

International VIEWPOINT

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The Democrats in post-Reagan America



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Trade Union Congress expels electrician's union

DELEGATES to this September's annual meeting of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) sat in stony silence to hear the leader of the electrician's union, Eric Hammond, explain why his union should not be kicked out of the federation. The delegates, representing nearly nine million workers, voted overwhelmingly for expelling the Electrical, Electronic and Telecommunications and Plumbing Union (EETPU).

But the vote, welcome though it was, did not signal the commencement of a battle by union leaders against single-union, no-strike deals with the bosses. So just what are the implications of this split in Europe's largest unified trade-union federation?

HILARY ELEANOR

THE EETPU represents a current in British trade unionism that stands even further to the right than the majority leadership of the TUC, itself firmly committed to a philosophy of "new realism". The electrician's union has made a name for itself as the number one scab union in Britain. Three years ago EETPU officials organized the recruitment of scab workers for press baron Rupert Murdoch after he had sacked journalists and printers and set up a non-union operation to produce his newspapers. The TUC turned a blind eye to the EETPU's activities (finally, only a motion of censure was passed), and did little to support the year-long strike of the 5,000 sacked print workers (see IV 113).

Since then, the EETPU has been at the forefront of negotiating single-union, no-strike deals with employers. But this fact in itself did not unduly upset the trade-union bureaucracy. It was only when Eric Hammond's union refused to be bound by TUC rulings over these "sweetheart" deals that the trouble began.

These rulings relate to the Bridlington agreement, dating back to 1939, which sets out guidelines and arbitration procedures aimed at preventing unions from poaching each others' membership. The EETPU was expelled from the TUC for refusing to abide by two rulings made by the federation's Disputes Committee, instructing the union to withdraw from single-union, no-strike deals at two companies where other unions already existed. This year's TUC

adopted a code of practice for future "sweetheart" deals, showing that it is certainly not opposed to them in principle — just as long as it regulates them itself!

The impact of the expulsion is difficult to judge so early after the event, but three questions are now raised. What will be the consequences of the expulsion for the EETPU itself, in particular in its relations with TUC unions? Will the electrician's union seek other alliances? And what will become of the minority left current inside the union?

All-out recruitment war

The answer to the first question is unclear. Many TUC-affiliated union activists have said that they will refuse to recognize the expelled union at local level. This would mean that in many workplaces with joint union negotiating committees there will be a blanket refusal to work with EETPU members. This could cause big headaches for the bosses, who will have to walk a tricky tightrope of parallel negotiations and the possibility of subsequent local disputes created by inter-union hostility.

Now that the EETPU is no longer even theoretically bound by the Bridlington agreement, commentators have predicted an all-out recruitment war, with TUC unions stopping at nothing to break up the EETPU's branches and vice-versa. Many of the trade unions in Britain were histori-



cally built up as craft-based cartels with membership dependent on rigorous and lengthy apprenticeships. The impact of unemployment and the attacks on trade unionism by the Thatcher government have speeded up an existing dynamic of amalgamations. There are now fewer than 90 unions for the first time since 1872, when total trade-union membership was only 255,000. Unions are turning outwards in their fight to keep membership figures up, and increasingly recruiting workers outside their traditional trades.

In its own interests, the 350,000-strong EETPU will undoubtedly be looking for new alliances among the other right-wing "yellow" unions that exist. These include the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM), which broke away from the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) during the 1984-85 miners' strike, and organizations like the Professional Association of Teachers and the Royal College of Nursing. But even if it comes off, the total strength of such a scab rival federation would be miniscule in comparison to the TUC.

Is there a future for the left in the EETPU? Socialists in the union campaigned hard against the Hammond and the executive, but many have decided that remaining in the union after its expulsion is untenable and have launched a breakaway, the Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union (EPIU). Many socialists have argued that this is a mistake, with some saying that the left must remain and fight in the EETPU in spite of all the problems. The future for the EPIU will indeed be difficult. While the bosses, for obvious reasons, are happy to have dealings with right-wing union break-

aways like the UDM, they will be reluctant to recognize a new, evidently militant union.

Meanwhile, large numbers of left or pro-TUC militants have opted to leave the EETPU to join relevant sections of TUC-recognized alternative unions, mainly in the two massive general workers' unions, the TGWU and GMBATU. Given the problems of remaining in the EETPU or the difficulties that will face the left breakaway EPIU, this is probably the most sensible short-term solution. The success or failure of Eric Hammond's project to take his union outside the TUC federation will be judged on how many members he manages to keep in the EETPU's ranks.

One further and not unimportant repercussion of the expulsion is the EETPU's continuing affiliation to, and participation in, the Labour Party. This week's LP conference voted not to expel the union in spite of strong arguments from the left that individuals in the union could remain members, but that it was scandalous that the EETPU's anti-working class leadership should continue to have a say in party policy and internal elections.

The pestilence of "new realism"

Outside of the drama of the EETPU affair, the TUC was "business as usual". It was not this year's struggles — albeit mainly defensive ones — by healthworkers, car workers at Ford, seafarers and the postal workers that dominated the agenda. A major discussion was held on the Tories' new Employment Training (ET) scheme for the long-term unemployed. Congress voted to withdraw from participation in the scheme, but only "conditionally".

ET replaces 37 previous training schemes for the adult unemployed, and is intended to provide an average of six months training for 600,000 people. It has two functions for the Tories. First, it will reduce official jobless figures, already manipulated so often by the government that no-one knows any longer how many people are actually unemployed. Second, it will provide a pool of cheap labour for industry: ET trainees will receive only welfare benefits plus around £10 a week.

Another major event at the Congress was the ovation given to Jacques Delors, president of the European Commission, who inevitably spoke of the impact of 1992 on the unions. Why the ovation? Opposition to Britain's EEC membership has been a long-standing policy in the labour movement, but is now beginning to be accepted as an inevitable fact of life. Delors' clever speech implied that Europe could be a safety net for defending and extending basic social rights — a tempting thought not lost on British trade union leaders who have suffered the loss of three million members over the last 10 years and are worried about what Thatcher's government will do next.

The one clear victory for the left at the TUC was the decision to shut down all nuclear reactors, a motion moved by Arthur Scargill of the NUM. But in other respects, as Scargill said, "I think that the TUC Congress of 1988 will be judged as one that fitted in neatly with the politics of fear. It was filled with the new realism that's sweeping the movement at the present time."

If the pestilence of new realism and class

collaboration is spreading within the bureaucracy, socialists can take heart from the continued willingness to fight expressed in the various struggles that we have witnessed this year, and those that will undoubtedly break out in the near future. Thatcher may have succeeded in neutralizing the bureaucracy, but, in spite of everything, her government is still a long way from having subdued the working class. ★

Postal workers: "Sold short, but undefeated"

A BACKLOG of between 150 and 200 million letters built up during the recent 12-day strike of postal workers in Britain. It was the first national strike for 17 years, but one that was clearly led by the rank-and-file with the leadership of the postal workers' union, the UCW, refusing to call all-out action. It started with a national 24-hour stoppage by 140,000 workers on August 31, and snowballed into one of the major industrial actions of recent years.

STEVE BELL

THE AIM of the initial 24-hour strike was to block the introduction of regional pay differentials by the management of the nationalized post office. Different rates of pay for the same work in different regions is a favourite idea of the Thatcher government.

This idea is based on taking advantage of differences in the labour market. Wages in the postal service are low. As a consequence, in areas such as London and south-east England where there is alternative employment, there is a high turnover of workers leaving for better paid jobs. In areas of high unemployment, such as Scotland, Wales and northern England, there are long waiting lists of unemployed workers seeking postal work. In this situation the government, who were clearly behind the post office management, wished to give higher pay to workers in London and the south-east than to workers elsewhere.

At the Union of Communication Work-

ers (UCW) annual conference this move was rejected, despite the preparedness of the national executive council to accept it. A membership ballot resulted in a 2:1 majority for strike action. Forced to act, the executive council called a one-day strike. It hoped that a series of selective actions would be sufficient to force the post office to retreat. August 31 was grandly called "phase one" of the executive's campaign. As things turned out, phase two arrived in a form unexpected by the executive.

The success of the one-day strike prompted the post office management to act against the union. With the return to work, local managers were instructed to attack established working conditions, but the workers were not prepared to accept this. As soon as the workforce returned strike action began locally. By the evening of September 1, some of the largest sorting offices in the country were out, including Liverpool, Manchester, Coventry, West London and Southend in England, and Chester, Swansea and Cardiff in Wales.

A national strike called and led locally

Within two days virtually the whole of Scotland, and most of north-west England, Wales, the Midlands and London were on strike. By September 5 over 100,000 workers had joined the strike, and by September 7 the entire network was effectively at a standstill.

What was truly remarkable was that although the UCW national executive had made every local strike official, all of them had been called and led locally. In other words, a national strike had been called by the actions of the local branches.

The background to the dispute lies in the changes to the industry and the changes in the workforce. The postal service in Britain was first established over 350 years ago. It assimilated telecommunications in its historic development, and until 1969 it remained part of the civil service. The Thatcher government split the service in 1980 into two parts: a public postal service

and a privatized telecommunications company, British Telecom. In 1986, the postal service was further divided into four sections: letters, parcels, counter services and the Giro bank (the post office's own banking service, based primarily on worker customers).

Most profitable postal service in the world

This reorganization was clearly aimed at privatizing at least the last three divisions. The industry as a whole is the most profitable postal service in the world, with a declared pre-tax profit of £212.2 million for the last financial year (April 1987 to March 1988). In the European Community, it is the only postal service to have a subsidy-free profit record over 12 successive years. The volume of mail handled by the post office has increased by 20% over the last five years; labour productivity has increased by 25% over the last six years; operating costs have been reduced by 15%.

The expansion of the service has been matched by the growth of the workforce. In 1979, there were 178,000 full-time and 11,000 part-time workers. By 1988, these figures had risen to 200,000 full-timers and 20,000 part-timers. Alongside this, there has been a definite change in the composition of the workforce. The proportion of the workforce composed of women and Black workers and young people is rising. The proportion of workers who experienced the defeat of the strike in 1971 is rapidly declining.

Many workers have been recruited who have trade-union experience in the declining manufacturing industries, such as coal, steel, car-assembly and engineering. The proportion of workers who joined the industry after leaving the armed forces is declining, although in the past this group was quite large. These changes, mixed with long hours, low wages and the arduous character of much of the work, have fuelled the growth of strike actions. Days lost through industrial action in 1980-81 totaled 2,044. By 1984-85, this had risen to 62,000 and has remained at that level every year since. From 1987-88, there were nearly 200 strikes, accounting for one-fifth of all working days lost in Britain that year.

The changing character of the industry and the workforce has prompted a government-led change in management. All remnants of civil service paternalism have been eradicated, and the chairman of the post office is a Thatcher supporter who favours privatization. Management techniques, such as quality circles, are being introduced to directly incorporate the workforce and undermine union organization. Local managers are assessed as much for their stance on the union as for their administrative abilities. All management emphasis is on business rather than public service.

Once the strike hardened, the importance of the industry became clear. Official esti-

mates were that the strike was costing £25 million a day. It was quickly noted in the financial press that the strike would have a definite impact upon monetary statistics for October. Major mail users were pressing the post office management to resolve the dispute. Thatcher's government dropped hints that it was considering removing the post office's monopoly on letter deliveries — a threat of no immediate consequence to the strike. Private parcel carriers obtained extra business, but admitted that their total collective annual resources were sufficient to handle only two days worth of regular post office mail.

All the conditions for an outright victory for the postal workers were being assembled. All the conditions, except one. The UCW executive were not prepared to secure the victory. Solid supporters of [Labour Party leaders] Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley, they were not prepared to use the power the workers had given them. Between 120,000-130,000 postal workers were on strike against the break-up of local working conditions. Instead of converting this strike into a total stoppage against the imposition of regional pay differentials and for the defence of established conditions, they came to a feeble agreement.

Agreement took steam out of strike

The union leadership had failed to call a national strike because they hoped that the post office would see this as a cue for a graceful retreat. Instead of posing the question point-blank by heading up the dispute, they felt it necessary to offer the post office a way out. Inevitably, the post office read the executive council's position as offering a better deal than the workers on the picket line.

The agreement, established on September 12, was composed of a formula for further negotiations on regional pay and a framework for local settlements of the strike, which were far from completely satisfactory to the workers. The agreement

took the steam out of the strike and offices began to return within 24 hours of the deal being signed. Yet it took a further week for the major sorting offices to return to work. By the weekend of September 17/18, many solid local strikes were still being maintained. This alone was a clear indication that the deal did not exhaust the combativity of the workers. Outrage among large sections of the workers at the sell-out was very real. In mass meetings up and down the country motions of no confidence were passed against General Secretary Alan Tuffin and the UCW executive.

Perhaps of more significance for the future was the fact that branch and district leaderships conducted very well-organized strikes without any direct involvement from the union's headquarters. It was not until the weekend of September 17/18 that union executive members left London to visit branches. In a number of major branches left-wing leaders gained real authority in the strike among the mass of workers. Thousands of workers, particularly young workers, took part in sustained union activity for the first time. Many branches were involved in solidarity actions, including mass pickets, public meetings and district and branch strike committees.

Since the stock market crash last October, the workers' movement in Britain has begun to rally. Thatcher still holds the initiative, and heavy blows have been dealt to the working class, but a definite recovery of the workers' movement is underway, of which the postal strike is a clear indication.

Sold short, but undefeated, postal workers have begun to forge a new solidarity. While this article was being written, UCW members working in the counter services who did not participate in the strike voted for strike action against job losses. Reports two weeks after the strike indicate continuing animation among postal workers.

Inevitably, the government and post office will be preparing further assaults upon postal workers. Next time the workforce will be better prepared after having been through this important experience. ★



Defend Mark Curtis!

MARK CURTIS, a union activist and member of the US Socialist Workers Party, has just been convicted of framed-up charges of burglary and sexual abuse (see IV 147). The sentence will be pronounced on October 21. Meanwhile, having been beaten up after his arrest, Curtis also faces a further trial as we go to press on charges of assaulting the police.

The following abridged article from the September 23 issue of *The Militant* explains the events leading up to the arrest and what happened at the first trial.

MORE THAN 70 people gathered at the Mark Curtis Defense Committee office here tonight to protest today's conviction of Curtis.... Those present vowed to expand the international campaign to get out the truth about this defense effort, led by the Des Moines-based defense committee.

Rally speakers charged that Curtis didn't get a fair trial. He was presumed guilty from the beginning despite the overwhelming evidence of his innocence, he was unable to introduce the key evidence that could further discredit the prosecution's case, the judge rejected the jury's request to have trial testimony read to it during its deliberations, and the composition of the jury precluded the possibility that the verdict was decided by a jury of Curtis' peers.

The three-day trial began on September 7 at the Polk County Courthouse in downtown Des Moines. The prosecution's story is that on March 4, 1988, Mark Curtis went to the Des Moines home of Demetria Morris, a Black woman who was 15 years old at the time, and beat and raped her. Police of-



Mark Curtis after being beaten up by the cops on March 4 (DR)

How you can help

- Contact the Mark Curtis Defense Committee for information and materials at P.O. Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311, USA. Telephone (515) 246-1695.
- Funds are urgently needed to cover legal expenses and to continue the campaign — contributions can be sent to the above address.
- Write to Mark Curtis. His address is Marion County Jail, Knoxville, Iowa 50138, USA. Copies of letters should be sent to the Defense Committee. ★

ficer Joseph Gonzalez testified that he was dispatched to the Morris house that evening and found Curtis on the enclosed front porch, with his pants down.

Mark Curtis, a union militant and political activist, testified that he was on the porch that night — more than 40 minutes after Demetria Morris claimed she was assaulted — at the request of a different woman who had flagged him down on a street corner. That woman said a man was after her. She asked Curtis to bring her home and wait for her on the porch until she checked the house.

Moments later, the cops came running up to the porch, grabbed Curtis, shoved him into a back bedroom, pulled down his pants, opened his car — which was full of protest literature — and turned him over to two other cops who drove him to the county jail, where they beat him, shattering his cheekbone.

Curtis faces charges of assaulting the cops who beat him. That trial is scheduled for October 10.

