesis.

The second possibility is that the FSLN leadership may take a hard-line position and accept no agreement to smooth the way for Violeta Chamorro to take power.

The FSLN would, in that case, insist on holding on to the commands and leadership of the army. In that event, imperialist intervention is quite possible. The US will wait patiently for agreements to be arrived at for the transfer of government. If that does not happen, the decision to invade Nicaragua has already been made.

The final possibility is that the FSLN will be forced to negotiate about some aspects of the state apparatus and even discuss the problem of the army, in order to give no pretext to UNO or its boss, the United

States, for an invasion. At the same time, it will develop a class struggle policy and begin progressively to create clear areas of ungovernability, winning the majority of the population over to the legitimacy of the revolution. In this case, the question is no longer whether this process lasts two years or six years, but how to regain political hegemony in the society in a very complex international context.

The FSLN (along with the entire Latin American revolutionary vanguard) faces a very difficult political situation. *Perestroika*, the aggressive policy of imperialism, the failure of the nationalist currents and so on are all favorable elements for a ferocious international anti-Communist campaign. The fables about the "end of history" or the need for "weak" ideologies clash with a social reality of hunger and poverty.

A new chapter in the struggle of the peoples of Latin America is being written. As in 1979, the FSLN finds itself today at the head of this struggle. Despite its election defeat and some errors, the FSLN is still the vanguard of the Latin American revolutionary organizations. ★

# Mass revolt against neo-colonial austerity

**I**N THE SPACE of a few weeks, Niger has been swept by a series of harshly repressed student strikes and Benin has experienced profound political instability after a wave of strikes by students and workers. After Senegal, which has been for several years the setting for a social and political crisis punctuated by student and high school strikes, Gabon and the Ivory Coast now experience in their turn political troubles and riots. Finally, Kenya and Mozambique are facing problems of the same order.

Of these six countries currently experiencing political disorder, four belong to the French-dominated area of Africa. Four, Senegal, Gabon, the Ivory Coast and Kenya have openly pro-Western regimes. The Mozambique of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) claimed adherence until recently to the socialist camp and to Marxism<sup>1</sup>. As for Benin, a tiny French neo-colony and a member of the Franc Zone, its regime had opted some time ago for "Marxism-Leninism", or rather a derisive caricature of the Stalinist model perpetrated by a populist military team. Despite their differences, all these countries have been affected by grave social conflicts.

Students and high school students have most frequently been at the heart of these mobilizations but, depending on the country, teachers, civil servants and blue collar public service workers have also participated. At least in the case of Senegal, Gabon and the Ivory Coast, the mobilizations have taken the form of a popular explosion with street occupations<sup>2</sup>. In these three countries as in Benin, the movements have taken as their target the head of state, demanding his resignation, whilst also attacking the corruption of the regimes and opposing a series of austerity measures<sup>3</sup>.

Some general lessons can be drawn from these popular opposition movements. Firstly, in none of these countries does there exist a genuine political force organizing the mobilizations, whether or not a structured opposition exists to the regimes in power. Some political groups or personalities can have an important influence on the demonstrations, but it is necessary to bear in mind that these are countries where the workers movement is extremely weak and often has no organic independence from the regime in power.

**6** Anti-imperialist consciousness, not to

**THE AFRICAN continent is currently being swept by a wave of social unrest that speaks volumes on the state of political and economic decay in these countries. At a moment when the victory of capitalism over socialism is supposedly being celebrated, it is important to review the damage wreaked, and more bluntly the crimes committed, by imperialist domination in black Africa.**

**CLAUDE GABRIEL**

mention class consciousness, remains very weak.

Secondly, it is important to underline the ease with which these social movements have rapidly evolved into full scale riots with looting, mobilizing the youth of the poor areas. Thus it would be mistaken to conclude that what has been happening represents a simple mounting of political and social radicalization in these countries. The process is more complex and more ambivalent to the extent that, in the absence of an alternative to the regimes in power, these movements also express forms of social decomposition. Today, there is a serious risk of these states suffering what it is now fashionable to call an "implosion", without any social force existing in opposition which is capable of expressing a true alternative.

## External factors overwhelm internal efforts

The destructive effect of the capitalist crisis on these societies is one of the principal causes of these events. Their destabilization and their decomposition as an effect of exogenous factors is today proceeding far more quickly than their ability to engender political and social forces capable of representing an alternative project to neo-colonial chaos. The fate of black Africa today must be at the centre of any indictment of imperialism.

This is because capitalist anarchy has

led to appalling damage generating very rapid and brutal social mutations;

- The long term debt of black Africa is today 19 times greater than it was in 1970. It is now equal to its gross national product (as a comparison, the Latin American debt represents 60% of GNP). Despite the negotiation of a hundred reschedulings in the course of this period, the arrears continue to grow<sup>4</sup>.

- Two thirds of the rural population and one third of the urban population live below the poverty level. The rate of infant mortality was 104 per 1,000 in 1985, against 71 per 1,000 in the third world as a whole. In the same year, "only 65% of the urban population and 26% of the rural population had access to clean water, against 75% and 42% for the developing economies as a whole. Life expectancy at birth was 49 for men and 53 for women, against 60 and 62 respectively for the developing world as a whole"<sup>5</sup>.

- To this poverty must be added a terrible oppression of women, a very low rate of use of contraception, and massive illiteracy amongst women. The rate of demographic growth has increased regularly in the course of the last period to reach 3.2%, the highest figure in the world. If these tendencies maintain themselves, the population of black Africa will be more than a billion by 2010<sup>6</sup>.

- Because of this demographic growth and the general situation of very great penury, ecological problems have taken a dramatic turn. The use of firewood as the sole popular means of cooking has led to a rate of deforestation 29 times greater than the speed of replanting. Sahelian Africa has been the most affected by this, losing 4% of its trees per year. At the same time, 55 million Africans face a shortage of wood. Moreover we are witnessing an erosion and a chronic exhaustion of cultivated land leading in many places to a lowering of agricultural productivity, and thus a colossal deficit of food production.

1. Mozambique is also the scene of a civil war against the South African backed Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO). This devastating war has brought the country to its knees.

2. In Senegal the crisis of relations with neighboring Mauritania allowed the regime to benefit for a time from the social and racial outlet represented by the fury directed against the Mauritanian community. In the Ivory Coast, the press has reported looting directed against Lebanese traders.

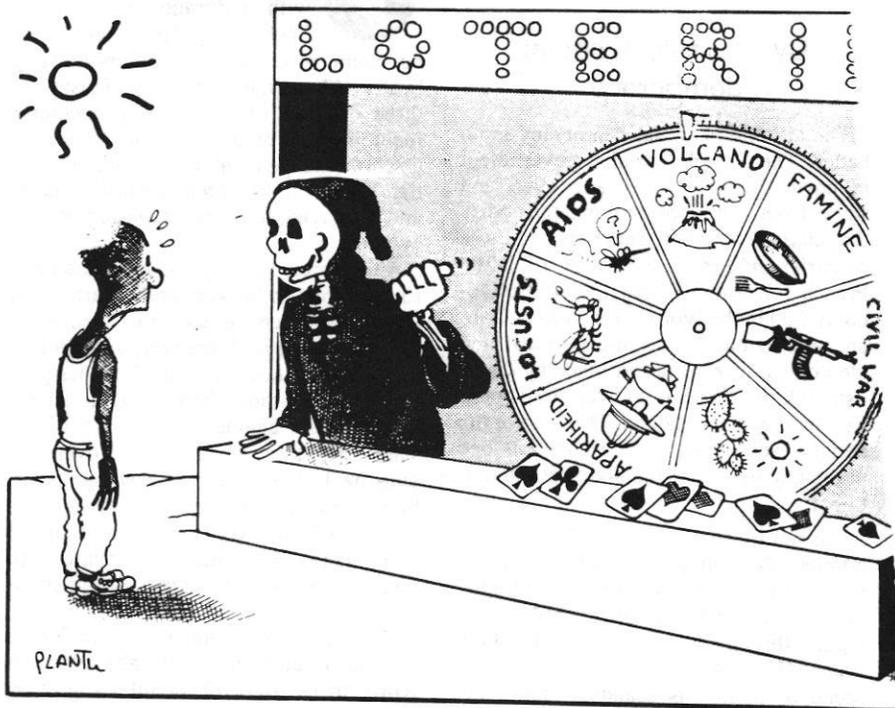
3. Senegal is the only one of these countries where a genuine structured political opposition exists, although it gives neither leadership nor perspectives to the mass

movement. It is again in Senegal, but also in Benin, that the trade unions have played a more or less significant role in the recent events.

4. See "From Crisis to Lasting Growth", published by the World Bank, Washington 1989.

5. Ismael Serageldin, "Poverty, Adjustment and Growth in Africa", published by the World Bank, Washington 1989.

6. These figures imply a rate of fertility of 6.5% per woman. 5% of couples use contraception against 30% in India and 70% in China. African women grow around 80% of foodstuffs, but receive only 10% of monetary income and possess around 1% of property.



● In 1987, for 450 million inhabitants, the gross domestic product for Black Africa was \$150 milliard dollars, scarcely more than that of Belgium. In some countries, the drop in income per inhabitant has reached 25%. In the course of the ten last years, taking account of the fall in discountable profits, numerous African countries have suffered from falling investment and a process of deindustrialization.

● The rapid evolution of techniques of production and changing needs in raw materials in the "developed" economies has destabilized black African economies. The changes in eating habits in the consumer countries and the growing use of substitute products modifies the international division of labour issuing from the time of colonization<sup>7</sup>. As a result, African countries are experiencing overproduction of coffee, chocolate, peanuts, copper etc. which leads to a fall in prices on the world market. Thus, Africa's share of world trade tends to decrease, making the possibility of repaying the debt still more remote.

● Corruption is rife among the ruling cliques and constitutes their chief means of enriching themselves. The crisis has not stopped this, rather the opposite, but on the other hand it has limited the extent to which the crumbs can fall down to the masses. Imperialism has maintained and reproduced this situation as an instrument for the control and reproduction of ruling class layers. It essentially consists of a private management of "public" property and a massive diversion of "aid".

● All the regimes of Black Africa, with-

out exception, are either dictatorships or highly repressive states. Under one form or another, the state is fused with the dominant party (often a single party), and the trade union movement is in the majority of cases subordinate to it.

● Foreign "aid and cooperation" have represented supplementary means of reproducing dependence. Far from allowing these countries to "take off", they have facilitated the massive presence of European state functionaries and entrepreneurs. In many countries, they are far more numerous than at the time of independence. Cultural and linguistic domination has enclosed these countries in a total alienation.

In conclusion, it could be said that the last twenty years have cost Black Africa more dearly than the slave trade at the beginning of colonization. At a time when many judge the "successes" of capitalism by the sole measure of the German or Japanese gross domestic product, it is appropriate to remember that the world capitalist economy forms an interlocking whole. The manner in which the imperialist countries have been able to limit the effect on themselves of the long depression which began in the early 1970s is not irrelevant to the fate of the countries of the third world. Part of the cost of the crisis has been displaced towards the latter. Africa's situation today is not a marginal phenomenon. The recurrent factors of the crisis now engender the phenomena of absolute decline and chaos. There is only one defendant at this trial — the world capitalist economy.

It is in this general context that the recent social explosions must be understood. The youth who demonstrate in the streets constitute in a way the generation of "structural adjustments". In the protest movements you will find, for example, students who know that, despite the shortage of technicians and teachers, they will be unemployed when they leave university because of budgetary austerity. The movement also includes those whose standard of living is directly affected when the IMF and the World Bank impose "realistic prices" for everyday consumer goods or demand the reduction of public spending.

This is not to deny the excessive burgeoning of certain sectors of the public services, but it is necessary to understand that this has served the social stability of the neo-colonial regimes for thirty years. Now wage earners are asked to pay the cost of this without any alternative policy at the very moment when foreign industrial investments are declining. And to the extent that there is no decline in the corruption of the ruling layers, the budget cuts hit hardest the already derisory social services budgets.

### Highest rates of illiteracy in world

In Zaire, for example, 20% of primary school teachers were sacked between 1983 and 1984, although the rate of illiteracy in Africa amongst those over 15 is 54% (as against 36% in Asia and 17% in Latin America)<sup>8</sup>.

It requires all the cynicism of the functionaries of the World Bank to defend the sweeping austerity measures whilst adding that it "is necessary to recognize nonetheless that changes of this importance are accompanied by grave disturbances of the conditions of existence for numerous sectors of the population"<sup>9</sup>. In a country like the Ivory Coast, the sectors affected by a 25% drop in income between 1980 and 1985 were not the ruling layers and the family of President Houphouët Boigny. The average annual income per inhabitant, which was, according to the World Bank, \$1150 in 1980, fell to \$650 in 1985. At the same time Houphouët Boigny has had a Pharaonic cathedral built to signify the grandeur of his reign<sup>10</sup>.

Two other lessons are worth drawing from the situation which grips the countries of Black Africa. First, it illustrates the failure of the Lomé Convention linking, amongst others, the majority of the African countries to the European Community. The Convention is supposed to remedy the effects of unequal exchange notably thanks to its compensatory mechanisms

7. See IV 140, May 2, 1988.

8. Ismael Serageldin, director of the Department for Western and Central Africa at the World Bank.

9. See *Le Monde*, March 6, 1990.



(Stabex and Sysmin) for the African economies loss of export profits. In so far as they amount only to an *a posteriori* rectification of the effects of the market, these mechanisms have been incapable of remedying the cumulative deterioration of the terms of exchange<sup>11</sup>. At a time when the EEC is trying to find the funds necessary for its intervention in Eastern Europe, it is doubtful that it will be able to devote significant resources to the Lomé Convention in the future.

The second point worth making is that the Franc Zone, which supposedly exists to protect its member states through the means of a currency with a rate pegged to the French franc, no longer seems to make any difference to the performance of the economy. Of the six countries hit by open political crisis today, four are members of the Franc Zone and traditionally under the domination of French interests. Indeed it is distressing to note the width of the national consensus in France on the question of relations with Black Africa. The unspoken most often serves as a political line for all the big parliamentary forces and the mass media.

All sorts of excuses and explanations are given to justify the existence of the African dictators. Often it is explained that, in Africa, there has always been a tradition of the "chief", and one of the principal leaders of the French right, Jacques Chirac, was able without discomfort to explain that "for countries on the

path of development, multipartyism is a political error and a luxury".

### Cynical role of social democracy

The attitude of social democracy is no better. The French Socialist government in power between 1981 and 1986 and since 1988, has done nothing to modify the relations of submission between these countries and France. There are still 2,200 French soldiers in Senegal, 3,900 in Djibouti, 500 in the Ivory Coast, 400 in Gabon, and so on. The whole political and ideological arsenal put in place by Gaullism to keep a strict hold over these countries has been maintained. The head of the Senegalese regime, Abdou Diouf, is one of the key figures of the Socialist International.

It is not by chance that the French government decided on February 28, in the midst of the Gabonese crisis, to extradite one of the principal opponents of the regime through an emergency procedure. Francophone Africa continues to be the scene of numerous scandals and shady affairs which inevitably suck in all those who are in power.

All this is not without consequence for the behaviour of the workers movement, because of the corrupting effects of the so-called French mission in Africa. Whereas the French left should give its complete support to the African people in tackling the economic, political and military problems that face them, instead we have the sad spectacle of a French Socialist Party that wants to be the best possible manager of "French" interests.

