

International VIEWPOINT

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Bosnia: A war of our times



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International VIEWPOINT

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A war of our times

THE war in what was once Yugoslavia is not that conflict from a bygone age that many would like to imagine. On the contrary, it sums up all too well the main features of our times. We are not seeing some product of congenital Balkan "backwardness" nor the sudden explosion of a time bomb of ancestral ethnic antagonisms. The shocking cynicism of the spectators at the neo-fascist attack on the refugee hostel in the German city of Rostock shows that Yugoslavia has no copyright on the crisis in social consciousness.

The "Yugoslav crisis" is the political and social product of the world as it is today.

CLAUDE GABRIEL — September 2, 1992

AT the outset, the desire of the peoples of the former Yugoslavia for national liberation was an expression of the search for a freer and more generous society. But it fell under the influence of the fatal illusion that liberty and abundance could only come about if the road back to capitalist and Western normality could be found. This evidently required the deepening of the role of the market and its laws and of competition between peoples, enterprises and regions. The final ambition was to beat one's neighbour in the race to get into the rich European Community.

This confusion favoured and gave a platform to every kind of demagogue and former leader seeking refurbishment, for whom considerations of democratic and national rights were never going to be allowed to compromise the new needs of capitalist accumulation. The new wine was put into old bottles; the finally alienated political consciousness was turned to the advantage of the various aspirants who parcelled up the remnants of the old state apparatus, including its barracks, its arms and its soldiers.

The Milosevic regime in Belgrade has been in the forefront of the war-mongering. The reactionary project for a Greater Serbia is the only answer the ruling cliques have been able to find to rebuild their positions. Appeals to the

nation and patriotism have served as pathetic excuses for the incredible violence they have decided to employ against the non-Serb populations to satisfy their ambitions.

Milosevic's criminal energy

But Milosevic's criminal energy is not due to the fact that he is the sole and final vestige of "communism", as the right-wing press complacently implies. In fact the bureaucracy of the former regime has fragmented to give birth in each republic to all manner of nationalist politicians and wheeler-dealers who have made a bad joke out of the radical democratic resolution of the right of self-determination for all. This also applies in Croatia where a fascist far right exerts pressure

on the regime tempted by an "ethnically pure Croatian nation" and the intimidation of minorities.

War is a means by which these regimes seek to achieve legitimacy. Violence, force, battles are, in their eyes, the founding acts of the chauvinist and ethnic legitimacy with which they want to cloak their regimes. This is the use of war for the likes of Milosevic and Tudjman, and this is the explanation for the discreet compromises between Zagreb and Belgrade at the expense of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Following the example set at the top, we have seen small local potentates proliferate, even more keen than their mentors to implement ethnic purity in their fiefs.

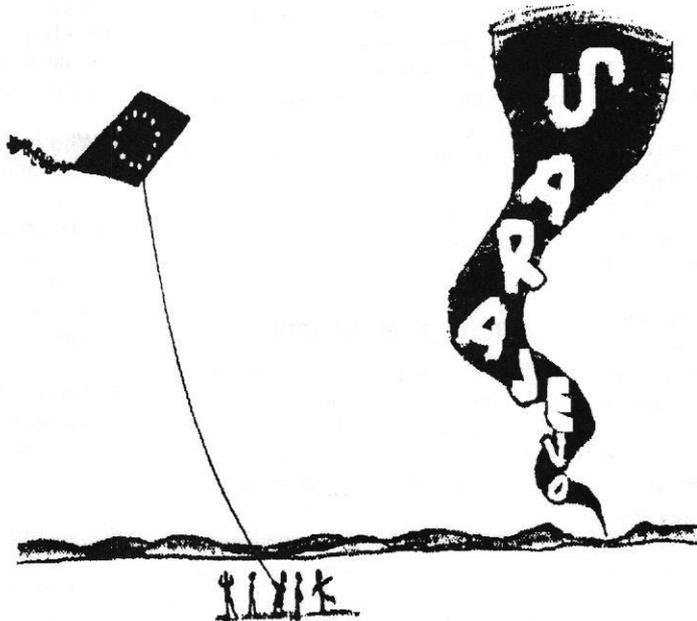
Poverty and inequality

The special fury of the Belgrade leaders is related to one of the deep causes of the conflict; that of the dismemberment of the old state against a background of poverty and unequal development. The Serbian leadership feels obliged to weaken richer Croatia and destroy multi-cultural Bosnia to gain more of the territory of the former Yugoslavia for itself. The Great Serb arguments are nothing more than an ignoble excuse for justifying the terrible consequences of the regime's ambitions.

The urgent need for internationalist, anti-militarist and democratic action is felt everywhere. Small antiwar forces exist everywhere; among the youth, women, intellectuals and journalists who want to fight against barbarism. They are, unfortunately, still too weak to change the course of events. However hope would become realistic if a popular movement succeeded in putting an end to Milosevic in a way that opened the door

to, among other things, a radical purge of the Serb armed forces and self-determination for the populations of Kosovo and Vojvodina. This would give a huge boost to progressive forces everywhere who want to oppose all the various authoritarian nationalist options that have everywhere supplanted aspirations to liberty and happiness.

Up until now, all the Western powers have adopted a pragmatic approach to the Yugoslav crisis. Appeals to the right to self-determination have been used to justify the recognition of new states when it suited the needs of



Paris or Bonn, but this "principle" turned out not to apply to Macedonia or Kosovo.

The unending spiral of conflict has now forced the West to attempt to coordinate a long term project. The aim is to end the war, halt the outflow of refugees and stabilize strong states. If the West were able to achieve an agreement between Zagreb and Belgrade, whole sections of the population would find themselves under the heading of the "profits and losses" of negotiations.

No complete and harmonious solution to the national and democratic issues raised by this conflict can come from the actions of the so-called Western democracies. All solutions they come up with will amount in one way or another to "robbing Peter to pay Paul".

An alternative line of action would require: putting forward a conception of democracy, social control, national rights and internationalist understanding which runs wholly counter to capitalist needs; this is true both for the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere in Europe and the rest of the world. The West is unlikely to give lessons to the Serb and Croat leaders that could boomerang. What use are figures such as the European Community's negotiator (until his recent resignation) Lord Carrington, when we can see how his state deals with the Irish question?

In our eyes the Western powers have no right or ability to intervene in this matter; they are societies marked by furious competition, violence, profiteering and rising racism.

Euro-opportunism

The real measure of the generosity of the EC is given by the opportunism of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who has seized the moment to push through his plan for changing the German constitution to allow military operations outside his country's borders, and to call for a harder policy against immigration and the right to asylum.

And what a splendid opportunity for EC president Jacques Delors to play the warmonger and thereby implicitly defend his plan for a rapid military integration of the EC. The war is embarrassing, but it also has its uses.

The "right to humanitarian intervention" is the new catchphrase in which strategic calculations are wrapped. The French foreign minister declared in *Le Monde* (August 27, 1992) that the Yugoslav crisis was a "testing ground" for Europe. And this is indeed an apt expression. As in the Gulf war the various proposals have only a tangential relation to the conflict; also at stake are the future of NATO and of a specific European military policy. The fate of the peoples is of no

more importance here than in the Gulf conflict, but the opportunity to put the finishing touches to the New World Order is too tempting.

One of the distinctive features of the Yugoslav crisis is that it does not for the moment allow at a mass level a demonstration of the possibility of effective solidarity independent of official actions. It has not yet been possible to make the link between progressive and mass forces in ex-Yugoslavia and the European workers' movement. And the European peace movement has hardly uttered a word on the question. As a result, the political terrain has been occupied by the various machineries of state — and by demagogues.

This situation can be explained by two factors: that of the overwhelming weakness of pacifist and internationalist forces in ex-Yugoslavia; and that of the chauvinist confusion of the West European workers' movement about everything related to the future of Europe. Thus, one side is not able and the other not willing to seek partners for a dialogue which could take us beyond the present state of meekly accepting initiatives launched by the governments of the day. For this to occur, the West European workers' movement would have to put forward a radical social alternative to the liberal, free-market Maastricht project — thereby offering the Balkan peoples a different conception of Europe. We are far from that.

The deafening silence, the absence of even the smallest sign of an independent position from the organizations of the European left, clearly highlights the weakening of even the most elementary class consciousness. Without a doubt, this is a state of affairs without precedent in the last forty years in a conflict of such magnitude.

Too isolated in its internationalist and anti-militarist outlook, the European far-left has also been too weak to take meaningful initiatives. Our aim must be to nurture active solidarity with all forms of resistance against ethnic nationalism, against racism and war-mongering. There must be no concessions to "realism" and no compromises with institutional manoeuvres.

Planning for the long term

This crisis is going to continue, and it will be possible to patiently build support networks for those who refuse to give into chauvinism and racism and build active solidarity with independent anti-war media and with pacifist groups. In the end, the progressive strengthening of an internationalist option is the only way forward — in the Balkans as in the whole of Europe. ★

The forces of disorder

AS peace talks inaugurated in London at the end of August moved to Geneva in early September, vicious fighting continued in the ex-Yugoslav province of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BH). *International Viewpoint* spoke to Catherine Samary, who has written extensively on Yugoslavia, on the background to the conflict and the prospects after the London conference.

WHAT do you make of the results of the London conference?

An end to the bombardment, control of heavy weapons, reciprocal recognition of the republics, the closing of the prison camps; a lot of good things are promised, but I am sceptical about what will happen in reality.

Furthermore, even if these commitments were met, essential questions would remain unresolved. There is a danger of a peace that simply ratifies what has been accomplished by force and terror.

■ Who is responsible for the climate of force and terror?

The main responsibility lies with the Serbian government and its allies. But Croatia also bears some responsibility; there is a Serb/Croat understanding about sharing out Bosnia-Herzegovina to the detriment of the Muslims.

■ Have the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina been recognized?

The border question is secondary to that of rights inside the countries concerned. In the present situation, there is nothing to stop the Kosovo Albanians or the Vojvodina Hungarians from rising in revolt. Recognition of frontiers only shows the way to a solution if it is tied to a substantial change

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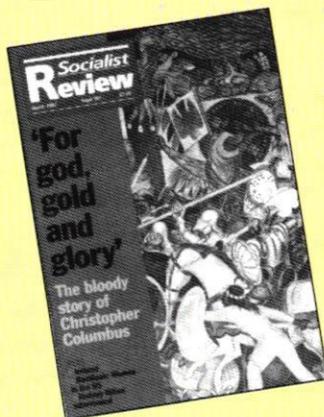
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with regard to the recognition of minority national rights inside the different states.

At present the formation of a sovereign Serbia has for some months gone along with the establishment of apartheid inside that state's Kosovo and Vojvodina provinces, where Serb refugees, encouraged by Great Serb nationalism, have occupied housing belonging to other nationalities.

In Croatia, there is a gap between the laws adopted as a part of the drive for independence and the real practice as far as citizenship is concerned. In fact, the latter is being granted only to "good Croats". Croats living in Australia are getting citizenship while Serbs who have lived there for centuries are being deprived of it. Since the centre of the war moved to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Croatian regime has become increasingly authoritarian and, behind the scenes, the mood in ruling circles is in favour of ethnic purification in practice.

For the frontiers of Bosnia-Herzegovina to be respected, the Great Serb and Great Croat logics of a division of BH between armed groups from the two sides have to be fought. But it is also essential that BH's Croat, Serb and Muslim populations feel secure. The country has a tradition of cohabitation. The basis for cohabitation is to be found in the constitution which recognizes that the republic has three peoples who have both common rights as citizens and national rights as peoples. These constitutional provisions need to be respected. But recognition of the rights of peoples also necessarily implies links with the other republics, in particular with Serbia and

Croatia and reciprocal guarantees for the rights of peoples dispersed among several states. The same considerations apply to Macedonia which has an extremely mixed population.

■ **How is this different from the proposal for dividing BH into ethnic cantons?**

The problem is the way that Serb and Croat nationalists interpret cantonization. They see it not in terms not of territorial decentralization but of ethnic division. However BH, for historical reasons, does not have ethnically homogeneous regions. Thus ethnic cantonization means that people have to be forced out so that

a region becomes ethnically pure.

Furthermore, the Muslims are sure to lose out. They were only recognized as a people at the end of the 1960s. Being the descendants of the privileged of the Ottoman Empire, they are concentrated in the towns. The ease with which Serb and Croatian forces have occupied the bulk of Bosnian-Herzegovinian territory stems from their support in the countryside. Thus the Serbs, who make up a third of the population, occupy two thirds of the territory, while most of the remaining third is in Croat hands, although Croats are only a sixth of the republic's population. That leaves nothing for the Muslims. This is why the capital Sarajevo has become the key to the fighting and why Croat forces have not come to Sarajevo's aid.

The only solution for BH is a far-reaching administrative decentralization with protection for minorities, which is not worked out on a purely ethnic basis.

■ **How would you characterize the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina?**

The Yugoslav crisis in IV

OVER the past few years IV has published many background articles, comments, interviews and documents concerning the Yugoslav crisis and its regional implications, among them:

- * Deaths in Kosovo; the morbid anatomy of a regime — *Catherine Verla* (no. 161, April 17, 1989)
- * Last straw for Albanian people — *Nina Jerkic* (Ibid)
- * The slide towards civil war — *Michele Lee* (no. 191, October 1, 1990)
- * Kosovo workers fight back — *Document* (no. 192, October 15, 1990)
- * Youth rebel against Milosevic — *Michele Lee* (no. 204, April 15, 1991)
- * Crisis in the Balkans — *Catherine Samary* (no. 211, July 22, 1991)
- * War in Europe — *Michele Lee* (no. 212, September 16, 1991)
- * The Macedonian temptation — *N. Champi* (no. 215, October 28, 1991)
- * A house beset by demons (*Document* — interview with former Mayor of Belgrade) (Ibid)
- * The antiwar movement in Yugoslavia — *Catherine Samary* (no. 216, November 11, 1991)
- * A militarized society and its critics — *Marko Hren* (Ibid)
- * Next year, Sarajevo? — *Slavko Mihaljcek* (Ibid)
- * Antiwar rebellion in Vojvodina — *Document* (no. 218, December 9, 1991)
- * The Yugoslav trade unions and the war — *Catherine Samary* (Ibid)
- * An army in search of a state — *Catherine Verla* (no. 219, December 23, 1991)
- * Canton; rhymes with Lebanon? — *Slavko Mihaljcek* (no. 223, March 30, 1992)
- * Repression of Kosovo Albanians continues — Interview with *Muhamedim Kullashi* (no. 226, April 27, 1992)
- * The forced cantonization of Bosnia-Herzegovina — *Christian Pomitzer* (no. 229, May 25, 1992)
- * What comes after sanctions? — *Christian Pomitzer* (no. 232, July 6, 1992) ★

What forces are at work there?

We should be aware that there are other forces than those involved in the war. The media do not attach sufficient importance to the multi-ethnic popular forces, which are in fact quite strong. Last summer they organized "the insurrection for peace". Today they have been pushed into a corner by the war but they remain active and structured, even if they do not have prominent figureheads. The media silence about them is no accident. Many of those involved in this movement are former Communists.

