

International VIEWPOINT

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Germany



★ **United States: The second civil war**

★ **Expo 92** ★ **And more**



Contents

GERMANY 3
STRIKE wave shatters social peace — *François Vercaemmen*
Plus
Winfried Wolf on the first wave of action and its political implications

ITALY 8
AFTER years of retreat, rank-and file Italian car workers begin to organize a fightback — *Gigi Malabarba*

SPANISH STATE 9
EXPO 92 opens in Seville at enormous cost, but the people of Andalusia will gain little — *Document*
Plus
CAMPAIGN against five hundredth anniversary upsets triumphal veneer of Spanish government — *Antonio Florez*

ex-YUGOSLAVIA 12
"CANTONIZATION" plan pushed by West contributes to dynamic of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina — *Christian Promitzer*

USA 14
BEHIND the statistics of dead and injured in the aftermath of the rioting in Los Angeles and other cities, the spectre of a second civil war — *Gustavo Buster*
Plus
INJUSTICE and inequality that led to the explosion — *Dolores Treviso*

Plus
BUREAUCRATIC union leadership derails Caterpillar strike — *Frank Lovell*

PERU 21
PURSUIT of neo-liberal policies leads to dictatorship — Peruvian revolutionary *Hugo Blanco* gives his view on the recent coup in his country

AROUND THE WORLD 23
 ● Greece ● Canada

RUSSIA 24
PROSPECTS for the left: a round-table discussion with three leading Moscow socialists — introduced by *Poul Funder Larsen*

AFGHANISTAN 28
AFTER the fall of Najibullah — the prospect of Lebanionization — *Salah Jaber*

TWO important errors appeared in IV number 228 of May 11, 1992. Firstly, owing to a computer error the magazine was printed with a back page dating from six weeks previously, instead of the promised article by *Salah Jaber* on Afghanistan. The article appears in this issue and we apologize to both readers and author. Secondly, the introduction to the article on Libya stated that the UN embargo against that country was being introduced six months after the US air raid of 1986: this should of course have read six years. ★

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Strike wave shakes Germany

THE German public sector unions agreed to suspend their pay strike on May 7, and their members are currently voting on the deal. Whatever they decide, it is already clear that the Christian Democrat/Liberal coalition government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl has suffered a defeat; Germany is facing a new political situation.

FRANCOIS VERCAMMEN — May 14, 1992.

IT REMAINS to be seen whether this defeat for the government is a victory for the workers. The preliminary agreement accepted by the National Commission of the public sector union, the OTV, by 98 votes to 25, involves a wage rise of 5.4% to come into effect on May 1 for those on lower wage rates and on June 1 for the better paid. There is also to be a one-off bonus of 750 DM for the lowest paid and of 650 DM for those in the middle bracket. There is also a special holiday bonus of 200 DM. The deal will be up for renegotiation again in 1993.

The union leaders are talking of a great victory for two reasons: first of all, the whole package of rises — which they estimate as being worth 6.2% (though the bosses claim it amounts to only 5.1%) is above Kohl's 4.8% "absolute barrier". Furthermore, they are underlining its "social justice" component, with the worse off getting the most.

However, some of the workers involved clearly feel that the outcome does not measure up either to the original 9.5% claim, their combativity, or the sharply rising cost of living. To accurately assess the latter one must add rises in tax and social security contributions on to inflation running at around 5%. An institute close to the German DGB union confederation has estimated that a rise in 7% would have been needed to truly compensate for the decline in purchasing power in 1992.

Front page news

Whichever way one looks at the figures, however, every percentage point gained above the 4.8% expresses a wave of class struggle unprecedented in postwar Germany. The serious press, both in Germany and worldwide, have had no doubts about this, regularly carrying the strikes on their front pages, and adopting a hostile tone, implying that German workers have become layabouts defending their privileges, lacking in solidarity with their compatriots in the East and, furthermore, threatening

world wide economic recovery by forcing the German government to keep interest rates high.

The international union movement, meanwhile has been struck dumb by this sudden display of militancy by the West German unions, which have been constantly held up as an example of moderation and wisdom. In fact the German union movement, after the terrible defeat without a fight in the former GDR after 1989, has had to wake up to the danger presented to its position by the massive deterioration of the situation on the labour market resulting from mass unemployment and low wages in the East.

The main engineering union, the IG-Metall, has struggled for and won a collective contract to run from now until April 1, 1994, which aims at equal wages East and West by the end of 1995. The print-workers are currently demanding an all-German wage rise of 11%.

East German passivity

The real task of the international union movement is to explain that the root of the West German "problem" is not the egoism of the West German workers but the passivity of their colleagues in East Germany, where the German ruling class, assisted by the social democracy, has been able to impose separate collective agreements which prevent them from joining the current struggle (apart from the terrible pressure of an unemployment rate of more than 30%). Even so, there have been strikes in municipal transport in East Berlin.

It also needs to be explained that a victory for these strikes strengthens the position of workers throughout Europe.

It is no accident that Kohl has decided to fight now and with such intransigence. By noisily rejecting the public employees' wage demands, he tried to show the "international community" the strength and resolution of the German bourgeoisie. Banking on the fact that a public sector

strike, with all the inconveniences it entails, is rarely popular, he hoped to strike a preliminary blow at the engineering workers, whose collective negotiations are next in line. This would have been a big help for German industrialists who are beginning to fret about international competitiveness. Hundreds of thousands of layoffs are planned by many big firms and an offensive to introduce "Japanese" working practices has been launched. And in the background lurks the enormous budget deficit resulting from German unification.

Who is going to pay for all this? As the *International Herald Tribune* put it on May 8, 1992, the strike was being portrayed as "an early skirmish in the longer-term battle among government, industry, and labor to share the soaring bill for reunification". The fact that the strongest and most integrated union bureaucracy in the developed capitalist world has found itself behaving in such an unaccustomed manner was not the result of pressure from below so much as a sign that it has understood that a page of German history has been turned.

In November 1989, the Wall fell and capitalism took the initiative. In December 1990, Kohl won the parliamentary elections. In 1991, the German economic miracle was the locomotive of the world economy. Then at the end of 1991, the recession took hold and at the start of 1992 Kohl has suffered a defeat — and it is possible that his government may shortly fall.

The record of workers' struggles in Germany this year is unprecedented, the previous postwar record for days lost through strikes — 5.6 million in 1984 — is going to be surpassed. Behind the public sector workers come workers in engineering, shops, print and construction, confronting employers spoiling for a fight.

After the steelworkers, banks and public sector strikes, we may be on the verge of a third and even more powerful wave of industrial conflict that will send shockwaves through Germany and the whole of Europe. ★

STOP PRESS
THE deal agreed by the public sector union leaders was rejected by the members of the largest union involved, the OTV, with only 44.1% in favour, on May 14. Post, rail and office workers involved in the dispute accepted the deal. The government and employers have refused further negotiation, while the OTV leadership is meeting on May 25 to consider the position. ★

Striking at the heart of the German miracle

AT the present time one of the biggest strike waves in West German history is taking place. The strikes have been restricted within the boundaries of the pre-unification Federal Republic and the union leaders are not planning to extend them to the East.

On May 7 the employers involved in the first round of these strikes, in the public sector, accepted an arbitration award of 5.4% that they had previously refused, to end the strike.

The following article looks at the course of the first wave of industrial action and its political implications.

WINFRIED WOLF

THE strike affected some public services such as post, rail, public transport and cleaning services. At the same time initial warning strikes took place in the engineering industry. There were also strikes at airports and in the television.

In the first week some hundred thousand workers took part in strikes. In many large cities, especially in Nordrhein Westphalen, public transport was at a standstill, while in many towns the postal service was effectively brought to a halt. Many long distance train services ceased to run and the flagship of the Bundesbahn, the high-speed Intercity Express (ICE) was almost completely halted.

On the May 5, 1992, the eighth day of the strikes, the strikes were stepped up as planned to include rail freight and airports.

The strike was carried out with such Teutonic thoroughness that in many places the municipal transport remained on strike on May 1, so that people could not get to the Mayday demos, affecting turnout.

The majority of the public expressed support for the strike despite the inconveniences it caused them. And even the bulk of the mass media have not adopted an openly hostile attitude. *Der Bild*, the country's no. 1 tabloid, made an effort on May 4 with the headline "The craziness doesn't end; ÖTV [the public sector union] makes Germany dirty" while underneath in the same size type we find

4 "The politicians are talking rubbish!" Interestingly, the article opposed the

various social austerity plans put forward that weekend by the FDP and CSU.

The main public sector union, the ÖTV, asked for a wage rise of around 10% in this wage round. The employers offered 4.8% and the matter went to arbitration. The "independent" arbitrators then offered 5.3%, which, despite overwhelming rejection by its members, was accepted by the union leadership. However, the employers, under massive pressure from Chancellor Kohl, rejected the deal.

Previously other sectors, such as the banks, had struck new wage deals which generally amounted to more than 6%. Thus after the negotiations and the employers' rejection of the deal, the situation was exceptionally favourable for the public sector unions (ÖTV, DPG/Post, GdED Bahn).

Decline in wages

In the background of the strike lay the increasing downward pressure on real wages — even according to official figures real wages fell in 1991. In broad periods, between 1982 and 1984 wages rose vigorously, between 1985 and 1989 they advanced slowly and in 1990 and 1991 they stagnated or even fell. Overall real wages are now some 6 to 8% above their level at the start of the 80s. A clear fall is on the cards for 1992; inflation has already reached 4.8% and rises in social payments are threatened as well as schemes for shifting payment for health care towards individuals.

However this is not the only reason for

the strike and its unprecedented scale and duration (the ÖTV's last strike was in 1974 when it lasted three days).

The social policies and above all the unification policy of the Kohl government, which has been in power for more than a decade, have led to slowly mounting fury among the unions. The first chance to get rid of him by electoral means is not until the end of 1993.

His reign has seen a worsening of social security, and while wages have risen, so has unemployment, from about a million on average in the 1970s to two million between 1982 and 1991. The number of people on social security has more than doubled as has the number of homeless.

German unity has further undermined the position of the "small people". No one has forgotten that Kohl had promised there would be no bad side effects of unification or his repeated assurances that German unity would pay for itself. In fact, however, the West has already seen special taxes (the "Solidarity Taxes") and a rise in VAT (a fixed-rate tax on goods and services). Further "costs of unity" are on the way. And above all everyone knows in their bones that things are about to get much worse. Since the end of 1991 industrial production has been dropping in West Germany and most big firms have announced layoffs — 20,000 in Daimler-Benz alone.

Planned anarchy

Meanwhile the economic situation in East Germany can reasonably be described as out of control. This anarchy is a conscious creation of capitalism which has created an institution, the Treuhandanstalt, entrusted with maintaining, "coordinating" and "organizing" the chaos. The material output of the industry of the former GDR is now about a third of its 1988 level and the number of jobs has halved between 1989 and 1992. The number of those leaving East for West Germany is almost as high as in the last year of Honecker's neo-Stalinist dictatorship (around 150,000).

The number of those officially unemployed or on short time working in the East has gone over the two million mark giving an all-German unemployment total of some 4 million, without counting the further half million artificially kept out of the statistics by "work creation" schemes. East Germany is becoming the German *Mezzogiorno* [Southern Italy] with West German rulers — most East German top officials are from the West.

If Kohl's government has, despite everything, retained a positive image this has been on account of its supposed economic competence. This was decisive for the last election victory in 1990 and for the defeat

of the SPD, whose candidate, Lafontaine, had made warnings about the immense costs of German unity his central plank. But it is now precisely this economic competence that is in question. These days all the opinion formers are using words such as "catastrophic", "irresponsible" or "harakiri" to describe the economic course of Kohl's regime.

Psychology played a role in this struggle that should not be underestimated. The employers' argument that "a strike over 30 or 60 marks is irresponsible" boomeranged. ÖTV chief Wulf-Mathies was able to argue convincingly that this is cynical, given that in many parts of the public sector 30 to 60 marks would make a real difference. Furthermore, the fact that it was the employers who rejected the arbitrated deal is rather shocking to the prevailing preference for orderliness among Germans.

It is also the case that the ÖTV was facing trouble in selling the deal to its membership. Wulf-Mathies is up for reelection at the forthcoming union congress. If she had got down on her knees after the rejection of the deal her reelection would have been in doubt. There were already doubts about her getting a majority in favour of the 5.3% offer in the union's wages commission.

Government on the ropes

The government is currently on the defensive. In recent regional elections it has seen its vote drop by 10% and the far right gain ground. The state debt, which has burgeoned as a result of unification and the growing signs of recession, is also out of control.

The resignation of Kohl's long serving foreign minister Genscher on the very first day of the strike was widely read as a premonition of a political earthquake. Both the manner of his resignation and its aftermath produced confusion in the ruling coalition — the smaller Christian Democrat party, the CSU, felt it had been overlooked, while the Liberals of the FDP feared some plot aimed at bringing about a grand coalition with the Social Democrats.

According to the country's largest circulation regional paper, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, on May 4, "The Kohl government is at the end of its road. It is being shaken by a rapid succession of crises, each one more violent than the last. The coalition is rotten to core..."

The big circulation weekly *Der Spiegel* headlined in similar vein on the same day: Next to a woodcut of Chancellor Kohl one could read "how long now?" The lead article drew many parallels with the situation in 1982, when the SPD/FDP coalition in power since 1969 broke up. It reported

The central committee of the capitalist class

SINCE the unity coup and the restructuring of the East by the Treuhandanstalt it has been impossible to overlook the existence in Germany of a kind of secret central committee of the bourgeoisie which sorts out the big political questions.

This was clear at the start of the 1980s when the so-called Flick scandal led to revelations of how the 1969 SPD/FDP coalition had been planned by ruling class circles and indeed financially prepared by the bribery of the FDP.

It is of some interest that in the two weeks before the start of the strike Germany's highest circulation magazine, *Stern*, published a series of investigative reports on the death of the minister-president of Schleswig-Holstein, Barschel, who was found dead in October 1987 in a Geneva hotel room — he was officially said to have died of a drugs overdose.

The report convincingly proved that (a) he was murdered and that (b) this was to do with "big politics", and above all the German arms industries (starring: the CDU's Stoltenberg as defence minister, submarines for South Africa, the Rostock connection in the GDR, and the former privileged East German contact Schalck-Golodkowski). The rest of the big press have kept quiet about this story, or have continued to defend the version of suicide.

Finally, the resignation of foreign minister Genscher smacked of stage-management. A man of this calibre does not resign on the first day of a strike (gaining thereby bigger headlines for himself than for the strike) without knowing what he is doing. An article in *Der Spiegel* on May 4 ended with the remark: "But he [Genscher] let his friends know that he would still influence the 'basic lines of German politics' in the future. And then a dire threat: he got a red pullover for his birthday. 'If I wear it, some in Bonn will take it personally as a sign'". Of a potential social-liberal coalition — W.W.★

that, just as in 1982, several strategy papers are on offer setting out the problems that must be tackled by summer 1992 at the latest. "As at the start of the 1980s, the problems are mounting — but this time they are bigger: the incalculable costs of unification, economic stagnation and inflation, social decomposition and homelessness, struggles over the division of the cake and strikes... The government runs the risk of losing its ability to solve problems. (FDP boss Lambsdorff) has let it be known that 'if things are not back on the rails by the summer break, even I will begin to see red'".

In this situation Kohl knows that he cannot survive a lost strike. The parallels with 1974, when Willy Brandt fell largely owing to an ÖTV strike, to be replaced with Helmut Schmidt, cannot be ignored.

German unity has meant that the political balance of forces in West Germany has moved in favour of the right. The bosses are in a stronger position and the radical left dramatically marginalized. The SPD has become more timid than ever and puts forward arguments that are

in harmony with those of the CDU, such as on the asylum question; indeed, on some points the SPD's positions are to the right of the CDU/FDP (with the rejection for example of a reconciliation with the "terrorists of the Red Army Faction" offered by the latter, to which leading members of the FDP had reacted positively).

