

# International VIEWPOINT

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## Mitterrand's France: The betrayal of hope



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**International VIEWPOINT**

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# God and the republic

**O**N THE ONE hand are the panegyrics. Hymns of praise to the all-powerful and all-wise president. French TV's satirical Bébête show calls him "God". And, indeed, his popularity is at an all-time high after the Gulf war, ensuring that the "Mitterrand decade" ends on a high note. He is Houdini, always finding a way to extricate himself from his apparent defeats. On May 10, 1981, he transfigured his previous political failures into sure steps on the road to power, and in 1988, when he was re-elected, he sealed his victory over his right wing rival, Jacques Chirac, with whom he had had to "cohabit" for two years, and proved that he was able to govern in the long term.

That is to say, he has seen off the idea that it is the left's destiny to fail. This is a triumph that confirms his solitude. The right has no answer but to re-enter those two old warhorses Giscard and Chirac, while the left, apart from the worn out competitor Michel Rocard, can only line up behind one or another of the president's faithful lapdogs, who regard power with the eyes of wolves.

## Reality behind the facade

However, others are able to point to an even more splendid reality behind this façade.

Wars always reveal truths and after the Gulf war people are asking questions about the real state of France. Mitterrand staked too much on his insistence that "France must keep its place" for the question of what that place is to be ducked now. On the economic level, everything seems to show that, after ten years of austerity, supposedly the necessary purgation that would restore the vitality of the French economy, French capitalism still suffers from the same weaknesses as before. There is a trade deficit which expresses French industry's lack of competitiveness with its direct rivals.

And what of France's international role? The support for the US position in the Gulf war, where France found itself playing second fiddle, the loss of credibility in the Arab world, the growing power of Germany which threatens the perspective of European unification under the joint leadership of Paris and Bonn, are all converging to cause deep anxieties about the country's position and its "rank" in the hierarchy of nations.

The domestic political climate is increasingly envenomed by the nauseating after-effects of the "affairs" that have been a constant feature of the Fifth Republic. Since De Gaulle the end of each presidential reign has been marked by scandals

**ON MAY 10, 1991, François Mitterrand had been president of France for ten years. In those ten years, his power, if not absolute, has, apart from two years of "cohabitation" with the right, been undivided.**

**FRANCIS SITEL**

in which money and the morals of the secret service and corrupt police are stirred in together. The Mitterrand regime, which managed to dampen down the "Rainbow Warrior" affair by sacking Hernu, the defence minister of the time, now finds itself facing a rising tide of "affairs", revealing a web of corruption involving the judiciary, the police and parliament.

The common point is the obsessive issue of the *fausses factures* (forged accounts), that is to say, of the financing of political parties. In the front line of this scandal is the Socialist Party (PS), the president's own party and the pivot of political life. Indeed, the evolution of this party is the other key element in the situation. At its last congress in Rennes, the PS presented an alarming image of a party torn apart by various "presidential stables", for whom politics is more and more reduced to a matter of pure personal ambition, or even straightforward corruption. Given this party's political role and the climate created by the "affairs", it would be no exaggeration to talk about a politico-moral crisis sapping the authority of the state.

## Social crisis takes concrete form

This authority is confronted at the same time by a directly social crisis. Recent months have been marked by a series of developments, which have been brewing for years, but have only now begun to take on dramatically concrete form, in the explosions of violence in several housing estates near the big cities, such as Vaulx-en-Velin near Lyons and more recently at Sartrouville, near Paris. In these cases young people have responded to police provocations with mini-riots, mixing confrontation with the police, the looting of big stores and various forms of plundering. Besides their immediate

causes, such events bear witness to the smouldering crisis on these disadvantaged estates where unemployment, social exclusion, racism, and all the various types of misery produced by an increasingly ruthless and inegalitarian society accumulate.

All these factors have rendered the leading circles, socialist or otherwise, with their practice so far removed from their speechifying and with their facile and invariably broken promises, increasingly isolated. The political class, for the most part clustered around the president, is without ideas or projects apart from the pursuit of their private interests. The notable exception is Le Pen on the far right. He is the only one who, in his own sinister way, dares to deal in the currency of political movement.

## Dislocation and drift in French society

Such a picture points up the elements of dislocation and drift in some parts of French society. It also underlines the impotence of the political class as a whole, and not only of the PS, even if the latter bears particular responsibility for the situation as the government party. Furthermore this lack of vision coincides with a time of immense historic upheavals, foreshadowing yet greater ones to come.

Over the course of the Mitterrand decade, France has profoundly changed — for the worse. This is not the kind of change which was envisaged by the Union of the Left in the 1970s and which ensured Mitterrand's victory in 1981. In those days the slogans were about "changing the way we live."

The change that has actually taken place, under the weight of the sacrosanct "realism", is that of the surrender of ambitions and hopes. The left, reduced to the PS due to the crisis of the Communist Party (PCF) and the growing marginalization of the far left, has kept power by selling its soul. This balance sheet of May 10, 1991 is a bitter one, but then, the losses have been considerable. All the values that contributed to the identity of the "left", in the broad sense of the term, have been degraded.

The left, and specifically the Union of the Left with its "Common Governmental Programme", held out the promise, that, as with the Popular Front government of 1936, once in power the parties based on the working class would have to meet the demands of the workers at least in part, and grant new rights. Everybody believed that this would lead to a confrontation

with the bosses which would lead on to new conditions, perhaps enlarging the horizons of the possible.

In 1982-83, with the turn to austerity, this perspective collapsed. When the country's trade balance began to yawn and the franc was threatened, the government, using the argument of the "external constraint" and the need to stay in the European Monetary System, gave way to German injunctions and accepted the policies proposed by the economy minister Delors.

This meant the renunciation of the "other policy", the policy of "change". This latter envisaged the relaunching of the economy through consumption, a reconquest of the domestic market by an interventionist industrial policy resting on a considerably reinforced nationalized sector, new rights for workers and so on. Now policy was going to be conducted on the same free market lines as in the other capitalist countries: a severe austerity policy, free play for the laws of the market, competition and profit and thus disinvestment by the state.

At the time this was presented as merely a "pause" in the reforms, painful, but temporarily unavoidable measures to strengthen an economy rendered fragile by previous administrations. After the foundations had been strengthened, the campaign would be relaunched. But no one was deceived. This was the funeral of the policy Mitterrand had promised during his election campaign. The socialist government, then including Communist ministers, reentered the consensus and engaged in the same austerity policy as all its western neighbours.

### Drive to secularize schools ended

This reorganization of Mitterrand's policy would be confirmed in other areas. The drive to secularize schools ended in 1984 in complete retreat in the face of an offensive by the defenders of private education. This battle represented a great victory for the right, which was able to mobilize significant forces, particularly in Catholic milieux. It made a double demonstration of its capacity to fill the streets and its ability to inflict an ignominious defeat on the socialist government — and on an essentially ideological question where the economic constraints used to

justify the austerity policy did not apply.

The same process was followed through in the area of foreign policy. After an ephemerally generous discourse, for example at Cancun, the regime quickly donned the old vestments of French imperialism, with a strong stench of neo-imperialism; the Lebanese adventure, the military intervention in Chad, the dropping of the perspective of independence for Kanaky, and so on. The only notable difference with his predecessors, still prisoners of Gaullism, was that Mitterrand gave his policy a clear Atlanticist inflexion; unstinting support for the deployment of US Pershings in Europe, and a much closer working relationship with

conditions, 1982-83 clearly marked the death of the illusion of significant change. The curve of hope then slumped downwards.

### The challenge of cohabitation

This did not stop Mitterrand from successfully taking up the great challenge of the decade; the test of cohabitation. This has allowed him, in an unprecedented exploit, to be reelected after seven years in power to a second presidential mandate. The lost votes of the workers, the price of broken promises and denials, were compensated for by the votes of the center. Mitterrand successfully presented himself

as the statesmanlike man of the moment, in contrast to an agitated and demagogic Chirac. Assured of the votes of the left, Mitterrand was able to devote himself to seducing that part of the electorate of the right which represented the true point of equilibrium of his policy.

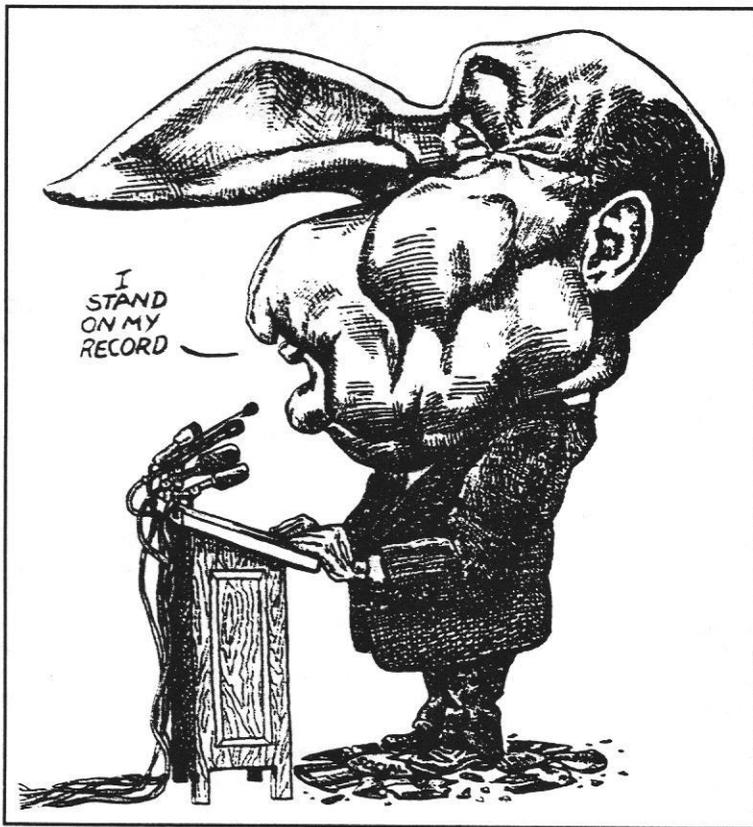
The fundamental result of the Mitterrand years is, then, the disqualification of the perspective of social change. Today all is bathed in the dull atmosphere of consensus, because this structuring reference is stifled, if not completely ruled out.

According to the line of the government, this adaptation represents progress for the left (in fact for social democracy); the replacement of the "culture of opposition" by the "culture of government", the choice of realism and the responsibility of governing on a long term basis. In short, the abandonment of

the ideological illusions of another age in favour of efficiency.

Recall that these ten years have seen the decline of the PCF, a major crisis throughout the trade union movement whose membership has fallen by half, a crisis of the far left leading a good part of it to the edge of extinction. As to the PS, now the biggest party in the country and comfortably ensconced in all the cogs of the bourgeois state, its Rennes congress has shed light on the deep crisis rending it, a situation aggravated by the government's policy during the Gulf war. The "grand design" of which the team around Laurent Fabius — one of the most prominent candidates for the succession to Mitterrand — speaks regularly deceives no one; the horizon of this party is strictly limited to fratricidal power struggles.

The Greens, who have affirmed themselves as a new force, present something



the US which would reach its apogee during the Gulf war.

This decisive and rapid evolution of the regime is well known, but it is worth adding another key feature of the decade, more difficult to explain and therefore more troubling; the fact that this major turn occurred without any strong working class reaction, nor open crises inside the parties concerned. Despite ups and downs, and a strong wave of struggles in 1986, the curve of working class combativity has inexorably declined in the course of the last decade. The PCF remained in the government and left on tiptoe, refusing discreetly in 1984 to join the new Fabius government. The PS saw its parliamentary group shaken by the amnesty law to the felons of the Algerian war, but absorbed the austerity and the crushing defeat on the schools issue without notable internal divisions. In these

of an exception in this context of staleness and corruption. If, as in the other European countries, their success can be explained by increasing consciousness on a mass scale of the ecological threats facing humanity, they have also known how to turn to their advantage the disillusionment with institutionalized politics. But, victims of their own electoral success, the Greens could not escape for very long the contradictions linked to the fact that they have become themselves an electoral force of some significance.

## Unprecedented crisis of the right

But the right has also experienced an unprecedented crisis during Mitterrand's decade of power. It has proved incapable of overcoming its divisions and redefining its political project. The rightist policy of Mitterrand has deprived it of political space and made it less credible. More seriously, by favouring the emergence of Le Pen's National Front (NF), Mitterrand has driven a stake through the heart of the right. Caught in insurmountable contradictions, it is trapped. If it denounces the racist discourse, it cuts itself off from a part of its own electorate and reinforces the NF. If it takes up the racist theme, which is its natural tendency, without being sure of winning back the voters lost to the NF, it would only reinforce the authority of the latter. If it renounces unity with Le Pen, it is assured of losing a good number of elections, inasmuch as the NF electorate in many cases has become indispensable to a right wing majority, but if it does enter into such an alliance it will experience new divisions, the moderate components finding an alliance with fascists unacceptable.

Such a situation witnesses to the great new political feature of ten years of Mitterrandism; the central importance of this racist and proto-fascist force. Having acquired an electoral audience of more than 10% of the electorate on the basis of anti-immigrant racism alone, the NF, continually denounced by the political class for its populist and anti-semitic excesses, is more and more perceived as a genuine anti-democratic threat.

Thus there is the conjunction of a working class movement in crisis and an increasingly powerful proto-fascist force which reflects profound social realities. The racist anti-immigrant reactions, the agonizing over "national identity", a certain disgust with "professional politicians", the rancor born of social frustrations... all these decompositions of the social tissue help the National Front at a time when all the traditional reference points of society, political and ideological, are in crisis.

In a society deprived of any perspective of change, the only dynamic force is that kind of anti-change epitomized by Le Pen; for many, the only force to offer a way

### The right to interfere

**DURING** a forum organized in Paris at the French Army's School of War on April 12, 1991, Vadim Zagladine, an adviser to Gorbachev, said that in Europe today "the threat of conflict comes more from the internal situation in the countries of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union" than from any risk of wars between states.

This came some days after a special European Council where, once again, the heads of states and governments had debated the problems of "European defence".

The forum at the School of War was then the occasion for Mitterrand to outline the views of the French government on matters of military doctrine, and to furnish some information on the state of discussions inside the European Economic Community (EEC): "the defence of Western Europe can, for the present and for many years to come, be conceived of only in respect of the Atlantic Alliance... It is not a matter of creating a defence organization which will substitute for NATO. Europe as such must not miss any opportunity to structure itself through a common policy and therefore, its own defence".

He added "political union in exterior matters will lead ineluctably to the creation of a military self defence capacity. It is not yet the case. The conditions remain still to be met".

Mitterrand's caution underlines once again the difficulties and contradictions of the process of European integration. The transition opening up will see cohabitation between a "reformed" Atlantic Alliance (some speak of "Europeanizing" NATO, thus reinforcing the weight of the countries of the old continent) and a project of European self defence. The French, whose own military ambitions have never been denied since the 1960s, are obviously more interested than others in the development of a European system of defence (notably starting from the Western European Union) in which they hope to play a leading role, to begin with through its industrial implications (see IV 194).

But if Mitterrand is being prudent, it is not simply because, from the diplomatic and political point of view, France and Europe came out of the Gulf war several lengths behind their US "competitor". The main motivation for his apparently paradoxical attitude is the situation in Eastern Europe. Thus the French president explains: "How many states will tomorrow's Europe be composed of, if each ethnic group wishes to possess the status of a state? How will it be possible then to unite, and what of interim crises, what of wars taking place anew in the European theatre which, although local, carry the risk of contagion?"

He went on to evoke "guarantees for minorities" and recalled that "non-interference stops where non-assistance to a people in danger begins". This clarifies the reasons why the French government believes that it will necessary to continue to take account of the Atlantic Alliance and the role of the United States in Europe. The risks of civil wars, of massive migrations, of endemic national conflicts, all weigh on the debates in the EEC on future systems of defence. And even the debate on the "right to interference" in Kurdistan appears, in the light of such words, as a precedent for a future "right to interference" in the Balkans or elsewhere; a viewpoint seemingly accepted by Zagladine — Claude Gabriel. ★

out, however fantastic and disquieting.

However this leaves us with a paradox: at a time of deep instability and depressing developments, and with all the risks these involve, Mitterrand remains solidly in place and political life is anaemic.

To understand how this can be so, the French situation needs to be put in a broader context, taking into account two factors in particular.

The first is that the tendencies which have shaken up the inherited political and psychological frameworks were already at work well before May 10, 1981. The crisis of capitalism and the bosses responses to it led in the 1970s to the destruction of the traditional centres of organized working class strength, such as steel and ship-building, and the complete

restructuring of others (cars, textiles). Thus, at the very moment when French capitalism was adopting new technologies and finding a new place in the international division of labour, the working class was suffering hard blows and a massive shake-up of employment and work patterns. The models advanced by the Union of the Left held back an understanding of what was going on. But, besides that, the entire political superstructure found itself out of phase with the developments in society.

Social democracy, finding itself in power, adapted, as we have seen, but other forces, including both the PCF and the parties of the traditional right, were unable to contain the crisis.

The other element is the new awareness

in France of the weight of international factors. Throughout the 1980s the French bourgeoisie has been acutely conscious of the relative weakness of French capitalism, but has not wanted to adapt its political pretensions to this diminished reality. The Gaullist vision of the world has remained dominant on the right, with the connivance of the PCF and sections of the PS. This vision involves an attempt to chart an independent course from the US; the ambition of playing, in alliance with West Germany, a leading role in the construction of a "Europe" without the Soviet bloc; and an active presence in North Africa, Black Africa, the Middle East and the South Pacific, to maintain its interests and prestige as an ex-colonial power.

