

International VIEWPOINT

Issue 237

October 26, 1992

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Five hundred years of resistance

**Italian
workers
reject
austerity**

**The British
economic
crisis**

**Palestinian
opposition
denounces
sell-out**



Diego Rivera. 1931

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CORRECTIONS

● THERE were a number of errors in the translation of the article by Ernest Mandel "The twilight of monetarism" which appeared in IV no. 235.

p. 6, third column, 19th line from bottom: "Rosa Luxemburg's pre (not post!) World War I..."

Twelve lines further on: add after "expansion": "of the international capitalist economy"

p.7, third column, 16th line from top: read: a budget equilibrium

p.8, first column, 13th line from bottom: read "it needs a state" (not "a nation state")

● IN the article on Sweden entitled "Where has all the money gone?" in IV no. 236, the second paragraph on p. 6 implies that Swedish local authorities have debts of SKR 550bn. These debts are those of the banks, not the local authorities.

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Stonewalling in a time of crisis

THE strengthening of the embargo, while not bringing down the regime, has aggravated Cuba's social and economic difficulties. In a situation where the very future of the revolution is at stake, the leadership of the ruling Cuban Communist Party (CCP) refuses to take its growing number of internal debates to the public. The recent expulsion of Carlos Aldana¹ from the CCP politbureau has not helped to make the state of affairs in the Party any more transparent.

JANETTE HABEL*

THE expulsion of Carlos Aldana, one of the central Cuban leaders, takes place at a time of great difficulties for the country. 1992 has been the most difficult year since the revolution, and it is ending with an increase in political pressures and a further tightening of the American embargo. At the same time, Cuba has lost 70% of its buying power: imports, which totalled \$8.1bn in 1989, have only reached \$2.2bn this year.

Faced with colossal tensions, the leadership of the CCP has not stimulated the necessary debates and the critical thinking required by the most conscious sectors of the population — those who want to draw a balance sheet of the revolution and be involved in the drawing up of new perspectives as to how to weather the storm while preserving the gains of the revolution.

tion and what kind of society to build.

The country, which has to restructure the whole of its economy, is looking for new markets, credit and technology in the West; for factories paralyzed by a lack of spare parts and primary materials have a vital need for foreign investment and trade. The new economic policy — adopted at the 4th congress in 1991 and confirmed during the constitutional review in July — is designed to reassure potential entrepreneurs still hesitant to venture outside of the sphere of tourism.

This new NEP has yet to provoke the desired response. American pressures are sufficiently strong to dissuade investors; Western companies, even big ones have learned as much. Moreover, the Cuban "opposition" based in the city of Miami in Florida has not hesitated to threaten

Solidarity efforts stepped up in Europe

EFFORTS are being made to challenge the United States led attempt to strangle the Cuban revolution by an economic blockade.

In Germany, a united conference against the blockade brought together more than a thousand people before the summer holidays. In Italy, the Communist Refoundation Party (PRC) has initiated a fundraising campaign to send oil to the island. On October 24, in Brussels, there will be a national meeting against the blockade, called by 40 Belgian organizations.

Among the many well-known figures in attendance will be the Brazilian liberation theologist Frei Betto, the European parliamentary deputy Dorothee Piermont, British Labour Party MP Ken Coates, LCR member Janette Habel and Abel Prieto, president of the Cuban Writers and Artists Union and member of the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party.

In France, various initiatives are being discussed. Signatories of the International Appeal against the blockade are planning a fundraising campaign to send milk to Cuba. This initiative will complement efforts by several European parliamentarians opposed to the suspension of milk shipments to Cuba for political reasons — shipments formerly made by the German Democratic Republic that the unified Germany was supposed to continue.

To reach the International Appeal, write "Appel Cuba", Robert March, 24, rue de la Réunion, 75020 Paris, France — G. Villetin. ★

Cuba's economic partners with sanctions should it come to power. In these conditions, the American Congress' adoption of the Torricelli amendment strengthening the embargo can only worsen the economic and social crisis.

In the period of one summer alone, two governments traditionally considered to be Cuba's allies have taken their distance. Indeed, the declaration of the Hispano-Latin American July summit held in Madrid contains no condemnation of the blockade. Spain's president Felipe Gonzales has blamed "internal factors" for Cuba's problems.² After meeting representatives of Cuban exile groups, the president of the Spanish Council called for the holding of democratic elections within one year. Spain's King Juan Carlos stated in an interview with a Florida newspaper that he had himself — along with his wife Queen Sofia and the head of the government — asked the Cuban president to step down.

In Mexico, President Salinas de Gortari has not only received anti-Castro representatives for the first time in the history of relations between the two countries, but has gone so far as to host Jorge Mas Canosa — president of the Cuban-American Foundation, a far-right leader and super-rich entrepreneur associate of President Bush's son.

The timing of these developments is not accidental for Cuba and points to new support for Washington's policy of strangling the regime.

Waiting for the fall

Since the collapse of the former Eastern Europe regimes, the United States has been waiting for similar developments in Cuba as a result of the deepening social and economic crisis aggravated by the embargo. The three-year long announcement of the impending end of the regime has saved Washington from having to resort to strong-arm tactics — which could be counter-productive given the reactions this would provoke across Latin America. With the end of the Cold War, a peaceful transition "along Spanish lines" would avoid the violent conflict which would send hundreds of thousands of Cubans fleeing towards Florida and seriously destabilize the southern United States.

*This article originally appeared in the October 8, 1992 issue of *Rouge*, weekly paper of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR — French section of the Fourth International).

1. Carlos Aldana was a member of the Political Bureau, in charge of external relations, ideology and culture. He headed the Cuban delegation during the trilateral negotiations over the end of the war in Angola, and is considered to be in favour of opening up the economy. Politically, he has blown hot and cold — if sometimes tolerant with respect to intellectuals and artists, in December 1991, he severely denounced critical expression.

2. *International Herald Tribune*, July 25 and 26, 1992.

But the regime has yet to collapse and the population, while very discontented, has yet to show any signs of rebellion against the Castro regime. All commentators — particularly diplomats posted in Cuba — have made the same observation, which has been backed up by dissident groups, who recognize that they exert very little influence.

This popular resistance can be primarily explained by the strength of national feeling, but also by the lack of an alternative: the riots in Los Angeles have not made the "American way of life" particularly attractive for a people which is increasingly Afro-Cuban in its composition. Indeed, Cuban television covered the Rodney King events with great interest.

No cause for enthusiasm

And the regional situation does not provide any cause for enthusiasm. American promises of aid for Nicaragua have evaporated into thin air and the big landowners are returning to take back their expropriated property. In nearby Santo Domingo, electricity cuts are more frequent and less organized than in Havana. And finally, images from Eastern Europe have hardly stimulated a desire for change. Even if such aspirations exist, the feeling is that the country has reached an impasse and the social discontent has not yet expressed itself politically.

This is the background to the call by an American working group for the partial lifting of the embargo.³ Faced with the survival of the regime, some diplomatic circles believe that its downfall can be better brought about by establishing contacts with Havana. The State Department has always alternated between the carrot and the stick, by nurturing the hope for a better future.

The idea is not a new one, but the new economic policy has enhanced its credibility. The hope is to stimulate political changes and bring about the fall of the regime by favoring the growth of contacts, trips, communication and exchanges through the partial lifting of the embargo. In any event, nothing will happen before the American elections, and it is very uncertain whether support for these proposals will be found in a new administration.

Such proposals correspond to hopes among certain circles of Cuban leaders who see no way out of the crisis outside the restoration of relations with Washington.

But under what conditions? This is the backdrop to the expulsion of Carlos Aldana.

According to the official version of events, Aldana was dismissed for corruption (it is claimed that the electronic equipment in his office, provided free by

the local Sony representative, was filled with listening devices by the corporate officer, who was an agent) and abuse of privileges.

This interpretation, corroborated by Aldana himself in a public press conference, is double-edged: on one hand, it means that a high-ranking leader was involved in fraudulent dealings at the same time that sacrifice is being demanded of everyone — which in itself reveals a high degree of crisis in the leadership. On the other, it does not adequately explain why only Aldana was expelled.

Once again, the total lack of transparency in the leadership's debates and functioning give rise for all manner of speculation. The Central Committee, the only body which can dismiss a member of the Political Bureau, did not even meet, and nobody knows what are the political bases of the measures that have been taken. But it is hard to believe that there is no connection with current debates over the future of the revolution.

What margin of manoeuvre does the leadership have for undertaking a policy of openness while the country is on a war footing? This is the big question. The example of Nicaragua haunts Cuba, and nobody can ignore the fact that the Sandinistas' electoral defeat of 1990 has precipitated a period of confusion and decline. But this is the perspective which unites both the "good" and the "bad" Americans as much as it does Salinas de Gortari and Felipe Gonzales.



Another ghost haunts Cuba: that of Grenada, where divisions in the leadership provided an opening for American intervention. Should Cuba close ranks and oppose at all costs the age-old annexionist designs of the empire to the north, or should it negotiate a retreat imposed by the New World Order? In both cases, the very future of the revolution is at stake.

Whether Fidel Castro can continue to garner popular support while excluding the people from the process of making key decisions — and while substituting dismissals made in the name of virtue for needed debate — remains to be seen. What is clear is that this is not the right way to respond to the deep anti-bureaucratic sentiment of the Cuban people. ★

ON OCTOBER 12, 1992, America discovered capitalism as Christopher Columbus, financed by the kings of Spain and the bankers of Genoa brought this novelty to the Caribbean islands. In his journal of the Discovery, the Admiral employs the word "gold" 139 times and the words "God" or "Our Lord" 51. These unspoilt beaches filled him with tireless enthusiasm and on November 27 he prophesied that "all Christendom will do business here". In that at least he was right. He may have believed that Haiti was Japan and that Cuba was China and that the inhabitants of China were the Indians of India, but about the business side of things he made no mistake.

After five centuries of business-like activity on the part of all Christendom a third of the American forests have been destroyed, a significant part of the previously fertile land is sterile and more than half the population eats only one meal a day. The Indians, victims of the biggest expropriation in world history continue to be pushed off their last remaining lands and their identity is still denied. They are forbidden to live in their own way. At the outset the pillage and "othercide" was performed in the name of God; now it is done in the name of Progress.

However the outlines of another possible America — invisible to the existing America blinded by racism — shine through this forbidden and despised identity.

On October 12, 1492, Columbus wrote in his journal that he wanted to take some Indians to Spain "so that they can learn to speak". Five centuries later, on October 12, 1989, a United States' court declared Ladislao Pastrana, a Mixtec Indian from Mexico's Oaxaca region and an illegal agricultural worker in California "mentally retarded" because he did not speak proper Castilian [Spanish] and recommended that he be held for life in an asylum. Pastrana had difficulty understanding his Spanish-speaking interpreter and the psychologist diagnosed "intellectual deficiency". Finally, the anthropologists sorted things out; Pastrana expressed himself perfectly in his own language Mixtec, spoken by Indians with a 2000 year old cultural inheritance.

Paraguay speaks Guarani; this is a unique case in world history where the common national language is that of the conquered Indians. However, opinion polls reveal that the majority of Paraguayans think that those who do not speak Spanish are "like animals".

One out of two Peruvians is Indian. According to the country's constitution, Quechua is a national language with the same status as Spanish. However reality does not conform to the constitution. Peru treats the Indians as South Africa treats Blacks. Spanish is the only language taught in the schools, the only one understood by

"It is the oppressed who discovers the oppressor."

THE Uruguayan writer and historian Eduardo Galeano has devoted much of his work to the history of Latin America, attempting to express the point of view of the victims of the Conquest of the Americas after the European invasion of 500 years ago, currently being celebrated as the "Discovery".

EDUARDO GALEANO

judges, police and officials; it is true that Spanish is not the only language heard on television — which also speaks English.

Five years ago, city registrars in the Argentine capital Buenos Aires refused to record the birth of a child. The parents, indigenous people from Jujuy wanted to give their child a first name from their language — Qori Wamancha. The Argentine registrars could not accept this "foreign name".

The Indians of America live in exile in their own land. Their language is not a sign of identity but a mark of a curse. It does not say who a person is, it brands them. When Indians give up their language, they start to become "civilized".

When I was a child I was taught in the Uruguayan schools that our country had been saved from the "native problem" thanks to the generals of the last century who wiped out the last Charruas [a people from the Rio de la Plata region].

The native problem. The first Americans, the continent's real discoverers are a problem. To get rid of the problem the Indians must stop being Indians. They must either be wiped off the map or their spirit must be wiped out; the alternatives are annihilation or assimilation, genocide or "othercide".

In December 1976, Brazil's interior minister announced triumphantly that "the native problem will be totally solved" by the end of the 20th century. By then all Indians would be properly absorbed into Brazilian society and would no longer be Indians. The minister explained that the task of the organization officially entrusted with their protection (the National Indian Foundation) is to make them disappear.

The invasion of Amazonia by enterprises greedy for minerals and wood was accompanied by shots, dynamite, presents of poisoned food, the contamination of rivers, the destruction of forests and the spread of diseases unknown to the Indians. However this long and ferocious attack has not been

enough. The domestication of the surviving Indians to save them from barbarism is also an indispensable weapon if all the remaining obstacles on the road of the Conquest are to be overcome.

"Kill the Indian and save the man" advised the pious American adviser Henry Pratt. Years later the Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa has explained that the only solution is to modernize the Indians even if this means that their culture has to be sacrificed to save them from hunger and poverty.

The maelstrom of salvation

Salvation has condemned Indians to working from dawn to dusk in mines and on plantations for wages which are not even enough for a can of dogfood. Saving the Indians also involves breaking up their communities and throwing them into the maelstrom of the cities as cheap labour, where they change their language, their name and their bearing and where they become beggars, drunks and prostitutes.

Then again, saving the Indians can mean putting them in uniform and sending them, rifle on their shoulder, to kill other Indians or die defending the very system that has repudiated them. Indians make good cannon fodder; of 25,000 mobilized during the Second World War, 10,000 died.

On December 16, 1492, Columbus explained in his journal that the Indians are there "to receive orders and to work, to sow and to do all that is necessary and to make

cities and to learn to wear clothes and our customs".

Subjugation of the body; robbery of the soul. In speaking of this operation the verb "reduce to" (the Spanish verb *reducir*) appears all the time. The Indian saved has been reduced. S/he will be reduced until s/he disappears. Emptied of themselves, they are non-Indians, nobody.

The shaman of the Chamacocos Indians of Paraguay sings of the stars, the spiders and the mad Totila who wanders in the forests crying. He explains what the kingfisher says: "Do not suffer from hunger, do not suffer from thirst. Mount on my wings and we will eat the river fish and drink the wind". He sings about what the mist says: "I am coming to cut down the frost so that your people will not suffer from cold".

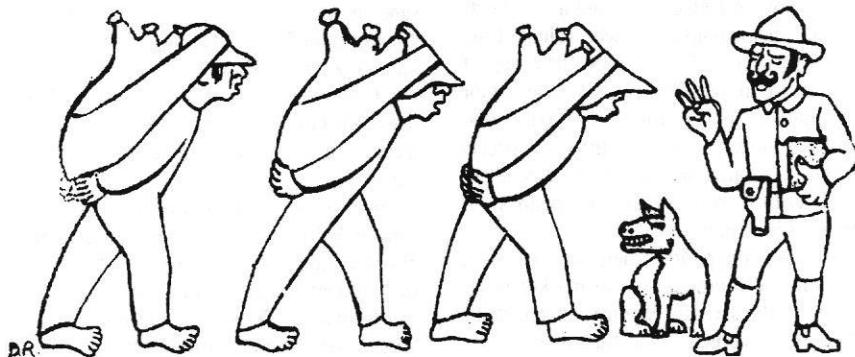
He sings about what the horses of the sky say: "We will saddle up and go to look for rain".

However the missionaries of an evangelical sect forced the shaman to abandon his feathers, tambourines and chants because "these things are from the devil"; he can no longer attempt to cure vipers' bites, bring rain in times of drought, nor fly over the land to sing about what he sees. In a conversation with Ticio Escobar the shaman said: "I stopped singing and I fell ill. My dreams don't know where to go and they torment me. I am old and wounded. In the end what good has it done me to give up what belonged to me?"

That was in 1986. In 1614, the Archbishop of Lima had all the *quenas* [Indian flutes] and other Indian musical instruments burnt and prohibited all their dances, songs and ceremonies threatening with a hundred lashes for those who refused for "they are in league with demons".

To dispossess the Indians of their freedom and belongings they were deprived of their symbols of identity. They were forbidden to sing, dance and dream of their gods even if they themselves [the Spaniards] had been danced and sung about in the distant days of the creation. Indians have been and are crucified in the name of Christ: to save them from hell the idolatrous pagans must receive the word.

Of course, the God of the Christians is an alibi for robbery. As South Africa's Arch-



* This article first appeared in the Uruguayan journal *Brecha* of April 10, 1992.

bishop Desmond Tutu put it: "They came; they had the bible and we had the land. They said to us: 'close your eyes and pray.' And when we opened our eyes, they had the land and we had the bible".