The German Communist Party (DKP) exists in the West only in the form of small groups with a few thousand members. The PDS (the remnants of the former East German ruling Communist party) has shrunk massively; more than half of the mayors who belonged to this party in 1990 have now resigned from it and it hardly exists in West Germany. It has the largest membership of any party in East Germany (about 140,000) and opinion polls give it about 8% of the votes there.

The bosses feel in a position to pursue a provocative line, at least when it won't cost them much. It was striking that the banks made a settlement with their employees of around 6%, since the employers did not want a protracted

struggle. In the food sector there has even been a settlement of 8%. But now the bosses are demanding that the government take a hard line. *Bild am Sonntag* asked the president of the employers' organization, the German Industry and Trade Congress (DIHT), Hans Peter Stihl, "should the employers in the public sector seek to bring the strike to an end with a higher offer?" Stihl's reply was "No. If the federal and regional authorities settle too high, bills and taxes will rise. Nobody can want that, since it will undermine our international competitiveness. The employers' offer of 4.8% is already at the upper limits of the feasible. And therefore we are calling on you, Herr Chancellor: be firm! A few weeks of strikes (our emphasis) are better than high wage settlements that threaten jobs."

In the same interview the boss of bosses announced precisely what would follow: "we will support the chancellor if he decides to drastically cut back on the demands for subsidies from Berlin, the border area and the mining regions".

This support cuts both ways. It can also be interpreted according to the theory that Kohl is being led into a trap and that leading sectors of the employers are in on the plot.

Certainly, it will be difficult for the present government to implement the programme that the employers now want. Much speaks in favour of a new government, perhaps a "Grand Coalition" of the CDU/CSU and the SPD.

A four-point programme

The bourgeois programme centres on the following points:

a) Dealing with the immense new state indebtedness, above all through a massive attack on living standards;

b) A series of constitutional changes to enable the privatization of the post and rail services to be pushed through;

c) "Solving" the asylum question, above all through changes in the constitution and even more restrictive measures against refugees;

d) The exploitation of the new possibilities for giving the German army a worldwide role (this also implies a constitutional change).

Any change in the constitution requires a two thirds majority in parliament, which depends on the votes of the SPD.

On each of these points, the SPD has made known in recent weeks that the unions concerned, whose leaders are close to the SPD, are ready for the necessary compromises.

Concerning (a): The German state budget deficit rose from 925bn DM in 1990 to 1170bn DM in 1991 and is set to reach 2500bn Dm by the year 2000. In the inter-

vening eight years, interest payments will have reached 180bn DM, that is, three times the present defence budget or two and a half times the current welfare budget, making it easily the biggest item of state expenditure.

Measured against Gross National Product, statisticians predict only a relatively small rise in the share of debt (by 55% in 2000), but this involves an assumption of uninterrupted economic growth.

The SPD has openly expressed its readiness for "common talks on solving the crisis of state finances".

Concerning (b): The SPD and the relevant unions in the post and rail have already signalled their acceptance of privatization plans. The post has already been put firmly on the privatization track by being split into three (Telekom, the post and the savings bank) and no further resistance to privatization is to be expected. In the weeks before the outbreak of the strikes the rail union, the GdED, gave its unconditional agreement to the federal railway's privatization plans.

Concerning (c): In the first week of the strike a decisive debate on the asylum issue took place in the Bundestag, in which the new SPD fraction chief expressed his party's agreement to the relevant changes in the constitution. This is a clear change of line by the SPD on this subject and it earned words of praise from the head of the CDU's parliamentary fraction, Schäuble.

Concerning (d): In recent months leading figures in the SPD expressed their agreement to changes in the constitution which would allow once again the sending of German soldiers throughout the world.

Social Democrats prepare for coalition

This last is symptomatic of the state of the SPD: Lafontaine made his way in Helmut Schmidt's SPD as a leading light of the left; A particular hobbyhorse of his at the time was his demand for withdrawal from NATO. Gerhard Schröder, another "Brandt baby", had previously been the representative of the Socialist youth ("Jusos"), and now heads a "Red-Green" regional government whose policies differ little from those of the previous CDU administration. The new SPD candidate for chancellor, Engholm, supports an even more aggressive pro-market course.

All these men form the so-called "Tuscan faction" of the SPD, which does not mean that the fraction (Farthmann, Rau) with roots in the workers' movement and favouring a more traditional approach is any more leftwing — quite the contrary, often this wing gives voice to racist positions concerning refugees.

Frau Simonis is a minister in Björn Engholm's government in Schleswig-Holstein. During the negotiations on public sector pay she sat on the employers' side of the table, where she went along with the hard line against the unions.

There has been hardly any sign of the SPD, which controls the majority of the administrations of the Länder, breaking rank towards the unions, although the party has the power to split the employers' side decisively. The SPD leaders know that, if they did this, they would lose their chance of entry into a coalition government.

Shades of the past

The debates over a Grand Coalition recall those of December 1966 and the formation of the first such coalition, with Kiesinger as chancellor and Brandt as foreign minister. At that time the central objective of bourgeois policy was to carry through the political and economic opening to the East and make the necessary changes to the constitution to pass the emergency laws. The SPD was needed for both and was ready for both.

In fact the tendencies towards a Grand Coalition have been visible since the start of the year, being made explicit in March 1992 — long before the strike. It was the employers who were pushing for this, well before the outbreak of the strikes. At the time the socialist weekly, *Sozialistische Zeitung*, reported on an open provocation to Kohl by the employers' representatives: "For the first time, Chancellor Kohl's regular conference on the development of the new Länder [of the former GDR] took place without the presidents of the key economic associations being present. The employers' associations justified their absence on the grounds that they had 'other important engagements' (February 2, 1992)".

It is also interesting that even at that time it could be reported that "It has been indicated that Chancellor Kohl has no further objections to having [the SPD's] Hans-Jürgen Vogel as the next federal President [a largely decorative post]". The way was cleared for the 1966 Grand Coalition in precisely the same way — with the election of the SPD candidate Heinemann as federal president as a test of the new spirit of cooperation between the SPD and FDP. The strike, the attitude of the government and above all that of the employers must also be seen in this overall context.

We do not mean to imply by this that the unions are simply playing the game of the employers who want strikes as a means of bringing the Grand Coalition into existence).

Dutch railworkers defeated

DUTCH railworkers struck for two days on April 6 and 7, 1992, completely paralyzing transport in answer to a call by rail unions from the country's three union confederations. The central demand was for the rejection of the board's proposal to introduce "broken shifts" (in which for example, you work from 4am to 8am and then go home and start working again from 4pm to 8pm) in the maintenance department, Infrabeheer. This was the first big industrial action against so-called "flexible working" in the Netherlands.

On April 7, negotiations resumed and, to the strikers' amazement, two of the unions signed a contract which did not exclude "broken shifts" in return for higher than anticipated wage offers.

The union leaderships then advised their members to return to work, but the following day strike action continued in many places, sometimes with the backing of the social democratic union, the FNV, which had not signed the sell-out deal. However by Thursday services were back to normal.

It was then hoped that a national meeting of delegates from the independent FSV confederation would reject the deal and motions to this effect were brought to the meeting by four big districts of the union. However these were not put to a vote, and the leadership got the green light to sign the deal. The same happened at the national meeting of the Christian social CNV confederation.

This left the FNV out on its own; the unity which made the strike such a success had been broken.

Furthermore, on April 17, the FNV union in the food processing industry decided to halt strikes in the milk processing sector aimed at obtaining retirement at 59 — a crucial demand giving the coming "rationalization" of the industry. This retreat took place under pressure from an anti-striker campaign, allegedly by an outraged "public". Furthermore, farmers started physically intimidating strikers.

These defeats may have a longlasting negative effect on the Dutch trade union movement. The FNV's chairperson, Johan Stekelenburg, has said that "he considered it necessary to discuss the usefulness of strikes as a means of resistance". In interviews, rather than defending his own members, he kept on saying that "maybe going on strike was not so clever" — Wim Baltussen.

★

At the start of the second week, both sides were under the pressure of the independent dynamic of the strike. The unions could only now accept a deal which gave them 5.3%+ as the arbitrator had decided. A settlement beneath this level would have been perceived as a grave defeat for the unions. The government on the other hand could not be seen to have conceded this under the pressure of industrial action without seeing the beginning of its own downfall.

The unions could only, however, be brought to their knees by the use of drastic measures, such as the use of the army to clean up rubbish, which, given the widespread support for the strike, would have been a dangerous escalation.

All this is all the more true because after the public sector workers come the

engineering workers. The employers here have offered a mere 3.3%, which is well below inflation. The unions have demanded 9.5%. There is no compulsory arbitration in this sector, which means that the IG-Metall union could call a strike ballot for this week. The warning strikes will spread more or less automatically. The link up of action in this decisive industrial sector, where some industries, such as cars, are still booming with the public sector strike, would have hit the economy hard.

Still other sectors are heading towards a breakdown of wage negotiations, including construction, where the employers have offered 3.5%. The arbitrator here is a Social Democrat, Apel, who is apparently going to come up with a decision similar to that in the public sector. If the

construction employers were to agree to this, it would be a death blow for the government.

Furthermore, if the strike had lasted longer, other issues, such as the privatization plans, would have come into it. The government is currently contemplating the first all-German road plan which will inundate the country with concrete (individual car ownership is predicted to rise by 80% by the year 2000 and the road area by more than 100%). This proves that there is certainly money around; it is a question of what it is to be spent on. A decision by the cabinet not to restrict rises in ministerial salaries to the 5% limit politicized the strike.

All this means that in these weeks West Germany has been hovering and will hover again on the edge of a strike wave unprecedented in its postwar history.

The missing issue

But of course there is one issue that is not being raised: East Germany. The decisive demands here are for wage parity between East and West and a state programme of work creation. The adoption of such demands would mean a decisive politicization of the strike movement. However there has been little sign of such a development so far.

The May 1 celebrations were distinctly feeble this year, although bad weather may have had something to do with this. Even the central meetings, addressed by the heads of the ÖTV, IG-Metall or the central union confederation, the DGB, attracted less than 10,000 people. The trend seen over recent years was confirmed; much of the attendance was made up of foreign colleagues.

There have been a considerable number of strikes and occupations in East Germany in the past few months, which have provided some important initial experiences. They failed, but now there is a situation where the strikes are taking place where they can hurt the German capitalists: in the West. Were there to be East-West solidarity in struggle, this would have a huge political significance, above all in terms of beginning to break down the enormous wall which separates all aspects of the West and East, including the left and the workers' movement.

In any case, it remains to be seen what the implications of Kohl falling in the wake of such a strike wave would be.

One thing that is certain is that the entry of the SPD into government will have a dampening, if not directly strike-breaking effect. ★

7

Resisting rationalization

THE defeat at the big Italian car firm FIAT in the fall of 1980 symbolized the beginning of the retreat of the workers movement for the following decade. This setback dampened militancy in Turin, the "FIAT city", though other centers of major capitalist industrial production in the North like Milan and Brescia experienced important workers' mobilizations around national engineering contract negotiations and the struggle for the defense of wage indexation.

GIGI MALABARBA

TODAY, the bosses are entering a new phase of economic restructuring in a strong position thanks to the growing subordination of the unions and of the left to the capitalist demand that foreign competition be confronted. This situation reflects the weakening of the mechanisms of wage recuperation and the facility of lay-off procedures that have been adopted by the government without opposition. This in turn has favored the shift to the right that has been seen on the social plane as well as on the level of political institutions.

An acceleration of this on all fronts stemmed from the double need to respond to economic integration into the single European market on one hand, and the pressure exerted by some sectors of the bourgeoisie whose privileges accumulated during the speculation boom are now threatened.

The opportunity for the bosses to register a strong financial recovery and at the same time to strike at the bastions of the working class has been provided by the possibility of "liberating" vast areas of industrialized urban space through real estate speculation undertaken by massive groups of public and private Italian capital like Fiat, Pirelli, Montedison or Ansaldo.

The state has massively intervened to facilitate the partial transfer of production to southern regions controlled by the Christian Democracy and the mafia. For their part, the unions accepted exceptions to labor laws and workers in the southern factories were forced to submit to "total quality" schemes.

In fact, the transfer of production and capital often takes the form of expansion into other countries. After the failure of several Italian industrial groups to make inroads into the West European market,

efforts have been made by companies like FIAT to penetrate the East European market while other firms like Olivetti have turned to the Far East.

Sirens of the free market

Unionization is not in a free fall, but the strong attraction of the sirens of the free market of the key centers has been undermining worker militancy. In the General Confederation of Italian Labor (CGIL), collaboration between the Socialist Party and the Democratic Party of the Left (the ex-PCI) is quite close.

At the last congress a national opposition called "Essere Sindacato" (ES — "To be a unionist") was formed with strong rank-and-file support. It managed to obtain representation on leadership bodies.

At the same time some sectors of the workers' vanguard initiated for the first time in the industry an embryonic form of self-management which broke with the union bureaucracy in large factories in Milan, Rome and Naples. The industrial "COBAS", like those which have already occurred in public sector employment and in the services, have a clear class connotation. Though they are still rather limited in scope, they have already played a key role in defensive struggles that have been

abandoned by the unions (the latter have recently signed agreements concerning factory closings). The COBAS mobilized alongside "Essere sindacato" against the accords on the cancellation of the indexation of wages in December 1991.

The demand for union democracy is one of the central points of these workers' initiatives as has been recently demonstrated by the COBAS at Alfa Romeo. Their professed objective is to refound a class unionism on the model of the factory committees of the early 1970s.

Alfa Romeo at Arese, with 13,000 employees, was acquired by FIAT in 1987 without spending a lira (the first installment should be paid to the state in January 1993), essentially to prevent competition from Ford or the Japanese which could injure the traditional monopoly conditions of automobile production in Italy. These developments have also affected the two other enterprises in the Milan area, Autobianchi and Maserati, which will be closed next July.

The Alfa Romeo vanguard

There remains at Alfa an important nucleus of vanguard workers with mass influence that has resisted the thorough restructuring of the previous years. In order to eliminate this grouping, FIAT, following an old pattern, organized a clandestine parallel structure — the so-called "Gladio" — to that of the official leadership, in order to neutralize the most militant workers.

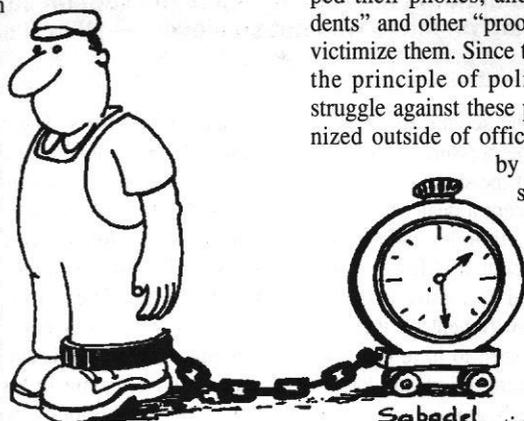
According to the testimony of a part of the former union leadership in the plant, starting in 1987, this body, with the aid of certain sectors of the state apparatus, trailed union militants around the clock, tapped their phones, and fabricated "accidents" and other "proof" that was used to victimize them. Since the unions accepted the principle of political firings, the struggle against these practices was organized outside of official union channels

by the workers themselves with legal and political support coming from outside the plant.

The bitterness of this struggle and the determination of FIAT to "nor-

malize" the situation in the plant has been underlined by the fact that some workers have been fired and re-hired under court order seven times. Fired workers have come to the factory gates, attempted to enter and have organized meetings and occasional strikes.

After several years of struggle within the union this nucleus organized a



COBAS at Alfa Romeo that was elected by 2,000 workers.