The prosecution, through its expert witnesses, actually proved that Curtis could not have been down on the floor of the porch as detailed by Morris. Also, laboratory tests on his underwear did not produce

one shred of physical evidence that Mark Curtis raped Demetria Morris. Testimony by eye-witnesses proved that Curtis was in Los Compadres, a bar and restaurant, with dozens of co-workers from the Swift meat-packing plant at the time Morris says she was assaulted.

Prior to the trial, court rulings had prevented the defense from introducing into evidence the beating Curtis received at the hands of two cops or their taunts of him as a "Mexican-lover" and someone who loves "coloreds"; the record of violence and lying under oath of the arresting officer, Joseph Gonzalez; and FBI spy files on Curtis developed as part of the federal government's campaign against the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador.

The 12-person jury began its deliberations on Monday morning, September 12. It met all day Monday and Tuesday, without reaching a verdict, which must be unanimous. On the morning of September 14, Curtis' attorney, Mark Pennington, moved in court that a mis-trial be declared. Pennington argued that the jury had been meeting for two days and had not been able to make up its mind, which suggested that it was deadlocked, unable to reach agreement. A verdict under those circumstances, warned Pennington, would be the product of undue pressure on the jurors to reach a unanimous decision.

Judge Harry Perkins overruled Pennington's motion.... An hour later, the jury reached its verdict. The defense has until September 30 to put forward post-trial motions, including the call for a new trial.... Curtis' sentencing is scheduled for October 21. The burglary charge carries a mandatory sentence of 25 years; the sexual abuse charge, a mandatory sentence of 10 years. It's up to the judge's discretion whether they run concurrently or consecutively, and therefore whether he's sentenced to 25 or 35 years. ★

A bold stroke by Gorbachev

THE SPECIAL Central Committee plenum called by Gorbachev aroused considerable speculation in the international press about a sharpening of the conflict between the reformers and the conservatives. With the departure of Gromyko and some other dinosaurs, the Brezhnevite old guard suffered a setback. But who will be the real winners from the Gorbachev reforms?

The following article from the October 6 issue of *Rouge*, newspaper of the French section of the Fourth International, looks at the present stage of the reform in the USSR.

CATHERINE VERLA

GORBACHEV certainly has a dramatic flare. Let us admit frankly that one could have feared the worst, a conservative counter-offensive. The only sign that pointed in the other direction was undoubtedly the theatrical bent characteristic of the Soviet leader. But more and more facts — not just signs

— in the recent period had been pointing to a conservative hardening up.

In August, first of all, there was the decree by the Presidium — still headed by Gromyko — which severely restricted the right to demonstrate. The Karabakh Committee leaders have already suffered the initial effects of a multiplication of heavy

fines. The decree was also used to ban and repress the August 21 demonstration in Pushkin Square against the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia that was called by the Democratic Union (which recently constituted itself as a party). On this occasion, we saw a new special riot police unit, all in gray, employed with vigor.

Finally, there was the attempt to limit the circulation of the press, or at least to make a strict selection of the publications that would have the right to get enough paper to meet the demand for subscriptions (in August people were standing in lines for several hours in the hope of re-subscribing to the more liberal press).

Growing discontent about shortages

The reaction aroused by this obviously political rationing essentially knocked the props out from under this measure. But overall, on the eve of changes in the apparatus and re-elections that could make more than a few bureaucrats fear for their livelihood, new conservative initiatives could be expected. They would no doubt have exploited the growing discontent of the population about shortages. The ideological cover for the power conflicts has shifted in this direction recently.

After taking up the cudgels in the debate over Stalinism, the conservative press adopted the question of the well-being of the workers — and “disorders” of all sorts that are blamed on *glasnost* — as their arguing point. Ligachev’s speech this summer attacked the social effects of the reforms.

Nonetheless, the weakness of such a speech — or of the conservative position — is that they have no credible or attractive program other than maintaining the old order, which is in a profound crisis.

The reserve or distrust of workers toward reforms that threaten the existing level of employment and the standard of living (through price rises) are not sufficient to guarantee the conservatives a situation equivalent to the one in which Khrushchev fell. Besides the international successes he has scored — unlike Mr. K. — Gorbachev is benefitting from the political aspect of the “revolution” he advocates.

In the socio-economic sphere, the reform has been little applied, if at all, and it is still possible to say that the main problems are being created by bureaucratic obstruction. Thus, reforms of the political system and elections seem a prerequisite for any *perestroika* (regardless of what content it has).

The early retirement of Gromyko and the other rhinoceroses of the Brezhnev period, as well as Ligachev’s transfer from his post as chief of ideology to agriculture (a trap, given the difficulties of this task) have one purpose. It is to reinforce the confidence of the partisans of reform, to deprive the conservatives in the intermediate and base structures of their spokespersons “at the



top."

In short, the objective was to inspire a certain boldness in renewing the party's base structures and cutting back the apparatus that up until now has paralleled economic administration (50 per cent of this apparatus is to disappear).

We are being told that Gorbachev has just gained a stable majority. That supposes that at the beginning of the meeting he did not have one. How, then, was he able to impose on this unfavorable majority decisions that could not have been to its liking? And, what is more, get unanimous agreement? There is not quite enough "openness" for us to understand all this.

The coming months are going to be marked by the elections. The reform's unpopular measures — price changes — will be applied, if they are applied (the example of Poland inspires caution at the top) after the elections.

National questions coming to the fore

Right now, national questions are coming to the fore. *Perestroika* has found unhelped-for support in the Baltic republics, where the mass of the population has taken literally the talk encouraging initiative and autonomy. Rather than leave the field open to separatist national currents, the local parties — and it seems, Gorbachev — have clearly chosen to accept, if not support, the creation of "People's Fronts," whose logic is to demand autonomy for the republics within the Soviet Union.

Given impetus by the main intellectuals in the republics, the fronts have opened the way for expression on a massive scale of long suppressed national aspirations. The taboo has been lifted from such questions as demands for cultural rights, for openness on the history of these republic's attachment to the USSR, putting forward the local languages and national symbols, the demand for control over the use of resources — and the terrible environmental harm caused by policies planned at the "center" — and, finally, "accounting autonomy" for the republics.

It is on such issues that the first very popular pro-Gorbachev demonstrations (although involving many party members) have taken place. It is easier for the Soviet leader to support the Baltic demands than to grant the reunion of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia in the face of Muslim fundamentalism.

However, more autonomy for the republics would also mean less redistributing powers for the central plan. A Yugoslav logic might then be set in motion (the rich republics against the poor ones). If the winners are only the richer areas, with higher levels of skill, then a dynamic of colossal tensions will loom. Conservatism is all the more suicidal because of that. "Realism" and efficiency are on the side of a redefinition by the Soviet peoples of the bases on

which they live together.

The official slogans today are "openness" and "democracy," "the *perestroika*

revolution," "all power to the soviets." They are nonetheless subversive ones if the people below take them at their word. ★

Ecology demo in Hungary

SEVERAL THOUSAND people participated in a demonstration in Budapest on September 12 called by the Democratic Forum and the Danube Circle against building of a hydroelectric plant at Nagymaros on the Danube near the Czech border. Austrian environmentalists, including two Green deputies, also took part in this action.

Nagymaros is only a complementary part of a much more ambitious project. A second dam and power plant are to be built at Gabčíkovo in Czechoslovakia. The combination of these two dams will have the effect of diverting the Danube over 180 kilometers and destroying the environmental balance of the ground water tables that supply the entire region, and notably Budapest, with drinking water.

The Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros project is a joint Czech-Hungarian project that has been under study since the 1950s and officially in the works since 1977. The total cost of this project is estimated at about \$3.5 billion, more more than triple the Hungarian annual budget deficit. Austrian bank credits will finance nearly 28 per cent of this amount. This is in fact an advance payment on the electricity that Austria will get from Nagymaros up until 2015.

In 1985, massive mobilization by Austrian environmentalists managed to stop a similar dam and hydroelectric power station scheme in Hainsburg. So, for the Austrian government and the Donaukraftwerk company, which has the contract for the project, this was a golden opportunity to accomplish in Hungary what was no longer possible in Austria and to secure electricity supply at a lower cost.

The Austrian Greens have denounced this "purely imperialist" attitude of their government, and have undertaken court actions (without success) in Austria to get the contracts signed with the Hungarian government annulled.

Moreover, besides its high costs — the threats it poses to the environment, the Nagymaros project is not very profitable either. Once the 12,000 megawatts are drained off for Austria, the complex will produce only enough electricity to cover 2 per cent of Hungary's needs.

In 1985, the samizdat journal *Beszelo/12*, published the minutes of a secret meeting held in 1953, in which the Hungarian leaders of the time participated, including Erno Gerö and Imre Nagy. Most of the arguments used today against the project were raised in this meeting, but kept quiet by the Hungarian press.

In 1984, a group of Hungarian environmentalists formed the Danube Circle. Its main objective was to combat the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros scheme. In January 1988, a petition was launched that listed 26 reasons to stop the project. It gathered 10,000 signatures, and the support of 191 emigré organizations.

Links with other environmentalists

In May, Rezso Nyers, a member of the Political Bureau of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party [the Communist Party], met with a delegation from the Danube Circle to discuss the Nagymaros scheme. On June 16, the petition's 26 points were published in the government's official journal, *Magyar Hirlap*, with an answer from the authorities.

Danube Circle figures wanted also to run in the first multi-candidate elections in Hungary, in eight Budapest districts. But they were blocked by the local party leaders, who packed the pre-election meetings with their own supporters.

The Danube Circle, moreover, established close ties with German and Austrian environmentalists. The Democratic Forum likewise associated itself with the campaign against the Nagymaros scheme.

In Czechoslovakia, a certain opposition to the project has emerged. In 1986 and 1987, at the time of the discussions organized by the Union of Young Socialists, the Socialist Academy and the Czech Scientific and Technical Association, with the participation of engineers, environmental specialists and government representatives, disagreements over the project became manifest.

On September 10, the Democratic Forum organized a meeting in Esztergom, near the Nagymaros site. It brought together more than 600 persons. Representatives of a Czech independent group, Democratic Initiatives, took the floor to announce that a Czech environmentalist committee against the dam project would soon be formed.

The Hungarian government ordered the Academy of Science to draw up a report on the economic, financial and environmental ramifications of the Nagymaros scheme. The Hungarian head of government, Karoly Grosz, however, opposed the idea of a referendum on continuation of the work. In the meantime, a member of the Danube Circle has lost his job, and several of them have had their passports confiscated. ★

Scandinavia's biggest ever feminist gathering

MORE THAN 10,000 women attended the Scandinavian Forum held at the University of Oslo, Norway, from July 30 to August 7. There were 700 different seminars and lectures. About a hundred organizations ran literature tables. It was the largest feminist gathering yet held in Scandinavia.

EVA NIKELL

“WOMEN have always had to learn to understand the male view of the world. Many of us have university educations in male sciences. It is time that we learned to use our own experience as a basis for social development,” said Kristin Karlsdottir, who works with the Icelandic “Women’s Slate.”

“We are making history today; we are producing and using new knowledge,” said Kamla Bhasin, an East Indian woman activist.

The Scandinavian Forum was a feminist gathering on a scale seldom seen. As the week went on, the initial formality and caution vanished. More and more people spent their time together on the lawns. Instruments appeared. Musical groups were formed, and new action groups were born.

More and more activities were taken outside into the good weather. There were sales of women’s handicraft, photos, posters, badges and clothing. In many cases, the receipts from these sales went to special women’s projects in the third world or to immigrant women’s organizations.

Strengths and weaknesses of the movement

There was a whole center for Scandinavia’s various unions, with exhibits, a book table and meetings. One center, the “peace tent,” was used for anti-militarist meetings and activities. Hundreds of different sorts of cultural activities took place in the days and evenings of the week.

The Scandinavian Forum came to be marked by the typical strengths and weaknesses of the women’s movement. Many organizations and individual women complained that it was hard to get information about the arrangements in time. Women’s activities are more often propagated through personal contacts and informal channels than by official means.

The Swedish mass media were also unbelievably backward about reporting on an event that was the biggest ever feminist gathering in our corner of the world. But “the women’s struggle is out.” At least it is according to Swedish TV, which did not want to buy the film from Norwegian and Danish TV.

Exchanging experiences with third-world women

The Scandinavian Forum, despite all this, came to be a meeting place for thousands of women working with various projects. It involved researchers, trade-union, peace and environmental activists, women’s schools, media groups and cultural workers.

Immigrant women from the various Scandinavian countries could meet, and we in the industrialized part of the world got an opportunity to exchange experiences with third-world women. Greenlander women in sealskin dresses, Faeroese women with their special songs and traditions, Lapp women and Finnish professional mourners — all came together in a common demonstration.

Single women with children make up a majority of all the world’s poor families. Between 1960 and 1975, we have seen a marked change. More and more, women are being pushed down below the poverty line. Gertrude Goldberg, one of the international guest speakers, talked about the “feminization of poverty.” It was a comparative study of conditions for women in six industrialized countries.

“We women are 53 per cent of the population. We do two thirds of the work on earth, we get a tenth of the income and a hundredth of the property. We have charge of all the children, but we have no power, and Mrs Thatcher is not a woman.”

“The military talk is pure science fiction. They call a bomb that can annihilate a million people a ‘clean bomb.’ They call a car-

rier of ten such bombs a ‘peace carrier.’ That is sick!”

Helen Caldicott, a pediatrician from Australia, a peace activist and founder of such organizations as Freeze Now and Doctors Against Nuclear Weapons, gave us a powerful lecture about imperialism, the arms race and international capital’s military plans.

Forging links with women around the world

“We have a contact network embracing 10,000 women in 150 countries. We collect thousands of documents, pamphlets, books and writings, and produce our own series of publications around various women’s themes.”

Marilee Karl told about ISIS International, a worldwide association for feminist work and organization. “The word ‘development’ means actually to open, to unfold, to discover, to experience. The work contains fantastic potential. In women’s self-activity there is a long series of such possibilities. The struggle has to include a new element, we have to bring happiness, beauty, humor into our work.

“We do not want to be a part of male society and capital’s traditional ‘development.’ We have to build our own road. If the mass media do not pay attention to us, we have to go out and play street theater. If we can’t be on TV, we can shout in the squares.”

Kamla Bhasin from India talked about women’s experiences in the third world, and their attitude to the development of their societies.

Two threads ran through the Scandinavian Forum, two different views of feminist activist — work for equality or women’s liberation. Work for equality, which is pursued in the framework of the conditions that prevail in society today, is seen by many women as too limited a goal. It is the political establishment’s goal. Women’s liberation, besides involving formal equality between women and men, means a fundamental change in the entire social structure to bring it into line with people’s needs.

The Scandinavian Council of Ministers Conference at the Scandinavian Forum dealt with equality. The strongest impression from the rest of the forum was that we had exchanged experiences of women’s struggle and women’s liberation.

It will be a long time before we will be able to see the full effects of the Scandinavian Forum. The contacts, the new knowledge and the inspiration that thousands of women offered to each other is a rich culture medium for generating continued solidarity and collaboration among one of society’s vulnerable groups, women throughout the world. ★

[From *Internationalen*, newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International.]

WE WANT to center this contribution on two questions: what are the tendencies in the women's movement today in Greece? and what are their conceptions and activity? Secondly, we want to stress the need for unity in action of the various currents through democratic modes of functioning.

Let us begin, however, with a short introduction about the framework of our struggle in the period since 1974. The period since the transition to parliamentary rule, in which we have seen the emergence both of the modern women's movement and a women's movement integrated into the political parties, has been a difficult one for feminism. We have had a clash between "tradition" and "modernism."

During the 1960s, there was rapid capitalist development and deepgoing economic and social changes, which created a strain between the new position of women and the backward attitude toward them. It became clear that we had to change this attitude and the institutions to fit the new situation that was developing.

Throughout the dictatorship, not only was there obstruction of those social trends but also the propagation by the government of an incredibly backward and reactionary ideology for women and head-on opposition to these modernizing social trends. This imprisonment of social development led to an explosion at the first democratic opening.

Clash between tradition and modernization

From then until today, there have been important changes in the status of women in Greek society, produced both by capitalism's need for institutions more in line with the modifications that have occurred and by the struggle of the women's movement.

In the framework of the "Europeanization" of Greece in every respect, a clash between tradition and modernization is occurring in all areas of social life.