The modern state prefers the alibi of education. To save them from the darkness, the ignorant barbarians must be civilized. Today, as yesterday, racism transforms colonial robbery into a act of justice. The colonized is a subhuman, capable of superstition but not of religion, capable of folklore but not of culture; the subhuman gets the treatment s/he deserves and the small value of their labour is appropriately rewarded. Colonial and neo-colonial pillage is justified by racism. Latin America treats the Indians in the same way as the great powers treat Latin America.

A prestigious Bolivian historian

Gabriel Rene Moreno was one of Bolivia's most prestigious historians of the last century. To this day one of the country's universities bears his name. This illustrious representative of a nation's culture believed that "the Indians are donkeys who produce mules when they intermingle with the white race". He weighed native and mixed-race brains; these, his scales told him, weighed five, six or seven ounces less than those of a white. He concluded that they were "cellularly incapable of grasping republican liberty".

Rene Moreno's Peruvian contemporary and colleague Ricardo Palma wrote that "the Indians are an abject and degenerate race". And the Argentine, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento used the following terms to describe the long struggle of the Araucanos Indians for their freedom: "They are more indomitable, that is to say more recalcitrant, and less apt for European civilization and assimilation".

The most violent racism in the history of Latin America is found in the words of the most famous intellectuals of the end of the 19th century and in the deeds of the liberal politicians who founded the modern states. Sometimes they are of Indian origin, like Porfirio Diaz, the author of capitalist modernization in Mexico who forbade Indians to walk in the main streets or sit in public parks unless they changed their cotton trousers for European style trousers and their sandals for shoes.

This was the period when Latin America became tied into the world market ruled over by the British Empire, an epoch of "scientific" contempt for the Indians which

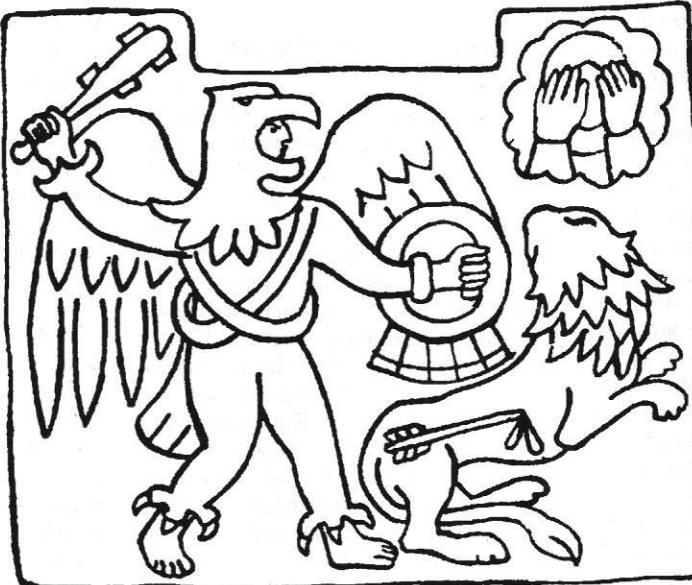
provided the excuse for the robbery of lands and labour.

The market demanded, for example, coffee and coffee demanded more land and labour. It was then, for example, that Guatemala's liberal president, Justo Rufino Barrios, a progressive man, reintroduced colonial-style forced labour and offered his friends Indian land and abundant Indian labour.

The racism reached its paroxysm in countries such as Guatemala where the Indians remained in the majority despite the repeated waves of extermination.

To this day there is no worse paid workforce: Maya Indians get \$0.65 for cutting a quintal of coffee or cotton or a tonne of sugarcane. The Indians cannot sow maize without military permission nor move elsewhere without a work permit. The army organizes massive labour recruitment for the sowing and harvesting of products destined for export. In the plantations pesticides fifty times more toxic than the tolerable limits are used; the mothers' milk is the most contaminated in the Western world.

In complete impunity, it is officially recognized in Guatemala that 440 native settlements disappeared from the map between



1981 and 1983 in the course of a campaign of annihilation in which thousands of men and women were murdered or "disappeared". The cleanup in the mountains (operation "shaved earth") also led to the death of an incalculable number of children. The Guatemalan military are sure that the vice of rebellion is genetically transmitted.

But does this supposedly inferior race, condemned to vice and idleness, incapable of order and progress, deserve a better fate? Institutional violence is there to drive away any hesitation. Today's *conquistadores* no longer wear suits of armour but Vietnam

war uniforms. They no longer have a white skin; they are mixed-race, brutally trained and obliged to carry out crimes that lead to their own death.

Some 1,200 years before European mathematicians, this inferior race discovered the number zero. They knew the age of the universe with astonishing precision, a thousand years before the astronomers of our epoch.

The Mayas were always time-travellers: "what is a man on the road? Time?"

Henry Ford's revelation

However they did not know that time is money, as Henry Ford revealed. Time, the foundation of space, seemed sacred to them like a daughter, the land, a son or a human being: like the land and like people time cannot be bought and sold. Civilization has been doing its best to teach them otherwise.

History changes depending on who is telling the story. What for the Romans were "barbarian invasions" were for the Germans "southward emigration".

Until now the history of the Americas has not been told by the Indians. On the eve of the Spanish conquest a Maya prophet, speaking in the name of the gods announced: "when greed comes to an end, the face, the hands and the feet of the world will be released". And when the mouth is released, what will it say? What will this other voice that has never been heard say?

Form the point of view of the conquerors — until now the only point of view presented — the morals of the Indians have always been taken as proof of their possession by demons or of their biological inferiority. This has been the case from the first days of colonialism.

The Indians of the Caribbean killed themselves rather than do slave labour. This proved that they were

lazy.

They went naked as if their body was their face. This showed that they were without shame.

They did not know about property rights, they shared everything and lacked the lust for wealth. This was because they were more like monkeys than humans.

They washed too often. This suggested a resemblance to the infidel Muslims, burned by the fires of the Inquisition.

They never hit their children and left them in freedom. They did not know how to administer punishment and lacked any doctrine.

They believed in dreams and obey voices. This is the influence of Satan or perhaps pure stupidity.

They ate when they were hungry and not at the proper mealtimes. Clearly, they have no control over their instincts.

They make love when they feel desire. Here it is the Devil impelling them to repeat the original sin.

There is no stigma on homosexuality or special value put on virginity. This is because they line the antechamber to hell.

In 1523, the Indian chief Nicaragua asked the *conquistadores*, "and who elected your king?" He had been elected by the community elders.

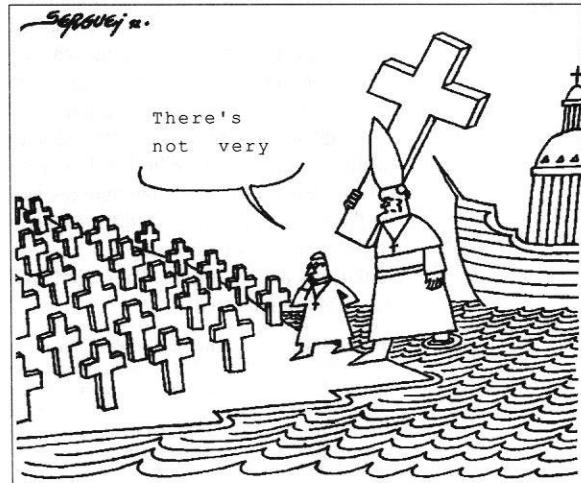
Pre-Colombian democracy

Pre-Colombian America was vast and diverse with forms of democracy that Europe has never seen and that the world does not know even today. To reduce the reality of native America to the despotism of the Inca emperors or the bloody practices of the Aztec dynasty would be like seeing in the European Renaissance only the tyranny of its monarchs or the sinister ceremonies of the Inquisition.

In Guarani tradition, for example, the chiefs are elected by assemblies of women and men — and they are chucked out if they do not respect their mandate. Among the Iroquois, men and women govern on an equal footing. Chiefs are men, but they are elected and deposed by women. Via the Council of Matrons they have decision-making power over the essential aspects of the life of the confederation. Around 1600 when the Iroquois men launched a war on their own initiative, the women staged a love strike. Shortly afterwards, the men, obliged to sleep alone, submitted to joint government.

In 1919, the Indian chief on the island of San Blas [near Panama] announced his triumph: "The Indian women no longer wear their [traditional] *molas* but civilized dresses".

He also announced that the women no



Protests mark 500th anniversary

IN the Dominican Republic, a visiting Pope John Paul II used October 12 as an occasion to call on his followers to undertake a renewed evangelical mission in Latin America and the Caribbean — against liberation theologians and the growing number of Protestant sects. At the same time, there were demonstrations across the country, with transport services and shops being shut down in the capital, Santo Domingo.

In Ecuador, several thousand Quechua Indians marched behind a banner symbolizing "500 years of indigenous and popular resistance".

In Mexico, rituals dating from the pre-Hispanic era were carried out at various historic sites, such as the cathedral in Teotihuacan.

In Santiago, Chile protests met with government repression. One protestor was killed and two others were injured.

(Taken from reports in *Le Monde* and *El País*, October 13 and 14.)★

longer painted their noses but their cheeks, as they should and that they no longer wore gold rings in their noses but in their ears, as was proper.

70 years after this the Kuna Indian women of our day still wear nose rings and wear their *molas* made of multi-colored cloth blended with extraordinary imagination and beauty and are buried in them when they die.

In 1989, on the eve of the US invasion, General Manuel Noriega assured the world that Panama was a country that respected human rights. "We are a tribe", he explained.

The primitive tools of the Indian communities rendered fertile the deserts of the Andes chain. The modern technologies of the big private export-oriented estates have made deserts out of fertile lands, in the Andes and elsewhere.

It would be absurd to retreat five centuries in terms of productive techniques, but it is equally absurd to overlook the catastrophes produced by a system which forces human beings, razes the forests, violates the land and poisons the rivers to obtain the maximum wealth in the minimum of time. Is it not absurd to sacrifice nature and people on the altar of the international market? This is our absurdity — and we accept it as if it were fate.

A sense of community

So-called primitive cultures are always dangerous because they retain their common sense. Common sense, by a natural extension, gives us a sense of community. If the air belongs to all, how can the land be private property? If we come from the earth and return to it, is not a crime against the earth a crime against us? The land is birthplace and tomb, mother and companion. It receives

the first mouthful and we give it rest and protect it from erosion.

The system despises what it doesn't understand because it refuses to recognize what it fears to know. Racism is thus also a mask for fear.

What do we know about the native cultures? What we see in Wild West films. And what do we know of the African cultures? What we have been told by Professor Tarzan.

At the end of the last century an English doctor John Down identified the syndrome that bears his name. He believed that the alteration of the chromosomes implied "a return to inferior races" producing mongolian idiots, negroid idiots and aztec idiots.

At the same time an Italian doctor, Cesare Lombroso gave the "born criminal" the features of Blacks and Indians.

Thus the prejudice that Indians and Blacks were naturally inclined to crime and mental deficiency was fitted out with a scientific basis. Indians and Blacks, traditionally instruments of labour became objects of science.

In the epoch of Lombroso and Down a Brazilian doctor Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (who was a mulatto) came to the conclusion that "the mixing of blood perpetuates the character of the inferior races" so that "the Black race will always be a factor in our inferiority as a people". This psychiatrist was the first researcher of African origin into the Brazilian culture. He studied the latter as if it were a clinical case — with the Black religions as a pathology, its trances a sign of hysteria.

Shortly after, an Argentine doctor, the Socialist Jose Ingenerios wrote that "the Blacks, the ignominious slag of the human race are closer to apes than to civilized whites". To demonstrate their irremediable inferiority Ingenerios stated that "the Blacks have no religious ideas".

In fact, religious ideas crossed the sea with the Black slaves. They had to take refuge under the guise of white saints where they survived to help millions of people violently torn from Africa and sold as things. Ogum, the god of fire, reappea-

red as Saint George, Saint Anthony or Saint Michael while Shango, with his thunder and lightning became Jesus Christ and Oshun, divinity of calm waters was the virgin of the candles.

These Gods were forbidden in the colonies of all the imperial powers. In the English Caribbean, after the abolition of slavery, it was still forbidden to play the tambour or African wind instruments and the mere fact of owning an image of any African god meant prison.

Dark skin was the cloak of incorrigible faults. Thus social inequality, which is also racial, is provided with an alibi by human imperfections.

200 years ago Humboldt noted that the whole of America works like this: the pyramid of the social classes is dark at the base and light at the top. In Brazil for example racial democracy means that the whites are on the top and the Blacks on the bottom.

James Baldwin wrote about the Blacks in the United States: "When we left Mississippi and went north we did not find freedom. We found the worst jobs on the labour market and we are still there".

An Indian from northern Argentina, Asuncion Ontiveros Yulquila has recounted the trauma of his youth: "Good and beautiful people were those that looked like Jesus and the Virgin. But my father and mother did not in any way look like the images of Jesus and the Virgin that I saw in the church at Abra Pampa."

Fundamental values miraculously preserved

Biological fatalism, which stigmatizes the "inferior races", congenitally condemned to idleness, violence and poverty, does more than simply prevent us from seeing the real roots of our troubles. It also prevents us from recognizing fundamental values miraculously preserved by these despised cultures and still more or less embodied by them despite centuries of persecution, humiliation and degradation. These fundamental values are not museum exhibits. They are historical factors, indispensable if we are to invent an America not divided into masters and slaves.

A short while ago, the Spanish priest Ignacio Ellacuria [a Jesuit assassinated by the army in 1989] told me that he thought the story of the discovery of America was absurd. The oppressor is incapable of discovery "it is the oppressed who discovers the oppressor".

He believed that the oppressor cannot even discover himself. That reality also is only visible to the oppressed.

Ignacio Ellacuria was shot. ★

A history of Black resistance in Brazil

SOME 45% of the population of Brazil is Black; this makes Brazil the country with the second biggest Black population in the world (65 million people), after Nigeria (with 100 million). This community's importance, however, is not only a matter of numbers; it has also played an essential social and political role in Brazil's history.

African slaves provided the first stable core of productive labour and were the first group to organize independently against the regime of the time, mounting resistance which included armed struggle.

ISAAC AKCELRUD*

THESE facts are rarely to be found in scholarly studies, even by people working in the Marxist tradition.

This is because the ideology of the Black movement did not and could not have any connection with European traditions. The independent organization of Black workers had an African cultural basis. And if we are not to diminish the Brazilian experience to a shadow of that of Europe, we have to understand this cultural input.

The study, self-analysis and self-understanding of the Brazilian working class, the identification of its distant, premonitory struggles and forms of struggle and the recuperation of the repressed aspects of its heritage require an open-minded approach. In particular the history of 500 years of Black resistance must be sympathetically studied. This is a fascinating task and a necessary one if class consciousness is to be historically rooted in the living realities of our people. And, among other things, it shows us how the struggle against racism is an essential part of the class struggle.

Civilizations suffocated

Africans have paid a high price for the role they played in the formation of Brazil. Firstly because they arrived in chains and were held by terrible violence; then, because African slaves were a cheap commodity, replaceable at far less than the cost of keeping a person alive. This meant labour and living conditions that cut useful life to less than ten years. Finally because slavery suffocated the civilizations and cultures of the African countries, depriving them of their younger and most capable elements and repelling the rest into the most isolated areas in a final attempt at defence against colonialist aggression.

It is naive to imagine that capitalism is

synonymous with use solely of "free" wage labour. In fact, capitalism could not prosper without slaves. In Britain children were used as slave labour, the cotton industry served to convert the more of less patriarchal slave economy of the United States into a commercial system of exploitation. In general the "wage slavery" of Europe's wage workers rested on the foundation of the undarned slavery in the New World.

Modern slavery, that is, slavery in the service of capital, began not in America but in Europe, in the English textile industry. The first slaves were not Blacks carried off to the Americas but English orphans, the sons and daughters of the poor or street children. Then it was white adults — prisoners seized for one reason or another including peasants dispossessed of their lands. But there were too few of them for the needs of capital.

Throughout America efforts were made to use Indians as slaves. Whole tribes were rapidly destroyed. These communities lacked the physical resistance and the capacity for continuous work necessary for work on plantations and in mines. They died like flies from a simple cold.

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Some idea of the difference in capacities of an Indian and a Black slave is given by their relative prices; an Indian cost only 20% of the price of a Black. Even in these conditions, natives suffered slavery for 200 years, from 1534 to 1755, when it was abolished.

From the start there are instances of mutual support by Blacks and Indians. This is a largely unexplored field of research. Few know that 200 Indians were executed for having refused to fight against the *qui-lombo*¹ of Palmares, the main centre of Black resistance at the time. We know today that the decision to abolish Indian slavery was a marketing decision by the "triple alliance" — the state, the Vatican and the slavers — to gain a monopoly on the slave trade — henceforth only involving Blacks. On the profits of this trade the Portuguese crown took 10% commission, the Vatican 5% and slavers the rest.

Exemplary self-denial

The Africans put up a desperate resistance but they lacked the minimum of material resources to win real emancipation. The abolition of slavery changed but did not end the power of the ruling classes. The slaves in revolt possessed neither the means nor the perspectives that would enable them to imagine any change in social structures. Nonetheless, they fought courageously and with exemplary self-denial, with skill and with admirable initiative.