It has been recognized as a representative of the workers and has its own offices within the factory. It is a body that has developed a series of initiatives opposed to that of the national union structures — the CGIL, the Confederation of Free Italian Unions (CISL) and the Union of Italian Labor (UIL). It has shown itself capable of organizing plant-wide strikes around wage demands, against lay-offs and political firings.

Over the last few months, some COBAS delegates, a majority of whom have a background in the far left, have,

together with some militants of the ex-PCI, founded a factory section of the Party of Communist Refoundation (PCR). A COBAS leader who had been fired for political reasons was a candidate on the PCR ticket for the Milan district in the April elections. She was elected to parliament thanks to the support of the workers from Alfa Romeo and other factories in the Milan area in spite of the fact that the party did not place her at the head of the list.

This victory constituted a challenge to FIAT's offensive and the basis for an opposition to the bosses' offensive throughout the country. ★

These huge investments do not however meet the economic needs of Andalusia. On the contrary, they will accentuate, directly or indirectly, its most negative aspects by putting our sun and soil on sale and recklessly gambling on mass tourism which can only create precarious jobs around volatile and unsure investments.

The technological park project at La Cartuja will require only an extremely highly qualified workforce and will create very few new jobs. It will on the other hand, mean great profits for multinationals like Fujitsu or Siemens. For the same cost, the basis of an infrastructure could have been developed which would have eliminated the endemic unemployment which Andalusia has suffered from for decades.

A monument to social division

The Expo will obviously not satisfy the region's other social needs either. As the priest Diamantino rightly said, the budget allotted to half a bridge at the Exposition could have eradicated the shantytowns of Andalusia.

The association for the defense of human rights in Andalusia estimates that there are 40,000 uninhabitable dwellings in this region. A glance at the rural zones and the outskirts of the towns gives an idea of the depth of the region's poverty.

The federal government in Madrid and the regional government have deepened the gap between Seville and the rest of Andalusia. In doing so they have confirmed the suspicions that Seville has received the largest slice of the pie.

But the Expo will also have other consequences; behind this luxurious wall lurks the rest of the city and its needs. It will be the population that will have to assume the burden of the municipal taxes that will sharply increase and who will be dispossessed of the public lands stolen from them. It will become more difficult to gain access to housing, and some old projects like that of the Hospital of Aljarafe will be put on the shelf. For how many years will the people of Seville be forced to pay the price of EXPO-92?

The administrative apparatus of Seville will no doubt be reinforced as a result of Expo. Protected by the government and its army of bureaucrats who fly like vultures around prey, a new caste of *senori-*

Expo 92: Selling Spain

THE Universal Exposition at Seville opened its gates on April 20. Millions of pesetas have been invested in this commemoration of the five hundredth anniversary of the "discovery" of America. Why has so much money and effort been devoted to this?

DOCUMENT*

THE government of Andalusia would like people to believe that the Exposition will be a boon to the local economy. At the same time they want to present a "modern" image of the country. "Expo" is therefore presented as a "regional development" initiative. The advertising campaign announcing the event has highlighted these themes with slogans proclaiming "Andalusia opens up to the future".

The Exposition has given rise to a multitude of projects, of which the most important is the City of the Pharaohs perched on the island of Cartuja, which in 1993 will become the "technological city" for the electronic and telecommunication multinationals rather than the amusement park that had been originally planned. No plans have been made for the Exposition's buildings when the event closes on October 12, 1992. It is estimated that the cost of the Exposition's grounds have reached a billion pesetas.

In preparation for "Expo" an entire tourist infrastructure along the coast of Cadiz and Huelva as well as several new hotels in Seville have been built and a

new network of highways connecting Seville and Baza, which will accentuate the administrative role of Seville. The financial cost of these highways has been increased by a growth in accidents and disastrous effects on the environment.

A high-speed train, the TAV (similar to the French TGV) cost a half billion pesetas — a rather capricious expense of doubtful profitability which will only serve the elites. This train will run between Madrid and Seville under the surveillance of 10,000 soldiers of three armies which itself will cost an additional six million pesetas. Its two meter-high

protective wall will destroy natural settings like the Sierra Morena in Malaga.

At the same time the Andalusian railroad network remains obsolete and the government is planning to privatize some of its lines. The elimination of the direct lines between Huelva and Madrid, and Cadix and Madrid as well as the west Andalusian line will force travellers who want to leave Andalusia to take the much more expensive TAV.

The investments that have been made around the Exposition are reinforcing a model of economic development in Andalusia based above all on tourism and intensive agriculture. These tendencies have already begun with the entry of the Spanish State into the European Community (EC), and with the destruction of an important part of Andalusian industry which was already in crisis. The fishing sector is in permanent crisis and the mechanization of intensive farming has led to the near disappearance of agricultural wage labor. All this has led to a sharp rise in unemployment (700,000 Andalusians are out of work) — the highest in the Spanish State and among the highest in Europe.

* This statement is from Accion Alternativa, the Andalusian affiliate of the organization Izquierda Alternativa (Left Alternative), born of the fusion of the former Spanish section of the Fourth International, the LCR and the Communist Movement (MC) — See *International Viewpoint*, no. 218, December 9, 1991.

The shining future?

THOSE passing construction sites in Seville on the morning of April 22 couldn't help but notice freshly painted slogans reading "The Exposition has been forced on us". Two days earlier on Sunday April 20, the city where the Universal Exposition is to be held saw three people wounded by police fire and seventy-two arrested.

By their brutality, the police unmasked the true wishes of the Spanish government: nothing or nobody is to interfere with the spectacle of the Seville "Expo".

ANTONIO FLORES*

Continued from previous page

tos has replaced the old system and aggravated social inequalities.

Expo has brought very little to Seville apart from the restoration of part of the Guadalquivir river. It has above all brought about an enormous speculative boom that has enriched a small minority. Seville has become one of the most expensive cities in the Spanish state. Rents have risen to the point that having a place to live has become a luxury that few can afford.

The mayoralty of Seville, which had been under the control of the ruling Socialist Party (PSOE), is today controlled by the Popular Party of Andalusia, a right wing party that has been one of the key forces behind real estate speculation and the sale of public lands. The old quarters are still left to decay and the poor neighborhoods are in ruins.

Keeping out the "undesirables"

During the six months that the Exposition will be held, the Seville population will be subjected to a major police presence. Penalties against so-called "delinquents" and those who dare to write graffiti will be heavier than usual.

Those considered "marginal" will be swept from the center of town and the



Alameda under the pretext of fighting drug abuse. Nearly a thousand hospital beds will be kept open in case of accidents that might happen at the Expo. Workers in so-called essential services (health, transportation, fire fighting, municipal services and so on) will have no vacation during the next six months.

The Seville Exposition like the celebrations of the five hundredth anniversary of the conquest of America, is a gross publicity stunt aimed at the people of the Spanish State.

The regime wants to show that Spain is finally one of the great Western powers although in fact, it is a second-rate country. It hopes to strengthen Spanish patriotism and to cut across the solidarity between the peoples of Latin America and the poor of the Spanish State. In Andalusia there are 600,000 "poor", 100,000 "indigents" and as many illiterates.

In opposition to these official projects the Exposition must be made the occasion for criticism and rebellion against the plans of the federal and Andalusian governments. It must be the occasion to show our solidarity with the peoples of Latin America and the outcasts of the Spanish state. This corrupt system must be fought. ★

THE fact that those protesting against the Exposition were German and Italian nationals had no importance whatsoever for the government of Felipe Gonzalez. The forty-two foreigners — mostly Germans — arrested in Seville during the week inaugurating the Exposition were expelled from Spanish territory on April 29 under a law on foreigners that up until now had been used to exclude or expel poor immigrants.

For the Spanish government 1992 constitutes a test that must be passed. It must impress on Spanish public opinion a particular view of the country. If the government fails, the image that it has carefully prepared over the last ten years will collapse. They have tried to show that the Spain of bulls, flamenco, and sun has given way to a Spain of foreign investments and technological progress — finally part of the First World. How can the population be made to relate to the windmills of Maastricht? The message is clear: "We are modern, and therefore we must be on the razor's edge of modernity — even if there is an impossible price to pay."

The government has not succeeded in hiding the costs of this operation. The hundreds of billions of pesetas spent on the Barcelona Olympic games, the Seville Exposition and the TGV as well as the naming of Madrid as a cultural capital, is proof of that. The minister of the econo-

* Antonio Flores is a member of the Committee against the Celebrations of the Five Hundredth Anniversary Celebration and spokesman for the Spanish state campaign "500 years of Agression, 500 years of Resistance, For the Emancipation of the Peoples."

my, Carlos Solchaga has already presented the bill: the European convergence plan will among other things reduce unemployment insurance and the duration of its payment in order to eventually recover the current investments.

The celebration of the five hundredth anniversary itself has become of secondary importance in this giant face-lift. The presentation of this image of the Spanish State in relation to Latin America filled an essential role during the first years of the project — demonstrating that the crucial role that Spain can play in a united Europe will be its special access to a market of over 300,000,000 Hispanics. It must be remembered that the purchasing power of the Latin American market is superior to that Africa or Asia and is also attractive to European investors by reason of its low wages.

But the winds have changed with the collapse of the East European regimes. The importance of Latin America has diminished in the face of the supposed larger market of the former "socialist" countries with their superior revenues and more qualified workers. However, the situation has quickly become more complicated than imagined in this part of Europe, especially for a country like Spain which has much less resources to invest than Germany or France.

Thus, Latin America, without being as important as it was at the beginning, has once again become an important target.

The existence of committees against the celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of the conquest has therefore begun to upset the triumphal veneer that the Spanish government has erected.

In December 1990, the Spanish State Committee Against the Five Hundredth Anniversary Celebration was founded with the participation of local committees from throughout the country. It has as its slogan "500 years of aggression, 500 years of resistance, for the emancipation of the peoples". The campaign is focusing on 1992 and is preparing an alternative coun-

ter summit and a popular forum. The first is planned for Madrid at the time of the Second Iberian-American summit. It is attempting to give a platform to voices from Latin American that will certainly not be heard at the official summit. The forum itself will have a popular character.

The Puerto Real summit

From October 9-12, 1992, artists, intellectuals, women, leaders of social movements and indigenous Latin Americans, as well as solidarity activists from the Spanish state and Europe, will gather in the small town of Puerto Real in the Cadiz region to discuss the reality of the problems of Latin America. A majority of the Puerto Real municipal government has lent its support, after organizing an open debate to decide on the character of the town's participation; 17 out of 22 municipal councilors voted in favor of city participation in the event.

Though they have not yet begun, these initiatives have already found an important echo. The majority of letters expressing solidarity with these events have come from individuals and organizations in Latin America and Europe who understand that these counter-celebrations represent solidarity with the Third World in general and Latin America in particular. This message is the antithesis of the official message of the five hundredth anniversary, the Seville Exposition, as well as that of the new capitalist Europe.

Another campaign is underway in the Spanish state under the title "Let's Unmask 1992". Its organizers have launched an appeal to respond to the costs of European unification and to the projects that the Spanish government is preparing in this framework. However coordination of activities against the five hundredth anniversary is, however, limited and the existence of the two committees has already caused confusion.

The April 20 demonstration against the Seville Exposition showed the problems. This demonstration was organized by the

"Let's Unmask 1992" campaign. It was supposed to be held with the participants of an international camp organized by this same committee near Seville. Local pressure including an enormous police presence would have dissuaded the organizations from marching but some of the participants in the camp did not hear about plans to cancel the march and around 400 people marched anyway.

The police version of the events is totally false. They claim that the demonstrators were organized provocateurs who intended to sabotage the inauguration of the Exposition.¹ In any event, the right to demonstrate and protest must not be restricted, certainly not by the police.

A period of lower solidarity

Beyond the Seville incidents there have been difficulties tied to the current situation. We are living in a period of lower solidarity. In a poll conducted in 1991, the majority of people interviewed knew very little about the five hundredth anniversary but were familiar with the Exposition or the Olympic games. Therefore, part of the official message has been absorbed by the population: the five hundredth anniversary is being celebrated by looking to a technological future and turning our backs on a past full only of misery and unhappy legends.

The government and the mainstream parties have made a big effort in this direction. The commemorations of the five hundredth anniversary have become a matter of state. In his Christmas speech King Juan Carlos I made a passing reference to this unhappy past when he said that the "discovery" must be celebrated "without complexes", which of course indicates that such "complexes" really do exist!

In spite of the efforts of the government the mask is beginning to fall and many have seen what is hidden behind it. The bullets fired by the police have contributed to this. The PSOE's convergence plan also allows some of the costs of this project to be perceived. Many in Latin America have for their part denounced for a long time the celebrations of the five hundredth anniversary. During his speech inaugurating the Seville Exposition, Felipe Gonzalez cited the supposed successes of the Exposition and of the government. Latin America which is supposed to be the great protagonist of this event was not mentioned once.

Sooner or later there will be a reaction to this duplicity, cupidity and the repression it inevitably entails. ★

1. See *El Mundo*, April 21, 1992.



The forced cantonization of Bosnia-Herzegovina

ACCORDING to an official provisional estimate published on May 10, 1,320 people have now died since the outbreak of hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BH), while another 6,700 have been wounded. Croatia's President Tudjman and his Serbian counterpart Milosevic want to partition the republic, and since they cannot achieve this aim by peaceful means, they are using soldiers and volunteer militia. The European Community's support for the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ethnic cantons has done nothing to stem the violence — quite the contrary.

CHRISTIAN PROMITZER*

THE antiwar demonstration of tens of thousands on April 6, 1992 in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo was the last attempt to stem the slide to war. The peace movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina was the strongest in the former Yugoslavia, and it was clear from the start that any war there would be very bloody. None of the three ethnic groups, the Serbs, Croats and Muslims, has an absolute majority.

No influential political force supported the demonstrators, on the march one could see old Yugoslav flags with the red star, flags of the Yugoslav League of Communists, dissolved in 1990 and even portraits of Tito. No less symbolic was the end of the demonstration, when the marchers were shot at through the windows of the Holiday Inn by Serb guards. This was the nerve centre of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), under its leader Radovan Karadzic. Afterwards some of the demonstrators occupied the parliament building, initiated a "People's parliament" whose proceedings were televised and set up a 25 person strong Committee of National Salvation, but that was the end of their activities. The following day the demonstrators went home as the war broke out all around them.

Since the struggle broke out in Croatia and the self-appointed leaders of the Serb enclaves there declared the "Autonomous Serbian Republic of Krajina", corresponding aspirations have been expressed for the Serb-populated areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The SDS' strategy is to push forward the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ethnic cantons. The Croatian Demo-

cratic Association (HDZ), an offshoot of Tudjman's ruling party, is pursuing a similar goal with respect to the Croat areas in Western Herzegovina.

Secret talks

The background to these efforts lies in the dependence on the various nationalist elites on their "fatherlands". Already, in the middle of last year, secret talks took place between the Croatian president Franjo Tudjman and his Serb counterpart Slobodan Milosevic concerning agreement on the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina; the cantonization plan would be merely a first step towards partition. The recent negotiations under EC auspices did not come out of the blue.

The Serbs were demanding 70% of the territory and the Croats 35%, leaving the Muslims, who started off opposing both partition and the cantonization plan, with less than nothing. The Muslims ended up supporting the cantonization plan because the EC made such support a condition for the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina — thus apparently providing some resistance to the "worse evil" of partition. However there are hardly any ethnically homogeneous regions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, posing a problem when it comes to dividing it up into ethnic cantons. The only means to overcome this is by big exoduses or forced assimilation of entire communities.

The Serbian regime provoked the destruction of Yugoslavia by its years of playing the nationalist card. When in March last year the regime's critics in Bel-

grade came onto the streets to demand democratization, Milosevic decided to up the stakes. Top priority was now given to the "salvation" of the Serb communities in Croatia and thereafter in BH. However the war with Croatia did not quieten down the protests in Serbia, where the regime remains under the permanent and increasing pressure of the Serb nationalist leaders in Croatia and BH and the federal army.