The non-nationalist opposition got some 25% of the votes at the December 1990 elections. It could thus be said that nationalism won. It is true that the presidency headed by Alija Izetbegovic comprises two Serbs, two Croats, two Muslims and a Yugoslav. But it is made up of ethnic parties. The ethnic principle rules.

There are a number of parties and groupings in the Serb camp. The dominant one is that around Karadzic, an ultra-nationalist maniac brought up in the Great Serb tradition. Karadzic traces his political roots to the anti-Communist Chetnik resistance movement of World War II.

Serbs are represented in other political formations, but only in small numbers. However Karadzic has imposed his line by terror. Bosnian Serbs who stand up for BH are under considerable pressure. The alliance between Serbia's president Milosevic and Karadzic is obvious. The war in BH is not an affair internal to that republic; the Serb militia there has use of federal army equipment left behind when the latter withdrew and there has been logistical support from Serbia. But the Milosevic-Karadzic alliance is not a smooth one. Under international pressure, Milosevic, the sorcerer's apprentice, may tone down his support.

The main force among BH's Croats is the Croat Democratic Forum (HDZ) of Croatia's president Franjo Tudjman. At first the HDZ in BH was represented by a moderate wing which wanted BH to continue to exist. But the HDZ in the Croat-controlled part of BH has been purged and the militarist far right has imposed what is in effect its own statelet on BH's territory. The Croat far right armed gangs have been responsible for massacres of Muslims, and, despite official agreements, have failed to submit themselves to the Bosnian territorial defence forces.

The Muslim camp is heterogeneous. In the 1970s Izetbegovic was convicted for writing a text considered "fundamentalist" in which he called for an Islamic state. He represents the religious nationalist current in his community, but he is also a pragmatist and a prisoner of the balance of forces. He has made the mistake of chopping and changing his alliances and stated principles. First he accepted cantonization then

rejected it. He has called for a multi-ethnic BH but the nationalist Serbs say that there are not sufficient guarantees against an Islamic state.

But it is the Muslim community which has the best positions and is the big loser in the current state of affairs. However, we should be aware that a fundamentalist far right does exist, especially in the rural areas in the Sandjak, and can only gain strength in reaction to Serb and Croat policies.

■ In BH we find people who have lived side-by-side for centuries turning on one another. Why? What should be the reply to people who argue that this is a sign of historic atavism and who claim that Tito's Yugoslavia was a "prison house of peoples?"

We have to get rid of these clichés about ancient hatreds. History leaves its traces, of course. The Ustashe regime set up in Croatia in 1941 was the bloodiest of all fascist Europe. Apart from Jews and Gypsies, 300-500,000 Serbs were massacred. The Bosnian Muslims, however, were spared (they were considered to be Croats). However, if we look at the longer term view, Muslims and Albanians also struggled against the Ottoman Empire and there were Croat anti-fascists. Hatred and the logic of genocide are not the product of some innate characteristics but of political lines to which other political lines can be opposed. Against the Ustashe and the Chetniks the Partisans fought for a Yugoslavia that brought together the various communities in a federation.

The present crisis is a product of the failure of Titoism. Nonetheless, that does not mean that Yugoslavia was an artificial project. In any case, since the war there have been several decades of peace, of inter-ethnic marriages and rising living standards. While it was certainly led by a single party, it was not true that Yugoslavia was a "prison house of peoples". The confederal system provided an adequate solution to the national question. The problem was that to genuinely overcome national antagonism more democracy was needed. The absence of openness meant that democratic national rights took on a perverted form. It also plunged the country into economic crisis; a non-capitalist economy can only function if the profit motive is replaced by the democratic motive.

Even so, the crisis of Titoism need not have led to war. For this to break out a break with the Titoist heritage on the national question in a negative direction was needed. This was the result of a combination of a number of factors: the crisis of the regime, the world economic crisis, the growth of regional inequalities, the resulting disintegration of the federation, the rise of nationalist currents to domination

over political life and finally the formation of new nation-states.

Serb nationalism inaugurated the festivities with the suppression of the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina. At that moment, a political battle could still have been waged; the Serbs were less than 50% of the population of the Serb republic, Croatia and Slovenia could have sought support in Macedonia and BH and won over the Serbs in Croatia to a line of multi-ethnic conciliation and against Great Serb nationalism. But currents in Croatia and Slovenia were already dreaming of integration into a prosperous (and Catholic) Europe.

They proposed to shed "the Turks" to the south and privatize their economies — after having brought it under state control. For these reasons, Slovenia and Croatia considered Vojvodina and Kosovo as Serb internal affairs. As a result, instead of going beyond Titoism in a positive direction, new regimes were set up that were no more democratic than the former regime. On the contrary, the nation states in ex-Yugoslavia can only be formed by leaning on a type of proto-fascism.

■ The West has only added fuel to the fire it has claimed to be putting out.

Yes. The West's responsibility can be looked at in three stages.

Firstly, until 1991 the West supported the line of a re-centralized "free market" Yugoslavia, as proposed by Markovic. At the start of the 1980s the Yugoslav state had a \$20bn foreign debt and the creditors wanted a strong and centralized state to ensure repayment. On top of this there was the fear of "disorder" in the Balkans. This line certainly added fuel to the fire since the push for the "free market" could only lead to the break-up of the federation by sharpening regional differences, as has also happened in Czechoslovakia. This was particularly true in Yugoslavia where the confederal arrangement was the result not only of pressure from ruling elites but of the need for democratic and efficient management of the common space, since such management must respect national sovereignties.

Secondly, the West went from support for free market recentralization to a disorderly recognition of independence of various republics. Germany encouraged independence declarations from Slovenia and Croatia. This was especially serious in ethnically mixed Croatia. The recognition of independence took place without coherent principles; the label "democratic" was attached to highly suspect regimes. Macedonia has not been recognized, owing to Greek pressure.

Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognized amid claims that this would prevent war. In fact, the opposite happened. This process of recognition did not take account of the

THE following is a list of anti-war organizations active in the different parts of the ex-Yugoslav Confederation; it first appeared in *Babel*, no. 5/6, June 1992, a publication of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly published in France.

SLOVENIA

* Center za kulturo miru in nenasilja — Centre for a peaceful and non-violent culture. Mestni trg 13 61000 Ljubljana, Slovenia. Telephone: 38-61-210-374. Fax: 224 666

* Womens' Movement, Citizens Assembly (HCA). Sonja Lokar, Tomsiceva 5 61000 Ljubljana, Slovenia. Telephone: 38-61-161 140. Fax: 215 855

CROATIA

* Anti-ratne Kampanja (ARK) — Zagreb anti-war committee. Tkalciceva 38 41000 Zagreb, Croatia. Telephone: 38-41-422 495. Fax: 38-41-271 143

* Demokratski forum — Rijeka Democratic Forum c/o Sura Dumanic Telephone and Fax: 38-51-713 291

BOSNIA - HERZEGOVINA

* Centar za mir — Sarajevo Peace Center. Dobrovoljacka 11 71000 Sarajevo B.H. Telephone: 38-71-214- 884. Fax: 646 455 - 663 730

* Anti-war Action : U1 Hasana Kikica BR 8 71000 Sarajevo, B.H. Fax: 38-71-219 866

SERBIA

* Center za antiratnu akciju — Belgrade anti-war committee. Prote Mateje 6 YU 11000 Belgrade, Serbia. Telephone: 38-11-431 298. Fax: 38-11-681 989

* Helsinki Citizen Assembly c/o Sonja Licht, Omladinskih brigada 216 YU 11070 Belgrade, Serbia. Fax: 38-11-332 940

* Civil Resistance Movement. Mladena Stojanovica 4, YU 11040 Belgrade, Serbia. Telephone: 38-11-668 324; Fax: 38-11-402 915

VOJVODINA

* European civic center for the resolution of conflicts. Trg. Cara Jovana Nenada 15 YU 24000 Subotica. Vojvodina, Serbia. Telephone: 38-24-246000; Fax: 38-24-37116

MONTENEGRO

* Citizens Committee for Peace. Hercegoyarcka 15 YU 81000 Podgorica, Montenegro. Telephone/Fax 38-81-41914

Some publications that have resisted chauvinism and war:

* VREME. Narodnog Fronta 45/VII Postanski fah 257, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

* MONITOR. Dalmatinska 52, 81000 Podgorica, Montenegro

* DANAS. 41000 Zagreb, Croatia. Telephone 38-41-435846

* OSLOBODENJE. Dzemela Bijedica 185, 71000 Sarajevo P.O. Box 663 Bosnia. Telex 44 OSLOB 5/44 60 82, FAX 71 467 286 ★

fact that the region needs some kind of confederal arrangement. The links need to be redefined, but in the framework of an overall political agreement which recognizes all the republics and provinces as sovereign elements.

Finally, the West supported the cantonization plan, as mentioned above.

■ The events in the former Yugoslavia give a taste of the possible results of the social crisis elsewhere in Europe, including in the West.

The basic problems posed in Yugoslavia are posed everywhere and remain unresolved everywhere, including in the "Maas-

tricht" Europe.

The first problem is: how to pool our common economic and social resources? Instead of that, economic liberalism means the widening of every kind of division.

The second problem: how should rights — human rights, civil rights and the collective rights of different national entities, and particularly of minorities -- be assured in a complex, multi-ethnic community? Instead of addressing this problem, liberalism demands ever stronger states.

And this is why the West throws fuel on the fire it claims to be putting out. Its impotence has deep economic and political roots.

■ But the alternative seems very weak.

Antiwar forces exist in all the republics. They are based on citizens' movements, and ecologist, anti-militarist and women's organizations, who are calling for the demilitarization of the Balkans.

There are a number of small political parties who are trying to resist. At the end of the 1980s, when the miners of Kosovo were crushed by repression, the Croat B. Horvat founded the Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI). Horvat is a well-known socialist economist.

His protests in the Serb press against the Great Serb repression of the Albanians were courageous. The UJDI was rapidly marginalized by the break-up of Yugoslavia and the nationalist tidal wave, but elements of it still exist.

Forces in a number of republics have adopted an antiwar position, including small Social Democratic parties. This is true of the USD in Croatia and autonomist formations in Dalmatia and Istria. It is also true of Milorad Pupovac, the leader of the Serb Forum in Croatia. The leader of the Croat Peasant Party, V. Cicak, has written virulent attacks on the Great Serb policy and Tudjman's policy in the Croat journal, *Danas*.

There is a battle underway on the information front. The Belgrade journal *Vreme* is at the centre of the anti-war movement in Serbia, in liaison with free radios and popular rock groups among Serb student youth. The journal *Danas* played a similar role in Croatia, but has been shut down on economic pretexts.

The YUTEL TV station, broadcasting from Sarajevo, has been prohibited in Zagreb and Belgrade, but it was very popular owing to its demarcation from the nationalist hysteria.

Even if it is not easy we must:

- Help the refugees;
- Support the amnesty law for deserters proposed by the Serb opposition;
- Make contact with independent journalists and give them material support;
- Give a platform to the suppressed minority of "traitors" to the national cause;
- Oppose military intervention. The Serb opposition to Milosevic is against it; they say it would strengthen the dictator's position among the Serb population and lead to an increase in repression.

Finally, there is the problem of support for the Bosnian territorial defence. If this force retains its multi-ethnic character and presents a programme that offers guarantees for the different nationalities, and if, as Tito's Partisans did, it offers an alternative to both the Ustashe and the Chetniks, an orientation towards military support for such a multi-ethnic defence could be seriously considered. ★

A turning point in the war?

LESS than a week after the end of the London Peace Conference, fighting has intensified throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. On Sunday August 30 Serb militia fired an accurately placed shell into a Sarajevo market leading to further carnage among the hungry people waiting in a queue which they hoped would have bread at the end of it. This new crime against unarmed people — supposedly under the protection of United Nations troops — showed how little respect the Serb forces have for the agreements reached at the negotiating table.

SLAVKO MIHALJCEK — September 3, 1992

FOR the Western powers, and in the first place the USA, France and Britain, the big diplomatic show was meant to “humanize” the conflict; they presented the conference as the historic moment when the military de-escalation was to begin in ex-Yugoslavia.

For three days London saw a diplomatic deployment greater than that of any other international conference concerned with a regional conflict since 1945.

With the British prime minister and the UN secretary general presiding, the conference brought together an impressive array of participants. Alongside the foreign ministers of the 12 European Community (EC) countries, were their counterparts from the USA, Canada, China, the CIS and Japan.

Frontline states represented

Representatives of the frontline countries, including Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Italy and also Turkey had been invited. The EC itself was represented by its president Jacques Delors, and the Senegalese delegate could be seen paying careful attention to the proceedings in the name of the Organization of Islamic Countries.

All the republics of former Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia) were represented by their presidents. While the Yugoslav Federation (comprising Serbia and Montenegro) had two seats, representatives of the Serb minority in Croatia, the Muslims of Serbia and the Kosovo Albanians were received in an annex.

Despite the turnout, the concrete results of the London Conference were thin.

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Serbia was named as the aggressor in

Bosnia in most of the speeches, although not in the final declaration, but no new sanctions were adopted.

While it was decided in principle to strengthen the UN force up to a limit of 6,000, the definition of their mission was not changed. Their task remains that of protecting humanitarian aid convoys and there will be no attempt to open permanent aid corridors in Bosnia.

Concretely, this means that the convoys can only get underway with the agreement of the main parties to the conflict and that they can be held up at any moment by small armed local militia forces.

Thus the town of Gorazde, which has a population of 300,000 as well as many refugees and has just been liberated after being besieged by Serb militia for 150 days, has yet to receive a single sack of food or box of medicines.

Apart from the media performances by Milan Panic, the American businessman who is now prime minister of what remains of the Yugoslav Federation, and promises from the chief of the Bosnian Serb nationalists Karadzic to close his concentration camps, Serbia gave no undertaking whatsoever at the London Conference to cease waging war on its neighbours.

Serbian regime satisfied

An analysis of Serbian radio and TV broadcasts reveals considerable satisfaction on the part of the Serbian regime over the results of the conference.

Except for the fascists, all the other elements in the Milosevic government consider that the “Peace conference” was positive in that it put on official record the fact of, and gave tacit acceptance to, all Serbia’s territorial gains in the war.

Even if some Bosnian towns will have to be surrendered, the Serb leaders reckon that the conquest of more than a third of Croatia and a half of Bosnia amounts, in fact, to the creation of a Greater Serbia.

The Belgrade media have noted with satisfaction that the conciliatory attitude of the Western leaders amounts to an acceptance of the new realities created on the ground by the war. A few commentators have expressed their concern about the “negative impact” of the discovery of the “detention camps” for Muslims and have advised they be closed “to improve the international image of Serbia”. The arrest of the head of a royalist militia accused of committing massacres in Bosnia is predicted. However Milosevic still considers Seselj, the head of the neo-fascist party in Serbia, to be his most reliable ally.

The Croat leaders were also putting an optimistic face on things on their return from London. The pro-government press believes that the conference “strengthened the international position of Croatia and its president Tudjman”. The Tudjman regime hopes to be able to compensate for its territorial losses (Slavonia and Krajina) by the annexation of Western Herzegovina with the blessing of the West. The population of Bosnia’s big urban centres (half the population before the war), which for the most part remain besieged by the Serb militia and army, are massively opposed to the outcome of the London Conference.