The whole period dominated by the Union of the Left, despite the fact that this formation was in many respects backward looking, saw deep changes at work on the world scale, including the high-tide of neo-liberalism in response to the economic crisis; the weakening of the USSR in relation to the US and the West in general, which was to destabilize Europe and lead to German unification; the rising tide of problems in the Third World and the end of the postwar right/left equilibrium.

### Objective collapse or conscious betrayal?

These conditions are part of the reason why the performance of the left in power has been perceived by the workers more as an objectively determined collapse of traditional values than a conscious betrayal of those values. This can be seen over the issue of privatizations. Nationalized enterprises were sold off by Chirac during the period of cohabitation: this was the right's revenge but it was above all the removal of an anomaly whereby France was brought into line with the worldwide free market trend. Hardly anyone opposed this, and after his second presidential victory Mitterrand took refuge in the prudent philosophy of "neither re-nationalization nor further privatization", shutting the stable door after the horse had bolted. In any case the whole idea of nationalization had lost its original meaning. At the start the nationalized enterprises were meant to be the instruments for an audacious and independent industrial policy, but in fact they were never more than out-of-date capitalist enterprises, and it made sense to "make savings".

The secret of Mitterrand's long tenure of the presidential office lies in the combination of these elements. He was carried to power by the left but in power has followed right-wing policies. At the same time the workers could not impose their own solutions, and those of them who could still be bothered to get out and vote have continued to vote socialist with the sole aim of keeping out the right, which would be even worse.

The bosses, meanwhile, have nothing to

### Death of a vision

THE UNITED STATES' initiative in the Gulf has left many of the "allies", and notably France, at sea as to their place in the New World Order. The US political coup has caught French imperialism, which lacks the support of an effective European political instrument, off balance.

After the Gulf war, the Gaullist vision of France as a great power, based on its nuclear capacity and its independent defence industry, is finished. Also washed up is the notion of France's independent policy in relation to the Arab states.

It is not even certain that the Elysée palace can round up the Mediterranean countries in a grouping that can counter-balance the economic weight of Germany. With the economic and political stakes in the East, which are absorbing all the energies of the main European power, France's policing role in Africa is increasingly less of a weighty factor in the new inter-imperialist rivalries. This is all the more true in that the multiplication of economic, social and political problems in France's traditional zone of influence in Africa are leading to a questioning of whether this area of the world merits such a high priority.

In this new situation, it is no longer possible for French political leaders to fall back on the dogmas of nuclear defence first outlined by Guy Mollet in 1956, systematized by De Gaulle in the 1960s and religiously defended by Mitterrand.

The Socialist leaders, who were in at the birth of French nuclear power, now have to consider a thorough doctrinal spring-cleaning, in line with the world role they envisage for France.

Furthermore, Paris is trying to find a solution to the delicate question of maintaining an arms industry able, if not to rival that of its transatlantic competitor, then at least to keep in the running. Contrary to the soporific statements of Bush, the Gulf war has given a boost to the arms trade, and the US victory is the best possible advertising slogan for American arms manufacturers. US influence will expand in zones where military agreements underpin relations of privileged dependence, and where French armaments manufacturers are the main competitors.

This is why the Rocard government has proposed to Britain the joint development of a long-range air-surface missile. The British leaders, for their part, have proposed to the Germans the formation of a joint rapid response force. ★

complain about in the present situation and have therefore done nothing to bring it to an end. Social gains have been progressively whittled away, workers struggles have petered out, the workers' organizations have shrivelled, and meanwhile profits have gone up and up accompanied by the revival of capitalist "values". Thus, after ten years, all the workers have gained is a reduction of the working week by an hour, a fifth week of paid holidays, new, rather lifeless rights and nationalizations that have become empty shells.

The real balance sheet is not a good one. High unemployment has become chronic, with more than two and a half million victims, the standard demands of the bosses — an end to any price related wage-indexation, work flexibility in the name of the productivity imperative, the spread of part-time work principally affecting women, massive growth of temporary work and short-term contracts, growing lack of job security for young people and the constant pressure on social services — have become entrenched realities.

And, perhaps the supreme expression of it all, social inequality has been growing constantly. While stock exchange manipulators make easy fortunes, the RMI (minimum income), that is to say assistance for the poorest, has become a central fact of social life, since unvar-

nished poverty has made its reappearance on the housing estates in the suburbs.

Thus, Mitterrand, the PS and the left, after a decade in power, have not only failed to make the most minimal change in favour of the workers and the most deprived sectors, but have even been unable to stop the situation getting worse. There is more injustice in France now than before. Mitterrand's trick has been to provide for each retreat a pseudo-democratic explanation of the type "one cannot impose measures, however just, on a society which rejects them". Thus the right to vote for immigrants has been postponed until the forthcoming blue moon, because, in the view of the president, the French are not ready for it, as they are not ready for the independence of Kanaky, the secularization of schools and so on.

The apparent calm that prevails in France after ten years of Socialist rule cannot hide the huge political transformations underway. Without any great class battles, "realism" has swept away historic landmarks.

Change has been renounced in favour of the art of the possible. But this leads to an impasse, as has become clear as the world plunges into turmoil. It is necessary to reinvent everything, beginning with a new project of social change, since the old ones have disappeared in the great wreck of the left known under the name of Mitterrandism. ★

# The betrayal of hope

**"TO change life" ("changer la vie") they said. Yet the balance sheet of ten years of Mitterrandism makes sad reading, from the point of view of the workers at least; 2,600,000 unemployed on official estimates, wages frozen, growing inequalities, social protection eroded, setbacks in labour legislation. On the other hand there is the triumph and consolidation of capitalist legitimacy. The reformist left, elected in 1981 on a whole range of promises, very quickly adopted an entirely opposite policy.**

MAXIME DURAND

**W**HAT is striking is the rapidity with which the turn towards "rigor" was made. Mitterrand was elected on May 10, 1981, the first austerity plan was adopted in June 1982, and this turn was definitively consolidated by March 1983. Thus it took Mitterrand only two years to abandon the programme on which he had been elected.

According to the official version, the good intentions of the left were shattered by a hostile international environment. And it is true that the reflation of 1981-82 led to a significant growth in the balance of trade deficit, particularly because the international recession lasted longer than had been envisaged, and the dollar increased very rapidly in value. Faced with such adverse conditions, it is said, the left had to fall back in line and accept the laws of economics, given the extreme narrowness of its margin of manoeuvre. But this version, in which a well meaning policy is destroyed by an outside world which it had not taken into account, poses immediately the question; were the left in government traitors or simply incompetents?

The question merits being posed in those terms, inasmuch as the leaders of the left were in a position to know what would happen. In a book entitled "Industrial Socialism", presenting the official positions of the French Socialist Party (PS), the author, Alain Boubliil, analyzed very clearly the two principal threats, namely a disequilibrium of the trade balance resulting from a strong increase in imports and the holding back of investment in the private sector.

Was the underestimation of these constraints deliberate or done in good faith? A saying attributed to Mitterrand ("for the moment I'm playing politics; the rigor, you will see later") could shore up the the-

sis of a Machiavellian intent. But the reply to this question, which would vary in any case according to the strata of administrative or political personnel you were talking about, matters little. Objectively, the success of a policy of social transformation was reliant on three conditions which the left did not want to meet. These were:

- (i) domestically, a break with the logic of profit.
- (ii) internationally, a break with the logic of the world market.
- (iii) the kind of popular mobilization needed to implement these two breaks.

## Refusal to break with logic of profit

The refusal to break with the logic of profit is clearly illustrated by the fate of nationalization as an instrument of policy. Certainly, the left government nationalized some industries and the banks (with generous compensation), but at the same time it declined to make effective use of this. When Rocard, the great defender of the market, was put in charge of the Commissariat of Planning, it became clear that the planning in question would remain of the vaguely indicative kind.

Neither did the government create the kind of National Investment Bank which could have ensured the redirection of financing towards target sectors of the economy in accordance with the priorities of the plan. The minister of industry, Chevènement, did try to put such an apparatus into place and give a real content to the agreements made between the big industrial groups and the Plan, but he was very quickly disowned and then forced to resign.

This turn opened a period of progressive retreat, the most significant event

being without doubt the decision to let Creusot-Loire go bankrupt in 1984, thus abandoning the perspective of building a French machine tool industry. Certainly, nationalization allowed the restructuring of industries such as iron, at the price of a drastic reduction in the workforce and a fusion of the two nationalized groups, Usinor and Sacilor. The left government thus assured the health of the principal French industrial groups, but according to a free market logic (reduction of workforce, non-integrated specialization, investment being sucked abroad) which means that if the French industrial apparatus has been financially strengthened, it remains nonetheless globally fragile, as the recent recession has shown.

The second necessary break concerned the world market. After five or six years of a strong franc policy, unanimously criticized by the left, everybody expected an early devaluation which would have established a value of the franc corresponding more to the competitiveness of the French economy. Mitterrand decided to postpone this devaluation, for eminent political reasons.

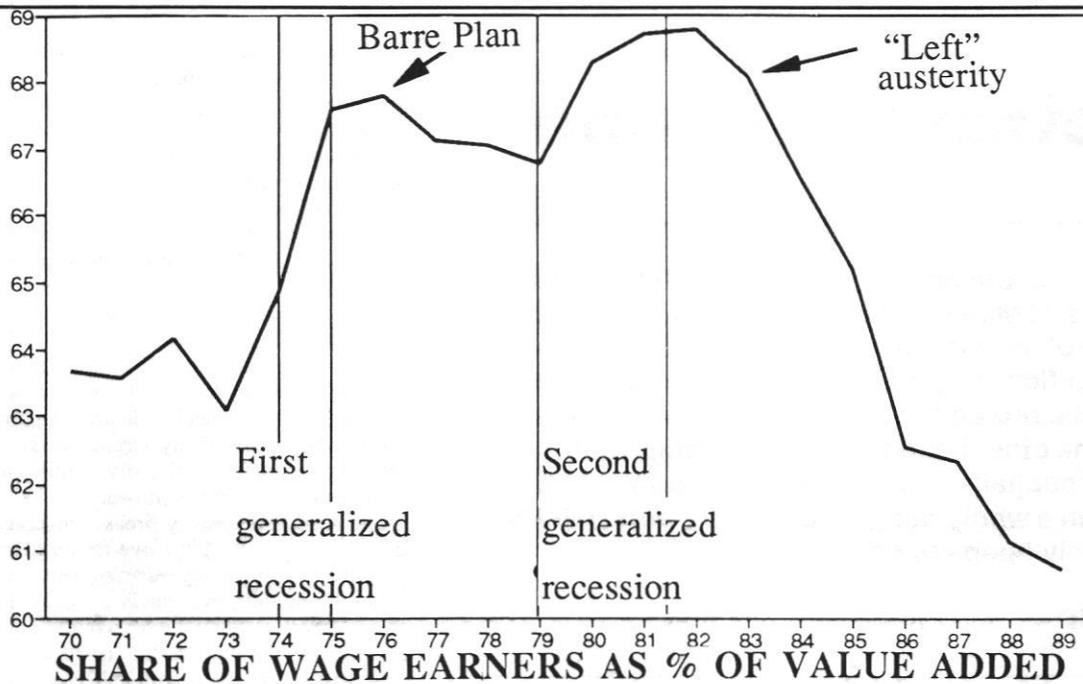
## A message to the bourgeoisies

This could only be interpreted as a message to the other bourgeoisies to reassure them of France's determination to continue to play the game. In a similar manner, the debate on leaving the European Monetary System, which preceded the definitive turn towards austerity in March 1983, was settled through acceptance of the rules; even the authorized margins of manoeuvre have not been questioned.

This minimum not being attempted, it is hardly astonishing that more advanced measures were not envisaged, like the disconnection of interest rates, controls of foreign currency and capital movements, or import controls.

The third condition was, obviously, the popular mobilization which, alone, could permit the implementation of genuinely radical measures. This mobilization did not happen because the left did everything to avoid it, so as to reassure the middle classes and the bourgeoisie. Since the signature of the Common Programme in 1972, social struggles had been systematically reined in in the name of electoral considerations. The division opened in September 1977 between the PS and the Communist Party (PCF) did not aid this mobilization either, displacing the debate towards the rival apparatuses. Finally, from the arrival of the left in power, the political and trade union apparatuses in their entirety did all they could to discourage popular initiatives.

From May 11, 1981, the message repeated over and over again was that the boat should not be rocked, for fear of losing the legislative elections of June 1981. The PCF and its relays in the CGT (Gen-



eral Confederation of Workers — the largest French trade union federation) played a specific role in the straitjacketing of the masses; *l'Humanité* (the PCF daily) becoming an "official newspaper" for the four Communist ministers of the period. The struggles of workers in the car industry were disowned, the prime minister Mauroy going so far as to see a Muslim fundamentalist conspiracy behind the unrest.

The refusal to break with the logic of capital and appeal to popular mobilization meant the left in power had to apply instead a policy of rigorous austerity, one of whose principal axes was the "deindexing of wages". From June 1982 an effective freeze of prices and wages (mainly the latter) was implemented. Inflation was effectively brought down to levels comparable to those of West Germany, but the result was that from 1983 the share of wages in value added was falling (see graph). This was the essential result of Mitterrand's economic policy. A whole series of corollaries went with it, of which the most grave were the rise in unemployment and the growth of inequalities. And these were not perverse effects, but constitutive elements of this policy.

The freezing of salaries and the jacking up of profits were obtained in the context of a deflation of the economy which led to a very rapid rise in unemployment. Diverse measures creating intermediary situations between work and unemployment have given the appearance of a stabilization in the number of unemployed, but the French figures remain amongst the worst in Europe. The rise in unemployment has been accompanied moreover by a degradation of the status of the worker, reflected in the growing use of temporary and part time work, night work, subcontracting, and so on. And each time the labour legislation has been

amended to accommodate these successive breakthroughs in "flexibility".

The left prides itself on having voted through the "Auroux laws" allowing a voice to the workers in their workplaces, but in reality there has been a regression in terms of rights at work.

The socialists maintained the right's thesis that the weight of obligatory deductions (taxes and social welfare payments) should not grow. This meant a freezing of the measures taken in 1981 and 1982 in favour of a minimum wage and minimum assistance to the old. A slow erosion of social payments then took place, the government being aware that social security is a gain to which the workers are strongly attached. Even retirement at 60, which is, along with the fifth week of paid holidays, one of the few gains of the decade, is today menaced by government plans, after having served its purpose above all in reducing the number of unemployed.

### A damning balance sheet

Mitterrand has asked several times to be judged on his record on jobs. It is a risky demand, for the balance sheet here is particularly damning. The left thought it could settle the problem of unemployment through a combination of three means; more growth, more jobs in the public sector, and reduction of the working week.

Austerity rapidly destroyed the first two postulates, and as for the reduction in the working week, the predictions of the partisans of a 35-hour law came true; by lowering the working week by one hour only (from 40 to 39 hours a week) a buffer was created so that the effective maximum became synonymous with the legal maximum. The recent economic upswing even saw a slight increase in the average working week. Ultimately, the left in

power relied on the reduction of wages rather than on a reduction of the working week to create jobs; there again, it surrendered to the arguments of the employers.

With the purchasing power of the workers frozen, it was necessary to rely on that of the rich to provide the dynamic of effective demand.

The arrival of Bérégovoy as Minister of Finance was accompanied by a furious policy of freeing up of the financial markets. The inventiveness which the left had not been able to display for the benefit of the workers showed itself at last; new instruments were put into place, the tax on capital gains was progressively lowered to only 17%, restrictions on capital movements were totally lifted, and the tax on company profits was reduced from 50 to 34%.

Moreover, Bérégovoy, who had been favourable to an exit from the EMS, embarked on a policy of defence of a franc overvalued by around 15% in relation to the mark (at the price of soaring real interest rates) and became the most heated defender of budgetary rigor. This policy had as its counterpart a spectacular distortion in the sharing out of income; whilst wages stagnated, financial income soared.

The sole motor of the economy was then the consumption of the rich, which compensated for the stagnation of that of wage-earners and eventually generated an increase in investment, starting from 1987-88. But, even from the point of view of the bourgeoisie, this policy has not exactly been optimal. The employers have laid off workers to the best of their ability, while the government has attacked the wage-earners and done everything it could to re-establish the financial health of the private sector. But this somewhat crude policy was accompanied by a stagnation of the interior market, a continuing weakness of investment and training, and thus a relative weakening of the productive apparatus which is reflected notably by a growing deficit in industrial trade.

But perhaps the most surprising aspect of this policy is the extent to which the Socialists have gone further than even the bourgeoisie might expect of them. The furious deregulation carried out by Bérégovoy, for example, went far beyond what

was strictly necessary in the short term. The best proof of this is without doubt furnished by the return of the right to government, from 1986 to 1988. If the right had meant what they said about the ravages worked by the left, one might have expected a 180° turn in economic policy. In fact the only significant change was the reprivatization of some of the industries and the banks which had been nationalized by the Socialists. This process was not fully carried through because of the financial crash of October 1987, but it demonstrated that the idea of nationalization had become an empty shell.