In order to keep all these forces together, Milosevic is now going for the whole Great Serb programme, which is presented to the world as the "Third Yugoslavia", in which territories torn away from Croatia and BH will be added onto Serbia and Montenegro. In fact, the plan envisaged the whole of BH entering into the new state, but since the Muslims and Croats there can hinder this, the idea is to carve as large a slice out of the territory as possible using the federal army and the battle-hardened volunteers from the Croatian campaign.

Special interests of federal army

The federal army has its own particular interests to pursue in Bosnia-Herzegovina, although these coincide to a considerable extent with those of Milosevic. The army has lost important spheres of operation in Slovenia and Croatia. If it were to lose BH as well, where 100,000 men, about half of its whole manpower, are stationed, its current size would be thrown into question. In the former Yugoslavia, furthermore, BH was the armoury of the military — two thirds of Yugoslavia's military production being concentrated there.

The army brass must hold on to BH as their last bastion outside Serbia — which is bankrupt and cannot hope to finance an army of this size. The army is also fighting to retain its source of supplies, and some of the fighting with Muslim and Croat territorial units in Mostar can be put down to this. On the other hand, it also pretends on occasion to be playing the role of referee, as during the bloodbath in the border town of Zvornik.

Franjo Tudjman has officially recognized BH's independence. At the same time he has offered BH's Croat citizens dual nationality and released members of the Croatian National Guard from BH to take part in the struggles in their homeland. It is clear that the Croat government, just like the Serbian, has been providing money and arms supplies to Croat paramilitaries in BH since the start of this year. It

* This article, dated April 16, 1992, first appeared in the May 1, 1992 issue of *Die Linke*, the journal of the SOAL, the Austrian section of the Fourth International.

is also known that units of the Croatian Defence Forces (HOS), the military wing of the fascist party of Dobroslav Paragas, have been operating in Western Herzegovina. In the eventuality of BH breaking up, the Zagreb regime might try to annex this region. The struggle for Kupres, which is just outside the Croat region, and represents one of the most important strategic positions for all parties, is to do with marking out the Croatian zone of influence.

Given the external influences, can one talk of BH having a political life of its own? Some insight into this can be gained from the first free elections in 1990, in which the reform Communists suffered a defeat heavier than in any other of Yugoslavia's constituent republics. One of the reasons for this was the "Agrokomerc" financial and corruption scandal, Yugoslavia's biggest, which resulted in thousands of lost jobs. The rewards were reaped by anti-Communist, nationalist parties based on the three ethnic groups.

The largest number of parliamentary seats fell to the Muslim Party of Democratic Action of Alija Izetbegovic, the prime minister. In second place was the Serbian SDS and then the Croat HDZ. Since no party had an absolute majority, the three formed a grand coalition, operating a proportional system of power sharing.

But national aspirations dominated the political discussion and burning economic and social questions went unaddressed. The Croat and Serb parties remained faithful to the interests of their external sponsors. Since the Muslim party had none, Izetbegovic sought contacts in the Muslim world, from where he also received money. Nevertheless, the Bosnian Muslims have been left essentially to their own devices.

The notion of "Muslim" as an ethnic category is a product of Tito's desire to create a buffer nation between the Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs. There has also been an unmistakable renaissance of Islamic feeling which has not as yet taken a fundamentalist direction. Izetbegovic stood in the elections under the slogan "Tradition and Tolerance" and seemed in favour of a multi-ethnic bourgeois republic.

The rebirth of Serb and Croat nationalism has to be seen in connection with events in the "mother" republics. At the same time, the legacy of the Croat fascist state of 1941-45, which occupied BH, has never been critically appraised and the negative mutual labelling of Croats and Serbs has now revived.

The ideological vacuum and the profound economic crisis have also made the ground fertile for nationalism.

Shaky economic situation

The break-up of Yugoslavia and the obstacles to trade created by the war have left BH, which is dependent on Croatia and Serbia for food, in a very precarious economic situation. In March this year, inflation reached 45%, wages slumped and unemployment reached 30%. The internal political fragmentation means that Bosnia has no real political direction. The attitude of the Bosnian government, and especially of the Muslim party, as to whether to prefer federation, confederation or independence, was first of all dependent on that changing constellation of forces in the Yugoslav arena.

After Slovenia and Croatia had withdrawn from Yugoslavia, BH had to reach a decision. Slovenia had successfully resis-



ted the military intervention and in Croatia there was war. BH, and in particular the Muslim party, tried to remain neutral. For Izetbegovic, confederation was seen as the only way to keep BH out of the whirlpool of national conflicts. Given the removal of Croatia as the only real counterweight to Serbia, however, there were only two remaining options for BH: entry into a Serb dominated Yugoslav Federation, with a corresponding rise of the influence of the Serb nationalist party in BH, or independence.

This meant accepting the cantonization demanded by the EC, which had been called in to mediate. From this point on it becomes difficult to follow the motives of the various political forces and personalities — there are too many variables at work.

If Izetbegovic were to choose independence, he could look to the HDZ as a possible, if somewhat unreliable, coalition partner. This, however, would be a provocation to the SDS. Already on January 9, 1992, the SDS floated the idea of a "Serb Republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina" as its riposte to the Bosnian parliament's sove-

reignty declaration, which it voted against. The Muslim leader was hoping at that time to rein in the SDS through the weight of the referendum on independence and EC recognition. However in fact all that happened was a confirmation of the status quo: Muslims and Croats voted for independence, while the Serbs hardly voted at all. Only through a loss of face could Izetbegovic or Karadzic back off.

On April 7, 1992, just after the referendum, the Republic of the Serbs of Bosnia-Herzegovina was proclaimed on territory controlled by Serb militia from Croatia and Serb units of the Bosnian territorial defence force.

A day later the government of Croats and Muslims, which was rapidly losing control of more and more territory, announced a state of emergency and took control of the Bosnian territorial defence force which will form the core of a new regular Bosnian army.

As in Croatia, so in BH; the EC and United Nations have become protagonists of the carnage. The EC's enthusiasm for cantonization shows their incomprehension of the situation. Cantonization is now taking place through war, massacre, pillage and the mass flight of hundreds of thousands.

A symptomatic blunder by the EC was the choice by the foreign ministers conference of April 6 to announce the recognition of BH. It was on the morning of April 6, 1941 that Hitler's troops occupied Yugoslavia; nor could anyone believe, knowing what had happened in Croatia, that the ceasefire called for April 13 would last more than a few minutes.

The priorities of the UN are also quite clear. The American elections are not going to be won in the Balkans, when Libya beckons. Nonetheless, in recent days a change in the US attitude to Yugoslavia can be detected. As always the suffering people in BH await relief from UN troops.

And they will indeed arrive, since the first step has already been accomplished: at the time of writing the UNPRO-For-Troops are now positioned in Croat Krajina and Slavonia with their logistical centre in Sarajevo. However, the UN troops will do nothing until after the "cantonization" of BH is complete.

Then — tens of thousands of lives later — it will move in to ensure the security of Serb and Croat zones of influence and the establishment of a Muslim state in whatever remains. The peace movement has hardly been able to respond; it seems as if the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina will become another part of the everyday reality of our times. ★



THE straw which broke the back of the American Dream is well-known; a jury of 14, all white except for one Hispanic-American and one Asian, acquitted the four white officers of the Los Angeles police department responsible for the savage beating of Rodney King, a 24-year old Black, which the whole country had been able to watch on television thanks to a video made by a passer-by.

But how did a video lead to a social eruption? According to President Bush: "the verdict produced in all of us a profound feeling of frustration and anguish. Respect for law and for legal procedures remains important." Meanwhile the Democratic front-runner for his party's presidential candidacy, Bill Clinton insisted that "North Americans must today appeal for tolerance, justice and mutual respect for all the victims of society's crimes. At a time of misfortunes and injustices, the United States must stay united or run the risk of further division." For Jesse Jackson "we Blacks, we feel humiliated". The young Blacks and Hispanics who took to the streets were simply out for vengeance.

The American Dream

During the Second World War Southern California, with Los Angeles at its centre, was transformed into the last frontier of the American Dream. The rapid construction of a war industry to back up the attacks on Japan created millions of jobs and large-scale immigration of white industrial workers from the East Coast and of Blacks fleeing the ghettos, in an overall climate of national endeavor, racial integration and equality of opportunity. However, when the war ended the wind changed direction.

The first to notice the change was LA

The second civil war

MORE than 60 dead, 2,100 seriously wounded, more than 4,000 arrests and about \$600m in material losses; this was the official balance sheet of the four days of rioting in Los Angeles and its knock-on effects in other cities such as San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Omaha, Dallas, Atlanta, and Philadelphia.

Beneath these cold figures lies the simmering volcano of what in 1969 the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence called the Second Civil War.

GUSTAVO BUSTER

police chief Parker, who, at the start of the 1950s, modernized and reformed the LAPD to prepare it for its new task: "It is estimated that by 1970 45% of the metropolitan zone of Los Angeles will be inhabited by Blacks. If you want your houses and families to be protected... you will need a powerful Police Department. If this is not the case, you will have to put your trust in God".

Unbridled racism was added on to the witch hunt against trade unionists and Reds. An alliance was formed between industrial and farming interests to build a new port on the West Coast to compete with San Francisco, where the unions were strong. At the same time the old Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie, led by General Otis and the *Los Angeles Times*, engaged in a financial battle with the new Jewish bourgeoisie for control of the property growth sectors. These were situated along the Wildshire and Santa Monica Boulevards to the center-south and east of the city where the Black and Hispanic minorities were concentrated, and they became transformed into happy hunting grounds for the LAPD.

The Saved and the Damned

Parker's basic idea was that, while there were (white) delinquents who could be reformed using shock therapy, there were other (Black and Hispanic) criminals destined in the best of cases to pass their lives in prison. When the first signs of a radicalization of Blacks appeared, expressed through the Nation of Islam, Chief Parker did not hesitate to attack a mosque in April 1962, leaving one dead and six wounded. This was the first step towards the Watts rebellion.

After the postwar restructuring, unemployment among Blacks had reached 30% in 1964, while civil rights activists were

attacked in the streets by young whites. On August 11, 1965, the LAPD arrested and beat up a Black driver. Chief Parker then ordered a state of emergency in the Watts neighbourhood. There followed a social explosion with generalized resistance by the Black population, who, at the cost of 33 lives, for the first time drove the LAPD out of their neighbourhood.

In the course of this struggle, a solid alliance was formed between several urban gangs and tribes who are still remembered to this day. The legendary Slausons, Gladiators and Parking Lot provided many of the leaders for the Black Panthers and a whole generation of militant Black Power activists who came to the fore during the "long hot summers" of the late 1960s, which blazed from Detroit and Chicago in 1967 to the murder of Martin Luther King and the Washington conflagration of 1968.

From Vietnam to Robocop

At the start of the 1970s the anti-public disorder division of the LAPD and the FBI's Operation Cointelpro wiped out the leaders of the Black Panthers, using for the first time in their assault on the Panthers' central-south office special police commando units (SWAT), formed on the basis of experience in the Vietnam War. This was the height of the conflict on the streets between the LAPD and the minorities.

The void which appeared after the defeat of the Black movement was filled by the Crips (whose name means, apparently, "Continuing Revolution in Progress") a federation of Black gangs founded by Raymond Washington, an admirer of the Black Panthers who had been too young to join them.

During the Monrovia revolt of 1972, and during the struggle for school integra-

tion in 1977-78, the Crips played a social role, but with the appearance of crack and the struggle for control over its supply, they turned into a mafia opposed to the Bloods, another defensive alliance of Black gangs in the neighbourhoods of the central south periphery of the city.

The defeat of the radical wing of the Black liberation movement took place at the same time as the emergence of a broad reformist alliance of Black civil rights leaders, white liberals with a background in the anti-Vietnam War movement and the city's Jewish bourgeoisie, which carried Tom Bradley into the mayor's office. Meanwhile the recession of the 1970s saw the restructuring of the Californian economy, which became integrated into the Pacific region; much of industry disappeared to be replaced by a huge service and research sector.

The social map became even more complex with the development of a "bourgeoisie of color" and a layer of Blacks on the municipal payroll, at a time when 50% of Blacks and Hispanics were unemployed. These latter were left out of the credit boom of the 1980s since property speculation never reached their neighbourhoods, isolated from the white belt by segregationist rules and LAPD harassment.

The two thirds society

This permanent social and economic degradation, aggravated under Reagan, has been revealed to the world in recent days by a press which has suddenly rediscovered the Black ghettos and Hispanic neighbourhoods where 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. The theory of the "two thirds society" becomes quite tangible when you realize that there are three times as many Blacks in prison as at university and that one in five dies violently before the age of 25.

Like thousands of Latin American peasants, the Crips and the Bloods of Los Angeles have discovered that their only role in the new international division of labour is participation in the drugs traffic. Between 1985 and 1987 the monetary mass of the local branch of the federal reserve went up by 2,300%, reaching \$3.8bn, almost all of it attributable to cocaine.

This immense underground economy represents the only hope of escaping poverty for many thousands of young people, who are organized into some 230 Black and Hispanic gangs and some 81 Asiatic gangs.

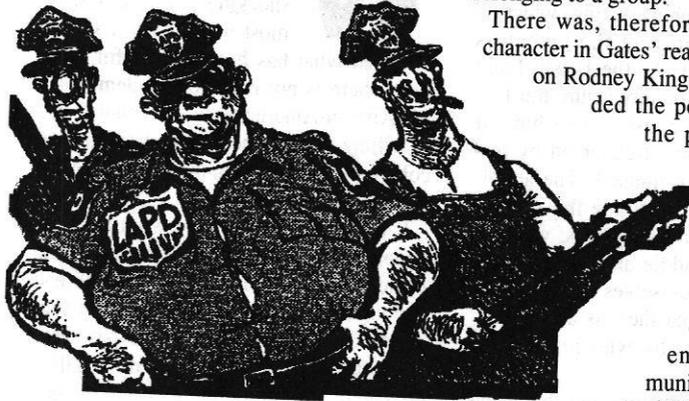
In response to the social decomposition and general criminalization of ethnic minorities — who will become the majority in the city by the start of the 21st century — the LAPD underwent a new reorganization in the 1980s under Chief Gates,

former driver to Chief Parker. Thus, if the Watts rebellion was the work of Parker, the recent explosion owed much to the tireless efforts of Chief Daryl Gates.

The nomination of Gates as police chief, which took place under the Bradley administration in 1978, has allowed the citizens of Los Angeles to relive the Vietnam War in their own neighbourhoods.

The spiral of violence

The spiral of violence, which began with the official justification of the murder of a 39-year old widow, Eulia Love, in 1979, continued with the excusing of the death of several young Blacks in police custody at the start of the 1980s; Gates put forward the theory that the anatomy of



Blacks made them more likely than others to die from the co-called "choke hold".

Further milestones were the police charges at the Los Angeles Street Scene Festival in 1986 and Halloween in 1988, and, finally, "Operation Hammer".

This involved interrogations and destruction and the establishment of "strategic hamlets" — districts which were systematically patrolled by 400 police who stopped and interrogated anyone suspected of belonging to the youth gangs. The police searched houses suspected of sheltering people "in the course of committing a crime". These districts were then sealed off — only those who lived there were permitted to enter after passing a police check. In two years, Operation Hammer led to 50,000 arrests, of which a mere 10% were found guilty of any crime.

The LAPD disposes of the most sophisticated electronic surveillance system on the planet, including 50 military helicopters carrying out permanent controls who fly more hours over Los Angeles than does the British army in Belfast, as well as a range of elite commando units — since 1988 authorized to use explosive bullets, prohibited by the Geneva Convention — who carry out secret operations. A huge private security market has also developed with more than 75,000 poorly trained vigi-

lantes on patrol.