The Bosnian towns and in the first place Sarajevo, which are ethnically very mixed, continue, despite the shelling, hunger and the ever-present fear of death, to reject the division of Bosnia along ethnic lines.

Revelations strengthen resolve

The revelations in the international media of the concentration camps and the massive expulsions of Muslims seem to have strengthened the resolve to mount armed resistance.

Croat papers have noted the recent arrival of light weapons previously held back by the Croats in Sarajevo which could be used in the setting up of the self-defence units which are being joined by citizens from all nationalities, including Serbs.

According to Radio Sarajevo the Serb military ring around Sarajevo may soon be broken at several points. The town of Gorazde has just been liberated and energetic resistance is starting to emerge in other Bosnian towns.

It seems that a turning point may have been reached in the war, characterized by mass resistance by the urban population, with the Muslims numerically dominant but very mixed in ethnic composition. ★

Party veterans and skinheads

ON AUGUST 2, general elections took place in Croatia — the first since the state seceded from the Yugoslav federation in 1991.

CHRISTIAN POMITZER

THE elections resulted in victory for Tito's former general and the current Croatian president, Franjo Tudjman, who got more than 56% of the votes cast.

The supreme leader played on the widespread sentiment in favour of continuity and outflanked the opposition with a smart manoeuvre; his party, the Croat Democratic Union (HDZ), which had 60% of the seats in the former parliament, passed a law which enabled it this time to get 70% of the seats with 40% of the votes.

Sixty seats were elected by proportional representation with a 3% barrier. Four seats were reserved for national minorities; Italians, Germans, Austrians, Czechs, Slovaks and Ukrainians. So much for the democratic veneer.

A further 60 seats were elected according to the British "first-past-the-post-system" — that is, whoever got the largest number of votes got the seat and votes for other candidates were wasted.

Thirteen seats are to be occupied by the Serb minority. How was only to become clear several days after the poll.

Tudjman picks his moment

Tudjman had repeatedly stated that there would only be elections when the war was over. However, in fact the war is not over and a third of Croatian territory remains occupied. Nonetheless the arrival of UN forces had calmed things down somewhat and Tudjman clearly calculated that this was the moment.

Everyone would be thinking about the war which Croatia had supposedly almost won. People were under arms rather than out in the streets. The favourable course of the war and independence were still fresh in people's memories.

But what might happen in the autumn? There might be trouble from the unions; the state debt had been soaring and living standards plunging.

Bankruptcies had been multiplying but for now the opposition was still weak. Let's get the elections out of the way in a few weeks, thought Tudjman.

The initial reaction of the parliamentary opposition was to call for a boycott of the elections, arguing that the war was still going on, and that the electoral law was unfair.

However Savka Dapcevic-Kucar, the *eminence grise* of the Croatian spring of 1971, decided to take part, along with her national-liberal Croat People's Party; after that all the rest of the opposition had to follow suit. Negotiations took place to find single candidates for the first-past-the-post seats.

But the voting itself showed that opposition promises to raise wages threefold were not believed.

The opposition presidential candidate, Drazen Budisa, and his Croat Social Liberal Party, got a creditable 20%, with the help of former German foreign minister Hans Dietrich Genscher, who was the first to recognize independent Croatia.

The home Croats voted more moderately than their emigré brothers and sisters (who were also allowed to vote). It was among the latter group that Tudjman and his fascist opponent Dobroslav Paraga did best.

Paraga and his Party of Law; it looks at first sight as if a well-fed and well-behaved theology student has accidentally run into a mob of bloodthirsty skinheads.

But the impression changes as soon as he opens his mouth: "For a Croatia that extends to the Drina!"; "UNPROFOR go home!"; "we will drive the Serbs back to Zemun [on the outskirts of Belgrade]!"

Every statement by Paraga is a media event and public sensation. But people are tired of the war. Paraga's gunslingers can no longer flourish in Croatia itself and have moved on to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Poor showing for neo-fascist party

Indeed, the only positive feature of the elections was the poor showing by Paraga's party, which got 5-6%, well below expectations. In many places there were irregularities in the voting.

The chairperson of the Social Democratic Union, Branko Horvat, personally tried out voting twice — and succeeded. In many places there were no polling booths. But such things did not decide the outcome.

The HDZ greeted its victory soberly. There were no drunks in its campaign headquarters, only young, keen men in shirts and ties. On the wall were com-

puters reporting the latest. In both one could see the fruits of the German CDU's efforts to "Europeanize" Tudjman's party.

The big chiefs, Tudjman and Stipe Masic, had left long before, but the feared interior minister, Manolic, who earned his spurs under the old regime, revelled in the victory, slapping trusted party veterans of the three year old party on the shoulder.

Veterans? That is, people he has known since the old days in the League of Communists.

Inner-party conflicts could resurface

The HDZ will have a struggle to get through the next four years unscathed. The marginalized opposition presents no danger for the time being.

However inner-party conflicts, which were apparent last summer, could break out again. Then there is the question of privatization. Of course one wants to be "ready for Europe" and introduce the free market.

But now that the party cadres have got their hands on the former self-managing enterprises, are they really to be expected to let them go again? And will this also apply to the press? Is the latter not already too unrestricted? The new/old president does not bother himself with such details.

He preferred to take his oath of office before a hand-picked audience in front of St. Mark's Church in the Upper Town.

On this occasion, he committed one of his famous slips of the tongue, thanking the "Croat people and other citizens" rather than "the people of Croatia" as it says in the text.

Among the other citizens belong those Serbs who have remained in Croatia; about 8% of the population. Tudjman gave them a party, but they did not vote for it.

The so-called Serbian People's party, which is allegedly to some extent made

up of secret policemen, got a bit more than 1% and thus missed the 3% barrier. This has put the central electoral commission in an embarrassing position. How to fill the 13 seats reserved for Serbs?

The answer was to put in Serb candidates from the lists of the parties who got into parliament.

With a bit over 5%, the former Communists won three seats, but since they had the most Serbs on their slate, they took eight of the 13 "Serb" seats, and thus, without lifting a finger, became the third largest party in the Croat parliament.

The Serb People's Party threatened to dissolve itself, thus removing Tudjman's figleaf in front of the West. So, four days after the poll, it was decided that the 3% barrier did not apply to this party, since it represented a minority. The SPP thus got three seats as a gift.

If the opposition is divided, the same is true of the left, with four social democratic parties standing in the election.

Only one, the ex-Communists, now in new moderate repackaging as the Social Democratic Party of Croatia — Party of Democratic Change, got into parliament. None of the other three got near the 3% barrier.

Little future for social democracy

The worst score was that of the right wing of Antun Vujic and his Social Democratic Party of Croatia. His 0.7% may end his hitherto rather successful petitioning of the German and Austrian social democrats and the Socialist International. The building of Western-style social democratic parties seems to have little future in Croatia as elsewhere in the former Communist countries. Further to the left we come to the Socialist Party of Croatia and the Social Democratic Union. Both of these got a little over 1% and may soon merge.

For the presidential election, the SDU did not run its own candidate and called for a vote for the Socialist Silvije Degen, who got a relatively respectable 4%.

Branko Horvat's SDU is the only non-nationalist party in Croatia, but the respected academic's charisma does not seem to exercise its effect beyond the lecture theatre. Nonetheless, the SDU is for the moment the only factor which a left current can build on. ★

Keeping the refugees out

THERE are now more than two and a half million refugees from the former Yugoslavia. Half a million are in other European states. About two million are "displaced people" still within the boundaries of what was once Yugoslavia. Europe faces the biggest refugee crisis since the end of the Second World war.

FINN JENSEN*

OF THE 23.5 million people in the six republics that formed Yugoslavia 10% are now refugees.

The numbers of refugees are increasing by 10,000 a day and could well

increase further if there is a lull in the conflict as some people are unable to flee during the heavy fighting.

Almost a million people have been trapped by fighting according to the United Nations High Commission for

Refugees: the crackdown

WEST EUROPEAN countries are making it increasingly difficult for refugees to obtain protection in Europe. Governments claim they only want to keep out "economic refugees", but their policies affect all kinds of asylum seekers.

In the late 1980s there was an increase in asylum seekers in most European countries. In the 12 member states of the European Community (EC) there were a total of 170,000 recorded asylum seekers in 1988. In 1990 it was 208,000 and in 1991 328,000. Germany got more than half of them. Germany and France together recorded around 80% of all asylum seekers.

It is also worth noting that while the European governments talk about being swamped by bogus refugees, Europe has only 5% of the world's estimated 17.5 million refugees. Poor developing countries in the so-called Third World host the majority of refugees. Pakistan has three million, Jordan one million, Somalia half a million. Britain hosts less than 200,000.

The European governments, along with the rest of the rich world, only recognize a very narrow definition of what constitutes a refugee. The UN Convention of 1951 for refugees and the 1967 Protocols define a refugee as someone "who has a well-founded fear of persecution" if returned to their home country. The person has to prove that (s)he or her/his close family has been singled out for persecution (prison, torture, threats of execution) by the authorities of their country. Refugees who fall within this definition are usually called convention-refugees. Most European countries will only accept these convention-refugees as genuine refugees. And most Western governments have started to interpret the 1951 resolution in a more and more narrow way — in order to reduce the number of recognized refugees.

West European governments have signed international treaties which prohibit deporting people if they are faced with torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment in their home country. These "de facto" refugees are only given temporary stay until the situation in their home country is normalized.

The West European countries have developed instruments to make it more difficult for asylum seekers to reach Europe and — if they get here — to be allowed to stay. These include visa restrictions, sanctions on carriers of persons without proper documentation, the right to send refugees back to "safe third countries" they have passed through and "accelerated" processing of applications involving detention and quick deportation. ★

Refugees (UNHCR).

Some 10,000 people have lost their lives in the war. José María Mendiluce, special UNCHR envoy, was quoted in the UK *Guardian* (August 18, 1992): "If the war does not end, then access will continue to be difficult to many areas; we will not be able to meet the needs of all the victims over the winter. We will be forced to try to make priority areas and groups.

"It's hard to believe we will be able to save all their lives. Winter could kill more people than the whole war. It is unavoidable that many people will be forced by winter alone to leave Bosnia, or die of starvation".

Refugees predominantly young

Two out of every three of the displaced people or refugees are aged under 20. If they cannot get protection and food inside ex-Yugoslavia this winter they will move to other European countries.

Most of the refugees inside the former Yugoslavia are ethnic Bosnians. By the end of July they accounted for 1,285,000 out of 1,884,500. Almost half of them (681,000) are still in Bosnia itself.

But many of them might want to get out as soon as there is an opportunity. The *Guardian* (August 8, 1992) gave an example of what some of them experience:

"Mortars crashed into a Sarajevo hotel filled with refugees last night, setting it ablaze and sending frightened people screaming into darkened streets. At least two people died. Hours after the bombs exploded on the roof, the Hotel Europe, home to 1,500 refugees, was still burning.

"A series of other explosions crackled around Sarajevo. Some reports from the scene said that when refugees fled from the burning building, snipers opened fire on them".

Hypocrisy and feigned surprise

According to Jonathan Eyal, director of studies at the Royal United Services Institute, this refugee crisis "was utterly predictable and is unlikely to be solved unless the mixture of hypocrisy and feigned surprise adopted by many European governments is quickly abandoned.

"Most knew what to expect for some time: since early 1991 intelligence reports warned about the dangers of a Yugoslav civil war and forecast a refugee crisis would be one of the most

Snapshots from Europe

Denmark: the government's decision that it was safe to send Palestinians back to Lebanon against their will led 60 Palestinians to seek sanctuary in a church in Copenhagen. A public campaign made the opposition parties pass legislation in March 1992 forcing the minority government to allow a number of stateless Palestinians to remain in the country on an exceptional basis.

France: On September 25, 1991, work permits were abolished for all asylum seekers arriving in France. The measure has not been accompanied by any steps towards increasing social or financial benefits.

Article 8 of a new bill which provided for the setting up of a transit zone at airports and the possibility of administrative detention for up to 30 days without any intervention by a judicial authority has been declared inconsistent with the French constitution.

Germany: Amendments to the Asylum law reducing the limited time available to lodge an appeal have evoked much criticism from non-governmental organizations, lawyers, judges and the UNHCR. The amendments might be unconstitutional. Following the recent wave of neo-fascist attacks on refugee hostels, cross-party support for a drastic tightening of Germany's historically relatively liberal asylum laws has been strengthened.

Netherlands: Amendments to the Aliens Law have been made. Asylum applications which have been declared to be manifestly unfounded can now lead to detention during the asylum period. Failing to turn up for an interview can also lead to detention.

Ratification of the Schengen Convention standardizing external border controls for the EC has been criticized in the Dutch parliament both on questions of content and the lack of democratic and judicial control.

Luxembourg: The government has terminated an existing labour agreement with Yugoslavia due to the fear of many more Yugoslavians arriving as a result of the war.

Switzerland: As of January 1992, as soon as an asylum seeker finds a job, 7% of the salary is deducted on a monthly basis for the purpose of reimbursing the government for public relief received and as a deposit for possible deportation costs.

Sweden: Immigrant, migrant and refugee organizations called for all workers of an immigrant background to stop work for one hour in February as a protest to show the contribution of immigrants to working life and to protest against racist attacks and xenophobia. Many Swedish nationals of no immigrant background joined the symbolic strike; underground trains stopped for five minutes and government offices joined the protest.

Norway: A demonstration was organized on the occasion of a speech by racist Mr. Arne Myrdd in November 1991. The 10,000 strong crowd turned their backs on him when he began his address. The event was declared a victory for anti-racists by the media. ★

immediate and pressing outcomes...

"Western governments, alarmed by a sharp rise in refugee applications during the last two years, responded in the only way they knew — by tightening border controls, bringing in cumbersome visa requirements and draconian entry conditions" (*The Guardian*, July 7, 1992).

Of the more than 400,000 refugees who have left the former Yugoslavia, Germany has received almost half. Hungary, Austria and Sweden have taken around 50,000 while Britain has taken around 2,000.

Britain has been criticized abroad and by Members of Parliament from all

parties for not taking enough refugees. Religious leaders in the UK (Christians, Muslims, Jews and Hindus) have joined together in a plea to help the most vulnerable victims of the conflict (*The Observer*, August 16, 1992).

It has been estimated that it will cost \$1bn just to look after the refugees in ex-Yugoslavia this winter. If the conflict escalates this figure will increase.

If war comes to Kosovo, millions could flee into poverty-stricken Albania, the European country least able to withstand the influx. ★

*Finn Jensen works for the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (UK).

Cracking the three irons

THE March meeting of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) politburo decided that 'left deviationism' was a greater threat than that of the right. Translated, this means that the efforts to foster elements of capitalism in China and open the country to outside economic pressures will be stepped up. One aspect of these efforts are attempts to do away with guaranteed jobs and food supplies. But this attack on cherished rights and privileges is not going unresisted.

ZHANG KAI*

GOVERNMENT propaganda on Cracking the Three Irons (Iron Armchairs, Iron Wages, Iron Bowls) was enthusiastically launched early this year, but has recently subsided. The term now is seldom referred to, which might have to do with broad resentment against the attacks on workers' rights.