From the time that it came into office, [the ruling party] PASOK has tried — and entirely succeeded — in channeling these contradictions (removing their explosive element) into the framework of parliamentary reform, without provoking any significant social upset. This goes especially for the status of women in a society which, at least in comparison with European conditions, is strongly male-dominated.

Young women who are enjoying the gains of the new legal situation today can better understand the limits of this equality, which is a formal one. It is in this layer that we can place our hopes for a renewal of the feminist movement.

Greece is marked by the existence of big women's organizations tied to the parties of the left. The development and the weight of these organizations does not have any

Which way for the women's movement in Greece?

THE PAPER of the Greek section of the Fourth International, *Spartakos*, published the following article in its September issue. It is a contribution from the autonomous women's group *Lamia* ["Witch"] to the women's forum held in the Athens city hall on June 26.

In its introduction, *Spartakos* noted that the article was an "initial critical assessment of the course, the mistakes and the gains of the modern women's movement," and that it could not "help but arouse a deeper, more expansive elaboration of the questions it touches on."

Given the general lack of knowledge about the Greek women's liberation movement in Western Europe, this piece also has the advantage of offering a general perspective on the development of the women's liberation movement in Greece today.

counterpart in the big developed countries of Europe, where mass mobilizations of women have become familiar events. These organizations correspond to the old conception of the traditional Communist parties, which built around themselves a series of apparently independent formations or fronts, but which in reality were transmission belts for the party line on specific political levels and on special questions.

Such structures, however, could not play a major political role except in countries with limited democratic possibilities or where democracy was constantly under threat. In such circumstances, women's mobilizations have a humanistic character (campaigns against repression, solidarity with political prisoners and so on), and often substitute for direct political activity when the latter is illegal.

The existence of such forms of women's organization can be seen mainly in the countries of Latin America (a movement against torture and against the "disappearances" of people), as well as in the Middle East (Palestine) and also in the Greece of the 1950s.

The reconstruction or construction of mass women's organizations was accomplished after 1974 by the existing parliamentary opposition of the left.

First, we will look at the Women's Organization of Greece [Organosi Gynaikon Elladas — OGE], which is linked to the

KKE [the Moscow-loyalist Greek CP]. Its main objectives are to defend the democratic and civil rights of women and to deal with questions of equality and material rights on the job.

The OGE does *not* challenge the status of women within the family, or the sexual oppression of women and what flows from it, such as sexual oppression as a whole and violence against women. Likewise, it does not challenge the traditional values bound up with motherhood and all the backward conceptions that are also rooted among the popular strata. It has never understood initiatives on questions such as abortion, or mistreatment of women, or questions of sex education. In the various social areas, it does not raise the question of developing the conditions for women's participation in the centers of decision-making.

Therefore, it has never worked out a strategy with a full body of demands and with a corresponding orientation to fight for in the trade-union movement, because in no way does it want to come into conflict with established male conceptions and structures.

The OGE's way of functioning is hierarchical. There are a series of cadres whose only task is to represent women's problems — and that is how they see them — to the state institutions and to defend and advance women's interests, but not to mobilize women for concrete demands. When they organize mass mobilizations, these actions have only generic aims, and seek to ad-

vance the party's women's work. Generally, they do not do grass-roots work to develop the consciousness and activity of women.

The EGE [Enosis Gynaikon Elladas] was formed in 1978 in the framework of a more general attempt by PASOK to build and structure itself as a mass movement. It has many features similar to those of the OGE. But it has distinguished itself from the latter by a greater sensitivity to specifically women's questions and also by a more mass character, greater spontaneity and grass-roots activity, especially in the provinces....

Development of state feminism

The fate of the EGE was determined not only by the level of development of feminist concerns in Europe and in Greece but to a large extent by the development of PASOK in other areas of work (trade-unions, farmers and so on). The advance of PASOK toward governmental power at the end of the 1970s and its conquest of power afterwards were accompanied by an attempt to co-opt these movements, to neutralize them and to transform them into instruments of the government's policy in these areas.

Thus, from being a relatively massive, living movement, the EGE was transformed in a few years into an ossified group of female cadres whose main goal was to put forward the government's policy on the international level....

Another form of state feminism is the Equality Council, the state institution created by the PASOK for the advancement of equality between the two sexes. In reality, it does not have decisive powers, and functions both as a propaganda mechanism for disseminating general ideas and as a tranquilizer for women who have not understood that motherhood is the solution to all women's problems.

The Movement of Democratic Women [Kinese Demokratikon Gynaikon — KDN] is the third mass women's organization linked to a left party. The question of the autonomous women's movement (and the question of the room that the KKE-interior [the Euro-communist CP] offered for autonomy more generally) differentiated its cadres, both as regards their aims and functioning, from the above organizations. They adopted the aims of the autonomous women's movement and participated in all its initiatives. However, as was natural, the women who were not integrated into this political space could not go along entirely with them.

The autonomy of the KDN was relative, and all the problems and political choices, weaknesses, actions and divisions in their milieu also influenced the movement.

The autonomous women's movement started off in Greece with the Women's Liberation Movement at the beginning of

1975. In this same period, of course, we saw the rebuilding of the left, the reforming of the big parliamentary parties, the proliferation of the far left organizations and the rebuilding of the unions. The women who originally formed this movement were mainly intellectuals. They belonged to the left and the far left, and had close political relations with these political milieus but also many conflicts with them.

Over and above ideological nuances, these women agreed in their estimate that the oppression of women as a social category was systematic and could not be combated except through the organized struggle of women themselves. They confronted the hostility of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary left. In the initial period, their primary concern was to demolish the charges leveled against them that they were taking an "apolitical stand." They tried through statements of principle and actions to demonstrate their anti-capitalist position. But they did not try to work out a revolutionary strategy for the women's movement.

This defensive position aggravated the contradictions created by the dual commitment of many of the participants. Thus, the movement oriented toward the left and not so much toward women, who as an oppressed category would have been able to form the collective base of feminism.

Despite all this, this movement laid the basis for an autonomous existence of the women's movement. It conducted campaigns for contraception and abortion, against conscription of women, against beauty contests. It organized solidarity with working women fighting super-exploitation and sexual oppression at work (midwives, telephone operators and so on), for the rights of women students in dormitories, campaigns against the oppression of women in Iran and other international campaigns.

From 1978, the movement started to dissolve, and at the same time, a plethora of small feminist groups started appearing in Athens and in many provincial cities. There were groups in the neighborhoods, universities and so on.

Effects of the decline in the mass movement

In the same period, the explosive movement that existed at the time of the transition to parliamentary democracy ended and was channelled through the official party and trade-union structures into a parliamentary logic. At the same time, the far left began to break up.

In 1978, we had a burgeoning of a feminist movement that organized campaigns against rape, for the freedom of women to walk the streets and for justice in the family. But that period was not favorable because the people's movement had ebbed. Those conditions aided the development and the perpetuation of an

inward-looking, anti-political feminism, distrustful of the left. Instead of working out a revolutionary feminist strategy, we saw a preoccupation with the formation of a private feminist sphere. Until today, this tendency has prevailed in the autonomous women's movement, and has marginalized it.

In Europe, there are two distinct, well defined and consolidated currents in the women's movement. Here, to the contrary, the currents that exist have not crystallized.

From the beginning of the autonomous women's movement there have been latent orientations — one was represented by socialists with a dual allegiance or a more general reference to the left; others who mainly stressed ideological, political and sexual oppression instead of working out a revolutionary feminist policy and forming a movement around concrete points of tension.

Need for an open discussion

The first tendency believes that there is a many-sided oppression, economic, social, ideological, political and sexual. All the initiatives of the autonomous women's movement, except on rape, have been taken essentially by socialist women. But these women have also failed to advance a strategy more systematically.

So there has been a great deal of caution about making these differences public. This, however, would promote discussion, sharpen up the points of disagreement and raise them to a theoretical level. These differences have been covered up out of fear that they might disrupt solidarity among women. The main cause for this concealment was the great hostility that society then held toward feminism. Thus, the autonomous feminists sought to protect their common existence by veiling the differences among themselves.

The concealment of these differences, however, and the failure to discuss them did not, in the last analysis, promote the unity and development of the women's movement but to the contrary led to neutralizing it and making it ineffective. This is a historical lesson that must be embodied in our collaboration and activity today.

We want a movement capable of taking initiatives on all questions of women's oppression — campaigns for women's representation, campaigns for sexual education, refuges for battered women, campaigns for introducing the women's question into the unions and so on.

We ourselves have to understand that the right to criticism, to differences and to form systematic currents is a fundamental democratic right, and begin to operate on the basis of this conception, which has not existed in the past.

We want a living feminism, based on reason, responsibility, criticism and effectiveness. ★

Nurses take the lead in health-workers' struggle

IN FRANCE as elsewhere, the watchwords of the 1980s have been "rationalization" and "rollback" as far as the public sector is concerned. Making nationalized industries like the health service profitable has been the unattainable goal of successive French administrations, and the strangely hybrid Rocard government is no exception in this regard.

But the nurses have had enough. As early as March, a joint demonstration was called by the main nurses' union, the CFDT (a national trade union federation politically close to the Socialist Party), and the anesthetists' leadership.

Nurses' coordination set up in April

In April, undoubtedly influenced by the healthworkers' struggle in Britain (see *IV* 135 & 136), over 100 nurses from 22 hospitals in the Paris region came together to discuss their demands. These included a retroactive payment of 2,000FF [about \$314] to make up for an ongoing loss of purchasing power, a general cost-of-living adjustment tied to the price index and to be built into salaries, similar rises in overtime payments, access to nursing courses, and professional training and status.

In June, the coordinating meeting attracted 200 nurses from 60 hospitals, seven of which were provincial, and it was decided to circulate a petition in the hospitals and plan a demonstration and one-day strike for September 29.

By September 15, a general assembly of the developing leadership attracted 500 nurses from 108 hospitals in the Paris region and 12 in the provinces.

The unprecedented growth of organized resistance by nurses to years of austerity in the health services is reflective of the same trend that produced the 1986-87 student strikes against the Devaquet bill, the rail strike, and the teachers' struggle.

For years, nurses have been regarded as Florence Nightingale-type "angels of mercy", who minister to the suffering without thought for themselves. The less exalted side of the job has been deliberately ignored — bedpans and broomsticks are bad press — while the stress of continually confronting death and disease, which results in nervous breakdowns and a high rate of attrition in the profession, are subordinated to this glamorized vision of thousands of saintly women nobly sacrificing themselves.

12 The reality is overworked nurses burdened with so many routine duties that

ON SEPTEMBER 29, 240,000 nurses walked out in a one-day strike that was 80% successful. In Paris, 30,000 nurses and other healthworkers demonstrated, joined by thousands more in the provinces, with hospitals all over France being affected.

The successful walk-out was the culmination of six months of intensive organizing efforts by nurses fed up with a chronic lack of recognition and dwindling real wages, and similar actions are planned for the near future. Although the Minister for Health, Claude Evin, has done little as yet to address the nurses' demands, the movement for change is so widespread and well-organized that there is little doubt this healthy "infection" will spread further, quickly contaminating other sections of the health sector's workforce.

ELIZABETH MILLER

they cannot be as supportive of patients as they would wish; nurses who work all day in the public sector and then contract themselves out at night to make ends meet. They are paid only about 1,000FF more than the monthly cross-sectoral minimum wage.

At the other end of the medical spectrum, their status is constantly in question, as highly-paid doctors (and even patients)

often ignore the three years of rigorous training nurses have to undergo to get their state certificate, often viewing nurses as merely the vigilant night-guard or the hand that administers the injection.

The final straw was the December 1987 governmental bill that effectively stripped nurses of their status by opening up nursing courses to anyone, regardless of previous training or degrees. This measure, if implemented, would reduce nurses of many years experience and seniority to the same level as health aids or unqualified trainees and ultimately lower their already inadequate salaries to a truly pathetic level. Health aids and trainee nurses have recognized the dangers that this poses for them as well and have come out in support of the nurses' struggles. Many participated in the national day of action on September 29.

The final factor in this struggle is the low percentage of nurses who are unionized at all. Just five percent of all nurses belong to unions, and those that do are fairly evenly divided between the three major federations.

But the nurses' coordination, based initially in the Paris region, has to a large extent overcome this problem. The nurses' coordination is the most dynamic and militant of the various coordinations that have been set up by healthworkers, to the extent that, for the first time ever, government representatives have had talks with such an unofficial workers' body.

Nurses' militancy infectious

The vigorous, expansive and democratic nature of the nurses' campaign presents the national union federations with a stark choice: either support the nurses in their struggle by demanding that the government include their coordination in negotiations, or ignore reality and leave this new — and representative — movement out in the cold.

The nurses' militancy is certainly infectious. Aside from being in the vanguard of the various categories of healthworkers fighting for better pay and conditions, the movement that has built up is threatening to snowball and inspire other sectors of workers in both the public and private sectors to fight against unemployment and austerity. On October 8, the nurses' coordination called for rolling 24-hour strike actions and a national demonstration in Paris on October 13. That will be a day to watch! ★

Free-market sports

THE BEAUTY of competition was presented with exceptional drama to an international audience this year at the Seoul Olympics. Urine sample tests, replacing the stopwatch and referees, were the decisive arbiter. The following article examines the problem of "performance-enhancing drugs" and what it represents more fundamentally.

ALEXIS VIOLET

FRANCO's minister for sport, a 100 per cent Francoist who was later ambassador to Moscow, Antonio Samaranch was elected president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1980 thanks to the votes of the USSR, Eastern European and third world countries. A shrewd businessman, he has been eliminating little by little those committee members co-opted for life and replacing them with international-class businessmen, including a leader of the Krupp group and one close to the big international sporting-goods firm, Adidas.

Says Samaranch, "money has to serve sports rather than the other way around." He wanted the Seoul games to be the most successful in the world. Commercially, he achieved that. It was undoubtedly not out of altruism or self-sacrifice that the nine multinationals that belong to TOP (The Olympic Program) and are official sponsors of the Olympic Games put close to \$100 million into them.

TV re-broadcasting rights amount to about \$80 million. It seems that the money is going to Samaranch, who managed to make the IOC a big-time commercial enterprise.

South Korea's interest in organizing the Olympic Games was to project itself as a great power and present a "democratic" show-case. It is evident that it is going to get some benefits from this, among other things by improving its relations with the USSR and China, which is a very big customer.

All the records were broken: 161 countries, 13,000 athletes and 4,000 journalists participated. In particular, the record for security was dynamited. There were no less than 120,000 cops and soldiers to safeguard this festival of "joy and harmony." The Koreans insisted particularly on harmony. The chief organizer, Park Seh Jik, had solid references. He was the head of the "re-education" camps, where 40,000 people were confined after the 1981 coup d'etat. Some of these people never came back, having been killed by the army.

South Korea got 33 medals, including 12 gold medals. Cheating was elevated to the status of an institution, especially in the body-contact sports. For example, boxing

referees were bought, another was attacked in the midst of a general punch-up instigated by Korean officials, because he had dared to declare one of their people the loser. No holds were barred, Korea had to become the leading Asian nation in sports. That is good for business.

Its methods of training its 400 athletes were close to a commando-style attack. They were shut up in a paramilitary camp for nearly two years. Chun Ae was struck violently by her trainer. She suffered a broken eardrum. On her return from the hospital, she said: "He was right. He just tried to improve my performance. I am sorry that I was not the best. I must be worthy of my country." Such exacerbated nationalism has not been seen since the Berlin games in 1936.

However, what will be remembered about these games, confirming that sports today are the main socio-cultural spectacle and therefore the best support for advertising, is what was presented as the drugs issue and the apparent firmness of the IOC, the modern champion of purity. What was really involved?

Dr. de Lignières, an endocrinologist who participated in a ministerial commission on drug-taking, told *Le Monde*, "The conclusions have been regarded as disappointing by those who formed this commission. We arrived at the conclusion that drug-taking is a very widespread practice in France, and

that high-level sports have not been at all good for people's health. We find potentially grave metabolic problems in athletes, and I think that trying to correct these disorders, which is considered as drug-taking, may be medically necessary."

Immense pressures on athletes

In the *Quotidien de Paris*, Dr. Bellocq, who looks after the athletes on the French team, said: "A study has already been done of athletes asking them if they were ready to win a medal knowing that they would die two years later. Half of them said yes. Talk to 25-year-old athletes. They don't understand. Health is an empty word for them. With contracts worth millions of francs at stake, death means nothing." He added, "Frankly, the great athletes have doctors who play a broker's role."