### Going further than the right

Mitterrand campaigned in 1988 around the idea of "ni-ni" (neither privatizations nor new nationalizations) but his government quickly accomplished what their right wing predecessors had not done, namely the dismantling of the status of the Renault car company and the post office. A little while ago, the participation of private capital in public enterprises were authorized. In any case it is a long time since anything distinguished the orientations of management or the mode of work organization in public and private enterprises. An examination of all the important economic trends reveals that the right's return to power made no particular difference. The accompanying wages curve graphic shows the record of the reformist left in power. It shows how the two generalized recessions, and above all the first, led to a growth of the share of wages in percentage of value added. In 1976 the Barre plan was implemented which succeeded in lowering this share a little, only for it to rise anew with the second recession. The arrival of the left in power was reflected by a moderate rise, soon followed by a dizzying fall which, ironically, was interrupted only with the arrival of the right in power.

But, amongst all the setbacks, the worst is without doubt the pure and simple alignment with the values of capitalism, as summed up in the formula of Bérégo-voy in the daily newspaper *Les Echos* on May 6, 1991: "France has reconciled itself to business and the Socialists have helped it". The left has not been content with betraying a programme, it has destroyed a hope. Just as Stalinism cast its shadow on the perspective of the construction of a socialist society, the experience of the PS and the PCF in government has for a long time discredited any project of social transformation. The essential references of the French left (nationalization, planning, self-management) are now discredited. France is distinguished today by a particularly deep crisis of trade unionism, and by the rise of the far right. It will take some time to wipe away the impact of this balance sheet in the social imagination, and rebuild a genuine project of social transformation. ★

## From dictatorship to anarchy

**FOR the past three years, Somalia has been in the grip of a brutal civil war which has received even less media coverage than the events in Liberia. At the end of 1990, probably as a result of the Gulf crisis, the situation took a further turn — a turn that has been almost totally ignored.**

**At the beginning of this year, the battle of Mogadishu, which claimed several thousand victims in a town now empty of foreigners, ended in the fall of the dictator Siyad Barre. Since then the various opposition factions have set upon one another: "tribal anarchy has thus become a reality in one of the few African countries united in culture and language."<sup>1</sup>**

### SAMAALÉ

**T**HE colonial carve-up at the end of the 19th century fragmented Somali territory between areas of Italian, British and French control. These three European states scrambled to occupy the shores of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean when this zone began to be considered strategic, after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In the same period, the Ogaden came under the control of Ethiopia, an ancient Christian state whose expansionist policies were openly supported by the two main colonial powers, Britain and France.

Resistance to this was fierce, and a sheikh from the northern Darod clan, Mohammed Abdillé Hassan, nicknamed "the Mad Mullah" by the British, organized a guerilla movement which was active from 1899 to 1920. Its main enemy was the British, but the Ethiopians and Italians also wanted to crush this rebellion.

### Somali national identity born

The coalition of northern Somali tribes was fragile and conflicts of interest between the different clans could lead to violent clashes. Nonetheless, the Mullah's personality and his talents as a poet helped give birth to the idea of a Somali national identity going beyond the present frontiers of the Somali Republic.<sup>2</sup>

Italy, a second-rate colonial power, had expansionist designs in this region. Forty years after the crushing defeat inflicted on Italy by the Ethiopians at Adoua in 1896, Mussolini's empire took control of Ethiopia after a particularly cruel campaign involving the use of gas on a massive scale. This barbarous aggression enjoyed the evident complicity of the British, who wanted to see the dictator's appetites sat-

ed by this colonial morsel.

At the beginning of the Second World War, after an ephemeral occupation of British Somaliland, Italy's east African empire, which comprised Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia, was unable to withstand the British counter-offensive. For ten years after 1941, Somalia was administered by the British, who encouraged the pan-Somali visions of a section of the local elite. This was the first appearance of a very vigorous nationalist tradition, which set up Mohammed Abdillé Hassan as the first hero of Somali independence.

### Irredentism a feature of new state

After independence in 1960, irredentism on the part of the authorities in Mogadishu was one of the main political characteristics of the young state, which was made up of a union between Somalia, which had become independent after ten years of Italian trusteeship under UN auspices, and the former Somaliland, which became independent at the same time. The five branches of the star on the Somali flag symbolize Greater Somalia, including Djibouti, still a French colony, the Ogaden, once again under Ethiopian control, and northern Kenya. Since 1964, Somalia has been engaged in a border dispute with Ethiopia along the provisional demarcation line drawn by the British in 1950. Following the failure to negotiate a real frontier, armed clashes developed and each of the two belligerents has supported guerilla movements on the other side of the border.

1. S. Smith, *Liberation*, August 4, 1989.

2. P. Rondot, "Quelques remarques sur le personnage et le rôle historique de Mohammed Abdille Hassan", in *Point*, Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes d'Afrique Orientale, no. 8, 1970, pp. 7-14.

Following the assassination of president Shemarke (probably owing to differences of tribal origin) the army took power on October 21, 1969, and Siyad Barre, president of the supreme revolutionary council, became head of state.

The military took power from civilians accused of having no support outside of a tiny urban clientele. The new regime proclaimed its intention to combat tribalism, nepotism, corruption and illiteracy. It adopted policies more attuned to the interests of the rural population, linked up with the Soviet Union and affected a resolutely socialist political line.

Moscow despatched some 6,000 civilian and military advisers to the country and established an important naval base at Berbera on the banks of the Gulf of Aden. China also had a presence, but this was limited to projects for the civilian infrastructure, notably the financing of the building of a road between Mogadishu and the north.

### Initial successes for regime

At first, the regime scored some successes, with the establishment of a written Somali using the Latin alphabet and a huge literacy programme. In 1974 Somalia was admitted to the Arab League, which opened the way for substantial aid from the Gulf states.

However Siyad Barre also pursued a very aggressive nationalist programme. From the end of 1976, he gave military support to the Ogaden Liberation Front.

A few months later, the Somali army's aggression, at a time when the new regime in Addis Ababa was confronted with offensives by the Eritrean and Tigrean liberation movements, led to a turnaround by the Soviet Union, which gave massive support to Ethiopia, providing that country with the military advisers and arms that enabled it to push the Somalis back.

The 1978 defeat in Ogaden forced the Somalis to return to internal affairs, and 'clan politics' was not long in reappearing. At the same time Somalia was forced to renew links with the Western powers. The Americans took over the "lease" on the Berbera base in exchange for economic and military aid.

But this was not abundant and the country's main foreign resource consists in the massive food aid to the Ogadeni refugees supplied over the past 12 years. In fact, the Somali authorities have always claimed more refugees than any of the studies undertaken have been able to find.

Over the past decade, the head of state and his entourage successfully exploited the divisions in the opposition. The defence of the regime was based on a pretorian guard (the Red Berets) and security services mainly recruited from the presidential clan, the Marehan, who make up no more than 2% of the population of some six million.

### One country, six confederations

THE population of Somalia is 95% Somali, the latter group being divided into 6 tribal confederations of differing sizes.

1. The Dir are based around the frontier with Djibouti and Ethiopia (the Jijiga region), and are composed of two antagonistic tribes; the Issa and the Gadaboursi.
2. The Isxaaq, one of the bigger tribal confederations, more than a million strong, occupy roughly the territory covered by the old British Somaliland. The members of this tribe are very active in trade and are supported by a diaspora of numerous immigrant workers in the Gulf countries and the former imperial power.
3. The Daarood, numerically the most important group, are implanted in the north east (Majerteenia), the major part of the Ethiopian province of Ogaden and, in the south, along the Kenyan frontier. The Marehan clan, to which ex-President Siyad Barre belongs, is part of this federation.
4. The Hawiyya, based in the centre of the country and Mogadishu, the capital being the fiefdom of the powerful Hawiyya clan, the Abgal.
- 5/6. The Rahanwiin and the Digil, established in the most fertile zones of the country, along the Schebelle and Juba rivers. These two tribes are the only ones to devote themselves to agriculture. They are often designated under the name of Sab, which attests to their Bantu ancestry. Because of their origin and way of life, they are not always considered as true Somalis. ★

In the leading spheres, political manoeuvres and fear of a coup led Barre to increasing reliance on family members. Every promotion or nomination in the state apparatus has tended to push the Isxaaq and Hawiyya, the two main groups involved in the country's business activity, further out of the political picture.

Besides these political consequences, the increasing nepotism allowed the president's entourage to help themselves to a large share of the country's meagre resources, not to speak of the foreign aid. The former ambassador of Somalia's permanent commission to the Geneva-based international organizations has been accused of selling for her own profit a cargo of rice worth several million dollars designated for famine relief.

### Aid ends up in Swiss banks

The new government has also taken steps to regain some \$100m deposited in Swiss banks. This pile includes notably a Saudi gift of \$70m to Siyad Barre's government last December — the price for Mogadishu's anti-Iraqi stance during the Gulf crisis.<sup>3</sup>

After the settlement of the Ogaden conflict through the signing of an agreement between Addis Ababa and Mogadishu on April 4, 1988, fighting became concentrated in the north, against the Isxaaq-dominated Somali National Movement (SNM), the Isxaaqs being the main Somali people in what was formerly Somaliland. The fighting was fierce and Siyad Barre's army did not shrink from bombing and destroying the former capital of Somaliland, Hargeisa, controlled for a few days by SNM forces.

In 1990, when the Abal clan of the

Hawiyya people, who make up the majority of Mogadishu's population, themselves took up arms against the government, the crisis reached its paroxysm. After months of intense fighting, on January 27, 1991, the forces of the United Council of Somalia (UCS — Hawiyya) chased Siyad Barre from the capital.

However the victory of the opposition movements has not brought an end to the fighting, since the different opposition factions have not been able to reach agreement.

The legitimacy of the provisional president, Ali Mahdi Mohammed, was at once challenged. The SNM boycotted the conference of national reconciliation, which was postponed to the end of April. In the north, there are to be regional consultations in order to engage in a preliminary re-discussion of the 1960 reunification act. While secession is a real possibility, there are many voices to be heard on the international level insisting on the need for federal solutions in the Horn of Africa.

In the power vacuum, particularisms have resurged, blending in with the clan divisions. Since the departure of Siyad Barre, Mogadishu has been divided into rival sectors, although the UCS retains the upper hand in the capital.

### Clan rivalries emerge throughout country

Throughout the country similar situations are taking on worrying proportions. On the frontier with Djibouti, the Issa have taken their distance from the SNM to set up the United Somali Front, (USF)

3. *Le Courrier de Genève*, March 13, 1991.

4. C. Simon, *Le Monde*, August 6-7, 1989.

5. J. Hélène, *Le Monde*, December 27, 1990.

with the aim of counter-balancing Isxaaq ambitions in the north of the country, at the same time adopting a strategy of confrontation with the Gadaboursi. These calculations seem to have been thwarted by the rallying of Gadaboursi elements to the SNM.

Among the latter, faithful allies of the ousted president have fled the Boroma region in the direction of camps on the Ethiopian frontier where they have regrouped under the banner of the Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA).

In former Somalia, besides the Hawiyya in the CSU, which has already experienced internal divisions, the Democratic Front for the Salvation of Somali, based on the Majeerteenia clan of the Daarood people — the first movement historically to oppose Siyad Barre's regime — has arisen from the ashes.

The southern Daarood, for their part, have regrouped in the Somali Popular Movement (SPM), the backbone of this being former Ogadeni army personnel led by Colonel Omar Jess.

Finally, supporters of former president Siyad Barre himself are not finished, especially since, given the warrior traditions of the Somalis, the Marehan clan will only survive the fall of its chief with difficulty. The danger of physical elimination strongly contributes to the cohesion of the clan.

Having taken refuge in Gedo, the region of his birth, the president is protected by a small army of armed followers. Nor has he lost the ability to develop a new web of alliances.

### Rival factions within opposition movements

Rival factions are proliferating inside the two big opposition movements. There are divergences inside the SNM between secessionists and moderates, without taking into account the Issa's attempt to control the Djibouti frontier with its own militia.

In the CSU it is worth mentioning the split of a group led by general Farah Haideed, the "unlucky candidate" against president Ali Mahdi Mohamed. Ethiopia, which remains wary of its neighbour's designs on the Ogaden, is making no secret of its sympathies for the secessionists of the SNM in the north and the partisans of Farah Haideed in the coastal zone (the Benaadir) around the capital.

In the medium term the issue is to gain control of the main flows of money coming from trade in the north and from Mogadishu. Commercial and financial transactions are subject to all kinds of rake-offs — taxes, payment for hypothetical services, not to speak of straightforward racketeering.

The picture would not be complete without mentioning the proliferating groups tied to this or that clan and local interests or formed with the aim of protecting cer-

tain businesses, or simply for the purposes of banditry.

This phenomenon is especially marked in the capital, to the point where the prevailing anarchy prevents humanitarian organizations from working, with the exception of SOS Villages — a small Swiss non-governmental organization — and the French Médecins sans frontières, which manages to keep two hospitals going in the capital.

Somalia, which belongs to the group of least developed countries, must now deal with the handicap of the recent destruction. In Mogadishu alone, a large part of the infrastructure has been destroyed and the town was pillaged for several weeks. All enterprises and administrative offices are shut and qualified personnel have left.

Furthermore, the country has been totally marginalized internationally, and thus, given that aid is usually linked to some sort of political and economic interest, it is very unlikely that there will be an influx of material and financial support. The extent of Somalia's marginalization is illustrated by the total evacuation of the US base at Berbera in November 1990, despite its proximity to the operational theater of US forces in the Gulf.

### Conflict accentuates economic distortions

Already hard hit by the periodic droughts which have struck the country in the course of the last two decades, the dislocation of the economy and movements of population have been accentuated by the conflict, with grave consequences for all the people, whether nomadic or sedentary.

Exports of cattle, the primary source of foreign currency income, which had

already fallen following a cattle plague in 1983, are at break even point since 1988.

Exports of bananas to Italy in the framework of the Lomé accords linking the ACP (African, Caribbean, Pacific) countries to the EEC have already fallen and should fall further given the devastation wreaked in the plantations.

Some plantations were still in the hands of Italian planters who have all left the country. Moreover, all the development projects undertaken have been stopped, the foreign personnel of the big aid and development agencies, UN personnel in particular, having been evacuated a little before the battle of Mogadishu.

### A cemetery of foreign aid

Aid from Saudi Arabia and Libya was not enough to save the regime of Siyad Barre. In a country known as a "cemetery of foreign aid"<sup>14</sup>, the new authorities will face great difficulties in obtaining diplomatic recognition and substantial aid, whilst famine menaces the country.

The Gulf War has led to the virtual drying up of the aid furnished by Somalia's principal backers (the EEC, the United States and the Arab countries) and of the remittances linked to the financial transfers of Somalis in Kuwait and Iraq, estimated at \$300m a year<sup>5</sup>.

Some three hundred Somalis have recently been expelled from Saudi Arabia. This phenomenon has helped to dry up the flood of imports of manufactured goods paid for in foreign currency with funds collected by the immigrant workers.

Their families in Somalia, who were remunerated in Somali shillings as a consequence of these commercial operations, face grave difficulties today. ★

### A pastoral country

THE Republic of Somalia was created in July 1960 out of the union of two former colonies, British Somaliland and the Italian Trusteeship Territory of Somalia. It covers an area of 638,000 kilometers and has around 6 million inhabitants (the annual rate of population growth is 3%). Today half of the population, which is 95% Somali, live as nomadic herders. Mogadishu, the capital, has around half a million inhabitants, the port of Kismayo about 70,000, whilst the towns of Berbera and Hargeisa each have between 60 and 70,000 inhabitants (they have been for the most part deserted since the fighting of 1988). With few natural resources, Somalia is an essentially pastoral country. Livestock: sheep and goats; 33 million; cattle and camels; 12 million.

Structure of production; agriculture represents 65% of GDP, services 25% and the manufacturing sector 10%.

Income from exports was at \$60 million in 1988, largely made up of beef on the hoof (67%), and bananas, of which the production rose in 1988 to 120,000 tonnes (22.6%). The remaining 10.4% came from leather, skins, furs and fish (product of fishing 17,000 tonnes in 1988).

Gross National Product (GNP) per inhabitant; \$170. Somalia's foreign debt is \$2bn, almost twice the GNP of the country. ★

# Rising criticism in runup to Communist Party Congress

THE economic difficulties and social tensions which Cuba is experiencing come on top of the questions raised by the crisis of the countries of Eastern Europe, long presented as bastions of socialism. Doubts, worries and uncertainties about the future are finding expression in the preparatory assemblies for the Fourth Congress of the Cuban Communist Party (CCP), which should have been held during the first quarter of 1991, and which has been postponed.

Relegated temporarily to the background by the Gulf war, the holding of the congress constitutes a dilemma for the CCP leadership; how to respond to the expectations raised by the numerous appeals for debate? And, above all, what to say to those who ask how and if the country is going to survive? These questions are accentuated by the difficulties of everyday life, and the leadership of the CCP is obliged to respond to the growing impatience which is manifesting itself amongst young people and intellectuals.

JANETTE HABEL

**C**ONVENED under the symbol of the proclamation of Maceo rejecting the capitulationist Pact of Zanjón<sup>1</sup>, the Fourth Congress sets itself in the tradition of the wars of independence, of the struggles for dignity and national sovereignty, "for the defence of revolutionary, patriotic and internationalist principles without dogmas or foreign schemas"<sup>2</sup>, at a time when the imperialists "think they are witnessing a definitive and irreversible crisis of socialism"<sup>3</sup>.

