

# International VIEWPOINT

Issue 161

April 17, 1989

£0.85; \$2; C\$2.75; 12FF

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**International VIEWPOINT**

A fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in conjunction with the French language *Inprecor*, which appears on alternate fortnights.

All editorial and subscription correspondence should be mailed to: International Viewpoint, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France.

Published by Presse-Edition-Communication (PEC). Directeur de publication: Christian Lamotte. Commission paritaire: 64324. ISSN: 0294-2925. Imprimé par Rotographie.

International Viewpoint is catalogued by the US Alternative Press Index.

● News closing date: April 10, 1989

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# Soviet elections get out of hand

THE ELECTIONS for the Congress of People's Deputies on March 26 marked an important turning point in the USSR. There was a significant step forward in the politicization of the broad masses. The top echelons of the nomenklatura suffered a political defeat of unforeseen dimensions. The democratization process, although certainly still very partial, has gone one stage further.

ERNEST MANDEL

IT IS NOT YET possible to make a complete assessment of the electoral results. But the information available from various Soviet sources and from Western press correspondents in the USSR is already impressive:

☆ Thirty-four out of 150 regional secretaries of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) were defeated.

☆ A candidate member of the Political Bureau, Yuri Solovyev, was defeated in Leningrad.

☆ Also in Leningrad, the three other "supreme chiefs" of the bureaucracy were beaten, notably the mayor and the first secretary of the CPSU in the town — the latter by an ordinary worker from the naval shipyards.

☆ The oldest member of the Politburo and head of the bureaucracy in the Ukraine, Vladimir Shcherbitsky, the only candidate in the workers' stronghold of Dnepropetrovsk, had his name crossed out by 27% of the electors.

☆ In Zhitomir, an independent journalist, Alla Yaroshinskaya, won out over four party candidates.

## "Conservative" bastion demolished

☆ In Lvov, the capital of the Western Ukraine, independent groups that were unable to run candidates called for crossing out the names of the CPSU candidates. Three of these candidates failed to get 50% of the vote.

☆ In Moldavia, independent intellectuals beat most of the party leaders.

☆ In Byelorussia, considered a bastion of the "conservatives," and where there was only one candidate everywhere, the candidates registered all failed to get 50% of the vote, thereby making necessary a second round.

☆ In Armenia, the official press estimates that 53% of the voters cast ballots in Erevan (as against an average of 85% for the Soviet Union). But independent observers maintain that there was massive fraud, and that more than 50% of the voters heeded the call of the Karabakh Committee for boycotting the elections. This action was taken to press the demand for release of the 11 arrested members of the Committee, several of whom wanted to run in the elections and had a good chance of being elected.

☆ In Kirghizia, the apparatus candidates failed to win in the first round and are poorly placed to win in the second. One of them was beaten by *Izvestia's* local correspondent.

☆ In Volgograd, an ultra-conservative writer backed by the party and the extreme right group Pamyat was beaten by an unknown young Komsomol (Communist Youth) candidate.

☆ In Kiev, the third largest city of the USSR, the party chief Masik was edged out, along with the mayor.

☆ In Yaroslavl, where there was an important strike last year, the party candidate, General Snetkov, was beaten by a lieutenant colonel who proposed that students be exempted from military service.

☆ In Lithuania, the radical-democratic, nationalist mass movement Sajudis won 30 out of 42 seats. The president of the SSR and the prime minister, who opposed this movement, were not elected.

## People's Front victory in Estonia

☆ In Estonia, the party chief was only elected with the support of the People's Front, which won 15 of the 23 seats decided in the first round of the elections.

☆ In Latvia, the prime minister was beaten by a television journalist.

☆ In Tomsk, Siberia, more than 50% of the electorate crossed out the name of the sole candidate on the ballot.

☆ Important military chiefs — such as the admiral of the northern fleet, the head of the Soviet Army in East Germany and the KGB chief in Estonia — were defeated.

☆ In Moscow, the mayor and the party's second secretary bit the dust.

☆ In a series of constituencies, "reform" candidates are in a good position for the second round: notably the long-time pro-Khrushchevian dissident, historian Roy Medvedev; the prosecutor Gdlian, who led the inquiry against the Brezhnev family; the philosopher Atzhin; and the economists Emelianov and Oleg Bogomolov.