Ben Johnson got \$250,000 for a single race at a sponsored competition where there was no examination. The strictness in Seoul seems astonishing. In fact, the so-called fight against drugs was designed essentially to make three-and-a-half billion TV viewers think that top competitive sport is healthy, pure and exemplary. All that is false. It is well known that, among other things, these athletes are subject to frequent hormonal and sexual disturbances. They are stuffed with biological products that have been known about for a long time. This time, the IOC scored some points, but there has already been talk of genetic manipulations practiced on athletes that are impossible to test for.

A French sports official, A. Piron, has said, "In France also we have prodigies. You have to find them at the age of 12, and then work differently with the elite and super-elite." Why wait 12 years? Why not select test-tube babies? The show will go on and bring in huge sums of money, with athletes resembling human beings. They will not be Frankensteins. They will be neat and well-brought up monsters. Top competitive sports generates this dynamic; drug-taking is only a consequence of it. ★



THE REAGAN ERA is over, almost. The question is, what comes next?

The major domestic and foreign policy initiatives of the Reagan Administration have been carried out, allowed to run their course and reveal their disastrous effects. The most thorough rewriting of the US tax code in half a century has been completed, leaving a paper trail to massive debt. The largest escalation in military spending since the Kennedy-Johnson era has reached its outer limits. The cuts in social spending have been measurably greater than those of the previous four administrations — though each of them made significant cuts.

The Reagan doctrine of supporting insurgent reactionaries such as the Nicaraguan contras and taking credit for the collapse of rotting dictatorships such as that of Marcos in the Philippines also appears in decay. Direct and indirect support to repressive regimes such as El Salvador, Israel and South Africa has failed to halt the rising tide of rebellion.

The majority of Americans have paid a high price for the Reagan experiment in supply-side economics. Real wages remain below the 1973 level. Real unemployment, including those who have given up looking for work and those forced into part-time work, is over 10%. Sixty percent of US families have experienced a loss of income in the last decade. The number of homeless has grown to crisis proportions. And, in spite of all the tax-cutting rhetoric, the poorest 40% of the population experienced an increase in taxes after 1980.

Beyond the statistics is a malaise in the quality of life. It is reflected in the general crisis of education and in the rise of racist incidents on the college campuses and in working class neighborhoods. It is evident in the now routine government corruption scandals. It can be seen in the chronic abstinence of the majority from the political process.

The "Reagan era" started before Reagan

The Reagan era is not simply a product of the man whose name it bears. The malaise, the economic devastation, and even the interventionist foreign policy all began long before Ronald Reagan moved into the White House. The economic policies of the two Reagan terms are applications of a new business agenda formulated by America's corporate elite in the 1970s. Traditional Keynesian policies had failed to deal with the crisis in profitability that began in the late 1960s throughout the capitalist world. Reagan era foreign policy was a response to the failure of the Nixon-Carter "surrogate power" strategy that ended with the overthrow of the Shah of Iran and the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua in 1979.

Much of what we now think of as Reaganomics actually began under Carter. In

1978-79 the Carter Administration and the Democratic Congress took their own right turn toward the fulfillment of the business agenda. In 1978, the tax code was amended to grant business and the wealthy a cut in the top capital gains tax rate from 48% to 28%. At the same time, social security taxes were raised. The wealthiest 50% of taxpayers got a 79% savings in taxes from the entire 1978 tax "reform." In the 1979 budget, federal grants-in-aid were cut.

Deregulation was begun under Carter

Deregulation, another darling of the business community, got its major momentum under Carter. It began in 1978 with airlines; trucking deregulation followed in 1980. In 1978, Carter invoked the Taft-Hartley Act against 160,000 striking coal miners. In 1980, the Administration approved the Federal Aviation Administration's Management Strike Contingency Force, the plan that Reagan used the following year to break the air traffic controllers' strike and their union, PATCO.

The appointment of Paul Volcker as chief of the Federal Reserve Bank, meant to please business, led to a tightened monetary policy and a subsequent recession in 1979-80. Carter had pioneered what Reagan would carry out consistently, but Carter had the misfortune to end up with a recession.

Reagan's 1980 election was not the result of some new conservative mood among voters, but of the failures of the Carter Administration. When even a recession failed to dampen inflation, Carter turned toward wage/price controls and spoke of austerity. Reagan and the supply-side ideologues presented both business and the electorate with an upbeat promise of growth, while the Democrats still talked belt-tightening. It was no contest.

The theoretical junk-pile known as supply-side economics, accompanied by far-reaching deregulation and a more consistently anti-labor atmosphere, offered the US capitalist class what it wanted most — money. The 1981 and 1982 tax bills cut effective taxation rates for business from 33% to 16%. Deregulation of transportation saved business an estimated \$50 billion annually.

The recession of 1981-83 effectively killed the high inflation of the 1970s. The wave of wage and benefits concessions by unions that began in earnest with the 1979-81 Chrysler bailout created another massive transfer of income to business. After 1983, the stock market took off (until its 1987 crash) and the corporate merger movement (strong since the late 1960s) accelerated. The longest business expansion since the 1950s justified almost any excess.

But the stock market crash of October 1987, the massive federal deficit, and the intractable trade deficits were a warning to the business elite that all was not well. The

The Dem post-Reagan

WITH REAGAN's programs Reagan "prosperity" beginning many people in America and the the upcoming presidential election US politics. What sort of an alternative and its candidate Michael

That question is examined in extracts from the pamphlet *The Democrats in Post-Reagan America* socialist organ

KIM



Reagan Administration had done what it promised, yet US competitiveness in a highly integrated global economy had still not been satisfactorily restored. For one thing, the social wreckage visited on the US working class, oppressed national minorities and on women of all races was creating a shortage of low-wage labor in many parts of the country. The decay of primary and secondary education was contributing to a future labor shortage by failing to teach basic literacy.

Since US industry had chosen to use its new-found funds for mergers, paper wealth

Democrats in America

altering on all fronts and the
look more and more unstable,
world are wondering whether
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native do the Democratic Party
kakis offer to Reaganism?

detail in the following major
*Truth About Dukakis and the
America* published by the American
Solidarity.*

ODY



and investment abroad, it was not keeping up with other nations in new technology. Reagan's military build-up was not creating the political stability that US investors needed to protect their investments in the Third World. Something beyond Reaganomics and the Reagan Doctrine were needed by corporate America. But the Republicans had nothing to offer their corporate masters but more of the same.

Business dissatisfaction with Reaganomics emerged publicly in 1987, when scores of business leaders signed an advertisement in the *New York Times* calling on the Rea-

gan Administration to do something about the nation's federal deficit. One of the ad's initiators, investment banker Pete Peterson, wrote in the October 1987 *Atlantic Monthly* that Reaganomics "promised us high-savings, high productivity, highly competitive economy, with trade surpluses; and gave us instead a torrid consumption boom financed by foreign borrowing, an overvalued currency, and cuts in private investment, with debt-financed hikes in public spending and huge balance-of-payments deficits." Peterson's manifesto of corporate dissent was followed by a flurry of business packed bi-partisan commissions calling for fiscal responsibility and new economic directions.

Democrats jump on neo-liberal bandwagon

Hungry for campaign funds, the Democrats jumped on the bandwagon with the formation of the Cuomo Commission on Trade and Competitiveness. The majority of this body were business figures, joined by neo-liberal academics and a few labor leaders. The final report of this commission, published in the summer of 1988 as the *Cuomo Commission Report*, is clearly offered as a strategy for US business in the post-Reagan era. Its conclusions are a jumble of fiscal conservatism, tax give-aways to business, and neo-liberal clichés about competitiveness.

A growing number of people at the bottom of the social heap were also looking for something new. The Black community had already expressed its anger and frustration in the 1984 campaign of Jesse Jackson. A second Jackson run in 1987-88 appeared as a natural vehicle for the pent-up frustrations of millions of Reagan-era victims. And, indeed, Jesse Jackson's second historic run for the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party took on a momentum that few had predicted.

As in 1984, the Jackson campaign ran up against the capitalist nature and rightward momentum of the Democratic Party. But unlike 1984, it confronted a Democratic Party that now had the legislative momentum in Congress and a track record on new economic policies in many states.

The Democratic Party of 1988 also differed from that of 1984 in that its 20-year crisis of leadership succession had been resolved. If the party still appeared open to revolt, it was because it had not solved the thorny problem that had plagued it since the New Deal coalition [the bloc of labor and Blacks welded together under Roosevelt] began to decay in the 1950s: how to rebuild a national electoral majority.

Jesse Jackson had a strategy that went under the name of the Rainbow Coalition. He proposed that the party secure this national majority by turning toward 80 million poor and working class voters who had abandoned the electoral process altogether since the early 1960s. Voter registration

and mobilization were a key element of this strategy. It naively presumed that the party, beholden to this constituency for national victory, would cede decision-making powers to a fortified "left wing." The Democratic Party would be realigned, pushed back from its rightward trajectory.

Ultimately, the strategy required a social program that could awaken the interest and energy of those who saw politics as irrelevant to their daily lives — the victims of Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan alike. Though Jackson's message was by no means a socialist one, he presented the party and the electorate with an inspirational populism that strongly challenged the practices of business in a crisis-ridden capitalist world. Furthermore, Jackson's populism implied a significant redistribution of wealth toward the poor and the working class.

Perhaps most outrageous, it proposed that this new populism would be led by a Black person and a mobilized Black community that would unite the "locked out" of all colors on their "economic common ground." In the context of mainstream US politics, it was a bold strategy. In the context of the Democratic Party, where the party elite could taste the potential for big business bucks and electoral victory, it was an unwelcome one.

Jesse Jackson's 1984 campaign proved there was an electoral constituency for new politics. His 1988 campaign proved it was growing. In 1984, Jackson got 3.2 million votes in 30 primaries. In 1988, he received 6.8 million votes in 38 primaries. His proportion of the Democratic presidential primary vote increased from 18% in 1984 to 29% in 1988. In 1984, he ran third, in 1988 second.

Jackson deepened his electoral base this year

In the 1988 primaries, Jackson deepened his electoral base among both Blacks and whites. Whereas in 1984, he won about 80% of the Black vote, in 1988 over 90% of Black voters pulled the lever for Jackson. While white resistance to a Black candidate remained strong in 1988, Jackson's vote among whites grew from about 5% in 1984 to 12% in 1988. In some states Jackson drew as high as 20-25% of the white vote.

As a Black civil rights leader with a national reputation and a sympathetic, organized base in the Black churches, Jackson had the kind of mass electoral base that few others could call on. Furthermore, it was a base whose mobilization was not dependent on either the leadership of national civil rights organizations such as the NAACP, the Urban League or the new Black urban political machines. This fact is underlined by the opposition or neutrality of much of the Black political leadership in 1984.

Only an outsider could have mounted such a rebellion. Insiders "owe" the party

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Dukakis and family campaigning in Atlanta (DR)

and have to play by its rules. It's okay to challenge one or another party policy, such as the war in Vietnam or support to the contras, when such divisions already exist among the elites that fund and guide the party. It is not okay to question the entire political direction of the party. This Jackson has done precisely because he was able to flaunt protocol and question the party's direction, beginning with the announcement of his unwanted and seemingly quixotic protest candidacy in 1983.

Finally, Jackson's populist defiance expressed the sentiments of millions who have suffered the effects of the Reagan era. The technocratic "new ideas," managerial competence, and business competitiveness espoused by Hart, Gephardt, Dukakis, et al. have no more appeal or relevance to the plight of working-class people of all races than the worn-out liberalism of Walter Mondale. Indeed, such themes only reinforce the conviction that these politicians are so many bureaucrats, removed from the life of the average person and on the payroll of big business.

Giving a new boost to Black pride

The Jackson campaigns and the Rainbow populism they projected can claim two great accomplishments. The first is to have regenerated pride, self-esteem and hope in the Black community. The social and economic crisis of the Black community in the past 20 years can hardly be overstated. The gains of the civil rights and Black liberation movements of the 1960s have been halted, undone or limited to a small middle class stratum. Jackson's ability to break the white rules and put himself forward on white turf was in itself bound to give a boost to Black pride. His campaign brought Black concerns to center stage in the twilight of the Reagan era.

Jackson's second accomplishment has

been to open the minds of millions of whites to the ideas of a Black leader representing much of the Black community. While the number of whites to make this transformation is still a small minority of the population, this blow against racism and its potential dynamic are crucial to the future of any left perspective in the United States. Among those whites who heard and agreed with Jackson are the most active elements in organized labor and the social movements.

Populism yielded to paternalism

On the face of it, the Jackson campaign and the new populist mood among many Democratic voters should have gotten more out of the 1988 Democratic National Convention. The Jackson camp commanded over 1,200 delegates, while organized labor claimed over 1,000 — 300 of them committed to Jackson. Women's organizations were strongly in evidence and the gay and lesbian movements had a militant presence. Jackson stole the show with his prime-time speech.

With a large, potentially disruptive force at the convention, and the eyes of loyal Black voters upon them, the Democrats had to "respectfully" acknowledge Jackson. But like most things at Democratic conventions, this was form and symbolism that did not yield any real concessions, much less power. In exchange for a little prime-time tokenism and talk of incorporating the Jackson forces into the high counsels of the Dukakis campaign, Jackson floor whips patrolled the hall. They calmed emotions, urging full cooperation in return for hollow victories, and closed down potential floor demonstrations around contra aid and freedom in southern Africa.

Many Jackson delegates were bitter at how readily populism had yielded to pater-

nalism. Bernard Parker, a Jackson delegate and chairperson of the Detroit chapter of the National Black United Front, told a public forum in Detroit: "I went to the convention to see if there is any democracy in America, and I came here tonight to tell you there is no democracy in America."

When Michael Dukakis selected Lloyd Bentsen as his running mate, he sent a message to white America: "We're still in charge here." The message was an insult to Black America and by implication to all oppressed people. This insult was intentional, a signal that the managers of the Democratic Party had opted for a campaign designed to recapture the white

"swing voters" who had deserted the party to vote for Reagan in 1980 and 1984. They roundly rejected the alternative strategy, advocated by Jesse Jackson, of reaching out to those who had given up voting or were new to the electorate.

Along with that strategy, the Democrats just said no to both Jackson's populism and their own traditional liberalism. In a deal struck with Jackson, his forces were allowed to bring three platform amendments before the convention, including the highly controversial call for a Palestinian homeland. But the outcome was a foregone conclusion; the amendments on "no first strike" and increasing taxes on the rich went down in a pre-arranged 2-1 defeat.

The Palestinian question was not even put to a vote. As for the future of the Palestinian people under a Dukakis-Bentsen administration: What Palestinians? Dukakis sees only the state of Israel and likes what he sees. He opposes any form of a Palestinian homeland and says he stands by the Camp David Accords.

Token places for Jackson camp at DP convention

The Jackson camp was given a token 15 seats on the 400-member Democratic National Committee (DNC). This compared to the 50 seats given organized labor in 1984 in return for helping Walter Mondale sandbag the Jackson delegation. Battle-proven anti-Jacksonite Paul Kirk was renamed chair of the DNC. A Jackson supporter, New Orleans Mayor Sidney Barthelemy, was made a DNC vice-chair with the specifically limited assignment of voter registration and turnout. Jackson was promised a ceremonious "special role" in the Dukakis campaign.

By the end of the Democratic convention in Atlanta, a new politics and a new electoral coalition had emerged in command of the post-Reagan Democratic Party. At the heart

of this new centrist alliance were the neo-liberals of the North and West, a new generation *Business Week* dubs the New Age Democrats, and the neo-Dixiecrats of the South.

Usually known as neo-liberals, the New Age Democrats might better be called post-liberals. They have made national political careers in the post-Watergate, post-Great Society era of money-driven media politics. Far removed from the urban machines of bygone days, they have no ties to the Black community, organized labor or other social movements.

The "New Age" Democrats

The Dixiecrat side of this alliance is composed of Southern politicians who made their way to office in the decades following the destruction of formal segregation. Dependent on the Black vote and shorn of the old lynch-mob lingo, they remain conservatives in domestic and foreign policy. Michael Dukakis and Lloyd Bentsen symbolize the convergence of this New Age/Dixiecrat axis.