Faced with the collapse of what was still called until recently in Cuba the "socialist camp", Fidel Castro seeks a return to the — profoundly nationalist — sources of the revolution. But this appeal to resistance, in an economically alarming situation<sup>4</sup>, cannot divert attention from the more fundamental debates: historic (how this situation has come about, why an analysis of the situation of the countries of Eastern Europe had not been developed earlier), political and economic.

As *Granma* underlined again on February 10, 1991, the congress must give priority to the "economic development and democratization of society" including

"the democratization of the Party", while reviving "a broad national dialogue". It is in these terms that the local assemblies, often very animated, have debated, sometimes well beyond the fixed limits.

If little is known about the deliberations of certain provincial assemblies, there is information on the debates organized in Havana by the intellectuals and professionals of different sectors, at the university, amongst the journalists, the writers and the artists, and by the Institute of Cinema. Far from confining themselves to sectoral preoccupations, these open Party meetings have reflected more general political demands.

In these relatively favoured circles — they have, amongst other privileges, the possibility of travelling, a right claimed by the majority of youth — the enlargement of political rights is at the centre of the discussions. The criticisms put forward spare neither the press, nor the institutions (including Fidel Castro himself), nor the CCP. The largely formal character of the Organs of Popular Power (OPP) and of the National Assembly have been challenged; the latter, whose provincial leaderships and national rep-

resentation are elected by indirect suffrage, is in fact directly controlled by the CCP. Local authorities, of which the delegates are in principle recallable, are reduced to tasks of municipal management.

The problem of the single party has hardly been raised, but, on the other hand, monolithism, the lack of respect for differing opinions and the impossibility of expressing them in written form have been strongly criticized and problems of corruption, double morality and hypocrisy have been unceasingly brought up.

Economic hypercentralization is identified as being responsible for the difficulties of everyday life; voices have been raised demanding the legalization of certain private activities, such as free markets for peasant produce and in diverse areas of artisan production (which are currently carried on in a clandestine fashion and beyond any control, because the inefficiency of the state sector makes everyday life a hell).

## Social control negated

As speakers at the assemblies underlined, finding a plumber to repair the pipes outside of relief work is very difficult and costs a fortune; the ban by the authorities not only does not stop private enrichment or corruption, but negates all social control and favours the diversion of the resources of the state sector on a grand scale. It is henceforth vital to render more transparent an economic system where bureaucratic opacity favours, in the last resort, the anarchic and speculative development of petty commerce and cottage industries. The authorization of these activities might, at least, control their development and pricing.

In the absence of all official explanation for, and any coherent analysis of, the crisis in the former Eastern bloc, which would necessarily have consequences for the Cuban institutional system, the interpretations put forward are all over the place.

Some intellectuals, who until now would not have put forward the shadow of a criticism in front of foreigners (private criticisms have always existed), express their bitterness today. One such is the writer Lisandro Otero, who was once president of the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists (UNEAC), and whose

1. Antonio Maceo, a black general, was one of the principal leaders of the wars of independence against Spain at the end of the nineteenth century. On February 11, 1878, a meeting was held at El Zanjón between the Spanish and the insurgents to establish the conditions for peace and an end to the war. In fact it was a veritable capitulation which promised neither independence nor the emancipation of the slaves. In March 1878, Maceo gathered 1500 officers and soldiers at Baragua against the dishonourable peace and for the pursuit of the struggle.

2. Report for the Assembly of the CP at Havana, AFP, February 1991.

3. Appeal for the Congress.

4. See IV 205.



last novel, "The Tree of Life" (set in the years of bureaucratization) has been published in Mexico but not in Cuba: "The revolution is a heartrending, beautiful, terrifying thing. It is the end of one thing and the beginning of another. In Cuba, the revolution has allowed us to make a nation of what was no more than a colony".

But will the revolution survive? According to Otero: "It's very difficult to say. There are many very deep problems. People here are very angry now and very unstable. Some are becoming violent. There's a lot of anxiety and irritation. The bureaucrats do nothing. That's how they protect their jobs. On the other hand, you don't see graffiti, you don't see demonstrations. People are restless, but they have not yet reached breaking point...."

"The single party cannot work. Before, in Batista's time, there were fourteen parties. That didn't work. We need something halfway. We want discussion, ideas, a new dialectic; we don't want this authoritarianism. We need to stimulate personal initiative. The problem with socialism is that everything's abstract".

Does he consider himself against the regime? "I do not consider myself a dissident. There are still many things about the revolution in which I believe. I suffer no harassment, no coercion. They just omit your name from the list. I am living in a social vacuum, a void...."

I am writing my memoirs. I think that they will get me into a lot of trouble but the artist must speak for himself.... You have to be nearly 60 to do that!"<sup>5</sup>

The intellectuals are subject to a malaise. The case of Otero, a once orthodox writer, is not an isolated one. Since the Cuban Institute of Cinema Technicians and Artists (ICAIC) enjoys a real decision making autonomy<sup>6</sup>, critical political allegory runs through the best Cuban films; satires on the bureaucracy, the official discourse and the competence of the regime appear in such films as "Supporting Roles" by Orlando Rojas or "Alice in Wonderland" by Daniel Diaz Torres, made in collaboration with the great Cuban writer Jesus Diaz. In the latter, Alice finds herself in the village where

the *tronados* (a popular expression for the bureaucrats who have lost their posts, because of a decision of the party hierarchy) are reeducated, and has a sinister experience of the horrors of the place.

It is not astonishing that one of the longest general assemblies held in preparation for the Fourth Congress (it lasted three days) took place at the ICAIC, in the presence of the immense majority of the personnel — artists and technicians, militants or not of the CCP — numbering several hundred people. Cuban film makers have a long critical tradition; they have suffered the intolerance of the conceptions, inspired by socialist realism, which impregnated the black decade from 1975 to 1985, during which films like "Techo and Vidrio" by Sergio Giral or novels like "Las iniciales de la tierra" by Jesus Diaz<sup>7</sup> were banned for several years.

### Birth of internationally recognized cinema

But it should be underlined that in this area, as in others, the repression has not been comparable with that of Eastern Europe. These artists are also conscious of the fact that the birth of an indigenous cinema, internationally recognized, is linked to the revolution; the exile cinema has yielded practically nothing.

However, the current opening from which the artists and intellectuals are benefiting — in particular in the domain of the human sciences, as is witnessed by the critical researches, notably on Stalinism, carried by reviews like *Cuadernos de Nuestra America* or *Casa de las Americas* — is not reflected in the political press linked to the CCP. The official daily *Granma*, when it can be found (which is difficult with the current restrictions on paper) remains a bastion of *teque-teque* (wooden language), and even a review like *Bohemia* remains poor. From all the evidence, control of the press, whether daily or weekly, is much more strict: Castro denounced some years ago the "secrecy syndrome" from which Cuban journalists suffered; if this syndrome remains, it is obviously

not the fault of the journalists, but rather the monolithism imposed by the single party which stops all public debate.

Youth constitutes another sensitive sector. The apparatus is today paying the price of a major contradiction; the generations born after the revolutionary victory have benefitted from a mass education — some tens of thousands of youth go to university; the raising of the cultural level is impressive. Cuban youth have the highest level of training in Latin America; but at the same time they are confronted with a blocked society. Their aspirations come up against institutional rigidity, macho prejudices, and cultural obstacles. Social advancement, a major feature of the preceding generation, is more difficult with the current crisis. This leads to the marginalization of some sectors of youth and an apolitical attitude.

Suicide is sixth amongst causes of mortality; according to the Cuban statistical annual, the most vulnerable sector consists of young girls who get pregnant and whose families manage the situation badly<sup>8</sup>.

### Police attack rock concert

The incidents reported recently by the French Communist Party newspaper *L'Humanité* are equally worrying; the police intervened at a rock concert in the House of Culture in the district of Playa in Havana. "Very many jeans and ripped t-shirts. Long hair and some earrings. And also some ordinary adolescent rock fans. Several Cuban groups played at the concert; Horus, Red, Metal Oscuro. This House of Culture regularly organizes these types of concerts and it lends its offices to groups so they can practice, without any particular problem. Several hundred youth were at the concert when the police intervened to evacuate the building"<sup>9</sup>.

According to the official version, the police intervened to put an end to a fight; the correspondent from *L'Humanité*, who can hardly be suspected of political animosity, heard different versions and indicates that phrases hostile to the government had been heard and, for the first time, stones thrown at the police; earlier police interventions, motivated, in general, by problems with alcohol, had never been on such a scale, although tensions were perceptible between the young police officers, who come from the countryside, and an urban youth who, like their equivalents almost everywhere in the world, dress in a particularly "American" manner, hardly likely to please a leadership whose radical anti-imperialism

5. *Guardian Weekly*, March 17, 1991.

6. On this subject, see the study by Paolo Parauaga, "Letter from Cuba to an unfaithful Europe, Political position of Cuban cinema", to appear in the British review *Framework* in May-June 1991.

7. To appear in Acte Sud editions in Autumn 1991.

8. *Granma*, February 17, 1991.

9. *L'Humanité*, April 26, 1991.

expresses itself in a critique of the totality of the American way of life.

That Cuban youth are rebelling against stereotypes, including revolutionary stereotypes, is confirmed by Roberto Robaina, secretary of the Young Communists: "This generation does not think only of amusing itself", but it must "seek how, in the current period, to be capable of playing the role of a generation continuing revolutionary work". Youth are not homogeneous, "and when someone finds that it is bad to be criticized, I am annoyed, for it seems to me to indicate a lack of confidence in the youth of today to accuse them of immaturity".

### The generation gap

There is a clear gap between the generations, whose radicalizations situate themselves in totally opposed historical contexts; for the Castroite generation, the apogee of the struggle for national liberation and the victory over neo-colonialism; for the new generations, the collapse of the "socialist" camp and the challenging of the values which it embodies. The leadership of the CCP risks paying a high price for the absence of pluralism, the monolithism and the sclerosis of the institutions and the organizations which results from it; in the absence of mechanisms of debate, of structures of exchange and discussion, young people could become cynical and apolitical. All the more in that the newspaper of the Young Communists, *Juventud Rebelde*, which had become reasonably open, appears less frequently because of the lack of paper coming from the Soviet Union.

The same goes for the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), led by Vilma Espin, who, despite a glorious past in the Sierras Maestra, has only recently been elected to the political bureau, until then entirely male. This organization has been the object of numerous challenges, nota-

bly for its failure to struggle effectively against a macho culture. It was late to take account of the feminist radicalization and the problems of young adolescents, in a context where changes in sexual morality are explosive; in this area also the generation gap is enormous. The same goes for homosexuality, now tolerated.

Cuban society has undergone in 30 years a colossal change; the population has almost doubled, it has become urbanized (70% now live in towns, 20% in Havana alone); in a country which was 25% illiterate in 1959, books are now fought over. In these conditions, to wish to continue to impose the ossified structures imported from the USSR, to not respect the diversity of currents of opinion, the critical manifestations of the youth, the new cultural phenomena however heretical, is an aberration; it is the entire conception of the single party/state party (not exempt from corruption, moreover) which is challenged, in a context where absolute truths are no longer put forward and where the contradictions between words and deeds — the double morality — are more and more perceptible.

### Leadership paralyzed

The leadership of the country — which reacts differently, according to whether it represents sectors of the apparatus or the Fidelist kernel — seems paralyzed by immobility, which explains without doubt the postponement of the Fourth Congress. Yet events are accelerating, under the pressure of outside developments, but also of the population, and the necessary changes cannot be put off indefinitely if more serious upheavals are to be avoided.

According to the general opinion (including the most lucid exile sectors) none of the dissident groups is truly representative; often in hock to the most reactionary of the Miami-based groups, they do not represent, for the moment, a real threat to the regime. The most offensive criticisms come from inside — or around — the CCP, a fact that should favour the expression of pluralism in the revolution around the two big questions of the moment; economic policy and institutional democratization. To these two problems, there are at least two responses; that of Fidel Castro, and that of the bureaucrats whose first motivation is to preserve their privileges.

The pragmatic and empirical Cuban leader is ready to accept important concessions in terms of privatization in the difficult situation which the country is experiencing, particularly since the agreement with the USSR, signed after a difficult process<sup>10</sup>, is already not being totally respected. Castro appears contradictory; his denunciation of "capitalist mechanisms" does not concern agree-

ments with foreign monopolies; mixed enterprises are growing, with consequences in the matter of deregulation of work and inequalities which create an ultimately explosive contradiction. He condemns, on the other hand, the personal enrichment of the artisans or peasants, without realizing that these private activities could lead to an improvement in everyday life and a relaxing of social tensions.

The process of "rectification" has gone through all kinds of permutations, and little remains of the original project. A series of economic initiatives are being undertaken out of the control of the Cuban leader; a monopoly of speeches is one thing — "always talk" say some of the technocrats in private — and practice another.

The Fidelist conception of de-bureaucratization has several consequences; on the one hand it is a de-bureaucratization from above, authoritarian and not really subject to mass control, and thus necessarily fragile; on the other, it profoundly destabilizes the apparatus which endeavours to protect itself — often efficiently — from the offensives of the Cuban leader, who does not take the measures which would allow an efficient struggle against the bureaucratic cancer which is gnawing away at the country.

### Recycling of bureaucrats

The proof of this is the fate already met by the measures, taken in the framework of the preparation for the congress, aimed at reducing the number of bureaucrats, and the already effective recycling of a certain number of them (some propositions of a reduction of 50% of the posts had been adopted in these assemblies).

All the same, the changes undertaken in the manner of electing CPP officials — direct and secret election — have had consequences at the base, on the local plane, but it seems that they have had little impact at the provincial or national scale. The relationship of forces established at the local level, to the extent that election does not take place on the basis of a platform or a mandate, remains largely formal. The rank and file delegates, although democratically elected and, moreover, often new, have not carried much weight in the provincial elections for the Party. The manner in which the political debates have been treated, despite the initial proclamations, prove it.

On July 1, 1990, *Granma* reproduced a long note from the political bureau: "The Communist Party is favourable to a broad national debate...The defence of socialism cannot be combined with a closed or resistant position. If we speak of rectification, we cannot defend excessively our current methods". The appeal to debate

10. See IV 205.





should permit "a more democratic functioning of the political institutions and of the state". The note underlines "that the quality of the meeting can in no case be measured 'as we have done it in the past' by the rate of unanimity or the absence of questions considered as problematic or divergent. We should not complain if points of view, until now repressed or inhibited, manifest themselves publicly today, because they offer us the possibility of discussion, bringing forward new elements and avoiding confusion and errors".

Eight months later, in February 1991, the report made to the assembly of the Party, in Havana, synthesized what had happened in the other assemblies; drawn up after the holding of 11,337 base meetings to canvass the opinions of around a million people, the report underlined that one person in 15 "had given their opinion openly"; some "neo-liberal and capitalist propositions" have appeared, that the document considers as "quantitatively negligible" and motivated by "political naivete, by confusion or inspired by positions openly opposed to the policy of the Party".

According to the report, some "pronounced themselves for the privatization of production and services, for the installation of a market economy, for the reestablishment of free peasant markets, and, in very limited cases, for multipartyism".

There was, in certain cases, "a lack of combativity or a certain naivete" on the part of Communists and revolutionaries, and "it was necessary to proceed to some analyses in the base organisms of the party, to clarify the essence of these propositions... In a general manner, the

explanations given have been understood; however, it has been necessary to apply disciplinary measures to some militants and to make critical remarks to some cells which have not been capable of defending Party policy". In these conditions, the broad national debate could well be cut short and the Fourth Congress could reaffirm a line summed up by the Cuban expression "mas de lo mismo" ("it comes to the same thing").

The report ends by a quadruple refusal; no to privatization, no to the market economy, no to multipartyism, and no to the *entreguistas* (capitulationist) capitalist reforms.

### No challenge to bureaucracy

Castro in no way gives the impression of going down the only road that could challenge the ravages of the bureaucracy, the denunciation of its privileges, its cynicism and its corruption, for that would imply giving a real power of control to the popular masses (which does not exist in the OPP, emptied of all their substance, as a public and official survey has established), a measure linked to the challenging of the single party, and to the mode of paternalist leadership inaugurated by Castroism.

Even if it is not through pure power interests that the commandant in chief opposes change, but rather in the name of an overall ideological conception, inspired by militarism, equating defence of the revolution with monolithism and incomprehension of the social, political and cultural diversity of a country like Cuba, this conception is increasingly contested. This cult of homogeneity is

linked to the defence of the single party.

It is true that some Latin American leaders disagree with this vision — Fernandez Huidobro, leader of the Tupamaros in Uruguay, for example — for, for them, "Fidel is the leader of the opposition, and more often a leader put in the minority"<sup>11</sup>. For Huidobro, Fidel is fighting "against something elusive, which is below him, but above the people and which seems invulnerable. Something big, thick, sticky and coarse". But why, after 30 years, is this bureaucracy, for that is what it adds up to, invulnerable?