☆ The most spectacular result was obviously the veritable referendum in favour of Boris Yeltsin, who won 89.4% of the vote in the whole of Moscow (a national-territorial rather than a local district), that is, 5.1 million votes. And this was after the Central Committee decided to start disciplinary proceedings against him.



Three myths were given their *coup de grace* by these election results. The first is that *glasnost*, democratization, is of interest only to the intellectuals. It is clear that the toiling masses, first of all the working class, used them as a means of expressing their discontent.

The German weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* reports in its April 3 issue that at a demonstration for Yeltsin, shouts broke out of "We want the heads of the mafia of bureaucrats!" Red flags were waved. An elderly woman shouted, "Why, this is a bit like 1917, minus the soldiers and sailors." The British *Sunday Times* (April 2) wrote: "One can no longer contrast the independence of mind shown for years by many Soviet intellectuals with the apathy and conformism of the workers. Millions of Soviet citizens have become serious actors on the political scene, for the first time since the years immediately following the revolution."

### Results were not a setback for Gorbachev

The second myth swept away was the so-called contrast between the minority nationalities and Russia, which was supposed to be a bastion of conformism and conservatism. The elections in Moscow and Leningrad have shown that it is not at all like this.

The third is that the democratization process underway was tightly controlled, manipulated and channeled by Gorbachev. All you need to do is study the instructions given by Politburo members before the elections and the commentaries of Gorbachev himself to see that things to a large extent went over his head.

Does that mean that the elections were a setback for Gorbachev? That is obviously not true. His "centrist," or more accurately Bonapartist, position has rather been strengthened for the immediate future by the appearance of a more radical and massive left confronting the conservative right. In the medium term, everything depends on the breadth of mass mobilization and mass discontent. So, we should remain cautious.

If Sakharov is also finally elected to represent the Academy of Sciences, which will be decided in a few days, that will mean that two leaders of the opposition will enter the parliament.

For the USSR, the least that can be said, is that this is a first. And regardless of the fact that the positions of most of the oppositionists elected are still vague and not very political, three general progressive threads emerge from the programs of many of them, especially Yeltsin and Sakharov — against privileges for the bureaucracy, for more equality (Sakharov calls for free food coupons for the poorest 40% of the population); for opening up a debate on the multiplication of political platforms and the possibility of a multi-party system. ★

# New advance for Baltic movements, Sajudis' perspectives

**FOR THE FIRST TIME, the Communist Party has been put in a minority in formally sovereign republics of the Soviet Union. In all three Baltic republics, the national-democratic People's Fronts won landslide victories. (The relationship of forces is a bit less clear in Estonia, where the local CP and Front are in an alliance, but it seems clear that the Front is the predominant political force.)**

This points to a victory of the fronts in the fall elections to the republic Supreme Soviets, which would give them formal power. The Lithuanian Front, Sajudis, won three quarters of the seats in the March 26 elections for the Congress of People's Deputies.

The Baltic fronts are mass movements that proved their capacity for mobilizing the great majority of the Baltic peoples before the election, as in the campaign against amendments to the Soviet constitution that would have eliminated the republics' formal sovereignty. It is harder, however, to get information about the Baltic fronts than the opposition in the Soviet capitals, and for that reason the following interview has a special interest.

Even in Latvia, where Latvians are only just about half of the population, the People's Front won a substantial majority of the seats. In the Latvian capital Riga, where there is a Russian-speaking majority, the candidate of a party advocating immediate independence won 34% of the vote against the republic's first secretary, who squeaked in with only 51% of the vote.

The biggest winner was Sajudis. This movement has been coming increasingly into conflict with the reform party leadership headed by Brazauskas since the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet rejected changes to the republican constitution to confirm legal sovereignty. The amendments were patterned on those adopted in Estonia but rejected by the central authorities. So, the decision of the party leaders in Lithuania was seen as a betrayal of the Estonians. Nonetheless, Sajudis finally withdrew its candidate against Brazauskas, and supported him.

It seems clear that many Russian-speaking people voted for the People's Front candidates. In fact, if there were not considerable sympathy with the Baltic democratic movements among the dominant nationality and other peoples in the Soviet Union, they could hardly have survived and grown. But the unionist "Internationalist" fronts had some successes in attracting the votes of Russians and other non-Baltic minorities. In Lithuania, there is an important Polish minority in the Vilnius area in particular. That city was seized by Poland after the first world war. In the second world war period, the Polish nationalist resistance, the *Armia Krajowa* (AK) tried to hold it for Poland.