Throughout America we meet with rare but significant cases of Blacks who succeeded in escaping at the moment of landing, tricking or overcoming the overseers, then triumphing over the hunger and fatigue of their infernal crossing on board the disease ridden slave ships.

They ran away as soon as ships landed to advance into totally unknown and hostile territory. Without clothing and without knowing a single word of the local languages, with no idea of the terrain and without knowing what awaited them.

Astonishingly some survived; however in most cases flight meant death. Such defections were discounted in the commercial calculations of the slave traders at the start of the voyage. Slaves were considered as perishable goods rounded up in herds in Africa; losses of 20% or more were expected. During the crossing, foul water and food were rationed to cut down weight and make space in which to bury alive as many Blacks as possible.

Blacks were measured out in metres and tons. Crammed together in darkness throughout the long voyage they were fodder for the sharks that accompanied the ships. One on top of the other, and each in their own excrement, they arrived at their destination in a state of total despair.

Many authors have drawn the unwarranted conclusion from these facts that the Black slaves were totally demoralized and have overlooked the admittedly rare escape attempts.

Preventing slave rebellion

However, such an assumption cannot explain the organization of resistance that followed and the unending struggle waged by authorities responsible for repression to ensure that, if the slaves could not be totally subjugated, they could at least be prevented from rebelling all at the same time.

Of course, we must recognize the immense vitality of the Black African, from a people living in an ecologically pure state still distant from the poisoning and industrialization of Europe. At the same time we can also see here the incredible reserves of energy that the fight for freedom can release in a human being, even under the worst imaginable conditions.

Already at the moment of sale preventive measures drawing on the experience of the slave traders were taken. Families were broken up, and members of the same nation, tribe or village were separated as were those speaking the same language or sharing the same religious rites.

The defenceless slaves could only offer a pretence of submission and hide resistance behind apparent passivity. Slowly, they reorganized to restore the practice of their cultural and religious traditions under the forms of the religion of the oppressors.

The Church did not waste time in addressing the problem of religious organization, creating fraternities that kept the African nations apart, preventing union between Nagos and Bantus, dividing up the mulattos, the creoles (Blacks born in Brazil) and the Blacks of African origin.²

Seen in retrospect the fraternities served a double purpose for the masters. First they segregated the Blacks into special Churches so that they could not enter those of the whites, second, they aimed to divide the oppressed among themselves so that they would not wage joint struggles. The statutes of one of these fraternities forbade access to "Jews, mulattos and heretics".

Julio José Chiavenato has discovered that Benedictines and Carmelites had "breeding grounds" for slaves.³ It was lucrative to cross White men and Black women to produce "rare specimens". However crossing Black men with White women was less useful since the child would not legally be a slave. In this process it was felt important to preserve a certain level of "Blackness"; a lighter type might become dangerous.

Not all these slaves were destined for sale. There was an important market in slaves for hire. Sick and disabled slaves were used as beggars by their middle class masters.

The massacre of slaves reached even into

the wombs of Black women destined to serve as wetnurses. Newborn children were killed and abortions carried out so that the womens' milk could feed the offspring of the owning classes.

This formidable vitality and survival capacity was tested once more in the war of aggression against Paraguay unleashed at the behest of British imperialism.

At that time, Paraguay was the only country in this part of the world which did not have a foreign debt. It was thus out of line with the model prescribed by British imperialism. It had to be brought under the discipline of dependent capitalism. Another important objective of the war from the point of view of the ruling classes in Pedro II's Brazil was to create the conditions for a perceptible whitening of the country.

Military, diplomatic and economic pressure for the ending of slavery was being exerted by Britain, which sought markets for its industrial products. Thus the Brazilian ruling classes faced a new challenge; almost half the country's population was Black or very dark. The Creoles spoke Portuguese fluently, and knew the country and its customs well, and many of them had been infected by notions of freedom. In the middle of the last century, "free Black" rhymed with "subversion", in the same way as, these days our ears are assailed with stories of the subversive and irresponsible character of the independent organization of the workers.

Massive slaughter in Paraguay

The danger had to be reduced and the Paraguay war was a golden opportunity. The Blacks were designated "volunteers" and encouraged to accomplish high deeds of heroism. Patriotic slogans paved the road to a massive slaughter. In the above mentioned work, Chiavenato speaks of "a brutal process of aryonation of the [Brazilian] Empire, reducing the share of Blacks in the population from 45% in 1860 to 15% after the war. While the White population grew by 1.7 times the Black population shrank by 60% in the 15 years following the outbreak of the war (1860-1875).

"This was the first time in the history of Brazil that the number of Blacks had fallen not only proportionally but absolutely...in 1800 there were one million Blacks in the country, in 1860 two million, in 1872 hardly

1. This is the name given to the Black forts in the Brazilian forest, which were places of refuge, entrenched camps and rearguard bases for anti-slavery activity in the plantations and in the areas where slaves were concentrated.

2. *Nago* is the name of an African nation, a member of the Sudanese group of nations in the area of present-day Benin. *Bantu* refers to the groups of nations living in the area of present-day Angola, Congo and Mozambique primarily. These are the regions from which most Blacks in Brazil were deported.

3. Julio José Chiavenato, *O negro em Brasil*, Ed. Brasiliense.

1.5 million".

In such conditions survival itself was an achievement. To multiply and increase its numbers and percentage within a hostile population was already an important victory. The Black population was absolutely without the political weight of allies. It was the country's only significant labour force and had no alternative. It had no reference points outside the existing society with which to replace slavery. There were even a few cases where freed slaves bought slaves themselves.

There were two bold and advanced solutions: to capture a ship and return to Africa — several such attempts were made, notably during the Reconcavo Baiano uprising — or build fortifications in the *quilombos* in the forests of the interior and undertake a permanent defensive guerrilla war. It was the latter that became the dominant option.

This undertaking required that the Blacks organize themselves. This they did within and without the slave quarters, in the workplaces, in the plantations, in the *candomblé* [African religion] grounds conspiring, inventing a coded language using sounds and drumbeats whose echoes survive in the present day *batucadas* (percussion instruments). Muslim Blacks, known in Brazil as the Malais were usually literate — unlike many whites.

A leadership developed which even organized armed struggle. The rebellion of the Malais in 1835 in Bahia state came within a whisker of military victory. An aspect of the plan was to capture ships to make the crossing to Africa.

Until recently the practice of Black religions was subjected to ferocious police repression, despite the Brazilian constitution's provisions concerning religious freedom. Given the enormous weight of the Black population — on average a half and in many places a majority of the total — in vast regions *candomblé* was the majority religion, even compared to Catholicism.

Repression, of course, served the interests of rival white cults. But its main motivation was *candomblé*'s political function as a banner and meeting place for Black resistance.

Using the same clandestine organizations and under the guise of Christian religious symbols ("Saint George killing the dragon") instilled confidence and fed the hope of a happy outcome in an unequal struggle) Blacks developed an entire system for preserving their cultural identity. The success

of this enterprise could only be patchy. However the literate Muslim masses managed to form a secret government to which they owed absolute obedience. What whites saw as simply folklore — the apparently theatrical representation of kings and sovereigns entering villages — was in fact the language of royal power. There were even cases of contacts with African leaders.

The various forms of organization and mutual aid, with general assemblies and collections under cover of religious meetings, sacred dances, samba schools and so on

and movements against the Portuguese and Dutch colonialists. Members of the *quilombos* taken prisoner made first class political agitators. They stirred up the plantation slaves, recruited for the *quilombos* and organized escaped to Palmares. Artillery was required to overcome the Black fortress. Legend has it that the Zumbi (the title of the commander of Palmares) threw himself off a high rock, preferring death to slavery.

This *quilombo* survived so long because it achieved a certain level of technical independence but above all because it had sup-

port on the surrounding plantations. However, the *quilombos* were doomed to stay on the defensive and suffer eventual defeat because there was no political force that could bring together Black rebels and the popular rebellions against colonial domination.⁴ In fact, whites, even in revolt themselves remained in the grip of slave-owning prejudices.

From 1812 we see the appearance of the first traitors to the Black resistance, under the banner of the Black Company of Pernambouc. We lack reliable information on groups of this type in other parts of the country.

At the opposite pole, already in 1870, before the abolition of slavery and the proclamation of the republic, the first Workers' League was formed by free Blacks.

Less than 20 years later, the farce of abolition turned the masses of Black slaves on the coffee and sugar plantations into landless agricultural workers. The change in British policy — from being the biggest organizers of and beneficiaries from the slave trade to policing the seas to prevent it — led to the moving of the slave labour force from the north east to the centre south of Brazil, initiating the north east's career as a specially depressed area.

The abolition of slavery without land reform and the massive importation of white European workers was a new catastrophe for the Blacks. But the new working class that was being formed also brought its own ideological baggage. It formed unions and political parties. With this, the heroic Black resistance would find a solid basis and a socialist perspective. ★

4. From the end of the 18th century revolts broke out against the rule of the Portuguese monarchy — its interests had come into conflict with those of the rich Brazilian colonists, and even more so with those of the colony's popular segments. The last revolt by these popular layers of the colony — alone and in their own interests — took place in 1798 in Salvador (in the state of Bahia).



developed to become associations that pursued demands, mutual credit associations and financial pools for paying for the freeing of Black leaders.

Armed resistance to slavery

Armed struggle was a permanent feature of Black resistance to slavery. The Blacks covered the country with their *quilombos*, some of whom did not last long but all formed by Blacks fleeing captivity with the help of other slaves and using their freedom to get arms and fight. Secret societies of runaway slaves organized terror against slaveowners, attacking plantations, freeing slaves, taking weapons and killing the plantation owners.

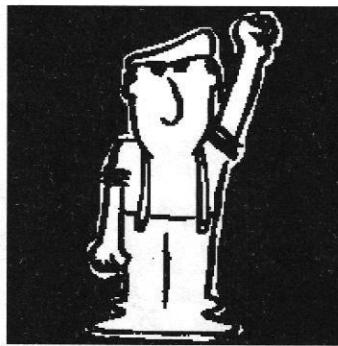
They penetrated into the tropical forest and organized new *quilombos* which reproduced the structures of the African communities from which they had come.

The most important of them, which stayed as a symbol in this country's revolutionary history was that of Palmares. It lasted for 67 years and had up to 20,000 inhabitants, including slaves on the run, free persons, and deserters from the colonial wars against Holland in north eastern Brazil.

Palmares survived thanks to guerilla war

Italian unions:

Collaboration or resistance?



IN the space of ten days more than one million people took to the streets in Italy. They were mobilizing against the elimination of the indexation of wages (whereby wages rise automatically to compensate for inflation) and the increase in the retirement age. At the same time, in recent by-elections 40% of voters in the northern city of Mantua cast their ballots in favour of the xenophobic, far-right Leagues.

GIGI MALABARBA — October 4, 1992.

THE large and militant September 12 national demonstration against the government sounded the alarm for the union leaderships. The demonstration was organized by the Communist Refoundation Party (PRC) and demanded the suspension of the July 31 agreement between union leaders and the government abolishing the indexation of wages. The social crisis is rapidly deepening, and the unions could find themselves in serious trouble unless they quickly try to regain the initiative.

On September 17 the government adopted — perhaps sooner than expected — new legislation which was even more draconian, reducing pensions and dramatically cutting back the national health care reimbursement system. At the same time, the Italian lira was devalued — a measure which will lead to significant price increases.

Most union leaders could only stammer in response, while a few leaders of the largest union confederation, the General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) started to talk about the need to organize a fight-back.

On the other hand, the government decrees were enough to provoke a wave of strikes on the morning of September 18. Workers in about one hundred factories went on strike — particularly in the north, in Brescia and Milan. They blocked railway lines and motorways, hoping in this way to call attention to and popularize their struggle given the lack of initiative from the CGIL, the Confederation of Free Unions (CISL — tied to the Christian democrats) and the Italian Labour Union (UIL — tied to the social

democrats).

The initiative taken by the factory councils of Sesto San Giovanni, in the industrial core of Milan, is significant. They telephoned all the striking workers to have them assemble in front of the regional union headquarters. After one hour of strong pressure from workers outside the building demanding a general strike, the regional secretaries emerged and called a general strike for the Lombardy region — using the megaphone of the Union rank and file committee (COBAS — a self-organizing body formed in opposition to CGIL, CISL and UIL) of Ansaldo. At the same time, the union leaders apologized to the workers for not having the authority to make a similar call on the national level.

At this point, the national unions tried to regain control of the movement by calling regional general strikes in the whole country, spread out over two weeks, including a national demonstration of retirees on September 26 and a public sector general strike on October 2.

Popular discontent

But the union leaderships have underestimated the extent of popular discontent across the country — more than one million workers have joined the various demonstrations which descend upon the city squares, chanting their demands in unison and filling the mass media with headlines announcing “the workers’ revolt”.

From the Alps to Sicily, the huge crowds of demonstrators called for a national general strike, the withdrawal of

the July 31 agreement and other government measures and violently confronted the union speakers. After years of silence imposed by a union bureaucracy that has prevented them from making their own choices, workers are “using the street” and outflanking the leaders of the CGIL, CISL and UIL.

The mass rallies which follow the demonstrations have been getting shorter and shorter — not exceeding five minutes — and union leaders have now been forced to give their speeches behind plastic shields provided by the police to protect them from barrages of vegetables.

In Rome as elsewhere, union leaders have stood on platforms placed 300 metres away from the crowds — protected by 2,500 members of the security service brought in as reinforcements from outside the capital, as well as 1,000 police in civilian clothes, and a squadron of mounted police which advanced against oppositionists who did not want to disperse, causing panic and several injuries.

Union leaders are now invoking the spectre of terrorism, in an attempt to temper the rapid growth of the movement, to divide it, and to gain some time before calling for a general strike — which, according to them, can happen without the workers having to leave their place of work, and with the sole goal of winning small changes to a package of economic measures they essentially support.

In the meantime, there have been two significant developments. At FIAT — where, after twelve years of workers defeats, the strikes at the Mirafiori factory have been total — the management has explicitly demanded that the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS — formerly the Communist Party of Italy) enter into the government.

Success for Lombard League

And the September 28 provincial elections in Mantua in Lombardy, produced a major defeat for government parties already discredited by scandals. While the left opposition held its ground, the Lombard League along with its allies made huge gains, with 40% of the votes.

All the polls predict that hereafter one-third of the northern Italian electorate will give their support to the Leagues. The government, through a decree and with the support of the PDS, has decided to postpone the elections that were scheduled to take place in the other two provinces of Lombardy until the spring of 1993.

While hiding their backing for the ending of wage indexation, the Leagues’ demagogic proposal for a “fiscal seces-



sion" by the North has received some mass support. All social layers are sympathetic to the Leagues' call to refuse payment of the residential tax, which had to be paid by September 30.

In the North, social protest is for the moment expressing itself in support for a right-wing political force, the only one which seems capable of bringing down the postwar regime. No clear demand for a political alternative has been heard even at workers' meetings; workers are limiting themselves to calling for an end to the government offensive at all costs.

Strike at Alfa Romeo

The first strike broke out on September 4 at Alfa-Romeo in Arese, on the initiative of the COBAS and rank-and-file delegates. In this factory, workers' self-organization is the most advanced in Italy. This action was an important sign of opposition to the July 31 agreement — in spite of the near-total press blackout.

The action at Alfa-Romeo produced an inter-union coordination body bringing together ten other factories in Milan, Rome and Naples to "rebuild a workers union from below", with unitary teams of delegates representing each factory — elected and subject to recall, and without union fulltimers.

But the most important phenomenon to date is the existence of several thousand delegates — particularly in the steel and engineering industries — who see themselves as part of the CGIL minority tendency *Essere Sindacato* ("Being a Unionist") which has the majority in Brescia province — the third biggest industrial region in the country — and in certain other regions.

This tendency retains a high capacity for mobilizing its supporters and offers all the union rights of which the COBAS are deprived. It attempts to put pressure on and influence the union leaderships. However, a discussion has begun in its ranks about the need to impose rules of rank-and-file democracy on the bureaucracy — and to oblige the leaderships of

the CGIL, CISL and UIL to consult workers and to be held to specific mandates during negotiations.

Minority currents in industry — partly originating in a leftward split in the CISL in alliance with small independent public sector and service sector unions — have founded the United Rank and File Confederation (CUB — not to be confused with the COBAS in industry, which are not part of the CUB).

The CUB have made propaganda with the aim of capitalizing on the discontent in traditional sectors — but they risk splintering the movement now being built. Indeed, they have remained outside this movement and organize their own separate activities.

The most important debate is now going on inside *Essere Sindacato*, which won 15% of the delegates — representing 200,000 members — at the 1991 CGIL congress. It is probable that their proposals enjoy majority support in the working class. Its leading members, who belong to the left of the PDS and the PRC, constitute the only union leadership that can provide a nationwide alternative.