Dukakis is an apt and willing representative of the New Age Democrats. While he eschews PAC [Political Action Committee, groups that make collective contributions to candidates] money, he readily accepts contributions from wealthy individuals. He has even received donations from Henry Kravis, an investment banker who is New York State financial chair of the Bush campaign, a fact that says a lot about just how business greases the American political process.

Dukakis' 1987-88 media and polling expenditures for the campaign up to June (\$5,688,764) surpassed all other Democratic and Republican candidates including George Bush. Dukakis's network of what the *New York Times* (May 5, 1988) described as "a dozen wealthy fund-raisers" around the country allowed him to raise \$18 million by May 1988, more than double that raised by any of the other Democratic contenders.

The Duke's legendary frugality doesn't stop at rumpled suits and subway rides. When he took office as governor of Massachusetts in 1975, one of his first acts was to cut 15,000 people from the welfare rolls at a time when the state's unemployment rate was around 10%. It was all downhill from there. The "Massachusetts miracle" he takes credit for is nothing but a high-tech business boondoggle [bubble].

The *New York Times* (July 13, 1988) said, "Lloyd Bentsen resembles George Bush more than he does Michael Dukakis." Bentsen deserves this political look-alike award. In 1979, two years before Reagan, he wrote in the Report of the Joint Economic Committee of Congress, of which he was chair, "the major challenges today and for the foreseeable future are on the supply-side of the economy." He acted on this con-

viction by voting for Reagan's 1981 supply-side tax bill and other Reagan measures. He is an avid *compañero* of the Nicaraguan contras and, as someone once remarked, he never met a weapons system he didn't like.

The *Christian Science Monitor* (July 13, 1988) wrote, "For much of his 25 years in public service Bentsen endeavored to promote the interests of American business." According to Common Cause, Bentsen is America's number one PAC-man. Since 1983, he has garnered \$5 million in PAC donations, \$1.5 million in 1988 alone. Among his contributors are America's corporate elite and, in 1983, the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), possibly the most right-wing PAC around.

Like all of the candidates in this year's election, Bentsen is a wealthy man, with net family wealth of over \$10 million. Aside from oil, Bentsen's wealth also comes from his family's deep involvement in Texas agribusiness. This involvement includes opposition to farmworker organizing drives and heavy investments in Tide Products, a distributor of toxic pesticides of the kind being protested by Cesar Chavez, the United Farm Workers, and Jesse Jackson. As a Senator, Bentsen has voted to weaken the regulation of pesticides and other toxic chemicals.

Neo-liberal politics shaped by corporate America

The power of the New Age/Dixiecrat axis stems from its shared domination of a majority of the nation's statehouses, state party organizations and the committee structures of both houses of Congress. Such pervasive control means that this new leadership will set much of the legislative agenda of the next decade regardless of who wins the White House in 1988. Since both the majority of the Democratic Party's leadership at the national level and its presidential candidates are drawn from this milieu, it is certain that they will dominate party affairs for some time to come.

As Philip Stern's recent book, *The Best Congress Money Can Buy*, has shown, neo-liberal politics are shaped by the needs and contributions of corporate America more than by conviction. The universal lack of charisma of New Age politicians is a function of their technocratic approach to politics as well as to social issues.

The post-Watergate generation of Congressional Democrats form the core of New Age Democratic politics. Since, in alliance with both older and newer-style Dixiecrats, they control the committee structures of both houses of Congress, business is more than willing to fund their campaigns and the party's apparatus. According to *Business Week* (February 18, 1985), by mid-1980s the Democrats were more dependent on "fat-cat contributors" than their Republican opponents. The aver-

The Duke on lesbian and gay rights

DUKAKIS has earned well-founded suspicion and hostility from the Massachusetts lesbian and gay community, and now from lesbians and gays across the US. His personal intervention installed a foster care policy in Massachusetts that took teenagers away from the gay foster parents they had finally managed to get placed with. The policy virtually rules out any future placements with gay people.

The Duke has refused to promise to issue an executive order banning anti-gay discrimination in the federal government if he's elected. He has failed to fight actively for a Massachusetts gay rights law, which has been narrowly defeated several times in the state legislature.

His own state insurance commissioner quit when Dukakis insisted on letting insurance companies test life insurance applicants for the AIDS virus. He vetoed a needle exchange program passed by the Boston city council. This record explains why the lesbian and gay community is seriously divided about supporting Dukakis even against Bush. ★

age Democratic donation was three times the size of the average Republican contribution.

In return, business expects and receives both specific favors (the good old pork barrel) and reasonable adherence to business's legislative agenda. As the older generation of liberals, such as Hubert Humphrey, Edwin Muskie, George McGovern, and Walter Mondale have died or retired, it is the New Age Democrats who have inherited both the US Congress and the leadership of the party's mainstream.

This is the first post-Great Society [the slogan of L.B. Johnson's social program] generation of Democrats to be confronted with the global crisis of capitalism, the decline of US economic and political hegemony, and the discrediting of liberalism's policy bedrock, Keynesian economics. These New Age Democrats have bought the policy agenda of their corporate sponsors: regulation (mostly completed under Carter); abolition of progressive income taxation (begun in 1978 under Carter and completed under Reagan in the 1981 and 1986 tax acts); weakening of organized labor in order to make US business internationally competitive; rollback of "costly" social programs from affirmative action to

health, safety and environmental programs; and the re-composition of US military power.

Fight over Democratic policy

Also important among New Agers are several Democratic governors who learned how to use scarce Reagan-era state resources to attract business to their states (and away from others) through tax abatements, seed money give-aways and a low-wage workforce. Besides Dukakis they include James Blanchard of Michigan, William Clinto of Arkansas, Bruce Babbitt of Arizona, Charles Robb of Virginia, and Mario Cuomo of New York (despite his reputation as a New Dealer). Barely distinguishable are such Republican governors as Thomas Kean of New Jersey and Richard Thornburgh of Pennsylvania, who was recently appointed to replace Edwin Meese as Attorney General.

The fight over the policy direction of the Democratic Party goes back a long way. But its culmination occurred after the disastrous defeat of Walter Mondale in 1984. In the aftermath of this defeat, many of the Dixiecrats and Western New Agers took the initiative by founding the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC). The DLC advocated distancing the party from its traditional base in labor, the Black community and social movements, which they termed "special interests." They explicitly rejected New Deal or Great Society-type programs aimed at income redistribution and called for a hawkish foreign policy stance. Richard Gephardt, Joseph Biden, Bruce Babbitt, and Albert Gore are all members of the DLC.

Paul Kirk, an erstwhile liberal who became chair of the Democratic National Committee in 1984, picked up these themes. He abolished much of the DNC representation previously guaranteed to minorities and women. Not to be outdone, he formed the Democratic Policy Commission (DPC), which adopted the same orientation as the DLC. Its statement, *New Choices in a Changing America*, proposes "to get out from under the false image that Democrats are weak on defense, have weird life styles and are big taxers and spenders." Except for [Jesse] Jackson and Paul Simon, all the Democratic candidates for the presidential nomination in 1988 are members of the DPC, including Dukakis. It is these forces that now control the Democratic Party.

The New Age/Dixiecrat axis needed a national election strategy. The old New Deal coalition, composed of northern city machines, labor and the "Solid South," had

collapsed. The alternative was a combination of organized labor, the new Black urban machines, the social movements and those whom Jesse Jackson calls the "locked out," many of whom don't vote. Right-wing Democrats, however, argued that non-voters are not dependable, white working class voters often prefer Reaganite social values over fuzzy liberalism, and Blacks will vote Democratic no matter what.

Instead these party ideologues propose to re-conquer the white "swing vote." This is not, as some have said, a Southern strategy, but an attempt to appeal to the basest instincts and fears that pervade this entire ra-



cist society.

The selection of Lloyd Bentsen as Dukakis' running mate signaled the adoption of this strategy, urged by many since the 1984 Mondale defeat, as the way to the White House in 1988. As a Texas Tory, Bentsen is above suspicion among those whites who voted for George Wallace in 1968 and Reagan in 1980 and 1984 in "swing states" like Michigan, Florida, Texas, California and Ohio.

There is a bitter irony in allocating voter registration and turnout to the Jackson camp. Jackson, of course, has demonstrated ability in this area. And new registration is central to his strategy of broadening the party's voting base in hopes of influencing its direction. Yet the Jackson camp is being asked and has agreed to increase voter turnout for a racist strategy over which they have no control.

No matter how many new Black or Latino voters are registered, Dukakis and Bentsen are going to campaign for the white "swing vote," appealing to white racism in

code words about "forgotten ethnic voters" and "hard-working, average Americans." Locked out of real policy making, the Jackson forces have been ghettoized with the legwork of a job no one in the party elite deems important, and some find a detrimental embarrassment.

Early in September, Jackson rushed to correct reports by his aides that the Dukakis camp had come up with a list of "forbidden states" where Jackson should not campaign on behalf of the ticket. Not surprisingly, the alleged list included "swing states" like Michigan and Texas where Jackson's "help" could "send the wrong message" to some white voters. Though the existence of such a list was denied by the Dukakis campaign, spokespeople admitted that they had urged Jackson to campaign in states where he would be "most effective." The Jackson forces are still demanding their ministerial portfolios. No money or effort toward a national voter registration drive has yet come forth from Democratic headquarters.

The policy agenda of the New Age/Dixiecrat Axis is better understood as post-Reaganomics than as anti-Reaganomics. It has been shaped by Reaganomics in a number of ways. For one thing, the huge deficits the Democrats will inherit should they take the White House will limit any residual urge to spend on social programs without cutting the defense budget drastically. This they will not do, because military spending is essential to their model of growth. As born-again Cold Warriors, they take their "Conventional Defense Initiative" seriously.

New Age economic policy is the other side of the supply-side coin. The historic tax give-aways foreshadowed in 1978 and carried through from 1981 on provided US capital with the money it needed to restructure through mergers and buyouts, plant closings, and workforce reduction. Corporate raiders and Wall Street traders aside, the purpose of much of this restructuring was to increase the competitive position of a company by making it bigger and, by eliminating the less profitable operations, more efficient.

Reagan tax structure will stay intact

The Democrats do not propose to change the Reagan tax structure. They have consistently used their legislative majority to cooperate with the White House and pass these bills through. Lloyd Bentsen has been a chief Senate booster of Reagan's tax "reforms." The Democratic National Convention's 2,499 to 1,092 vote against Jackson's platform amendment to increase taxes on the rich should come as no surprise. Jack-

son commanded over 1,200 delegates, indicating that even some of his supporters voted against this amendment.

The random distribution of supply-side booty through the market restricted investment in technological innovation. To compensate, New Agers like Dukakis developed a form of "leveraged" industrial policy that complemented the supply-side orgy. By providing seed money, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina and Pennsylvania encouraged the kind of high-tech companies that could supply new technology to both new and old industries. "Smokestack" companies were encouraged to modernize through tax breaks and incentives. This "leveraged liberalism" is not so much a counter policy to Reaganomics as a complementary feature of it.

The role of the military budget

Restructuring and innovation are major aspects of the religion of competitiveness the New Agers share with the Reaganauts. Dukakis's techno-faith can largely be explained by the fortuitous success of high tech business in the export market. In his *Massachusetts Miracle*, David Lampe of MIT explains: "Massachusetts benefited particularly because one of the technologies developed in the region — the computer — unexpectedly proved to have enormous international market potential.

A central, usually unmentioned, aspect of New Age economics that overlaps Reagan-era priorities is the role of the military budget. Reagan's nuclear detente reflects a recognition by Republicans and Democrats alike that the defense budget must now be restrained in the light of the federal deficit. However, both also reject any attempt to reduce military spending.

Dukakis' increasingly hawkish rhetoric involves more than a pitch to swing voters. For one thing, as he approaches the imperial mantle that goes with the presidency of the United States he must show himself fit to rule and, perhaps, conquer. But he is also keenly aware of the central role of military spending in the "Massachusetts miracle."

While the state provided some funds for high-tech firms, it was the Carter/Reagan military build-up that pulled Massachusetts and New England out of their doldrums. With \$8.7 billion in the Department of Defense contracts in 1986, tiny Massachusetts was fourth at the military trough.

Dukakis also has the New Age love of big-ticket [high priced], high-tech conventional weapons. In August, he summarized his views on military spending for reporters:

"The fact of the matter is we have a massive survivable nuclear deterrent right now, 12,000 strategic nuclear warheads. What we don't have is the kind of strong conventional defense capability we must have, and that is going to be my top priority."

He proposes a Conventional Defense Ini-

tiative (CDI) to provide sophisticated weapons that can actually be used. This emphasis on *useable* weapons should give pause to those who thought Dukakis' past opposition to contra aid indicated a tolerance for revolution abroad. This preference for conventional weapons, however, does not prevent the Duke from favoring Trident 2 D5 submarine-launched nuclear missiles, cruise missiles or the Stealth bomber. Dukakis denounces SDI (Star Wars) as a "fantasy," but still advocates \$1 billion for research on it because his mind can be changed.

Another Reagan-like aspect of New Age growth policy is low-wage labor. As Bank of Boston analysts Linda Frankel and James Howe wrote in 1985, "The second factor contributing to the substantial increase of high tech manufacturing jobs in New England was the fact that in the 1970s New England's wage structure became relatively quite competitive." Today's New Age governors encourage wage concessions by unions in older industries and routinely fund non-union industries in their own states.

The fear of labor shortages, which tend to drive wages up, also fuels the New Age search for business-government partnership in getting people "off the welfare rolls, onto the work rolls." This means the Democratic embrace of that old Republican favorite, workfare. Workfare already exists in one or another form in 38 states. On June 16, the Senate voted 93 to 3 for a law requiring 22% of all welfare mothers to enroll in work programs by 1994. The House had previously adopted a version of workfare that differed only in offering more generous incentives to the states. By July, House Democrats were already urging cuts in those incentives in order to negotiate a joint bill.

State-of-the-art workfare program

Dukakis' Education and Training Choices program in Massachusetts, known as ET, is a state-of-the-art workfare program because it provides day care and medical benefits for up to a year. Unlike most workfare programs, it is voluntary. Nevertheless, ET's goal is the same — to enlarge the low-wage workforce and provide a literate, semi-trained reserve army of labor. In fact, the highly touted ET placed only about 15,000 people in low-wage jobs from 1983 to 1986. By mid-1987 another 10,000 had been placed at an average wage of \$6.50 an hour, which is between \$2.00 and \$2.50 below the national averages for the private non-agricultural sector, the insurance, finance and services industries.

If Massachusetts is the model for America's future, it is a deeply flawed one. Since 1984, Massachusetts has lost 79,000 manufacturing jobs. According to some union organizers, the number of union members has dropped by 25% since 1982, when only

19% of the state's workers were in unions. Dukakis's state agencies hand state incentives and contracts to non-union firms over unionized companies.

Unemployment and social services

The state's low unemployment rate does not extend to the Black community. In Black Roxbury, unemployment is 12% among adults and about 50% among youths, both equal to the national averages. In fact, the 3% unemployment rate is largely a function of out-migration caused by the high cost of living in the eastern part of the state where all the jobs are. Dukonomics has gentrified that area to make it attractive to the managers and professionals who are the true beneficiaries, after capital, of this military miracle.

This is not to say that a Democratic administration won't pass any social legislation. Congressional Democrats have already taken the initiative on some social measures meant to address serious labor market problems. These include the Catastrophic Health Insurance bill and proposals to increase day-care funding. Both are measures needed to keep poor people, particularly poor women, in the labor force. Indeed, the the issues of health, education and child care for low-income workers have become so pressing that even George Bush supports (and Reagan is prepared to sign) the Catastrophic Health Insurance bill and has proposed a \$1,000 tax deduction for day-care, a measure that doesn't address the lack of day-care facilities.

In a similar vein, Reagan Secretary of Labor Ann McLaughlin has told business and labor leaders there is a "widening gap between workplace needs and workforce capabilities." New Agers share this concern with business leaders and Reagan cabinet members. It is possible that the Democrats will also want to address the near collapse of the nation's unemployment and insurance system, which now covers about 25% of the unemployed.

With federal budget reductions and increases in military spending as stated Democratic priorities, it does not require a computer to calculate that the first New Age administration will produce meager results for the vast majority.