In its February 5 issue, the Polish Catholic paper *Tygodnik Powszechny*, a semi-independent institution, published an interview with Vytautas Landsbergis, the chair of Sajudis. It was censored in some places. The following is a somewhat shortened translation.



Lithuanian nationalists in Kaunas on their first legal Independence Day (DR)

**W**HAT social layers make up the core of the movement that you lead? Do they include individual party members? Are you a member of the Communist Party?

I am not, and have never been a member of the party. But in the movement, and even in the initiative group, individual party members have been active. The movement was formed by groups of progressive intellectuals, mainly intellectuals and pro-reform circles in the party.

■ That reminds me of the symbolic years, 1956 and 1968 [i.e., the rise of opposition in Poland in those years].

We include mainly city people. On the other hand, the middle level of the local party bodies, the bureaucratic "new class," is against *perestroika*. Years ago, Gorbachev talked about this to the people of Krasnodar, calling on them to support his activity at the top with revolution from below.

■ How many people belong to Sajudis?

I can't say. Estimates run from 100,000 to 500,000. Up until now, we have not established formal membership. We do not want to create a new bureaucratized structure. We rely on social initiative. But we are now registering our supporters. We had to make that decision because of the threat of provocations and the attribution to us of actions contrary to our program and methods of struggle. We have to have the capacity to distance ourselves from actions conflicting with our aims.

On many questions, a definite majority

of the population support us. For example, in a week we collected 1,800,000 signatures for a protest against the proposed changes in the [USSR] constitution. To take the petitions to the Kremlin, we needed to charter a whole train.

■ In fact, that is equal to the adult population of the Lithuanian nation. Could you summarize the most important planks of your program.

Our highest aim is to achieve sovereignty for Lithuania, which need not at all automatically mean leaving the Soviet Union. The Western European countries are tending to become more and more closely integrated. It is possible that the USSR can be transformed into the sort of community that we would voluntarily accept. In the introduction to our program, we said explicitly that Stalin's deals with Hitler in 1939 were unjust. In the same way, we analyze all the consequences of these deals.

We consider that the foundation of Lithuanian sovereignty is having our own economy. Our economy must be an organism completely separate from the center and able to stand on its own feet. Exchange must be fair, regulated by agreements freely entered into in accordance with market mechanisms.

■ Is that possible?

It has to be. The economic machine is already in a morass, and only a radical restructuring can get it out of that. These reforms will not weaken the Soviet Union but give it dynamism. Only the power of the central bureaucracy will be weakened.

We place a high value on defending the environment. It is in a catastrophic situa-

tion. "Lithuania, you were like health," we should say.<sup>1</sup> We are also concerned with increasing the prestige of the Lithuanian language and culture in our republic.

■ In the November issue of *Atgimimas* ["Rebirth," the central publication of Sajudis], however, I read that the introduction of the Lithuanian language as the state language in Lithuania and of the traditional flag lost its luster because of the rejection by the Supreme Soviet of Lithuania of the proposed amendments to the republic constitution, which would have guaranteed greater sovereignty.

Of course, a precondition for real sovereignty is legal and economic independence; everything else is just gestures. We also demand that the Catholic Church take its proper place in social life, that it regain its property and internal autonomy.

■ Is there also a coalition of opposition centers grouped around the

1. This is a paraphrase of the famous introduction to the long poem *Pan Tadeusz* by the Polish national poet, Adam Mickiewicz, who wrote in the first half of the nineteenth century: "Lithuania, my fatherland, you are like health, only one who has lost you can truly appreciate you." Mickiewicz was born in Lithuania, and in this case used its name as a code word for Poland, to make the Czarist censors think that he was celebrating what at the time was considered only a region. Lithuanian nationalism, as distinct from Polish, arose only in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Lithuania was part of the medieval Polish commonwealth, and the upper classes were Polish or "Polonized."

### Church, as there is in Poland?

The Church is an important moral and national force. In the 1940s and 1950s, as at the beginning of the century, it was the sole bulwark of Lithuanian dignity. But we cannot speak of a coalition around the Church. The Church goes along with us, and we with it. Our roots, however, are distinct.

Sajudis is a lay and liberal movement. We look to the tradition of *Varpasu*, a liberal journal published at the end of the nineteenth century. In the traditional Lithuanian anthem, there is no concept of God, because it is an anthem for everyone. In the inter-war period, clericalists tried on several occasions to introduce the word "God" into the anthem, but they never succeeded.