Absence of union democracy

But the necessary conditions for overturning the relationship of forces in CGIL do not exist, given the total absence of democratic structures. This tendency still has trouble in addressing the issue of making a left split from the CGIL. *Essere Sindacato* has not translated its idea of a "refounding at the base" of a new democratic union into practice — although such an undertaking would, for example, chime in with the proposals from the Alfa-Romeo COBAS.

Despite the different context, this situation shares common features with the struggle waged in the Communist Party, before the split of January 1991 — to "refound inside" or to "refound outside".

Pressures from the leading groups of the CGIL "centre" and the demands of the political situation — for unity against the dangers of an authoritarian turn —

have so far dissuaded the minority from taking its own independent initiatives. If they had, they would have had a greater impact. They have also missed the opportunity to decisively take the leadership of the struggle — by going further than their (justified) decision to join the CGIL opposition after the leadership's signature of the July 31 agree-

ment was confirmed at the national leadership committee meeting of September 2 and 3.

The Alfa-Romeo COBAS, which is outside the CGIL, CISL and UIL, launched a public debate with the supporters of *Essere Sindacato* — particularly with its national spokesperson Fausto Bertinotti and the Brescia delegation, proponents of the convocation of a national assembly of factory councils.

The motivations for this proposal oscillate between the assembly being an organ of self-organization and being a vehicle for exerting internal pressures on the union leaderships.

The COBAS and what can be called the rank-and-file left of the minority are trying to start up a common oppositional front inside and outside the CGIL — to support the general strike and to call for a referendum on the repeal of present legislation which gives the CGIL, CISL and UIL complete control over negotiations. This latter proposal was made by Bertinotti himself, arguing that this monopoly should be returned to councils of delegates elected by the workers.

The evolution of the situation — given that the bourgeoisie cannot reduce the scope of its attacks — leaves the door open to a possible radicalization. A new capitulation by the bureaucracy — a "July 31 on the welfare state" — after the elimination of indexation and the widening of the governmental majority to include the PDS, could provoke a split in the CGIL.

Combatting demoralization

If the split sees the emergence of rank-and-file self-organization structures, this split could quickly give birth to a mass class-struggle union — thereby preventing the demoralized retreat the new defeats would produce for thousands of activists with years of experience in struggle.

Only a definitive break with the bureaucratic apparatuses of the CGIL,

CISL and UIL would give reason to hope for a reversal of fortunes for the workers movement — to continue along the path charted out during the birth and development of this enormous social movement, represented on the political scene by the birth of the PRC.

The uncertainties and contradictions of *Essere Sindacato* appeared in full view during its national meeting in Sesto San Giovanni on October 3. One thousand delegates were in attendance, in spite of CGIL secretary general Bruno Trentin's call not to organize separate activities. But a few important leaders of the minority did not attend this meeting.

In spite of the programmatic and political limitations of the PRC, workers have placed their hopes in this party, hoping that it will become a useful instrument and a point of reference for the reorganization of the left.

This gives the PRC a tremendous responsibility. Aside from the demonstration of September 12, it has not been able to take up the tasks of leadership demanded by such a movement — a movement, moreover, whose birth it hoped for at the end of its first national meeting.

Some of its most representative union members even prevented the more radical orientation of Fausto Bertinotti (still in the PDS) from carrying the day. This helped ruin an opportunity to make a qualitative jump in the building of an alternative leadership of the movement. It can be attributed to a certain approach to the balance of forces in the PDS leadership, an approach which these PRC members picked up during their many years in the PCI: they are looking to establish privileged relations with the "communist sector" of the PDS, even though it grows increasingly weak and discredited.

These union members have an orientation which is more moderate than that of PRC Secretary General Sergio Gavarini. They publicly denounced him because of his refusal to explicitly rule out the possibility of a split in the CGIL.

Realignments in prospect at union congress

One shouldn't exclude the possibility of new internal realignments occurring in the lead up to the next congress, to be held sometime in mid-1993. These realignments would upset the traditional divisions between the two currents of the ex-PCI and those originating in the New Left.

To cite an example, PRC union leaders originating from the far left Proletarian Democracy (DP) have been heckled — alongside union bureaucrats — by militants from the self-same PRC who were formerly members of the PCI. ★

Union militants meet

WE PUBLISH below extracts of the draft resolution put to the leadership meeting of the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) on September 2-4, 1992, by the *Essere Sindacato* minority tendency. This resolution was defeated.

AT its September 2-4 meeting in Ariccia, the leadership committee of the CGIL drew a negative balance sheet of the July 31 agreement. This morning's decision to retroactively increase the discount rate provides further proof that the agreement is not even capable of achieving the goals it set for itself [...]

The leadership committee therefore feels that it should withdraw its signature from the July 31 agreement, and renegotiate it based on those issues which are and have been the focus of a broad consultation and mobilization of the rank-and-file:

- **The re-instatement of an automatic mechanism of indexation for salaries and pensions...**

- **The re-instatement of the option to negotiate based on regions and the workplaces; for the organization and re-launching of struggles for the renewal of public sector contracts which expired years ago.**

(..) We must re-build the mobilization — up to the organization of a general strike — around the following points:

- **For a policy defending and expanding employment, through an immediate nationwide negotiation to deal with the devastating effects of the restructuring presently underway — for a policy which reforms current laws restricting mobility and moves towards legislation reducing the working week. A real employment policy must be oriented in the direction of expanding the country's productive base, and against the privatization of key public sector enterprises.**

The priority objective of such a policy must be the development of the South.

- **For a fiscal policy based on equality — beginning with the reinstatement of fiscal control — with the aim of punishing tax evasion for the first time, beginning with a system of enforcement which prevents investors from paying less than workers. In this framework, the tax increases on workers must be eliminated and the system of residential taxes must be radically overhauled...**

- **For a policy defending and extending the welfare state, with priority given to the system of health care and prevention. The public character of the national health service must be preserved by struggling against waste and inefficiency — which means opposing privatization, the drop in reimbursement and the increase in the costs of medical assistance.**

The system of indexing pensions must be maintained. We must reject increases in the retirement age and in the number of required years of work (from 15 to 20 years) — measures which strike particularly hard at women and workers in difficult circumstances, and reduce the real value of pensions.

It is also unacceptable that the right to a minimum amount of welfare be conditioned by the spouse's income.

It is based on these priority concerns that the CGIL — while not underestimating the objective difficulties of the current economic situation, and while seeking a common front with the CISL and UIL [other union confederations] — can rebuild a genuine autonomy in which links with its real social base can be democratically established, and its activists' confidence can be restored.

(From the September 11 edition of *Notiziario Comunista*, publication of the Communist Refoundation Party — PRC). ★

THE enforced exit of the British pound sterling from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in mid-September, its devaluation of 15% and the public row between the British government and its European Community (EC) partners — in particular Germany — have advertised both the fundamental weakness of the British economy and the crisis of bourgeois strategy.

Behind the British economic crisis lie acute dilemmas for the country's ruling class. The monetarist "miracle cure" of Thatcherism has created as many problems as it has solved. However, any alternative neo-Keynesian policy based on an attempt to strengthen the structures of production would also face enormous difficulties.

Underlying these tensions is the contradiction between the social nature of capital and its mobility.

JAMIE GOUGH

THE Conservative government of John Major is now in complete disarray, and seen to be so even by its own supporters. It has both lost the main mechanism of its economic policy and failed on its chosen index of success. Since the mid-1980s when the Conservatives abandoned control of the money supply as the central lever of their strategy, they have relied on a high exchange rate to impose deflation and discipline on the economy. This lever has now been removed in spectacular fashion.

The Conservatives have always presented their strategy as being about "reducing inflation". Right up to the moment of debacle Major was justifying the recession by pointing to the government's success in achieving 4% inflation — below the German rate for the first time in 25 years — and promising zero inflation. The devaluation will now ensure that inflation increases steeply in the years to come.

It is true that the exchange and inflation rates are only indirect and fetishistic forms of capital accumulation. Nevertheless, it is through these forms that bourgeois state economic policy functions. Loss of control of both is a disaster not only for the government but for the bulk of British capital, which has supported government strategy.

The sterling crisis owes something to the high level of German interest rates. But the fundamental reason is the weakness of productive capital in Britain; in the long term exchange rates reflect relative levels of productivity of labour in different coun-

A very British crisis

tries. The devaluation reflects this inescapable reality; the currency speculators — blamed for the crisis by both government and Labour opposition leaders — are no more than mediators.

Balance of trade

The most immediate measure of relative productivity is the balance of trade. This deteriorated continuously in the 1980s and went into deficit in 1986, in spite of income from North Sea Oil. Despite the fact that the recession is worse in Britain than in other imperialist countries — which ought to improve the trade balance — the latter remains in deficit, and would be sure to get worse in the event of any economic revival.

The lack of international competitiveness is reflected in the particular severity of the British recession. This has now lasted two and a half years and is still deepening. Real unemployment is around four million or 14%.

Government borrowing this year will be equivalent to 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), making it impossible for the government to use state spending to combat the recession; indeed there is talk of tax increases, which would further deepen the recession while representing a humiliating policy U-turn for a government that has always appealed for popular support as the party of tax cuts.

The real interest rate is at its highest level since the 1930s but a lasting cut to stimulate the economy is ruled out by the

plunge of the pound. In short the currency markets are right; the British economy is in its worst state since the early 1930s.

The dog that didn't bark

One might have expected the labour movement to use this open crisis to go on the offensive. Alas, we have a whimper instead of a bang.

The Labour leadership has been hamstrung by the fact that it supported British entry into the ERM before the Conservative government and even supported the high rate at which the pound was pegged. This is because they want deflationary discipline no less than the Tories and look to the ERM to impose it, using support from Germany and hoping that the "external" nature of the constraint will provide them with a convenient alibi in any future conflict with workers.

Labour has also ruled out any substantial increase in public expenditure. It has therefore been confined to putting forward some mild proposals for increasing productive competitiveness; more training, incentives for fixed investment and research and development and some stimulus to the building industry. From the trade union leaderships, meanwhile, who took further steps at the recent Trades Union Congress towards US or Japanese style business unionism, there has been a resounding silence.

The crisis thus raises some fundamental questions: First, why has the Conservatives' policy for reviving British capitalism failed so miserably? Second, why has the labour movement's response been so timid? Third, the open failure of neo-liberal policy might be expected to give a boost to a project with longstanding support, particularly in the labour movement — that of "modernization" meaning reorientating both government policy and the City of London financial centre towards the needs of domestic capital. Is this a realistic strategy for British capital and what are its implications for labour?

These problems are not specific to Britain. They concern the contradictions of both neo-liberalism and social democracy in the present period. Furthermore, while these contradictions take particular forms in Britain, this very "peculiarity" of Britain is different from how it is usually pictured on the left.

The British crisis is a particular expression of the crisis of world capitalism, currently visible in recession or slowdown in all the imperialist countries, the instability of the world's financial system and economic catastrophe in much of the semi-colonial world. This situation acts as an external context of the British crisis, most obviously in restricting markets. But there are also contradictions at work within Bri-

tain and other imperialist countries which are reproducing and perpetuating stagnation.

Nevertheless, the record of the domestic British economy has been peculiar: since the beginning of austerity it has continued its historical decline relative to its rivals. World crisis always exposes and sharpens the inherent unevenness of capitalism, including that between countries. This was the root of the ending of fixed exchange rates in 1971 and of the present currency crisis in Europe. Britain, in particular, has suffered badly from this process.

Neo-liberalism seeks to solve the crisis for capital by creating the maximum space for the operation of the therapeutic processes contained in the capitalist mode of production itself. The destruction of capital values is speeded up, thus reducing the amount of capital with claims on a given profit, in this way tending to increase the rate of profit. Unemployment is not combatted or is actively encouraged as a way of holding down wages and intensifying work.

For these processes to operate at full swing, obstructions to the operation of the law of value have to be reduced as far as possible. Neo-liberalism has sought to weaken and sweep away non-market "institutional" arrangements built up during the previous long wave of expansion, whether these be forms of state intervention and welfare, collective bargaining arrangements, trade union influence or cartels and other forms of coordination between firms; while all these may have been profitable for capital in the earlier period, they are now seen as having become shackles. In this way capital becomes more mobile, freer to move into new fields of investment, geographical areas and new inter-firm relations.

This programme has been carried out in a relatively pure form in Britain, since it goes with the grain of British traditions. Britain's past imperial dominance produced on the one hand money capital with the world as its oyster, and on the other manufacturing capital which for a long period was not forced to consider competitive strategy because of its historical head start and the cushion of Empire markets. Capital mobility, free markets and free trade seemed to serve well. Liberalism, in this sense, is dyed in the wool.

Thatcherism achieved certain gains for capital. Between the two cyclical peaks of 1979 and 1989, labour productivity increas-

sed at about the same rate as for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries as a whole — something not previously seen in the post Second World War period. This was achieved partly by enormous destruction of less productive plant, partly by labour saving investment, and, to a lesser extent, intensification of work.

Reorganization of production was assisted by successive defeats of the unions. In

stages of production were moved abroad, leaving behind low skilled and routine production. The present crisis flows from this lack of industrial investment.

Crucial to this failure was Thatcherism's refusal to have an industrial policy. The economies of today's imperialist countries are highly socialized. That is to say, many investments have a long turnover time and therefore need a planned context; firms' plans are highly dependent on those of other firms but are not easily or quickly changed; while there are many essential inputs to production that capital is loath to finance because they are difficult or impossible to keep private, including skilled labour and much knowledge production. For capital accumulation to proceed effectively, these interdependences require organization across and even against the private interests of both firms and workers.

This socialization of production has grown inexorably throughout the history of capitalism. The two most successful postwar imperialist economies, Germany and Japan, have been marked by strong socialization; in Germany organized by the banks and formal employer-union cooperation; in Japan by joint planning between the large firms in each sector and the state.

Neo-liberalism only sees the negative effects of the socialization of capital: feather-bedding of firms, blocking of investment avenues, excessive worker influence and the exposure of the state to pressures from particular interests. In its crusade to destroy these rigidities, it fails to find the needed new forms of socialization. The Conservatives have instead relied on cost cutting and deskilling.

The lack of attention to socialization has had severe negative consequences. Most of British industry has continued in its historic traditions of low product and process development, poor marketing, lack of strategic planning and collaboration. The government's cost-cutting strategy has chimed in with British industrial tradition; but in late capitalism pure cost competition is a very poor form of capital accumulation.

The government's success in weakening the unions has been used by employers to enforce speed up, flexibility of jobs performed and an increase in hours worked. But such forms of absolute surplus value extraction only lead to a temporary rise in profits unless they are used to facilitate tech-



1979-89 the rate of profit increased to reach its level of 1970 — low by the standards of a boom but a substantial improvement. As usual, British capital fared better than the British economy: Thatcher's ending of controls allowed an enormous export of capital — £53bn in 1989 alone.

No revival of investment

But big problems remained for capital. The rate of domestic fixed investment was no higher in the late 1980s than in the late 1970s, a far worse performance than in other OECD countries, and an increasing proportion of this investment was in property rather than in plant. Net fixed investment in industry was actually negative in 1981-84. Whole industries, notably computer manufacturing, were wiped out in the eighties. Many of the higher value added

nological innovation which was not the case in 1980s Britain. Deskilling and increased authoritarianism have sometimes provided a breathing space for employers, but as a form of the capitalist labour process it is inferior to the active collaboration and initiative of workers which many German and Japanese employers have been able to elicit.¹

State investment in physical and social infrastructures — the most obviously socialized branches of production — has been inadequate. The resulting shortages of skills, transport and housing, as well as the chaotic bankrupting of firms and sectors, have hampered production and resulted in inflation, thus undermining the government's cost cutting strategy. This shows that to reduce inflation and create "perfect markets" it is not enough to remove state and institutional interference; in fact, the latter are necessary to ensure adequate investment and thus adequate supply.

From public ownership to private monopoly

The objective inevitability of socialization shows through in the difficulties the Conservatives have had in privatizing state functions (gas, telecoms, electricity supply and so on). In most cases privatization has simply resulted in the creation of private monopolies whose high prices are ultimately a deduction from the profits of other capital, and which systematically under-invest. Attempts to get private capital to pay for, for example, special technological schools, have failed and we have seen farces such as the cancellation of a new underground line in East London due to the bankruptcy of the property company owning the new Canary Wharf development in London's Docklands.

Similarly, attempts to introduce internal pseudo-markets and competition within the National Health Service and education have failed in their aim of depoliticizing these services. On the contrary they have highlighted the costs and benefits of different parts of the services and encouraged new conflicts over resources. The inherently social and political nature of such services finds new ways to break through.

Lacking any positive industrial strategy to guide state spending the government has been weak in resisting pressures for handouts. The liberalism of British society is reflected in a culture which worships short term income. In the absence of a culture of collaboration within production, social cohesion depends on immediate money and benefits to both capital and labour.

Thus the Conservatives did nothing to end, and actually extended, a series of government handouts which are expensive and wasteful for capital as a whole: tax

rebates on house purchases, open ended subsidies to property companies, farmers and the arms industry and feather-bedding of the privatized industries. The handouts to capital have gone to the least innovative and risky industries. This weakness is not merely about buying political support (though it is that too); it follows from the lack of strategy.