In the absence of strong support from the workers' movement in the imperialist countries, the opposition forces, today in Senegal or in the Ivory Coast, tomorrow in Nigeria or Kenya, will have grave difficulties in establishing a relationship of forces which is favourable to them. Instead of asking what the peoples of Africa could do to overthrow the existing regimes, the European workers movement must rather ask itself what it can do to change a world which now condemns 450 million human beings to chaos and slow death.★

10. In 1988-89, the regime in the Ivory Coast attempted to withhold its cocoa so as to put pressure on world prices. The operation was a total fiasco and the regime had to bend to the rules of the market. But political measures of this type taken by enfeebled regimes show the extent to which disorder and the irrational have entered into the relations between these states and imperialism.

11. See IV 51, April 23, 1984.

12. 14 African countries are members of the Franc Zone. Since 1948, the CFA (African Financial Community) franc is equal to 0.02 French francs. Through a complicated mechanism involving community management of the centralised foreign holdings of the member states, French funds were supposed to guarantee without limit and a priori the deficits and currencies of the latter.

ON JANUARY 20, a state of siege was proclaimed in Haiti, with a duration of 30 days. Scores of people were arrested. Some were deported, others horribly beaten. Already, in November of last year, three officials of popular organizations, including one of the principal leaders of CATH (Independent Federation of Haitian Workers), had been arrested, tortured and displayed, unrecognizable, on the television.

And yet, on January 30, under the pressure of foreign backers and a part of the Haitian bourgeoisie, General Avril lifted the state of siege. Moreover, on February 7, he announced "a general amnesty in favour of all those implicated in crimes and offences against the security of the state". The three prisoners of November, who he had accused of wishing to kill him, were also released, albeit in very poor condition. Avril called for dialogue and made "a formal commitment to respect the rules of democratic functioning".

The Electoral Council has reaffirmed that local elections will take place in April, to be followed in July-August by the election of the two governing chambers and in October-November the election of the president of the republic. Despite Avril's volte-face, which does not conceal the continuing repression, the majority of political parties are refusing to participate in the elections as long as he remains in power. But do they think that the simple replacement of Avril, without touching the state apparatus (and who could touch it?) would give them the guarantee of free elections? The crisis of the "democratic transition" in Haiti exists for profound reasons which we examine below.

### A parasitic bourgeoisie

The major part of the Haitian bourgeoisie is parasitic, turned towards the exterior, and more particularly towards the United States, where it channels a large proportion of its profits. It has primarily invested in merchant activities or served as a broker for foreign capital. The sector of industry turned towards the interior market is rickety in the extreme. Industrial parks are consecrated to the assembly of imported products and are almost immediately moved abroad. The part of the bourgeoisie that finds itself at the centre of economic power already occupied this position under Jean-Claude Duvalier (Haiti's president from 1971 to 1986. His father, François Duvalier, was president from 1957 to 1971). It is an alliance of two components. The first could be called the "modernist" sector of the new bourgeoisie that developed itself under the Duvaliers after having seized control of the state apparatus. Under Jean-Claude Duvalier, it was able to expand its activities, in general non-productive. The other

# Haiti: a democratic transition?

**ON MARCH 10, General Prosper Avril, president of Haiti's military government since the coup of September 17, 1988, was forced to resign following a week of demonstrations that had left at least 20 people dead. Avril left Haiti for Florida on a U.S. Air Force plane two days later. Meanwhile, Erta Pascal Trouillot, the only woman on the Haitian Supreme Court, has emerged from negotiations between the opposition and the military as a caretaker president until elections can be held within the next 90 days. However, Haiti remains tense and rumours of a counter-coup abound. The following article, written before the fall of Avril, graphically underlines the difficulties which any "democratic transition" in Haiti will face.**

**ARTHUR MAHON**

component of the alliance dominates the import-export activities. It has its origins in the bourgeoisie, often of foreign origin, which grew up in the shadow of the U.S. occupation (1915-1934) and led the country after this. The big coffee exporters form the nucleus of this fraction.

They were for a brief period badly treated by François Duvalier. But the regime needs them. They have always succeeded in maintaining their influence within the state apparatus and have simply had to cede a little space to the Duvalierist entrepreneurs. The coffee sector is in decline, and the exporters are looking for new sources of profit in industry and the service sector. Linked to agricultural activities, they are in contact with the notables and grandees of the rural world and share their concerns. These two sectors are fundamentally conservative and above all are seeking stability.

They support, not without some reservations, the economic propositions advanced by the U.S. experts for 20 years — the abolition of all obstacles to the development of an economy based on economic liberalism and the import of foreign capital. Such a course would hit hardest the peasant sector and food-producing activities. The American plan enjoys the support of the "liberal" wing of the bourgeoisie above all. This latter, which suffered particularly under the François Duvalier regime, profitably invested some of its capital abroad and returned to Haiti under Jean-Claude, whilst keeping one foot outside the country. It has invested notably in the assembly plants, often in association with U.S. capital. Faced with the growing crisis of traditional agriculture, many capitalists wish to invest in the

new economic sectors (subcontracting, tourism, services, representation of foreign firms). But there isn't enough room for everyone. And this wing of the bourgeoisie resents the fact that the Duvalierists use their control of the state apparatus to compete with them.

There is a sector of the bourgeoisie which the American plan, applied with force in 1986 and 1987, in no way assists. This is the sector of the "new Duvalierist bourgeoisie" which developed under the protection of François Duvalier, basing itself on a protectionist economic policy (in force until the end of the 1960s). Already under Jean-Claude Duvalier, this sector was opposed to the economic turn that began the shift towards economic liberalism and the penetration of foreign capital. The American plan also worried some big landowners and village notables, who have traditionally dominated the countryside. Along with the petit bourgeoisie which constituted the administration under the dictatorship, these social layers made up Duvalier's base: Whilst undoubtedly in decline, they maintained a considerable social weight.

## American plan implies administrative reform

The implementation of the American plan would imply an administrative reform and the dumping of a considerable part of its personnel. It would imply also an attack on the system of "section chiefs" in the countryside — "sheriffs" with total power, even including judicial power, in their zones of activity. They are responsible for the collection of the multiplicity of taxes which weigh on the pea-

santry (taxes for moving animals, market taxes, taxes for passes...) and constitute a good part of state revenues. Obviously, they embezzle whatever money they need. They are more like racketeers than tax collectors. They are supported by numerous deputies, who constitute uncontrollable gangs. Along with the big landowners, the moneylenders, and the judges, the section chiefs are part of the notables of the countryside. These last often have family links, and they constitute a veritable local mafia, holding in their hands all the essentials of power, economic as much as political. Uprooting this system would be a difficult task.

## Rich pickings from state apparatus

In a society as impoverished as Haiti, where the economy is in profound crisis, the state apparatus is a stake of considerable value. It is virtually an economic sector in itself. It is a supplier of jobs. In Haiti, a dozen people live off one salary. The state, then, is the inexhaustible source that sustains an economy of total corruption. Under the Duvaliers, the army, unlike the tontons-macoutes, profited relatively little from the state. During the four years it has been in power, all the rackets have served to enrich it. Today, it is not even a question of embezzlement of funds — the Presidential Guard which constitutes General Avril's power base openly helps itself from the state coffers. It is out of the question that it should give up such a pot of gold!

In these conditions, who in the dominant classes and the state apparatus is interested in free elections? In the final count, very few people — the "liberal" wing of the bourgeoisie, and the layers of the middle bourgeoisie who trail in its wake. The other sectors are bound by too many common interests to risk upheavals.

After the fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier, in February 1986, the "liberal" wing of the bourgeoisie thought that it could take control of the state apparatus. In spite of the obstacles created by the regime of General Namphy, it managed to have a constitution, the text of which was written by its supporters, put to the vote at a referendum in March 1987. One of its articles envisaged a ten year period during which those implicated in the Duvalier era would not be able to hold elected office. When this constitution was approved by an overwhelming percentage of voters, many thought that a page was being turned in the history of Haiti.

Unfortunately this belief was based on a misunderstanding of the text of this constitution and of the fact that free elections were unacceptable for the Duvalierists. It also involved a grave underestimation of their strength and the social sectors which supported them. The trial of strength came during the summer of 1987. After having banned a trade union federation, General

Namphy decided to dissolve the electoral council, independent of the government, which was charged with organizing the elections. Strikes and demonstrations followed. The objective was the ousting of the military government. Faced with this danger, the Duvalierists mobilized their forces. In the towns, the army remained in control. In the countryside, section chiefs, soldiers, and gangs of old or new tontons-macoutes retook the offensive and imposed their will, sometimes at the price of massacres, as in the Jean-Rabel district. Therein lies one of the contradictions of the American plan — the system of the section chiefs and the tontons-macoutes is still indispensable for the maintenance of order in the countryside.

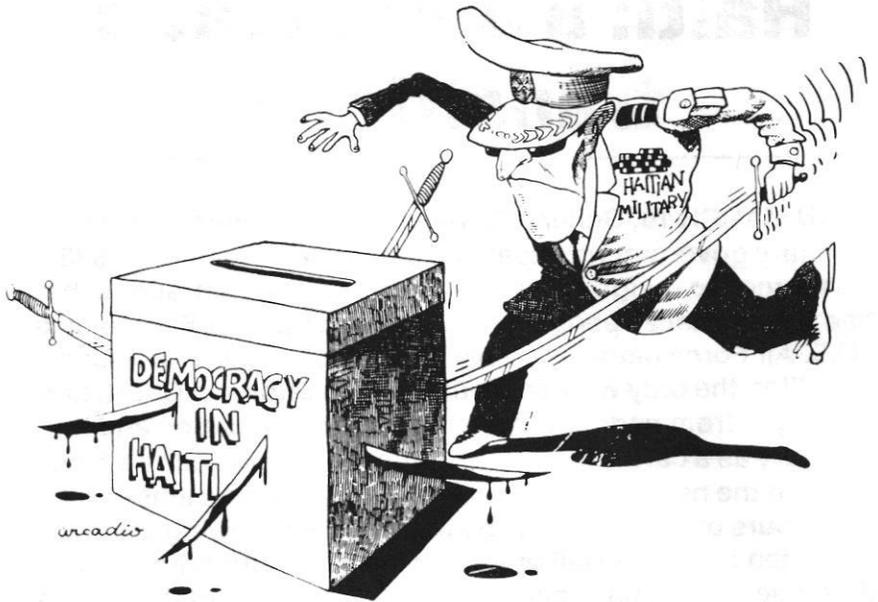
### 1987 elections drowned in blood

Finally, the elections of November 29, 1987, were drowned in blood. On that day, hired thugs and soldiers attacked the polling stations and sowed terror in the capital and in certain regions. The organizations of the "democratic sector", more or less linked to the Socialist International, subsequently declared that they had not thought that the Duvalierists would dare to behave in such a fashion. In the preceding weeks they had preferred to close their eyes to the exactions of the Duvalierists and the soldiers, and had in no way encouraged the population to organize its defence. This was a grave setback for these organizations. A great part of the population had followed them in what was a true electoral adventure.

After this the population is no longer ready to place its confidence in these bankrupt politicians, nor to participate in elections, which could end up once more in a massacre. It knows full well that it is illusory to struggle for free elections as long as the sectors which are opposed to them are so powerful and have armed force. It is not disposed to pay the price of battles between politicians and knows well that it is not through elections that change will come — even if an honest man could be elected, he would be a prisoner of the military.

After the army had made Leslie Manigat president of the republic, a reversal of alliances took place. The "liberal" bourgeoisie had until then supported the attempts of the "democratic sector" and the so-called "civil society" (bringing together fractions of the petit and middle bourgeoisie) to oust the Duvalierists from the state apparatus. These sectors drew their prestige from their ability to channel the popular mobilizations, strongly helped in this by the use of radios.

During the first half of 1988, noting the evolution of the relation of forces, the "liberal" bourgeoisie turned towards the rest of the dominant classes. And after the overthrow of Manigat, the MIDH (Movement for the Institution of Democracy in



Haiti) of Marc Bazin, protégé of U.S. imperialism, advocated "a realistic appreciation of the forces opposing each other on the socio-political chessboard" and accepted General Namphy's offer of dialogue. It was followed down this road by the PANPRA (Haitian Revolutionary Progressive Nationalist Party), today a member of the Socialist International.

After the coming to power of General Avril, in September 1988, the two parties tightened still further their alliance and accorded de facto critical support to the military regime. They presented themselves as representatives of the financial backers represented by the United States and France, hoping thus to influence Avril's policy, and persuade him to resign after the elections.

### Avril plays several games at once

General Avril has been trying to play several games at the same time. He is conscious of the grave social crisis that Haiti is experiencing, and of the necessity for a strong state power. "The Presidential seat is too hot for a civilian", he explained with lucidity. Besides, he is not going to do anything that does not have the support of the thousand men who constitute the Presidential Guard. It is the latter which saved him from an attempted coup in April 1988. It is today a coalition of gangs that breaks into houses and sows terror when night falls, without sparing the bourgeoisie. Foreign aid has been strongly reduced since November 1987, and now that Avril has had to put a brake on the cocaine traffic, the soldiers help themselves to the state coffers and take what they need from the civilian population.

Acting under the pressure of these new "Tontons-Macoutes", Prosper Avril has become an uncontrollable element in the

eyes of a good part of the bourgeoisie, as was the case with Namphy when he was overthrown in September 1988. This is also the opinion of the imperialist powers who had thought they could rely on their men inside the army. Prosper Avril must at the same time maintain his support in the Presidential Guard and the Duvalierist sectors, and remain within the limits acceptable to the United States. From this dilemma stems an apparently incoherent policy — he announces the holding of elections, but does everything to remain in power, he nominates an electoral council but goes out of his way to block its functioning. For their part, the United States have despatched to Haiti an ambassador experienced in difficult missions. In the 1970-72 period, Al Adams was one of the functionaries of the U.S. embassy in Saigon, and worked towards the "Vietnamization" of the war. In 1983-85, he was assistant in the struggle against terrorism. If he does not succeed in organizing elections and erecting a democratic facade, at least he will be in a position to help Avril to break the popular movements. And is that not the essential thing?

Certainly the situation today is hardly favourable to the popular organizations. After the mobilizations that followed the overthrow of Namphy in 1988, the population is once more enclosed in silence and fear, as it had been a year before. However the fire continues to burn under the cinders. The massive success of a number of general strikes testifies to this. And, while their base is certainly narrower than in 1986 and 1987, the popular organizations have succeeded in structuring themselves and have maintained their activity, often more thought out than in the preceding years. Al Adams knows well that it is in this deep going activity, axised around a long term perspective, that the real danger for the established order resides. ★

# East Germany: the new *Anschluss*

IN THE LAST MONTHS of 1989, the regime in East Germany was overthrown by a mass movement. The fall of the Stalinist regime in Czechoslovakia soon followed and a few weeks later the Ceausescu dictatorship in Romania toppled. These events meant the end of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe, and at the same time the disintegration of the organizations intended to integrate the Soviet bloc economies, COMECON, and the Warsaw Pact military alliance. The postwar order in Europe, its division into an Imperialist bloc and a bloc of bureaucratized post-capitalist states is dissolving. This signifies a profound change in the situation in Europe and a reinforcement of imperialism.