This development has been made possible by the political support of right-thinking members of society. In 1989 Chief Gates organized the capture of a house in a ghetto by a SWAT team to show Nancy Reagan how it was done.

The demonization of youth and the minorities has been supported by the reformist leaders of the 1960s generation, who, powerless in the face of economic crisis, the crack economy and the gangs have been unable to come up with anything other than police repression. The Democratic prosecutor Hahn has been among the most zealous — in 1987 he disinterred an anti-worker law from 1919, the "act against criminal unionism", to allow the sentencing of youths simply for belonging to a group.

There was, therefore, nothing out of character in Gates' reaction to the assault on Rodney King. At first he defended the police reaction, on the pretext that King was resisting arrest and had tried to get away in his car. Even faced with the outcry from the entire Black community, which had forced Mayor Bradley to complain, Gates continued

to defend the LAPD's actions up until the trial and acquittal of the four officers.

It took four days of rioting and more than 60 deaths to budge Gates.

Los Angeles' history of systematic social conflict is reflected in the topography of the city. Every visitor sees it and it is reflected in many police or apocalyptic films, the best of which is perhaps *Grand Canyon*.

At the end of the 19th century, Frederick Lam Olsted sought to avoid social polarization, through the building of public parks, promenades, big avenues and museums to create an inter-class landscape.

In the new California of the Second World War the beaches, cinemas, leisure parks and yet more grand avenues, full of young people in their cars, had the same social objective.

However, from the 1970s onwards the trend has been towards the fortress city. Segregation reigns between neighbourhoods, drawing up lists of rules for the neighbors to maintain speculative housing prices — the middle class is thus increasingly forced to mortgage itself to finance its lifestyle. The old struggle between Downtown and Beverly Hills, between the Anglo-Saxon and the Jewish bourgeoisie, has been resolved by an alliance, reinfor-

ced by massive buying up of buildings by Japanese enterprises, to create a buffer zone between the center-south and the east — the best example of this is Bunker Hill.

The architecture of middle class paranoia

The architect of the moment is Frank Gehry. In the Samuel Goldwyn Centre he has built in Hollywood, massive walls support iron doors with a panoply of electronic surveillance devices. It is no accident that one of Gehry's recent constructions has been the US Embassy in Damascus.

The city is closing in on itself in guarded air-conditioned industrial centres where the clients are listed according to their purchasing power. The paroxysm is reached with the public seating, which is semi-circular to prevent the homeless from sleeping on it. As the Urban Land review explains: "The city centre must be conceived so that the visitor feels himself in an attractive place, frequented by respectable people like himself. The activities on offer will determine the type of people who walk in its avenues; we have to work so that middle and high income residents install themselves in the neighboring zones, so that there is a high percentage of passers-by who respect the law".

The social infrastructure and the shape of the city — its medical services, but also the whole network of small grocery stores — have little by little disappeared. After the Watts rebellion all the big supermarket chains pulled out of the center-south. The void was filled by small shops controlled by South Koreans, isolated in the middle of the Black ghettos, often selling at high prices. They are also often involved in small-scale lending.

They were the target of popular frustration in these riots and defended themselves against the youth with guns. Apart from the South Koreans, the only other person to return to the ghettos is the promoter Alexander Haagen, who, using municipal subsidies, has developed a new concept in shopping centres, the King Center Watts, inspired by Jeremy Bentham's panopticon prison: this is a circular edifice closed to the outside and internally monitored from a central tower.

The social explosion provoked by the King case shocked the United States, although the basic economic figures and underlying social situation were well-known. The presidential campaign is being carried out against a background feeling that the American Dream is evaporating and a saviour must be found. But it is one thing to know figures and another to look on at a rebellion with thousands of young people in the streets, which it took

The fire this time

OUTRAGE was the reaction throughout Los Angeles as many Angelenos struggled with the reality: the four Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) officers who the world witnessed brutally beating up Black motorist Rodney King on March 2, 1991 had been acquitted by a white suburban jury on all but one charge of excessive force and officer misconduct on Wednesday April 29, 1992.

DOLORES TREVISO

WHILE to many whites the not guilty verdict was shocking to the senses, for most non-whites it simply affirmed what has been known for some time: there is not even formal democracy for African-Americans in the country that is willing to spill the blood of soldiers of color on foreign soils in the name of democracy.

It is well understood by working class people of color that the "democracy" the United States is so ready to kill for abroad is not guaranteed at home for a large segment of society. Indeed, in the past year alone, four minority youth were "legally" murdered, shot in the back that is, by law enforcement agencies in the African American and Latino communities in the County of Los Angeles. Countless other members of minorities are stopped, searched and harassed, often illegally, but always with the blessing of the state which has declared a war on drugs — in fact a battle cry in the war against minority youth.

Under the guise of ridding the streets of drugs and crimes, the state can suspend many of the judicial rights of individuals

— individuals, it should be emphasized who are invariably working class boys of color. The state can, for example, legally shoot an unarmed 15 year old Mexican American boy in the back, or a mentally retarded Black youth lying face down on the pavement, if the officers in their "line of duty" deem the situation to be "life threatening". These are the scenes in some of the cases of officer murder last summer.

Where is the justice?

The growing threat of legal violence against minorities by the police and the unwillingness of the state to check the most extreme actions of its representatives has publicly underlined the question that Black and Brown mothers have long been asking — where is the justice?

The verdict that so shocked the nation came as no surprise to the African-American community, still angered by a case in which a white judge sentenced a Korean merchant, captured on video shooting 13 year old Latasha Harlins in the back, to a mere six months probation. In both these cases, separated by a time span of six

16,000 police and soldiers to suppress — like a rerun of the invasion of Panama.

The growing dualization of the economy and immigration have created a Latin America in the heart of the United States, which expresses itself, in the absence of other means, by uprisings of the kind seen in several Latin American cities recently.

It is not yet clear what the impact of these events will be on the forthcoming presidential elections. But, given the fact that the poor tend not to be registered to vote, we will probably see a wave of law-and-order reaction among conservative whites.

But in any case neither of the parties is proposing anything that resembles the Keynesian programmes of Kennedy's new frontier and Carter's "war on poverty".

Bush and Clinton have zero credibility in the ghettos and neighbourhoods; the social transmission belts which guaranteed the promises of politicians some kind of a hearing have disappeared in the 1980s. Furthermore, unlike in the 1960s, the crack economy has created a cultural void which facilitates violent explosions and at the same time makes it more difficult to articulate demands politically.

The Watts rebellion gave rise to the Black Panthers. We do not yet know what will result from Los Angeles. However it is clear that it is becoming increasingly difficult to govern the United States. The central pillar of the New World Order is showing big cracks. ★

months, it was obvious that if the racial line up had been reversed, the white courts would have found in favor of the victims.

This juridical double standard stems from the fact that the state has steadily and systematically criminalized the African American and Latino communities of this country and recognizes only one criminal: the Black/Brown male. The statistics are indeed revealing: fully 46% of African Americans and 12.6% of Latinos compose the population of state and federal prisons. Indeed, Black males in the United States are incarcerated at a rate four times that of Black males in South Africa. As many as 25% of Black men between the ages of 20 and 29 are under the control of the criminal justice system. These figures, moreover, have little to do with increasing crime. In fact, while the crime rate has dropped by 3.5% since 1980, the prison population has doubled in the same period.

Thus the violence of the "dark masses" that the world has witnessed as a response to the racial injustice of the King verdict, the violence that has claimed 58 lives and caused 2,383 injuries, the violence that set ablaze 5,383 structures, has been matched by a far more powerful violence on the part of the state.

Illegal mass arrests

By the Monday following the King verdict the state could rest assured that the City of Angels was pacified and that it was to "return to work". This pacification was made possible by the incarceration, very often illegally, of some 14,000 people, picked up en masse at peaceful political demonstrations and most without the possibility of what was until May 5 the right to a speedy arraignment.

And after many of those who are currently detained get released (now, legally, as long as seven days after their arrest), their voice will have been silenced and their form of political protest crushed by the militarization of the city. Over 12,000 federal troops, composed of "Desert Storm" trained national guardsmen, marines and others, occupy posts in those parts of Los Angeles that other white Angelenos have only read about.

Indeed, so severe and yet so hidden has been the state's response that the media has totally failed to report the sweeps of at



least a couple of thousand Mexicano and Central-American immigrants by *la migra*, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), deployed in Los Angeles as part of the national troops sent in by Bush.

In essence, INS agents were strategically placed in Latino communities where they would be free to round up and rough up non-English speaking "illegals". But just as no official reports have emerged about the deportation of 2,000 immigrants captured by INS agents through invasions of apartments and the like, the local police reluctantly admits only to having turned over 263 of the 1,044 "illegal immigrants" currently held for riot and related activities to the the INS. The secrecy of the local police stems in part from the fact that turning over these undocumented individuals to the immigration officials violates police department policy.

The international camera

While this wave of quasi-legal state violence was underway, the international camera was focussed on what appeared on the surface to be indiscriminate acts of looting and arson by the Black and Brown masses. But in fact most of these incidents were by no means as arbitrary as they were presented in the media. On the contrary many of the acts of arson followed a pattern dictated by the politics of race. While Korean owned liquor stores and Koreatown as a whole were targeted by the youth engaged in arson, some of the Black and Latino owned small businesses were spared, and for definite racial reasons: the Black and Latino owners had posted signs on their small shops that read "Black owned" or "Spanish owned".

The reasons for the targeting of Korean

owned establishments are numerous and complicated but suffice it to say that the parasitic relationship petty merchants have, of economic necessity, with the members of their "host" community, is under most circumstances experienced and understood through the prism of racial difference. In the United States these differences are seen as matters of color and race and so what are cultural clashes in the context of an exploitative economic relationship are mutually understood as race relations.

The looting, meanwhile, obviously has economic origins. The severe economic deprivation of the inner city, the fact that the majority of Black and Latino adults that live in it are either unemployed, under-employed or simply excluded from the labor force explains why the masses of the inner city — young and old, male and female — participated in the widespread act of taking commodities from the local merchants. These commodities ranged from high-priced status symbols such as Reebok shoes (priced at \$150 per pair) and high tech CDs to basic necessities such as milk and cereal.

Crimes against property

While the capitalists were shocked by the magnitude of these "crimes against property", these same capitalists, both through direct economic means and through the state, have pillaged and looted this community for years. The capitalist assault on the working class, primarily through the restructuring of the economy, has hit the African-American community the hardest. According to sociologist William Julius Wilson, "as late as 1974, 48% of all Black males aged 20-24 were working as semiskilled machine operators or in craft positions that paid enough to support themselves and their families. By 1986, only 25% of that group of Black males worked in such jobs, while the others were forced to take the most low-paying positions or go unemployed" (*LA Times*, May 6, 1992).

At the same time the state has cut back on all social spending on health, education and welfare, while at the same time reducing all property and income taxes for business and the wealthy.

The net effect has been a doubling in the gap between rich and poor in the last 15 years. The divisions of society into two camps of haves and have-nots has concen-

No Contest

AFTER more than six months of turmoil and strikes in the farm implement and construction equipment industry, provoked and sustained by the anti-union strategy of Caterpillar Inc., the giant manufacturer of heavy construction machinery, 12,600 members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) who had been on strike for months and had refused Caterpillar's "final offer" were sent back to work on April 14 by UAW negotiators without a union contract and under conditions dictated by the company.

FRANK LOVELL

THIS precipitate decision by top UAW officials sent shock waves through other AFL-CIO unions and stirred resentment in the ranks of the strikers. Even Caterpillar management at the factory level seemed surprised and claimed to be unprepared by the sudden turn of events.

This came less than one month after UAW president Owen Bieber promised a mass rally of 20,000 strikers and supporters in Peoria, Illinois, at the headquarters of Caterpillar, that the international union with all its resources would stand firmly in support of the strike until victory, for as long as it takes.

The deal was done behind closed doors at the insistence of a US government mediator, Bernard Delury, who expressed satisfaction with the outcome.

trated people of color in the camp of the have-nots.

Faced with overcrowded schools and a declining quality of education, over 50% of Black and Latino youth drop out before the completion of high school. In an economy that is more and more dependent on a highly educated labor force, Julius Wilson's pronouncement that there is "no future" for these youth is unquestionable. The events of the past week have suddenly made it impossible for the ruling class and the state to ignore this part of the population. And yet, in a period of severe recession, it is very unlikely that the revenues sufficient to rebuild these communities and to improve general conditions will be forthcoming. In fact, Bush has already blamed the riots on the social welfare program of the Great Society of the 1960s.

For this reason it is all the more necessary for the left to attempt to organize a broad movement which would unite those forces outside the communities of color with forces from within who are struggling

"It feels good when you can get 12,000 men and women back to work," he said. Delury is director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and personally interceded in this situation. In his capacity as director he carried out his duty to the Bush administration. He said it was necessary to bring such an important union and major manufacturer together and avoid a showdown. It is, of course, especially necessary for Bush in this year of the general election. Negotiations are scheduled to continue under Delury's supervision. "We'll take it step by step," he said. There is as yet no announcement of the next step.

Chief negotiator for the UAW, Bill Casstevens, implied that the strikers had gained a breathing spell after long months on the picket line. He said the union retains the right to resume the

to reinstate social welfare programs, education, health care and above all, jobs. Certainly in the aftermath of the revolt the militarization of the city has had a dampening effect on more organized political mobilization, but the process of coalition building is already underway.

Among the positive effects of this revolt is the heightened awareness of the need for unity in a community that has been torn apart by fratricidal gang warfare for the last ten years. In the middle of the revolt the largest African-American gangs called a truce which they announced on the walls of the city with slogans like "Crips and Bloods together forever". For the moment these groups came together for the stated purpose of defending their communities against police abuse. Both they and the state have felt the power of this most despised and wretched part of society and their threat remains emblazoned on the minds of all those who witnessed these events: No Justice, no Peace! ★

strike if negotiations fail to produce a satisfactory settlement. He said the union seeks to improve the package offered by Caterpillar but made no mention of the UAW's traditional position for industry-wide pattern bargaining, which was rejected by Caterpillar after a satisfactory UAW agreement was reached last November with Deere & Co., manufacturers of farm machinery.

This was the issue used by Caterpillar initially to break off negotiations and unilaterally impose job reclassification and revised shop rules at all its factory sites. Casstevens is UAW secretary-treasurer, one of the union's two top officers.

UAW Local 974 in East Peoria represents 9,000 Caterpillar strikers who received the back-to-work order from their union officials. Jerry Brown is president of Local 974. Other members of the local first learned that the strike was called off when it was announced on public radio early in the morning. Unlike other members who earn their living in Caterpillar plants instead of working for the union, Brown quickly figured out that the strike at that point had been a success. At least he knew that Casstevens and other top officials would want him to say that the strike succeeded.

He was quoted as saying that the membership showed that it could stand together and stand up against the corporation. He said, "We're going to continue to negotiate. Anything that they do that were not happy with will be an issue on the bargaining table." He added that the union would never ask its members "to commit economic suicide," according to reports at the time.

Rank-and-file anger

These rationalizations of what happened and the guarded references to further developments by union officials were in stark contrast to the anger, disbelief and frustration of the strikers who tried to return to work as directed.

As things turned out Caterpillar management had different ideas. Although company and union negotiators had agreed under pressure of the federal mediator that the company would not hire replacement workers (scabs) and that the strikers would return to their jobs the following day, plant managers stood at the gates on the morning of April 15 to turn the strikers away. Management said there had been some misunderstanding. A company representative announced: "The events of the last day were completely unexpected. We have been operating differently during the strike, with 4,000 management workers. We can't just absorb

12,000 people in a matter of a few hours."