We defend and will continue to defend the demands of believers. They are a considerable majority of the nation, and their right to religious freedom is an essential element in the democratic syndrome. I am thinking of human and civil rights. We are fighting for the full realization of these rights, and also for the right of associations of citizens to free educational and cultural activity.

We protest against the state pushing atheistic propaganda down the throats of people. We have the moral support and sympathy of Cardinal Sladkevicius, who once said: "We thought that we were the last [Lithuanians], and it has become clear that the nation lives!"

### ■ Speaking of Lithuanian sovereignty, are you thinking of a separate citizenship, currency, army?

At present, we are not thinking about a separate currency, although we foresee such a possibility in our program. A separate citizenship has already been introduced. We also see the need for the republic authorities to take control of the influx of immigrant labor to work in factories located on Lithuanian territory.

We demand that all citizens of Lithuania — Lithuanians as well as Russians and Poles — have the opportunity to do their military service in their own country, if, of course, they do not themselves express a desire to go outside, for example to special units, schools and services.

### ■ Has this demand been influenced by the blood shed by your boys in Afghanistan?

Yes, but not only that. We were also afraid of the moral degradation to which Lithuanian youth were exposed. [Censored.]

### ■ Listening to your program, I wondered about the means of achieving it.

We reject rebellions, force and mass disobedience. We operate officially and openly. That is the basis of our strength.

■ Can you exclude the possibility of a police attack on your legal meetings? A Byelorussian demonstration was broken up in October. Earlier, all the official press and personalities condemned the Stalinist crimes revealed after the discovery of the mass graves at Kuropaty. Young Byelorussians only wanted to pay homage to the memory of the hundreds of thousands of victims in their traditional Forefathers' Eve processions.

**"We are trying to realize Gorbachev's idea...we are not anti-party"**

Nothing like that has happened here yet. The course of events will depend on the relations between our movement and the authorities and on the general situation in the USSR. The new constitution gives the government the right to declare a state of emergency. The fact that they can do this does not mean that they will.

■ You said that you look to liberal thought. But within the framework of this current, you can find the concept of "civil disobedience."

Of course, it has to be acknowledged that sometimes we resort to such means. At a mass meeting on July 9, we called for a boycott of *Tiesa* (the Lithuanian *Pravda*). People generally stopped buying the paper. Even newspaper sellers warned customers "you shouldn't buy this paper." After a few weeks, the editor-in-chief was removed. His successor stopped publishing tendentious letters from "shocked readers."

The Greens have called for a boycott of milk and dairy products as well as of polluted fruit. More than half of the milking herds should be slaughtered, because they are diseased and infect consumers.

■ That is incredible in a Lithuania



famous for its agriculture.

Recently, especially after the demonstration against deputies to the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet for rejecting the proposed amendments to the republic constitution, the official press has started to accuse the movement of trying to hide behind the slogan of *perestroika*. But we are trying to realize Gorbachev's idea. It is not we who are anti-party, but rather the egotistical group of conservatives in the bureaucratic structures.

■ Do you see your movement as a continuation of the dissidents?

No! That was a totally different stage and different political sectors. The idea of restructuring was formulated officially, at the top. We are supporters of it. We represent the aspirations of the great majority of the nation. The dissidents were individual protestors. That is the fundamental difference.

■ You operate through mass actions and a mass press. Could you describe how you do that.

We are still using the TV. We have two hours a week, usually broadcast live. Our congress was also broadcast over two days, without any cuts. (It is true that after the outbreak of the conflict over the proposed changes in the republic constitution, our air time was taken away.) Our press is legal, but not censored. Now they are beginning to talk about this.

The central organ of Sajudis is *Atgimimas*. We have started with a press run of 100,000 copies. Today, the Lithuanian edition is 100,000 and the Russian one, 20,000. Local councils of Sajudis put out their own publications, for example, *Kauno Aidas* ["Kaunas Echo"] and *Sajudzio Zinios* ("Sajudis News"). Of course, we have printing problems, but up until now we have overcome them.

■ You say you are a self-limiting revolution. What are the limits?

We are accused of wanting too much too soon. That is untrue. We only want more and faster. The limits are the following: no acts of violence, watching out for provocateurs, always operating openly and in accordance with the law. We believe that constant mass pressure and the will of the society will prove effective.

■ Do you think that the Lithuanians betrayed the Estonians?