ANGELA KLEIN

**U**NLIKE in the Soviet Union or Hungary, the overthrow of the East German regime was carried out by a popular mobilization: this was a revolutionary overturn in the sense that "those on top could no longer rule in the old way, and those below could no longer live in the old way". From the beginning, the motor force of the revolution was democratic demands: the right to free and public expression, an independent judiciary, pluralism, free elections, rule of law, and popular participation in the running of society and state.

## Opposition called on people not to leave GDR

The slogan that summed up this mood best was "we are the people". In mid-September, the opposition forces organized to exploit the paralysis and passivity gripping the ruling SED's Politburo. They called on public opinion not to seek the solution for their problems by fleeing to West Germany, but to attempt a revolutionary renewal of the GDR. These forces included the United Left (VL), the New Forum (NF), "Democracy Now", and later on the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

The process of political revolution in East Germany has been marked by special characteristics that distinguish it from the other East European countries.

First of all the reform process was much delayed in East Germany. As a result it erupted with all the more violence. Since 1953 there has been no mass movement in the GDR. Before the building of the wall the masses found a way out for their discontent through leaving for the West. A total of 3.5 million people, mostly young,

have left the GDR since its foundation. After 1961, only a few people took the risk of flight; some tried to test out whatever field of action was open to them inside the existing structures, but most took the road to "inner emigration". Periods of reform were always the result of similar moves in the USSR.

The authorities, however, did not want to get involved with *perestroika*. It correctly feared that the process would get out of control and would mean the end of the SED regime. As the leadership of a "rump state" constantly compared with the other, capitalist, half, the SED feared political and economic liberalization more than any other East European regime, more even than the Soviet leadership.

This attitude led the East German popu-

lation to abandon all hope that the regime could reform itself. For many, above all the young, who did not feel tied to the country by decades of constructive work, the only possibility to "realize a better life" was to leave the GDR.

The possibility of mass flight appeared when Hungary announced the opening of its borders with Austria in May 1989. For the East German citizens who traditionally spend their holidays in Hungary, a direct route to mass emigration was in front of them. The mass exodus began in August and continues to this day. This situation where it is possible for people to emigrate en masse from a country whose government they reject without being able to change, is unique in Europe. External circumstances, language, culture and common traditions facilitate the move to a country that they do not consider to be foreign.

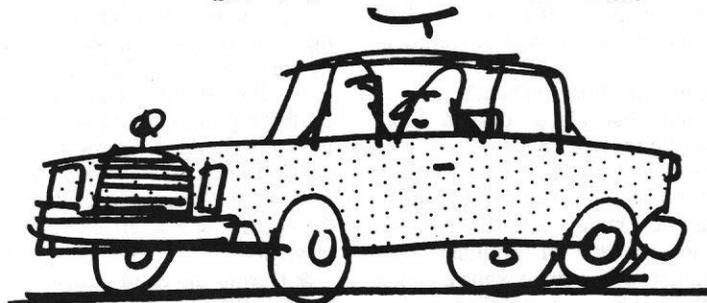
## GDR migrants get special treatment in West

On the other side, the West Germany government, pretending to speak in the name of "all Germans", offers them, from the first day of their arrival, every possibility for immediate integration into society (money, housing, work and so on). The citizens of East Germany enjoy, because they are Germans, privileges compared to other foreigners and even to West Germans from the poorer classes.

It was the daily flight of thousands of people, then the process of organization of the previously illegal opposition, and finally the development of an ever growing mass movement, that led to the fall of the regime. These elements, added to the sudden opening of the wall, that has presented the GDR with extraordinary economic problems, have determined the rhythm and direction of political development in the following weeks. These general conditions have also influenced the formation of new political forces:

- The revolution took place in the

I'VE FOUND A SUPPLY  
OF IMMIGRANT WORKERS  
WHO SPEAK GERMAN AND  
DON'T LIKE TRADE UNIONS!



Pessin

street, whether on the road out or in the demonstrations. There was no political leadership. The opposition groups tried to have an influence, but they did not organize this.

● At the start, there was no process of self-organization by workers in the factories. Later, a number of groups, notably the United Left (VL) tried to stimulate it, but it has been difficult to get off the ground. Workers made up the majority of demonstrators. They wanted to put pressure on the regime to undertake reforms. Insofar as they were disappointed many of them packed their bags and went West. This remains a simpler alternative than that of building structures and alternative forms of rule. After the fall of the wall, another possible solution appeared, the simplest of all: reunification with West Germany.

At the start the dominant tendency was towards a "renewal of Socialism". In mid-November, the Sociological Institute at the Academy of Sciences stated that 87% of East German citizens believed in the possibility of constructing democratic socialism. On November 24, 83% were still for keeping the GDR as an independent and Socialist state. Only 10% were for reunification.

### Mood changes suddenly in Leipzig

A few days later, on November 27, at the regular "Monday demo" in Leipzig, the mood changed: 200,000 people demanded not only free elections, free speech and the punishment of ex-functionaries of the regime, but also "Germany, one fatherland". The climate also changed to the right. The demonstrators began to be more and more aggressive towards anything that seemed left-wing. Nationalist, xenophobic and even anti-semitic slogans multiplied. Today, it is risky for the left to take part in the Leipzig demonstration. Only small groups dare to do it, distributing leaflets saying: "Don't throw away the GDR". They are abused and physically attacked by the demonstrators. New Forum orators are interrupted by slogans such as "Reds, get off the demo" and "put the left in concentration camps". The Republicans, an extreme right-wing force in West Germany, who agitate openly and provoke violent confrontations, are tolerated. According to recent opinion polls, 76% of the GDR population are now in favour of reunification.

How to explain this turnabout?

● In the first place, despite rapid advances, the process of self-reform and self-renewal has been too slow and has appeared too hesitant to be really credible and arouse new hopes. The SED faces an impossible job, that of simultaneously dismantling its own regime while creating the backbone of a new political leadership, that is to say, it is supposed to both

dissolve its power and keep it.

● At first, all the attempts of the SED reformers to get the party to regain the initiative, while reforming it, were successfully thwarted. In September/October, changes only took place under popular pressure and always "too late" for the masses to have confidence in the SED. Ten weeks of mass flight passed before Honecker's resignation (October 18); two months passed between October 9, when the regime renounced a "Chinese" repression and December 1, when it renounced the leading role of the party. The conflicts around the dissolution of the *Stasi* (political police) reinforced the widespread fear that the SED was organizing the reform only as a way of safeguarding its power under another form.

● During the Extraordinary SED Congress, that opened on December 8 against the will of the old leadership, the reformers took the leadership of the party. But they too proved unable to give a clear lead for renewal. The delegates settled their accounts with the Stalinist past and clearly came out for political pluralism. But the Congress imagined that, by purging the conservative wing from the party and the old guard from the state structures, renewal was achieved. It did not throw down the existing structures of domination and made no effort to push forward autonomous citizens' initiatives, which could have formed the basis of a new political order. At the same time, it has been getting ready for the electoral contest with other opposition forces. "Strengthen the SED" remains their slogan. A lot of oppositionists were disappointed by the outcome of the Congress.

During January, the disbelief of the population in the possibility of the state and party reforming itself were further reinforced. At a leadership meeting, the new party boss, Gregor Gysi, claimed that the party had the right to keep the fortune that it had accumulated during the period when it held monolithic power (and therefore the right for the party to take from the state). The new Prime Minister, Hans Modrow, brushed aside the Round Table that was set up in mid-December, declaring that he could not accept that it should put any pressure on him. Everybody, he said, must respect the existing rule of law (that is to say the rule of bureaucratic laws).

Finally, the government antagonized many with its purely formal dissolution of the *Stasi*. In reality, it proposed to keep it by creating a new "Service for Protection of the Constitution". Only when the other coalition parties threatened to leave the government did Modrow give in to the demand of the Round Table and promise to delay the formation of a successor to the *Stasi* until after the parliamentary elections.

● During the extraordinary SED Congress at the end of January, it became clear to everybody that the reformers have



Well at least I've shown you the countryside (from Polityka)

failed to establish the party (now called the Party of Democratic Socialism — PDS) as a leading force in political life. The entire leadership of the Dresden district left the party the same weekend. They have been followed by a whole series of tendencies constructed around diverse platforms. The party has begun to break up. Its membership has dropped from 2.3 million in October to 800,000, and the bottom has not yet been reached. The opinion polls give the SED/PDS some 5% of the votes for the March elections.

### Opposition groups fail to find alternative

● In this short time, the opposition groups could not find a way to set up a credible alternative. The only exception has been the social democrats. These weaknesses are due to the circumstances under which they had to work during the SED regime. They had no possibility to take root in society (which applies above all to the left and its aspirations to acquire a working class base) or to organize their supporters.

Their political preoccupations were democracy, peace, human rights and anti-fascism. Only a small part of them had asked the question of how an alternative non-capitalist economic order was supposed to work.

The intelligentsia, which was previously almost entirely connected with the SED, has been profoundly marked by the work of building a post-capitalist state for 40 years, a state that they have often had to defend against the systematic attempts of the FRG to call into question the existence of the GDR. Its most well-known representatives are on the left. It is characterized by a serious attitude to theory and by a thoroughgoing assimilation of socialist ideas, including from the West. Many of

the "thinkers" of the West German left (Bloch, Dutschke, Rabehl) came from the East.

Their first analyses of the explosive situation were made in 1988. Even so, the opposition was surprised by the strength of the eruption and the direction that it took. Above all, the political revolution found itself faced by a problem that it (as well as the West German left) was not ready for: the sudden opening of the wall, and, connected with this, a sudden confrontation with the social and political reality of West German capitalism. Apart from the VL, almost nobody had any concepts capable of dealing with this situation.

The opposition, that had been united in the fight against the Stalinist regime, began very quickly to divide over the question: private or collective property? Market economy or preservation of elements of socialist planning? Along with reunification, these themes are the dividing lines between the left and the right. For the left-wing of the opposition, this division began to become more important than that with the SED.

● The collapse of the SED regime has gone along with the exposure of its bad management of the economy. Until now, the fact that this country, even if it did not offer the same standard of living as the FRG, was nonetheless the leading COMECON country at an international level, in 13th place, alongside Britain, was of some comfort to the population. The revelations have been a shock.

Previously secret information has come to light revealing:

● The internal debt has risen to 130 billion East German marks.

● The external debt is \$20 billion, that is \$1,250 for each inhabitant. The director of the Commercial Coordination Service, Golodkowski, responsible for managing currency exchange, had banked enormous sums abroad, notably in Switzerland and Luxemburg. In order to get currency, Golodkowski had organized arms deals with, among others, Iran and Iraq.

● Six million marks were put annually

at the disposal of the families of Politburo members to supply the luxurious ghetto at Wandlitz.

● The colossal corruption and quasi-feudal privileges of the nomenklatura (hunting pavilions, private parks for hunting, constructing and repair teams for their private use and so on).

● The industrial installations in the GDR are, with a few exceptions, so out of date that, from the point of view of competition on the world market, there is no point in modernizing them. Productivity in the GDR is 40% of that in West Germany.

● Terrible environmental destruction has taken place, causing an annual loss of some 30 billion GDR marks and requiring in some cases the closure of factories.

### Cities of South of GDR in ruins

And, as has been known for a long time, the buildings of the cities, especially in the South, are in ruins; the supply of high quality goods is very poor; waste in the production process is enormous and so on.

With the opening of the wall, millions of people were able to see with their own eyes that the difference in living standards with the FRG is even greater than they had imagined. On both of the first two weekends, four million East Germans visited the West. This represented a sort of culture shock. The SED symbol became synonymous with a worthless economy, stealing, egotism and so on. People's anger was immense. It has not ceased to grow and the population no longer wants to hear any more about the "renewal of Socialism". "I have supported Socialism for 40 years, and I don't want any more varieties of it. No more experiments! We do not want to be used as guinea-pigs!"

After the fall of the wall, the decisive question in the GDR was: is the population going to find the strength and self-confidence to rebuild a non-capitalist society on the ruins of Stalinism? Only

such confidence would give the GDR a reason to exist as a separate state. The price that would have to be paid for this would be a markedly lower standard of living for a prolonged period — and this with open frontiers. People would have had to believe that the possibility of creating a socialist democracy was more advantageous than the increase in consumption for a part of society.

The opposition spelled this out quite clearly. In her November 8 appeal to those preparing to leave the country, Christa Wolf declared: "What can we promise you? Not an easy, but a useful life. Not immediate prosperity, but a part in great changes." A few days later New Forum went further: "We will stay poor for a prolonged period, but we do not want a society run by profiteers and where people push themselves to the front with their elbows."

This strength and self-confidence do not exist. The exodus of thousands of people continues. From the end of August 1989 to mid February 1990, 400,000 people have left the GDR. As many, if not more, are waiting for the elections to decide whether to leave or not. The governments of East and West Germany estimate that between a million and a million and a half will leave in 1990. The GDR's economy risks collapse through lack of capital and labour power.

However, people's ideas are rather contradictory: on the one side they are scared of capitalism, and scared of the GDR being bought by the FRG. On the other, the GDR, has in fact, been dependent on the FRG in many respects. The FRG has always been its principal economic partner in the West; its living standards have always been taken as the model; the regime's ambition has always been to "catch up with and overtake" the FRG in all spheres.

At the SED congress in December, Rudolf Bahro described this dependence in the following terms: "Here we put our finger on a decisive link in the vicious circle, that, over decades, has led to the demolition of our economy. Its regulation has in fact been determined by the obtaining



of hard currency, in economic competition with the "class enemy", that was always stronger in every way. The running of our economy was not therefore determined by the needs of the population. The conclusion is evident: the West German mark has dominated: this is the inevitable outcome of this choice....Hans Modrow finished his report by concluding that our economic development must become socially and ecologically sustainable. But this aim is in total contradiction with the very nature of the economic forces that are now coming to bear on us....

"A joint venture costing 5 billion, as seems to be envisaged with IFA (the East German enterprise that builds the Trabant motorcar) means, in the present situation, a loss of political and cultural decision-taking power by the society, whatever form this joint venture might take. This is the result of a strategic renunciation, of a failure to take into account the economic potential of the country....Such a joint venture means a straightforward acceptance of a piece of capitalist society....In this way our society loses its sovereignty, in one sphere after another."

### Bureaucracy tried to create East German patriotism

The questioning of the "united German fatherland" by the Honecker regime starting in the early 1970s always lacked credibility, since it was based on arguments similar to those used by the bourgeoisie in the West, who, however, defended the idea of a "fatherland for all Germans". It is hardly surprising that a population that had been educated for decades in the values of the "Socialist fatherland" sees today, as "Socialism" collapses, more advantages in a larger and more efficient, albeit capitalist, "fatherland".

The Modrow government has not been able to escape from this dependence. It declares that it can do nothing about the economy without West German capital and addresses its attention almost exclusively towards the FRG government and its industrial and financial circles.

The population is disarmed. It is convinced that the leading economic principle must be competitiveness on the world market and the achievement of living standards equal to those in the West, objectives that cannot be obtained without the DM. Of course, the process has to be cushioned socially. This analysis is shared by many opposition groups, including on the left.

The opportunities that exist in a perspective of an economy orientated eastwards, towards the semi-industrialized countries and towards the small capitalist countries that do not have the same powers of blackmail, are only discussed in restricted intellectual circles. The great majority of the GDR's population sees no independent way forward.