The greatest likelihood is that all this slick high-tech trickle-down finagling [tinkering] will collapse with the next recession. The Democrats' agenda is by no stretch of the imagination an agenda for the left. ★

* This pamphlet is available for \$1 from Solidarity, 7012 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210, USA. It is a sequel to the pamphlet *Jesse Jackson, The Rainbow and the Democratic Party: New Politics or Old* (\$1.50), of which major excerpts were published in IV 143, June 13, 1988.

Shock treatment for Nicaragua's economy

FOUR MONTHS after last February's economic measures, which included the introduction of a new currency, a new economic "package" was introduced in mid-June.

The new córdoba (C\$) was once again devalued in relation to the dollar, going from 10 C\$ to 80 C\$ to the dollar. The "parallel" currency exchange which had been eliminated in February was reintroduced on the basis of 130 C\$ to the dollar. The cost of inter-city public transportation, of electricity, and of fuel rose more than 100%. A graduated scale of interest rates was introduced for different sectors of the economy: 45% for commerce, 20% for agriculture, and 12% for industrial production. Finally, wages were increased by 30%, and state subsidies of health (\$70 million), education (\$75 million), and public transportation (\$1.4 million per month) were maintained.

But this "economic shock" was not to be the last for the Nicaraguan people, since this August saw a new series of measures introduced by the government: another devaluation of the córdoba by 125%; the exchange going from 80 C\$ to 180 C\$ to the dollar in the official currency exchange, and fixed at 420 C\$ in the parallel currency market. There has also been an increase in the cost of electricity, and salaries have risen by 140% in the public sector. Private sector wages remain linked to productivity levels. And there is to be more room to maneuver in the allocation of credit for small farmers.

These measures have not failed to arouse reactions, provoking discussion and criticism in the general population as well as within economic circles. In fact, there is scarcely any doubt that a debate around the "Sandinista model" is taking place within Nicaragua today, despite President Daniel Ortega's reaffirmation on July 19 of this year that the Sandinista revolution has been "socialist from the beginning".

We publish below extracts of a study done by the Institute of Sociology of the University of Central America (UCA) from the August issue of *Envío*, on popular reactions after the June measures were announced.

All illustrations in this article by Nicaraguan cartoonist Róger Sánchez



POPULAR perception of the FSLN and the government is characterized both by political support for their anti-imperialist project and, at the same time, serious doubts about their administrative capabilities in the economic sphere. This political and economic dichotomy in popular consciousness is evident in every single opinion poll.

An analysis done by the UCA explains, on the basis of data obtained in June 1986, that the mass of the people had doubts about the economic capabilities of the government but believed that the cause of the economic crisis was American aggression and the cost of the war. They lacked confidence in the government's economic management because the various initiatives of economic adjustment undertaken since 1985 had always led to higher levels of inflation and a drop in their level of income. On the other hand, their own experience had convinced them it was Reagan, and not the Sandinistas, who was responsible for an economic situation going from bad to worse, since the standard of living had noticeably improved between 1979 and 1983, the year that American aggression began to have serious repercussions on the economy. This was also the year that people's real wages began to fall precipitously.

Informal sector hit hard, but unevenly

Other studies by the UCA looked at the economic impact of the February 1988 measures on the populations of Managua and Carazo [a nearby region]. On the basis of studies from before and after the February measures, it is clear that — as the government had hoped — the informal sector of the economy was hit hard, but even from this point of view the effect was uneven: Among families relying on the poorer layer of this informal sector incomes dropped substantially, and people had to abandon their activities in order to look for waged work.

It was this urban informal sector which had served as a safety valve for a working class whose real wages were dropping. The February measures, and even more so those of June, forced those who worked in the informal sector to return to waged labor where, in turn, the new wage freeze eliminated all maneuvering room.

In this context, the raising of wages by 30% was perceived as a slap in the face or a cruel joke because the prices of some basic necessities had risen, along with the exchange rate, by as much as 566%, and the price of fuel and urban transportation rose respectively by 1,066% and 350%.

After the new measures, many Managuan workers who lived in the "green belt" of the capital or in commuter towns could not even get to work, because the cost of a return bus ticket was higher than the day's wage! From Masatepe, a return ticket is 90C\$ a day, which, multiplied by the num-

ber of days worked, produces a sum greater than the monthly wage of the lower level administrative workers as determined by the SNOTS [the wage scale set by the state].

Unequal distribution of incomes exacerbated

At the other end of the spectrum in the more affluent informal sector, although people were affected during the first few weeks after the measures their incomes quickly reverted to previous levels.

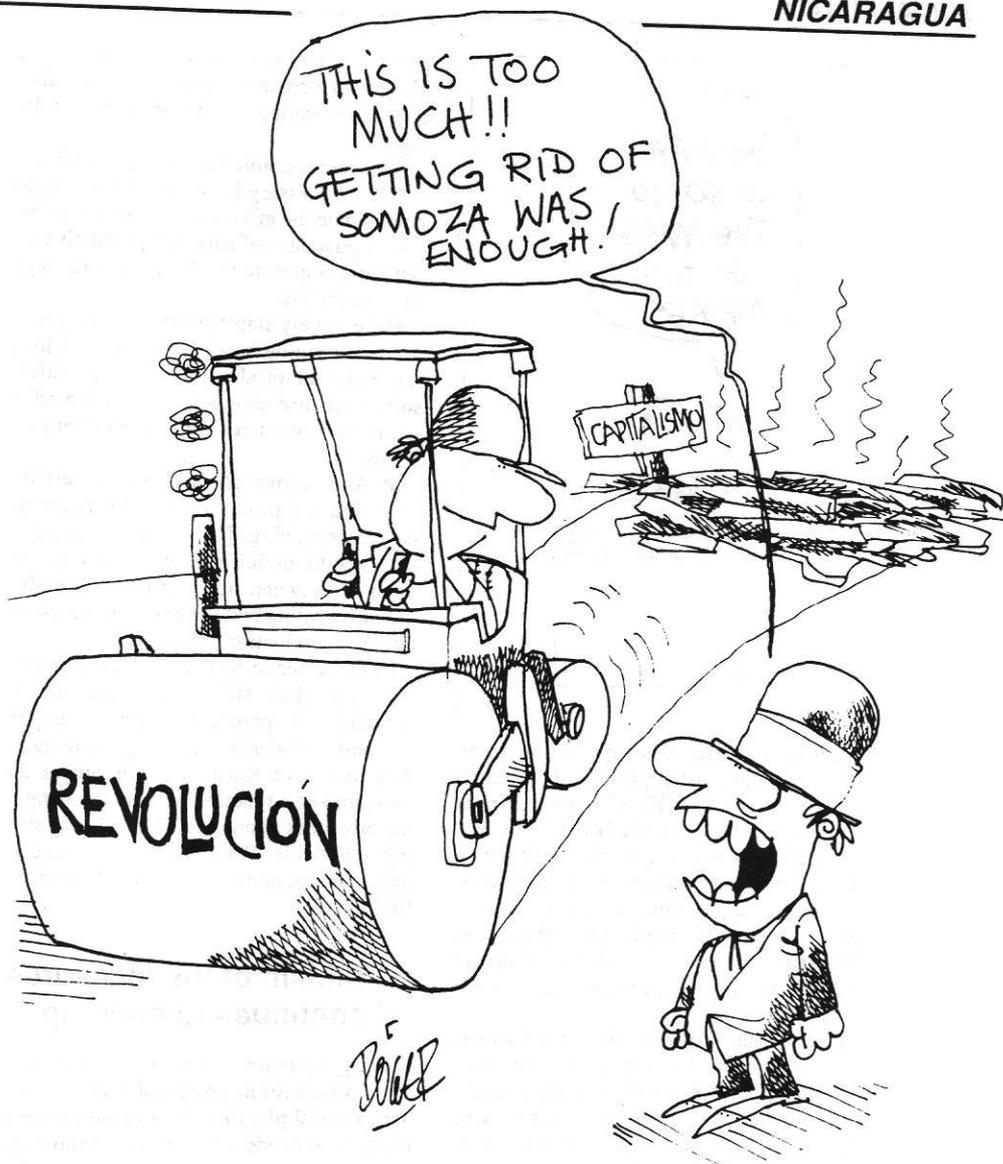
Thus, in both the informal sector of the economy and the sector subject to the SNOTS wage scale, the February measures created an even more unequal distribution of incomes — the normal result of any economic adjustment when a country's national currency is drastically devalued. This process of wage differentiation and polarization of the informal sector into proletarians and small bosses was accelerated by the June measures.

The general feeling that better-off families were hurt less by the measures than the mass of Nicaraguan people is supported by the facts. This is why the declaration of Ramon Gurdian [one of the leaders of the employer's association, COSEP] that "I support and applaud the new measures taken by the Sandinista government" has hurt the government more than any of his previous attacks. Even if these measures will have a big effect on the middle layers and petty-bourgeois producers, the manner in which this is understood within the working class will be quite different, given the abysmal drop in their income. This perception will ultimately be transformed into a political pressure which the government will have to confront.

The Nicaraguan people have shown that they were ready to make sacrifices to ensure their national sovereignty, but it remains to be seen whether they will pressurize their government so that it makes sure that everyone contributes equally for the right to be Nicaraguan. Even in cases where employers may be efficient and where their production serves to stabilize wages in the working class, it is hard to demand more sacrifices from people who can see that employers are pleased with the economic measures taken by the government.

At a time when the inefficiency of any enterprise is a further burden for the working class to shoulder, and in an economy of scarcity, restlessness and unease among the general population is to be expected.

The most recent opinion poll, dating from June this year, and conducted by the Center of Studies associated with the UCA (ITZ-TANI), once again shows the dichotomy between attitudes concerning politics and economics. But it also reveals a new perception of the economy, which could mean that the political cost of this series of economic measures may be higher than the



government expected.

The poll demonstrated that 71.7% of the population of Managua supported president Daniel Ortega, and that more or less the same percentage of Managuan inhabitants supported Sandinista political positions and voted for the FSLN in 1984. Even if 65% of this group thinks that the government wants to solve the economic problems, only 19% think that the problems are caused by either Reagan, American aggression, the blockade, or the war. And 36% think that the major economic problems are low wages, insufficient production, and bad management.

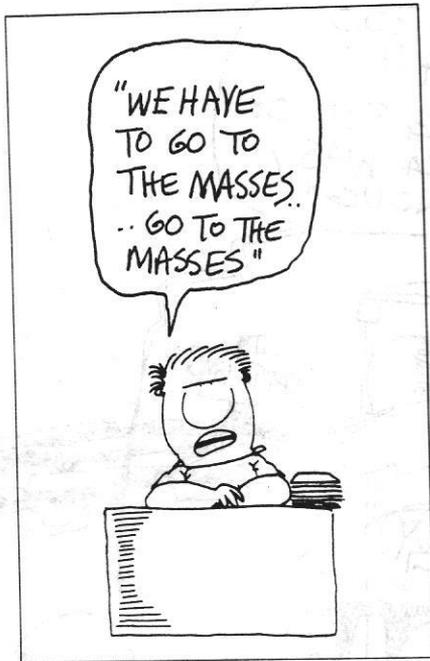
Is the war the only reason for the crisis?

So, in two years, or rather in the eight months since the super-inflation of November 1987, we have seen the steady waning of the popular perception that the war was at the root of the economic crisis. This could be in large measure the result of the government's own propaganda about the "strategic defeat" of the counter-revolution, for, in popular consciousness,

there is a simple dichotomy: Either the contras have not been defeated as the government claims and therefore war spending must continue, or they have been defeated and war spending must stop. Among those who think that the contras are in an irreversible decline, in a certain very small and reactionary sector there is the idea that both sides need the excuse of the war in order to finance their respective armies.

The Sapoa Accords and the temporary cease-fire have begun to reinforce the popular opinion that military spending is no longer so necessary and other factors must therefore explain the drop in the standard of living. However, the problem is that in the geo-political and military sense, the war is not over; the cease-fire is precarious. In Reagan's final months anything could happen — the situation could suddenly take a turn for the worse.

At each stage the common perception of the situation is more marked by what President Ortega calls "the dichotomy or the division of our reality between the problem of the war and that of the economy". As he explains, "when we address the economic difficulties, we tend to forget about the war". Even if Nicaraguans are not following the



opposition parties (the opposition party which got the most support in the opinion poll conducted by ITZTANI was the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) with only 3%, and the FSLN is still the only party with a mass base of support), the growing discontent with the government and the nightmare vision of an armed crowd taking over milk trucks in certain neighborhoods are exerting strong political pressure on the government.

This pressure from below, which affects even technical and administrative layers of the state apparatus, is undermining its ideological coherence, unity, and the ability to implement economic policy. The fact that the June package includes no measures that can satisfy the most supportive and productive layers of Nicaraguan society, those within the state and cultural administrations, also helps to create the danger of a loss of coherence in this program.

From this arises the danger of an incomplete economic program that further undermines the ability of the government to have any influence on the functioning of the economy, as Ortega warned in his presentation of the new measures: "If we don't maintain our coherence, keep saying the same thing, and if we do not conform to the reality which confronts us at this stage, if we lose our political and ideological cohesion, then this weakness will have its effect at all levels of the society we are trying to influence".

When all is said and done, the coherence of a government with a socialist orientation and a mixed economy in this world context depends on the strength of the mobilization of a people in support of their government's economic policies. For, as we warned in our first evaluation of the February measures, any adjustment of the Nicaraguan economy is like "an operation without anesthesia". Since we don't have the material base that would enable us to

control inflation, the only element giving Nicaragua a chance to confront the escalating deterioration of its economy is its people.

Such an economic base would require:

- The necessary international reserves to consolidate the effects of the devaluations.
- A guarantee of adequate productive input from domestic production, or through foreign credits.
- Relatively stable prices, and a climate in which whole workweeks are not lost, nor national production made to suffer solely because economists cannot predict the effects of such sharp devaluations on prices.
- And, above all, a chance to escape from the inflationary spiral by reducing military spending. This is the true cause of the gigantic deficit and of the serious imbalance between huge and unproductive public spending and the scant resources devoted to production.

In the absence of these material conditions and their stabilizing effect on the economy, the people's conscious support for, and confidence in, their government's administrative abilities stands out as the most important factor. Without the people, the project of economic adjustment is simply non-viable. This is the crux of the economic conjuncture in which Nicaragua finds itself.

Criticism of the measures continues to build up

The government has the political support of its people for its project of national unity and political pluralism. But in the economic arena, it needs a new series of more diversified, more popular measures, if it wants to succeed in carrying out the fundamental line of this economic readjustment at a minimum political cost.

For the reasons outlined above, the new measures led to increased public criticism of governmental inability to manage the economy. Popular criticism will continue to build up a wave of pressure which will crash against what until now has been seen as the slowness of the government to restructure productive strategy in wartime, to change the style of economic management and to draw a new balance sheet of how resources have been allocated to the war and to production.

The peaking of this pressure wave could force the new economic program to take any of three different directions:

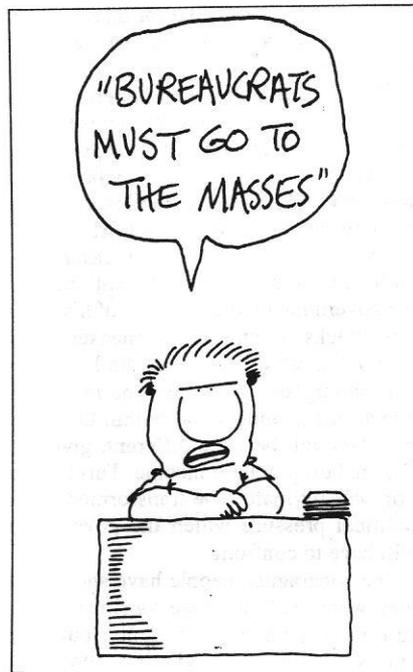
- Abandoning the measures even though they are absolutely necessary. Pursuing them without a coherent alternative will soon produce all of the negative consequences we have already mentioned.
- Retain the measures without any modifications and run the risk of losing political support as well as maintaining the current high levels of inflation.
- Modify and complement the development of the Sandinista economic model to

accommodate better to a survival/war economy, instead of papering over the cracks.