The target of the Iron Armchairs is supposedly the secure positions and privileges of cadres in the enterprises. What was proposed was the election of the leadership by the workers. But instead of bringing about the better development of the economy and workers' self-management, the campaign was from the start restricted because only medium and low ranking cadres have been reshuffled, and high ranking cadres in general are unscathed, except for a very small number of enterprise managers that are running a big deficit.

The cracking of Iron Bowls and Iron Wages, however, is a direct attack on the rights of workers in general. Acute competition has been incited by workers who are promoted or demoted according to their labour intensity, skills, responsibility and productivity. Except for the strongest, who get promotion and better wages, workers in general receive lower wages, and the weak are stranded in dismissals and unemployment. In enterprises where such reforms are conducted, about 20% of the workers are dismissed.

According to official reports, the enterprise reforms have been vigorously implemented from the start of 1992. A ruthless slogan was adopted: "To crack the Three Irons with the Three Irons". The latter, the Iron Heart, Iron Face and Iron Wrist, are to be employed in cracking the Iron Armchairs, Bowls and Wages. One example of what the slogan means in practice comes

* This article first appeared in the August 25, 1992 issue of *October Review*, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong.

from Zhuzhou City, Hunan Province: here 60 enterprises could not meet the efficiency target set and wages were cut by up to 20%. This means an annual average wage cut of 400 yuan for the 40,000 workers in these enterprises. The China News Agency reported on February 10 that "this act caused serious repercussions across the province". Reuters, on April 14, quoted the English-language *China Daily* as reporting that the State Council had announced a decision to allow enterprises to manage and decide on wages. This measure is aimed at ending the standardization of wages for workers in state enterprises.

Increase in redundancies

As for the Iron Bowls, *Ming Pao* reported on April 30 that, according to officials in the Shanghai government, there has been a sharp increase in the redundant staff screened out in the streamlining of 220 state enterprises undergoing the reform. Over one million workers in Shanghai have joined the ranks of those staying in a job without work. This is a startling figure, since there are five million workers in Shanghai, four million of them employed by state enterprises.

The *China Daily* quoted the Bureau on Economy and Trade (BET), which is under the State Council, to the effect that, in order to activate the state enterprises, over 1.4 million workers have already been dismissed this year. This is 1% of the total urban workforce of China. The BET estimated that there are 10 million redundant staff throughout the country (*Ming Pao*, June 16, 1992). Guangdong Province is also trying to catch up with the reforms. In the Provincial Labour Conference held in late January, it was decided that the labour contract system will be fully implemented throughout the province within three years.

Workers have reacted to these attacks.

The *Chinese Woman* quoted a woman worker in Shanghai as saying "the reform should bring workers a sense of security, otherwise, it will not gain the support of the majority of workers". The magazine said that most women workers in state enterprises in Shanghai felt the same way. Some workers complained that they were forced to sign contracts which did not give them job security and were thus unjust and flavoured with capitalism.

Some workers have responded with extreme actions. Among reported incidents are:

1. In a state enterprise in Nanjing, a woman worker asked for sick leave and scuffles with the manager began. The worker staged a sit-in in the office, was fired by the manager, and the case went before the District Labour Tribunal which directed the management to re-employ the worker since she was indeed ill and her claim had been justified. The management refused on the grounds that the enterprise's autonomy had been infringed. The case was brought to court. The Jiangsu Provincial Labour Union pronounced its support for the worker in this case.

2. In the first two months of the reform in Jinhua City, Zhejiang Province, seven managers and directors were beaten up by workers who were transferred away. A director of a biochemical factory in Hefei was killed by a worker driving a vehicle. A worker in a factory in Yunnan Province did not get a wage increase; he drove a car into pedestrians, causing 34 casualties. A worker in Houma, Shanxi Province, shot the director of his factory because he had been dismissed. There have been other cases of management personnel being beaten up, wage protests and sabotage of productive equipment in Shenyang and Shanxi (*Ming Pao*, May 1, 1992).

3. In Jinjiang City, Liaoning Province, a worker in an oil refinery stabbed a leading cadre in his factory and was sentenced to death, suspended for two years. The case caused a great stir and quite a number of workers who felt their interests had been damaged by the reform took the opportunity to create a fuss, upbraiding and beating up the leadership, writing blackmail letters or smashing the windows of leading cadres (*China News Agency*, May 29, 1992). Liaoning is a heavy industrial centre. The Liaoning Daily reported that workers felt rising resentment of the reform because it will cause some to lose their jobs or part of their wages, and all workers will have to spend more on housing and medical care (Reuters, June 10, 1992).

4. Shanghai, the country's largest industrial city, has seen the strongest response from workers. The chief of the Public Security Bureau, in an interview with the *Shanghai Law Daily*, said that managers supporting the reform met with opposition

from the workers. There had been strikes, sit-ins, protests and disruptions of production. "Worker turmoil" and "violent resistance" occurred (AFP, June 15, 1992). Such resistance, according to the *Liaoning Daily*, had led the authorities to cease promoting the slogan of Cracking the Three Irons.

Since 1986 the government has been talking about streamlining the enterprises and breaking the Big Iron Rice-Boiler, but has been forced to proceed slowly owing to workers' resistance. The government announced that by the end of February this year 17.67 million workers were involved in enterprises carrying out reforms of personnel, wages and social security. This amounts to about 16% of all workers in state enterprises.

Patience and prudence

The May 28 editorial of the *People's Daily* quoted two instances of worker support for the reform. One was a worker's speech in support of the general lowering by one point of the wage scale for all workers at the Xuzhou Crane Factory. The other was the positive response of 25 older workers for a campaign to reorganize work for 20% of the workers at the Second Dyeing Factory in Tianjin. The editorial nonetheless added that the reform needed careful, prudent persuasion, and particular attention to the mood and sentiments of the workers; patient ideological and political work had to be conducted in matters that concerned the interests of the masses.

The secretary of the All-China General Labour Union, in a speech to the Work Conference on Conducting Ideological and Political Work among Workers, complained of the difficulty in ideologically persuading the workers (*Workers' Daily*, June 15, 1992). Workers' resistance has hindered the smooth implementation of government reforms of wages and the labour system. Fiercer resistance can be expected if the attempt is made to privatize state enterprises. The Chinese working class has a tradition of struggles. It is 145 million strong and much better educated than before. However long years of repression under the bureaucratic rule of the CCP have weakened the workers' collective strength and the various attempts to organize independent unions, particularly in 1980 and 1989, have been ruthlessly crushed.

Due to the lack of organized resistance, workers have so far responded to the attacks on their rights by individual assaults on factory managers and directors. Such extreme measures reflect the workers' lack of channels to defend their rights and improve their conditions. It is urgent that the working class organize itself to become a strong force and intervene in social reforms. ★

War at the summit

THE acceptance by the Diet (the Polish parliament) on July 11, 1992 of the broad coalition government led by Hanna Suchocka has, for the time being, put an end to the longest and most bitter political crisis that the Polish Third Republic has experienced.

"I do not wish to speak of that which was bad. I wish to speak of the national agreement. Ours is an extremely difficult coalition" explained the new prime minister on the day of her nomination.¹

Hanna Suchocka enjoys the support of both the main party emerging from the tradition of the Solidarnosc trade union, the Democratic Union, of which she is a member — and by extension of the liberals — and of the Catholic right for her support for the law penalizing abortion and her traditionalist positions. She thus embodies in her own person the compromise that seeks to preserve the institutional framework that emerged from the collapse of Stalinism and has been perfected by the new political-parliamentary elites, who have been largely discredited by the recent political crises.

JAN MALEWSKI & JAROSLAW WARDEGA — July 15, 1992.*

NONETHELESS, her task will not be an easy one. While the main parties in the government are agreed on the need to continue along the road of the restoration of capitalism in Poland, their divergences are nevertheless numerous: they concern not only the delicate question of "de-Communization", which brought about the inglorious end of the Jan Olszewski government in June 1992, but also relations between church and state; the role of the state in the process of capitalist restoration; relations with foreign capital and its institutions; the respective place of so-called "national" values and the liberal tradition; and finally relations with the trade union movement.

Moreover, the parliamentary guerilla warfare in which all the parties have enthusiastically indulged has left open enmity between the ministers originating from the neo-liberal currents² and those of the Catholic-national right or Christian Democracy.³

The first woman prime minister in the history of the country must also take into account the pressure of the President of the Republic, Lech Walesa, who has profited from the latent political crisis to strengthen his position and place trusted aides in key posts: Krzysztof Skubiszewski at the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Andrzej Milczanowski at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Janus Onyszkiewicz at Defence.

After having won the "war at the summit" against Hanna Suchocka's predecessors — first by opposing Tadeusz Mazowiecki, in 1990 then in obtaining the dis-

* An analysis of the recent strikes in Poland will appear in the next issue of *IV*.

1. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, no. 161, July 10, 1992.

2. The Democratic Union of former prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki has 62 deputies in the Diet and controls four ministries (Defence, Labour, Finance and the Secretariat of the Government), as well as the post of prime minister; the Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD) of former prime minister and current minister in charge of relations with the EC, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, has 37 deputies in the Diet and has been given the ministries of State Administration, Post, Privatizations and Relations with the EC; finally, the Party of the Polish Economic Programme (PPG), the product of a split from the Beer-Lovers Party (PPP), has obtained the post of minister for the Promotion of Enterprises.

There are also three ministers from Popular Agreement, the most pro-liberal of the peasant parties, which originates from Rural Solidarnosc.

3. The Christian National Union (ZChN) of the president of the Diet, Wieslaw Chrzanowski, has 49 seats in the Diet and 6 ministers (Vice Prime Minister for the Economy, Planning, Justice, Education, Culture, Transport). Two other small groups are worth a mention here: the Party of Christian Democrats (PChD) with the post of vice prime minister charged with political questions, and the Christian Popular Party (SLCh) of agrarian tradition, with the ministries of Health and Industry.

missal of Jan Olszewski in June 1992 — Lech Walesa has tirelessly pursued his goal of reinforcing presidential power. The setting up in early July of a Commission of Order which brings together, under the presidential thumb, the heads of all the Polish state's "bands of armed men"⁴ has underlined the new relation of forces emerging from the recent crisis at the summit of the state.

Police pacify peasants

The first demonstration of the effectiveness of the new arrangement was given on July 9, when the police brutally "pacified" peasant supporters of the new organization Samoobrona (Self-Defence) — simultaneously a peasant trade union, political party and militia — who had blocked roads to demand the cancellation of their debts.

The nomination of the government coincided with a new rise of social tensions. In addition to the peasant mobilizations, which sought to encircle the capital and block its supplies, strikes were announced for July 20, 1992 in the mining sector and the copper works in Lower Silesia, as well as in the coal basin of Upper Silesia. Without threatening the existence of the new government, such a social climate can only increase its fragility, limit its margins of manoeuvre and diminish the favourable impression that a section of the public accords to new leaders.

The government's goal is to give the pro-capitalist political elites the time needed to find institutional solutions to the crisis and guarantee, in the longer term, the stability of the state. Thus, the Diet is working on a new electoral law which would put an end to the extreme fragmentation of the political scene and avoid a repetition of the "war at the summit" which has characterized the new Polish democracy since the end of the honeymoon period which the first government originating from Solidarnosc enjoyed.

If the Diet succeeds in deciding between proposals for a proportional system, under which the different political formations on the lists would have to cross a minimum threshold, and for a majority system, elections could be organized before the end of the year.

The election of October 1991 starkly revealed the crisis of the Polish transition. Two years of free market policies, primarily hitting those whose mobilizations had been the architects of the changes, has led to a growing popular scepticism about the new political scene — the strongest expression of this being the massive abstention rate (56.8% of the electorate) and the extreme fragmentation of the votes (none of the parties on the lists succeeded in winning more than 6% of registered

voters) at the recent elections.⁵

No stable majority could establish itself in the Diet which emerged from this election. The Olszewski government, formed at the end of 1991 after two months of futile attempts to form an alliance between the parties of the right — the Centre Alliance (PC) and Catholic Action (National Christian Union, ZChN) — experienced great trouble in finding majority support for its budget and fell into a growing paralysis, its parliamentary initiatives being systematically torpedoed by negative majorities, comprised of both the neo-liberal right and the post-Stalinist left.

Despite being built around the parties which had carried Lech Walesa to the presidency in 1990, the Olszewski government nonetheless rapidly entered into open conflict with the president.

The latter, attacked in the press by his former collaborators, and presented as an incompetent psychopath and a puppet in the hands of his former driver, Mieczyslaw Wachowski (now a minister of state), counter-attacked by taking it out on the government⁶ — first by dismissing the minister of defence, Jan Parys, then by demanding the resignation of the Olszewski government.

Caught between the pressure of the Diet and that of the president, the Prime Minister chose flight. On May 28, 1992, at the initiative of the deputy Janusz Korwin-Mikke, spokesperson of the ultra-liberal grouplet, the Union of Real Politics, the Diet voted through a resolution demanding that the Minister of the Interior provide full details on anybody exercising a public function who had collaborated with the political police between 1945 and 1990. Korwin-Mikke did not conceal the fact that he had agreed the text of the resolution with the Minister of the Interior, Antoni Macierewicz, a member of the ZChN.

Lists of agents

Although a significant minority of deputies immediately challenged the resolution and referred the matter to the Constitutional Tribunal, the Minister of the Interior immediately took the decision to publish the lists of presumed "agents". On June 1, 1992, the press, hostile to the government, made public a draft law on de-Communization prepared in secret by the Minister of the Interior.⁷ On June 4, Macierewicz submitted to the presidents of the parliamentary groups a list of 80 names, among them several people who had been historic leaders of Solidarnosc and political prisoners under the old regime, but also Leszek Moczulski (leader of the KPN, political prisoner between 1981 and 1986) and Wieslaw Chrzanowski (leader of Macierewicz's party, the ZChN and president of the Diet).

The next day, the lists appeared in the press. The same day Piotr Naimski, director of the Office of Protection of the State in Olszewski's government, put the Vistula garrisons of the Ministry of the Interior's forces on a state of alert.⁸

In the early morning of June 5, at the request of Lech Walesa and 50 deputies, the Diet voted down the Olszewski government — with the partisans of the latter not hesitating to present the conflict as opposing the "Communists and their agents" to the "true Poles".

But neither this, nor the immediate replacement by the President of the Ministers of Defence and the Interior, nor even the nomination by the Diet in the course of the afternoon of a new Prime Minister, put an end to the affair. The Constitutional Tribunal's decision on June 19 to suspend the famous Diet resolution as illegal defused some of the danger, but it has not calmed spirits.

Once the Pandora's box was opened, the accusations flew out. Lech Walesa, himself challenged for having signed some acts of collaboration when he was arrested in 1971 — something he had admitted in his memoirs — counter attacked by making public the deeds of an agent whose code name was quickly recognized as being the pseudonym of Zdzislaw Najder, former director of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe and longtime close collaborator of Walesa in his struggle for control of the Movement of Civic Committees — but who has since become a supporter of Olszewski.

Little by little, the whole of the political class and the highest office holders in the state have been implicated in a frenzy of interwoven accusations.