Very quickly, all eyes have turned

towards Bonn. Modrow first proposed a pact between the two German states for a confederation. He hoped in this way to get the necessary "fraternal aid". But the Kohl government has tied all financial aid to precise conditions, which get constantly more demanding: free elections, an end to the leading role of the SED; introduction of market mechanisms; abolition of obligatory currency exchanges. Later, other points have been added on. An agreement on the protection of investments; no limitation on foreign participation; liberty of setting up firms and choice of work; and later the adoption of the social and legal order of the FRG; and monetary union. Besides the establishment of a hard currency fund that allows the GDR's citizens 200DM per year for journeys to the West (and which they spend in the West), the federal government has not until now come up with a single penny of financial aid to the GDR. Kohl's argument: he does not want to invest in a "black hole".

### Modrow offers to renounce executive functions

When, at the January Congress, Modrow found out that he could no longer rely on the party, he made a U-turn and announced his capitulation. He offered to hand over central executive functions to the Round Table and several days after declared: "Germany must become a united country for all the citizens of the German nation." The plan that he presented envisaged first a confederation, after that the progressive transfer of the sovereign rights of the two states to common confederal organs, finishing up with a common federation of *Länder*. This plan meant the final abandonment of an independent road for the GDR. But even this plan has not been realized. In Bonn they no longer want unity via confederation; the aim is for *Anschluss*, a pure and simple integration into the FRG. In the GDR itself, the economy has spoiled all plans: the central bank is calling for the immediate introduction of the DM as a second currency, and, in exchange, the transfer of a part of its powers to the FRG's Federal Bank. Modrow is left fighting rearguard actions and lamenting the arrogance of Bonn.

The U-turn in East Berlin has considerably accelerated the efforts of Bonn to utilize the collapse of Stalinism to get its hands on the RDA. Kohl's ten-point plan of November 28 (see IV 176) still envisaged a stage by stage approach, realizing a common federal state via a confederation. There was to be a ten year period to carry through the equalization of the economies of the two socially different systems, political union being considered as the culmination of this process.

Modrow's declaration in favour of reunification has rendered all these plans null-and-void. Since then, the federal govern-

ment has been frantically cobbling together a new plan: first of all monetary union (to be carried out by July 1) then political union — this being planned for two years hence — prepared by the formation of common parliamentary commissions at various levels and by a process of "transplantation" of the FRG's civil law, penal and social systems and finally the rapid establishment of the federal system, with the GDR *Länder* being able to declare their adhesion to the FRG separately (something that is envisaged in the West German constitution).

Once the West German bourgeoisie has got its hands on state power, it will be in a much better position to offload the costs of the painful process of "adaptation" (more precisely, the costs of reunification), since it will have political and legal power over the workers of what is still today the GDR.

The essential measures in this direction will be prepared before the federal elections in the FRG, putting the future government before a fait accompli. It is not out of the question, in fact, that the federal government will postpone the elections (set for December 1990) in favour of pan-German elections a few months later.

The West German political parties have begun to organize various regroupments of different East German opposition groups to create "fraternal parties" for the elections to the GDR Chamber of Deputies on March 18. Without direct intervention by the West German Christian Democrats (CDU and CSU) and the Liberal Party (FDP), neither the conservative Alliance for Germany (*Allianz für Deutschland*), nor the German Liberal Party (LDP) would have seen the light of day in East Germany. The SPD got to work a lot earlier, but it did not have to fear any resistance, given the still living social democratic traditions in the GDR.

### Bonn politicians stand as candidates in GDR

Bonn politicians have played the preponderant role in the electoral campaign in the GDR. In the election rallies, they behave already as if they run the country, and some have even allowed themselves to be put forward as candidates. For example, Elmar Pieroth, President of the Association of Liberal Professions of the Western CDU is standing for the *Allianz* in the East declaring that he wants to become the economics minister, since the natives understand nothing about the market economy.

The second step has been to get round the obstacles to immediate reunification posed by the victorious powers of the Second World War, above all the Soviet Union. With the Genscher plan, the Bonn government has found a formula whereby a united Germany would remain a member of NATO with a special military status for the territory of the ex-GDR. The main

pillar of this would be the construction of a new European security system in which every state would participate except the USSR. The United States and Soviet Union would be the guarantors of this order. This concept would permit the integration both of the neutral states in Europe and the Warsaw Pact countries. This plan, of course, involves the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact. At the same time this entire security system would be, in one way or another, associated with NATO.

Soviet troops could remain in the GDR and US troops in the FRG. The eventual presence of West German troops in the East is an object of controversy. Another is the question of a guarantee of the western border of Poland. These two problems are not insoluble for the bourgeoisie. The German bourgeoisie is an expert in devising special military statuses for particular regions. After the First World War, the two sides of the Rhine were demilitarized until the 1930s.

Modrow did not insist on his original concept of neutrality. After the Ottawa summit, the Soviet Union seems ready to accept the notion of a new European security system, even if this has nothing to do with Gorbachev's "common European home", but means an imperialist alliance in Europe under German leadership. The internal situation in the USSR and COMECON does not permit the Kremlin to press hard for conditions.

The third step by the federal government on the road to rapid reunification is the swift carrying through of monetary union. A bilateral commission has already been established to consider ways and means. This has led to controversy in West German bourgeois circles. While the majority of economic specialists, including the Bundesbank (federal bank), are warning about the risks of a rapid monetary union, all the political forces have come out in favour of it, and have in fact imposed it. The Bundesbank president's opposition only lasted about 24

hours.

Nonetheless, the risks are clearly visible. The important economic gap between the FRG and the GDR cannot be quickly overcome, even in the framework of a united Germany. It would first be necessary to raise the level of prices and wages in the GDR as it exists now. Otherwise the migration will continue inside the new state.

On the other hand, the employers are openly in favour of keeping the level of wages in the GDR low, for this is the only way in which the East would be attractive for investments. This means that East Germany is going to be the poor region of the new Germany. At the same time, there will be a massive downward pressure on West German wage levels. Unemployment will grow fast. The estimates of the number of potential unemployed in the GDR this year range from 800,000 to 2.5 million. These figures are based above all on projected closures of enterprises (Gysi talks of a half of them) that are unable to stand up to West German competition. The assimilation of the social security system will demand enormous sums. The massive privatization of enterprises, land and housing will lead to speculation and inflation. No one can control the effects of this process or its impact on international financial markets.

Representatives of the West German employers have given figures regarding the cost of total economic reunification. It will need some 800 billion DM (which corresponds to the sum of floating capitals seeking an outlet) for the infrastructure, energy provision, construction of housing and cleaning of towns and the appropriation and cleaning of factories. But nobody, either in East or West, has come up with figures for the social costs.

The federal government is claiming that the costs of non-reunification will be equally high, since, in this case, the wave of migration, which is already causing a certain amount of social disturbance in the West, could not be stopped. But this

migration could be stemmed if GDR citizens were treated like normal immigrants, and if Bonn was ready to come up with the immediate financial aid (between 10 and 15 billion DM) asked for by the GDR government and Round Table. Only under these conditions would the reconstruction of the GDR have any credibility for East Germans.

Bonn is refusing to do this because it wants to force the GDR into rapid and unconditional reunification. It answers the employers' reservations with an alternative calculation: past experience of investment in countries with "state trade" shows limited profitability, insofar as there continues to exist a political system that imposes precise conditions, where workers cannot be freely disposed of, and where the global economic conditions are dictated by political rather than purely market criteria.

According to Bonn, if private investment in the GDR is to be really profitable, it is necessary to impose the FRG's political and judicial system. "Only when we have political power will we be able to control conditions for investment; only then will we be able to remove negative factors for the market."

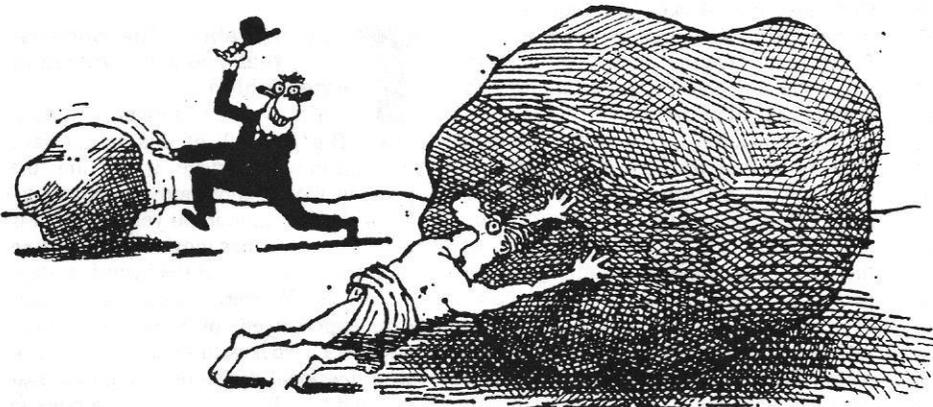
This is a very dangerous operation for the bourgeoisie. But it believes that it has sufficient financial as well as repressive means (police and special para-military units) and political ability to carry it through.

### Threat to take back property from East Germans

The question is: who will pay the costs of reunification? Certainly not capital. In the first place it is the GDR that will have to take it on. A colossal process of expropriation threatens to begin immediately after the March elections. Some 500,000 previous landowners and at least the same number of homeowners are demanding what once belonged to them.

The traditional firms in the FRG have already set up in the GDR to find out what there is that could serve as branches there. The FRG trusts are negotiating with the GDR's industrial complexes. Siemens has pounced on Robotron, Volkswagen on IFA, Zeiss Ikon on Zeiss Jena, the three chemical industry giants on the Leuna workshops and so on. A list of 3,000 firms that want to buy GDR factories at a very low price or who want to create new private enterprises has been made public. West German capital dictates the conditions with unashamed brutality and aggression.

The second group who will pay are West German workers. The Association of Engineering Employers has already categorically rejected any further reduction in the working week as well as the maintenance of the free weekend, referring to the GDR. The



president of the Association of Savings Banks has gone so far as to assert that reunification requires limitations on trade union rights and social negotiations. The social claims of the metalworkers and printers this year are going to be tests of strength.

There are also other costs that threaten West German wage earners: there is talk of setting up, after the federal elections, "emergency sacrifices" for the GDR, for example, special taxes. Political pressure to keep down wage rises is already apparent. Under the pressure of competition from the GDR the level of pensions, services and health care are going to drop, but the cost is going to rise.

A grand coalition, ranging from the Christian Democrats to the social democracy are promising that the "period of adjustment" will be brief and will be followed by a new economic miracle. God alone knows! It cannot be ruled out. But it is a fact that the new Greater Germany will come out of the reunification process profoundly destabilized. In any case, promises about the future are not the main concern of the wage earners; they are worried about what is going to happen next.

### **Seizure of power by West German bourgeoisie**

Properly speaking, we should talk about the "incorporation" of the GDR into the FRG rather than reunification. What is happening is the conquest of the GDR as a new market by West German capital and the seizure of social and political power by the West German bourgeoisie on the territory and over the population of the GDR.

In the GDR resistance to the mechanisms of the *Anschluss* is beginning to take shape. At the end of January, the Free German Confederation of Unions (FDGB) held its congress, at which it adopted a trade union law demanding a right of veto for the unions on matters of working conditions and decisions that affect the enterprises (changes in forms of property, the structure of the enterprise, functioning, investment and so on), as well as measures of defence against lock outs and the right to strike. The FDGB wants this law passed even before the elections, if not it is threatening a general strike. One can have one's doubts about what strength a renewed FDGB can have, however. The same motivation: "we must be in the factories before capital" is also behind the movement for the reconstruction of workers councils, which, also, remains weak for the moment.

Tenants, haunted by the fear of being dispossessed and thrown in the street, have formed an association. Capitalist plans are thus, for the first time in a bureaucratically dominated state, inspiring a large-scale anti-capitalist reaction. Thus perhaps this opposition to capital

may produce what the opposition to the bureaucracy only stimulated in embryo: an anti-capitalist awareness and a process of self-organization of the working class and large layers of the population.

The East German SPD, which seems likely to win the election was the first to raise national slogans. The West German SPD candidate for the Chancellorship, Oskar Lafontaine, has been attacking the "costs of reunification". It may be that it is the social democracy that succeeds in becoming the most skilful architects of reunification. At best, such a line can prolong the reunification process somewhat. But this will change nothing regarding the character of the *Anchluss* and its social consequences for a large part of the population.

At the present time, the process of integration of the GDR by capital seems inevitable. Even a strike movement for specific demands might become a strike for unification and win the demands only in this framework.

### **Collapse of bureaucratic economy**

Time is a decisive factor in this revolution. Given that the collapse of the bureaucratic economy is faced by a capitalist economy that has been growing for seven years; the political revolution is exposed to massive pressure from West German imperialism; no alternative way out exists at a mass level; and, finally, when the criticism of the old regime overwhelms for ever all discussion of another anti-capitalist road, the time available for developing an alternative is decisive. This time does not exist in the GDR. There is not a sufficient field of action to win a large part of the population to another form of planned economy.

This does not mean that people are passing bag and baggage over to the side of capitalism. In the FRG, the project of a rapid integration of the GDR has awakened great anxiety. The wage earners do not want to pay the costs of reunification. Greater anxieties are felt in the East. The population fears that reunification will create a "second-class zone" out of East Germany. Ina Merkel, president of the Independent Women's Association (see IV 180) can count on considerable support when she says that capitalism also has a "great need" of reforms.

The population of the two German states is looking for a third way between the evils of capitalism and bureaucratic rule. This explains the popularity of the social democracy which is perceived as the only force capable of realizing such a perspective. The "when" and the "how" of reunification will be the object of strong social conflicts in the two German states. Their outcome will determine the circumstances and the relation of forces under which reunification will be realized. ★

## **The perspectives of the Marxist left**



**WE PUBLISH below an interview with well-known Soviet independent Marxist writer and activist Boris Kagarlitsky. The interview was carried out by David Seppo in Moscow on November 25, 1989.**

**T**ELL me about the socialist party that you are involved in establishing.

Yes, we are setting up a socialist party. But any talk of this would have been meaningless were it not for the appearance of a labour movement in Russia for the first time in 60 years. And it is a movement that has moved with amazing speed through many of the historical stages that the Western labour movements have experienced over decades: from spontaneous strikes to overcoming sectoral professional divisions (the initial mistrust and hostility of the other workers to the miners' strike) to the formation of independent trade unions and political

movements.

We are the "Committees of New Socialists" and we exist in a number of towns and regions. A congress is planned for January, and it is possible that it will decide on the foundation of a party.

Since the July strike, a realignment of political forces has occurred. Before the picture was one of liberals against conservatives. But now it appears that, while the conservatives have kept their social base, the liberal front has fallen apart. It turned out to be a narrow group, centred in Moscow.

At the same time a left has begun to emerge: this is the labour movement, as well as the New Socialists, who are seeking to build their base in the working class and already have very good ties with the strike committees.

### ■ Who are the conservatives?

This is a revolt of the apparatus, as well as the United Front of Toilers (UFT). There is no more frightening animal for Gorbachev. For half a year the liberals were shouting: We must have the next party congress early! And they achieved nothing. Now apparently the apparatus supports this demand. The mass party meeting organized yesterday by the Leningrad party committee represents conservative populism.