The Lithuanians, on the whole, fully support the Estonians and their Supreme Soviet. We issued such statements on our own account, and published them in our press. Only the Supreme Soviet of Lithuania did not accept the constitutional amendments. Violating the formal procedures, it did not submit them to a vote. We were for accepting the principle that all-Union laws would only

be binding if they were in agreement with the Lithuanian constitution. The crowd that gathered in front of the Supreme Soviet building denounced the deputies for betrayal. As a protest, the Sajudis delegation left the Supreme Soviet chamber early. We were accused of agitating people [Censored.]

■ **You mentioned a boycott of agricultural products. Tell us about the situation in the countryside.**

We see a need for restructuring relations in the countryside. The local authorities have total power over the collective farmers. Local functionaries can reject products necessary for husbandry, even refuse to agree to the sale of pigs raised on the collective farms.

■ **I did not believe it when a professor at a Soviet institute told me that the chair of a *kolkhoz* [collective farm] in Byelorussia fined people caught speaking Lithuanian.**

You have to remember that the country people are still marked by the bitterest sort of experience of the collectivization and the guerrilla war [which continued against Soviet forces until the end of the 1940s at least]. The Lithuanian countryside is in a deeply depressed social state, which is expressed by general alcoholism. Every day, farmers see the futility of their labor and the hopelessness of their existence. They see the constant degradation of the soil. This is an unbearable experience. Intellectuals can always find some useful occupation. Peasants cannot.

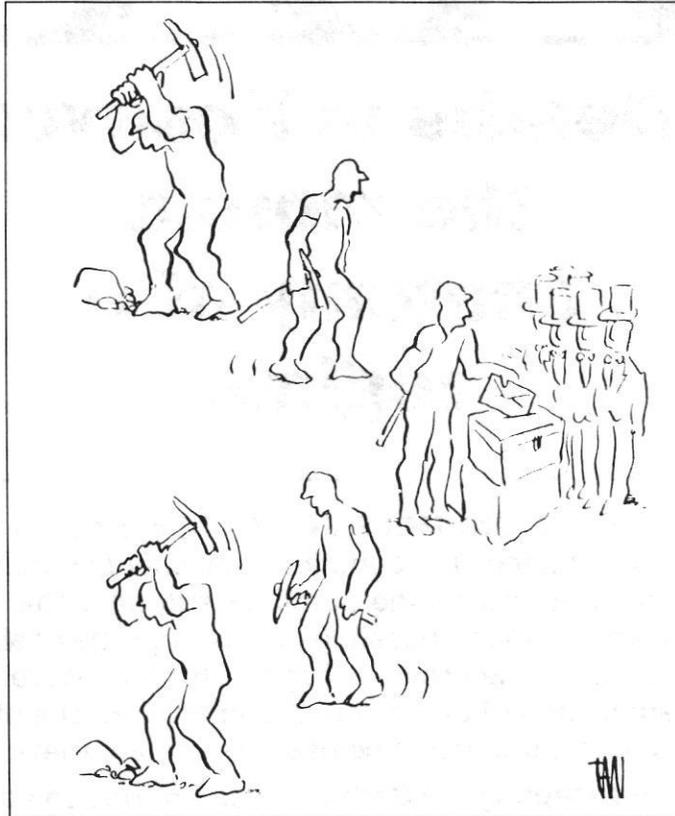
■ **The Polish October [1956] brought massive dissolution of the collective farms and at the same time rehabilitation of some members of the AK. Is there a new view of the guerrillas in Lithuania?**

In the discussions on drawing up the Sajudis' program, we posed the demand for characterizing the guerrillas as a national-liberation formation. This idea is just starting to catch on. It would be wrong, however, not to recognize that over time the forest units often turned into ordinary bandit groups. The war was transformed into a civil war and then into vendettas, vengeance on families.

Today, when the whole truth is beginning to be written, it is becoming clear that the view that the pro-Soviet side had a monopoly on nobility and heroism does not stand up. Symptomatically, songs are being sung only about "the forest brothers," and not about those who fell defend-

ing the Soviet regime.

■ **Let us talk about Polish-Lithuanian relations. There are more and more reports about anti-Polish incidents. Your countrymen are supposed to have thrown eggs at the Mickiewicz monument. The slogan "Send the Jews to Israel, the Russians to Russia and the Poles to the crematorium" is supposed to have been written on Vilnius Cathedral.**



I don't know anything about the Mickiewicz monument. That damaging slogan did in fact appear, not on the walls of the cathedral but on a sign at a rally. The people themselves ripped it up, when they saw what it was. In our press, we protested against this provocation. We have no doubt that it was a provocation.