The old divisions inside the democratic opposition dating from the 1950s and 1970s — which are little understood by the population at large — have come back to the surface like so many phantoms.⁹

Adam Michnik has written: "The action begun by minister Macierewicz, with the agreement of Prime Minister Olszewski,

4. Namely, in addition to the new ministers of Defence and the Interior, the heads of the Office of Protection of the State (UOP — political police), of the police, the National Security Council, military training and the Vice-Prosecutor general.

5. See IV 217, November 25, 1991.

6. See the interviews given by his former spokesperson, Jaroslaw Kurski, with his collaborators and former collaborators, published under the title "The boss — before the last chapter" by *Gazeta Wyborcza*, no. 95, April 22, 1992.

7. This draft law envisaged banning from any public employment not only collaborators with the former regime's political police, but also all those who had exercised, in the past, any kind of leadership activity, even at the lowest level, such as cells of the political organizations of the old regime. The principal oppositionists of the 1960s and 1970s would thus be excluded under this law. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, no. 128, June 1, 1992.

8. This was revealed later. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, no. 139, June 13-14 1992.



has poisoned Polish political life for a long time. Now, we are going to find for a long time to come suspicions, defamations and calumnies. Nothing has been made explicit. But the Polish state has been made to look ridiculous. I would go further: a certain idea of Poland, which lasted a long time, which we honoured and saw as a title of glory — the ideals of solidarity, dignity and truth — has been dishonoured... The Polish state finds itself in danger and it is for this reason that the reaction of Walesa is justified.

"It is thus that we have entered the new phase of the "war at the summit", which began two years ago. It was then that the method of false defamations, unjustified accusations and hollow promises was for the first time employed, by the common agreement of the president and his current adversaries".¹⁰

The nomination to the post of Prime Minister on June 5 of Waldemar Pawlak, the young leader of the Peasant Party (PSL)¹¹, who is foreign to the Solidarnosc tradition, bears witness to the disarray among the new political elites. Only someone from outside the magic circle could form a majority and give the illusion of the continuity of state power.

The nightmare of which Adam Michnik spoke cannot be understood out of context. On the surface it appears to be the fruit of a settling of accounts between factions torn by political and personal rivalries, but its roots go deeper. Nor is it simply the heritage of the activities of the Stalinist political police over past decades.

The crisis of the new Polish state, born out of the transition negotiated in 1989 between the anaemic bureaucratic regime of General Jaruzelski and the leaders of the opposition, should not be confused with its surface appearance. The roots of the crisis lie in this state's orientation towards the construction of capitalism on the ruins of

so-called really-existing socialism, together with the policies followed for almost three years by the successive governments emerging from Solidarnosc.

The many corruption scandals among the new political personnel, their medieval mores,¹² and their very special fashion of conducting political debates only form the decor.

Although the new Polish state has been established little by little, it has all the same totally revolutionized society. The gradual character of its installa-

tion reflected the Stalinist bureaucracy's awareness of the complete bankruptcy of its regime and its fear of being swept into the streets.

Certainly, the bureaucracy believed itself capable of sharing power for a time with the Solidarnosc elites, and of using the latter to obtain Western aid while preserving the essentials of its own rule.

Illusions swept aside

These illusions were swept aside by social pressure, itself diverted and confiscated by the new regime. Thus the Polish workers' state, for a long time reduced to its shadow and hijacked by the bureaucracy, collapsed under the combined blows of the Polish working class and the pressure of the Western bourgeois institutions.

The collapse in January 1990 of the Polish United Workers Party — the Stalinist party and the essential cog of the old state apparatus — was both an effect and an accelerator of this process. The state of the old regime was replaced by a new state apparatus step by step: the partially free elections of June 1989; the nomination of a prime minister of Solidarnosc origin at the head of a coalition government in September 1989; the introduction of market economic mechanisms and the total liberalization of foreign trade in January 1990 under IMF and World Bank pressure; the purge of the repressive apparatuses of the state, and finally the dismissal of the ministers who had served under the old regime in summer 1990 and the presidential election of autumn 1990. The parliamentary elections of autumn 1991 put the final touch to this process.

It is clear that the change in the nature of the state does not mean that all the administrative apparatus of the old regime has been replaced. Far from it. But it has been put at the service of a qualitatively diffe-

rent political, economic and social orientation.

The old apparatus has served first to prettify the new "state of laws" seeking, on the one hand, to guarantee the individual liberties of citizens and, on the other to assure respect for private property.

Two laws, adopted on July 13 and coming into force on August 1, 1990, allowing the privatization of state enterprises and the creation of the Ministry of Privatizations, constituted the touchstone of this edifice. They permit the transformation of state enterprises into private companies with transfer of the shares forming the capital, their liquidation in case of a delicate financial situation or, finally, their hire-purchase.

It is worthy of note that a state enterprise can be transformed into a single private company, of whom the sole shareholder is the state, by the unilateral decision of the prime minister; a maximum delay of two years is then envisaged for the transfer of the shares held by the state to third parties.

On June 14, 1991 a new law on companies with foreign participation harmonized the legislation concerning private enterprises held entirely or partially by foreigners with that of the enterprises held by national capital and liberalized the rules concerning the repatriation of profits. Henceforth profits, after the payment of taxes, can be transferred abroad without any particular limitation.

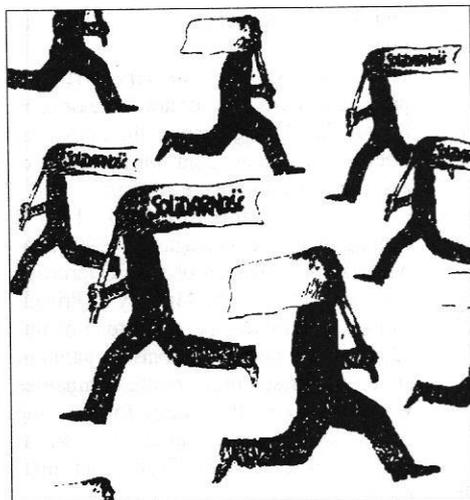
With the introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) in January 1992, and the changes in tax legislation in January 1991 the Polish tax system has been rendered coherent in terms of a neo-liberal economy. Finally the 1927 Labour Code has been changed to authorize collective dismissals and the old Code of Commerce (1934), of German inspiration, has been dusted off and restored. Thus, the legal edifice which constitutes the indispensable basis of "free enterprise", whose introduc-

9. In 1956 a conflict emerged between Jacek Kuron and Antoni Macierewicz inside the scout movement, the first seeking to make it a "red" organization linked to the October Left, whereas the second wished to organize an independent scout movement, linking up with the wartime tradition. In 1977, another divergence emerged between them inside the Committee for Workers' Defence (KOR): the first supported a strategy of "Finlandization" of Poland, while the second rejected any idea of negotiation with the regime.

10. A. Michnik, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, no. 133, June 6-7 1992.

11. Originating from the fusion of a minority of militants of Rural Solidarnosc with the "renovated" apparatus of the old satellite peasant party, the ZSL.

12. On this, it is necessary to mention an affair that made front page news recently. The Vice-President of the Diet, Andrzej Kern (PC) mobilized the police and the forces of justice to stop his 17 year old daughter from living with her boyfriend. The parents of the latter were arrested at night, subjected to a search and accused of kidnapping. Kern explained publicly that he could not tolerate his daughter living with a young man "who will be no better than a trader".



tion had begun prudently in 1989 under the last government originating from the Stalinist stable, was completed in 1991.¹³

Economy opened up

Parallel to these legal transformations, the successive governments of Solidarnosc origin have put the finishing touches to the opening up of the Polish economy to foreign trade.

The monopoly of foreign trade as well as central administrative planning had already been abolished, in essence, by the last government of Stalinist origin. It sufficed to streamline customs duties — which led to several scandals — and to assure the convertibility of the national currency, the zloty.

This was done with the support of the IMF in January 1990. The rate of exchange was fixed at 9,500 zlotys to the US dollar, and maintained for one year, despite a rate of inflation which hit almost 600% in 1990, allowing intrepid speculators to realize enormous profits by playing on the difference in interest rates between European Community and Polish banks.

Readjusted in 1991, then freed in 1992, the rate of exchange is currently 13,800 zlotys to the dollar, reflecting the differential inflation rates between Poland and the countries of the dollar zone.

Finally, the Polish banking system was reformed by the law of December 1989, which confirmed the separation of the National Bank of Poland, the central state bank, responsible for flotation and the central credit institution, and the other banks. These last are autonomous and self-financed units, granted a legal status and personality. This extremely liberal law had to be revised in October 1991 to reinforce central bank control, as the danger of bankruptcies began to darken the horizon.

Despite all these changes, one can still argue that the bulk of industrial production remains in the hands of the state, which is true. But, unlike under the preceding system, the state enterprises can be (and are!)

declared bankrupt when their economic results do not permit them to continue activity.

The neo-liberal blindness of the new Polish leaders, combined with the state's budget difficulties, has pushed them to act in an even more decisive manner in relation to their state sector than has generally been the case with the old capitalist states.

Thus, if the private sector, in the strict sense, still plays a secondary role in the Polish economy, the current transformation of the rules of the game and the replacement of an industry producing in great part use values by an industry oriented to the production of exchange values constitutes the beginning of a qualitative change of social relations and the relations of production.

Thirteen industrial and commercial enterprises are, for the moment, quoted on the Warsaw stock exchange, and a very much larger number of bonds put out by public and private companies have also been exchanged there for four years now.

According to the Central Office of Planning (of which only the name remains of the old institution) privatization progressed in 1991. The share of the Gross National Product (GNP) produced by this sector is now 33%. In retail trade 82.8% of sales are realized by the private sector; 24.1% in industry against 16.2% in 1989. In 1991, the private sector accounted for 55.2% of production in building and 23.7% of the value of transport services.¹⁴

These figures should, without doubt, be revised upwards, for it is estimated that nearly half of consumer goods are sold on the black market, and are thus not taken into account in statistics. Moreover, "the state monopoly in foreign trade has been partially broken by these [private] enterprises, as is shown by a boom in imports by private enterprises, small as well as medium-sized. This concerns, in particular, the rapidly developing consumer goods sector" writes *Zycie Gospodarcze*, reporting on a recent enquiry into the private sector.

The new private enterprises are, in general, run by small — indeed very small — capitalists. The average capital of the enterprises set up in 1990 and 1991 was hardly more than \$15,000 and came for the most part from new entrepreneurs. Of these latter 41.5% were former leading managers of the statized economy, while 21% were proprietors of other enterprises.¹⁵

Finally, in July 1992, the Bank of Export Development (BRE) issued shares, which are now available on the Warsaw stock exchange. Thus, the process of privatization of the banking system, which had already begun with the growth of banks of

foreign capital (eight, in June 1992)¹⁶ and of small private banks (13 in June 1992), has experienced a new impetus with the quotation of the first of them on the stock exchange.

Up to the end of 1991, around 14.5% of state enterprises had been affected by the process of privatization. Three quarters of these were privatized by being put into liquidation. It seems that the number of enterprises privatized in this manner is growing, whereas the sale of enterprises by issuing shares is tending to diminish.¹⁷

Tendency to privatization

There is a general tendency towards privatization in Poland, which goes together with a very grave economic crisis and is perceived by the new elites as a categorical imperative. The state is seeking to divest itself of its property at any price and there is serious discrimination in the conditions of functioning of those enterprises which are still state owned (in particular, heavier taxes than the private enterprises).

Such a situation is inevitable in a context of a deficit of disposable capital on the internal market and a weak inflow of foreign capital, and where successive governments have measured their success in terms of the number of enterprises passing into private sector hands.

Foreign capital is not rushing into Poland. And when it does, it is into particular sectors where each Western multinational seeks, in the first place, to occupy the terrain, even it means a temporary loss, so as to block access to potential competitors.

In Poland foreign capital has been involved more in securing potential market shares than in investments based on a calculation of immediate profitability. Thus, in 1991, Phillips bought the Polish constructor of light bulbs and neon lamps, Polam. And Fiat has just acquired, for a handful of dollars, a big stake in the car firm FSM, with which it has had cooperation agreements since the 1970s which envisaged, in particular, that FSM deliver its products to Fiat at prices inferior to its

13. See D. Heimerl, U. Plowiec, "Textes législatifs et réglementaires relatifs à l'économie polonaise de 1989 à 1991", in *Le Courrier des Pays de l'Est*, no. 367, March 1992.

14. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, no. 152, June 30, 1992.

15. According to the results of an analysis carried out by KIG in collaboration with the IBGR, the University of Lodz, the AWF of Cracow and the American University, reported by G. Garlinska, *Zycie Gospodarcze*, no. 27, July 5, 1992.

16. It is necessary finally to mention that three foreign banks — American Express, NMB Bank and the Société générale — have begun to open branches in Poland, limiting themselves, for the moment, to serving clients who possess accounts abroad.

17. According to W. Karpinska-Mizielska and T. Smuga, The process of transformation of property, in the IRISS report, quoted by *Zycie Gospodarcze* no. 22, May 31, 1992.

own costs of production.

Fiat, in its generosity, has agreed, in the context of this contract, to honour FSM's foreign debts, a good part of which are constituted by its debt to Fiat itself!¹⁸

Joint ventures accelerate

The entry of Fiat onto the Polish market has however speeded up the joint venture accords between the military industry and Mercedes and between the automobile factory FSR and Volkswagen, in both cases for the assembly of vans. Finally, negotiations are underway for the sale of the FSO car factory in Warsaw to General Motors. The interest of the car multinationals in the repurchase of Polish factories has been increased by the fact that the customs agreements signed between Poland and the EC mean that car manufacturers who invest a certain sum in Poland can benefit from a lifting of taxes on the import of vehicles into the country.

Another similar case of privatization concerns the purchase by the ABB multinational of three enterprises producing turbines which had been its direct competitors, in particular on certain Third World markets. This Swiss-Swedish monopoly immediately stopped production of the competitor turbines in Poland, reorganizing production to limit it to the local market.

Apart from these examples, direct foreign investment in Poland remains limited. The \$200 million invested by US capital essentially amounts to investments seeking to facilitate the flow of US production onto the local market and not to big productive investments.

The current economic crisis is to a large extent the direct product of the orientation which has been adopted. It is true that the Polish economy of the 1980s was not exactly flourishing: ageing machinery¹⁹; stagnant industrial production; a foreign debt in the neighbourhood of \$40 billion; a structure of international trade worthy of an under-developed country, without speaking of the agricultural crisis, the poverty and inflation which became hyper-inflation in 1989.

The economic policy of the new regime sought the suppression of hyper-inflation and an opening to the outside world; and some success has been obtained in this, even if it amounts to less than the promises made in 1989.

Inflation, which was running at more than 1200% at the end of 1989, was brought down to 600% in 1990 and 70% in 1991. The predictions for this year put it at around 50%. This reduction has essentially been achieved by lowering real wages in the public sector — by nearly 50% on average at the end of 1991 in relation to 1989 — which has led to a structural modifica-

tion of household consumption. In December 1989, unavoidable expenses (rent, energy, water) and food costs accounted for around 45% of the income of an average workers' household, whereas in June 1991 they represented 75 to 80%.²⁰

The deflationary policy has provoked a serious recession, with GNP falling between 17.8 and 20% in 1990-1991.²¹ The recession has been particularly sharp in industry, where production fell by 24% in 1990 and 12% in 1991.²²

Consequently, public enterprise debt has sharply increased, and it is estimated today that nearly a third of debts held by the banks cannot be repaid.