In a matter of 24 hours this announcement was revised. The company began hiring back all its former employees the following day. A Caterpillar group president, Gerrard Flaherty, said "We have invited back every striking hourly employee in good standing." He added that some were not "in good standing" — less than ten, he said — because of their conduct on the picket lines during the strike. Thus the corporation asserted its right to hire and fire as it chooses. At a news conference during the day senior executives announced that Caterpillar would reduce its workforce by 1,350.

Returning workers at the main Caterpillar manufacturing facilities in East Peoria knew what to expect. A precedent had been set. Caterpillar is joint owner (with its Japanese competitor, Komatsu) of the Komatsu Dresser company which operates two plants in Libertyville and Broadview, towns in northeast Illinois, not far from Peoria which is in central Illinois. These are small plants with less than 500 employees total.

Last November, when agreement with Deere & Co. was ratified, the UAW members at Komatsu Dresser walked out because they were denied the same terms. Their strike lasted two days and was not authorized by UAW international officials. The strikers returned to work under a company-dictated contract, tentatively accepted by the union.

Rights and benefits slashed

Workers presently employed at Komatsu Dresser plants are reclassified and paid \$4.00 per hour less than before their walkout. Seniority rights of workers recalled from layoff are subject to company reinterpretation. Pension benefits have been slashed from \$1,600 per month to \$383 for retirees with 30 years seniority. Casstevens, who is in charge of UAW negotiations with both Caterpillar and Komatsu Dresser, says he intends to go after Komatsu Dresser "as soon as the Caterpillar situation is negotiated."

In truth, Caterpillar's anti-labor policy covers both companies and is designed to destroy union effectiveness in both. With all workers back on the job there is no rush on the part of Caterpillar or the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to resume negotiations. Without negotiations and no strike there is nothing to mediate or conciliate.

Back in Detroit at Solidarity House, UAW international headquarters, President Owen Bieber said a resumption of strike action is not excluded, but he gave no indication of preparations for such an eventuality. His second in command, Casstevens, outlined plans to pressure Caterpillar through a worldwide public relations campaign and through charges of unfair labor practices filed with the National Labor Relations Board.

He explained that if the board upheld the charges Caterpillar will be restrained from hiring replacement workers (scabs). He hinted at a possible in-plant shutdown. "We're going to tell workers to only do what they need to do to protect their jobs," he said. Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO lobby in Washington continues to seek support for legislation, pending in the US Senate that will ban the permanent replacement of strikers.

No one slightly acquainted with US politics expects the present Congress to pass favorable labor legislation, and everyone knows that if it did President Bush would veto it. There is little prospect for a favorable settlement for Caterpillar workers as matters now stand. What appeared to be shaping up as a test of strength between company and union, with the union having a slight edge because of growing worker militancy and general political discontent in the country, suddenly turned to defeat when the top UAW leadership gave up without a struggle.

Militant phrases

This leadership often speaks confidently in militant phrases but auto workers have learned over the years that

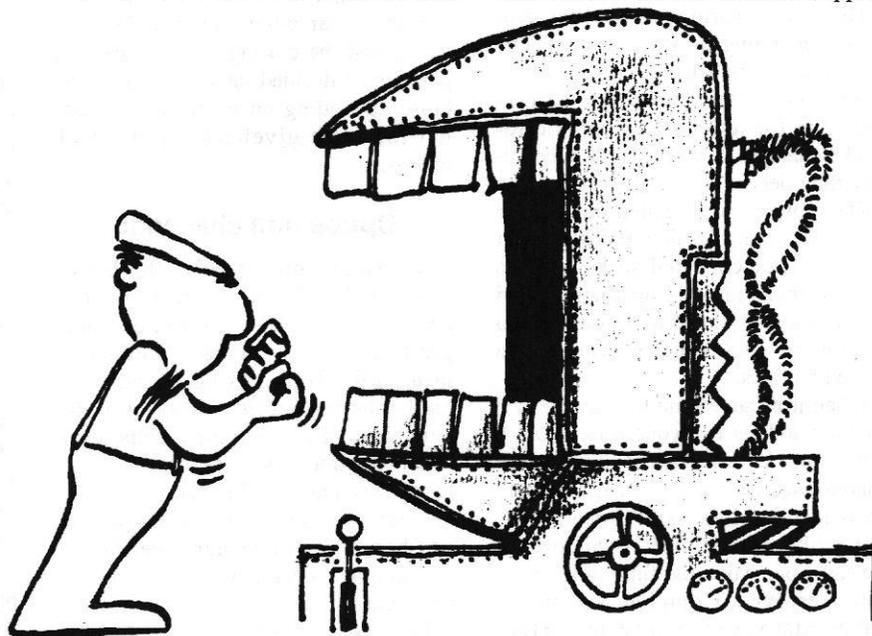
their actions belie their words. The UAW is a thoroughly bureaucratized union. It has a "clean" reputation. Its officials are not connected to the mob like some Teamster officials before the recent housecleaning. But in the UAW officials are paid handsome expenses. They live and think more like middle-level plant executives than the workers they are supposed to represent.

They are not arbitrarily appointed to their comfortable positions but are required to work their way up from shop steward to local union president and from there on up through the rings of the bureaucratic ladder. Regional directors, vice presidents, and the two top executive officers are re-elected at union conventions by duly elected delegates, the majority being aspiring union officials augmented by staff members on the union payroll. This is a self-perpetuating system.

The family gathering

Since the time when Walter Reuther was UAW president in the 1950's and 1960's until very recently, UAW conventions have been more like family gatherings than decision-making bodies. Throughout the 1970's and most of the '80's UAW conventions ratified decisions previously made and acted upon. The top officialdom in Reuther's time began to refer to itself as "the family," and collected substantial slush funds, secretly known as "the flower fund," to insure protection of the family and the careful selection of members or potential members of the family. Those who became members were assured tenure.

In the life of the UAW there was never a time without debate and opposi-



tion to the top officialdom, especially at the local level. This was encouraged as part of the necessary training of future bureaucrats. Beginning as shop stewards' union members learned to conduct negotiations with management and were trained to resolve grievances through compromise. Management representatives contributed to this training. Union-management collaboration was accepted on both sides throughout most of the post-world war II years as essential to worker morale and efficient factory production.

This arrangement satisfied both sides as long as industry was expanding and the national economy prospered. Employers could afford small concessions, if they did not interfere with big profits, in exchange for a satisfied and docile workforce. But this came to an end in the mid-1970s when the economy began to slump and multinational corporations were formed to seek sources of cheap labor and expanding markets. The labor policy of big business in the U.S. shifted from collaboration with unions to what the UAW president at the time, Douglas Fraser, characterized as class war. And the government's labor policy shifted accordingly.

Living in the past

The present UAW officials crawled to the bureaucratic top in the time of labor-management collaboration. They don't know anything else. Their only experience has been at the bargaining table with management or in strikes that were called only to allow negotiations to proceed to a pre-arranged conclusion. There were many such strikes in the 1950's and 1960's, some of several months and others for only a few weeks.

There were various compelling reasons, depending on the particular circumstances. In some years the auto companies had large inventories or needed time for retooling to prepare for model changes. A strike would accommodate their needs.

The workers were called out but the union saw to it that they did not suffer unduly. They collected strike benefits plus unemployment compensation. And if they chose to do so they could find a job on the side, usually available to skilled workers.

When it became time to sign the new contract and get everyone back to work a final week of negotiations would be announced with much fanfare. The daily press reported how skillful negotiators worked far into the night, right down to the last hour when the final differences were resolved. Company and union representatives then appeared before

news cameras, shook hands smiling, each announcing victory while commending his (no women ever present) counterpart. In these strikes everybody won, nobody suffered. It was all part of the system.

Some strikes, usually of shorter duration, were agreed to by the negotiators "so the workers could blow off steam". This put the workers in a better frame of mind to accept the "final wording" of a poor wage settlement.

This is the story of the past, where the present UAW hierarchy lives.

The present generation of factory workers has learned first hand what Fraser was talking about 14 years ago. Most are looking for ways to protect their present wages and working conditions through the union structure against class war waged by the employers. They blame union officials for failure to turn back employer attacks. For this reason the craven capitulation to Caterpillar may become a decisive issue at the UAW constitutional convention in San Diego this June.

Many UAW militants are alert to the ramifications of what is happening to Caterpillar workers. At the moment of retreat Owen Bieber assured all who would listen that every strike is unique, that union defeat at Caterpillar was unrelated to union defense strategy against layoffs and plant closings by the Big Three (General Motors, Ford and Chrysler) in the auto industry.

But it is clear that all major corporations have a common anti-union strategy, closely attuned to government labor policy to circumvent national agreements and pit local unions against each other in bidding wars to cut wages and working conditions in the false hope of saving jobs. This is what happened earlier this year when General Motors announced the closing of 21 of its 150 plants, and decided later which ones to close depending on where they could get the most givebacks from local unions.

Opposition challenge

A serious opposition in the UAW began within the bureaucracy in 1986 and has grown steadily since, encouraged by the success of the reform movement in the Teamsters union and spurred by the remorseless onslaught of the employers. This movement calls itself New Directions and is headed by a former UAW regional director, Jerry Tucker. He is campaigning against Bieber and hopes to win enough delegates at the coming convention to become UAW president.

Tucker's ambition races ahead of his

vision. He has set his sights on a more militant union strategy, limited to struggles for economic needs and better working conditions for auto workers and other UAW members. He talks among union militants about struggles for social gains — for universal health care, low-cost housing, free public education, a public works program to reduce unemployment — but at public rallies skirts the question of how the union movement can organize a labor party to win these things.

The first and most important task, he tells his supporters, is to organize the New Directions caucus in the UAW to transform the union and elect a new leadership.

Membership not alerted

In the union's test of strength with Caterpillar, Tucker argues that the present UAW leaders failed to alert the membership early on to the dangers. A campaign should have been organized in all Caterpillar shops against overtime work as soon as the company refused last November to sign up on the industry-wide terms that had been negotiated with Deere & Co. This would have limited the stockpiling of machines and parts in anticipation of the strike which the company at the time was preparing to provoke.

The membership should have been kept fully informed of every anti-union move by Caterpillar and encouraged to challenge the company at the plant level. He is also critical of Bieber for refusing to publicize the evil design of the company as revealed in months of negotiations, and for not calling on the entire labor movement for support. He charges that the UAW leadership is out of touch with the membership and the times we are living in. His appeal is for a return to the innovative negotiating strategy of Walter Reuther in the formative years of the union prior to World War II and shortly after. He claims the present UAW leadership believes and longs for a cozy labor-management relationship that no longer exists.

Whether this appeal will prove strong enough to carry Tucker to the presidency of the UAW this year will soon be known. What is already known is that the Caterpillar fiasco will not be resolved and forgotten with the election of union officials at this convention. It will be remembered as a sorry page in union history for years to come. ★

The return of the military

HUGO Blanco is a member of Peru's Party of Mariateguist Unity (PUM) and a leader of the Peasant Confederation of Peru (CCP). During a recent visit to Europe, he spoke to *International Viewpoint* about the situation in his country in the aftermath of the coup carried out by President Fujimori on April 6, 1992 (see IV 227, April 27, 1992).

IN A poor country like Peru it is difficult to implement neo-liberal policies without a dictatorship. In Peru these policies have had terrible social consequences — hunger and misery. It is clear that in the long run the people cannot accept this.

A dictatorial government will be needed to contain this resistance. The general line of the putsch can therefore be explained in these terms.

To this must be added a number of characteristics unique to Peru. The president, Fujimori, does not have a party structure at his disposal. Cambio 90 (Change '90) [the coalition that supported his electoral campaign] was a strictly electoralist invention.

Since then, its leaders have gone in different directions; its two vice-presidents for example, are today in opposition to Fujimori!

Decomposition of Peruvian state

The decomposition of the Peruvian state is also a key factor. This decomposition is reflected in the fact that some parts of the country are under the direct control of military figures while others are in the hands of drug traffickers and, in other parts of the country, Sendero Luminoso.

There are even some places where there is a strong popular power. Brazil and even Columbia "administer" parts of our territory. Fujimori had no control whatsoever over the judiciary, parliament or regional governments.

It must be remembered that this coup d'état was carried out by military

officials. The army supported the economic adjustment policy in spite of certain differences related to the concrete interests of the military. For example, the soldiers have demanded salary hikes which is in contradiction with the austerity policy.

In spite of its official declarations, Washington supported the putsch. There is a contradiction for imperialism in the sense that it identifies neo-liberalism with democracy, in order to polish the tarnished image of the former.

Neo-liberalism versus democracy

But in practice, neo-liberal policies cannot be applied in a country like Peru in a democratic framework. This is why imperialism must officially criticize the putsch while secretly supporting it.

When vice-president San Roman was sworn-in as president of Peru by a secretly assembled parliament after the putsch, which formed a parallel government, the United States reaffirmed that it will only recognize Fujimori. Bush does not have the same attitude towards Haiti or Peru that he has towards Iraq, Cuba or Libya.

We see the same contradiction on the problem of drug trafficking, which serves as a pretext for Washington to intervene militarily in Latin America. But it must be remembered that it is the United States that profits most from the drugs trade. For example, that is how they financed the Nicaraguan contras.

When they intervened militarily

under this pretext in Bolivia or Peru, they never even arrested one important drug dealer! The involvement of Peruvian military officials in drugs running evidently bothers the United States but it is surely not its primary preoccupation.

All of these contradictions, between the Fujimori government and the armed forces on one hand, and imperialism on the other, are minor compared to the shared interest in applying the neo-liberal economic project.

For example, when the Peruvian army attacked a United States airplane, the Peruvian and US governments agreed to whitewash the affair. This was totally different from the affair with Libya.

The Peruvian bourgeoisie reacted in a nuanced way to the putsch.

On the one hand, the employers and exporters supported the president. On the other, the right wing political organizations, like the Liberty party of the writer Vargas Llosa and the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) of the former president Alan Garcia, condemned the coup d'état.

What explains these two attitudes? Even if the Fujimori government represents imperialist interests more than those of the Peruvian bourgeoisie, it alone is capable of giving a certain stability to the system.

The opposition of bourgeois political parties is understandable: no political figure wants to lose his prestige by supporting a project that he knows will be condemned.

If there are elections, those who have supported the putschists will have no chance of being elected. All the bourgeois politicians hope to profit in the long run from the current government's loss of prestige.

It seems that we are today seeing the return in Latin America of the military. The Peruvian and Haitian cases are the product of the same dynamic. But there have also been echoes in Bolivia and Ecuador, and even rumors in Brazil or in Argentina. Peru was the weak link in the chain.

Putsches could spread elsewhere

But the international economic situation persists. Putsches of this type are necessary to assure that the neo-liberal solution will be applied. That could spread to other Latin American countries.

In Peru there is a divorce between the left and the popular movement. Before the putsch, the mass movement experienced a certain ebb due to the

neo-liberal offensive and the recession.

With thousands of unemployed, many workers didn't strike for fear of giving the bosses an excuse to close their factories. The recession has strongly weakened the Peruvian worker's movement, and even, though to a lesser degree, the peasant and neighborhood movement.

There is a sort of political divorce even within the mass organizations, between the vanguard who understand the role of the Fujimori government, and the masses who accept the president's rhetoric aimed at blaming the grave situation on others.

The left also distanced itself from the mass movement because it was unable to respond to the direct needs of the population, and gave priority to the "legal" struggle for municipal and regional governments and so on.

In spite of this, and faced with the decomposition of the Peruvian state, there are some popular organizations who are taking on certain functions normally reserved for the state. These are what we call "survival organizations". For example, they organize popular canteens or the distribution of milk for the children of the popular quarters.

Peasant self-defense groups organized

The peasant communities, who have strong self-organizing characteristics, have organized peasant self-defense groups in order to defend themselves from cattle thieves. There are also self-defense groups in the popular quarters.

There is therefore, a contradictory situation. On the one hand there is a decline of struggles, on the other there is a reinforcement of what we call "popular power", and the appearance of new forms of organization to meet the shortcomings of the state. This is positive, even if at this time it doesn't translate into large mass struggles.