This sector of the apparatus is trying to find a social basis in that part of the masses that not only has received nothing from the reform but that is not capable of resisting independently. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels wrote of the reactionary socialism of the aristocracy directed against the bourgeoisie. This is

similar: this is oriented to the past and to the masses against the new elite, and it threatens to shake Gorbachev's boat.

### ■ What do you think of the economist Sergeev (professor at the Higher Trade Union School), who has emerged as the main theoretician of the UFT?

Sergeev and Co. in practice, though not explicitly and perhaps not even necessarily consciously, appeal to the conservative part of the apparatus and through it to those strata of the working class that have not yet awoken and still follow the apparatus, either organizationally or ideologically. When a crisis breaks out, we go to the workers; they go to the party committees.

We do not in principle reject the possibility of cooperation with the UFT to the

## Debate on the national question

IN THE INTERVIEW on these pages, Boris Kagarlitsky offers some interesting facts and points of view, both about the activities of the Marxist left in the Soviet Union and the way he sees the working class and national questions. On the latter point, we have a disagreement with him that is worth pointing out again. (A discussion of this was already initiated by a response to another article by him in *IV*159). Kagarlitsky's point of view with regard to the non-Russian national movements seems, moreover, to be common among the Marxist left in Russia.

Let us first note what we agree about. We agree about the right to self-determination, and therefore the freedom of the non-Russian republics to separate. Kagarlitsky and his comrades are waging a campaign against the Great Russian chauvinism of Pamiat (the Russian far-right organization) and its anti-semitism. We also agree about the need for pointing out the lack of concrete proposals for workers' self-management in the programs of the national democratic movements in the non-Russian republics. We obviously agree also on denouncing the political crimes of the Stalinist past.

However, the relationship between national and social consciousness among the non-Russian workers is a complex problem that has to be analyzed concretely and which apparently takes a different form in different republics. In Armenia and Lithuania, national demands have been in the forefront of the mass mobilizations. There is no doubt, on the other hand, about the mass character of the fronts, and it is clear therefore that they also have broad working-class

support. The relationship between national and social consciousness is more complicated in Ukraine, in particular in view of the differences between the eastern and western regions of the republic.

The problem becomes complicated also, when, as in Estonia, there is a Russian-speaking working class, and we have a difference regarding the analysis of their situation. The Russian workers certainly are not in the "dominant" position in Estonia. (They are unskilled workers holding jobs Estonians do not want). They went there to find jobs. But "bureaucratic centralism facilitated the process by financing the hiring and housing of these workers," and "the Russian language is dominant in the federation and sometimes regionally." (*IV*159).

What is more, the forced assimilation of the Baltic republics (and of Moldavia), and still worse on the basis of the secret agreements between Stalin and Hitler, as even the Soviet press has revealed, calls for a special sensitivity to the national sentiments being expressed there.

On the Caucasus, where the situation is very complicated, simplistic judgements should be avoided. At the root of the problem are grave errors committed by the Bolshevik authorities in the 1920s. The responsibility of the Russian central bureaucracy for the poisoning of the present situation in the Caucasus is damning. Gorbachev's recent military intervention in Azerbaijan shows that even in these times of *glasnost* the national minorities of the USSR have good reasons to fear the brutality and cynicism of the central state. Even the Soviet liberal press has denounced this "punitive expedition" (*Les Nou-*

*velles de Moscou* of February 16, 1990).

In general, the Russian left has tended to pay most attention to analyzing bureaucratic manipulation and free-market points of view within the national movements. It is necessary to examine that. But a double standard cannot be applied. As Kagarlitsky himself explains in his interview, the Marxist left in Russia has also been led to stand on the same ground or even to collaborate on specific questions with sections of the apparatus and free-market forces that are no less manipulative.

The tone taken in criticisms of the minority national movements is also very important. Arrogance is apt to be seen by oppressed nations as an expression of the chauvinism of the dominant nation.

In taking up the national question in the USSR, it is necessary (especially when you are in Russia) to put the primary stress on the crimes of Stalinism and to denounce, in addition to Pamiat, the Great Russian chauvinism and manipulations of the central apparatus. The role of the left in Russia is clearly to explain this past to the Russian working class (in particular in Estonia) and get it to recognize the need for giving priority to the minority languages and, beyond that, to recognize the right of self-determination of the oppressed nations not only in words but also in practice.

The Marxists in these oppressed nations, on the other hand, need to criticize explicitly the weaknesses of the national movements and to advance, in particular in the Baltic republics, a program that can also gain the confidence and support of the Russian workers. ★

Catherine Verla / Erdal Tan

degree that there are workers in it. But we cannot talk with the present leadership of the Moscow and Leningrad UFTs. There are also apparently a significant number of Pamyat' members in the Moscow UFT, even though Pamyat' considers the October Revolution a catastrophe and is anti-socialist. The UFT is akin to the Zubatov movement [Police unionist movement in Russia preceding the 1905 revolution].

But the regime eventually lost control of its creation, and the movement became revolutionary. This could happen to the UFT.

■ **And yet, the analyses of the current reform by what you describe as the right and left have a number of points in common.**

We agree that the current reform concept leads only to chaos and the disintegration of the economy and country. But they dream of a return to the past, and we dream of a democratic reform. But this will be a reform that calls for a considerable amount of centralism. In this, incidentally, we have allies in the ecological movement, whose members understand the need for centralism. Decentralization as it is occurring now means only the brigandage of the ministries, which are producers' monopolies.

A real programme of restructuring the economy requires strong central planning instruments. But these instruments should be used to introduce market relations, in the sense of creating conditions that empower consumers, make possible a de-monopolization policy and create conditions for competition. But this is competition in a framework that makes it work for common goals. This is what Ota Sik called the macro-economic framework. What is principally new in this model of socialism — and the workers are spontaneously demanding the same — is the ending of ownership as abstract state property and its transfer to the soviets at different levels, from the national to the micro-district.

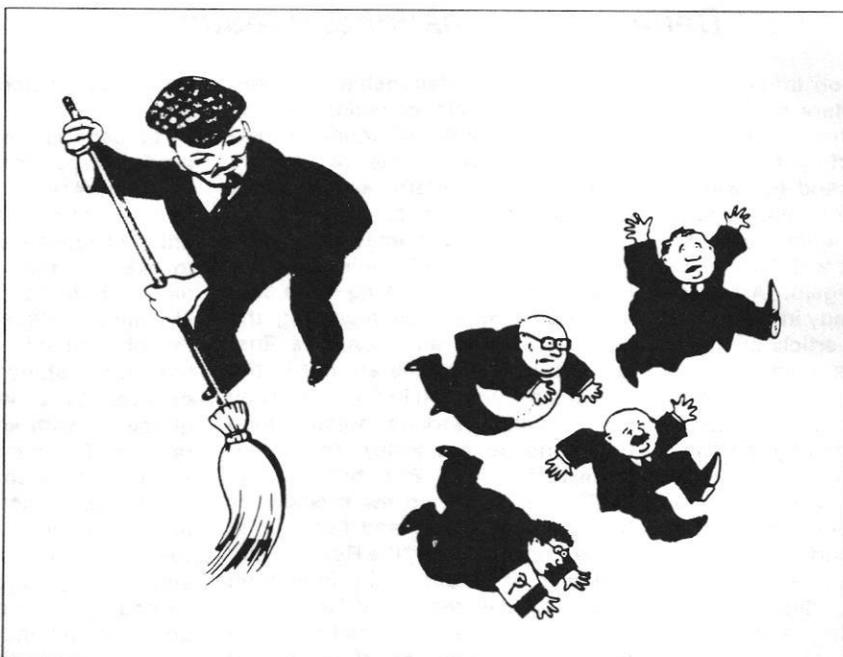
And from below there should be control by self-management organizations or associations of self-managing enterprises. Collective property, i.e. worker-owned enterprises, is also possible, that is, a cooperative sector, though I personally do not like that idea too much. There would also be a private sector.

The UFT calls for the shutting down the

cooperatives, whose high incomes and prices and crooked practices have aroused so much popular anger. We oppose this. Rather, they can be taxed or restricted in their use of hired labour. But is not labour in the state sector hired?

■ **Can you elaborate on how you see the workers' attitudes toward the market?**

The workers are for the market. The whole question is how they understand it. All workers in some degree believe that the market will enable them to resolve certain problems that at present cannot find resolution. But while the liberals, like Shmelev and Popov, identify the market with capitalism and intend to use it as an excuse for demanding privatization, the issuing of shares, the admission of multinationals; the workers feel that



the introduction of certain market incentives will allow for a more rational organization of work, will allow them to earn more money for social investment, and also create a basis for self-management.

We in the New Socialists see the introduction of market elements by the government as bringing certain elements of rationality to the economy and at the same time intensifying class contradictions and social resistance. That is the other side of the coin. The government's market reform will activate the workers, and that is very positive. Thus, until now the situation has been one of general labour shortage and a sellers' market for labour.

The government's reform aims to change this, to create a buyers' market. But it is very unlikely that it will get as far as creating mass unemployment. The workers will respond with a wave of strikes and demonstrations. So the gov-

ernment reform is apparently a phase the workers will have to live through [until they develop their own reform programme]. The current market reform will not yield the hoped-for results. At best, it will introduce some market relations, but in combination with traditional bureaucratic relations. Creating a certain market rationality at some levels, it destroys it at others. It will result in a crazy market, in chaos.

When the state fixed prices, even if they were often artificial, at least there was an attempt to take into account production costs. With this reform, you will find different prices in different parts of the country. There will be tens and hundreds of isolated markets. Money will stop being the universal means of exchange. The economy is effectively dominated by monopolies. To create competition you

need a strong central state capable of taking investment decisions that will create conditions for competition. Paradoxically, the creation of a market requires the creation of central planning that at present does not exist. We are not, then, opposed in principle to the market. Of course, there may well be contradictions between the socialist organization of labour and the commodity character of the economy. But these are contradictions that must be resolved in the course of an entire historical epoch.

■ **This sounds very similar to the analysis of the small**

**number of Marxist social scientists in different Moscow institutes and at the university.**

Yes, we work with them. They have formed a "Club of Marxist Researchers". Some have recently published articles critical of the reform in the popular economic journal EKO, which lately has also published material by Broué on Trotsky and by Tony Cliff, though, frankly, publishing Cliff is really going too far! Characteristically, they have not asked Sergeev to join.

It is as if you have a sick person before you. Sergeev makes a good diagnosis: infected eye, a head cold, autitis. But his cure is: off with the head! It is hard to say to what extent that corresponds to the attitudes of a part of the workers.

Meanwhile, the liberals point to this and say: see what a mean person he is? We only want to poke out the eyes. On the other hand, I feel that a currency reform, one of the UFT's key demands aimed at

"unearned income", is inevitable. So is rationing.

■ **Tell me something of the Sotsprof, the Federation of Socialist Trade Unions, in which you are involved. Reading some of their documents, I was surprised to see that they want to include unions of cooperators in the federation. But many cooperatives use hired labour — so are not they organizations of employers?**

That is a big problem. I agree that many of the cooperators are really private entrepreneurs. But since it is a federation, if the cooperators enter it, they will probably be marginal. In any case, the Sotsprof still has not held its founding conference; so it is still not clear who will have the upper hand and what the Sotsprof will be.

The Sotsprof really has two faces, two leaders — Khramov and Volovik. If you read their respective documents, you would think it was two different organizations. Khramov, an oceanographer by profession, is a social democrat in essence. He has moderate positions on relations to the authorities. He does not want politics in the Sotsprof, no conflicts with the authorities, no stirring up of the class struggle. He is a moderate, and his positions are conciliatory.

Volovik, on the other hand, adheres to the model of fighting unions. In Vorkuta recently he aroused the ire of the authorities when he stated: The government is our opponent. You don't appeal to your opponent. You fight him. He is an engineer by profession. He worked a half a year as a worker in a factory and now he works full time for Sotsprof. He is one of the most promising potential leaders of the New Socialists. And so, there are two positions in the Sotsprof: one oriented to the Western social-democratic model; the other) to the Western left.

■ **Let's talk now a little about the national movements.**

In the Baltic, these are movements based to a large extent upon the liberal and nationalist parts of the local apparatus, on the one hand, and the nationalist intelligentsia, on the other. They have working class support, to be sure, but they do not have firm roots in the working class. In Estonia, the working class, which is almost totally Russian speaking, is hos-

tile to the national movement. But even in Lithuania, where the Workers' Union is a part of the Sajudis, the national movement, the leader of the Workers Union, Kazimir Suoka, who is also a loyal member of the Sajudis, is constantly complaining that the Sajudis does not care a damn about the workers' interests.

Suoka himself, of course, does not always represent the workers. On the one hand, he does complain about the Sajudis' failure to take up working class concerns. But on the other, he does everything to orient the workers toward the Sajudis. There are also a significant number of Polish and Russian speaking workers in Lithuania, and even Lithuanians, who, while not enemies of the Sajudis, do not identify with it.

■ **What exactly is the Workers' Union in Lithuania?**

It was founded by Suoka as a sort of working class wing of the Sajudis. But now it is becoming clear that if the Workers' Union finally develops its own personality, it will be very different from the Sajudis. So even in Lithuania, class differences are beginning very much to be felt. In Latvia, where workers' clubs have emerged, their leaders joined the Popular Front, but now they also all complain that it does not give a damn about the workers and makes no effort to overcome national divisions within the working class. Even Egeryonok, one of the leaders of the workers' movement inside the Popular Front of Latvia, wrote in the P.F.'s paper, *Atmoda*, that the P.F. does not respond when the workers make efforts to heal these divisions. This is very telling. Of course, the local bureaucracy is very much interested in maintaining national divisions.

In Estonia, on the other hand, the national confrontation has taken on a clear class character, since the working class is Russian speaking, while the intelligentsia, the bureaucracy and the cooperators are Estonian.

■ **What of the organization of Russian workers in Estonia, the Interdivizhenie?**

It has two tendencies. One is conservative, oriented to the UFT. That is at present the majority. Then there is a minority, oriented to us, the New Socialists, led by Konstantin Kignadze, one of the founders of Interdivizhenie. He is for the creation of a socialist party on a non-

national, class basis.

But at present this is not possible in Estonia, as the national split is very deep. I hold the leaders of the National Front very much responsible for this. At the beginning, the Russian speaking population looked favourably upon that movement. If the issues had been posed, not on a national, but on a social and democratic basis, the situation would have evolved differently.

So, on the one hand, the national movements in the Baltic have been a force for pluralism in the country as a whole. They have led to the emergence of new democratic possibilities. They helped shift the political process from a dead point. I am not at all attacking them across the line and totally distancing myself from them. But along with the democratic potential that they contain, there is also a strong national-bureaucratic element. The fact that the Vice Prime Minister of Estonia is Edgar Saivis, a leader of the P.F., and that members of the Central Committee of the Estonian C.P. not only meet together with members of the P.F., but they actually chair these meetings — that also says something.

■ **You say it is a coalition of the nationalist intelligentsia and the national-liberal sector of the apparatus. But what does the former think will happen after independence? One of them gave an interview in Canada in which he said that the P.F. was just using the Communists as a shield against Moscow, but once independence is achieved, they will be chucked out.**

That is an illusion. If they get independence, they will close ranks even more against the people. This is because they will lose the support of the workers. This has already happened in Estonia. It is still not so clear in Latvia and Lithuania.