The Group of Seven (G-7), alarmed by the danger of a banking crash in one of the countries on the road to capitalist restoration, has just agreed to the transformation of the funds for the stabilization of the zloty agreed in 1990 into insurance funds for the restructuring of the debt of the Polish enterprises.

Another of the effects of the deflationary policy is that unemployment, still insignificant in Poland in September 1989, has just reached 2.2 million (or 12.2% of the population of working age); the government forecasts 3.5 million unemployed at the end of 1992 (or 19% of the active population).

Budget crisis provoked

This recession has provoked a crisis of state finances. The budget deficit is very large and now seems to be a structural phenomenon — despite the pressures of the IMF and the World Bank the new cuts in social expenditure seem quite simply unrealistic.

Finally, the foreign debt has not been reduced from what it was in 1989, despite a significant reduction of the debt agreed by the principal public creditors in 1990: it is currently at \$45.5 billion (in May 1992) whereas it was \$40 billion in 1989. Thus, apart from a degree of success in bringing down inflation, the economic policy carried out since 1989 could be summed up by the old anti-bureaucratic joke: "We were on the brink of the abyss but thanks to the farsighted policy of the new regime we have taken an immense step forward".

The comparison between the results obtained and the price paid — unequally shared among the population, for a small minority of the new bourgeoisie has become very much richer — is the basic cause of the crisis of the new Polish state. Emerging from the tradition of the workers' revolt of Solidarnosc, it has betrayed the hopes of the great majority of the people.

It is implementing a policy in the interests of the bourgeoisie which does not represent, for the moment, a great deal in

terms of social force in Poland. Subject to the diktats of the imperialist institutions, it cannot, nonetheless, hope for sufficient support from them to assure stability.

The social weakness of this state over-determines the weakness of the political forces represented in it and the absence of a social structure in which they can root themselves. Suspended in mid air, these political forces seek an ideology and are always ready to abandon one recipe for another.

But this weakness of the state, which the authoritarian plans can at best mask for a while, is counterbalanced by the destruction of the social tissue which had allowed the Polish workers to come to the fore in the 1980s. For, if one wants to speak of the success of capitalist restoration in Poland, it is in terms of the destruction of the combative potential of the workers.

The state of the trade union movement is evidence enough. It has, in the image of the parties, been reduced to an apparatus of full timers which manage for better or worse an essentially passive rank-and-file. In such conditions, the explosions of anger which come here or there are doomed to defeat.

The atomization of the workers increases, on the other hand, the bureaucratization of their organizations contributes to the alienation of their leaderships. These latter, integrated, in part at least, into the political pseudo-parties, are caught up in the same divisions cleavages and confusions. Their role is very often reduced to that of a means of transmitting the "war at the summit" to the base.

While, in 1989 and even at the beginning of 1990, the majority of workers were ready, in the name of change, to accept sacrifices, the subsequent absence of an overall movement by workers against the deterioration of their living and working conditions is not the result of illusions in the policies which have been implemented but of their absence the of hope of possibly changing it. Weak as the adversary is, it appears at the same time as all powerful and impossible to pin down. ★

18. *Gazeta Bankowa*, no. 24, June 14, 1992; *Polityka* no.22, May 30, 1992.

19. It is estimated today that 40% of the machinery installed in Poland date from before 1970 and that 40% dates from the period 1970-79.

20. B. Szopa, "Transformation of the system and living conditions of the people", *Praca i Zabezpieczenie Społeczne*, no. 3, 1992.

21. Calculations of Stefan Felbur in *Zycie Gospodarcze* no. 23, June 7, 1992.

22. According to some estimates, industrial production stopped falling in the first months of 1992, which would constitute a success.

From Sao Paulo to Managua

THE third meeting of the Sao Paulo Forum* took place in the Nicaraguan capital Managua from July 16 to 19, 1992, with 122 delegates representing 61 organizations from 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as 60 observers from all over the world. Its central theme was "the alternatives for development and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean".

ALFONSO MORO

THE declaration of Managua (see p. 20) is characterized by a clearly anti-imperialist content, and is in this respect substantially better than the results of the second meeting in Mexico in 1991. This time a series of definitions were put forward which can serve to shape the activity of the currents taking part in the Forum. Concretely, among eight elements, there is an initial attempt to tackle the false dichotomy resulting from the identification of capitalism and democracy which is currently so much in vogue and which underpins projects such as US president Bush's "Initiative for the Americas".

This theory holds that without the presence and dominance of the market economy, and without the continued application of the so-called structural adjustment programmes, our countries will continue to be condemned to permanent crisis and live in their ancient backwardness.

The reply to this vision is based on two observations: firstly the fact of the protracted economic crisis which descended on most imperialist countries in 1990 and which is accompanied by sharp rises in unemployment and the impoverishment of large sections of these countries' populations; and on the other, the certainty that the adjustment policies applied since 1982 in Latin America have not only not resulted in resolving the most serious problems but have added a new element that is simply perverse; that is to say, they have seen a destructuring of the economic and social tissue of our countries making them yet more dependent and vulnerable to the vagaries of the world capitalist market.

While this definition is important, there exists another which merits as much or more attention. Point III of the declaration (Elements for the defence of popular interests) states clearly that "... in order to change the nature of the traditional struc-

ture of production, or to defend those changes where they have been successfully made" is it necessary to fight against "structural adjustment policies whether orthodox or heterodox".

This statement implies a more or less veiled criticism of the economic policies pursued for example by the Nicaraguan Sandinistas in their last three years in government with catastrophic results for the majority of the population. There was the underlying hope that these measures, whether taken diluted or in pure form, could in the end give rise to a viable economic policy for our countries. For the same reason it is important that the declaration explicitly mentions that "the neoliberal project proposed for Latin America and the Caribbean does not allow for amendment" that is to say that it cannot be used as part of the design and working out of a radically different economic policy.

Concepts of democracy

There are other encouraging aspects in the declaration which reflect the discussions that took place in Managua even when they retain an inevitable tinge of heterogeneity. The incorporation of a series of observations on the left's concept of democracy is very important. Here there seems to be agreement on the need to push forward all forms of self-organization and popular participation, not only as something to pronounce on at meetings (before being forgotten after the revolution) but as an objective to be pursued permanently in the here and now.

Without such a strategic vision of the meaning of popular self-organization, and without taking into account the respect due from political organizations to social organizations, no alternative project is possible. The impact of attempts to "direct" the latter — which in practice flow from

instrumentalist and hegemonic intentions — inevitably means in the medium or long term the division and destruction of organizations which have different structures and objectives.

This experience is true both in the case of organizations built around a politico-military conception and those that have been able to work within the legal and institutional frameworks of various countries, independently of their size and social roots. This is one of the areas where the Latin American left is the weakest and the discussion on this point must continue alongside that of the development of an alternative economic strategy.

Still on the subject of the alternative economic project to be constructed, the Managua meeting took its first steps concerning various experiences of regional popular participation where one is certain to find the participation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Without really developing this necessary debate, the Declaration correctly asserts that "the sum of micro-economic tasks, however autonomous and popular they may be, do not in themselves amount to a national alternative".

That is to say, however important and necessary such experiences are for the accumulation of forces on the popular field they are not enough to break out of the circle of the capitalist system if they do not set as their objective advances in the formation of a national project which must go beyond a regional vision, however advanced this may be.

Customary practices

While the Managua meeting allowed the process of elaboration and reflection that began in Sao Paulo in 1990 to be continued, it also revealed the persistence of practices which have been customary among sections of the Latin American left, who often confuse pragmatic attitudes bordering on opportunism with a real internationalist vision which could be presented as a viable project not only to the population of one's own country but also to other peoples.

Two important facts marked the carrying through of the Third Meeting and caused tensions; the way in which they were resolved has set a bad precedent that could be repeated and whose consequences could be fatal for the survival of the Sao Paulo Forum.

On the initiative of the four Mexican

* The Sao Paulo Forum is an annual meeting of left wing political parties and movements of Latin America and the Caribbean. The first meeting took place in Sao Paulo in July 1990 at the initiative of the Workers Party (PT) of Brazil, hence the name. See IV 190 and 212 for reports of the two previous meetings.

parties represented in Managua [Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), the Workers Party (PT) and the Popular Socialist Party (PSP)], a proposal was put to the meeting for a declaration denouncing the latest electoral fraud perpetrated by the Mexican government in the elections for the governorship of the state of Michoacán that took place at the start of July.

Discussions and consultations over many hours allowed us to achieve a proposal which centred its denunciation on an aspect that would be central for all those at the meeting; the repeated violation by the Mexican government of such a basic democratic right as the right of the citizen to vote.

The problem was posed clearly; either the leftists gathered in Managua would make their own a demand which comes not only from Mexican political organizations but from that country's people or, for "tactical reasons" — valid or not (this is another question) — involving the relations which almost all left organizations in Latin America have with the Mexican government, to simply oppose any declaration that touches on the Mexican government and its party/state, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

Unwelcome guests

The pressure exercised in this respect by many organizations who said they would not sign resulted in the withdrawal of the proposal. However, what is more serious, the organizers of the meeting took it upon themselves to invite an "observer" who turned out to be a member of the Mexican PRI itself, who, although representing nothing inside the meeting, but with the agreement of the organizers, claimed that the elections in Mexico had been characterized by their "cleanness" for which reason he could see no grounds for issuing such a declaration.

The second case was no less disturbing. Among the observers at the meeting were official representatives of the Chinese Communist Party, the North Korean Party of Labour and the Iraqi Baath Party. The atmosphere of the discussion therefore became extremely tense when the representative of the Brazilian Party of Labour (PT) asked that, just as the meeting had already passed a declaration of solidarity with the people of Iraq, demanding the lifting of the blockade imposed after the Gulf War, the same meeting should also issue a declaration of "support for the Kurdish people, today suffering repression by the governments of Turkey and Iraq".

This declaration was approved in principle with votes against from the Cuban Communist Party, as well as abstentions by the Colombian ELN, FARC and CP,

the Communist Parties of Argentina and the Dominican Republic and the Socialist Party of Puerto Rico.

This democratic decision was then whisked away. The representatives of Saddam Hussein's government were invited, once again by the organizers of the event, to speak and give their mythical account of events, which had nothing to do with the situation of the Kurdish people and the respect of its human rights by the Iraqi government.

Although a new draft was proposed which the representative of the Brazilian



PT accepted in order to maintain the united character of the meeting, this turned out to be a futile gesture since we can find published in the July 20 number of the Sandinista daily *Barricada* all the declarations of international solidarity apart from the one which refers to the Kurds.

These events threw a sizeable shadow over the third meeting, revealing anti-democratic methods of functioning and a lack of internationalism on the part of several of the organizations represented there; this will have inevitable repercussions on future debates on the participants in the Sao Paulo Forum. It is clear that a rebirth of internationalism, which every one is pleading for, cannot arise on the basis of a narrow vision restricted to the frontiers of one country and which belongs to this or that organization in particular.

Either there will be a frank and open discussion on the implications of relations between states and the forces involved in the Forum or, sooner or later, it will be necessary to sacrifice one of the original

principles explicitly embodied in the Sao Paulo Declaration which states: "... active support for the defence of human rights and with popular democracy and sovereignty as strategic values confronting the forces of the socialist left and progressives with the challenge of constant renewal of their thinking and activity".

After the shock experienced by the international left and in particular that of Latin America after the fall of the bureaucratic dictatorships in eastern and central Europe and the events following the US invasion of Panama in December 1989 and the Gulf War of 1991, it is clear that a good proportion of our former certainties have disappeared and many questions have taken their place. Finding the answers to these questions will take time, and will without doubt require a renewed capacity for reflection and analysis. In the circumstances it would be impossible to ask the forces making up the Sao Paulo Forum to find immediate and global responses to the complex problems that today confront all organizations of the left, together and separately. But, having said this, some of the themes on which the exchange of opinions and discussion must advance in the future can be identified.

The problem of the state

Until now, little or nothing has been said about the problem of the state both in the capitalist societies and in the so-called transitional societies. If we look at the Declaration of Managua (and the same can be said of those produced in Sao Paulo and Mexico City) we can see that a more concrete analysis of the present day role of the state is almost absent. Of course some advances have been made, in denouncing the errors of both the ideas underlying a statist vision of politics and those of the neo-conservatives who see no role for the state in economic affairs. But the problem remains.

When reference is made to the need for the state to be democratized, we have also to state that this is the main issue that all experiences of revolt and revolution have had to confront without exception. How to avoid the bureaucratization and degeneration of those parts of the left that find themselves in the ambit of the state apparatus, through, for example, participation in parliament? Can one talk of a struggle for the democratization of the state independently of putting forward a project for a radical democratic rupture? What kind of balance-sheet can today be drawn of the left in our countries over the relation between the state, political organizations and social movements? How should the left pose the issue of the deprivatization of state activities? These are questions, which, as we have insisted, it will take

time to resolve, but it already clear that a real alternative development project (including the creation of a new popular, political and cultural project) will have to go hand in hand with the effort to work out possible answers.

If the question of the state merits a profound discussion, the same applies to the debate on a new international order which was raised by several organizations at the meeting. We think that the proposal is in itself valid and more necessary than ever, but the ways in which the idea is being presented are inadequate from every point of view.

In fact, if we read point VII of the declaration (alternatives and demands) we find a proposal for "a total reorientation of the policies and functioning of the IMF and World Bank". However it is clear a new international order must rest on quite a different type of organization. Just like the neo-liberal economic policy, neither the IMF, the WB nor similar institutions, whether providers of credit or not, can be reformed.

For popular sovereignty

THE third meeting of the Sao Paulo Forum at Managua ended with the adoption of the following declaration by the 61 organizations and political parties participating: we reproduce the most important extracts below.

DOCUMENT

AS SHOWN by its third meeting and the international recognition it has received, the Sao Paulo Forum has proved its usefulness as an instance for meetings and exchanges between the different democratic, nationalist, popular and socialist forces. Five hundred years after the invasion, the conquest and the colonization of Latin America, we hope not simply to continue five centuries of indigenous, black and popular resistance, by reaffirming the right of our peoples to liberty, sovereignty and social justice and development. We wish also, by the autonomous organization of the workers, in affirming our historic and cultural identity, and

This is a debate in which no confusion is possible, if we do not want to repeat the experiences of the mid-1970s when a good part of the international left embarked on a similar discussion, but failed to go beyond the Third Worldist vision and experienced defeats which are apparent to everyone today.

Finally, the relevance of the initiative taken by the Brazilian PT three years ago is shown today by the growing number of organizations, parties and social movements from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean and from various parts of Europe, Asia, the USA, Canada and the Middle East who were present at the third meeting, whether as members, guests or observers.

The fourth meeting of the Sao Paulo Forum will take place next year in Havana, Cuba; its central themes will be "The economic, political and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean" and "The relation between parties and social movements".★

through combative and creative action, to force our investment in the third millennium.