■ **"National mythologies still condition relations with Poles"**

I am astonished that Poles don't see that. Your press jumps on that sort of thing. It is a shame that it does not look for those who are really responsible. Lithuanians have been very much aggrieved by a series of such unjust accusations. Prejudices created by such reports make it hard for you to see what is really happening in Lithuania.

■ **What is Sajudis' attitude to the national minorities in Lithuania?**

Our program devotes a lot of attention to the minorities. We recognize the right of minorities to their own languages and their own national identity. We would like to help the minorities, especially the Poles, practice their own culture. We consider that the minorities should have their own schools or classes in their own language, associations and so on. We think the possibility should be created for members of national minorities to study the Lithuanian language, in order to facilitate their full participation in the social life of the republic and access to higher studies.

The minority circles should recognize the territorial integrity of the Lithuanian republic. Today, Lithuanian Poles do not even want to read the Lithuanian press.

■ **Is it true that Poles generally sympathize with Edinstvo ["Unity"], the organization of the local Russians?**

The Poles have a lot of problems. Edinstvo is an artificial creation. Most of its slogans have been taken from Sajudis. I think that the Polish workers support Edinstvo not so much out of internationalist sympathies but out of a hereditary fear of Lithuanians.

If the majority of Vilnius Poles go into Edinstvo, that would be a big political mistake. It would revive the Polish-Lithuanian conflict, and the final result would be to speed up the Russification of the Polish community.

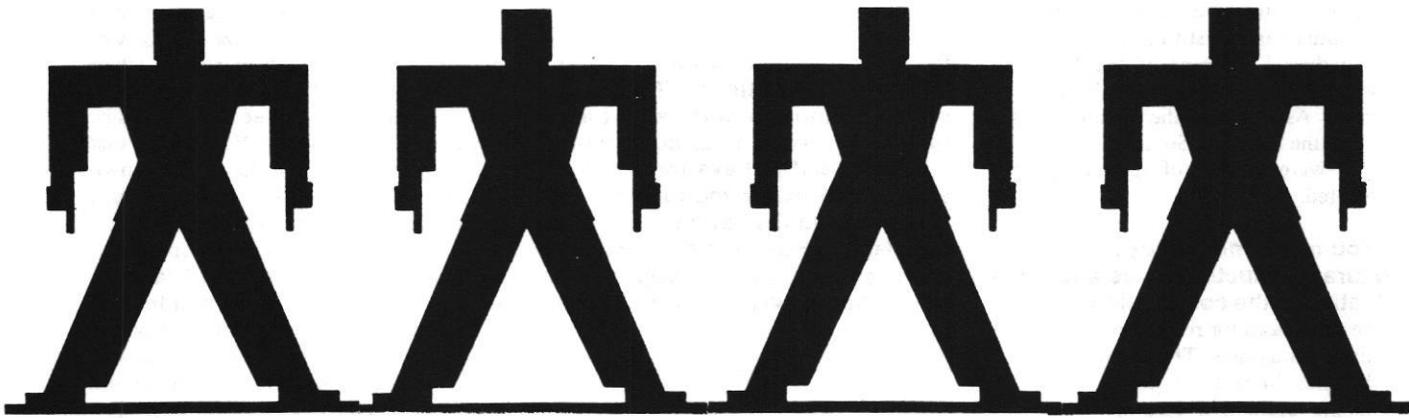
■ **How do your countrymen see us Poles?**

National mythology still conditions this, on both sides. In general, we are suspicious. We wonder what you are thinking of in the cult of Lithuania [as part of the golden age of medieval Poland]. What do these images of the Ostrobrama Madonna [the patron saint of Vilnius] in Polish homes mean? What menace lurks in these memorials to the Vilnius AK in Warsaw churches? Do you realize that the partisans you so honor have a bad reputation among Lithuanians?

■ **Does Poland have a special meaning for Lithuanians?**

Of course, Poland is our only neighbor [outside the USSR]. From the historical standpoint also, you have a special meaning for us, even if it is a bit ambiguous.