The intelligentsia must choose between the people and the apparatus. I have such strong reservations about the national movements because camps are being formed on a national basis, but the real problems cannot be solved in the framework of individual republics.

■ **That may be true objectively. But you have the problem of people's consciousness. You remember that Lenin said — it is easy to be an internationalist when you belong to the big nation.**

But you and I, Jews, do not belong to big nations. But seriously, our comrades are genuine internationalists. I was very much struck when I was in Karaganda to see a total absence of national and ethnic divisions. And there are many nationalities: Kazakhs, Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, and many other groups who were exiled there. The miners were very united, and when I asked one what he thought about the national divisions, he answered:



Go down in the mine. Everyone there is wearing masks and covered with dirt. There you will see if the national question poses itself. They have a totally different approach from that of the Popular Fronts of the republics.

■ **The Lithuanian Supreme Soviet just voted a law that guarantees cultural rights and equal civil and political rights to the republic's minorities. That sounds very progressive.**

This occurred only after the Poles, who live compactly in a district outside of Vilnius, declared themselves an autonomous region. The Lithuanians had no choice. It has not come to this yet in Estonia. The Estonians come out against the imperialist oppression of small peoples by the Soviet regime and by the Russians.

But as soon as their own Russian minority starts to talk this way, they declare that Estonia is one and indivisible. In Georgia, the national movement is also pushing for independence from the Soviet Union. But when the Abkhazians or the Southern Ossetians want separation from Georgia, they will not hear of it. Paradoxically, Georgia is probably the republic that presently stands the closest to separation. They have no internal Russian minority to pose problems but they have their own minorities. There is a lot of irrationality and illusion in these national movements, the illusion that once independence is won, all the problems will go away. In Armenia, the movement calls for independence

because the Soviet government will not allow them to start a war with Turkey and Azerbaijan to win back their ancestral lands. Of course, they would be trounced in such a war.

On the other hand, the Azeris want out because the Soviet Union will not guarantee their republic's integrity against the Armenians who want Nagorno-Karabakh. An officer who recently returned from the Transcaucasus said he saw pitched battles there the likes of which he had not seen even during his service in Afghanistan.

It is one thing, then, to support the democratic right to secede. But this does not mean that socialists must lend their support to all secession movements.

■ **Let's conclude by returning to the working class. Are the miners a special group of workers?**

I think they are all over the world. They have a very high level of collectivism. They live closely, in their own isolated communities and they have a very developed sense of solidarity and mutual aid.

■ **What are their social origins?**

In Vorkuta and Karaganda they are the children of convicts. In the Kuzbass they are not first generation, but indigenous Siberians. The Kuzbass and the Donbass miners are one of the few cases of an hereditary working class that is several generations old. There is also a rather large strata of intelligentsia, people with higher education who have gone down

into the mines to earn good wages. But for all the particular traits of the miners, I believe that in the coming year, other groups of workers will mobilize: engineering workers will start to move, perhaps metallurgy, transport for sure.

■ **Are the Donbass miners worried about the prospect of mine closures? If a real market is introduced, it is clear that many mines will be shut as unprofitable.**

They are indeed worried. But the fact is that many really do need to be closed. The miners understand this. But the point is not simply to close them, but to create new work places, a new economy, retrain the miners, cultivate the land, restore it ecologically. There is a lot of coal dumped as waste. Some say that the region could live for a whole generation just on reclaiming the coal from these huge waste piles. But you need new technology for this.

This calls for huge capital investments and democratic control over them. If the free market is allowed to decide, there will be a Thatcher-type solution: the area will be abandoned, and that will be that. The miners understand that there are two ways to go. They have posed the question of reprofiling the region's economy in a very serious manner.

They know this cannot occur spontaneously through market forces. Nor can they count upon the directors, who do not care what happens. It calls for a thought out, long-term strategy, and this can only be done on a democratic basis. ★



# The Lviv strike committee — The role of workers in the Ukrainian national movement

**T**HIS REGION, which was only incorporated into the Soviet Union at the end of the second world war and which has a history of extremely stubborn resistance to Stalinist power, is the most militant center of the awakening of the Ukrainian nation, a process that led in September to the founding of the People's Movement of Ukraine for Restructuring, RUKH (see IV171).

Big mass demonstrations for political democracy and for national rights shook the city of Lviv in the summer of 1988. Despite very brutal repression by the police of the Brezhnevite regime that continued in this republic, the movement did not retreat. In the fall of the same year, there were still more massive and politically radical mobilizations. In the spring of 1989, during the election campaign for the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR, such demonstrations became almost daily events. On each occasion, they brought tens of thousands of people onto the streets, raising slogans that more and more openly called for the independence of Ukraine.

At this point, actions by workers in factories began to play an increasingly important role. In order to force the bureaucracy to allow the writer Ivan Drach (today the national chair of RUKH) on the ballot, workers in various factories and students in several schools held coordinated "warning strikes." Later, hundreds of thousands of citizens demonstrated in Lviv for the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Outlawed in the 1940s by Stalin, this church has survived underground thanks to great popular support.

The Ukrainian Helsinki Union (UHS), which was reconstituted by some of the most battle-hardened dissidents that Gorbachev released from the concentration camps, became the leading political force in the mass movement in this region. Devoted in principle to defending human, civil and national rights, the UHS has tended in fact to become a political organization for national independence. In July 1989, the miners in the Lviv coalfield joined the general strike of Soviet miners. But here in the Chernohrad mines, the demands were more directly political. They reflected the democratic demands of the national movement in the region,

**SINCE October 1989, the Ukrainian workers' and national democratic movement has had an instrument of political struggle in the city of Lviv. Called the Lviv Strike Committee, this body and the role that it has played in the mass struggles shows that the working class is tending more and more to take the leadership of the national movement in western Ukraine.**

**ZBIGNIEW KOWALEWSKI**

which were reinforced by specifically workers' demands.

On October 1, 1989, a democratic mass demonstration was again repressed, but this time with particular violence, by the special forces of the Ministry of the Interior. Those responsible for this attack clearly wanted to warn the population of Lviv that the next time they would not hesitate to repeat what happened in Tbilisi. But the effect was the opposite of what they expected.

## Repression leads to increased mobilization

Instead of demobilizing the masses, the repression helped to mobilize them still more. On October 3, they protested with a two-hour general strike. The initiative committee that called this strike included the regional council of RUKH, the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, the Student Fraternal Association, the Memorial association, the Committee in Defense of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, the Independent Ukrainian Association of Creative Intellectuals, the Jewish Cultural Society and all other independent organizations active in the city.

The committee called on all inhabitants of Lviv, "regardless of nationality, party loyalty, social status or religion" to "join together in one united front against crimes against the people," under the slogan, "We are for *perestroika!* There will be no return to neo-Stalinism," to "form strike committees at workplaces, which would keep the situation in the city under

their control," and to "coordinate them in one single city strike committee." In the afternoon of October 3, about 30,000 people attended the rally called by the initiative committee to demand an authoritative public investigation of the repression and prosecution of those responsible.

During this rally, the Lviv Strike Committee was founded by delegates of strike committees in 55 factories, enterprises and institutions and by representatives from all the independent democratic organizations. The local strike committees in the cities of Drohobych and Truskavets also joined it. Viktor Furmanov, a Russian worker well known for his activity in the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, was elected chair.

The immediate objective of this committee was to demand "*glasnost*" about the October 1 demonstration and punishment of those responsible for it. But in reality, the organization aspired from the beginning to go much further. In its manifesto, it announced that its role would be to "defend the interests and rights of the workers, to fight for social justice and to participate actively in the solution of state, political and economic questions, and if necessary to unleash a strike" in the Lviv region. Furmanov explained that the committee's main weapon would be mass political strikes and that the law adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR regulating labor conflicts could not be invoked against this, because the law is applicable only to economic strikes.

During its first session, the committee decided to support the standing strike committees that exist in the enterprises and to aim to coordinate its activities with the strike committees in other regions of Ukraine; to train workers in the methods of conducting strikes; as well as to organize teams to maintain public order and so on. It also decided to systematically explain the political situation to the population and to draw up a list of political and social demands, a political platform and a program for solving the crisis. The committee also announced that one of its main tasks was to "organize workers' control over the administration, the use of social funds, working conditions and discipline" in the enterprises.

On October 18, the Lviv Strike Commit-

tee issued a public statement addressed to the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine in which it demanded that the coming general elections in the republic be conducted in a fully democratic way, that the debate in the republic Supreme Soviet be broadcast live over radio and TV, and that the way be opened for the submission of alternative proposals drawn up by the independent organizations for a vote in this body.

In a parallel appeal, it called on all the strike committees in Ukraine formed during the miners' strike to focus their actions on the decisive political demand of "all power to the people's councils."

When its initial demands were not accepted, the Lviv Strike Committee resorted to its first mass action, calling a 24-hour general strike in the city for October 27 "as a sign of protest against the unwillingness to punish the organizers and executors of the criminal deed of October 1, against the spreading of lies and slander against social organizations and their activists, against administrative repression in Ukraine and also as a sign of solidarity with the strikers in Vorkuta."

The action was not as large as expected. It was announced almost on the eve, without much preparation. Having little experience in organizing strikes, the committee relied too much on spontaneity.

### Moderate nationalists try to head off strike

Moreover, at the last moment, the Lviv council of RUKH sowed confusion, calling not for a strike but only for rallies in the enterprises, because in its opinion the action had not been adequately built. In reality, more moderate leaders and advisors of RUKH sought to head off the strike.

In their view, such an action could destabilize the political situation, provoke the institution of a state of war and prevent the holding of democratic general elections in the city.

Besides, they were not happy about the independence of the Lviv Strike Committee. In order to bring it under their control, they demanded that it consult with the RUKH leadership about its actions. The majority of the latter is made up of pro-Gorbachev reformist intellectuals. As a result of all these factors, the workers in only 20 factories and institutions in Lviv participated in the action.

In its activities, the Lviv Strike Committee applies the principles of mass democracy. Its work on a list of demands and a political platform have been presented for public discussion in rallies. On December 2, some 30,000 people took part in such a rally.

On that occasion, it was decided that the demands adopted would have the force of a mandate for the Lviv deputies representing the independent organizations in the legislative bodies of the

USSR, and that these deputies would have to give an accounting to the masses of the way they executed their mandate.

On January 24, in another mass rally, in which 10 thousand people participated, the Lviv Strike Committee took a position on the conflict between the Armenian and Azeri national movements. "Motivated by feelings of solidarity with the democratic forces of the peoples of the Caucasus and by genuine internationalism," it condemned the Soviet military intervention in Azerbaijan. It called on the Armenian National Movement and the People's Front of Azerbaijan "to sit down at a negotiating table and do everything possible to put an end to the inter-ethnic conflicts and violence, which serve only the interests of the enemies of the freedom and independence of the Armenian and Azeri peoples and all other peoples of the empire."

### Criminal gendarmes of the Empire

Protesting against the use of Ukrainian soldiers in repressive military operations against other peoples of the USSR, the Committee declared... "We call on all individuals liable for military service to refuse to serve outside Ukraine, and above all to refuse to serve as criminal gendarmes of the empire in Azerbaijan." The citizens of Ukraine were also called on to hold rallies, demonstrations and pickets and to sign petitions to prevent the sending of Ukrainian conscripts for operations to repress the national movements of other peoples.

The vice chair of the Lviv Strike Committee, Stepan Khmara, has pointed out that this organization did not arise as the result of a social or economic struggle but as the outcome of a political struggle, in which both the former aspects were combined, and that this is its most original feature.

The Committee does not limit itself to defending the interests of workers in specific industries or trades but defends the civic and democratic rights of all working people and all citizens. For this reason, it is structured along purely territorial lines.

According to Khmara, who is a well-known activist of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union and the Committee to Defend the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church: "There is no way out of the ecological, economic and national-cultural crisis or out of the grave social situation without solving the problem of power. Power must be transferred to the people, to democratically elected councils on all levels. But the slogan of 'all power to the councils' can be given real social content only when the CPSU ceases to hold a monopoly over the running of society...."

"The present situation is characterized by the growing pressure of the democratic forces from below and by the resistance to democratic changes from above. In the

western and eastern regions of our republic, this conflict is reaching a critical point. In this situation, the stabilizing role should be played by the strike committees (or workers' committees or workers' unions), whose task would be to take the situation under their control and organize pressure on the reactionary anti-popular apparatus of the CPSU, thereby averting chaos and repression by the government. The time has come to create an all-Ukraine coordinating center for these organizations.

### Instrument of force to combat Stalinists

"Only within the framework of such coordination can the strike committees act as independent organs, at the same time maintaining extensive consultative links with other political and social organizations with democratic platforms. In a society in which all the power belongs to a Communist elite, which has no law but force, it is essential to have an instrument of force capable of compelling this elite to respect the people. Such an instrument is the political strike. In certain conditions, this extreme form of protest is the people's only effective means of self-defense."

The base structures of the regional strike committees and for their coordination at the republic level must be in the factories, Khmara explained. "The formation of strike committees in the enterprises will assist the free activity of the workers and create a climate favorable for propagating democratic ideas among the masses. This will be a mechanism for defense against arbitrary actions by the apparatuses of the administration and the Communist Party. It will create a more decent life for the workers, who should become the real owners of the enterprises. Under an illegal and totalitarian dictatorship, the strike committees are a new hope for a people that aspires to free itself from oppression and become sovereign."<sup>1</sup>

Over the past decade, it has been more and more confirmed that the influence of the Polish revolution of 1980-1981 has contributed to the rebirth of the national movements of the oppressed peoples in the western territories of the USSR.<sup>2</sup> Today, the most advanced ideas of this revolution are finding an echo in the political strategy being worked out by the Lviv Strike Committee. ★

1. The statements of the Lviv Strike Committee and its leaders quoted in this article are cited from the independent publications *Lvivski Visti* and *Nova Doba*, from the releases of the Press Service of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union and the Ukrainian Press Agency and articles by S. Khmara in the weekly *Ukrainske Slovo* published in Paris.

2. See R. Solchanyk, "Poland and the Soviet West," in S. E. Wimbush, editor, *Soviet Nationalities in Strategic Perspective*, London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985.

## DEBATE

**Political revolution and the reunification of Germany**

We publish below two resolutions discussed at the February/March meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, a worldwide Trotskyist organization.

The first resolution received a majority of votes at the meeting.

## The situation in the GDR and our tasks

**1.** SINCE the end of October 1989, the GDR has been experiencing the beginning of political revolution. The impetuous rise of the mass movement, of exceptional breadth, has won a large number of victories. Under the impetus of rejection of the repressive regime of the SED and a growing awareness of the waste engendered by bureaucratic management of the economy and the intolerable privileges this involved, the masses mobilized to overthrow the bureaucratic dictatorship. They have shaken it to its foundations.

But alongside this remarkable rise in the self-activity of the masses, there was a no less pronounced delay in self-organization and the precise goals of power that flow from this. There is no revolutionary vanguard, not to mention a revolutionary leadership. There was growing political disarray among the workers, the product of disenchantment with the despotic SED regime and the lack of a credible alternative, and the pronounced delay in realizing substantial reforms in the economic and social fields. To a large extent, the masses identify socialism with Stalinism, whose bankruptcy is visible to the naked eye and which is universally rejected.

In these conditions, the carrying through of the political revolution in the short-term was excluded, and a shift occurred in the attitude of the masses.