Despite the difficulty of widening the productive alliance that underlines the Sandinista model, the political consequences of the two first solutions are so negative that we tend to believe that popular pressure will play a crucial role in the forging of a new Sandinista economic model in the coming year.

The February and June measures have been without doubt the indispensable fiscal steps towards the reconstructing a Sandinista economic model on its original popular foundations.

The extension of the Sandinista model of accumulation has as a prerequisite the enormous task of winning back, in the economic sense, the lands which were ravaged by the war. It is in this region one finds the best potential for the production of beef and coffee, the two areas in which Nicaragua



can actually increase its exports. In fact, the income lost by Nicaragua from coffee and beef — in relation to pre-war export levels — has been without doubt the principal reason for the difficulties encountered in trying to get productive inputs. It is this fundamentally that has drained the Nicaraguan economy and thereby limited the government's capacity to maintain social programs and protect the real incomes of workers and peasants.

Nicaragua did lose sources of income and means for producing basic foodstuffs because of the war, but also because the middle producers and peasants near the border were never part of the class alliance prioritized in the original Sandinista model of accumulation. As many Sandinistas have said, "the revolution never got that far".

The February and June measures provide the fiscal framework necessary to recover economic ground lost as a result of the war, but they will not be sufficient to mobilize

the great complex that produces domestic corn, beans, pork, cement, and coffee, and whose final fruit is exactly the amount of income needed to provide a secure base for the adjustment of this economic model. This adjustment or broadening of the current model of accumulation could be summed up in the seven following points:

1) A model more rural than urban, which would mean redirecting the metal industry towards the production of consumer and capital goods for the coffee and cement producers instead of acting as an industry serving the big projects of MIDINRA [Ministry of Agricultural Reform].

2) A model based on the technological level of the population today, thus with a slower rate of transformation than the one currently in force.

Using agrarian reform to relieve crowding

3) A model which changes the eight-year-long relationship between the non-productive informal sector and the productive sector, where the informal sector has benefitted more than producers. This will be done by better organizing the artisans involved, and investing resources in that part of the informal sector that provides essential services for production. The fiscal measures will quickly do away with the most inefficient small-scale concerns, while maintaining those which the revolution can encourage as service or credit cooperatives.

4) A model that uses the agrarian reform to relieve crowding in the urban areas, especially Managua and the Pacific region, by giving up non-strategic state lands for the creation of cooperatives.

5) A model that encourages the mobilized population to turn away from the commercial sector towards the productive sector, not only by keeping track of speculators, but also of who produces and who does not.

6) A model that reinforces the traditional production of villages and in the countryside, thereby creating an economic base that can speed the rate of technological transformation.

7) A model that broadens the alliance of classes which support it; that increases the role of peasants and small and medium-sized producers in the countryside and small businesses in the towns; that changes the nature of the alliance with the poorer urban layers from a policy of subsidized consumption to one of productive mobilization; and that keeps a better check on the inefficiency of large companies, whether state or privately owned.

The extension of the original Sandinista model will continue to be impelled by popular pressure, in the same way as the agrarian reform was. There are two factors which determine the potential for development of the Sandinista model: firstly, the depth of structural changes already consolidated

and mass pressure for greater equality in the economic sphere; and, secondly, the new fiscal measures. Given the potential for tensions already contained in this economic package, any modifications and new, complementary measures could serve as both a political safety valve and promote economic mobilization.

That new measures could serve as a safety-valve seems unlikely: not only are there few available, they would be very difficult to put into practice. The only real alternative is partial implementation of some or all of the measures. The following are six measures that could reinforce the new economic decisions, while also attaining the overall objective of extending the model of accumulation:

- Raising wages while retaining the drastic nature of the June measures primarily for large companies, and making concessions to the broader productive sector by readjusting the credit policies in order to stimulate the economy.

- Restructuring the investment program as the only real possibility of raising the level of exports and as the first step towards a new productive strategy and a new model of accumulation.

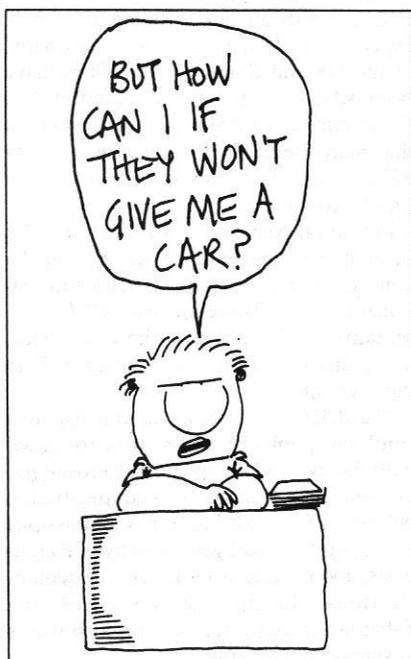
- Developing and putting into place a new program of significant foreign financing.

- Integrating the economic potential of the army within the survival economy.

- Energizing the state's economic administration in a new direction: priority to production, instead of administrative control.

- Increasing popular participation in planning through public debates and meetings and establishing a new ethic of austerity and efficiency. ★

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"Our goal is to take better advantage of our country's meager resources"

LAST JUNE, Daniel Ortega travelled to Cuba: we print below his remarks to the Cuban daily *Granma* on the meaning of the recent economic measures.

ECONOMIC measures are an integral part of a war economy — a survival economy. The measures we have decided upon are aimed at taking better advantage of the meager resources our country has. Our political program has included extensive subsidies, and this produced high inflation and a surplus of money in circulation. There has been a serious tension between the excess money in circulation and the relative scarcity of consumer goods.

In other respects, this situation ran counter to such central revolutionary goals as favoring the fundamental forces, those active in the military defense of the revolution and those linked to production or basic services in the country.

For example, the commercial sector did quite well out of these difficulties, whereas we were finding it hard enough to direct resources to the sectors we wished to prioritize. Neither were the interests of workers and productive enterprises served, since goods the latter produced had their prices fixed according to quite rigid norms set by the government. Moreover, as these prices were often either heavily subsidized or badly calculated, once on the market they were exploited by dealers who jacked them up three, four or five times. Their market value was falsified, and it was the petty shopkeepers or dealers who profited.

The goal of these measures is therefore to better manage the country's few resources by directing them towards military defense and certain productive sectors. What does this mean? In part, that some areas of production must be sacrificed, indeed some necessary sectors. As we are at war, we can't keep everything; something has to go.

To give an example, if we must spend money on coffee production and, at the same time, the production of lemonade,

then obviously we won't hesitate to direct all of our resources towards coffee production, even if doing so paralyzes the lemonade industry. As for the workforce which is then out of a job, we will have to explain the problem politically and see whether they can be transferred to the productive areas of the agricultural sector — which is the most important part of the Nicaraguan economy.

“Subsidies amount to more than 15bn córdobas”

These measures also allow us to better adjust our subsidies, since we're not implementing the International Monetary Fund's dictatorial model plan. It is true that we are applying some strategies from the market economy framework, but that doesn't mean they correspond to a capitalist pattern. It simply reflects the reality of Nicaraguan society where we have many small proprietors in rural areas, where we don't have large-scale industry, but many craft workers. This is what forced us to look for ways to stimulate production without, however, renouncing our policy of subsidies.

At present, despite some very harsh measures, we immediately approved subsidies for education, health, milk for infants under six months old, for day-care centers, and for children wounded in the war. They amount to more than 15 billion córdobas. These subsidies will have an inflationary effect, but we cannot abandon them. They are consciously intended to benefit these layers of the population and will not be “diverted” into the pockets of small shopkeepers as happened before, especially in the case of basic foodstuffs.

We see the practical application of these measures as the way in which we can redirect subsidies towards those productive enterprises and social sectors we think must be the beneficiaries.

So, although we may not be able to make big plans for the extension and completion of the social programs wanted by the Nicaraguan people, neither are we conducting a policy that will sacrifice the gains of the revolution. The people want more education, more schools, and we can't provide them because we haven't got the means.

What do we propose to do? We plan to educate more than a million Nicaraguans, which requires the retention of 57,000 educational workers, counting those who work in rural areas, and whose contribution is essential. This means a policy of subsidies, and no reductions in the education budget, while explaining to teachers that the situation is very difficult.

The other solution would be to cut the budget, and we don't want to do that. The same goes for health. So, we want to preserve basic social services, since we cannot expand them as we would wish. But at least we can continue the programs that have an important effect on the lives of every Nicaraguan. ★

AROUND THE WORLD



INTERNATIONAL

Contra funds

MARTA Rodríguez describes herself as “a good friend of Israel”. In her position as the ambassador to Honduras of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), Rodríguez has also been a good friend to the Nicaraguan contras. Her “embassy” is instrumental in funnelling cash and supplies to those trying to overthrow Nicaragua's Sandinista government, as well as maintaining important links between the contras, US-based evangelical Christian groups, Israel and South Africa. On the ideological front, ICEJ's evangelical proselytizing helps to dampen political protest in Central America.

Despite its appellation embassy, the ICEJ represents no national entity. It was established in 1980 in Jerusalem in response to that year's exodus of all 13 foreign embassies from the city in compliance with a UN resolution.... A recent ICEJ press release on the Palestinian uprising said that the deportation of Palestinians in violation of international law “was the most human act Israel could employ against people, some of whom are convicted terrorists, who inflame the masses to rebellion and murder.”

During its short existence, ICEJ has blossomed into an operation with a yearly budget of over \$1 million and a staff of 30 full-time and 200 part-time employees. It claims to have branches in 50 countries. ICEJ activists are concentrated in Europe, especially in Finland and West Germany, in the US and South Africa. There have been persistent, but unverified, reports that South Africa is a major financial backer of the enterprise. ICEJ director Johann Luckoff is a Dutch Reformed minister from South Africa.

In Central America, ICEJ has embassies in Honduras and Guatemala, headed by ambassadors who sit on ICEJ's International Council. There are also ICEJ representatives in El Salvador and Costa Rica, and plans to establish embassies in both those countries.

The ICEJ's mission in Central America combines public relations work for Israel with the evangelical agenda of proselytizing and supporting Reagan administration policies, so in addition to the expressions of support for Israel generated by ICEJ outposts, and junkets to Jerusalem for demonstrations during the Feast of the Tabernacles, ICEJ in Honduras also works to support the contras.

For instance, Honduras has granted special diplomatic status to the ICEJ, giving it the right to bring a wide range of goods into the country duty-free. “Customs never looks at our things,” Rodríguez says. “They're sealed.” Could they bring in aircraft? “We can do it, but why? I'm not a pilot.” Still, the embassy bring in vehicles for other right-wing religious groups known to help the contras. And ICEJ and Gospel Crusade, Inc., a leading player in the US evangelical network aiding the contras, bring some of their supplies to Honduras on US military transport. ICEJ's links with Israel, which has funnelled major military support to the contras through Honduras since the early Reagan years, underscores the issue....

Gerald Derstine, founder of ICEJ in Honduras, is a prominent leader of the US religious right. He and his son Phil boast of having delivered over 100 tons of “humanitarian” assistance to the contras. In an interview with Debra Preusch in Tegucigalpa, Phil Derstine confirmed a 1987 report in Covert Action Information Bulletin that Oliver North had placed both Derstines in contact with the contra leadership in 1985. Now both men boast of their close connections to contra leaders Adolfo Calero and Enrique Bermúdez. The Derstines have also established close ties with high government officials in Honduras, including President Azcona.

The ICEJ in Guatemala was established only two years ago. Embassy director Reverend Jorge López also heads a pentecostal and charismatic church, Christian Fraternity. López has reached out to military officers and has succeeded in placing several officers on Christian Fraternity's board of directors....

The military-dominated government of Guatemala has benefited enormously from the activities of Protestant evangelicals, who have converted more than 20 per cent of the population to a quiescent, accepting, and above all “anti-communist” creed. Yet, perhaps because the rhetoric and practices of ICEJ and its associated groups are so backward-looking, so alien, they have remained largely outside of the framework of policy discussions in the US. Those with an interest in sending and receiving sealed packages for the contras probably prefer it that way. ★

By Debra Preusch and Jane Hunter, from the August 31 issue of the *US Guardian*.

SOUTH AFRICA

Conference banned

THE BIG anti-apartheid conference that was supposed to have been held on September 24 in the Cape has been banned by the South African government. Discussed at COSATU's congress last July, the assembly was intended to bring together dozens of labor, political and community organizations. Five hundred delegates were expected for the occasion. The government justified its decision by arguing that the conference would put pressure on the electorate to boycott the next municipal elections.

This meeting could have been of paramount importance for the opening up of a thorough-going debate on the perspectives for the anti-apartheid movement and on unity within the mass movement. The regime feared that this initiative could have given new life to struggles just as it is attempting to solve the question of residence regulations for good with the Group Areas Act.

It is ready, in fact, to legalize the opening up of certain neighborhoods to all races, in this way belatedly recognizing an already existing fact. But it also wants to use this legislation to minimize the number of non-whites who until now have lived illegally in some city centres, estimated to number more than seven million. Sanitation or safety regulations may now be used to evict people and then demolish the buildings.

The legislation will also be accompanied by a hardening of residential segregation for all other urban areas. For example, a white who rents to anyone of "another race" would have to pay a fine of between \$160 and \$4,000. The government will be looking for much more widespread expulsions than at present; there are estimated to be around 200,000 people living outside of their "racial zones" in this way. The government also intends to attack the squatters who have created gigantic shanty-towns on land earmarked for other uses. ★

U S A

Poverty on the increase

THE OFFICIAL poverty rate among Blacks in the United States rose in 1987 to 33.1% from 31.1% in 1986. The percentage of Latinos living in poverty, according to a report from the US Census Bureau released August 31, rose to 28.2% from 27.3%. The bureau's official poverty line ranges from \$5,800 per year or less for one person to \$11,600 or less for a family of four to \$23,000 or less for a family of nine.

The increase in the official rate of poverty for Blacks was the first since 1983, when the US economy was in a recession. At that time the poverty rate among Blacks hit 35.7%. Before 1987, the official poverty rate among Blacks declined somewhat in the course of the current economic upturn. But it remained above the 30.6% level reached a decade ago in 1978. The rate of

poverty among whites dropped to 10.5% from the 1986 rate of 11%.

The number of Blacks recognized as poor rose by 700,000 to nearly 9.7 million. The number of Latinos below the poverty line rose by 360,000 to nearly 5.5 million. There were 32.5 million people in the US living below the poverty line in 1987 — more than one-eighth of the population.

The official overall poverty rate of 13.5%, down from 13.6% in 1986, was higher than for any year in the 1970s, including the 1974-75 recession. Robert Greenstein, an economist cited in the September 2 *New York Times*, said that there are 8 million more people below the poverty line than in 1978. Moreover, the share of the national income that goes to the poorest working people — Black, white, and Latino — has shrunk, while that going to the richest sector of the population has increased.

The richest 20% of US families, with incomes over \$52,910, received 43.7% of income, up from 40.4% in 1967. The poorest 20% received 4.6%, down from 5.5% in 1967. About two-thirds of those the government classifies as poor are white.

Even those with regular jobs have been hit. A report by the private Economic Poli-

cy Institute said that the number of full-time, year-round workers with incomes below the official poverty level increased by 600,000 between 1979 and 1986. Reasons for this, according to the Institute's figures, included a 9% drop in weekly wages adjusted for inflation since 1979, and a 12% drop since 1973 in the income of the average family headed by a person between the ages of 25 and 34.

Twenty per cent of children in the US lived below the poverty line, while 45.8% of Black children did so. Of people over 65 years of age, 12.6% were officially regarded as living in poverty.

The Census Bureau reported that the median income for all families — a figure that lumps together families ranging from billionaires to the homeless — rose in 1986-87 period by 1%, to \$30,850. (After inflation is taken into account, however, this figure has been essentially stagnant since 1973 — rising on \$30.)

Among Black families, income slipped almost 1% to \$18,098. The income of Hispanic families dropped 2% to \$20,306. The median income for white families rose to \$32,274. ★

From the September 16 issue of *The Militant*.

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Trotskyism in America
Saturday, October 15:
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of Leon Trotsky) • Alan Wald (U.S.)



"You only need one kidney, anyway!"

SEVEN BABIES were saved in the nick of time on August 8 in Paraguay from being sent to be dismembered to provide organs for a rapidly growing international medical business. The affair was widely reported in the international press, and drew attention to a peculiar combination of scientific advances and the persistence of the free market and vast inequalities of income.