The increasingly numerous criticisms, sometimes even public — which is new — of Castro, are not entirely innocent. Here also the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Profoundly worried since the Ochoa affair of July 1989<sup>12</sup> — a major trauma in the history of the island — a certain number of apparatchiks are beginning to think that in the current conjuncture, they could be in danger, if the popular discontent brings down on them the wrath of a Castro whose popularity is still real. That is why, for the first time, some high functionaries pronounce themselves in private in favour of economic reforms, in a "perestroikist" sense, and for political changes, a greater opening, which would allow the role of Fidel to be relativized and theirs to grow. This orientation, which would hardly have been credible only a short time ago, is more so today, in view of the changes underway in the Cuban exile community in Miami.

The Cuban immigrant community represents an economic and political power

11. *Mate Amargo*, March 13, 1991.

12. See IV 173.

13. *Jacobo Timerman, El Pais*, December 16, 1991.

in Florida; a million and a half Cuban-Americans live in Miami. Until recently, the objective of the "exile old guard" was to provoke an invasion of the island by US marines or to succeed, with the help of the CIA, in the assassination, many times botched, of Castro. These far right sectors would not hesitate to organize reprisals, attacks and murders against the *dialogueros*, the partisans of dialogue and "national reconciliation", who do not consider Miami as their town and who dream of returning to "their" island.

Such people, once a minority, are in the process of becoming hegemonic for several reasons. On the one hand, because the Soviets increasingly seek to negotiate a peaceful and economically beneficial way to lighten the burden that Cuba represents for them; the Cold War is over, Cuba no longer interests them, but they wish to organize an acceptable and therefore peaceful transition, to preserve their image in the Third World. On the other hand, the hopes of a violent overthrow of Fidel from the inside are no longer plausible; as Jacobo Timerman underlines in *El Pais*, "it is no longer believed in Miami that the aggravation of the conditions of life on the island will provoke a rebellion against Castro"<sup>13</sup>.

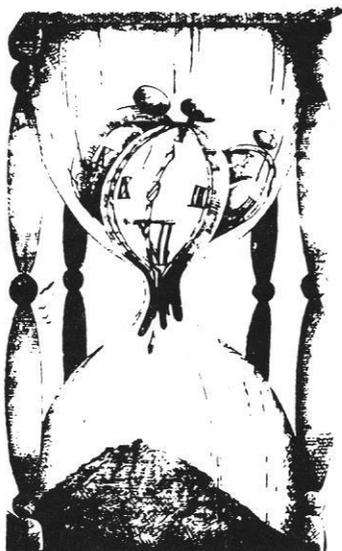
The hypotheses envisaged for two years have not been confirmed; the idea of a suicide squad, or, more precisely, Castro's being arrested by the military and subsequently sent to the USSR, in the context of a Soviet plot (an idea which flourished after the execution of Ochoa in July 1989), are hardly credible. Finally, and here there is a major change, the trips and the contacts which have developed between families in exile and the interior (the majority of Cuban families have a member exiled in Florida) have contributed to a change; numerous Cuban-Americans fear a violent end to the crisis and the *dialogueros* are not favourable to a US intervention — the repetition of a Gulf War does not enthruse them. Indeed, in a situation of civil war, "the United States could intervene. It would be disastrous to see the US handing over power to an Endara [the Panamanian president, imposed after the US invasion of that country], even a slimmer one, called Valadares"<sup>14</sup>.

One thing is clear, the premisses for an eventual negotiation are based on the fact that this must take place between Cubans. "The transition towards freedom and democracy must be discussed by all Cubans. The destiny of the nation must be decided in Cuba and by Cubans, not in Moscow or Washington" declared the

Cuban Democratic Platform, created in Madrid in August 1990, with the backing of the Spanish government. For the first time, the government of Felipe Gonzalez has made contact with the opponents of Castro.<sup>15</sup>

Whereas the Spanish state figures at the head of Cuba's European partners, this decision is certainly not unconnected to the affair of the embassies in July 1990. According to the Platform, the political forces which should participate in this dialogue are the following: "A broad representation of the groups, movements and parties which seek to promote political and social change in Cuba; a broad representation of the exile community; a delegation from the Cuban government; and international observers which give their backing to the negotiations". A particularly balanced relation between political currents!

### Possibility of a coalition government



For the exile community, their are a variety of possible outcomes: the best would be a coalition government (possibly presided over by Fidel!); in the same way that Humberto Ortega remains head of the army in Nicaragua, Raul Castro could perhaps remain at the head of the army in Cuba. Miami should have a determinant place and reinforce its role as an economic pole, investing in the construction of hotels

and second homes for the Cubans of Florida who would come to spend their weekends, without counting the family aid that the Cubans in exile, "like the Turks, the Greeks or the Portuguese", could furnish.

This scenario is, in reality, only a first stage. Understanding that the perspective of an armed overthrow of the regime from outside is improbable, the Miami community has drawn the lessons of what has happened in Eastern Europe and is preparing for a progressive transition and ultimate change of the regime, which it seeks to undermine through its own contradictions.

It is certain that contacts exist between Havana and the most moderate exile leaders. But what are the conditions already put by Cuba for the opening of a dialogue? The end of the US embargo, the return of the military base at Guantanamo (all the more urgent in that the

USSR is reducing, for the first time, its deliveries of arms); a possible political opening — in respect of the Cuban social regime — if guarantees are given to cease all measures of harassment and aggression.

As Carlos Aldana, leader of the CCP, has said: "We wish to make the system more efficient, more democratic, more effective on the economic plane. If you really want to leave us alone, accept Cuba as it is — which would be a beautiful expression of world pluralism, if pluralism consists in accepting several forms of government — one could see then if our system is capable of perfecting itself in the sense of a greater democracy. But in cornering us, in harassing us, in slandering us and submitting us to all kinds of pressures, you cannot demand that we advance further in this direction than good sense and the instincts of survival advise us"<sup>16</sup>.

The outlook is discouraging: Cuba's allies in Central America are cornered, the Spanish state as well as the principal Latin American governments support "dialogue" Miami-style, and the situation in the USSR is all too clear. The evolution of the situation in Albania and North Korea, the economic opening in Vietnam, faced with the combined pressures of the Soviets and Washington (after its crushing victory in the Gulf) show the difficulty in resisting with one's back to the wall; moreover, the "Chinese" model — economic opening combined with repression à la Tiananmen Square — which might tempt some elements in the apparatus, is not conceivable in Cuba.

The Cuban government cannot ignore the risks of a negotiation whose economic counterpart is uncertain — we have already seen what became of the promises of aid to Panama and Nicaragua.

### Can the leadership regain the initiative?

In such a difficult situation, it is to be hoped that the Castroite leadership will take the initiative — lest it be imposed, in conditions that it will no longer control — of an institutional democratization, in all necessary fashions. It is also an essential condition for the preservation of the mobilization of the masses and the credibility of the system — in short the revolution that the Fidelists wish to defend at all costs. ★

14. Former policeman of Batista, incarcerated for a long time in a Cuban prison, where he faked a paralysis. He was liberated by the intervention of President Mitterrand, with the help of Regis Debray. He is leader of the US delegation to the Geneva Commission on Human Rights.

15. The Democratic Platform includes Christian Democrats, liberals, social democrats and conservatives, all supported by their international equivalents.

16. *Cambio 16*, Madrid, Interview reproduced in *Courier International*, April 18, 1991.

# Alternative dead-ends

**THE Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation (Comecon) was founded in 1949, with the aim of creating a counter-balance to the American-sponsored Marshall Plan and the European Economic Council and presenting an economic alternative to the capitalist West. Today, 42 years later, the former Comecon countries are in the grip of a pro-capitalist euphoria. In the following article, which first appeared in the April-June, 1991 issue of the Austrian quarterly, *Ost-West Gegeninformationen*, Jürgen Mittermüller records the end of an illusion.**

**JÜRGEN MITTERMÜLLER**

“ THE conference has noted that successful economic relations prevail between the aforementioned countries, especially advantageous from the point of view of increased trade. The creation of these lively economic relations and the pursuit of a common policy of collaboration have enabled the People's Democracies and the Soviet Union to undertake their reconstruction and the development of their national economies.

“The conference has also noted that the governments of the United States and Great Britain, as well as the governments of other West European countries, have effectively engaged in an economic boycott of the People's Democracies and the Soviet Union, because they have found it impossible to subject these countries to the dictates of the Marshall Plan, which they have resisted because the Marshall Plan would harm their sovereignty as well as their national economic interests. Taking into account these conditions, the conference has decided to create an organization which will have the aim of creating wide-ranging economic cooperation between the People's Democracies and the Soviet Union. With the aim of realizing this wide-ranging economic cooperation, the conference has considered it necessary to set up a Council for Mutual Economic Assistance... The CMEA will only take decisions when the interested countries declare themselves in agreement.”

It was with these words that, on January 25, 1949,

the responsible economic officials of Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the USSR announced the foundation of Comecon. A year later East Germany joined, to be followed by Mongolia (1962), Cuba (1972) and Vietnam (1978).

Today the only thing these states discuss is how to dismantle the Council and the relations established within its framework. But here also unity is an idea of the past — the so-called “conservative” part of the community (the USSR, Romania and Bulgaria) are demanding the creation of a successor organization, while the “progressive” countries want simply to become members of the European Economic Community (EEC).

The present economic situation in the former Eastern bloc countries is catastrophic. The generalized efforts to move to a market economy are turning out to be

more painful than expected, either in the countries concerned or in the West.

## POLAND

The director of the Viennese Institute for Comparative International Economics (WIIW), Professor Friedrich Levčik, sees Poland as the only one of these countries that might experience an economic improvement this year. This statement arouses a certain cynicism. Poland's economy is really on the floor. Even the Communists were unable to reach quite such a low point.

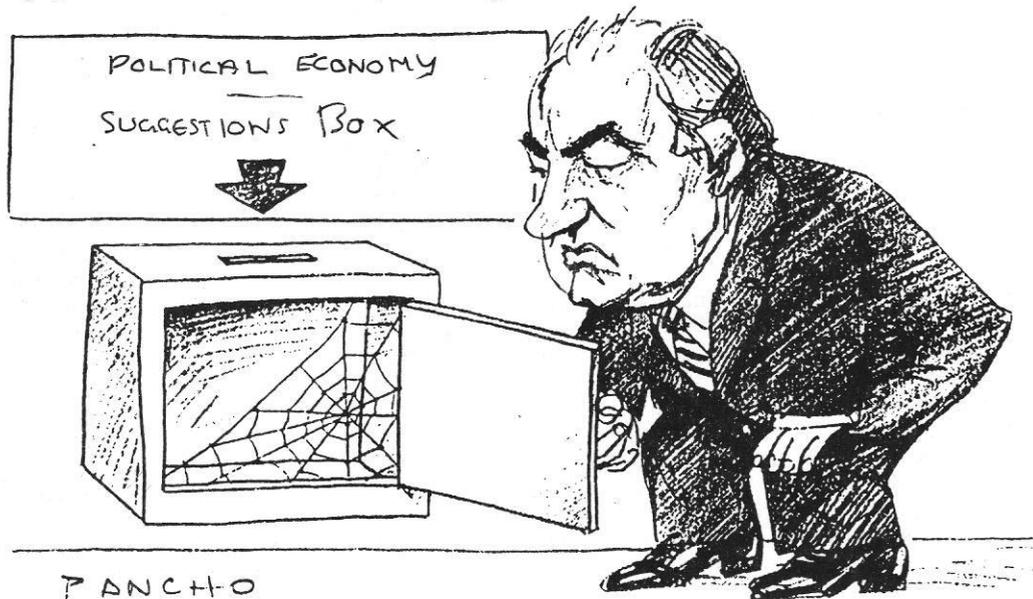
The policies imposed by the international financial authorities — described as “shock therapy” — have caused a drop in production so intense that it can only be followed by an upturn.

Despite this, Poland's leadership remains determined on a thoroughgoing restoration of capitalism. At a Comecon (dissolution) meeting in February, the Polish representatives insisted that their government had decided not to back a “purely cosmetic re-edition” of this association.

Regional collaboration in Europe, they insisted, required entirely new structures. The progress of the former fraternal countries is, in the eyes of the Polish leaders, and above all Walesa, too hesitant. The concerns of the working population continue to be afterthoughts under the new leadership. This was shown by recent decrees which give workers in the private sector big advantages over those in the state sector.

## HUNGARY

meanwhile, has set out on the road of “gradual change”. Finance minister Kupa spoke of an “ideology free” reorientation of the economy under his four-year programme. But he too has had to realize the impossibility of such an approach. Hungary has bravely met its obligations to the IMF. The budget deficit has been cut from



PANCHO

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52 billion forints in 1989 to 1.4 billion in 1990 and in 1990 there was a hard currency trade surplus of \$950m.

Hungary's foreign trade is in surplus by 15% as a result of the re-orientation towards Western markets. Until 1987 the volume of trade with other Comecon countries was twice that with the West; today the position has been reversed. But the collapse of trade with the East could aggravate the crisis. The value of exports to the East — as calculated in rubles (for the last time) in 1990 — dropped by 24% on the year. As a consequence production in the big machine and vehicle firms specializing in the ruble export market was cut by 30%.

This translated into only a 5% drop in Gross National Product, since the dynamic sector of small and medium size firms was hardly affected and because of the drop in the share of Eastern countries in Hungary's trade — down from some 50% in the mid-80s to 33% in 1990.

In 1991 the share of Eastern trade will continue to decline since here market economic methods cannot be applied to the problem. These problems will be made worse, not only by the breakdown of the Soviet economy, but also because it has not so far been possible to make agreements with the Soviet republics and enterprises. The tendency towards centralization in the Soviet Union is going to get stronger.

A striking example of the difficulties is the fact that it has been possible to hold back the export of Hungarian medicines, buses and other goods, designated for the Soviet Union and urgently needed there. In spite of repeated discussions, it has not been possible to arrange credit for these.

While Hungarian and Soviet firms have agreed on Hungarian deliveries worth \$500m for this year and there has been talk of opening lines of credit worth \$150m, in fact it has just been announced that only \$20m of credit is currently in place.

Here too the main burden of the economic reforms is borne by the workers. Over the past year unemployment has risen by three and a half times to 90,000 (or 2% of the economically active population). Prices of consumer goods rose, according to official figures, by 29% over the year, and this year are expected to rise by a further 35 to 37%. Wages have fallen by 8%.

In **CZECHOSLOVAKIA** privatization got under way on December 1, 1990. In the meantime, the "small privatization" has been carried through. Over 100,000 enterprises were put up for auction. Thus far only small enterprises have passed into private hands — mostly, through the use of intermediaries, foreign hands. The "large privatization" is yet to come.

Czechoslovakia, which has the reputation in the West of being a relatively successful industrial country, is now over-

burdened with industrial disadvantages — unemployment and inflation. The freeing of prices, on January 1 this year, raised the cost of living by more than 44% and the cost of food went up by more than 63%.

However, "reform ready" Czechoslovakia is going out to embrace the Western money bearers. The EEC has promised \$1bn in credit in the framework of the G-24 aid programme. It is small wonder therefore that Havel has turned his back on any successor organization to Comecon.

**THE SOVIET UNION**

The great unknown is the economic and political future of the USSR. The hub of the former Comecon now finds itself in an unprecedented economic depression. A 2000 page joint report from the IMF, the World Bank, the OECD and the East European Bank paints a hair-raising picture of the Soviet economy. The logical conclusion is drawn: financial help would be money down the drain. The way out from the catastrophe is to be shock therapy on Polish lines.

1990 saw the Soviet economy in decline in all departments. GNP fell by 2% (1989 +3%), labour productivity was down by 3% (1989 +2.5%) and the volume of foreign trade fell by 6.9%.

With the termination of foreign trade between Comecon countries in transferable rubles in favour of hard currency at the end of 1990, the Soviet economy should get a boost. So at least speculated the Basel Bank for International Financial Settlements (BIZ) in their first quarterly report for this year, where they see the USSR as the main beneficiary of the changed trade system in central and eastern Europe.

A doubling of interest payments and a sharp increase of Soviet imports as a result of the growing difficulties of the domestic economy, however, meant that the balance of payments were only at break even point. Extraction problems in the oil industry meant that oil exports declined, and hoped for extra income was lost. It remains the case that the USSR, because of its vast supplies of raw materials, has an advantage in hard currency trade lost to the other ex-Comecon states.

But this has turned out to be of marginal importance; on the one hand, owing to structural problems (transport, previous commitments and so on), and on the other because of the difficulties that the other Eastern European countries have in paying for Soviet imports in hard currency. Around 60% of Soviet hard currency income comes from oil sales to the West. Furthermore the low oil price means that the cards are once more stacked in favour of the industrialized West.

Throughout the region, barter trade is a thing of the past. The low quality of the region's products means that former trade partners are all seeking to buy in the

West.

**BULGARIA**

It is understandable that the other part of Comecon has wanted to retain some variant of the old structures. The economies of Bulgaria and Romania (not to mention Cuba) are very closely bound to the Soviet economy. For example, Bulgaria imports more than 70% of its fuel needs, mostly from the USSR, and that country is by far Bulgaria's largest trade partner. Nonetheless, even in Sofia, "reformist" tones are to be heard.

At the start of February, the new coalition government under Dimitri Popov submitted its "Programme for Transition and Hope" to the IMF, seeking new credits in return for a new squeeze. And indeed \$3bn in "fresh money" was designated to bring new hope to the government.