The church plays an important role in this process, as it does in the peasant milieu; but the left is not totally absent either and intervenes in these new organizations.

Finally, a word must be said about the *rondas campesinas* who constitute a form of self defense for the masses providing that they only recognize the authority of the peasant organization and that they act in its interests.

These groups began in Catamarca and have since developed throughout the country. But it must be mentioned that the army has organized peasant

para-military groups of the same name under the pretext of fighting Sendero Luminoso (SL) but which in reality attack all those opposed to the government's policy.

In the regions where the SL is very active, some peasants organize to defend themselves from this group and have asked the military for arms; when this happens the army uses them for its own ends. Obviously, we fight for the autonomy of these groups.

Sendero Luminoso has been strengthened by the putsch. In the face of the predictable rise in repression, it is the best prepared organization to fight underground; the others are used to functioning legally.

With the strengthening of the dictatorship the SL will appear as the clearest option. In another sense the putsch has given a certain legitimacy to the SL; article 82 of the Peruvian constitution stipulates that the people have the right to revolt against illegitimately constituted governments, which is the case for the current government. The putsch therefore legitimizes the action of the SL against the state — but surely not that which it carries out against popular leaders.

The other armed movement in Peru, the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, which is a political party, is currently greatly weakened by its internal crisis.

Before the coup the Party of Mariateguist Unity (PUM) said that Peru was undergoing a specific "pre-revolutionary" situation.

Elements of pre-revolutionary situation

It is true that there were elements of a pre-revolutionary situation like, for example, the decomposition of the bourgeois state, the constitution of organs of popular power with a real presence in their zone of influence — like the armed *rondas campesinas*.

If it was true that there were neither strong revolutionary parties nor a revolutionary front at the head of the mass movement, some elements existed, even if they were weak and divided. Today, the PUM no longer characterizes the situation in these terms. On the contrary, it says that the masses are experiencing a period of regression.

For us, a return to legality does not mean a return to the situation that existed before the putsch, nor does it mean accepting the plebiscite organized by Fujimori, who would like to gauge public opinion for the reform of the constitution and a whole package of

other measures.

The sole democratic reform possible under the constitution involves the convocation of a constituent assembly which will decide the terms of a return to legality.

For the PUM, democracy in Peru must be essentially based on the organizations of popular power, the elected officials must be subject to recall, and so on. Obviously, the conditions do not exist today to organize such elections; it will be the dictatorship that will impose its methods.

After the formation of the parallel government by the old dissolved parliament, with former vice-president San Roman at its head, the PUM recognized its legitimacy. According to the constitution it is the legitimate government. This does not mean that the PUM supports San Roman or his policies.

This parallel government obviously has no power; it is the armed forces that have the strength. They prop up Fujimori. Also, in the light of the loss of parliament's prestige the parallel government has no social base.

Attacks on mass organizations

Finally, it is necessary to unmask the international press campaign that claims that the putsch was not violent. From the beginning, there were attacks against the mass organizations.

The army invaded the headquarters of the Peasant Confederation, the General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP), the teachers' union, popular leaders were questioned and so on. All these unions are now functioning underground.

If the mass movement has not yet been subjected to strong repression, it is because Fujimori has not yet needed it. The government does not want to appear as a dictatorship, which could awaken the masses.

Solidarity must be focussed on this repression, which continues to increase. As people lose their faith in Fujimori and they see that misery and corruption continue to worsen, the struggle will recommence against the government, which will respond with more repression.

The campaign for the abolition of the foreign debt which is underway in some Western countries must continue. The unconditional abolition of the third world debt must be demanded. Its consequences for Peru and its role in the origins of the coup must be explained to the entire world. ★

AROUND THE WORLD



GREECE

Peace campaign seeks support

THE break up of what was once Yugoslavia threatens to throw the whole of South-East Europe into turmoil, as the region's various ruling groups grab the opportunity to reap the internal and external benefits of aggressive nationalism.

This is true not only of the new elites arising out of the collapse of "Socialism" but of the Greek bourgeoisie, which has been reopening its claim to Macedonia, the north-western part of which formed one of the republics of Yugoslavia and is now independent (see N. Champi: "The Macedonian temptation" in *IV*, no. 215, October 28, 1991).

To fight against this new threat to peace in the Balkans, an open Anti-war, Anti-nationalistic Campaign of Greece has been formed, currently supported by the far left, anarchists, some ecologists and students circles. According to a press release of April 24, 1992:

"The whole spectrum of the official political forces is dragging the whole people in an imperialistic and chauvinistic direction. The ruling New Democracy party, the "socialist" PASOK and the whole official left agree and compete for the preservation of the "Greekness" of Macedonia, which, they claim, was the "property" of Alexander the Great, who ruled and fought 2,500 years ago.

"They use this ludicrous and unsubstantiated argument and at the same time hardly hide their pro-war pursuits towards the neighbouring small state of Yugoslav Macedonia, which comprises one of the three pieces of the geographic space of Macedonia, the other two being in Greece and Bulgaria."

The Campaign has convened meetings, engaged in a publicity campaign and organized a 1,000 strong demonstration on April 16. It has also made contacts with peace activists in Serbia and seeks common activities with such movements.

Attempts to distribute the Campaign's basic statement have resulted in arrests: six activists have received jail sentences of six months each and four others are awaiting trial.

Here are some extracts from the basic statement:

"...Our rulers are cultivating nationalistic hysteria to make us forget the economic

misery, unemployment, shrinking of income, deterioration in the quality of our lives, oppression of soldiers and deadly accidents in the army and the subjugation to the plans of the big imperialist powers. They want us to agree to their aim of becoming Balkan rulers and to the broader aims of the great powers in the region.

"They want us to accept passively the murder of Albanian fugitives on the borders by the special army-police bodies they have formed.

"They want us to be indignant when somebody makes nationalistic statements in Skopje [the Macedonian capital] but to clap our hands when the same or even worse statements are made in Athens or Salonika.

"They want to sweep away values and traditions fortunately still alive in Greek society, like hospitality, solidarity and humanism.

"Yes, the Greek people are in danger! Not from the unarmed statelet on our northern borders nor from the hungry Albanian refugees!

"We are in danger from the continuing war in Yugoslavia, in which our country may become involved, if the government and the main opposition party do not abandon their megalomaniac plans and statements and if they do not abandon the game of outbidding in nationalism and vote-hunting patriotism.

"It is a shame on us to accept without protest the continued economic blockade of a neighbouring country [Macedonia], as well as the various "combative" proposals for an army invasion of it.

"It is a shame on us to allow certain people to yell about invasions and annexation of lands, using as a pretext the oppression suffered by the Greek minority in Albania.

"We must understand that our enemies are not the neighbouring peoples faced with the same problems, but nationalism, racism and war. Against them, the wage-earners and the youth of the Balkan countries must unite, through common anti-war movements, activities and struggles of mutual support and international solidarity."

The Campaign can be contacted at:
Valetsou Str 35
106 81 Athens, Greece. ★

From Los Angeles to Toronto

ANGER at the acquittal of Rodney King's assailants, combined with the police murder on May 2 of a 22 year-old black youth, Raymond Constantine Lawrence, spread to Toronto, Canada following the upsurges in the ghettos of the United States. On May 4 more than 1500 angry demonstrators turned out at a rally and march to protest the killing and to draw the links between police racism and violence north and south of the border. Socialist Challenge/Gauche Socialiste, section of the Fourth International in the Canadian state, issued the following statement on the events:

"It would be a tragedy of immense proportions if we are not able to harness the collective anger of the recent period and forge an effective, organized anti-racist force in this city.

"The Black Action Defence Committee (BADC) has done a commendable job of organizing protests and mobilizing opinion against the racist attacks... But to escalate the struggle and to be prepared for future attacks we need something more than BADC, a fact the BADC itself would certainly admit.

We need a city-wide coalition that brings together BADC and other anti-racist groups and individuals around a set of concrete anti-racist demands. We need a coalition that can reach into the communities, into the schools and the workplaces, into the trade union movement, and into the churches, temples, synagogues and mosques.

"Such a democratic, mass-oriented coalition could mobilize public opinion and bring out people onto the streets like never before. It could provide a ready framework for rapid response in times of crisis, and could go "on the offensive" with concrete demands to genuinely tackle the roots of the racial attacks.

"We will not stem the rising tide of racism by retreating into our own corners. The anti-racist coalition we need has to be multi-racial, and it has to recognize the leading role of non-whites in the struggle against racism and for Black Liberation.

"Recent events provide both opportunity and danger. We need unity in the struggle, we need a program and we need organization". ★

Prospects for the left in Russia

A round-table discussion

INTRODUCTION
by Poul Funder Larsen

THE sixth Russian Congress of People's Deputies, which ended on April 22, consolidated the Yeltsin government's position, despite some skirmishes between the ruling circles and the more conservative body of deputies during over two weeks of proceedings.

However, the situation in Russia is far from stable, with the free fall of the economy continuing as economic links between enterprises are broken and a further round of price liberalization — in this case for fuel — looming. The population's living standards have declined very steeply since the January price reform, but the picture is uneven: some groups of workers have been granted large wage increases, particularly in the decisive "strategic" industries, such as fuel processing — miners for example get between 10,000 and 15,000 roubles a month. Other workers in relatively profitable industries, or industries still receiving massive government subsidies, have also been able to keep their heads above water. Groups like pensioners, students, many white collar workers and workers in less privileged industrial branches have seen their real income plummeting almost daily.

Such workers may receive 1,000 roubles a month or even less and it is estimated that around 50 million Russians now live below the poverty line. This has provoked some reaction from certain especially hard hit groups, including protests by students and invalids and a wave of strikes among teachers, health workers and to some extent workers in municipi-

pal transport.

While at the end of April the main concern of the liberal press was "international recognition" of Russia's economic reform — that is, admission to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank — doubts about the reform were growing among the population. A survey in the liberal *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on April 30 showed that only 6.4% of the respondents fully supported the government. 23.7% supported it on the whole, while 64.8% disagreed with it either partially or strongly.

No political expression

However, the rising dissatisfaction has not so far found expression in any political force capable of challenging the dominance of right wing Yeltsinism.

During the Congress of People's Deputies, an opposition crystallized spanning a number of groups — both from the "liberal democratic" and "Communist" camps — particularly around the question of a reform programme that would protect the interests of the state enterprises and foster the formation of a national capitalism, as opposed to the programme put forward by Yeltsin's economics minister, Gaidar, which would mean strong dependence on international capitalism.

At the congress this position was defended by, among others, the chairman of the parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov, but it is clear that the powerful lobby of enterprise managers, organized in Arkadii Volsky's Congress of Industrialists and

Entrepreneurs, was operating behind the scenes.

However, since the January price shock the only consistent opposition has come from the remnants of the former ruling Communist Party (CPSU), including a series of street meetings of "traditionalist" Communists in Moscow this year.

The latest one, on Mayday, drew a crowd of some 50,000. Among the Communist forces, the leading role has been played by the Russian Communist Workers Party (RKRP), a neo-Brezhnevite formation claiming 150,000 members, but also involved have been more moderate groups such as Roy Medvedev's Socialist Workers Party (SPT), the Russian Communist Party (RKP) and the Union of Communists, these last two both originating from the CPSU's Marxist Platform.

Chauvinistic rhetoric

Another active group which has attracted much media attention is *Trudovaya Rossiya*, but despite its reliance on nostalgic slogans calling for the resurrection of the Soviet Union and chauvinist rhetoric which has drawn Russian nationalist leaders around the fringes of the movement, it has won no substantial support beyond its own ranks.

Unfortunately, this is also true of the far less numerous democratic socialist forces grouped around the Party of Labour project or the various anarchist and left socialist organizations.

The Moscow Federation of Trade Unions (MFP), which pursued an independent line throughout last autumn, supporting the call for a Party of Labour and organizing a demonstration against the government's policies on October 23 (see *IV* no. 216), has been strikingly passive since January, despite the onslaught on its members' living standards.

The prevailing passivity among workers and the feeble stand taken by organizations, including the so-called independent ones, claiming to represent it, have increased the left's isolation.

There are thus very many reasons for a debate on the left's strategy and tactical choices. *International Viewpoint* invited three leaders of the Moscow left to discuss the current situation and the perspectives for socialists: *Alexander Buzgalin*, economics professor at Moscow University and a leader of the Party of Labour, which is due to convene its first congress this sum-

mer; *Boris Slavin*, political commentator on *Pravda*, the only mass circulation daily open to left wing views, and a member of the Russian Communist Party, and *Vadim Damier*, historian and co-founder of the Green Party, and now a leader of an anarcho-communist grouping.

The discussion, of which we print extracts below, took place in Moscow in April. ★



"Way out of the crisis"

HOW do you view political developments over the last few months? We have seen a certain polarization between the ruling liberal elite and the conservative Communist forces — but why has the socialist left been so marginal to this development?

Alexander Buzgalin: Traditionally, democratic left wing forces have been quite weak in this country. Layers of the old nomenklatura [the ruling elite under the former system], the new nomenklatura and the new entrepreneurs have developed a political expression while forces rising from below have been rather weak. This objective sociological fact is probably the main reason but there are also subjective factors.

The most important is that the left is dispersed and the sharpening of national conflicts has polarized the situation in a way that squeezes the democratic left. But now, perhaps, everyone understands that Gorbachev's *perestroika* was a bureaucratic struggle against bureaucratism in which a new elite and not the people triumphed. *Perestroika* produced power-

ful national conflicts and we saw a parade of sovereignty declarations in the struggle for power with Gorbachev. This happened in Russia first of all, then it spread to the Republics before going even further.

Now, this "patriotic" discourse has become dominant. That part of the old Communist movement that has taken up the patriotic banner now finds itself on the same side of the barricades as right wing forces in the European sense of the word — including some extreme rightists such as monarchists — against the pro-free market right wing liberalism of Yeltsin and his supporters. Under such circumstances it is extremely difficult to promote a third road.

Boris Slavin: I agree with your appraisal of the reasons for the weakness of the democratic left. But I would like to emphasize more strongly that the left wing here has always been identified with the Communist movement, and that movement had a totalitarian, Stalinist character. The attitude towards Communists today is therefore still extremely negative, though this is now changing a bit.

However I would warn against a sim-

plistic use of the terms "left" and "right" or "Communist" and "non-Communist" to describe the situation here. In fact the left wing, just like the right wing, is composed almost entirely of Communists. Today there are Communists among the liberals and in the right wing parties and on the left and even in a neo-fascist group like *Pamiat*.

Thus I don't think that a reunited CPSU can be reborn because of the way it broke up, through a betrayal by the leaders who moved over from orthodox Stalinism via social democratic positions to liberal democratic, pro-free market, positions. Both Gorbachev and Yeltsin followed this path.

Alexander Buzgalin: I would rather not use the word "betrayal" since these were traitors from the start, or to put it more clearly bureaucrats isolated from the people, pursuing their own interests as a privileged social force. From this derives the logic of their behaviour: they were prepared to adopt any position which would uphold the privileged status of the bureaucracy; if this was Stalinism, they were Stalinists, if it was Brezhnevism, they were Brezhnevites; when the time came to be social democrats, that is what they became, and so on. But one thing they will never be is democrats in the real sense of the word, because then they would have to smash their own bureaucratic system.

Boris Slavin: I agree, but I would not say that the left wing has no political influence today. Recently it has developed quite rapidly. Since last August we have already three parties that are officially registered: the Socialist Workers Party (SPT), the Russian Communist Workers Party (RKRП) and the Russian Communist Party (RКP). Now the Party of Labour (PТ), which could have a wide sphere of influence, is preparing to register.

In membership terms these parties, with the possible exception of the RKRП, are still small, but they are growing. So, I don't think we should be too pessimistic. There are also signs of a possible unity of left forces emerging. First this may take the form of a congress, but it is quite possible that a united force can be formed with its own publications and influence in the press, a force that can make itself heard.