The same weakness lay behind the Conservatives' relaxation of money controls and credit during the mid-80s, paralleling the Reagan boom in the USA. Certainly, in periods of crisis, capital itself tends to create debt to get around its problems; and attempts to reap profit through speculation periodically cause inflation of capital values (the Tokyo stock exchange being the most spectacular example of recent years). But in both Britain and the USA, government succumbed to pressure from capital and chickened out of the deflation demanded by neo-liberalism. It is no coincidence that these are the two most liberal, strategy free, imperialist countries.

The result has been that, whereas much manufacturing capital has been bankrupted, there has been an enormous overblown increase in capital values in business and consumer services, property and the stock market. This excess capital depresses the aggregate rate of profit. And Thatcher/Reagan Keynesianism has now gone into reverse: the unprecedented debt mountain now threatens both capital invested in production and the world banking system, while consumer debt severely depresses final demand.²

These contradictions show the superficiality of the once fashionable British Eurocommunist view — promoted by the influential journal *Marxism Today* — that Thatcherism had created a new and hegemonic political economy. In reality the Conservatives' strategy, while it has a powerful logic, is undermined by its inability to address the socialization of production.

The promise of modernization

The failures of neo-liberalism give renewed credibility to the project for the "modernization" of British capitalism. This project has a long history stretching back to the mid nineteenth century when Britain's productive weakness first became evident.

The modernizers want to make Britain more like Germany, *dirigiste* France or, lately, Japan. They seek to defend domestic industry and government policy from the City of London, with its priorities of foreign investment and short term profits. Sterling is seen as chronically over-valued in the interests of money capital; the modernizers welcome the current devaluation.

They seek to make productive industry itself pay more attention to long term planning and coordination between industries. There is to be greater institutionalized cooperation between capital and labour, through incorporation rather than unemployment — a shift away from mediation through money alone.

This project has a real logic and appeal not only to workers but also to capital to the extent that the latter is still dependent on the domestic economy. For example, the shares of the big four British banks, which are strongly internationalized, fared worse in the 1980s than those of industrial companies. They have been hit by failed overseas investments, by the weak domestic economy and now by enforced devaluation. Britain is still important to them.

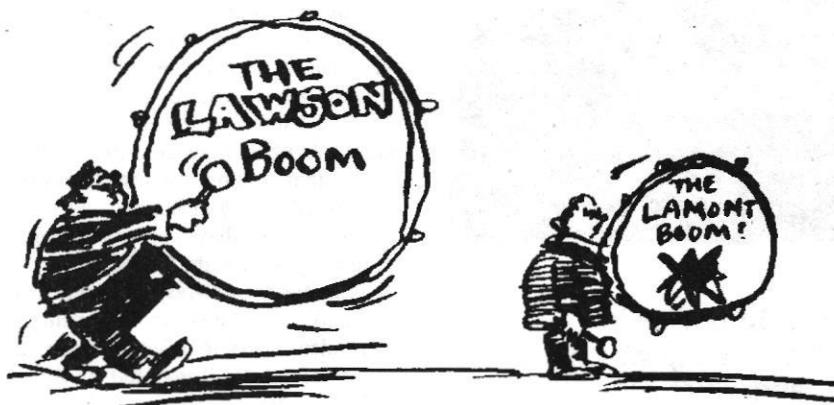
A mild version of modernization was attempted by Conservative and Labour governments in the 1960s. It was the essence of the Alternative Economic Strategy which had broad labour movement support in the 1970s. In recent years a version of this strategy has been put forward by the prominent leftwing Labour MP Ken Livingstone and left Stalinists: controls on capital export and credit, reduction in military spending to finance industrial investment and training, and possibly selective nationalization to create "pacesetters".³

Pressures from employers

Under the Conservatives there has been continual pressure from employers' organizations for at least some elements of modernization, such as greater spending on infrastructures and targeted industrial support. Many local councils and other economic agencies have attempted to carry out local modernization strategies with the support of capital and labour, though with limited resources.

If modernization were carried through in the way its proponents envisage it would undoubtedly benefit accumulation in Britain. And although the internationalization of money and production and knowledge linkages make national action for socialization more "leaky" than ever before, there are still many aspects of socialization that can be effectively addressed within an economy the size of Britain's.⁴ Modernization potentially has a wide appeal, offering to address problems in production in a "commonsense" and nationalistic fashion.

But the project faces major obstacles. First, despite the appeals to national solidarity, it would have to be nasty. The government would have to do away with many of the traditional handouts in order to use spending more productively. In restructuring industries, some firms would suffer in order that the industry as a whole would benefit. If unemployment was not to be employed to moderate wages, a govern-



ment incomes policy probably would be.

Moreover, despite the modernizers' promise of greater equality, socialization is inherently uneven. Its benefits go disproportionately to certain industries — for instance knowledge intensive ones, to particular regions and to better qualified workers. The modernizers thus have to persuade many sections of capital and labour to make sacrifices in order to secure promised benefits ten or twenty years later.

This, in essence, is why successive attempts at modernization over the last 140 years have failed. The present long wave of stagnation makes things even more difficult. In tough times both capital and labour are less inclined to make sacrifices; the Liberal Democrats' proposal in the 1992 election to add one penny to income tax to be spent on education was answered by a big drop in their vote. The attitude of British capital to prudent sacrifice is eloquently indicated by the fact that in the last two years of plunging profits dividends have hardly dropped.

Moreover, capital worldwide has responded to the crisis by attempting to increase its mobility and weaken institutional shackles. World capital also knows that, particularly following the inflationary boom of the mid-1980s, there is a continuing need for devalorization of capital. These are not, then, simply British diseases.

In Japan, for example, the holding company system of ownership, which has been a crucial underpinning of long term planning by protecting firms from short term stock market pressure, is under pressure from US capital wishing to enter Japan. The Japanese companies themselves are weakening their jobs-for-life system to become more mobile. This is not to say that all forms of national socialization are being destroyed, simply that this is a powerful tendency. In Britain, this tendency accentuates capital's traditional habits.

Many of the modernizers hope that a deepening of European integration will pull Britain towards the more socialized

forms of economic regulation prevalent on the continent. The reality is just the opposite. Though the EC operates some industrial investment policies, its central policies are for cuts in industries with "excess capacity" and removal of "distorting" national industrial subsidies, that is, for weakening socialization. In addition, the ERM and free internal trade necessarily have a permanent deflationary effect on countries with weaker economies, such as Britain.

Increased leverage for workers

Finally, organized socialization tends to give the working class increased leverage over management and government. This holds no substantial dangers for capital if the workers movement is very weak — as it was for example in post-Second World War West Germany. In Britain, however, despite the defeats for the unions, capital is not convinced that labour is sufficiently "disciplined" not to use openings provided by modernization initiatives to pursue its independent interests. Only at local level, where labour is geographically fragmented and dependent, has capital been confident of keeping modernization under control.⁵

These contradictions explain why capital, although it has demanded greater attention to socialization by government and has supported local initiatives, has rejected any systematic modernization project. The modernizing Tory "wets" such as Michael Heseltine have little weight within the Major government.

The Labour Party failed to win the endorsement of any significant section of industrial capital in the April 1992 election despite its programme being a carbon copy of their demands. The timidity of the labour bureaucracy in taking up the banner of modernization, despite the dire state of the productive economy, reflects its problems for labour and especially capital.

The open crisis of neo-liberalism has produced, not a modernizing alternative, but paralysis of both the bourgeoisie and reformists.

The modernization project would subordinate labour to capital in a new, more consensual and cooperative fashion. It should be rejected for this reason alone. But it is also important to see its utopian aspect: that both British workers and capitalists have strong reasons for remaining "unmodernized".

An influential view on the British left, most systematically developed in the *New Left Review*, is that Britain has a reactionary, not-fully capitalist, ruling class. This view lends itself to modernizing projects, a logic expressed recently in NLR's support for a Labour-Liberal coalition.

This analysis views capital in only one of its aspects — production, socialization, use values, geographical rootedness, capital-labour collaboration, and ignores the other side — money, free markets, value, mobility. The latter is no less a part of capital than the former; in fact, the British predilection for money and market freedom corresponds to capital in its most "perfect" form.

Not properly capitalist?

It is true that the one-sidedness of British capital creates problem for domestic accumulation. But it serves British capital well in its overseas investments, and these develop the world division of productive labour.

The most powerful forms of capital, the multinationals, now combine productive and money operations; this is particularly true of British multinationals. And internationalization, mobility and weakening socialization are now strong tendencies within world capital, not merely in Britain.⁶

We need, then, to see socialization and mobility, productive and money capital, as forming contradictory unities. They are in conflict, and it is this conflict which blocks the modernizing project in Britain. But they are also dependent on one another. This contradiction creates fundamental tensions and dilemmas for world capital and prevents any simple resolution of the crisis. ★

1. John Holloway: "The red rose of Nissan", *Capital and Class* no. 32, 1987.

2. Ernest Mandel: "The twilight of monetarism", *International Viewpoint*, no. 235, September 14, 1992.

3. N. Costello, J. Michie, S. Milne: *Beyond the Casino Economy*, Verso, London, 1989.

4. For a different view see Ernest Mandel, op. cit.

5. Aram Eisenschitz and Jamie Gough: *The Politics of Local Economic Policy*, Macmillan, London, forthcoming.

6. For a critique of the NLR position along similar lines, see Ellen Meiksens Wood: *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism*, Verso, London, 1991.

Russia and the Commonwealth: More equal than the others

ON September 9, Russian President Boris Yeltsin surprisingly called off his trip to Japan, a trip which had been prepared for several months and which elite liberals were looking forward to with hopes of a major breakthrough. This was more than just another minor manoeuvre in the ruling circles.

POUL FUNDER LARSEN – October 6, 1992

AS *Izvestiya* noted on its front page on September 11: "The cancellation of the visit testifies to a change in the relationship of forces in the Russian leadership". Suddenly the long drawn out discussion inside the ruling circles over the "new" Russia's foreign policy objectives, both in relation to the "Near Abroad" (mainly the Commonwealth of Independent States — CIS) and the New World Order of the major capitalist powers, was out in the open.

The rifts inside the alliance around Yeltsin had lately become increasingly clear — particularly over the issue of the second phase of economic reform, where the hardline monetarists around prime minister Gaidar were feeling the pressure from the industrialist lobby¹. But the debate on Russian foreign policy displays in a perhaps even more striking manner the compound and unstable nature of the alliance supporting Yeltsin.

The divisions in the apparatus on these issues were clear even before the formation of the CIS in December 1991. During the protracted negotiations over economic union of the former Soviet republics after last year's coup, two main positions on the role of Russia in relation to the other republics were expressed: The first, a unionist tendency (at that time rallying around a project put forward by the economist Yavlinskii) called for a centralized economic reform and a strong centre in Moscow to preserve the bulk of the economic links of the (then) Soviet Union.

This option amounted to Russia assuming control of the former all-union centre; it was finally rendered invalid by the demise of the Gorbachevite alliance

at the centre and by the drive for independence in the non-Russian republics.

Meanwhile a liberal tendency — expressed in the economic union project drawn up by Shatalin — argued that to begin with Russia should let the other republics go. Later on it could easily assert its hegemony through its sheer economic weight in the region. In short a strategy focusing on institutional guarantees for Russian hegemony was opposed to domination primarily through economic and diplomatic means.

Yeltsin may well have preferred the first option, but in order to get rid of the old centre, and as a result of the *de facto* secession of most other republics from the Soviet Union (the most dramatic development here being the Ukrainian referendum on December 1, 1991) he had to settle for a solution closer to the second model. The CIS was the resulting compromise.

Break with the totalitarian past?

The Yeltsinites have been arguing that this "break with the totalitarian past of the USSR" and the construction of the CIS was based on the will of the people(s) of Russia. But this claim is very difficult to prove or find evidence for, since the CIS was set up through top level negotiations behind closed doors and Yeltsin gave the population no opportunity to express its view on this decisive constitutional issue.

It is in fact highly unlikely that a majority of Russians would endorse the CIS — although only a minority would want the USSR back in its bureaucratic

and hyper-centralist form. Nonetheless it remains true that a clear majority of people in Russia (as well as in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and elsewhere) voted for the, admittedly vague, concept of a "renewed Union" in the referendum of March 17, 1992. A recent opinion poll showed that support for some kind of Union is still strong in Russia — 69% of Muscovites said they were sorry about the disintegration of the USSR.²

It is important to grasp how the CIS came into being. The Commonwealth of Independent States founded in Minsk on December 8 only consisted of three republics — Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia. This unilateral move by these three states — the most prosperous after the departure of the Baltic States — met with considerable anger from those left behind, primarily the Central Asian and Transcaucasian republics.

Two weeks later eight more republics joined the CIS at the Alma Ata summit, but the rationale behind the initial move — apparently orchestrated by Russia — remained clear: the "first class" members should be tied together by a series of formal agreements and institutions (also with the hope of keeping "unruly" Ukraine in its place), while the "second class" republics would be forced to come in for economic reasons but be without real political influence — satellites around a Slavic commonwealth.³

This "go-it-alone" attitude is a common feature of the Russian leadership's dealings with the other republics, above and beyond the internal Russian discussions on policy towards the Near Abroad. One example is the taking over by Russia of most former Union institutions and its claim to be the sole successor to the Soviet Union in the international arena — for example in the United Nations Security Council.⁴

Russia's natural resources

This approach to the other republics is obviously based on the very great geopolitical and economic potential of Russia, which disposes of 61% of the Gross

1. For a more detailed discussion of this see Poul Funder Larsen: "From shock to slump" in *International Viewpoint* no. 235, September 28, 1992.

2. *Izvestiya*, August 24, 1992.

3. The agreements of December 8 and 21, 1991, are reproduced in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 1/1992. For further considerations on the formation of the CIS see "What future for the new Commonwealth?" by David Seppo in *IV*, no. 220.

4. One of the major exceptions to this was, until recently, the USSR's foreign debt. Russia was in no hurry to press its claim to this part of the inheritance. However in recent months, Russia has entered into bilateral agreements with several other CIS states who have taken on a share of the foreign debt in exchange for USSR assets abroad, such as embassies.

5. *Narodnoe Khozyaistvo SSR v 1990 godu*, Moscow, 1991.

National Product (GNP), 75% of the territory, 90% of the oil and 75% of the natural gas of the former USSR.⁵ In principle, furthermore, Russia is the least dependent on maintaining the economic links. In 1989 its trade with other Soviet republics amounted to 13% of GNP compared to 27% for Ukraine, 29% for Kazakhstan and 34-50% for the other republics.

Most calculations confirm that Russia would profit by a comprehensive shift within the CIS to trading at world market prices. Nonetheless, the breaking of inter-republican enterprise links is wreaking havoc in all the republics — so far Russian trade with the other CIS states has fallen by 48% in 1992.⁶

Andrei Kozyrev, the Yeltsin-Gaidar government's foreign minister, has become a symbol of the pro-Western orientation of foreign policy, prioritizing close ties (meaning obedience) to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other Western institutions. Indeed the lack of principled positions and the readiness to do the utmost to appease the major imperialist powers in exchange for economic support seems to be the leitmotif of Russian foreign policy.

The attitude to the Yugoslav crisis is a case in point. At first, Russia was reluctant to support sanctions against Serbia, but in the end they gave in. One conservative weekly reproduced a memo from the Russian ambassador to the UN which stated, "It is very important not to oppose on this point the Western countries and the United States, where public opinion is strongly against Milosevic... Our country must not be associated personally with Milosevic, especially not on the eve of the summit in the United States."⁷

Russia's place in the world

However, as Gaidar's government meets increasing resistance, pressure on Kozyrev to alter Russian foreign policy is also mounting. In an important article in the liberal *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* this spring, Sergei Stankevich, a Yeltsin advisor, challenges Kozyrev.

Stankevich outlines two main attitudes in governing circles to the question of "Russia's place in the world": the Atlanticists, who want to give priority to relations with the West and situate Russia firmly within the institutions of the so-called "civilized world community" versus the Eurasians, who want a stronger defence of Russian interests within the ex-Soviet Union and an orientation that puts as much emphasis on Asia and the Middle East as on the Western powers and the institutions they control.⁸

The Atlanticist perspective is in reality

a continuation of the Gorbachev/Shevardnadze line, whereas the Eurasians want at least a partial break with the line prevailing in Soviet foreign policy after 1985. These two lines roughly correspond to the two different notions of economic reform — Gaidar's hardline monetarism and the policies supported by the industrialist alliance around Volsky/Rutskoy.