**2.** Like any revolution, the beginnings of political revolution in the GDR posed the question of power, shaking the existing state power to its very foundations. Theoretically there are three possible outcomes to the question of who rules in the GDR:

- The re-establishment of a consolidated rule of the *nomenklatura*. This would

require at least partial repression of the mass movement — for example of the type that resulted from Jaruzelski's coup d'état in Poland — even if the bureaucracy is no longer capable of completely suffocating, not to say crushing, the mass movement. In the current national and international relationships of forces this first outcome is very unlikely.

- The victory of the political revolution by the democratic exercise of political and economic power by the self-organized toiling masses. As already indicated this seems excluded in the short-term.

- The restoration of capitalism under the rule of a bourgeois state and by the submission of the economy to the hold of big capital, that is, a social counterrevolution. Given the weakness of the small and medium bourgeoisie, and the lack of a big bourgeoisie in the country, the only real possibility of such a restoration is the absorption of the GDR by the FRG, and the establishment of West German bourgeois rule over the GDR's population, as well as the hold of West German big capitalism over the GDR's economy.

In practice, in the present conditions the two most likely eventualities are:

- either a restoration of capitalism along the lines indicated.

- or a process of convergence of West and East Germany by stages, arriving at the capitalist unification of Germany (one state, one army, one police force, one economic structure, one legal system, one constitution) only after several years. However this intermediary situation might be defined — confederation; unification by sectors; a partial unification; or a monetary, tariff and trade union — it would be characterized by the absence of a real united state power, that is one army, one police force, one judi-

cial system, one economic structure, one constitution, one legal code.

Such a confederation could combine monetary unity under the control of the *Bundesbank*, a large private sector in the small and medium enterprises and the beginnings of the establishment of big private companies on GDR territory on the one hand; and, on the other, maintaining a majority public sector in the big enterprises, keeping the armed forces and police independent from those of the FRG, and keeping a separate constitution and legal system and separate state apparatus. This does not exclude that, during this intermediary period, a section of the *nomenklatura* might try to integrate itself into the bourgeoisie, another section orienting more towards integration into the state apparatus of a unified Germany, while maintaining as far as possible strong positions at local, regional, economic, cultural etc. levels.

The duration of this intermediary process could favor the East German working class winning political and organizational autonomy, even if by stages. In any case, it would involve specific tasks for revolutionary Marxists and the whole of the socialist left in the GDR, tasks which are not yet on the immediate agenda of the mass struggles in the GDR. It would be characterized by a very large degree of freedom of action for the masses in the GDR, owing to the extreme weakness of the state.

**3.** The dynamic in the GDR differs from that of the other countries in Eastern Europe.

- Because of the aspiration to German unity in the consciousness of the masses, a result above all of the attraction of the higher living standards in the FRG, of scepticism about the possibility of rapid, progressive, radical social and economic reforms in the GDR, as well as the strength of national feeling which is fed by the wild propaganda of the West German media;

- Because of the weight of the socialist tradition within the working class and intelligentsia, even if is channeled above all through social democracy, whose specificity in relation to the SPD is not yet clarified. The contradiction between these two particularities will probably shape the evolution of the political, economic and social confrontations in the GDR in the months, if not years, to come.

For the time being, the overwhelming political tendency is towards a rapid unification of Germany via the absorption of the GDR by the FRG. The masses tend to give priority to the unification of Germany regardless of its social and economic content. The more the economic crisis worsens, the more the scepticism about the changes taking place is reinforced, the more there is a flood of refugees making the exodus to the FRG and the clearer becomes the risk of total collapse of the

GDR's economy, which is, moreover, promoted by the cynical refusal of the Kohl government to extend economic aid to the GDR.

A capitalist unification of Germany would represent a serious defeat for the working class in the GDR, the FRG and the whole of Europe, through the strengthening of German imperialism that it would mean, at least in the short-term. In addition, the question of the exercise of power by the workers is posed in the GDR; it is not yet posed, either in the short- or medium-term, in the FRG. Nor would it be posed in a capitalist unified Germany.

The popular masses of any country have the democratic right to decide themselves to which state they wish to belong. Revolutionary Marxists recognize such a right. But they have the right and duty at the same time to tell the truth to the masses: the absorption of the GDR by the FRG, even through a majority vote of the masses, would represent a significant step backwards for the masses themselves, since it would involve the restoration of capitalism in the GDR, and it should be rejected by any conscious worker or socialist.

Later developments would not be slow in showing that the revolutionary Marxists were right. They would broaden their audience within the masses even if they were swimming against the current on this question for a time.

**4.** In fact, as the transformations that have started in the GDR become clearer and develop, the concrete social and economic questions will move to the forefront of the day-to-day concerns of the masses. They will tend gradually to combine with the question of unification, reducing the exclusive priority which seems to be given to this question today, independently of its concrete content. This would be all the more true if the intermediate period of "confederation", that is unification by stages, were of any length.

These preoccupations notably concern:

- guaranteeing full employment;
- maintaining low rents and social services
- maintaining or introducing into the constitution the right to work, the right to education, the right to health-care, housing and legal aid for all;
- the status of real ownership of the big enterprises independently of the abstract discussion on the "social market economy" (that is, slightly reformed capitalism) against "planned economy";
- the extension of democratic rights and powers to the broad masses.
- refusal to restore landed property to the pre-1945 owners.

On this basis, the choice of the concrete form and content of unification could little by little replace the abstract question (that is to say, without a concrete content)

of unification in general as the political line of divide.

The essential thing, therefore, is to gain time so that the masses can have this experience before the class nature of the German unified state is decided for a prolonged period.

The fight around the points outlined during an intermediary period would also gradually stimulate a differentiation, indeed a political radicalization, in the FRG as well. Little by little, the perspective of a socialist, unified Germany would take shape.

In these conditions, the fight to defend the sovereign right of the GDR workers to decide their fate in all fields without any foreign interference whatsoever is the immediate priority objective of the Fourth International in relation to Germany. This implies the possibility of, in time, carrying through the process of political revolution, even if revolutionary Marxists do not have any illusions about the — very limited — chances of seeing this possibility arrive at its final conclusion.

**5.** The absorption of the GDR by the FRG in the short-term runs up against some serious obstacles in the FRG itself, obstacles that have been masked only temporarily by the nationalist wave sweeping the country.

● It confronts the bourgeoisie with a difficult choice between priority for consolidating the EEC and priority for absorbing the GDR. This choice takes a clear form especially in the monetary field. German capital cannot simultaneously bear the costs of creating a common European money (for which the Bundesbank's exchange reserves would be the main collateral) and of absorbing the GDR, financed in Deutschmarks. Each operation would cost tens of billions of Deutschmarks, and they could not be carried through together. They would moreover stimulate a process of accelerated inflation spreading through capitalist Europe, which could choke off economic expansion through a rise in interest rates, even if the absorption of the GDR and the penetration of West German capital in East Europe in time stimulated the conjuncture.

● It is fanning fears among the toiling masses of a downward pressure on wages and employment through the transfer of centers of production to the GDR, as a low-wage area, as well as of an aggravated crisis of social security and public housing financing.

These fears will be aggravated by the bourgeoisie's attempts to shift the cost of unification onto the backs of the workers.

**6.** The absorption of the GDR by the FRG in the short run is also running up against serious international obstacles.

The imperialist powers remained divid-

ed about this. For US imperialism, the priority is maintaining "detente" with the USSR. It wants to avoid anything that might provoke hostile reactions in the Kremlin. The latter cannot accept a united Germany in NATO, which would involve the possibility of seeing soldiers of the imperialist countries or the *Bundeswehr* based on the present territory of the GDR, even in the longer term. It cannot either accept any challenging by German revanchists of the frontiers in East Europe that emerged from the second world war, in particular the Polish border and the incorporation of the former East Prussia into the USSR.

In addition American imperialism would doubtless not look unkindly on a slowing down of the process of consolidating the EEC because of the German unification. The vast majority of the European bourgeoisie, to the contrary, continues to prioritize this consolidation and would consider a rapid unification of Germany as an obstacle on this path.

But for a good part of the European bourgeoisie, the inclusion of a unified Germany in NATO is considered as a necessity, both in order to reduce the risk of the military preponderance of German imperialism and in order to ensure the continuation of an American military presence in Europe. The Kohl wing of the German bourgeoisie shares this second concern.

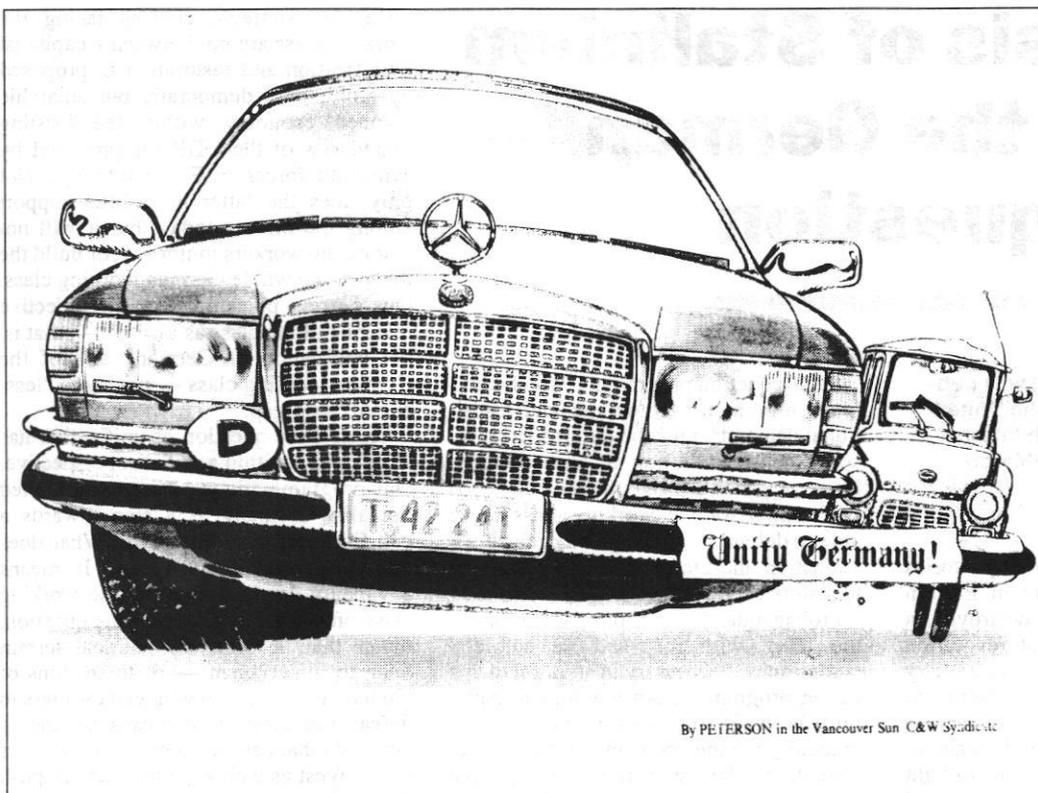
The international context of the "German question" gives a primary importance to all the demands linked to the anti-militarist struggle:

- withdrawal of all foreign troops from both Germanies;
- dismantling of both armies and all forces of repression in the two Germanies and the de-militarization of Germany.

● Opposition to possession of nuclear weapons by a united Germany, the signing of a nuclear nonproliferation treaty by a united Germany, elimination of all nuclear weapons from German territory, from France, from Great Britain and from all countries of West and East Europe.

A broad mass movement is already possible on these two themes in both the FRG and the GDR, with broad support in the rest of Europe, indeed in the USSR and the USA. Such mass movements would create additional obstacles on the road to a capitalist reunification of Germany.

**7.** In addition to this common political task of the anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic forces in the GDR, with back-up in the FRG, revolutionary Marxists will seek to get these forces to adopt a series of transitional demands going in the direction of defending the interests and gains of the toiling masses, of increasing democratic freedoms against the current process which is tending to gradually subject these masses to exploitation and control by West German big capital. These demands include notably:



energy supplies in the GDR, indispensable for reasons of defending the environment; limiting orientation to the EEC market to the most modern sector of the GDR's economy able to stand up to the competition without endangering jobs; the elaboration of an overall economic plan after a broad, pluralist, public discussion decided in a pluralist and democratic fashion in order to guarantee the socio-economic and political objectives indicated; giving priority in the framework of this plan to investments oriented towards improving the disastrous ecological situation in the GDR.

Such demands have, moreover, the advantage of keeping their mobilizing potential even in the context of a rapid unification.

In this case their function would be to protect GDR workers against the short-term negative impact of this unification.

In the present state of affairs the bulk of the organized workers' movement in the FRG, led by social democracy, completely committed to a policy of consensus with the bourgeoisie, will not support these demands. But they will have a growing echo in the more advanced wing of the working class and in the "new social movements".

They also have the function of giving a concrete content to the "third model of society", that of democratic and self-managed socialism, opposed both to despotic bureaucracy and the despotism of the market, and based on the self-determination and democratic sovereignty of the masses in all fields.

That provides an important contribution to the fight for the victory of the political revolution.

Our political propaganda pivots around the following themes:

- Defence of the mass movement in the GDR, against any bureaucratic or imperialist repression.

- Against any foreign interference in the GDR, for the free, sovereign self-determination of the GDR masses on their political, economic and social fate.

- Against the restoration of capitalism by the absorption of the GDR by the FRG.

- For the victory of the political revolution in the GDR, a springboard towards a socialist united Germany!

- For the socialist unification of Germany! ★

- The establishment of a right of trade-union veto in the management of enterprises, beginning with the joint ventures that are being set up now, to be exercised by democratically elected representatives of all the workers in every enterprise

- The establishment of a fund to equalize wages between the FRG and the GDR as soon as possible, eliminating any discrimination against women or immigrant workers.

- Measures designed to avert the selling off of national wealth (notably land) to the profit of the bourgeoisie or to layers of the nomenklatura becoming private owners.

On these questions, trade unions and workers in the FRG have an obvious material interest in supporting the demands of the working-class vanguard in the GDR. A key objective to be obtained is a broad united front on these questions beyond the borders of the two states. They also have a common interest in opposing any attempt by the bosses and wings of the trade-union bureaucracy and the social democrats to downplay the fight for the 35-hour week on the pretext that the immediate unification of Germany takes priority.

These demands must be extended onto the political terrain through the demand for a drastic broadening of democracy:

- Unrestricted multi-partyism and strict proportionality in parliamentary, regional and municipal elections;

- Unrestricted freedom to demonstrate, particularly without the serious restrictions currently in force in the FRG;

- Access to the media for all citizens in line with established numerical criteria,

and total independence of the media from state bodies, private owners and professional associations;

- Extension of the range of direct democracy, particularly through the immediate recall of elected representatives; the election of judges and high functionaries; the generalization of jury courts; all men and women to be equal before the law and the availability of free legal representation; the introduction of referenda at popular initiative on the big political, economic and social choices; right of veto for local councils over investments and developments that could threaten the environment; veto right for women's councils in the workplaces over all management decisions that concern women's condition; broad administrative decentralization;

- Total dismantling of the political and state police;

- Drastic extension of democracy in the enterprises; election of management committees by the whole of the personnel; generalization of workers' control; unrestricted trade-union freedom; unlimited right to strike.