It will be for the rest of the population to see to the transition side of things. Freeing of prices at the start of February saw average rises of food prices of 500%. In spite of this attempt to strangle the consumers, and an expected rise in unemployment from 70,000 to 300,000, Popov the Reformer envisages an "optimistic social partnership". The unions' optimism found its expression in a commitment to refrain from strikes until the elections in May. As Popov put it: "Bulgarians have finally understood that this is how things must be". On a recent visit to Germany, trade and industry minister Ivan Pushkarov presented the alternative as: "reforms or elections."

**ROMANIA**

Things are going the same way in Romania. Petr Roman and his circle are hoping to get hard currency through the "shock therapy" routine (price rises, an end to subsidies, plant closures and mass unemployment). And those who protest and incite demonstrations become guilty of contributing to the economic misery and will be labelled as opponents of reform.

All the Comecon states are in recession. The WIIW is predicting a further downturn this year. Factors in this are the higher energy costs owing to the introduction of pricing in hard currency, the beginning of the recession in the West, and high interest rates on the international financial markets due to investments in east Germany and the USA's public debt.

At the moment some 34 million people in Eastern Europe are living below the poverty line. This figure is certain to rise. Which of the Eastern European economies will come through the capitalist struggle for survival is as yet unclear. However two things can be stated with confidence: (1) the decision about this will be taken in the centres of the "free market economy", not in the countries concerned; and (2) the losers from the "renovation" will be the workers, and above all women workers, there. ★

# The balance swings

**"WHAT is happening? I came back as a defeated soldier. And what is worse I had to be subjected to humiliating searches by young white policemen almost half my age. I left the country to fight the government and bring about a non-racial and democratic South Africa. Nothing has changed except that the movement and the government are talking. We did not fight to live next to white people. We did not fight to have them open their restaurants and hotels to us. The fight was about power and the right to vote" (Jacob Yako, a soldier in the ANC's armed wing, quoted in *Sunday Star*, April 28, 1991). This quote sums up the growing despair and frustration that is being felt by many activists at the worsening balance of forces between the popular mass movement and the Pretoria regime.**

**MARK HARPERT**

**A** YEAR ago, at the beginning of 1990, the country was in the grip of mass euphoria. The unbanning of political organizations, the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and the government's move away from harsh repression restored confidence to workers, township communities and the youth. New waves of struggles and popular mobilizations broke out. Strikes resulted in more work days being lost in 1990 than in any other year. Rent boycotts spread to more townships and an unprecedented number of protest marches and demonstrations occurred. Even the bantustans, previously pacified by terrifying scales of repression, exploded.

Yet, 12 months later, the mood has changed dramatically. Euphoria is being replaced by demoralization. The violence sweeping the industrial heartland of the Witwatersrand and different parts of Natal is taking a heavy toll. In the first four months of 1991, 600 people were killed. In the first week of May, 136 were brutally killed in the escalating violence.

Alongside this, the deepening economic recession is resulting in thousands of workers being retrenched and a decline in living standards. In the mining industry alone 50,000 jobs were lost in 1990. This year it is estimated that the number will be even greater. Similar figures have been estimated for the steel industry.

Since February 2, 1990, and the initiation of negotiations, the government of FW De Klerk has been trying to seize the political initiative in order to bring about a political settlement which will bring stability to the country.

The reform of apartheid now being proposed by the government is aimed at winning broader legitimacy for the state through the cooption of the black middle class. Up until recently the reforms introduced by the National Party government have always been too little and too late to win any support amongst any significant layer of the oppressed people.

But by unbanning political organizations, freeing Mandela and other political prisoners as well as opening up discussions with the ANC on creating a peaceful climate for negotiations, De Klerk has made the political running. His February 1 speech this year, in which he announced that the remaining pillars of apartheid, namely the Land Act, the Group Areas Act and the Population Act will be removed, has done much to ease the international pressure on the regime.

Other pieces of legislation will be amended to take out references to "race" and at the end of April the government announced that the Internal Security Act would be amended and softened.

## A controlled transition

By undertaking the reform of apartheid from above and without the participation of the oppressed people, the government is attempting to keep control of the transition from apartheid in a way that does not threaten the interests of the white population. White communities are to be given control of their areas through a process of decentralizing local government and under the mask of "maintaining standards". Local councils will be able to control the influx of "new" people to

their areas and schools in this way.

This is being confirmed by a number of new bills introduced before Parliament which will replace the repealed legislation. These new bills, if they become law, will continue to give white government officials vast powers to limit the impact that the repeal of apartheid will have. For example, the Residential Environment Bill will continue the artificial protection which white areas have enjoyed under the Group Areas Act. Other bills will give state officials vast powers to determine where blacks may farm, where townships can be established and leave black tenants at the mercy of the landowner.

One should not of course underestimate the impact that the repeal of the apartheid laws will have on international opinion and on the higher paid black workers and middle class blacks. Many have already begun to move out of the townships and buy property in white areas. The government has announced that it is willing to make unused white farms available to black farmers. But this is on such a small scale that it will in no way redress the present situation where 13% of the population own 87% of the land.

## Old inequalities will remain

Since the repeal of these apartheid laws will not coincide with a substantial programme of wealth distribution and radical agrarian reform, none of the social, economic and structural inequalities which are the historical legacy of apartheid will be affected. The majority of black people will remain trapped in the ghettos of the townships, squatter camps, and the homelands. Capital will remain almost exclusively in the hands of the whites or put more specifically in the six main conglomerates who account for over 80% of shares on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. In other words capitalism in South Africa will be reproduced as racial capitalism. Apartheid of the statute books will be replaced by the apartheid of the so-called "free market".

The De Klerk reforms have all met with widespread international approval and resulted in the EEC lifting investment and some trade sanctions against the SA government and a flood of invitations to De Klerk to visit European capitals. It has also led to the SA government being able to announce that it will be opening a number of new diplomatic offices in nine African countries and in Eastern Europe. This has all occurred against the active lobbying of the ANC.

In an attempt to regain the initiative from the government, the ANC leadership has called for an All-Party Conference to discuss the constitutional principles for a new constitution and to discuss the process of transition. The ANC is demanding that the government cannot be referee and player in the constitutional negotiations, and that it should set up an interim gov-



ernment with the ANC and perhaps other forces which would oversee the calling of a constituent assembly.

This position of the ANC has been endorsed by the SACP and COSATU while forces to the left of the ANC have rejected the idea of an All-Party Conference. Organizations like the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the Azanian Peoples' Organization (AZAPO), and the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA) believe to a lesser or greater extent that the government, which supports the idea of an All-Party Conference, will force the other parties to accept certain constitutional principles which will protect the interests of the white minority and act as a major restriction on what type of constitution could be formulated by a constituent assembly.

Up to now the government has opposed the idea of a constituent assembly knowing full well that in a democratic election it will lose control over the process of determining a new constitution for the country. If a constitutional framework is agreed by the parties of the All-Party Conference then the government will have little to fear from a constituent assembly.

In a shift in attitude the ANC has recognized that it needs to build a relationship with the other organizations in the liberation movement in order to strengthen its position in the negotiations with the gov-

ernment. With this in mind the leaderships of the ANC and PAC met in early February in Harare, Zimbabwe, to discuss the setting up of a Patriotic Front. The meeting agreed to call a conference of all forces who support the demand for a constituent assembly in Cape Town in August.

A fear that is expressed in the AZAPO and WOSA camps — they were not invited to the Harare summit — is that the two main liberation organizations were working out a line on the role and structure of the Patriotic Front that other organizations would simply have to accept. What was of particular concern to them was that the Patriotic Front was being connected with demands for an interim government and an All-Party Conference which are not acceptable to everybody. There was also a fear that the conception of the Front being discussed in Harare was that of a forum for the leaders of the main organizations rather than of a mass organization built at local, regional and national level, and under rank-and-file control.

The violent conflict that has been going on in Natal over the past few years has spread to the townships of West and East Rand in and around Johannesburg. This is the heartland of South African industry and of the industrial working class.

The regime and the mass media have

been quick to characterize the violence that is wreaking havoc on the Reef as a tribal, black on black conflict.

### Attempt to obscure roots of violence

This is an attempt to obscure the real roots of the violence and the sinister forces behind it. While it is true that communal violence and pogroms are the order of the day, that ethnic antagonisms have reached exploding point and that inter-organizational intolerance has reached new heights, government-aligned forces have carefully exploited existing divisions and orchestrated what is now taking place. Whether it is in Natal or the East and West Rand (the Transvaal region and around Johannesburg), government controlled structures or aligned organizations have led attacks on the people with the active support of the security forces.

Whether it is the murderous attacks on black people in the stations, trains, taxis, or the mob attacks on hostels, squatter camps or township residences, the consequence has been to dramatically increase existing tensions, terrorize people and exhaust their capacity to defend and organize themselves.

It is no accident that state security forces, using vigilante groups often closely connected to the townships' community

### Jail sentence for Winnie Mandela

WINNIE MANDELA has just been sentenced to six years in prison for taking part in 1988 in the kidnapping of a young boy and for complicity in the beatings and stabbings that led to his death. This is obviously not going to make life any simpler for the African National Congress and its leadership. Efforts by the latter to explain that it is all a plot by the South African regime could carry little conviction, given the controversies surrounding Winnie Mandela. While Mrs. Mandela has her unconditional supporters, many militants consider that she has already done the movement enough harm: a few weeks ago she was defeated in the election to the presidency of the ANC's Women's League. Even in 1988, at the time of the events brought up in the trial, it was not hard to find people in the leading circles of the UDF and COSATU who felt that things had gone too far.

The government has used the trial to put the ANC on the spot. But it does not seem likely that it will be overjoyed by the heavy sentence at a time when it is trying to smooth over its problems with the ANC and go forward with the negotiations. Beyond the simple facts, this affair also expresses the ANC's long term contradictions and problems, which also have bearing on its present political difficulties.

The notorious Mandela Football Club which kidnapped Stompie Mokhetisi in December 1988 was something halfway between a bodyguard and a gang. Such an "institution" in the heart of Soweto was something quite other than the devotion of the ANC militants who risked their lives in real militant activities.

Winnie Mandela's personality was promoted in and by the media not only in order to protect her and the movement, but also through sectarianism and triumphalism. The theme of the "Mother of the Nation" corresponded to that period in the history of the ANC when it wanted to be recognized as the sole and exclusive representative of the mass movement.

The autonomy which Winnie Mandela and her entourage enjoyed is also a sign of the lack of democracy in the UDF. The rank-and-file activists had no idea of the real debates going on at the top or about the clan battles.

The "Stompie" affair brought a number of aspects of the functioning of the ANC and the behaviour of some leading lights to the surface. Subsequently other scandals, such as the revolts and repression in the camps in Angola, confirmed the diagnosis. Of course, the ANC's present difficulties cannot only be explained by such tales. But the state of the mass movement in 1990 at the time of the sudden opening of negotiations was not wholly unrelated to the way in which it had been led during the 1980s.

The whole climate around this trial has deepened the impression. First there was the sudden disappearance of witnesses, and then the effort of the defence lawyers to explain that the affair had originated in an attempt to "protect" youth who had become used to engaging in homosexual practices with a pastor in a nearby parish. This curious *coup de théâtre* by the defence team was accompanied by demonstrations by a few ANC activists outside the doors of the court with placards condemning homosexuality.

The media impact of this was disastrous and the South African gay movement circulated a resolution condemning these actions which was published in several of the country's left-wing publications — **Peter Blumer. ★**

councillors and the Inkatha Freedom Party (the right wing Zulu-based movement led by Gatsha Buthelezi) have shifted their campaign of low intensity war from Natal to the townships of the Rand.

The security establishment realize that the government cannot succeed with its reform strategy unless the capacity for resistance by the black working class movement is substantially weakened. The government and the security forces are not sufficiently assured that the ANC leadership is prepared to or capable of disciplining the radical township youth, the workers and the unemployed to accept a negotiated settlement, especially one which will not address the huge social inequality that divides the majority of whites from blacks.

Such has been the scale and devastation of the violence that the ANC called an

emergency National Executive meeting especially to address the violence. Following a series of massacres from Sebokeng to Daveyton and Alexandra, the ANC leadership has come under intense pressure to formulate a response to the carnage taking place.

The meeting resulted in a strongly worded ultimatum being delivered to the government. This ultimatum called on the government to take a number of measures to address the violence, including the sacking of the minister of defence Magnus Malan and the minister of police, Adriaan Vlok. If the government failed to take these demands seriously, the ANC said it would break off constitutional negotiations. The meeting also undertook to support the building of defence committees in the townships and squatter camps.

In reply the government made it clear that it had no intention of sacking the two ministers and attacked the ANC for threatening to break off talks. It called for a conference on violence, which was rejected by the ANC leadership as an inadequate response to their ultimatum. Just days before the expiry of the ultimatum De Klerk held meetings with both Buthelezi and Mandela. Following these meetings the government declared a ban on the carrying of "traditional/cultural" weapons — one of the demands contained in the ultimatum.

It seems from the favourable statements following his meeting with De Klerk that Mandela is willing to compromise on some of the demands in the ultimatum.

### Lack of alternative to negotiations

This seems to reflect the fact that the ANC has little option but to continue with constitutional negotiations. What alternative to the negotiations can the ANC put forward? In reality, its political life is dependent on reaching a successful outcome to the negotiations with the government. In this respect their current stance could lead to further problems for the NEC given the fact that the compromise worked out with the government might spur even more criticism by those in the ANC who still resist its negotiating strategy.

The ANC's ultimatum comes in the wake of accusations from its supporters in the black townships that they are being left defenceless against the violence. Township residents are demanding the building of defence committees that will protect them from the violent attacks by Inkatha-supporting hostel dwellers. It also comes in the context of the forthcoming ANC national conference where the ANC's executive leadership is going to come under scrutiny. Given the level of criticism directed at it at the ANC consultative conference last December, it is not surprising that the Executive is taking a hard line with the government. It would be foolish for it to ignore its militant base in the townships which will have strong representation in the conference.

Great confusion prevails in the ANC/SACP/COSATU bloc. There is no clear idea on what tactics to follow or what alliances to make. In Port Elizabeth, for example, there has been a heated debate over whether to make electoral alliances with liberals and the bourgeois Democratic Party. In the Transvaal, Moses Mayekiso, now a member of the Communist Party, disavowed the rapprochement between the local ANC-controlled associations and the Central Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber, the regional structure which retains urban racial segregations (*Weekly Mail*, Johannesburg, April 12, 1991).

The violence on the Reef has spawned

the rapid growth of Inkatha. Just as the security forces have used Inkatha to weaken the mass popular movement so Inkatha has used the support of the state forces to build itself up into a major player that cannot be ignored in the negotiating process. Caught in the middle of a war, many hostel workers who were not members of Inkatha have been forced to join the organization to protect themselves from the counter-attacks on the hostels from residents bearing the brunt of the violence. Also, the undisciplined behaviour of lumpen elements of unemployed youth acting in the name of this or that organization, who have arbitrarily attacked Zulu speaking people, has driven hostel dwellers and Zulu speakers into the arms of Inkatha.

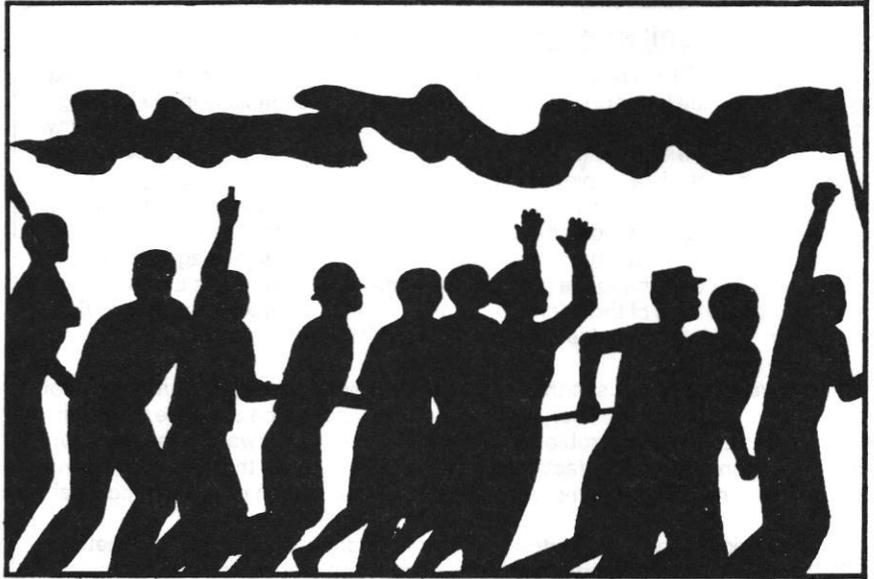
This development has been encouraged by the Community Councillors, who have joined Inkatha *en masse*. Facing severe pressure from the community organizations to resign from their positions, they have decided to adopt the mantle of Inkatha as protection. The councillors, with the resources of the positions they occupy as well as from the illicit deals and corruption they are involved in, are the main sponsors of the huge and profitable gun-running operations that criss-cross the country.

**Violence isolates union from hostel workers**

The violence has served to isolate the trade unions from the hostel workers and is causing growing division and tension on the shop floor. This was reflected in the poor attendance at May Day celebrations in the Johannesburg area. In Orlando, Soweto, at the main event organized by COSATU and the SACP, the stadium was less than a quarter full. On the way home from this rally workers were attacked by people wearing red headbands, setting off a week of violence that left over 136 people dead.