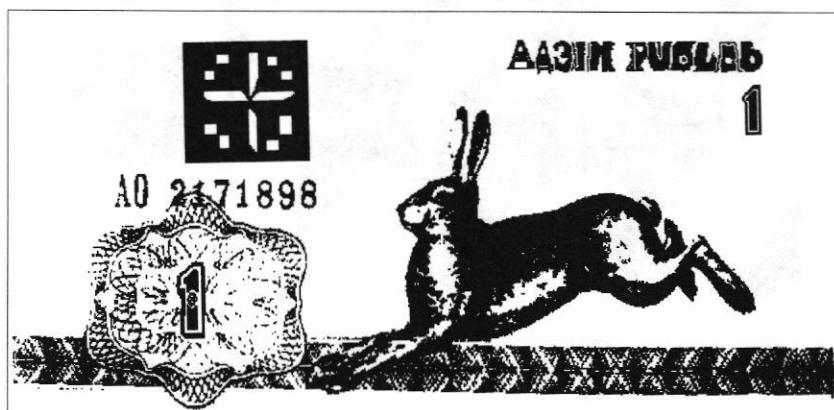
This conflict has come to the surface in a discussion around the idea of a separate ministry of CIS affairs, independent of Kozyrev's foreign ministry. Stankevich is a likely candidate for the head of such a new ministry, the creation of which would herald a more interventionist approach by Russia to the affairs of the Near Abroad.

Stankevich has been calling for sanctions against Estonia and Latvia over their treatment of Russian minorities and in the early summer he accused Moldova of "the systematic killing of the Rus-

when it includes such regions as the Transdniestra and the one where the Gagauz live... It is necessary to give Transdniestra a special political and legal status — for the time being within Moldova — now there is no other way out. Later on there may be different solutions".¹¹

Kozyrev remained within the bounds of diplomatic discourse but others were less woolly. The new commander of the Russian 14th Army in the Transdniestra region, Alexander Lebed, who replaced a less bellicose general in late June, made it plain that the conflict with the "fascist" Moldovan government could, in his opinion, only be solved through the secession of Transdniestra and its likely incorporation into Russia.

This is not only a question of chauvinist outbursts, as the 14th army and other Russian institutions have actively been aiding the Slav insurgents. "Aid is being given behind the scenes.



sian-speaking peoples".⁹

Throughout the spring and summer Moldova and the question of its eastern Transdniestra region was a testing ground for the new interventionist approach which is gaining currency in much of the Russian leadership.¹⁰ The case of the "moderate" Kozyrev is telling: in April in a Russian radio broadcast he made the sober point that, "We must not provoke Russophobic feelings in Moldova, because 75% of all the Russians and Russian speakers in Moldova are beyond the Dniester, on the right bank" — implicitly acknowledging thereby that Russians are in a minority even on the left bank.

But two months later his tune had changed. In an interview with *Izvestiya* under the headline "Andrei Kozyrev does not rule out the possibility of a revision of borders within the CIS" the foreign minister made ominous noises: "Concerning the Transdniestra region, it is important that Moldova gives up its unrealistic positions.

"I don't understand why Moldova should at any price be a unitary state,

Employees of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs are serving in the Dniestr battalion, the equivalent of the OMON (Interior Ministry special troops) in the region.

"The Russian government pretends not to see when Russian factories sell Tiraspol [the capital of Transdniestra] firearms and military vehicles written off as part of economic conversion... Volunteers from Russia (and not only Cossacks) are fighting in various armed formations without the Russian Prosecutor's Office charging them with crimes."¹²

6. *Izvestiya*, September 18, 1992. The Kazakh president Nazarbayev recently claimed that 85% of the drop in production in the CIS states could be ascribed to the breaking of inter-republican ties.

7. *Den*, June 7-13, 1992.

8. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, March 28, 1992. This distinction has a pedigree — for instance in the traditional distinction between Slavophiles and Westernizers ("Zapadniks") in Russian thinking.

9. *Trud*, June 12 and *Izvestiya*, July 8, 1992.

10. For the background to the Transdniestra conflict see Colin Meade: "Yeltsin and the generals" in *IV*, no. 233.

11. *Izvestiya*, June 9, 1992. The Gagauz are a Turkish-speaking minority in Moldova.

12. *Sobesednik*, no. 30, July 1992.

For the time being open warfare has been halted through a Moldovan-Russian ceasefire, but meanwhile Russia has managed to win important concessions using the "Dniestr Republic" — which continues to develop its internal structures — as a battering ram.

Interference in Georgia

While the case of Moldova is probably the most clearcut instance of Russian interference other examples can be cited. In Georgia there is little reason to doubt that Russia played a key role in the ouster of president Gamsakhurdia — a putsch which led to the instalment of the supposedly Moscow-loyal Shevardnadze. But Russian-Georgian relations have continued to be less than cordial.

protracted faction struggles within the Russian leadership that this type of statement was made two months after the Russian-Ukrainian summit at Dagomys had seemed to have injected a certain stability into relations between the two states.

The evolution of Russia's attitude to the other CIS states coincides with an important shift within the Russian defence establishment. In May, Yeltsin, in a surprising move, appointed the conservative general and former Afghan war veteran Pavel Grachev as Russian defence minister. Following this several conservative hawks, most of them with a past in the Afghan campaign, were promoted to leading positions in the Russian army.

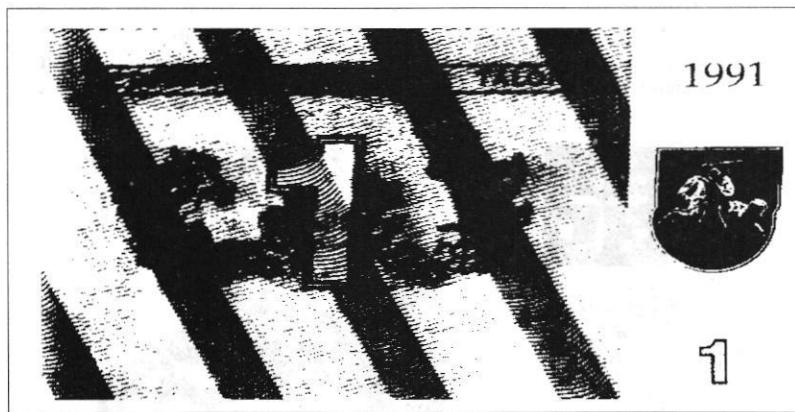
The promotion to deputy defence

population. An opinion poll on the eve of Yeltsin's planned departure for Japan showed that 76% of respondents were opposed to ceding the islands with only 13% in favour.¹⁵

The forces opposed to Kozyrev's pro-Western orientation have had a considerable impact on public opinion with populist slogans about the territorial integrity of Russia and the need to defend the 25 million Russians living abroad (that is in other republics of the former Soviet Union).

The bogey of an exodus of Russians from the non-Russian republics has been evoked — the actual number of Russians returning in 1991 was around 500,000 with another 600,000 expected this year.¹⁶ In any case, the thrust of this rhetoric — adopted by a large part of the Russian elite — is clear: it pushes the issue of "Russian statehood to the fore, at a time of unprecedented socio-economic crisis, to pave the way for chauvinist and authoritarian solutions".¹⁷

In official statements, the West has expressed concern about mounting national tension in the former USSR, but there are signs that it is not in reality opposed to granting Russia a certain freedom to act as the "gendarme" of the CIS. It was striking that Yeltsin sharpened his verbal attacks on Moldova after his return from his summit with the US leadership in June.



Demands for the incorporation of the refractory Southern Ossetia into Russia have been voiced in, for example, the Russian Supreme Soviet — and at a meeting with Cossacks in southern Russia, Yeltsin stated that the question of border revisions with Georgia is not settled once and for all.¹⁸

The very recent developments in the Abkhaz region of Georgia, where Yeltsin is threatening to intervene directly, and Tajikistan in Central Asia, where more Russian forces are being deployed, underlines the shift towards increasingly direct intervention from the Russian side.

Imperial ambitions

There have also been unmistakable signs of the imperial ambitions of the Yeltsin leadership in relations with Ukraine, notably on the Crimean question. In August Yeltsin's vice-president Alexander Rutskoy put things in his usual blunt manner addressing the council of Cossack Atamans (chieftains): "The Crimea was Russian — it's covered with Russian blood and it must be Russian".¹⁹

minister of the arch-reactionary Boris Gromov, former right hand man of Boris Pugo, the interior minister who committed suicide after the failed coup, was perhaps the most significant change. But other conservative army figures such as the former commander of Soviet troops in Poland, Dubynin, and Lebed (see above) have also been given top posts.

While the conservatives are playing an increasingly prominent role, the CIS high command led by Evgenii Shaposhnikov is apparently losing ground. But even Shaposhnikov has voiced criticism of the line prevailing in Russian foreign policy. At the end of June he came out openly against any Russian concessions to Japan on the Kuril Islands issue: "Russia has not become so weak and puny that it should start trading land for some kind of temporary success".

The question of the Kurils became a key issue for the different factions trying to influence Russian foreign policy. Throughout the summer military leaders, including Grachev, were calling for a clear rejection of Japanese claims, publicly contradicting the cautious official line of Yeltsin and Kozyrev.

Furthermore the circles rejecting concessions to the Japanese could count on considerable support among the

Moscow's Monroe doctrine

This has acted as grist to the mill of the "interventionist" faction in the Russian leadership, prompting some of its supporters to formulate a new "Monroe Doctrine" for the Near Abroad. The chairman of the Supreme Soviet's foreign relations committee, Evgenii Ambartsumov, put this point blank: "As the internationally recognized legal suc-

13. ITAR-TASS, July 22, 1992. The Georgian government has repeatedly claimed that Russian troops are involved in the conflict in South Ossetia — see for example, *Izvestiya*, June 20, 1992.

14. Cited from RFE/RL Research Bulletin no. 33/1992. Crimea was transferred to the Ukraine in 1954. Around two thirds of its population are Russian; nonetheless, 54.1% of the inhabitants voted for Ukrainian independence in the December 1991 referendum.

15. *Izvestiya*, September 7, 1992. The popular resistance to Japanese claims was in part fuelled by the Japanese government's undisguised blackmail, refusing any substantial economic aid to Russia until the territorial issue was solved.

16. *Reuters*, June 29, 1992.

17. Obviously this does not in any way imply a whitewash for the leaderships of the non-Russian republics. Many of these "new" regimes — which are more often than not solidly anchored in the old nomenklatura — have climbed to power on the backs of national democratic movements; but their record on both internal democracy and respect for national minority rights is in most cases flawed.

18. *Izvestiya*, August 7, 1992.

sor to the USSR, the Russian Federation's foreign policy must be based on a doctrine that proclaims the entire geo-political space of the former Union a sphere of vital interests (following the example of the US' Monroe Doctrine in Latin America)". This has to be done with understanding from the Western powers: "Russia must secure from the international community the role of political and military guarantor of stability on all the territory of the former USSR".¹⁸

In spite of their own increasingly interventionist approach the Yeltsinists are maintaining over and over again that the threat of Russian chauvinism comes solely from the so-called "red-brown alliance" of Stalinists and Russian nationalists. Through the *Trudovaya Rossiya* ("Working Russia") front this alliance organized a series of demonstrations last winter and spring drawing crowds of

advocates a Greater Russia within the borders of the ex-USSR and is also pushing the idea of so-called "proportional representation" in public life — a proposal meant to exacerbate prejudice in particular against Jews, alleged to be "over-represented" in political and cultural life.

On the fringes of the nationalist mainstream, press reports speak of a growing number of extremist groups and parties which openly adhere to fascist positions.¹⁹ Another sign of growing chauvinist militancy in Russia is the revival of the Cossacks, who were formally rehabilitated by Yeltsin through a decree in June. Groups of Cossacks have been operating with growing self-confidence especially in southern Russia, organizing physical assaults on people from other nationalities.

But while pro-centralist and Great Russian tendencies have been gaining

the Far East was also cited as an argument against concessions over the Kuril Islands which could provoke anger throughout the region.

The main stumbling block in relations between centre and regions remains money, and notably the division of tax income. At the end of June the large Chelyabinsk region warned the centre that in future it will keep a far higher percentage of tax income for its own budget rather than transferring it to the centre, which, it claimed, did not allocate enough to the region's own industry.

Meanwhile the republics of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and Yakutia — all within Russia — announced that they will add all local tax income to their budget regardless of decisions of the Russian Supreme Soviet.

Such developments, which could eventually undermine the centre's ability to govern the Federation, may be spreading. At least there seems to be a stalemate between the regional leaderships loyal to the centre and those that are not. Yeltsin recently had to admit the extent of the problem of regions that are more or less ungovernable: "The president stated that the ratio of regions where there is agreement between the [regional] legislature and the [regional] executive and those where this is not the case is about 50:50".²²

It is not surprising given the turmoil in all the republics that the CIS has not developed into an efficiently working organism. This spring the CIS seemed on the verge of a breakdown. The liberal *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* concluded in April: "The reality of the first four months of the formal existence of the CIS is that during this period the construction of a viable Commonwealth didn't succeed — and the process of disintegration went so far that even the very concept of a Commonwealth is experiencing a profound crisis".²³

This judgement remains valid today insofar as the Commonwealth has not managed to adopt even a charter or set up effective inter-state institutions with the power to implement joint decisions.

between 30,000 and 60,000. But the front's traditionalist profile and its nostalgia for Brezhnev and Stalin limits its appeal and prevents it from reaching broad layers of workers.

Trudovaya Rossiya has in fact become a convenient bogey used by the liberals to stigmatize any kind of opposition, alleging the threat of an imminent "red-brown" putsch. The main danger, however, are not the scattered "pro-Communist" groups calling for the resurrection of the Soviet Union but the fact that chauvinist rhetoric and open support for chauvinist practices are gaining ground even in the supposedly respectable part of the political scene.

Russian National Assembly

The formation of the Russian National Assembly in mid-June was a sign of this. This organization unites nationalists and Stalinists, but has also drawn in some prominent off-shoots from the liberal wing of Russian politics such as the governor of Sakhalin Island in the Far East Valentin Fedorov, as well as moderate conservatives. The Assembly

ground there are also strong centrifugal forces within Russia itself — forces which may in the medium term represent a serious challenge to the pro-capitalist reforms. The pressure for federalization, far-reaching sovereignty or outright independence from national minorities is at work in all the former Soviet republics, but nowhere on the scale of Russia with its more than 100 nationalities.²⁰

The March 21 independence referendum in Tatarstan — formerly an Autonomous Soviet Republic within the Russian Federation — showed how potentially explosive this issue is.²¹ Even though Yeltsin managed to get together a Federative Treaty earlier this year the basic issues have not been resolved.

On the contrary: the liberal reforms aggravate inequalities and contradictions between the regions, which then try to defend their interests in the face of pressure from other regions and, particularly, the centre. One foretaste of this was the congress of Siberian regions which early this spring stopped short of threatening to form Siberian republics. The danger of secessionist tendencies in Siberia and

19. *Izvestiya*, September 18, 1992, gives a disquieting account of collaboration between circles in the St. Petersburg police and various fascist groups. It should however be added that fascism is still not a mass phenomenon.

20. It is calculated that as many as 65 million people on the territory of the former USSR are living outside of "their own" national republic.

21. If there are areas and republics presently within Russia that want outright independence — as may be the case in Tatarstan and some regions in the Caucasus — this could lead to open, even armed, conflict; this was shown by Yeltsin's threat to use military force against breakaway Chechen-Ingushia last autumn.

22. *Izvestiya*, September 14, 1992.

23. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 22, 1992.

The CIS may, however, survive for a longer period than initially expected, but rather as a loose association of states developing cooperation in (at least) two speeds.

The Russian agenda

While Russia has officially been keen on developing the framework and institutions of the CIS it has also consistently been pressing ahead with its own agenda even when this is clearly to the detriment of the other CIS states.

A case in point is monetary policy where Russia has been playing the part of the IMF's most zealous disciple. In order to carry through the prescribed drastic reduction in the money supply, they have introduced a series of measures — in part through the financial institutions of the former USSR — that have presented the other CIS states with two alternatives: either to submit to the decisions of the Russian Central Bank or leave the rouble zone.

Some have left — or announced their attention to do so (for example Ukraine), while others are more or less forced by their dependence on Russia to stay in.

Consequently Russia retains the levers of monetary policy in its hands and it has also by and large secured firm control of the military forces of the CIS. The main problem so far have been the disputes with Ukraine over the Black Sea Fleet and the supervision of strategic nuclear weapons.

There is however little doubt about the real relationship of forces: the (Russian) commander-in-chief of the CIS forces, Shaposhnikov, has announced that: "Commanders of the various sections of the Russian armed forces will become deputies to the CIS commander-in-chief, because over 80% of the air force, navy and air defence infrastructure belongs to Russia".²⁴

Authoritarian drift

The outcome of the current political struggle in Russia over its "place in the world" will have significant repercussions not only on the domestic scene but also throughout the CIS. Most of the political establishment is drifting towards increasingly authoritarian and interventionist positions.

The question remains if other forces — outside the conflicting factions of the bureaucracy — can make heard their vision of an alternative to the pseudo-solution of inter-republican and national disputes through economic domination and military intervention. ★

The roots of Tamil oppression

IN most of the world's media the Tamils of Sri Lanka appear either as refugees or as "terrorists" of the nationalist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Little attention is paid to the history of past and present oppression of Tamils by the Sri Lankan state, dominated by the island's Sinhala majority, which has led to the rise of the Tigers and the desire of many Tamils to leave their country.