For myself and my colleagues, Poland has been and is a window on the world. In Poland, we find books from which we can find out about Europe. We can see art exhibitions, hear concerts, see foreign newspapers. Poles can also inform Europe about us and our problems. You could write about and analyze our problems. ★



**T**HE SERBIAN authorities struck a high-pitched note, accusing the Albanians of wanting to carry out a "counter-revolutionary secession" and "genocide" against the Slavic minorities in Kosovo. But neither of these accusations can be taken seriously. If the Albanians really wanted to secede, that would be their right. But they have never wanted that up until now.

Quite simply, Albania is not attractive for them, neither economically, nor politically nor even culturally (in particular since religious rights are denied in Albania but not in Yugoslavia). But it is clear that if this anti-Albanian repression continues, that attitude could change, with every justification.

As for the use of the term "genocide," this is a scandalous device for camouflaging the real reason for the exodus of Slavic families from Kosovo. They are leaving mainly for economic reasons. For example, Kosovo has 40% unemployed, as opposed to less than 2% in Slovenia. But they are also leaving for cultural reasons. The province, which they no longer dominate, has in reality been Albanianized. Wanting to forcibly bring back the Serbian past today means oppressing a nationality that makes up 90% of the population of this territory, and which has every reason to demand full control of it.

Yugoslavia is suffering from an accumulation of the evils of the market (increasing unevenness between regions) and of bureaucracy (waste of the resources redistributed). Thus, every nationality, rich or poor, feels "exploited" and hard done by the others. The rise of chauvinist nationalism was stimulated, moreover, by the repressive turn in the 1970s, which not only put an end to the Croatian nationalist movement

## Deaths in Kosovo: the morbid anatomy of a regime

**THE AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE of Kosovo has "ratified" the constitutional changes that re-centralize all the Serbian territories. This vote was made possible only by a purge of all those in the provincial apparatus who were suspected of being "too Albanian," dozens of deaths, the presence of tanks and a curfew.**

**In accepting the Serbian re-centralization at the expense of the Kosovo Albanians and Vojvodina [an autonomous province distinguished by large non-Serbian national minorities], the federal apparatus hopes to limit the Serbian demands. But behind the Kosovo drama, the entire Yugoslav system is in crisis.**

CATHERINE VERLA

but also to the rise of internationalist movements hostile to the market reform and which supported working-class demands against it. The possibility of a democratic and socialist alternative to the regime was throttled, profoundly transforming the League of Communists and the state apparatus.

However, Tito combined this repression with increased national rights, which the Serbs resent as unjust but which are supported by the Albanians, along with the

Croats and Slovenes. The Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic's shameful "victory" is going to lead the Serbian government down a blind alley and force the Yugoslav federation to make a choice.

The deplorable rejoicing of the Serbian population celebrating the bloody re-centralization of the republic will turn sour when it becomes clear that the emperor Milosevic has no clothes. What program, what solutions does he offer, except anti-Albanian racism and populist verbiage, except the primrose paths of the free markets?

The "national unity" that has formed behind him is profoundly heterogeneous, and will undoubtedly break up in the first tests, as soon as the Albanian bogeyman is no longer there to unite the ranks. From neo-Stalinism to the primitive anti-Communism of the pro-royalist Great Serbian nationalist currents, including populist attempts to tap the struggle against the bureaucracy (of the other republics) — Milosevic has drawn a motley, very fragile coalition behind him.

As for the federal apparatus, it has gotten caught up in a process that is rebounding against its objective of trying to avoid a breakup through a rise of Serbian nationalism. The federal police forces that shed blood in

Kosovo are not going to moderate but rather spur on the reactionary Serbian demands.

Moreover, any repressive "solution" to the real danger of an explosion threatens to lead to a civil war that will go beyond the frontiers of Kosovo. Only a radical democratization of Yugoslavia, putting all its nationalities on equal footing and respecting their differences, can prevent a breakup today, or else a military coup d'état that would impose the "arbitration" of the only "Yugoslav" institution, the army. ★

# Last straw for the Albanian people

**F**OR YEARS, the autonomous province of Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians make up 90% of the population (the rest are of Serbian and Montenegrin origin), has been a focus of tensions between Serbs and Albanians. In recent years, the Albanians have been treated like second-class citizens and have faced growing repression resulting from Serbian attempts to reduce Kosovo's autonomy, which was guaranteed by the 1974 constitution. The constitutional changes proposed by the Serbs were the last straw.