These demands must be backed up by the outline of an economic orientation alternative to that of Kohl and Modrow. This orientation would include notably maintaining economic integration with the Comecon in order to ensure the continuation of full employment in enterprises unable to stand up to competition within the framework of the EEC, while waiting for their modernization; the extension of broad agreements with the countries of the third-world, in particular with a view to ensuring a reconversion of

# The crisis of Stalinism and the German question

The following resolution was supported by a minority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International at its February/March meeting

**I**F THE present democratic victories of the mass movement in Eastern Europe are not to be destroyed, a programme of political revolution must be put forward by revolutionary Marxists that goes beyond attempts to "reform" the system. It is necessary to organize independently of the bureaucracy in order to smash its power, and to fight for alternative institutions of power and government based on the self-organization of the masses.

The right to self-determination for both sections of the German people and unification must be unconditionally supported. It is not for either Helmut Kohl or Hans Modrow to set conditions. If it is the will of the East German masses — which it clearly is — unification should take place. Elections should be held for Constituent Assemblies to freely and democratically decide on social organization and state institutions. For our part, we will fight for the new united Germany to be socialist, for social and democratic rights to be set at the highest levels, and so on.

The key demands of the political revolution in the immediate situation are:

- Immediate, free elections to a Constituent Assembly.
  - Freedom of the media, with free access by all democratic organizations.
  - The right of assembly and demonstration, and the right to strike.
  - The secret police and all repressive institutions to be disbanded.
  - All secret files to be opened.
  - For a public trial of all those involved in bureaucratic corruption and crimes against the people.
- And in the particular phase now opening up, the following demands are extremely important:
- For new, independent trade unions.
  - For democratic committees in the workplaces and armed forces.
  - For workers' control in the offices and factories — open the books. For student control of the colleges.
  - For a democratic plan of production and workers' self-management.

Such an action programme, which combines minimum, democratic and transitional demands, must be tailored to correspond to the situation in each country. However, such a programme of demands is essential for the working class to be able to defend its social gains against privatization and the bourgeoisie's attempts to restore capitalism.

Propaganda for the reorganization of the army with rank-and-file soldiers' committees is necessary in addition to this action programme. An ideological battle must be waged to explain what a democratically-planned economy actually is, to provide a Marxist critique of capitalist market economies and explain the role of a system of socialist democracy and self-management through workers' councils. These arguments are especially pertinent to the fight against the ecological crisis in Eastern Europe. Demands must also be raised in relation to the doubly oppressed.

## The German question

The German question is key to the unfolding struggles in the whole of Europe. East Germany is the most successful and industrialized of the East European command economies, and therefore the most proletarianized. It was inevitable that the political revolution, from the very first day, would be intertwined with the national question — the unification of Germany.

Although we are for the self-determination of the East German people, including the right to unification with West Germany, it is necessary to present a revolutionary Marxist perspective on unification. This means clearly rejecting Kohl's 10-point plan for a phased move to a capitalist federal solution, or other similar pro-capitalist projects that would lead to the incorporation of the GDR into the FRG. We are in favour of unification, but will fight for it to happen on a socialist basis. On the other hand, turning our face against unification, because the Kohl plan dominates the political terrain at present, would only lead to the complete marginalization of the Marxist left.

The growing democratic demand for German unification is unstoppable. The key political question is which class will realize it — the bourgeoisie or the proletariat? At present, the bourgeoisie holds all the cards.

But the strategic choices facing the working class are not between a capitalist reunification and restoration as proposed by Kohl, or a democratic but autarchic planned economy within the existing boundaries of the GDR (as proposed by some left forces in East Germany). Not only does the latter have little support among the masses today, but it will not inspire the workers tomorrow, or build the unity of the whole German working class. Our starting point must be the objective interests of the class as a whole — that is, the unification of Germany and of the German working class — not some "lesser evil" stop-gap.

Clearly, the question of unification has to be placed within a socialist perspective. Our programmatic stance is for a United Socialist Germany as a step towards a pan-European socialist unity. What does this mean concretely today? It means advancing demands that put the working class onto the offensive on this question, rather than leaving the political terrain open to imperialism — or to sections of the bureaucracy, who will lead the class to defeat and disaster. It means advancing demands that can be taken up by workers in the West as well as in the East, to push forward the task of building a united front of the working class in both Germanies. The demand for a united neutral Germany, outside both the Warsaw Pact and NATO, can be a starting point for an anti-imperialist agenda.

West German capital will only accept reunification on its terms: the defeat and atomization of East German workers and an end to their mobilizations; the creation of a vast pool of cheap labour; the destruction of the extensive welfare system; the destruction and asset-stripping of whole sectors of the GDR's industry; and, finally, keeping a future united Germany as an integral part of the imperialist NATO alliance. However, capitalist penetration is also happening without unification — being against unification is not by itself any guarantee of protecting the social gains of East German workers! Fearing the consequences of a protracted crisis in the GDR and the emergence of a genuine working class solution, the Kohl government has embarked on a policy of destabilization and rapid integration. The speed of this process, including proposals for a single currency this year, is causing rifts within the ruling class and the Atlantic Alliance.

Various formulas will be up for negotiation. In this situation, our movement must articulate demands that, if taken up by New Forum or the United Left and so on, will begin to push imperialism onto the defensive on the national question. They will also create the conditions for workers in the GDR to defend and extend their social gains in a united way, and at the same time construct a united front with the working class in West Germany.

So, in addition to the action programme

set out above, in East Germany we should call for:

- The withdrawal of all foreign troops from both Germanies, including Berlin, as a step towards a demilitarized and nuclear-free Europe.
- German withdrawal from all military alliances.
- The equalization of wages up to West German levels, and the harmonization of welfare rights to the most advanced levels across both states.
- The upwards harmonization of abortion rights, maternity and childcare provision.
- The 35-hour week with no loss of pay — East and West.
- No layoffs. For the expropriation of all capitalist firms creating redundancies.
- The generalization of popular and social forms of democracy — for workplace committees and a system of workers' councils.
- For a United Socialist Germany as part of a Europe of the workers, East and

West.

Such a programme, even though Marxists will not be able to win acceptance for all these demands straight away, corresponds to the interests of German workers, East and West. The socialist left has to take the lead in fighting for the unification of Germany — it must trump the manoeuvres of Kohl and Modrow. The programme outlined above would be totally unacceptable to imperialism — even neutrality is anathema — or to the bureaucracy itself. But these demands will seem reasonable to an increasingly bigger layer of militant workers, at first in the East but also in the West. East German workers should appeal to workers in the FRG, build links, common campaigns and solidarity. In other words, try to construct real unity in action — a united front of the workers East and West!

What is at stake — not just theoretically, but concretely — is the possibility of European-wide working class and socialist cooperation. Despite discussions in

the European Community about building political and economic links with Eastern Europe, its institutional framework, ever-so carefully negotiated over many years and taking into account all the different national interests, is incapable of providing a structure for pan-European cooperation.

On the contrary, the initiatives of the Kohl government in relation to German reunification are causing significant strains within the existing capitalist clubs.

Right across Europe, the left must initiate an alternative political and economic framework for the integration of the continent, which respects the rights of peoples' to self-determination and democratic control of their political and social life. Our sections must not only help to build sections of the Fourth International in the East, but also intervene into the existing workers' movements in the West, promoting European-wide initiatives for developing a pan-European socialist perspective. ★



UNITED STATES

**New moves in campaign for release of Mark Curtis**

THE fight for justice for Mark Curtis, the U.S. socialist activist currently serving a 25 year sentence on trumped-up sexual assault and burglary charges (see IV 147, 149, 151, 154) has taken on a new impetus with the establishment of a United Nations inquiry into the case. An international delegation of Curtis supporters arrived in Geneva on February 6 to raise his case at the 46th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. The delegation was headed by Kate Kaku, Curtis' wife, and John Studer, the coordinator of Curtis' international defence effort.

A UN human rights officer has been assigned to direct the UN inquiry — she will prepare a summary of Curtis' case and send it to the U.S. embassy with a formal request for a reply. Kate Kaku is currently undertaking a two month tour of Europe to publicize the Curtis case.

Curtis, a member of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, has been subjected to further harassment in the Iowa State Men's Reformatory in Anamosa, where he is detained. After being framed on charges of gambling on the Super Bowl football game, his visiting rights have been reduced and 2 good conduct days removed from his record; he can no longer receive telephone calls or have access to

his typewriter, and has been moved to a more overcrowded level of the prison where inmates enjoy less privileges.

The Mark Curtis Defense Committee has urged that protest telegrams and letters be sent immediately, demanding that prison authorities rescind the punishment imposed on Curtis, drop the frame-up charges, and clear his record. Messages should be sent to John A. Thalacker, Warden, Iowa State Men's Reformatory, Anamosa, Iowa 52205, and to Paul Grosshem, Director, Department of Corrections, Capitol Annex, 523 E 12th, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.

Please send a copy and any response received from Iowa prison officials to the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, P.O. Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311. Donations to help finance Curtis' efforts to fight for justice before the U.N. Commission can also be sent to the above address, and earmarked for the U.N. effort. ★

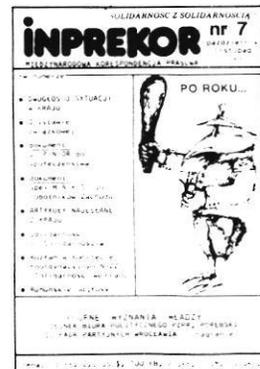
POLAND

**Fourth International thanked for solidarity effort**

The second regional congress of Solidarnosc in Lower Silesia, held in Wroclaw on March 2, 3 and 4, 1990, paid tribute to the solidarity with Solidarnosc built by members of the Fourth International at the time of the state of emergency. The congress was attended by over 500 delegates representing 235,000 trade unionists. Presenting a report on activities in

his capacity as president of the clandestine leadership of Solidarnosc in Lower Silesia from October 1982 to April 1983, Josef Piniór said in particular; "In this period Solidarnosc in our region received aid of the utmost importance from the west, in the form of radio equipment and transmissions, thanks to the activity in Paris of the Solidarnosc support committee led by Zbigniew Kowalewski and that of the editorial staff of the Polish journal of the Fourth International, grouped around Cyril Smuga". The written text of this report has been distributed to all the trade union structures of the region — the second largest in Poland in terms of Solidarnosc membership — and will appear in a book on the history of the trade union.

Issue number 25 of Polish *Inprekor*, printed in Wroclaw with the assistance of the Socialist Political Centre, was distributed during the congress by the regional distribution service of Solidarnosc. Our comrade Cyril Smuga, who attended the congress, was interviewed by Wroclaw regional television in his capacity as editor of *Inprekor* and the magazine was shown on television on March 5. ★



# A Bonapartist presidency to save the bureaucracy

THE SECOND ROUND of the elections for the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet, originally scheduled for March 10, was moved up a week, reportedly so that the new legislative body could issue a declaration of independence before Gorbachev could get himself elected as a constitutional czar empowered to guarantee the integrity of the "socialist fatherland." The supporters of Lithuanian independence won the race with Gorbachev. The new Supreme Soviet declared the country an independent republic on Sunday, March 11 by a vote of 124 for, with six deputies abstaining. Gorbachev did not manage an equivalent show of strength.

GERRY FOLEY

IN A CONGRESS of People's Deputies made up overwhelmingly of Communist members, out of 2250, 495 voted against the Soviet chief, 372 did not vote at all and 54 cast invalid votes. In all, he got only about 61%. Moreover, he barely managed to get the two-thirds majority needed to be elected president by the Congress of People's Deputies. The Lithuanians did not take part, considering the USSR now a foreign state. The Latvian and Estonian representatives reportedly voted for Gorbachev in return for his pledge to discuss the independence of their countries. Clearly, a period has opened of high-risk political maneuvers.

## Strong presidency replaces party's leading role

Gorbachev's ideological high priest made it quite clear what the role of the presidency was supposed to be. "V. Medvedev noted that it was no accident that the post of the presidency was being introduced at the same time as articles 6 and 7 of the constitution were being abolished," *Pravda's* parliamentary correspondents G. Ovcharenko and Yu. Ursov wrote in the March 13 issue. "Indeed, without a strong presidential power capable of action, the party's abandonment of its present functions could lead to anarchy."

In his report on the proposal, vice chair of the Supreme Soviet A. I. Luk'ianov said: "In the discussion about the establishment of the post of president, the question was raised more than once whether this step did not conflict with the renova-

tion of our federation, the strengthening of the sovereignty of the Union republics and guarantees of soviet autonomy. This, of course, is a complex and problem-ridden process. But here also the presidential powers should play a positive, constructive role, in the first place in reinforcing the sovereignty of the republics, defending their territorial integrity and constitutional rights."

Luk'ianov went on to attribute to the president basic powers to maintain the status quo:

## Defending the territorial integrity of the USSR

"Among the primary tasks of the president will be guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of Soviet citizens. He will be obliged to take essential measures for defending the sovereignty of the USSR and the Union republics, the security and territorial integrity of the country and for implementing the principles of the national-state system."

Luk'ianov stressed the limitations on the president. "First of all, the president is to be elected by universal suffrage and secret ballot [in the future]. In addition, in order to be elected a candidate must receive more than half of the votes cast, not only in the Union but, as a minimum, in a majority of the republics....

"Secondly, it is proposed to establish in the constitution that the same person cannot serve more than one term....

"Third, the proposal clearly stipulates that the president is responsible to the Congress of People's Deputies, which

can recall the president if he violates the constitution or laws of the USSR.

"Fourthly, the proposal starts from the principle that the powers of the president are defined by the constitution and laws.

"Fifthly the Congress of People's Deputies can change the orders of the president, and the constitutional tribunal of the USSR is responsible for verifying their legality."

The "first president," however, "will be elected from among several candidates by the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR, the most representative, democratic forum that we have today."

In the Congress of People's Deputies, figures considered liberals such as Aleksandr Yakovlev spoke in favor in election by the Congress on the grounds that in the present conditions in the USSR a popular vote would be dangerous: "We must take account of the present crisis."

Gorbachev had to accept certain limitations on his proposed presidential powers. Nonetheless, the establishment of such an institution is particularly dangerous in time of crisis, when the rulers are waving the bogymen of anarchy, trying to exploit feelings of insecurity as pretexts for cracking down.

Given the fact that it was possible to reduce still further the shaky legitimacy of the presidency, it seems that the Latvian and Estonian delegates made a big mistake in deciding to vote for Gorbachev in return for promises.

## National movements face difficult choices

The national democratic movements now face very difficult tactical choices. For example, the political articles in publications such as the Latvian and Estonian literary weeklies, *Literatura un Moksli* and *Reede* are now largely devoted to such problems — should the national democratic movements involve themselves in all-Union politics to support the progressives, since their fate depends on the victory of democracy in Russia too; or if they do that, do they risk losing their way "in the dark corridors of power"? Should they base their demands for independence on arguments about the illegality of the Soviet occupation and its results or on a more democratic legitimacy?

Moscow's reaction to the Lithuanian declaration, for instance, was that it was only a formality. But these "words" could very quickly lead to fundamental conflicts. For example, the Paris daily *Libération* reported March 15 that a law had been adopted by the Lithuanian parliament that citizens of the Lithuanian republic are no longer liable to serve in the Soviet army.

The question now is whether the Sajudis bloc is solid enough for a face off with Moscow, and whether it has a leadership with a strategy for winning such a struggle. ★