V. THIRUNAVUKKARASU*

THOUGH well-known to observers of the Sri Lankan politico-military scene, it is worth briefly recounting the events leading up to the ongoing war in the north and east of Sri Lanka and the current major offensive on Jaffna code-named "Operation Earthquake". It should be noted that this has been preceded by a number of such operations in the past, such as "Operation Vadamarachchi", "Operation Jayasakthi", "Operation Valampuri", "Operation Thunderstorm", "Operation Balavegayas I and II", and so on. Furthermore, during its presence in the north and east from 1987 to 1990, the so-called Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) also launched a number of operations with "Operation Pavan" as its major offensive on Jaffna.

Terrible human cost of war

The now 10-year old war has cost around 50,000 lives and many thousands have been maimed. Annual military expenditure has risen from 1.37 billion rupees in 1983 to Rs. 12.7bn. in 1987 to Rs. 20bn. in 1992. The total expenditure between 1987 and 1992 alone is Rs. 86bn. The destruction caused to property will also doubtless run into hundreds of billions, to say nothing of the pillage and plunder by unscrupulous armed forces and other elements.

At least 700,000 people have been made refugees and consigned to squalid camps, living on miserably inadequate rations, falling victim to serious malnutrition, and in sub-human health and sanitary conditions. The rations worth Rs. 315 (less than \$8) per week for each family of five or more members have since been halved by the government, allegedly for lack of funds, while vast sums are ploughed into the war.

Military expenditure, which was 0.7% of the Gross National Product (GNP) in 1977 rose to 5% by 1988, and the food subsidy came down from 5% in 1977 to 0.7% by 1988. It is clear that essential welfare subsidies have subsequently been further pru-

ned to meet ever-increasing military expenditure.

In the post-1948 period, with the advent of independence from British rule, the country witnessed two major anti-Tamil riots, besides a number of intermittent outbursts of bloodletting, in southern Sri Lanka. The first was in 1958, during the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP)-led regime headed by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike who, in 1956, made Sinhalese the only official language, ignoring the Tamil language altogether.

This served as a further step on the path of oppression of the Tamil-speaking people initiated by Sri Lanka's (then Ceylon) first United National Party (UNP) prime minister D. S. Senanayake who removed citizenship and the franchise from the Tamil plantation workers. This was aimed as a deadly blow to these workers as well as to the then powerful leftwing movement.

He also encouraged state-sponsored colonization of parts of the Tamil majority north and east by Sinhalese-speakers, thus drastically changing the demographic composition of these areas as borne out by the government's census figures.

The 1958 riots broke out following the repeal of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact which sought to redress and resolve the grievances and problems of the Tamil-speaking people. The repeal was triggered mainly by a campaign spearheaded by former president J.R. Jayewardene coupled with the exhortations dished out by the UNP journal *Siya Rata* to "awake, arise and kill the Tamils".

The riots turned out to be so barbarous, with even bellies of pregnant women being ripped open in broad daylight, that people asked themselves whether it signalled the end of the road between the Sinhalese and the Tamils.

The second occurrence was in 1977, soon after the UNP headed by J.R. Jaye-

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wardene (known as JR) was returned to power. 1977 proved to be even worse than 1958. Jayewardene was returned to office in early 1977 on a manifesto which explicitly identified and promised to address the genuine grievances of the Tamil-speaking people in areas such as education, employment and land settlement. Once returned comfortably to office with substantial Tamil support, JR threw that pledge to the winds, declaring in a speech in Colombo that if the Tamils wanted war, it would be war; if they wanted peace, it would be peace.

Anti-Tamil pogroms

Then came the July 1983 anti-Tamil pogroms, the worst holocaust ever, the pretext being the killing of 13 soldiers in Jaffna by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Both in 1958 and 1977 the Tamil victims were able to flee to their native north and east at least to vouchsafe their physical safety.

By 1983, however the security and safety of the Tamil-speaking people in the north and east itself had become imperiled with the progressive beefing up of Sinhala armed forces in these areas. (These forces were first posted to Jaffna in the early 1960s to suppress the non-violent protest campaign launched by the Federal Party under the leadership of S.J. Chelvanayakam.)

By the early 1970s the Tamil youth had already become disillusioned and exasperated by the ever-shrinking access to higher education resulting from the then SLFP-Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP)-Communist Party (CP) coalition government's pursuit of a policy plainly detrimental to the Tamil students. Coupled with the terrible death and destruction in July 1983, which included the massacre and mutilation of Tamil prisoners at Welikade Jail, the Tamil youth chose the path of all-out armed struggle, to which the government responded by stepping up its repression.

The ensuing war, with its ever increasing toll, has today assumed monstrous proportions particularly insofar as the Tamils and Muslims in the North are concerned. Tied to this bloody war are a host of restrictions tantamount to an economic blockade which has already debilitated the bulk of the population, with serious malnutrition invading most families — a consequence worse than the war in itself.

There continues to be an acute shortage

of food, fuel, medicine, and the like. In Jaffna, vital drugs such as antibiotics and all varieties administered to heart, cancer and psychiatric patients are not available at all most of the time. Even dressing material is seldom available at a time when large numbers of civilians are getting wounded almost daily in the ongoing military operations.

Death rates have increased as a result. Infant mortality rates have also risen in Jaffna. During a seven-month period 283 infants died — 235 of whom were stillborn; 90% of mothers are malnourished. There are large numbers of premature births with badly underweight babies. Malnutrition is the prime reason for this state of affairs. Non-availability of proper prenatal clinical care and wartime shocks have also been contributory factors, according to Jaffna's obstetrician and gynaecologist, Professor Sivasooriyar.

What is more, education has been seriously disrupted in the war-torn areas. The students, like anyone else, have to live in constant fear of aerial bombardments, artillery shell fire and so on — with even refugee camps and examination centres sometimes being targets. Thus one can easily imagine the extent to which the psychology of the student population is damaged and their education derailed.

Moreover, the continual lack of electricity supply and the acute shortage of fuel has affected the students immensely. Standards have begun to drop sharply, as evident from the hitherto unheard of low performance at the university entrance GCE (AL) Examination held in April 1991.

Even in such an extenuating situation, the government continues to pursue the pernicious policy of media-wise standardization via the stipulation that students in the north and east who sit the above-mentioned exam have to secure some 30 marks more than students elsewhere (in engineering and physical science) for admission to the University.

In the economic sphere, the agricultural, industrial and fishing sectors are at a near standstill. Further, the construction sector has ground to a halt for want of building materials. Thus, all the sources from which the bulk of the people used to derive their income have dried up; it is not hard to imagine the plight of the people condemned to an existence fast reaching Somalian conditions, especially with the recent halving of the already meagre refugee rations.

On the political plane, it took over three

decades and, above all, external interference, for the ruling class to remove past blunders even on paper. For instance, Tamil was granted the status of an official language under the 13th amendment following the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of July 1987. And the Sinhala "Sri", the exclusive introduction of which on motor vehicle number plates in the 1950s caused quite some tension and bloodshed, was recently dropped altogether.

Complicity of old Left

Attempts by successive governments to provide some solution under pressure have each time proved to be too little too late, and every such attempt proved to be futile. The old Left parties (the CP and the LSSP above all) also have to share the responsibility for compromising with the capitalist forces, on the Tamil question as on others.

What is the way out of this impasse? Firstly, the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP — Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International) has made it clear that the latest government effort, the Mangala Munasinghe Parliamentary Select Committee¹ is yet another exercise in futility.

Secondly, the NSSP reiterates that there is no other way to resolve this question except on the basis of the right to self-determination of the Tamil-speaking people being inscribed in the Constitution, and regional autonomy for the merged Northern and Eastern province with powers over security, land settlement and allocation of adequate resources from the national product.

It should be crystal clear that it is fruitless for the Tamil and Muslim parties to entertain any hope that either the UNP or the SLFP will bring forth a viable solution to the problem. Instead of following the beaten track of trying to negotiate with the oppressors, these parties should join hands with the oppressed who form the majority of the population: the workers, the peasants, the plantation workers, the students, and so forth. This is their hitherto untried, but historically inescapable task and the NSSP will fraternally exhort them unceasingly to take this path. The sooner they do so, the nearer will be the goal of national liberation. ★

1. Mr. Mangala Munasinghe is a Member of Parliament of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). He presented a motion in parliament for the appointment of a Parliamentary Select Committee to devise ways and means of achieving peace and stability in the Island, with particular reference to the war-torn north and east. The Premadasa government, which has failed to put forward any proposals for the resolution of the national question, grabbed this opportunity to engage in yet another time-wasting exercise and set up the desired Select Committee with Mr. Mangala Munasinghe himself as its Chairman. The Select Committee has laboured like the proverbial mountain for well over one year now to bring forth what?

Important victory for Colombo Port workers

In the next issue of *International Viewpoint* we will carry a report and analysis by union leader Bala Tamboo of the recent victorious work-to-rule campaign by the 16,000 workers at the port of Sri Lanka's capital city, Colombo.★

Palestinian opposition denounces sell-out

EVENTS are speeding up on the Palestinian front. The coming to power of Rabin in Israel after last June's elections has given new impetus to the year-old negotiations taking place under American auspices between the Zionist government, its Arab neighbours and, in quasi-official guise, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Rabin's highly intelligent tactics are in marked contrast to the bovine intransigence of his Likud predecessors.

SALAH JABER – October 15, 1992

WITH the aim of getting American guarantees of a \$10bn loan, Rabin has undertaken to make the concessions needed to get the negotiations that started in Madrid and continue in Washington back on the road. After the fifth round of negotiations involving Rabin's predecessor Shamir, the ball was firmly grounded on the Israeli side of the court. Rabin has now succeeded in getting it back over to the Syrian and Palestinian side through concessions which are more noise than substance.

For the Syrians, Rabin has talked of the possibility of a partial retreat from the Golan Heights occupied by Israel in 1967. Indeed the very fact that negotiations between Israel and Syria are taking place implies such a possibility, since Israel has nothing else to offer. Even so, the proposal remains below the minimum that Damascus could accept (this minimum being the total return of the Golan).

For the Palestinians, Rabin has put a new coat of gloss on the autonomy plan that first saw the light of day 13 years ago in the Camp David agreement signed by Israel's Menachem Begin, Egypt's Anwar el-Sadat and the US president Jimmy Carter. The plan would allow the Palestinians of the Left Bank of Jordan and Gaza to take control of those affairs that do not impinge on the interests of the Israeli occupiers, in this way lightening the burden of administration and repression borne by the occupying power.

This experience, according to the most generous Zionist scenario, is, after a further transitional phase, then supposed to lead to the formation of a Palestinian Bantustan under the joint supervision of Israel and Jordan.

In both cases, Rabin has understood that such purely formal concessions can elicit much more substantial concessions from

the Arab side. The latter have a nasty feeling that if Bush loses the presidency in November this will mean a strong turn in US policy in favour of Israel; the Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton is said to be strongly pro-Israeli.

So far, Damascus has not taken the bait, having more to lose than to gain as far as new Israeli concessions are concerned. Foreseeing the prolongation of negotiations, it has firmed up its position in Lebanon.

Through the tradesman's entrance

The PLO leadership on the other hand has humbly passed through the tradesman's entrance opened by Rabin. Taking the risk of sharply heightening inter-Palestinian dissension, and on the eve of a change in Washington that may herald an even more difficult climate in the negotiations, the Arafat leadership has swallowed further bitter pills, which the Palestinian nationalist opposition is finding increasingly difficult to digest.

The rightwing that dominates the PLO is looking for a rapid agreement, even before the American elections, taking advantage of the haste of some of its supporters to get their hands on the dubious prerogatives of an administration under strict outside control — a haste expressed in the rush to enrol in the future Palestinian police. This calculation inevitably implies a series of new capitulations to add to the PLO leadership's already impressive total.

The Palestinian right has betrayed the unanimous undertaking adopted by the PLO's leading bodies on July 22 to refuse to take part in a sixth round of negotiations if the US granted Israel the \$10bn loan. The Palestinian negotiators, following orders from Arafat, have gone to Washington with a vague notion of an agreement

with Israel on "administrative autonomy".

Once again they have come home tongue-tied. Now that it looks likely that Bush will lose, the Israelis feel that the pressure is off. They have broken off the sixth round and postponed the issue of an agreement to next year.

The Palestinian opposition has vigorously denounced the new capitulations by the Arafat leadership. The two left factions in the PLO, George Habash's Popular Front and the Democratic Front of Nayef Hawatmeh have increased their collaboration, already strengthened after the start of the Israeli-Arab negotiations, whose ground rules they have denounced. Once again they have made statements jointly with the Islamic fundamentalist opposition represented by the Hamas movement and the Islamic Jihad.

But this time they have also come together with all the factions of the Palestinian opposition including Abu Musa's dissident faction of Fatah formed in 1983 and Saika (controlled by Syria). They have very sharply denounced the policies of the Arafat leadership, referring to the positions set out by the Unified Patriotic Leadership of the Intifada in its communiqué no. 86 of September 1, 1992.¹

The opposition cartel called a general protest strike for September 23 which was widely observed according to our sources. On the eve of this strike the two Fronts of the Palestinian left announced the formation of a common leadership.

We publish extracts from the above mentioned documents on page 26 opposite. ★

1. In this communiqué the Unified Patriotic Leadership "reaffirms its rejection of any solution not based on the resolutions of Palestinian, Arab and international legality, which have all underlined the need to realize the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their right of return, of self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital".

Some Palestinian organizations

DFLP: Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

FPPS: Front of the Palestinian People's Struggle

PF-GC : Popular Front-General Command

PLF: Palestine Liberation Front

PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

Hamas: Islamic Resistance Movement

PRCP: Palestinian Revolutionary Communist Party

**Joint communiqué of the PFLP,
DFLP and Hamas
— September 5, 1992**

...THE administrative autonomy scheme that the Madrid delegation is now trying to get accepted under cover of the leadership that controls the PLO is aimed at abandoning the Palestinian cause and even the PLO itself insofar as this represents a national gain. It also aims at perpetuating the occupation of Palestinian territories by giving it legitimacy...

The PFLP, DFLP and Hamas state their categorical rejection of the administrative autonomy scheme and all the measures leading towards it whether this be the formation of commissions or the organization of elections... They consider that the Palestinian delegation has not been empowered by the Palestinian people nor by any legitimate Palestinian institution to conclude agreements concerning the Palestinian people with the Zionist enemy.

The secret negotiations and dealings taking place behind the back of the Palestinian people and its living forces, and outside of any national agreement, only represent the position of a limited faction which controls the centre of Palestinian decision making...

We call for an immediate referendum of the Palestinian people both in Palestine and in exile on its national future. The united Palestinian people has the sole right to decide its own political destiny, far removed from capitulations agreed to behind its back.

In no case is it permissible to ignore the will of the great majority of the Palestinian people and impose the political choices of a narrow layer that has monopolized Palestinian decision making in the teeth of Palestinian public opinion and by hiding information and the truth from it... ★

Communiqué of ten Palestinian organizations, September 16, 1992 (appeal for the Palestinian general strike of September 23).*

...THE assembled organizations hereby state their position on the question of administrative autonomy:

1. We categorically reject the administrative autonomy scheme in all its details and implications as well as all the mechanisms related to it such as appointments, elections and others.

2. We state that the Palestinian delegation at the negotiations with the Zionist enemy does not represent the Palestinian people, and does not have the authority to sign any kind of agreement affecting their destiny; no agreement concluded by this delegation is in

any way binding on our people.

3. We place the responsibility for accepting this proposal for surrender firmly on the leadership that controls the PLO and on the delegation.

4 ... We call for the organization of a general referendum on everything that affects the destiny of our people and its national future.

5. We call on the delegation and the leadership in control of the PLO to at once withdraw from the negotiations and cease the series of concessions...

**(The ten organizations are: the PFLP, FPPS, Hamas, the Islamic Jihad Movement — Palestine, PRCP, DFLP, PF-GC, PLF, Saika and Fatah (dissident). ★*

**Communiqué of the United Leadership of the PFLP and DFLP
— October 6, 1992.**

... THE United Leadership has noted that, at the moment when the *intifada* has gained a new impetus, confirming our people's resolve to beat back the occupation and win its right to independence, the delegation in Madrid and Washington, under the cover of the leadership that controls the PLO is continuing on the road of concessions at the seventh round of negotiations in Washington.

In the coming round it is proposing to reach an outline agreement for the application of administrative autonomy, contrary to the express will of the masses of our people who reject this proposal for surrender and wish to make it fail.

This is taking place at a time when Rabin's government, supported by the United States, is stepping up its efforts on all fronts to divide the Arab ranks, and sow discord between the different Arab parts in order to weaken all and impose partial and separate solutions amounting to capitulation.

... The UL of the two Fronts calls on the masses of our people to continue and step up their mobilization to put an end to the policy of dishonorable concessions and put a stop to the administrative autonomy scheme as well as the plans for permanent settlement [of Palestinians in the Arab countries of the diaspora] and expulsion.