The response of the trade union movement, particularly the main confederation COSATU, which is closely tied to the ANC and SACP, to the violence and the attacks being waged by the bosses on their members has been constrained by their support for a negotiated settlement.

In preparation for its fourth conference in July a discussion is taking place among COSATU affiliates around the role trade unions will play in a post-apartheid South Africa. While the debate has concentrated on whether leaders of unions can also hold leading positions in political organizations, an equally important debate is the one on the relationship between the unions and employers. There is a growing school of opinion in the COSATU leadership, based on the research and analysis of the influential Economic Trends Group, that holds that the union movement must move away from "militant abstentionism" to reconstruction accords with employers



and worker participation.

At the root of this new thinking is the belief that the road to socialism is not only going to be a long one, but will go through the regulation of the capitalist economy, not its destruction.

An expression of this new thinking and "realism" took place at the recent congress of the 270,000-strong National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Faced with the prospect of capital's reorganization of the mining industry, which will result in thousands of jobs being cut, the union is proposing the organization of a conference with the Chamber of Mines and the government to discuss the future of the mining industry. This conference would lead to a joint accord on the reconstruction of the industry and would herald the era of worker participation in the reconstruction of the South African economy. At the same conference, the NUM moved away from its hard line on the nationalization of the mines, a policy inherited from the ANC Freedom Charter, which the NUM adopted four years ago, citing the disastrous balance sheet of extensive nationalization in Africa and Eastern Europe.

**Idea of social contract mooted**

At a recent workshop on economic restructuring organized by the COSATU-affiliated engineering union, NUMSA, the idea of the unions entering into a social contract with the government and the employers was mooted. Unions, it was said, must take a lead in working for economic growth. The implications of this were summed up by Karl Von Holdt, editor of the *South African Labour Bulletin*, who commented that: "it is true that if workers and trade unions start to take responsibility for economic growth and development, they will have to strive for greater productivity and less industrial action" (*SALB*, March 1991, pp. 15/16).

Since the February 1 joint mobilizations for a constituent assembly, there has been little mass mobilization around this or any other issue.

The ANC Women's League called for mass action to protest the violence in the first week of May, but in most parts of the country support was very weak.

When the April 30 deadline for the release of all political prisoners and the return of exiles passed with many prisoners still in jail and many exiles still abroad, the ANC Youth League staged demonstrations and occupied embassies and government offices. Political prisoners have started hunger strikes. But this movement is very fragmented.

Part of the problem is that the mass democratic organizations have moved to the sidelines since the unbanning of the ANC, PAC and SACP.

Many union and local activists have been redeployed into building up the structures of the ANC. In March this year, the ANC leadership pushed successfully for the UDF, a front of organizations under ANC hegemony that played a key role in the popular upsurge in 1985-87, to be disbanded.

There is a definite feeling among activists that mass mobilization is not being encouraged and is only resorted to as a tactic to push negotiations along.

The perspective of rebuilding the mass movement and empowering the organizations of civil society — the civics, youth organizations and so on — has been left behind.

It is clear that the violence has led to a weakening of the popular movement. The search by the mainstream of the mass movement for a negotiated settlement is further disarming the masses from being able to develop a strategy to counter the state's offensive. The balance of forces is swinging gradually in favour of the government and the bosses. The ANC and COSATU conferences later this year will show how far this process has gone. ★

# "We must decide what is rational"

Interview with Soviet miners' leader

THE recent Soviet miners' strike has been presented in much of the western media as simply an aspect of Boris Yeltsin's struggle with Mikhail Gorbachev.

Aleksandr Sergeev is a member of the Interregional Co-ordinating Council of Strike Committees and vice-chair of the Executive Bureau (EB) of the Independent Trade Union of Miners (ITM). He is also a member of the strike committee of the city of Mezhdurechensk in the Kuzbass. He spoke to David Seppo in Moscow on May 4, 1991, about the real background to the strike and how miners are organizing in the Soviet Union.

**I recall correctly, Mezhdurechensk is where the strike began in July 1989. What is its social composition?**

It is a mining town of about 100,000 people. There are five mines as well as a factory that makes pre-fabricated units for construction. About 50,000 people are employed in the mines and the factory. Besides children, pensioners and housewives, some 5,000 work in trade. The trade sector here is run by the mafia, just as in Moscow.

We are trying to improve the situation, but in conditions of generalized shortage, it is impossible to completely end the abuses.

**What is the composition of your city soviet? Are the candidates of the strike committees in the majority?**

No. About 30% are workers' representatives. Of this 30% some are workers and some intellectuals. It is not easy for workers to deal with budgetary and economic questions. The Communists predominate. People do not believe that the city soviet can resolve their problems.

**How would you rate the general level of consciousness and abilities of the workers?**

Compared to the general level of all employees (toilers) in the USSR, it is rather high. Sociological studies of the workers have shown that they are rather independent people, who can do things with their own hands. Of course, the economic crisis has a depressing influence, but the desire for action is there in most.

**Tell me what has been happening since the Second Congress of Min-**

**ers in Donetsk that founded the ITM in October 1990.**

The delegates were supposed to report the decisions of the congress to their collectives. But in this a lot depended on the capacities of the delegates and their motivation. I went to my mine, Tomskaya, and told the miners that I had been elected to the Union's Executive Bureau. I asked if they needed my help in forming the trade union at the mine. They said that they would manage by themselves and that I should return in a month. When I returned they had registered the union and received an official stamp, but the union had only a few members. They simply did not know how to go about it. I explained this to them. And today, in a collective of 1,500 we have about 300 members.

The small number is not so important. That fact is that, for many years, Soviet trade unions' main activity was dispensing various benefits and distributing goods that are in short supply. And so people are wary of leaving those trade unions. Only those who understand the tasks of trade unions are ready to leave.

**Can one be a member of both unions?**

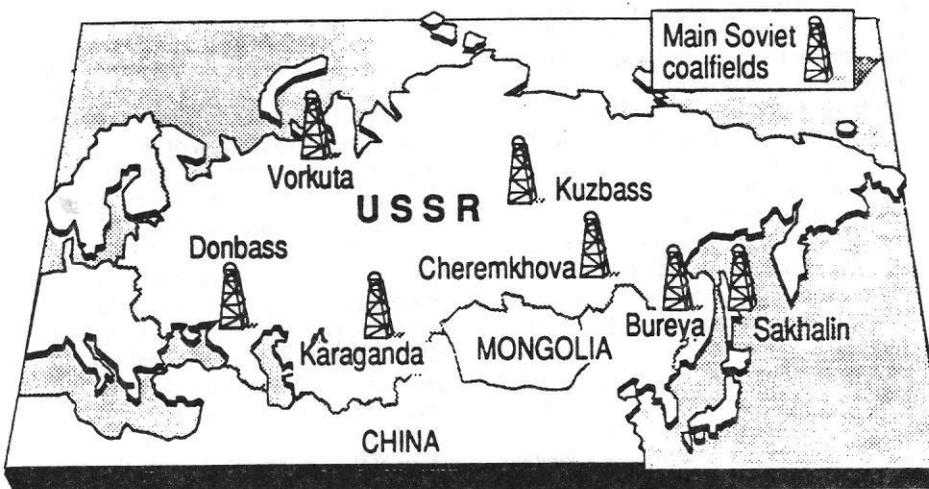
In principle, yes. Our constitution allows it. But the other trade union forces people to choose. People say they are afraid of losing their sick pay. We explain that sick pay, trips to sanatoria and so on are not paid by the union but by state insurance and the law says that any worker has a right to these benefits, regardless of whether the enterprise made its payments to the fund or whether an individual is a member of the trade union.

And when the workers leave the state union they really do continue to get these benefits. The same with the sale of consumer goods within the enterprise. After all, it is the entire collective that earned them, and they should be distributed equally.

**How did the present strike begin?**

The Second Congress of Miners in October 1990 decided to launch a campaign for a general collective agreement in the coal sector. It elected an EB and assigned it three tasks: organize union locals, conclude a general collective agreement and organize miners' congresses. We began to organize locals. We now have more than 50,000 members in the entire Soviet Union. This is a small number, but these are committed people.

We worked out our demands and wrote up a draft collective agreement for the sector. We presented it on November 20 and received a negative reply a month later. In the case of a negative reply, the law proposes a conciliation commission. Again papers. The EB proposed conciliation, but the authorities ignored this. We sent Ryzhkov, Gorbachev and Lukyanov [Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet] a warning that we were considering a general strike.



missed your thousand tonne norm by two tonnes. Then you would get, say, 300 rubles. However, if you surpassed the norm, you would get 600 rubles. But your output does not depend mainly on your work. The geological conditions could be bad, the electricity off, materials not delivered, or the combine broken down. It turns out you worked practically for free. So we demanded to be paid by the tonne, independently of the plan. We won this, but they still managed to get around it: yes, up to a certain level, we'll pay a fixed rate by the tonne, but then, depending on how vigilant the miners were, the authorities sneaked in sliding scales and bonuses and the like.

So we began to ask ourselves: how are these basic wage rates set at the centre? Why is it two rubles an hour and not six? By that time the first Congress of Miners was approaching and we decided to work out a concept. The second congress worked out the principles, and the EB continued to work on it. According to these principles, a miner's wage should have four constituent parts. First of all, a basic wage. This should be the value of the consumer basket of an average person, regardless of stoppages that are not the worker's fault. This is thus a guaranteed minimum. Secondly a guaranteed payment for harmful working conditions: above-normal concentrations of dust, methane, nightwork, heat over 26 degrees and so on. A third part is payment for time going to and from work, washing and so on. At least a part of this should be compensated. The time spent at production is six hours, but in fact a person might spend ten hours or more in all. This is his personal time. Only the fourth element should be about quality of output. We haven't worked this out fully.

As we understand it, this is the practise among miners in the West, that is, a guaranteed minimum for a decent life and to compensate for harmful working conditions. At present, the fact that our miners' wages depend on how much they produce forces them to violate safety norms, to work in conditions that exceed the norms for dust by 2000 times. The consequences are silicosis, trauma; a worker does not value his life. The state trade unions have the right to shut down the enterprise if conditions exceed safety norms. But it will not do this because it knows that workers have to earn a living.

Of course, the government will oppose our demands because they raise the issue of the organization of production. They will say: how can we pay what the miner has not produced? We answer that that is your responsibility, director, chief engineer, department head and minister and prime minister.

I am above all a person. I pay taxes to the state, I elected a deputy and appointed you to your post. You are supposed to be a qualified specialist at your post and I at mine.

■ **Compensation for harmful conditions has been criticized as encouraging workers to tolerate and even seek to work in such conditions, at the same time as freeing management from pressure to remove these conditions.**

Our position is to make management pay for harmful conditions. For example, according to norms, no person should lift more than 50 kilos. But as an electrician in the mines I carried beams and metal that weighed 60 or 70 kilos. So our idea is that wage supplements for harmful conditions will make it unprofitable for management to ignore these conditions.

We are in practise going over the same route that your trade unions traversed years ago. So that when we ask what kind of help we need from the West, we answer that we don't primarily want financial and material help, although, of course, that is important — we need your experience, your methods, your knowledge of how to conduct negotiations, so that we won't have to invent all this anew. That is why we want to establish contact with Western miners, to get their experience and learn their history. Of course, we are proud of what we have done ourselves. I was talking to my acquaintance in the state trade union and I told him: you have to admit that there isn't a single state union that ever proposed the principles we have worked out. And that is because they were worked out by people who had the desire to change things. They answer: well, come over and be a leader in our union. My answer to this is: why should I join you when you haven't come to these ideas yourselves. Why should we impose them from above? It would be the same system as before: a kind lord appears, he looks things over and gives the nod. Let's rather proceed from below, by ourselves, to propagate our idea.

■ **How does the miners' movement relate to the different political currents?**

I'll try to do this briefly, though it might not be so clear because it really would require a lot of time to explain. Our trade union adheres to a purely trade unionist principle, that is: that for now at least, the trade union should not support any political party. But at present we have to look at the situation.

In addition, there are those strike committees that have not yet transformed themselves into trade unions and which adhere more or less to the orientation of the democrats, in the Soviet sense of the word [i.e. liberals] though maybe this might not mean the same thing as in the West.

In Russia, this is the Democratic Russia movement. This is especially true in the Kuzbass. Golikov for example, the chairman of the Council of Strike Committees of the Kuzbass, is on Yeltsin's brains trust.

■ **Are the political positions of these strike committees supported by the rank-and-file?**

I would say so, for the most part. After all, the idea of sovereignty is attractive. The centre has ripped us off for a long time, and the idea is correct. I also, incidentally, am a patriot of Russia; I want there to be a Russian republic that is sovereign, but within the Union. And let them divide up their powers.

To put it briefly — perhaps abstractly and a bit crudely — a struggle is occurring today between the Communist *boyars* [aristocrats] and the new bourgeoisie that used to serve the *boyars* but has grown tired of that. They now have the desire to rise to the top themselves. The bourgeoisie are enterprising people, whose capital at present is their knowledge. They worked for the *boyars* for a long time, servicing their ideology.

■ **You are talking about the intelligentsia?**

Yes, the intelligentsia, economists and the like. So to put it rather figuratively, there is this struggle taking place between the *boyars* and the new bourgeoisie, whose capital, for now, is knowledge. For us, workers and the workers' movement, it makes more sense now to support this bourgeoisie, because for 70 years the Communists' idea that everything belongs to everyone and to me, "everything is the Kolkhoz's", has shown its unsoundness — in general, although in principle some degree of centralization and planning are necessary. It is a question of deciding what is rational.

The new bourgeoisie are proposing a system that gives the worker a chance to sell his labour power according to the amount agreed. That is, you too are a person, and we give everyone a chance — though this is really open to debate, here as well as in the West. In any case, they are proposing a concept of a normal society in which everyone will have a chance — though I repeat, the validity of this claim is far from obvious. So while this struggle is going on, we naturally support the new bourgeoisie. Because the foggy orthodox Communist idea, that of the radiant future, is not based on concrete reality and concrete forces.

But we must never forget that when the new bourgeoisie comes to power — that is an inevitable process, for either they will share power with the *boyars* and live with them in peaceful coexistence or they will come to power on their own — those whose capital is knowledge will want to transform this into material capital.

In any case, when the new bourgeoisie tries to turn its knowledge into capital they will want to exploit us, that is part of their system. So while supporting at present the movement of democrats — though we know that they are really a bourgeoisie with a social-democratic orientation if judged from the point of



But then, after all, Yeltsin is a politician.

### ■ Do you think that Yeltsin's promises are realistic?

Today, the papers published Yeltsin's decree transferring the mines to the jurisdiction of the Russian Republic. Those mines that want to will receive their independence and pay only taxes. The others will be subordinated to the Russian Committee for Fuel and Energy.

I consider that this measure proposed by Yeltsin is populist. It might well turn out that he will take into Russian jurisdiction only the profitable mines and leave the others. We have to see. But the threat of closures is real in Russia too, including in the Kuzbass.

In general, I am categorically opposed to such blanket recipes. In the 1930s there was mass collectivization; now they want to conduct mass privatization, at full speed and without any economic analyses or studies of the situation in the coal industry as a whole. We need time to study these questions. They are holding out to miners the prospect of becoming owners and masters. But what will happen after that, nobody knows.

I told the representatives of the Rapskaya mine [one of the largest in Russia]: two and a half years ago they offered you a leasing arrangement to persuade you to abandon the strike. Two years later, in 1991, you struck again, and they let you become a joint stock company in order to end the strike. What will you strike for the next time? You haven't yet even understood the first stage and you are already jumping into another. They are throwing you bones. These are pure slogans without any economic basis, like in 1917.

Not everyone agrees with me, of course.

### ■ And what is the view among the rank-and-file?

There too, opinions are divided. A person who has spent six hours at physical

labour and then has to think about how to get food, is naturally not worried about such things. They tell him: here's your chance to become owner; until now you have been working without being owner. And he thinks to himself: hey, maybe that's the truth. Who the hell knows?

We are going through a process of self-education. We don't trust any economists. They offer different and contradictory analyses depending on who is paying them. We take one point of view, another, try to compare them, and then draw our own conclusions. But in making the comparison, we start from the principles of the trade union: it was created to defend the workers interests in the areas of employment, wages, and health and safety.

None of the programmes, neither that of Pavlov nor of Silaev [prime minister of the Russian Republic] take these problems into consideration. They don't even mention them. In principle, that is correct, since that's what a government exists for: in order to get out of the crisis, you have to cut off the ends, and do anything that will keep the ship afloat. But we can't adopt that point of view.

Our small union has forced the state to recognize that collective agreements should exist for all sectors, although it is the state unions who will conclude the agreements, and their whole tradition leads them to be conciliatory. Until the 1930s Soviet trade unions used to conclude such agreements, but then that right was taken away. Until about 1930, the function of determining the value of labour belonged to the Central Council of Trade Unions, but it was taken over by the State Commission on Labour.

### ■ Is there anything in your collective agreement about enterprise management? Who will hire the director?

If you analyze the agreement, you will see that it will radically change relations

in the entire country. Before, in our country, it was production for production's sake. Now, the basic principle would be that everything produced by people will be produced for themselves. And price number one should be the value of a person's skills, knowledge, the value of his labour power. For that to be true, the labour legislation has to be changed, as well as the system of social insurance and the laws regarding self-management. There is nothing concrete in the draft agreement about who will manage. It says to the state: you own 90% of the property (the rest being private plots, cooperatives and non-state enterprises), you buy our labour power and you have many obligations towards us. Let's define our respective powers.