Vadim Damier: In my opinion there is no left wing movement in this country today, despite some rudimentary developments which can become something more under favourable conditions. Firstly it is necessary to distinguish between the radical left, the soft left and the "left" which is prepared to work with the most extreme

right wing, proto-fascist forces. This last type is left wing only on paper.

The soft left has two characteristic features. First, they make certain concessions to the liberal pro-market spirit of the time. If you look at these organizations' programmes you will find they are essentially in agreement with the concept of a market economy, even if they want the most socially just model of such an economy.

Secondly, the soft left is wary of actions on the streets. Last autumn they initiated quite large protests. But from mid-December onwards, they abandoned this and the majority of people who are now taking to the streets to protest are strongly influenced by the "national-patriotic" forces.

The majority of those who attend the protests in Moscow are neither Stalinists nor national-patriots; they are merely people suffering from the current economic situation who have taken the only way possible of expressing their discontent. They have been abandoned to the monstrous nationalist coalition of "left" and right by the soft left.

The radical left is quite small, consisting first and foremost of the left of the anarchist movement. There are also a variety of Trotskyist organizations and a number of independent Trotskyists. In spite of our numerical weakness we try to be quite active; in Moscow we regularly organize small demonstrations and actions.

To sum up, one can say the soft left has a badly worked out programme, is indecisive and is not too strong numerically either, while the radical left has the necessary will, but we are few and have only small possibilities for influencing what is happening in the country. The situation is getting worse in the absence of a really strong and independent workers' movement.

■ **It seems as if a number of militant workers' groups that earlier pursued a relatively independent line (notably the independent miners' union) have been co-opted by the Yeltsinites and are now confining themselves to "loyalist" positions. And how do you view the actual and potential role of the official trade unions?**

Alexander Buzgalin: The situation is very complicated; first of all, a large part of the workers' movement sees itself as a group supporting the present government, while fighting for certain concessions and changes in policy, but unwilling to mount any comprehensive challenge. This is also true for the independent miners' union, which was formed out of the strike movement.

The reason has to be sought in the character of the working class or more precisely the character of the hired worker. He

is hired by the state, which appears as the universal capitalist, and worked under conditions of strong social guarantees and a total repression of all initiative from below.

This led to passivity, an inclination to put parasitic demands on the state and a badly organized basis for the workers' movement. At the same time another possibility exists, based on those elements of socialism that exist in our country. I am talking here of the potential for self-regulation shown during the 1989 strikes but which we did not manage to organize.

We are now seeing in for example the Kuzbass a situation where former strike committees are the main opponents of the struggle for humane conditions by other sectors of workers. Such separatism, fragmentation and isolation was a cardinal feature of the former regime.

As for the future, I fear the deterioration of the economic situation will lead to spontaneous explosions benefitting the national Communist and chauvinist movements, since they provide an available outlet for discontent.

Unfortunately, workers' organizations based on the rank-and-file are not appearing: there are outbursts of strike action which disappear without leaving lasting traces; attempts to sustain such structures have all been unsuccessful. At the first congress of the independent workers' movement in Kuzbass in May 1990 a group oriented in a socialist direction — that is towards self-management and collective ownership — was set up.

But all attempts to revive and reactivate it have failed, except for the formation of some local groups which still exist, such as the *Rabochii* ("worker") Union in the Urals/Volga region and some small independent trade unions.

Boris Slavin: The official line towards the working class is one of divide and rule. A sign of this is the tenfold increase in miners' salaries, which are now 13,000 to 15,000 roubles a month at a time when a teacher or a health worker receives 1,000 to 1,500. Such an abyss didn't exist even under Stalin, who always privileged the miners. At that time the difference was about one to six, now it is one to ten or 13.

Such differences mean conflicts between the various parts of the workers' movement, and for the time being there is no union force that can bring all the branches together. This is the main weakness of the union movement, and from it flows the main task of the left; to unite the workers movement. However to do this, the left has first to unite itself. If it does this it can link up with the mass workers' movement that will begin at some point, triggered off by new price rises — at least

if the government persists in its ultra-liberal economic policies. We should expect a rise in working class activity this autumn and if the left can unite and link up with the progressive trade union movement, we have every reason to be optimistic.

Vadim Damier: As a historical parallel one could say that it resembles the first period in Poland after the removal of General Jaruzelski. It is a time when, in sense, the official and independent trade unions change places. Forces supported by the new trade unions come to power. The leadership of the independent mine union has even made a statement saying that it does not support the current wave of strikes in Kuzbass and other regions since it does not want to interfere with government's economic programme: the move to a market economy.

However not everyone in these unions thinks like this. There is an opposition spots where more radical views can be found, such as in the miners' union in Donbass and Karaganda.

There are still elements supporting self-management, not as an alternative form of organization for the whole of society in terms of the transformation of state enterprises into the collective property of the labour collectives, still a clear advantage compared to the prevailing bourgeois model.

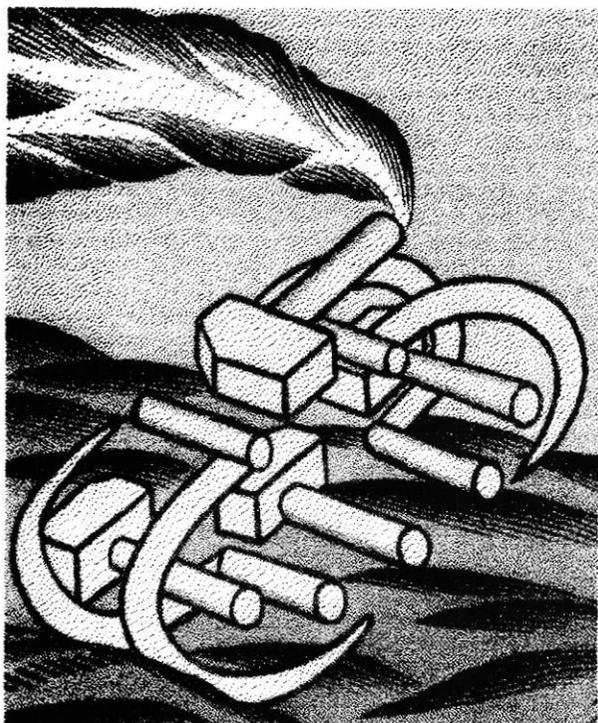
The official trade unions have structural weaknesses. Firstly, in many places they do not reach down to the rank-and-file. Usually the official trade unions were never really trade unions in the proper sense of the term, but rather organizations dealing with social insurance or the distribution of vacations.

Their second weakness is the level of bureaucratization, although in this sense they do not differ markedly from the new independent trade unions which have become bureaucratized very quickly.

There are two basic tendencies in the official trade unions. One is a more conciliatory line towards the government pursued by the leadership of the Russian trade unions — the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR). The second, more centrist, and to an extent more radical tendency, mainly exists in the big cities; Moscow, Leningrad and a few others.

Another feature of the workers' movement at present is the total lack of solidarity. Every branch, every sector, every enterprise and every region is trying to grab what they can for themselves, without considering the consequences for others.

■ **So your overall estimate of the balance of forces within the working class and the workers' organizations**



is not too favourable. But how can the left wing, with its modest forces, intervene in the current situation? What kind of methods and demands can be raised to link up with struggles?

And what role can slogans such as self-management play at a time when large-scale privatization is approaching?

Boris Slavin: I think the idea of self-management is good and necessary and that it can play a role in the period of privatization, when the rulers of the country are trying to create a situation where the controlling interest of the shares will be in the hands of a private owner, a capitalist, and not the labour collective. In this way, the idea of self-management can represent the interests of the collective, and it can unite many collectives that want to keep the controlling interest and ownership of the means of production.

However, I disagree with the idea that self-management should be the main slogan or the form in which a new society can be built in Russia. I do not envisage a perspective in the near future of generalized self-management or the possibility of conquering power on this basis.

If the left wing manages to found a genuine movement and can then set up a genuine coalition with other democratic forces on the level of government or in an election campaign and then get into power while maintaining these democratic

concepts, the idea of self-management could be revived.

But in many ways the idea has suffered setbacks, for example as regards the election of labour councils in the enterprises; the government is now planning to obliterate those councils, which means that the potential for the idea of self-management, which started to grow around 1986-87, is declining.

Vadim Damier: On the left here there are three basic understandings of self-management. The first is the concept of self-management as an integral social model, a fundamental alternative for the whole of society. This is our position. The second, supported for example by the Rabochaya Partiya ("Workers' Party") of

Tikhonov and others, is that property should remain popular and public, but that the enterprises should be given to the collectives, which should have full rights to dispose of their property economically.

That is, the labour collective should run the enterprise, appropriate the profit for itself, allocate the work and so on. Finally, the third conception, supported by most of the soft left and most of the more radical elements in the trade unions, is the notion of self-management as one of the forms of privatization.

Personally, I do not believe that the left can come to power through some sort of shortcut, and certainly not in coalition with the democrats. I think self-management organized as a structure from above cannot solve the country's problems. Only the self-organization of the workforce from below can do the job. Without this we will repeat what happened during the first years of *perestroika*, when there were quite strong and broad mass movements, but above these movements rose some leaders, who turned them into support groups for themselves.

In the coming months we will see a continuation of current economic policy, and we can therefore expect large-scale closures of public enterprises. The unemployment benefit is miserable, so what can be done? The only thing we can advise — and here the left can play a certain role — is to prepare a sitdown strike and a

factory occupation.

Alexander Buzgalin: I think the idea of self-management can be useful in different contexts. First in the struggle for different models of privatization, destatization or rather debureaucratization of property relations. The first step is for the collective to become the manager, either through a model with the collective exercising full economic control or through collective ownership. As regards this activity there are certain contacts in the labour collectives and the unions.

Secondly, we must fight for rank-and-file democracy, for self-management in the social and political spheres. This is important, for example, for tendencies to self-management in residential neighbourhoods. Such tendencies collapse and are reborn all the time. They arise, they get bureaucratized, they fall apart and then after a while they appear again in another district or in the same with a new initiative. This process has been going on continuously for three years, as is absolutely logical; since it has not been possible to unite on a higher level each of the isolated cells dies.

The third aspect is the application of the idea of self-management and rank-and-file democracy, or more simply the idea of democracy to the economy, in politics, and in the social sphere, in the struggle with the existing regime which is becoming increasingly statist and authoritarian.

Finally, we have to support functional self-management; that is, support the different tendencies to bring together social organizations such as trade unions, consumers' associations, ecological organizations, the women's movement, youth organizations and so on in the management of economic and social processes at an overall level. For example, we will soon hold a round table on an alternative economic programme where leaders of consumers, the union of labour collectives, trade unionists and intellectuals will take part.

The perspective is to convene a conference on this at the same time as the congress of left forces, which is also in the pipeline. This would be a real step forward.

Vadim Damier: It seems to me that the most important task at the moment is to develop some concrete collaboration in action in the mass movement rather than work out concepts which try to include everything. No discussions or political manoeuvres will be enough to change the course of this government. This can only be changed by mass actions from below, so we have to go further than the idea of forming simply an electoral alliance. ★



After the fall of Najibullah

THE only possible surprise in the fall of the Afghani dictator Najibullah — the former head of Kabul's secret police, the *Khad*, who was installed in office by the "modernists" in the Soviet secret police, the KGB in 1986 in Gorbachev's time — was that it took so long.

It is unlikely that the new government that has arisen out of bloody confusion to succeed him, giving a taste of what the "Islamic" future will be like, will last long either. Afghanistan seems destined to be plunged into what has become known as "Lebanonization" — fragmentation into rival military-political zones according to all manner of divisions.

SALAH JABER — April 30, 1992

FOUR years ago we highlighted the reasons why the Kabul regime would be able to survive the withdrawal of Soviet troops which took place in September 1989.¹ This view was based on the one hand on an assessment of the regime's policies and its real social base and on the other on the heterogeneity of the Afghan Islamic Alliance, the cartel of fundamentalist and traditionalist factions opposed to the Kabul regime and its Soviet mentors.²

Gorbachev's faithful pupil

The Najibullah regime attempted to present itself as the promoter of "national reconciliation", echoing Gorbachev's policy for dealing with regional conflicts. Although spurned by the Alliance organizations based in the Pakistani city of Peshawar, the new regime in Kabul nevertheless succeeded in extending its social base. To this end it combined measures of political and economic liberalization and clever manipulation of fluid ethnic/tribal allegiances, drawing on the long experience of the former leader of the *Khad* in this field.

By such means Najibullah was able to survive the departure of his Soviet protectors; indeed in this respect the Soviet-inspired "Afghanization" of the conflict was more of a success than the "Vietnamization" that US imperialism had tried out in Indochina. He could probably have held on for a long time if the whole Soviet edifice had not collapsed at the centre. Economic and military support from the Big Brother to the north was essential to the survival of the Kabul regime, which was as incapable as its adversaries of funding permanent war out of its own resources.

The growing paralysis of the central Soviet regime had already taken its military toll on the Afghan protégé with the fall of Khost in April 1991. But the final tragedy played out in Moscow between August and December 1991, resulting in the humiliation of both Gorbachev and the KGB, meant the certain end of the Kabul government; its days were numbered since the start of this year. Its struggle did not cease for lack of fighters, but for lack of any means of paying them.

Its opponent, the Islamic Alliance, on the other hand, has never lacked petrodollars from Saudi Arabia and co. to cover any interruption in US funding and, furthermore, has been able to draw succour from the return of the military-Islamic coalition to power in Pakistan after Benazir Bhutto's fall in August 1990.

Shifting loyalties

Najibullah, in the tradition of the country's rulers, is a Pashtun like the great majority of inhabitants of the southern half of Afghanistan and the north-west of Pakistan. However he did not succeed in winning decisively on the ethno-tribal plane, the influence of Pakistan and the Muslim fundamentalists remaining decisive outside the capital. On the other hand, the weight of the USSR and its Tadjik and Uzbek republics had an influence on the corresponding ethnic groups in the north of Afghanistan, who were in direct contact with their brethren living under Soviet rule.

After the collapse of the empire to the north, the Uzbeks and Tadjiks who had stayed faithful to Moscow shifted massively over to the Islamic Alliance, while continuing to make alliances according to ethno-tribal allegiances. Thus the Tadjiks have rallied to the famous commander Massud, the Afghan Rambo, who is based in the Tadjik zone and who belongs to Rabbani's Jamiat-i Islami, which has close links with Pakistan. At the same time the Uzbek chief Dostam, whose men are notorious for their terrible raids and which had supported the Kabul regime, now again

changed sides to join the Alliance loyalists who support Massud.

This camp brings together the majority of the organizations in Peshawar, a hodge-podge of more or less strict fundamentalists and partisans of the restoration of the monarchy overthrown in 1978. Its motley complexion flows from the fact that it brings together the so-called minority (that is, non-Pashtun) peoples. They have reached agreement on an interim government council of 51 members which has to organize elections in two years. The fact that the least powerful of the Peshawar leaders, Mujaheddi, has been put at the head of this council says a lot about its compromise character. Already disputes are raging over the division of offices in the new regime between the numerous and diverse factions, whether political, ethno-tribal or even ethno-confessional — such as the Shiite Hazaras, supported by Iran, who are demanding extra representation.

However the most threatening competition comes from the Hezb-i Islami of Hekmatyar. He is a hardcore fundamentalist and a Pashtun, who has played this card for all its worth and who has thereby won the allegiance of some factions of the former Najibullah regime. The installation of the new government in Kabul was preceded by days of fierce fighting between supporters of Massud and Hekmatyar — both belonging to the same Islamic Alliance and represented in the Interim Council for control of the capital.

And it is far from over yet. ★

1. See *IV*, no. 145, July 11, 1988.
2. *IV*, no. 117, April 6, 1987.