The Forum has shown the willingness to pursue the struggle for the definitive political and economic liberation of Latin America and the Caribbean, menaced by the new mechanisms of imperialist domination and oppression. It reaffirms the necessity of struggling for national liberation, social justice and democracy, in all their dimensions, not only political but also economic, social and cultural. It symbolizes the refusal of the great majority of Latin Americans to identify democracy with capitalism, modernization and submission...

An offensive from the North is taking place today under different forms against Latin America and the Caribbean aimed at accentuating its domination, by modifying and deepening the basic structures of dependent capitalism, and by imposing neo-liberal policies which have led to a growing deterioration of the living conditions of the people, a limitation of elementary rights, and the denationalization and complete opening of our countries to capital and to world production.

The international financial organisms controlled by the United States and the great imperialist powers, like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the Interamerican Bank for Development (IBD) play a key role in these attacks against popular interests, as do the utilization of the unjust and unpayable debt and the formation of economic and geopolitical blocs controlled by the great powers which wish to submit the

countries of the South...

The attempts to impose a new division of the world between the different monopolies of the main powers develops in a context of inter-imperialist conflicts and the world crisis. The oppressed and exploited peoples of the world must know how to take advantage [of this situation].

While we should not under-estimate the external factors which to a great extent are responsible for the extremely grave situation in which the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean live, it is necessary also to stress the responsibility of the internal elements in this situation. Sectors of the oligarchy and of big multinational capital insist on maintaining the links of dependence between the South and the North... to safeguard their common interests and keep control of power at the local or international level.

The neo-liberal offensive is also taking place on the cultural and ideological terrain; it seeks to dislocate the values of solidarity rooted in our society, imposing an individualist model of competition which opposes the one to the other in a struggle for survival. This limits again the social and political participation of our people.

The economic and political structural adjustment programmes, defined and imposed under the pressure of multilateral financial organisms, far from assuring social development, seek only to create the best conditions for dependent insertion, according to the needs of the imperialist interests of the economies... At the same time, the different forums and world and regional organizations are increasingly under the control of the United States and the other capitalist powers, which are seeking to consolidate a regional and world order in their own interests, and aiming to legitimate the role of world policeman for the United States, notably through the intermediary of the Security Council of the United Nations.

Defend popular interests

The search for popular and revolutionary alternatives must be linked with the capacity to encourage resistance to the neo-liberal policy and the creation of spaces of popular power. The neo-liberal project advanced for Latin America and the Caribbean cannot be amended, for its evil is rooted in the very nature of the unjust world economic order which it seeks to consolidate, and the model of society it aims to impose.

Only the broadest unity of all the left and the progressive forces of the world in all their diversity could bring about a definitive change more in accord with the demands of justice and peace. The economic content of an alternative model of

integration must start from inside the societies, from a struggle destined to go beyond the dominant structures and models and to eliminate monopolistic and oligarchic control, and from the construction of autonomous economic development oriented, in the first place, towards satisfying the elementary needs of the majority.

This could be done by an alliance between all the forces who have an interest in the elaboration of national projects for the construction of social justice, democracy and national liberation. Every process of authentic economic development passes through a change in the **social subjects of power**, for a just distribution of property and wealth, for the establishment of the power of the majority and for the reinforcement of civil society.

To achieve this, spaces for participation must be opened, both in the autonomous organization of the people and the state institutions, amplifying the influence of the great majority of the people. Social policies cannot be separated from economic policies.

To modify the character of the traditional productive structure, or to struggle for structural changes, it is necessary to combat the policies, orthodox or heterodox, of structural adjustment and to favour the development of the productive forces.

It is necessary to undertake active political work for the autonomous organization of the people under different forms and modes, starting from the base up to their national expressions. We must oppose the neo-liberal strategy which seeks to weaken the action and the political weight of the popular movement.

We should implement programmes which specifically guarantee measures allowing the full and equal integration of women in society, which recognize maternity as a social function and domestic labour as a function which produces wealth.

These programmes must permit the integration of women into the labour market and their appropriation of the intellectual, technological, political, cultural and material wealth of society and the elimination of oppressive social relations.

An authentically popular alternative must involve a programme of democratization which weakens and replaces the anti-democratic elected and non-elected institutions, and which, on new constitutional bases, allows the possibility of creating and developing an integral political, economic and social democracy.

A popular alternative must be prepared to assume the economic responsibilities monopolized by the employers' sectors. In a new institutional and structural framework, the people and the popular organizations must assume the roles of economic



"Bone, Fido, bone!"

management and leadership which facilitate the necessary transformations. For that, information, transparency, public debate and the development of forms of local and national popular participation are essential. These forms of participation are only viable in the context of a project of global transformation for a new society.

Popular participation in the elaboration, leadership, management and control of strategic decisions depends on the existence of a clear project of national development on which efforts can be concentrated.

The accumulation of micro-economic projects, even if these latter are very autonomous and popular, does not constitute in itself a national alternative as such. The state must constitute a place for the participation and power of national decision, inasmuch as it is obliged to play a central role in the regulation and promotion of social equality, without abandoning the direction of the economy to the will of the market.

We must resume the struggle of our indigenous peoples and nations, by breaking with the ancestral submission, with the goal of creating conditions which permit the construction of multinational societies and states. This is a central factor in popular development.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the autonomy of the indigenous peoples and ethnic groups, socially and culturally structured, requires proper economic bases and appropriate forms of political representation, as an indispensable part of any

project for democratic participation. The rights of the Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in the United States must be taken on, in militant fashion, by all our movements and parties, through supporting their demands and their protests in common with the revolt of the black minorities and the struggles of the most impoverished sectors, vigorously demanding the end of discrimination, exploitation, exclusion and repression.

The integration of peoples

The Initiative for the Americas and the Free Trade Treaty represent an attack on democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean; they grant increased power to the multinational enterprises to take decisions which have direct repercussions in the areas of education, health and other services indispensable for the improvement of the quality of life.

[We] reaffirm that any alternative project or any programme of political action should take into account the harmful role of the interventionist policy of the United States.

The success [of an alternative project of integration of the peoples] can be seriously compromised by the problem of the foreign debt... The payment of the debt continues to deepen poverty and block the investments necessary for economic growth, technical progress and social justice. Integration would demand the search for proper mechanisms of joint negotiation in response to the unity of the creditors.

The "legitimation" of the interventionist policy

Under the pretext [of the struggle against the drugs trade and terrorism] the United States organizes military campaigns in the Andes region, and reinforces the repressive capacity of the security and spying structures in the countries of our region.

The armed policy traditionally employed by the United States against our peoples has now been legitimated by the illegal judgement of the Supreme Court of the United States which, through a series of extradition demands, justifies the detention of those who the Washington government considers as having committed a crime. We raise our voices together with the other forces that defend legality, to denounce this new attempt to impose the rule of the strongest in international relations, through flagrantly violating national sovereignty and international law. We demand the annulment of this illegitimate claim by the legally competent world and regional organisms, as well as the immediate repatriation of the detainees.

The aggressive and increasingly hostile policy of the United States government towards the people and government of Cuba, and its new attempts to strengthen the economic blockade against this sovereign nation, constitute an affront to the national sovereignty of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and an offence to the dignity of their peoples. We affirm our support for the right of the people and the Cuban government to defend their will to pursue the construction of socialism in their country. We mobilize with the people of the region and of the world to contribute to the defence of this sister nation, by demanding of all governments that they do not give in to

the imperialist pressures seeking to make an obstacle to links of cooperation with Cuba.

For non-intervention

We call for the construction of a new international political and economic order, different to that which is being imposed today under the hegemony of the United States and the capitalist powers, which would allow:

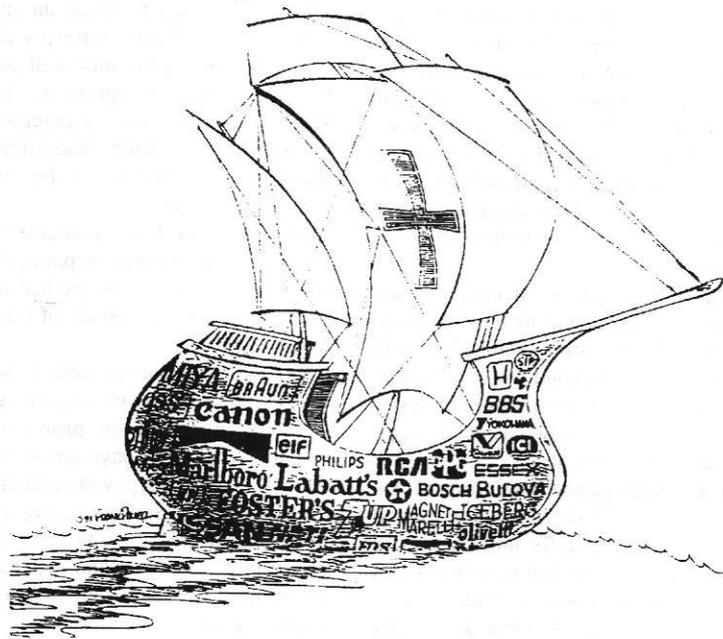
- The democratization of the international organisms and especially the United Nations, by changing its current norms of functioning which allow the hegemonic abuse of the Security Council...
- The definite resolution of the grave problem of the foreign debt, through its cancellation...
- The modification of the current regime of unequal exchange between the developed countries and those of the South;
- A total reorientation of the policies and functions of the IMF and the World Bank, redefining the mechanisms of decision making inside them;
- The adoption of economic policies and models of development which guarantee the preservation of the environment, by putting an end to ecological devastation and which link the struggle for the environment with the struggle against poverty;
- The recognition of the ecological debt of the countries of the developed capitalist world towards the countries of the South;
- The reallocation of the military expenditures of the great powers to the development of the South, thus encouraging world disarmament;
- The democratization of the mechanisms of information and of world communication;

- Respect of national sovereignty and the principles of non-intervention and of political solutions of the differences between nations;

The Sao Paulo forum demands;

- An immediate end to the illegal and immoral blockade against Cuba and massive international economic aid to alleviate the harmful consequences of more than 30 years of blockade.
- The handing back of [the US military base at] Guantanamo to Cuba.
- The re-establishment of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president of Haiti.
- The re-establishment of the democratic rights denied to Peru and the election of a sovereign constituent assembly;
- The scrupulous respect by the government of El Salvador of the peace accords signed with the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN);
- The acceleration of the process of negotiation in Guatemala;
- The immediate halt of all interference or intrusion by the United States in the internal affairs of Nicaragua, as well as the end of the pressures which weigh on the future policies of this nation to dismantle the consequences of the Sandinista popular revolution;
- The non-recognition of the illegitimate government imposed on Panama by the US invasion, the withdrawal of all US troops from this country and the full and complete respecting of the Torrijos-Carter accords;¹
- Respect of the right of the brother people of Puerto Rico to free self-determination and independence as well as the closing of the military bases on their territory;
- The total eradication of colonialism in the Caribbean and the dismantling of the foreign military bases in this region, so that the right to self-determination and independence of those countries and territories which still suffer from colonial domination in Latin America and the Caribbean can be exercised;
- The pursuit of the process of negotiations for a political and non-military solution to the Colombian internal conflict and the rapid resumption of the dialogue between the government and the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordination;
- The closure of the military bases of the United States in Honduras.

Managua, July 19, 1992. ★



1. The Torrijos-Carter accords were signed in 1979 by the then presidents of the United States and of Panama, respectively Jimmy Carter and Omar Torrijos. They provided for the return of the canal to Panamanian sovereignty. The US military intervention of December 1989, which took place under the pretext of arresting Panamanian president Noriega, was linked to the approach of the deadline for the return of the canal.

Socialism and the future

WHAT ARE the prospects for socialism after the collapse of the self-styled socialist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe? In the following article Ernest Mandel, an internationally known Marxist scholar and a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, gives his answer.

This text is based on the speech Mandel delivered to the third meeting of the San Paulo Forum held in Managua, Nicaragua this July.

ERNEST MANDEL

SINCE the mid-1970s a deterioration of the balance of forces between the classes has taken place on a world-wide scale. The main reason has been the onset of a long-lasting depressive wave in the capitalist economy with a continuing increase in unemployment. In the imperialist countries, unemployment has increased from 10 to 50 million people; in the Third World it has reached 500 million. In many of the latter countries this means that 50% or more of the population find themselves without work.

This massive rise in unemployment and in the fear of unemployment among those who have jobs, has weakened the working class and facilitated the world-wide capitalist offensive aimed at increasing the rate of profit through pushing down real wages, and cutting social and infrastructural costs. The neo-liberal and neo-conservative offensive is only the ideological expression of this social and economic offensive.

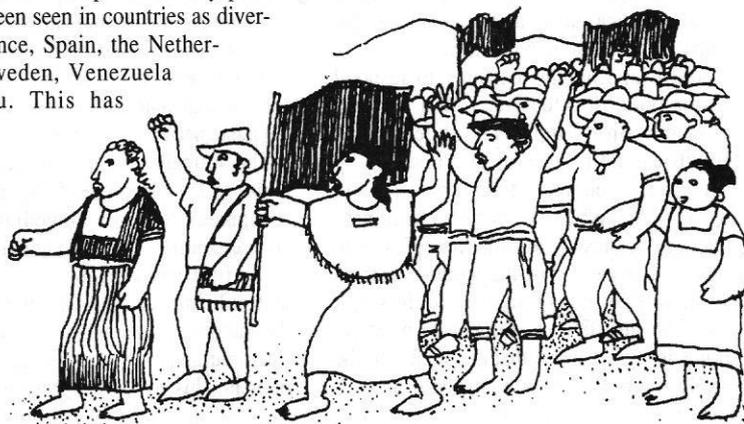
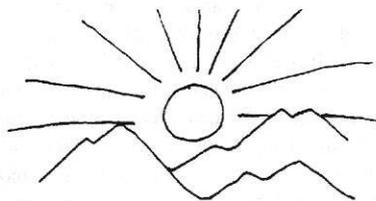
The large majority of the leaderships of the mass parties who claim to be socialist have capitulated before this capitalist offensive, and have accepted austerity policies; this has been seen in countries as diverse as France, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Venezuela and Peru. This has

disoriented the working class and, during a whole period, has made it more difficult for the masses to undertake defensive struggles.

Crisis of credibility

This capitulation of the Social Democracy has been coupled with the ideological and political impact of the crisis of the systems in Eastern Europe, the ex-Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and in Indochina, which is fomenting a profound and near universal crisis of the credibility of socialism.

In the eyes of the great majority of the population of the planet, the two principal historical experiences in constructing a classless society, the Stalinist/post-Stalinist/Maoist and the Social Democratic, have failed.



Of course, the masses understand very well that this is the failure of an overall radical social objective. But that does not imply a negative assessment of the important concrete changes in social reality in favor of the exploited that have taken place. In this latter sense, the balance sheet of more than 150 years of the activity of the international worker's movement and all its tendencies, remains positive.

But this is not the same as a belief by millions of workers that all immediate struggles will increasingly lead to the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the advent of a classless society without exploitation, oppression, injustice or mass violence. In the absence of such a conviction, immediate struggles are fragmented and discontinued, without overall political objectives.

The political initiative is in the hands of imperialism, the bourgeoisie and its agents. This is clear from what is happening in Eastern Europe where the fall of the bureaucratic dictatorships under the impact of broad mass struggles has led not to a political initiative in the direction of socialism but rather, towards the restoration of capitalism. The same thing is beginning to happen in the ex-Soviet Union.