First of all you are obliged to provide us with work and to pay us so that we won't starve. At present, we are not paid for stoppages that are not our fault. We are on piece work. We are demanding to be paid by the hour. Our concept is that 70% of the wage should be hourly and 30% piece-rate.

So, the state is the owner, we are the labour force. The state should provide us with work-guaranteed employment, and decent socio-economic conditions. But at the same time, we do not deny the collective its right to take over the enterprise as its property. But even if it does this, wages and other conditions cannot be below those fixed in the collective agreement. That is, the agreement must hold for the salaried workers regardless of the form of property, whether it be joint-stock, private, state or collective. It must be recognized that a person works in order to feed his family and to live decently. He does not go to work to feed the neighbour's family or to realize some lofty ideas. The worker, the basic producer of all the value that exists on earth, and his needs, must be the cornerstone.

### ■ Can you expand on the proposed form of wages?

This conception was developed over a long period. I worked on this when I was still chairman of my mine's trade-union committee. After the July 1989 strike I was elected chairman of the state trade union committee. In the mine, we tried to understand this question. It turns out that there is a basic pay rate that is set by the State Commission on Labour for the minister. These basic rates are included in the cost and price of coal, which are also set by the state. We began to think about how to organize things so that a minimum wage could be guaranteed. The first step was our demand in the 1989 strike that the state pay a hard price for each tonne of coal.

Before that, you were paid a basic wage; after that came the bonus; that depended on you fulfilling your norm. Say that you

missed your thousand tonne norm by two tonnes. Then you would get, say, 300 rubles. However, if you surpassed the norm, you would get 600 rubles. But your output does not depend mainly on your work. The geological conditions could be bad, the electricity off, materials not delivered, or the combine broken down. It turns out you worked practically for free. So we demanded to be paid by the tonne, independently of the plan. We won this, but they still managed to get around it: yes, up to a certain level, we'll pay a fixed rate by the tonne, but then, depending on how vigilant the miners were, the authorities sneaked in sliding scales and bonuses and the like.

So we began to ask ourselves: how are these basic wage rates set at the centre? Why is it two rubles an hour and not six? By that time the first Congress of Miners was approaching and we decided to work out a concept. The second congress worked out the principles, and the EB continued to work on it. According to these principles, a miner's wage should have four constituent parts. First of all, a basic wage. This should be the value of the consumer basket of an average person, regardless of stoppages that are not the worker's fault. This is thus a guaranteed minimum. Secondly a guaranteed payment for harmful working conditions: above-normal concentrations of dust, methane, nightwork, heat over 26 degrees and so on. A third part is payment for time going to and from work, washing and so on. At least a part of this should be compensated. The time spent at production is six hours, but in fact a person might spend ten hours or more in all. This is his personal time. Only the fourth element should be about quality of output. We haven't worked this out fully.

As we understand it, this is the practise among miners in the West, that is, a guaranteed minimum for a decent life and to compensate for harmful working conditions. At present, the fact that our miners' wages depend on how much they produce forces them to violate safety norms, to work in conditions that exceed the norms for dust by 2000 times. The consequences are silicosis, trauma; a worker does not value his life. The state trade unions have the right to shut down the enterprise if conditions exceed safety norms. But it will not do this because it knows that workers have to earn a living.

Of course, the government will oppose our demands because they raise the issue of the organization of production. They will say: how can we pay what the miner has not produced? We answer that that is your responsibility, director, chief engineer, department head and minister and prime minister.

I am above all a person. I pay taxes to the state, I elected a deputy and appointed you to your post. You are supposed to be a qualified specialist at your post and I at mine.

**■ Compensation for harmful conditions has been criticized as encouraging workers to tolerate and even seek to work in such conditions, at the same time as freeing management from pressure to remove these conditions.**

Our position is to make management pay for harmful conditions. For example, according to norms, no person should lift more than 50 kilos. But as an electrician in the mines I carried beams and metal that weighed 60 or 70 kilos. So our idea is that wage supplements for harmful conditions will make it unprofitable for management to ignore these conditions.

We are in practise going over the same route that your trade unions traversed years ago. So that when we ask what kind of help we need from the West, we answer that we don't primarily want financial and material help, although, of course, that is important — we need your experience, your methods, your knowledge of how to conduct negotiations, so that we won't have to invent all this anew. That is why we want to establish contact with Western miners, to get their experience and learn their history. Of course, we are proud of what we have done ourselves. I was talking to my acquaintance in the state trade union and I told him: you have to admit that there isn't a single state union that ever proposed the principles we have worked out. And that is because they were worked out by people who had the desire to change things. They answer: well, come over and be a leader in our union. My answer to this is: why should I join you when you haven't come to these ideas yourselves. Why should we impose them from above? It would be the same system as before: a kind lord appears, he looks things over and gives the nod. Let's rather proceed from below, by ourselves, to propagate our idea.

**■ How does the miners' movement relate to the different political currents?**

I'll try to do this briefly, though it might not be so clear because it really would require a lot of time to explain. Our trade union adheres to a purely trade unionist principle, that is: that for now at least, the trade union should not support any political party. But at present we have to look at the situation.

In addition, there are those strike committees that have not yet transformed themselves into trade unions and which adhere more or less to the orientation of the democrats, in the Soviet sense of the word [i.e. liberals] though maybe this might not mean the same thing as in the West.

In Russia, this is the Democratic Russia movement. This is especially true in the Kuzbass. Golikov for example, the chairman of the Council of Strike Committees of the Kuzbass, is on Yeltsin's brains trust.

**■ Are the political positions of these strike committees supported by the rank-and-file?**

I would say so, for the most part. After all, the idea of sovereignty is attractive. The centre has ripped us off for a long time, and the idea is correct. I also, incidentally, am a patriot of Russia; I want there to be a Russian republic that is sovereign, but within the Union. And let them divide up their powers.

To put it briefly — perhaps abstractly and a bit crudely — a struggle is occurring today between the Communist *boyars* [aristocrats] and the new bourgeoisie that used to serve the *boyars* but has grown tired of that. They now have the desire to rise to the top themselves. The bourgeoisie are enterprising people, whose capital at present is their knowledge. They worked for the *boyars* for a long time, servicing their ideology.

**■ You are talking about the intelligentsia?**

Yes, the intelligentsia, economists and the like. So to put it rather figuratively, there is this struggle taking place between the *boyars* and the new bourgeoisie, whose capital, for now, is knowledge. For us, workers and the workers' movement, it makes more sense now to support this bourgeoisie, because for 70 years the Communists' idea that everything belongs to everyone and to me, "everything is the Kolkhoz's", has shown its unsoundness — in general, although in principle some degree of centralization and planning are necessary. It is a question of deciding what is rational.

The new bourgeoisie are proposing a system that gives the worker a chance to sell his labour power according to the amount agreed. That is, you too are a person, and we give everyone a chance — though this is really open to debate, here as well as in the West. In any case, they are proposing a concept of a normal society in which everyone will have a chance — though I repeat, the validity of this claim is far from obvious. So while this struggle is going on, we naturally support the new bourgeoisie. Because the foggy orthodox Communist idea, that of the radiant future, is not based on concrete reality and concrete forces.

But we must never forget that when the new bourgeoisie comes to power — that is an inevitable process, for either they will share power with the *boyars* and live with them in peaceful coexistence or they will come to power on their own — those whose capital is knowledge will want to transform this into material capital.

In any case, when the new bourgeoisie tries to turn its knowledge into capital they will want to exploit us, that is part of their system. So while supporting at present the movement of democrats — though we know that they are really a bourgeoisie with a social-democratic orientation if judged from the point of

view of world experience — we must never forget that sooner or later we will clash with them, and are already clashing over a number of issues. Therefore, we are creating a trade union that at first deals with purely union problems and stays out of politics.

■ **Do you foresee the need for a workers' party?**

I can't predict what the future holds. But I can give you my personal opinion. In order for a person to be able to define his political position, he has to have reached a certain level of knowledge as well as have acquired the desire to do so. For now, we still have to raise the workers up to that level. The majority of people today are preoccupied with the question of what to eat and drink. So we have to interest them in these other things. We have to allow the worker to feel that he is a person. And when he feels this, when he receives all that he has earned, has extra money, time to read books, his horizon will broaden. then he will be able to define himself.

To force the creation of a workers' party now, in my view, is utopian, since it would fall under the influence of either the right or left; for example look at the United Front of Toilers, which is really a radical-left orthodox Marxist party. But sooner or later there will be a need for a normal party, either an English-type labour party or a Socialist party. This will exist in the future, but to try to create it now would be just a waste of time. People first have to define themselves politically.

■ **It seems obvious that a barely hidden struggle for property is now taking place.**

Yes, at the level of the state, the sector and the enterprise there is a hidden struggle for economic power. In the year after the 1989 strike laws on leasing and on joint-stock companies were passed, many directors proposed to their workers: let's take this enterprise over as collective property. And this year we began to ask ourselves: why is it that a significant part of the directors are supporting this idea? And we came to the conclusion that given the low level of workers' legal and economic knowledge, if the enterprise is taken over as some form of collective property, the workers will become even more dependent on the enterprise. It will be "their's" but they won't know how to manage it.

So the directors see a chance, not directly, but indirectly, to exploit the workers' lack of preparation in order for themselves to become the real masters of the enterprise. If they used to be subordinate to the ministers, now they would be free. After all, why should they want to become legal owners themselves? They might go bankrupt. But if the collective takes over the enterprise, the workers will come one day to the director and ask: where is the money, where are our wages? And the

director will reply: why ask me? It is your enterprise. You are responsible for it.

Look at the process of establishing republican sovereignty at enterprise level. In principle it is a good process. But it has its negative sides. The republics say to their workers: we are all brothers; the centre is robbing us.

Let's take over all the enterprises and we will be rich. And each one says it is the other who is to blame. They want to be free from the structures above them but to preserve their own structures to

dominate those below. And so it goes all the way down the line.

They want to exploit our ignorance.

Capital is being accumulated, and it will flow to those who have economic knowledge.

■ **Do you think the workers, when they fully realize what is happening, will revolt against this?**

I don't at all deny this. It's at that point that the possibility of a party will become real. ★

## Europe — the concrete utopia

**THE unification of Germany and the Gulf war have pushed the issue of the European single market (or "1992") into the background. The European governments officially planned that this market unification should be realized by 1992.**

**However, it now seems that this target cannot be met. Nonetheless, steps in the direction of the single market have already been taken in some important sectors. This is true in the transport sector and above all in freight transport.**

WINFRIED WOLF

“AMONGST the foremost aims of the community with regard to 1992 must also be that of the creation of a real Europe of Transport.” Thus the introduction to a brochure from the European Community Commission which appeared in September 1990.

What does this mean?

The transport sector accounts for around 7% of the GNP of the EC states and an equal percentage of jobs. This calculation is based exclusively on freight transport and those employed in the transport sector (public transport firms, railways, traffic systems) — figures for individual transport or those employed in the car industry are not included. Some 40% of all public investment by the European states is in the transport sector, above all for road construction and maintenance (this figure does not include the investments of the private railway companies). In other words, this is a central part of the whole economy and is the decisive sector as far as state investments are concerned.

All projections for the development of transport foresee a strong expansion. In the front line here will be freight transport. In West Germany the 1985-1995 Federal Transport plan is officially still

in force. This envisages a rise in freight transport of 30% by the year 2000 and an increase of around 50% in transit traffic, including a doubling of air traffic. In fact the real rise will be still higher, above all in road freight transport. What you think you see when you look at the heavy goods vehicles on the motorways is what is really happening.

The *Economic Weekly* has summed up 1990 thus: “Already, almost as many parcels are being carried by road as the Bonn plan envisaged there would be by 2000.” The effect of unification and the opening up of eastern Europe to traffic is not taken into consideration here. According to the predictions of the transport expert Helmut Holzapfel: “as much as a doubling of heavy goods traffic in West Germany is possible”. Transit traffic will rise especially.

We live, as we are often reminded, in a market economy. That is to say, there is planning of parts but the whole is anarchic. This has been evident in the transport sector for decades: first traffic “comes into being” and then, under the pressure of increasing delays, roads are built. After which the volume of traffic resumes its upwards course.

The environment has become a press-



ing theme in everyone's thinking, and gets into every politician's speechifying. But in fact environmental destruction is to be stepped up. The European landscape is to be concreted over, tunneled through and bridged over.

### The end of the missing links

The time has arrived for the filling in of Europe's "missing links", that is, the connections that stand in the way of the inflation of traffic. These are:

- The Channel Tunnel between Britain and France. This is one of the biggest construction projects in history with an estimated cost of about \$12bn. While it is true that this will carry a rail link, it will nonetheless mainly carry heavy goods vehicles for a short stretch through the tunnel. For safety and technical reasons a road tunnel was deemed unfeasible.

- The Iberian peninsula is to be connected to the rest of Europe through high-speed railway tracks and a motorway over the Central Pyrenees. Since the tracks will be built according to the norms already existing in the rest of Europe, the Spanish and Portuguese railways, which are of a different gauge, will be excluded from this network, and their future will be threatened. There are no plans for investment in harmonizing European railway tracks.

- The Eurocrats consider the Alps a particular hindrance to the movement of traffic. Furthermore the pigheaded Swiss have a weight limit for heavy goods vehicles of 28 tons (it is 40 tons in the EC) and a ban on night driving for such vehicles (no such restrictions will exist in the EC). As a result there are plans for huge tunnels under the Simplon, Gotthard and Brenner. In the most extravagant versions, the last of these would involve tunneling right under Austria, especially if these people also persist in enforcing a ban on night traffic.

- A row of bridges and tunnels (Scandlink) are to be built between Denmark and Sweden which will connect the Jutland peninsula with Sjaelland and

Sweden.

- The 1180 kilometer long motorway through Yugoslavia is to be converted with massive EC aid. The corresponding connections to Greece and Turkey will also be upgraded.

- There are a whole number of new road building projects which are to "connect eastern Europe to Europe". These are mostly still in the preliminary planning stage. One project however has already been given top priority by the federal German government. A new autobahn is to run along the Baltic from Hamburg to Szczecin.

This orgy of concrete will be supplemented by national road building programmes. The German government is already hatching the necessary laws which will get rid of a whole series of civil rights concerning road building (the right to object and to inquiries), for which constitutional changes are needed.

The question remains: what lies behind the new traffic boom for which these new routes are to be built? There are essentially three sources which feed the growth of freight traffic.

The first and decisive one is the fact that the transport costs of the enterprises are in all cases, whether railways, boats or roads, subsidized by the state. The same is true here as with nuclear power: the profits (from road construction, vehicle manufacture and also through low transport costs) are privatized while the losses and costs of this form of organization of transport are "socialized". Heidelberg's Environment and Projection Institute (UPI) concludes: "Every citizen of this country subsidizes heavy goods' traffic by something between 500 and 1000 marks a year." A sharp rise in fuel prices would be needed to cover the real costs of transport.

But the EC has other ideas: transport costs are to fall further while all restrictions are to be removed. At the same time competition between transport sectors (roads versus railways) will become sharper. Above all, competition between the road hauliers — and drivers — of the whole continent will rise. Everybody will be able to become a road haulier and safety regulations will be radically undermined, by levelling down to the lowest national existing level in the EC. But it will be worth it: even lower transport costs will produce even more traffic.

From this comes the second factor — the trend for industrial production to put its storage costs on the move, on the roads and other transport systems. Needed parts will no longer sit about waiting to be used, but will arrive "just in time" exactly when and where they are needed. This does not of course mean that the

journey time will be absolutely predictable — the congestion will prevent that. Instead the roads will themselves form storage space and buffer zones; the only important thing is that the relevant parts arrive on time at the factory and that the transport costs are smaller than the corresponding storage costs.

The third factor will be increasing subdivision of work, reaching absurd levels. It is for example rational from the company's point of view for Thomson Brandt to have its electrical resistors taken to a government subsidized factory in Malta, where they are installed in precision pumps which are then transported back along the excellent Italian autostradas to the customers in Germany. There are innumerable examples of this type. Thus milk from Bavaria is taken by road to Italy where it is made into yoghurt before being taken back for sale to Germany. The waste cartons are also part of the transport merry-go-round. They will often enough find themselves travelling long distances across Germany to be disposed of in the Wild East.

### Productive and unproductive labour

Karl Marx undoubtedly had the European single market in mind when, in the second volume of *Capital*, he considered the question of productive and unproductive transport costs. He arrived at the conclusion that only *economically average necessary* transport costs should be considered as productive, as when raw materials such as iron ore and coal have to be transported for iron and steel production. However, he points out that all this appears in a quite different light to the individual entrepreneur, for whom every valorization of his capital is productive, whether it goes to build schools or is invested in a brothel.

Similarly with the EC transport sector and in respect of the inflation of traffic. "Deregulation" creates more traffic. This brings more private companies into the haulage business. This leads to traffic chaos and to the building of new roads, which requires more private firms. The emissions of pollutants rise massively (some claim that the emission of nitrogen oxides will double in ten years). Trees will die at a still faster rate. But this doesn't matter.

Everything, more concrete, more HGVs, more environmental patching up, more road deaths and costs, more waste, all amounts to an increase in GNP; it just grows and grows and grows....and as it grows, nature and human beings die, while humanity and the quality of life wither. ★