The following study of this area of capitalistic free enterprise was published in the September 1988 issue of *Viva*, the publication of *La Vie Mutuelle*, the federation of French mutual aid societies. The article is somewhat sensationalist, but clearly points to a growing problem.

M RAFFOUL

"THE PRICE of human organs should be determined by demand, like any other product." The name of the person who made this statement is Aidan Vinig. This Canadian businessman is undoubtedly the one who has best defined the basis of the traffic in human organs — "reestablish the rules of competition." Blood, an eye or a kidney are products to be bargained over in the same way as an emerald or a kilo of sweet potatoes.

In such trade, the third world or the fourth world once again turn out to offer inexhaustible supplies. This is especially true since, as a result of scientific progress, forms of traffic that were previously unthinkable have become business as usual. Last May, for example, the University of Wisconsin in the United States announced the discovery of "UW Solution." This makes it possible to preserve organs outside the human body for more than 24 hours in the case of kidneys and six to 26 hours for the liver. This also permits practical applications that the American professors undoubtedly never thought of.

At the same time, the disequilibrium between the supply of, and demand for, organs worldwide has continually increased. Out of 17,000 patients waiting for a kidney transplant in Europe, barely 7,452 were able to have their operations in 1985. The recipients in the rich countries need organs; the poor donors need money. The scientific skill exists. So why not sell a person, a child, or a fetus?

At the beginning of 1985, two employees at the Polyclinic morgue of the Vienna municipal hospital agreed to sell embryos to a representative of a French beauty products

firm at a price of 130 francs. Meninges [spinal columnar membrane] and hypophyses [pituitary gland tissue] cost him 45 francs. The "representative," a reporter for the Austrian magazine *Ikarus* exposed the business to the broad public.

Was this an exceptional case? According to the testimony of one of the employees arrested, German pharmaceutical firms had been buying foetal tissue from him for more than 14 years at a price of \$4....

In the same year, on the other side of the Atlantic, the Californian police discovered more than 500 dead fetuses preserved in formaldehyde stacked in a truck. They were going to a private plastic surgery clinic in Santa Monica. This discovery inevitably recalled another affair revealed after more than 10 years ago by the *Washington Post*.

US Defense Department's kidney trade

In 1986, the paper that blew the Watergate scandal published an article claiming that between 1970 and 1976 the laboratories of the American Defense Department imported 12,000 pairs of kidneys of fetuses aged from three to eight months from South Korea. As incredible as it may be, this information was not new. Ten years before, Professor Wald, Nobel prize winner in medicine, tried to expose this traffic.

Back in March 1976, *Asahi Shimbun*, the biggest Japanese daily, wrote: "a large quantity of kidneys of human fetuses — more than 20,000 — imported by the US from South Korea have been used for military research." Mr. Lee Myong Bok, a pro-

fessor at the University of Seoul, does not deny being one of the doctors who was charged with the delicate task of collecting fetuses for the Flow pharmaceutical laboratories (Rockville, Maryland), the world leader in supplying human tissues.

A profit rate of 6,000 per cent!

Since saline abortion could have damaged the tissues and killed the fetuses, the noble professor inflicted the most advanced type of Caesarian operation on South Korean expectant mothers under the pretext of "complications." As early as 1969, Flow laboratories paid him \$15 per pair of kidneys, a rate that he gradually raised to \$30.

In a remarkable work by Rolande Girard devoted to this traffic, Professor Wald explains that from a pair of kidneys 6,000 tubes of tissue cultures were obtained, which were sold at \$30 a piece to laboratories "including the laboratories of the Fort Detrick [Maryland] military medical institute for research on infectious diseases."

According to some estimates, he adds, the number of seven to eight-month-old fetuses annually imported into the US from the entire world between 1970-80 was 80,000. Flow's profit rate was 6,000 per cent!

What could these kilos of fetal kidney tissue be for? Questioned by Rolande Girard, Professor Steven Rose, director of the brain research institute at the British Open University, claimed to know nothing about the traffic in South Korean fetuses. But, nonetheless, he advanced the hypothesis of work on a chemical weapon intended for use in the European theater. He thought it was a nerve gas capable of killing in a few seconds through simple skin contact....

The other hypothesis is an "ethnic weapon" capable of killing Asians selectively without "harming" people of other races. True or false? It is hard to answer this question, especially since the director of the Fort Detrick Military Institute, where this type of work is continuing, preferred to maintain a troubling silence on this matter during a discussion with Rolande Girard for the French TFI TV channel.

To gather together the raw material necessary for their research, the United States naturally turned to a "friendly" third world country known for its high abortion rate. For the year 1970, the number of interrupted pregnancies approximated the birth rate. In 1978, deliberate abortions were three times more numerous than births.

So, if we are to believe all the testimony provided by people involved in the traffic, the "land of liberty" caused fetuses to be dissected in a third world country in order to perfect a biological weapon for a new "final solution" to be used against people of the yellow race. The undersecretary of state in Washington was willing only to concede before the TFI cameras that this traffic "did exist up until 1977," but only in an attempt

to isolate spontaneous diseases.

Up until today, the US State Department, through the intermediary of its diplomatic offices, indignantly denies the reports about work on an ethnic bomb. It points out that the "largely multi-ethnic composition of American society shows how ridiculous this claim is." Not a word about the "South Korean foetuses conduit" As if other more "noble" labors no doubt justified recourse to such methods.

Since the revelation of the affair, South Korea has indeed stopped its macabre exports. "The market was taken over by Singapore, but I don't know anything more," Professor Wald says from Switzerland.

Flow, which has an office in France, has affiliates in 14 countries. Where do the laboratories get the raw material necessary to supply the demand on a world scale? Flow laboratories' chief of products in France, Hervé Gourgues is not very forthcoming on this question. In an interview given to *Parents Magazine* in 1966, he said: "The cells come from laboratories, most often American ones. I do not know how they come by the embryos."

"But I see from your catalogue that you offer, for example, lungs of a masculine embryo of the Black race," the reporter countered.

"Now see here," Mr. Gourgues replied: "We are not offering the lungs of an embryo but cells extracted from the lungs of an embryo, which is a very different thing."

Like many Haitians under the regime of dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, François and Allie dreamed of going to North America. A Montréal Haitian they met by chance in a travel agency at the beginning of 1986 promised them \$7,000 and false immigration papers for Canada if they each gave a kidney. "Anyway, you have one too many," he told them.

From Port-au-Prince to Miami

Landed in Miami without being told where they were, they were taken at night to a mysterious clinic and then separated. Allie, who does not speak a word of English, was abandoned without any money, without papers or baggage and with no address in the downtown area. A week later, she found François. He had been operated on the day before, and his scar was bleeding. He, of course, had neither money or immigration papers.

Despite the "advice" of doctors, François decided to alert the US police. Shortly afterward, a car ran him over on the sidewalk and sped away. He was killed on the spot. Many Haitians have had the same experience. More than 150 of them, according to an investigation carried out by two US journalists for the *Pittsburgh Press*, and which was published in the March 30, 1986, issue of the paper.

Few of the "volunteers" have received

the promised money. The conduit formed by voodoo priests, doctors and traffickers leads to Miami, to Montréal and maybe Québec City, sometimes even Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. That is where Estelle, a 14-year-old girl from Cap-Haïtien, ended up. She was contacted by a medical team that asked her to participate in a research program at the Haiti National University in Port-au-Prince. She was promised a return ticket to the city and \$20. When she woke up in the hospital, she had only one kidney left. The other one was to be sold for \$13,000 in the United States.

"Our notions of death differ"

According to two Haitian doctors, at the beginning of the 1980s in Haiti at least two or three non-consenting donors a month were operated on without knowing what was happening. Some died, and 60 per cent of the survivors that these practitioners have been able to examine since suffered from grave post-operative infections.

"In Haiti, where the highest members of the government are implicated in one way or another, making any public statement would mean signing your own death warrant," the two doctors noted, explaining that they preferred to remain anonymous.

In April 1987, a team of doctors from the Brazilian university medical center in Taubate, near São Paulo was accused by Mr. Kalume, the former director of the department of medical sciences at the university, of having "prematurely shortened" the sufferings of five comatose patients in order to take their organs, without asking authorization from their families. "Our notions of death differ," Mr. Kalume said ironically. He added with a certain sense of understatement: "Not everything was done to keep the patients alive."

The mother of a comatose teenager who subsequently died reports that the doctors had asked her permission to take corneas from her child, who "suffered from visual problems." When she refused, they took the corneas plus her son's kidneys and liver without informing her. Knowing that she was illiterate, they asked her to sign a paper giving her agreement. In total, the investigation cited seven suspect deaths, and 11 doctors will be charged. The profits from the sale of kidneys to rich clients of São Paulo clinics "were divided between the doctors and the clinic," one of the more indiscreet surgeons, Henrique Torrecillas, explained.

Because of the enormous risks involved, everything would be a lot simpler if the donors came forward on their own. On August 2, 1981, in the "advertising section" of the big Brazilian weekly *O Globo*, an apparently innocent notice appeared. "Zinda Tolentino wants to sell one of her kidneys." Questioned by TV reporters, she explained calmly that she needed money urgently. In Brazil, where three quarters of the popula-

tion live below the poverty line, she is not the only one.

In the following weeks, hundreds of similar ads appeared in the Brazilian papers. Roque, who is unemployed, wants to make the payments on his apartment and pay for pilot training for his son. "They call me crazy," he says indignantly. "What is crazy is when your son cannot get an education. What is crazy is the cost of living today."

Doubtless, to assure respect for this "right," several businessmen have even tried to gain official status for this unspeakable trade. Seeing the 1974 floods in Bangladesh on TV and the thousands of "wasted" bodies, Dr. H. Barry Jacobs in Reston, Virginia, wrote in February 1983 to the Federal Food and Drug Administration, the body in charge of all health inspection, to get authorization to import organs and launch his little business — International Kidney Exchange Ltd. He offers \$10,000 for a kidney taken from living person, who is to give written consent in full knowledge of what is involved. If the persons involved cannot read and write, their agreement will be recorded on tape.

No federal law bans such traffic

"Having only one kidney does not have a major effect on the health of the donor," the expert says. "The other takes over about 70% of the function of the missing kidney." In his defense, Dr. Jacobs notes that no federal law bans such traffic. And even if it did, Mr. Merryman of the American Association of Tissue Banks predicts that "at the end of the decade the trade will be so extensive that the law will not be able to prevent abuses."

Showing an admirable concern, some doctors are worried that only rich people can afford a kidney and that "companies are engaging in the organ business without taking precautions." Last year, Hajo Harms, a German businessman resident in Aix-la-Chapelle, offered to buy kidneys in the third world, paying donors \$5,000 and then selling them in West Germany.

Mr. Harms was universally condemned by his compatriots. "It is monstrous," it was said for example in the German Committee for Organ Transplants, "for well-off nations to profit from the poverty of developing countries."

The project of Aidan Ving, the Canadian business man who advocates reestablishing the rules of free trade in the sale of organs, is even simpler. A broker will buy your organs while you are alive, promising not to take possession until your death. Like Dr. Faust, you will be asked only for a little signature at the bottom of the contract.

Is not everyone free, according to sacrosanct liberal law, to do what they want? In this case, the poor are free to sell themselves a piece at a time and to die by inches, while the rich are free to use this to extend their lives. ★

“Don’t come home without Solidarnosc!”

WOMEN made up the majority of the strikers at the Szczecin Departmental Public Transport Depot (WPKM) during the recent strikes in Poland (see IV 147 and 148). For once this led the editors of the bulletin *Kurier Strajkowy* — edited by the central strike committee at Szczecin (composed of nine men) — to devote an article to the women strikers in issue number 9 on August 28.

IN THE tram depots, the majority of workers are women. We do not know if this made it easier for the government to decide to “pacify” the strikes there. In any case, it only underlines the barbarous character of the police action. Perhaps these gentlemen thought that their job would be easier if they attacked women.

To their cost, in the depots at Niemierzyn and Golecin, they quickly found that they had made a mistake. The uniforms and the threatening weapons did not scare the women. The police had to carry them out of the depots. Often, several of the armed chaps were necessary to drag the tram drivers away. Such battles are really degrading for the people’s government. But even Gandhi would have been proud of these women fighters.

Celina Mosa was involved in the strike from the beginning. She was a member of the strike committee at Niemierzyn, and also involved in the aid and information centre, where she and some friends organized groups of strikers coming from the depots occupied by the police. And today? She is, of course, in the place where the strike is continuing, the Dabie depot in Struga road.

What do their families say about it? “Our families have been exemplary. My son Arthur has nearly learnt to cook, he does the shopping and the housework. He even looks after the dog — he says. He has visited me here before and still comes. He understands that I have to do this.

“But everything’s not rosy all the time and everywhere. Often, at the beginning, some young women came to see their striking husbands in tears to argue with them. There were tears and shouting. It was necessary to explain to them, convince them. You are not going to believe me, but today it is often the same women visiting the strikers who shout: ‘Don’t come home without Solidarnosc!’”

The men are active around “men’s” questions — negotiations with the managers, the dialogue. Eugeniusz Gierczak cites a curious fact: the official unions are involved in the mediation commission as

representatives of...the management.

“They have not noticed this — what can you call it? — this impropriety, and history will have an official account of the discussions between the workers and the management, supported by these so-called ‘unions’. How are they going to get out of that one? But, in any event, their president Marian Kowalewski takes the side of the police in the attacks against strikers...” The president of the strike committee, Romuald Ziolkowski, and Miroslaw Kedzierski emphasized the political maturity of the strikers: “They are prepared to sacrifice other questions on the altar of pluralism. Wages are not the only things at stake. They can see the problems of retired people, of healthworkers and others.”

“We’ll end up in the same cell”

And do they appreciate the real value of the role of women? “Men? Of course,” Celina replies. “If they still want a bit of order around them. It’s important when so many people are concentrated in such a small space. But it’s understandable. My male friends tell me: ‘Don’t worry, we’ll manage to end up in the same cell’.”

The Dabie depot is the last stronghold of the WPKM strike, the strongest. There are people from all the depots there; the stories and impressions run together. “Talk to Maryla Pozniak from Pogodno. She is really somebody! She was in the strike at the ZBKol workplace all night long. When the strike began to falter, she ran to the aid centre and found 15 people there. She explained, encouraged. The workers were impressed by this small blond [sic] who had left two children at home. The next day, there were several dozen occupying the workplace. And from Niemierzyn there’s Wanda Jarocka, whose child has to look after itself at home. Or there’s Ewa Walicka, a real spark of good humour, who raises everyone’s morale. Nobody knows when she sleeps and nobody has ever heard her complain about being tired.”



Among the WPKM’s demands there is one that only concerns women: the demand for them to have a six-hour working day with eight hours pay. “Six hours a day? I think that ought to go without saying,” says Celina. “I would prefer not to have to work and look after children in addition, like my grandmother. I often work from 4.00 in the morning to 5.00 in evening. And after that there’s still the shopping, running to the house like a beast of burden to prepare next day’s meal, a little sleep and then back to work again. Where’s the place for children in that? Are our wage demands absurd? I admit that I get over 70,000 zlotys a month for 280 hours work, and the whole lot goes on food.

“I never realized how strong the human body could be. I have just had a gynaecological operation. I must not catch a cold, or go swimming, although I love that. I was in hospital all summer. My friends knew about it and at the beginning they went easy on me. And after? The cold nights, the tiredness...The first four nights I must have slept for an hour and a half at the outside. I don’t even use the vibramycine that they prescribed for me.”

Finally, we visited the improvised chapel in the depot’s vehicle wash. The cross in front of a bus, the flower-bedecked altar, a candelabra in the shape of a “V” made out of two pistons. Father Marian, who often visits the strikers and comes from the Słoneczne neighbourhood church, has already announced that later on he will find a choice spot for the candelabra. Prayers and a mass are held every day in this chapel. Songs and guitar music can also be heard there, thanks to frequent visits from young people from Oaza in the neighbourhood.

Celina Mosa doesn’t often go to these singalongs. “Some songs — above all *The Black Virgin* — make me cry and I have to leave when I feel my eyes filling with tears”.

But, as we already know, for the women of WPKM this is not a sign of weakness. ★