Stalinism and Marxism

The masses in Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union, not to mention countries like Cambodia, identify the Stalinist and post-Stalinist dictatorship with Marxism and Socialism, and they reject all of these equally. Stalin murdered a million Communists and repressed millions of workers and peasants.

This was not the product of Marxism, socialism or of the revolution; it was the result of a bloody counter-revolution. But the fact that the masses still see these things differently is an objective fact that bears heavily on international political and social realities.

This crisis of the credibility of socialism explains the principal contradiction of the world situation at a time when the masses are fighting in many countries, often on a larger scale than ever before.

On the one hand, imperialism and the international bourgeoisie are not capable of crushing the workers movement as they did in the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s in the big cities of Europe and Japan and in many other countries. But, on the other, the working masses are not yet prepared to fight for a global anti-capitalist solution. For this reason we are in a period of world-wide crisis and disorder in which neither one of the principal social classes is capable of assuring its historical victory.

The principal task of socialists and communists is to try to restore the credibility of socialism in the consciousness of millions

The Lesbian and Gay Struggle in South Africa Today

TANYA Chan-San is a lesbian and gay rights activist in Johannesburg, South Africa. IV interviewed her in July during a visit to Paris.

CAN you tell us something about your organization?

I work for an organization called GLO — the Gay and Lesbian Organization of South Africa, in which there are more gay men than lesbians. It is a non-racial organization and contrary to other lesbian and gay organizations, we encourage our members to be members of political organizations.

One of our members, Simon Nkoli, was in an important trial, the so-called Delmas trial. He was a member of a mainly white gay organization which did not want to support him in this trial — so GLO was formed. Simon was not out as a gay man, but the prosecution raised it, trying to imply that he was gay and therefore evil. There was a campaign and he and 14 others were acquitted.

Our organization exists in the Witwatersrand region, which takes in Johannesburg, Soweto and four townships along the Rand. We have contact with other groups in the Transvaal. There are two groups in Cape Town; one which is solely an activist group and another which also gets involved in social functions. There is also a lesbian-only group in Durban. GLO, the Cape Town groups and the Durban group work on campaigns together.

Because of the distance involved, it is difficult to coordinate, but we are hoping to form a national organization.

■ What are the prevailing cultural views of lesbian and gay sexuality in South Africa?

In South Africa, the apartheid system is marked by a very strong Calvinist ethos. Gay men are criminalized — sodomy is illegal; lesbians are not criminalized, but there is an age of consent which is 16 for heterosexuals, 18 for gay men and 19 for lesbians.

There is a strong Christian fundamentalist current in South African society, including in the Black society, which is very vocal and is supported by the government. Their very oppressive views on homosexuality have been made widely known. They claim that there is no homosexuality

in the Black culture, that it is a product of Western decadence and of course they hold that it is abnormal and evil.

The broader population reflects these views.

■ And what about the anti-apartheid movement?

Working within the anti-apartheid political organizations as an openly gay man or lesbian has proved extremely difficult. One of the few successes we have had has been in some ANC (African National Congress) branches and this has only come about through long involvement in grassroots struggle in the old UDF [United Democratic Front — the umbrella anti-apartheid organization before the unbanning of the ANC and other organizations] movement.

There has been little support from the left and far left organizations, who avoid the issue. The PAC (Pan-African Congress), AZAPO (Azanian People's Organization) and sections of the ANC have moved gay and lesbian rights down the agenda, saying that it can't be an issue now, only after the revolution.

No organization has come out in full support of our cause. The ANC Charter contains a clause against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but this is part of a catch-all clause which includes all other human rights. The real commitment is very vague.

GLO members have worked in different organizations and have tried to put lesbian and gay liberation on the agenda. We have tried with the PAC and also with WOSA (Workers Organization for Socialist Action). Even in the latter this has not been easy. The culture here is very macho and socialist men may be very committed socialists but are still male chauvinist and very homophobic.

In reality there is no substantial support. The ANC pays lip service to keep foreign support. The PAC is out-and-out macho and is open about it. The far left organizations have not yet made a commitment. WOSA has supported our marches and campaigns, but we do not find this enough; we need support all the year round.

We are part of an inner city committee, since we are residents and here of course we work alongside the political organizations.

■ What about the trade unions?

We have very strong links with the domestic workers union — I don't know who is more marginalized! A presentation has been made to COSATU so the issue of lesbian and gay rights will come up. We have also tried to get it on the agenda as part of the issue of conditions at work.

■ Have you had any positive support from the Churches?

In Holland I met a lesbian minister from the Dutch Reformed Church; they have a positive policy on homosexuality. Indeed, the South African branch of the Dutch Reformed Church threatened to withdraw from the international Reformed Church because they thought that the people in the Netherlands had gone too far!

■ Can you tell us about some of your campaigns?

At Winnie Mandela's trial the defence tried to equate homosexuality with sexual abuse. Her supporters were outside carrying placards saying "There is no Black homosexuality". We wrote an Open Letter to the ANC and others pointing out the contradiction between this and the statement in the ANC's programme about sexual orientation.

We got no reply from the ANC, but branches throughout the country sent messages of support. That was at least a victory from the point of view of publicity and education on the issue.

We have also been involved in campaigns in defence of people who have been fired because they are HIV positive. This is still in the test case stage which gets lots of publicity.

The first sittings of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA — a forum involving the South African government, the ANC and other organizations in discussions on the country's future) called for submissions, so we made one on gay and lesbian rights.

Out of that came a campaign to draw up guidelines on gay and lesbian rights to provide a point of reference on the issue; like most South Africans we are wary of the courts. The courts here tend to refer to American decisions in test cases — and the US courts are often very conservative.

In drawing up the guidelines we have gone around bars and so on, and have had a big response in terms of suggestions, especially from the Black community. On the whole conservative white people — and anyone else with enough money, even if they are lesbian and gay — don't consider themselves oppressed and don't want

to get involved.

■ What is the situation with regard to AIDS and HIV?

In 1989, tests were carried out on pregnant women in one of the big hospitals. One in ten women tested positive. The government campaign is very moralistic; "don't have sex, say no" and in favour of monogamy and sex within marriage. After all sex is only for procreation, so what is all this fumbling around?

They also hand out free condoms at all family planning clinics, but there is no education about the condom. In terms of the South African situation women are in such a submissive role that there is no time to negotiate the use of a condom. A lot of rural African women come to the cities. Their explanation of how sex occurs is that the woman sleeps on the floor, while the man sleeps on the bed. When the man wants sex he gives her a kick and when it's over she gets back down onto the floor. The women say "where in all of that am I going to introduce the condom?" There is no discussion about it.

There is also the tradition that a woman must prove she is fertile before she can find a husband. A lot of young girls are pressurized into having sex and getting pregnant. If she does have a child, and especially a male child, her future is guaranteed. There is no education around that; the posters all say "be good girls and don't have sex".

AIDS is a disease which affects Black heterosexuals and the government is not really concerned. There was one hostel for terminally ill AIDS patients but it had to close for lack of funding. Another was opened in a very conservative area, but the residents petitioned and lobbied and fire-bombed the house of the priest in charge until the plan was abandoned.

Many domestic workers are forced to wear gloves and are being taken for tests without their consent. There is a shelter where women have come saying: "I've worked for this family for 30 years and then I tested positive and they sacked me." These women have no insurance, nothing and probably do not know how to do anything other than domestic work. They have no legal recourse. This is one of the issues we have worked with the domestic workers on.

■ What is the state of the South African women's movement?

The women's movement in South Africa is just starting. The literature we get from, for example, the US doesn't apply. A National Women's Coalition has recently been formed which we hope will include everyone from the lesbians to the domestic workers. The ANC women are dominant — they are well organized and vocal. We

have formed a lesbian caucus and are fighting for its recognition.

The fact is that the roles of most women in South Africa are those of mother and wife. They don't see themselves as taking the lead in politics. But the Coalition

seems to be drawing in women at the grassroots who have been out there working on their own, and hopefully we are seeing a trend to form an organization which does not only pass resolutions but also acts on them. ★

George Novack: 1905-1992

GEORGE Novack, a leader of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party (SWP) since the mid 1930's and a founding member of the Fourth International, died in New York City July 30, after a brief illness. He was 86. Novack was a prominent figure in numerous defense committees during six decades of political activity and the author or editor of some fifteen books on history and philosophy.

Born in Boston on August 5, 1905, Novack attended Harvard University from 1922 to 1927. With the onset of the Great Depression, he was drawn around a circle of radical writers and academics, associated with the *Menorah Journal*, that included Herbert Solow, Clifton Fadiman, Diana Trilling, Sidney Hook, and others. In the early 1930's Novack wrote for the *New Republic* and the *Nation* and became active in the Scottsboro and other defense cases through the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners.

In 1933 he joined the Communist League of America, predecessor of the Socialist Workers Party, attracted to its response to the fascist victory in Germany that year. He remained in the SWP until his death, serving on its National Committee from 1940 until 1972. Novack was for many years a writer and editor for the Militant newsweekly, the magazines *New International*, *International Socialist Review*, *Intercontinental Press*, and other socialist publications.

As secretary for the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky, Novack was part of the delegation that met the Russian revolutionary leader in Mexico when he arrived by ship in January 1937 for his last exile. Later that year, Novack helped organize the International Commission of Inquiry headed by John Dewey that convened in Mexico to investigate the charges against Trotsky in the Stalin regime's Moscow trials. The commission found the charges baseless.

Novack then served as the national secretary of the Civil Rights Defense Committee, which mobilized opposition to the federal government's first Smith Act indictments in 1940. The trial ended in December 1941 with the conviction of James P. Cannon, Farrell Dobbs and 16 other leaders of the SWP and Minneapolis General Drivers union for their antiwar activities. They served from twelve to eighteen months in federal prison.

In subsequent years, Novack played a prominent part in many other civil liberties fights, from the McCarthy period through the SWP's civil suit against spying and disruption by the FBI and other government agencies filed in 1973. Novack was a plaintiff and architect of that suit, which ended in 1986 with a federal court ruling favorable to the plaintiffs.

Novack's books, mostly published by Pathfinder Press, include *Understanding History, Democracy and Revolution, Pragmatism versus Marxism, Empiricism and its Evolution, The Origins of Materialism, America's Revolutionary Heritage* and *Polemics in Marxist Philosophy*. His works have been translated into Spanish, Turkish, Greek, Gujarati and other languages.

Novack lived most of his adult life in New York City. He also lived in Minneapolis (1941), Detroit (1942-43), Los Angeles (1951-53), and Paris and London (1951-53).

His wife and collaborator, Evelyn Reed, author of *Women's Evolution* and other books on women's liberation, died in 1979. ★

Racist attacks shake Germany

AUGUST 25, 1992 will go down as a notorious date in recent German history. On that day some 2,500 fascists and a jubilant crowd of thousands of onlookers succeeded in forcing refugees to leave their hostel in Rostock in East Germany.

On the same day, leaders of the opposition Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in spite of resistance from the party rank and file, made it known that they would support government-proposed amendments to the constitution to restrict asylum rights, thus making it possible for the change to gain the two thirds majority in parliament required for a constitutional change to become law.

DAVID MULLER

IT WAS just a year ago that Nazis found themselves able to force the closure of the local immigrant hostel in Hoyerswerda. Even before that the rightwing parties in the government coalition, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) had started to make asylum an electoral issue.

However this time the spirits they have raised have escaped their control with militant neo-fascists using the racist atmosphere to launch violent actions such as in Rostock. For the first time since the downfall of the Nazi regime they have been able to influence German politics through sheer terror.

Bourgeois politicians and the CDU controlled regional government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which is responsible for Rostock and its policing, at first refused to take the violence seriously. This was shown by the fact that on August 25 there were only six police to confront over 200 armed Nazis; units of border guards stood idly by, since they were not given the order to intervene. Some 60% of those arrested were anti-fascists who had tried to come to the aid of the refugees.

Lack of will

The press and politicians talked of the "helplessness" of the police. In reality, it was simply a matter of a lack of will.

As if by magic, the same police chiefs and politicians were able to overcome their helplessness on August 29 when 3,000 elite police were on hand to control the anti-fascist counter-demonstration,

making over 90 arrests.

The racist outlook of bourgeois politicians and police chiefs aside, the initial inactivity also had a precise political motive in the form of the campaign for a change to the constitution's provisions on asylum. Furthermore, the racist tide is useful to the government as a way of distracting attention from its own lack of ideas.

It was thus no surprise to find establishment media and politicians deploring the "violence of left and right" (meaning that they do not want to see the emergence either of an independent, action-oriented fascist movement or still less of an energetic anti-fascist movement) alongside a swell of "understanding" for the Nazis and those that applauded them.

The establishment united front has talked mainly about "the problem of stopping the flood of asylum seekers". Meanwhile CDU and SPD security experts have taken the opportunity to call for the creation of a 1,000 to 2,000 strong special police unit. It is not difficult to guess who will be this unit's real target. The Nazi terror has thus led directly to a stronger state — aimed at the left.

All the measures which the state claims are aimed at dealing with the Nazi threat represent concessions to the far right programme and will in fact work to the Nazis' advantage; the refugee hostel in Rostock will be vacated, the article on asylum in the constitution changed and the state strengthened. The Nazis can and have greeted this victory: five to ten attacks on refugee hostels have been taking place daily in Germany.

The caving in of the SPD leadership is a disaster. This it has done not only on asylum, but also over the involvement of German troops in United Nations intervention units. Briefly summarized: the SPD will do its bit to increase the production of refugees while at the same time preventing them from coming to Germany. Some SPD chiefs are toying with the thought of a grand coalition. But the basic cause of the collapse is the integration of the SPD bureaucracy into the bourgeois state apparatus and their lack of ideas.

The SPD no longer has any alternative to the conservative fog as it did at the start of the Brandt era in the 1960s. The collapse of Stalinism in a rightward direction has not had such a big impact on the SPD as on the Stalinist and Stalinist-influenced left. Nonetheless, the Social Democrats has retreated step by step before the rightwing offensive.

There have been some resignations and signs of opposition, especially among the Jusos (Young Socialists), but the latter are scattered and it does not seem that enough support can be found to force an emergency congress. Those that resign from the SPD will probably either drop out of activity or turn towards the Greens. Socialists will try to draw such people into active campaigns against racism and militarism.

Counter-demonstration

The counter-demonstration in Rostock had very broad support, ranging from the local branch of the DGB trade union confederation to the anarchistic autonomists. The turnout of 20,000 showed that the radical left remains able to mobilize more people than the far right.

However the demonstration also revealed a dangerous split. Some of those in the reformist spectrum see the masses as inherently racist and are therefore ready to consider proposals for tougher controls on immigration.

The other problem comes from the radical side where many who are (correctly) ready to directly confront racist ideology and organize militant opposition are unwilling to address social questions. This is not to suggest that committed racists are going to change their views because of social demands.

The point is, however, to present a clear left alternative built around a consistent anti-racist struggle for full legal and social equality for all and a movement of immigrants and refugees which takes up demands relevant to all workers. If such an alternative is not built, "foreigners out" will become the political programme for an increasing number of people in Germany. ★