The dangerous extent reached by this policy threatens to have terrible effects for the national unity of our people and its cause, and requires all of us to take up our national responsibilities, to cease to turn our back on common national principles and restore the framework of national unity and unanimity...★

October 6 “Day of Justice”

THE Swedish trade union movement had designated October 6 as a national day of protests against rightwing government policies. Well over 100,000 people participated in 150 towns and cities in actions opposing the two latest austerity packages.

**KJELL PETTERSSON —
October 15, 1992**

THE famous Swedish “model” is being torn down. Unemployment is close to 10%, up from less than 2% not long ago. Youth unemployment is over 15%. Mass sackings are expected in the public service sector. Trade union rights are under attack. New, record high rent increases are on the way.

It was at the start of June that the leadership of LO, a trade union organization with 2.2 million members called for a day of protest on October 6, the day that parliament opened its autumn session.

At that time they did not know that their comrades in the Social Democratic Party (SAP) would negotiate and sign two austerity packages together with the bourgeois coalition government. These packages include cuts totalling 60 billion Swedish kronor (about \$12bn).

But preparations for The Day of Justice had gone too far when the cuts package came down. It would have been impossible to call it off. And it became a protest directed not only against the government of Carl Bildt, but also against the rightwing policy of the SAP.

Anger at betrayal

Many in the demonstrations expressed their disappointment with the “betrayal” by social democracy, and spoke of the need for a new workers’ party.

But hard criticism was also directed against the trade union leadership. The anger arises from their feeling that LO is more loyal to the SAP leadership than to the immediate interests of its members.

Thus, in Sweden's main working class town, Göteborg, the local daily paper quoted someone saying, "I think it is time for [LO Chairperson] Stig Malm to start representing the LO members."

"He has been sitting in the SAP leadership and has approved proposals going against his members' interests. There is a great need for an independent trade union. More fighting wouldn't harm one bit!"

Other lower-level union leaders are asking for a new political leadership in the SAP which would stand for working class policies. Many have started to question the present course and the LO leadership. But at the same time the SAP's grip over the unions remains firm, and it still gets around 45% in opinion polls.

It was clear that trade union leaders faced a dilemma on the Day of Justice. Most of the speakers avoided any mention of the SAP in their speeches. Instead, they criticized the so-called "market".

In Stockholm, for example, the chairper-

son of the Seafarer's Union was the main speaker. He vigorously denounced capitalism, market dictatorship and the employers. But then he went on to sneak in his opinion that the cuts packages may have been necessary.

Leif Blomberg, chairperson of 450,000 engineering workers in Goteborg, stated that "to deal with the market is like plying chess with the devil. You can never get checkmate". But he refrained from telling the audience of more than 10,000 his opinion of the crisis packages.

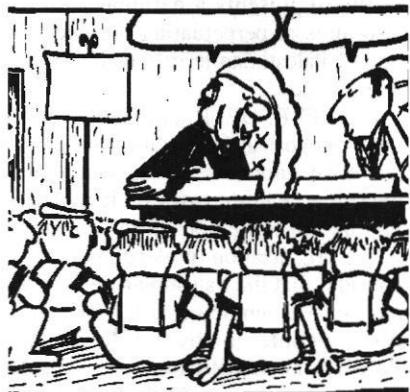
October 6 was, whatever its weaknesses, a success for the Sweden's workers and low-income earners. Discontent is growing over rightwing policies, the SAP and the present course of the trade union movement.

The next battle is being prepared. The first round of contract negotiations has just begun. The Employers Confederation has demanded the extension of present contracts — in other words, a one-year

wage freeze.

If this is not accepted, they assert, the "market" will force a new austerity package on the people.

It remains to be seen if the patience of the Swedish labour force will break. ★



Jim Percy (1948-1992)

JIM PERCY, president of the Democratic Socialist Party (formerly the Socialist Workers Party) died quietly as a result of cancer at his home in Sydney, Australia on Monday October 12, 1992.

In 1965, as a 17-year old high school student, Jim became active in the anti-Vietnam War movement. He initiated the High School Students Against the War in Vietnam, joined the Vietnam Action Campaign and in 1970-71 was one of the coordinators of the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign.

In 1967 he founded the radical youth organization Resistance in Sydney. In August 1970 he became the first National Secretary of Resistance. In September 1970 the socialist newspaper Direct Action was established; Jim edited Direct Action in its first years.

At the founding conference of the Socialist Workers Party in January 1972, Jim was elected the party's first National Secretary, in which capacity he served for the next 20 years. At this time the party became a sympathising organization of the Fourth International. [Two years later it was recognized as the Australian section of the FI.]

Jim participated in the 1974, 1979 and 1985 World Congresses of the International and served on its Executive Committee from 1979 to August 1985, when the SWP ended its affiliation to the Fourth International.

During 1978-79, Jim worked in Paris for the FI's United Secretariat Bureau, travelling extensively in Europe, Asia and North America.

In 1990 Jim, along with others, initiated a new broad publishing venture — Green Left Weekly — which could synthesize environmental and socialist politics.

THE above are excerpts of the obituary written by the DSP for Jim Percy. Although Jim had led the then SWP to split from the FI in 1985, we are hereby mourning one of our comrades, a revolutionary militant who was keen to maintain comradely relations with the Fourth International. We had drawn politically closer in recent years.

During the political disputes in the FI in the 70s, the Australian SWP sided with the SWP of the USA in what became known as the "Leninist-Trotskyist Faction". The LTF waged a fierce fight against the FI majority in the name of Trotskyist orthodoxy, accusing the latter of adapting to non-Trotskyist revolutionary currents.

Ironically, in the early eighties, both SWPs began a process of open revision of some basic tenets of what is commonly known as Trotskyism.

The Australian SWP left the ranks of our International in August 1985, because they thought that the FI — but actually their own experience and interpretation of it — had become an obstacle to their convergence with the rest of the world revolutionary movement.

However, the SWP-DSP remained from then on very pragmatic and open to learning from the actual processes in world and Australian politics. In world politics, Jim's party put a strong bet on Gorbachev, believing that his *perestroika* might lead to a revival of socialist democracy. In Australian politics likewise, the DSP tried to reach an agreement on possible unification with the local pro-Moscow forces. Both expectations faded out.

One lesson Jim drew from these endeavours, as he himself told me when he last visited us in Paris last year, was that after all, he found that we shared a common wavelength distinguishing us from other components of the broad world revolutionary movement. In other words, we still shared a wide range of basic programmatic targets and a global conception of revolutionary politics.

For this reason, Jim had come to be in favour of close collaboration between the DSP and the FI comrades in Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR. He was sad that the DSP had not been invited to observe the 1991 World congress of the FI. He was very interested in the development of our views on building the International and the role it should play in the broader revolutionary movement, as well as our non-centralist conception of the internal functioning of the FI.

We pledged to work together to overcome any obstacles in the relationship between the DSP and the FI.

Accordingly, an exchange of letters was started and some decisions taken to strengthen our relationship. This process is still unfolding and we firmly hope that it will lead the DSP eventually to take part, in one form or another, in our debates and share directly our concerns about building the world revolutionary movement.

It is indeed very sad that Jim will not be present any longer to continue working for this outcome. Actively pursuing this same goal will be our best tribute to the memory of our comrade, Jim Percy — SALAH JABER ★

The Bosnian War; What is to be done?

THE following resolution on the continuing war in the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was adopted at the October 1992 meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

DOCUMENT

SARAJEVO symbolizes the possibility that the Serb, Croat and Muslim communities can live together, as they have done in Bosnia-Herzegovina (B-H) for centuries. The resistance of this city's mixed population is crucial for the survival of a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina and for reversing the process of "ethnic cleansing" in the new states emerging from the Yugoslav crisis, particularly in Serbia.

This is why the Serb nationalists, led by Radovan Karadzic, after having proclaimed a Serbian Autonomous Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to build a Greater Serbia, want to break the back of Sarajevo's resistance by laying siege to the city and destroying its unity.

This is also why, in spite of the formal proclamations of alliance between the Croatian government and Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, the Croat nationalist in B-H led by Mate Boban are allowing the strangulation of Sarajevo, because they too, in agreement with Karadzic, have "liberated" "their" Croat state of Herzeg-Bosna.

Serb and Croat nationalists, in proportion to their different weight in the Bosnian population, have reached an understanding for the dismantling of B-H in favour of the Serbian and Croatian republics. Both willingly sound the false alarm of a Bosnian "Islamic Republic"; both ignore the fact that secular currents are today dominant among the Muslims of this republic.

The Muslims, along with the mixed populations of the cities, are today the main victims of this dismantling and of the massacres. They are opposed to the shared goal of the Croat and Serb nationalists which is also behind the project of dividing B-H into ethnic "cantons".

The support given until now to this orientation by the European Community (EC) and the United Nations (UN) authorities and the exclusion of the antiwar movements and anti-nationalist parties who asked to be heard at their "peace conference" bears witness to the logic of the imperialist powers who dominate these institutions — a logic that cares little for the real interests of the peoples concerned. The shifting, unprincipled and irresponsible positions that these powers have taken since the beginning of the crisis also illustrate the same narrow defence of the dominant states' interests.

Military intervention

This is the kind of logic that would prevail if the imperialist powers intervened militarily. Therefore we must oppose any imperialist military intervention by the EC or UN. A foreign military intervention in Serbia would harm the opposition to Milosevic without hindering the activities of the paramilitary groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It would not eliminate the causes of the war.

As for an intervention in Bosnia, it would enmesh itself in a guerrilla war without any clear battle lines, with every possibility of letting loose a "Balkan storm". A murderous quagmire and not peace would be the reality.

Nor can we accept a situation where the presence of UN forces consolidates the relation of forces and the logic of "ethnic cleansing" perpetrated by the Serb and Croat paramilitary factions with the complicity of the Serbian and Croatian governments.

The only solution is the development of multiethnic civil and social resistance to reactionary policies and to every kind of ethnic and religious discrimination be it Serb, Croat or Muslim. Above all, the Great Serbian nationalism that threatens to ignite Kosovo and its Croat counterpart threatening to "settle" by force the resistance of Croatian Serbs must be politically defeated.

There can be no progressive outcome to the crisis and no durable peace without solutions negotiated by the parties themselves, guaranteeing that no one asserts a right to self-determination by denying it to others through the creation of ethnically "pure" nation-states.

Four priorities

We have four priorities in this situation:

1. Taking into account the pivotal role of the political situation in Serbia and the central responsibility of the Greater Serbia project for the current war we must multiply our ties with and support for the peace forces in Serbia. We must support the anti-war movement and the deserters, inviting their spokespeople to our countries; we must support the student peace movement and the independent union; we must support the independent Serbian media (especially *Vreme, Borba* and Radio '92) and we must give material aid to counter the harmful effects on these movements of the embargo against Serbia.

2. We must support, above all through the establishment of "twin cities" all the communities, cities and villages of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia that declare themselves zones of peace and resist the logic of "ethnic cleansing". We should campaign to help multiethnic and multinational movements find means of expression (free radios, conferences, open access to TV, concerts for peace...). We should support the Interethnic Forum by publicizing its analyses and its charters of rights and freedoms.

We should note the planned Conference of Municipalities for Peace in Skopje (Macedonia) on November 6-9.

3. We must mount a political campaign against the dismantling of Bosnia-Herzegovina and against the logic of ethnic cantons for the disarmament of all Serb and Croat paramilitary forces which support this logic, a campaign for the maximum of political and material aid to all multiethnic resistance and for breaking the isolation of Sarajevo.

We should campaign for the revelation of everything to do with the detention camps and for an international tribunal of independent personalities on the crimes related to "ethnic cleansing".

4. We must aid the refugees in the countries to which they flee and in the republics of ex-Yugoslavia, focusing on aid for voluntary return of refugees to their homes and on legal and physical protection for those who want to resist "ethnic cleansing".

November 9, the European day of anti-racist action is an opportunity for marches and support initiatives for Sarajevo's resistance to "ethnic cleansing". ★

Anti-fascists visit refugees

AT the end of August three anti-racist activists from the Belgian city of Liège — Marcel Brose, Maurice Mordant and José Garcia went to Slovenia to visit the refugee camps of Bosnian Muslim refugees. The Belgian Trotskyist paper *La Gauche* (September 23, 1992) talked to them.

HOW has the Slovene population reacted to the conflict?

Marcel: Slovenia is outside the conflict now. The [Yugoslav] federal army has left. However, as soon as the war got underway in Bosnia, families of refugees started to arrive; they were lodged in the vacated barracks. There are currently 70,000 refugees here, a half of them children. The government has so far taken a very correct attitude and the population has spontaneously welcomed the refugees. However the increasing numbers of refugees may change this. Slovenia's population has suddenly risen by 3% — in a country that has lost its markets to the south and is ill equipped to win new ones in the west.

For me, the humanitarian issue is connected to another fight, against fascism. Things in the former Yugoslavia are clear; there has been territorial conquest and strong states have been established.

Our point of departure was a camp in the centre of the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana. According to our principle of aid without intermediaries we put our confidence in some people who divided up what we had brought, mainly among children who have lost their parents. The distribution is thus carried out by the refugees themselves. We have two small projects that we hope to carry through in our next visit; a clothes making workshop (lack of decent clothing is an important question for morale) and material for young people who want a space of their own.

But winter is coming and these barracks are in very poor state. Everything needs fixing: the sanitation, the heating. For big projects such as this we are making contacts with bodies such as the High Commission for Refugees.

In a camp at Postojna we found that tea-

chers have been trying to restart lessons. Sonja Lonkar, the head of the former CP's parliamentary group (renamed the Slovene Democratic Party) wants to help us to find camps which are hardly or not at all supported by the big international bodies.

We believe that the essential thing is to get active solidarity from workers. The engineering union in Liège has given us considerable aid. We hope that other union bodies will get involved. We must motivate the workers' movement. People over there are scared about the rise of the far right.

■ How does the situation appear from an anti-fascist perspective?

José: We had some ideas about the history of movements such as the Chetniks (Serb ultra-nationalists) and the Ustashe (Croat fascists). We had heard about "ethnic cleansing" — people being driven from their homes because they did not belong to a given nationality.

We wanted to know about what was happening on the ground. Speaking with refugees the reality became clear: populations of whole villages in Bosnia have been emptied with the aim of not only obtaining their military occupation but also of "ethnically cleansing" them.

■ What about the pacifist movement there?

There is no structured movement as in Belgium. Furthermore, the pacifists are divided among themselves over questions such as foreign intervention, the presence of the United Nations. Their contribution to peace is concentrated on helping the refugees.

■ And the far right?

For a long time there was a single approved version of historical truth in Yugoslavia. Now, with the coming of a multiparty system there is a widespread desire to revise this explanation.

Holes are appearing in the single truth. It has been discovered for example that thousands of rightwing refugees repatriated to Yugoslavia after the war were massacred by the Partisans. The far right is making use of this episode. Older people remember the fascist atrocities, but the young do not. This created profound ideological disarray which is added to the disarray caused by the social crisis.

There have already been anti-refugee demonstrations and clashes with skinheads. If the conflict goes on there is a risk that young Muslims will undergo a radicalization in the direction of religious fundamentalism — most of the aid at the moment comes from Muslim countries.

It is thus extremely important that the aid we provide is one clearly based on the forces of the left. ★

POLAND

Pinior still under attack!

ON AUGUST 28, 1992 the Polish justice ministry refused to overturn a verdict against Józef Pinior, found guilty in October 1988 of organizing a strike the previous May in Wrocław. The ministry explained that that there were no grounds for challenging the verdict that Pinior had insulted the officers who had arrested him in 1988, when, the ministry states, he had refused to leave enterprise grounds and resisted the police.

Józef Pinior was president of clandestine *Solidarnosc* in the Wrocław region after 1982 and a member of its national leadership from 1982 to 1987. He was several times imprisoned for his activities in the opposition to the Polish Stalinist regime. The verdicts accumulated then now prevent him from finding work in his field as a lawyer or a teacher in higher education. He has thus formally requested the justice ministry for an exceptional revision of these cases so that they be removed from his record. This has now been refused him.

In Poland this shocking decision has aroused a wave of protests, from many *Solidarnosc* enterprise committees and other social and political organizations. Members of parliament have joined the protest. One, M. Mazurkiewicz from the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (with origins in the former ruling Communist party), writes that, during 1982-88, the civil law had been employed against Pinior to find pretexts for "isolating in prison a representative of the leftwing democratic opposition who the regime of the time considered dangerous".

Those campaigning on Pinior's behalf in Poland need moral and material support (legal costs are high).

- Send letters of protest to: Zbigniew Dyka, Minister of Justice, Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości RP, Al. Ujazdowskie 11, 00-950 Warszawa, Skr. Poczt. 33, Poland.

- With copies to: J. Pinior, c/o Pracowniczy Fundusz Przemysłowy, Rekordzielnica 16, 50-991, Wrocław, Skr. Poczt. 1442, Poland (or fax no. (48 71) 51 20 07).

- Send money for legal costs to: Józef Pinior, Bank Zachodni, Wrocław, Poland, a/c no. 389206-01020386-017879-152-1 ★