A strike started on February 20 in the Trepca mine. Some 1,200 miners swore not to leave the galleries 800 meters under the surface until their demands were met. Despite the poverty in Kosovo, the miners' demands concerned only political problems — opposition to the Serbian strategy to transform Yugoslavia into a Greater Serbia and the pursuance of this strategy through extending the Serbian government's prerogatives over the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo.

## Series of demands raised by miners

The miners demanded the ouster of Rahman Morina, former chief of police and present head of the League of Communists in Kosovo; and two other leaders, Azemi and Shukrija. All three, according to a study by the Slovenian weekly *Mladina* were supported by only 0.1% of the Albanian people. These three leaders favorable to the Serbian policy had replaced three Albanian leaders to whom the Albanian people accorded at least a minimum confidence and whose rehabilitation the protestors demanded. Other demands were also raised:

- That the Yugoslav media stop spreading false stories designed to discredit the Albanian people about a genocide of Serbs and "political rapes." (A study conducted by *Mladina* among the inhabitants of Kosovo showed that only 7.5% of Albanians, as opposed to 60.2% of Serbs and Montenegrins, believed that Albanians were raping Serbian women for political reasons.)

- That the Communist Party leaders accept and acknowledge the fact that the

Albanian demonstrations were not a counter-revolution organized by separatists but a normal reaction to the Serbian oppression that has lasted for eight years. Democracy has not been the same for everyone. The Serbian rallies that have been going on for a year have been portrayed as the height of democracy, whereas similar expressions of the will of the Albanian people have been called "excesses by separatist individuals."

- That the constitutional changes making it possible to deprive Albanians of their flag, their symbols and their language and thereby reducing their autonomy in Serbia be rescinded. Now, according to Article 47 of the Serbian constitution, the Kosovo Assembly has only the right to assent to the decisions taken by the Serbian Assembly.

## General strike met with state of emergency

The protesters have demanded meetings with Serbian leaders, especially with Slobodan Milosevic. But the state showed its cynicism once again. In place of the Serbian leaders concerned and directly responsible for the situation, it was state functionaries who came to negotiate with the miners, proclaiming "here you are, this is what you wanted, the Communist Party has separated itself from the government."

On February 20, the students at the University of Pristina [the capital of Kosovo] locked themselves in the gymnasium and went on strike in solidarity with the miners. The merchants and craftsmen shut their stores. Economic life was paralyzed; a general strike developed.

The government responded by declaring a state of emergency, although this is not something recognized by the Yugoslav constitution, which only has the authority to proclaim a state of war in response to a foreign threat.

Emergency measures to preserve "constitutional order" have been taken. The situation has come to resemble a farce, because the demonstrators do not want to destroy the constitutional state but to preserve it. Every public demonstration has been banned. Military maneuvers are in preparation in Kosovo. Albanian reservists have been called up.

Workers can be fired without any explanation at the slightest suspicion of "counter-revolutionary" activity. Strikers can be conscripted for labor, like military reservists. Military airplanes and helicopters are constantly flying over Pristina. Tanks are moving toward Trepca, Pristina and other big cities.

Military reinforcements and riot police forces are coming from Sumadija in Serbia. The officials in Kosovo and Serbia are accusing the strikers of being manipulated by Albanian nationalist separatists, while for the first time all Yugoslavia can see the real face of the "counter-revolution that threatens the country's social system" — disappointed, exhausted and sick miners,

risking all that they have left, their lives.

An unnamed miner gave an interview after coming out of the mine: "I was down in the pit five days running. The sixth day, I came out to get a breath of air, but I went back immediately. During eight days of the strike, only 30 miners went out, but they all came back very quickly; 1,200 miners did not leave the mine. Most of them had almost nothing to eat...."

"On Friday, February 24, hundreds of miners needed medical help because of respiratory and eye problems. Many will no longer be fit for work. Improvised clinics were set up in the galleries. We set only one condition for coming out of the mine. It was getting rid of Morina, Azemi and Shukrija.

"When they told us that these three leaders had resigned, we decided to come out on condition that no one was arrested. After leaving the mine, everyone was exhausted. That is why we set March 1 as the date to discuss our other demands. We came on Monday [March 1], but the courtyard in front of the mine was full of police. We were told to go home and wait."

On March 2, the police arrested Azem Vllasi, former chief of Kosovo, who had to give up his place to Morina, and some managers. They were accused of organizing counter-revolutionary demonstrations and face the possibility of several years in prison. The "proof" of Vllasi's separatist activity was supposedly his visit to the mine. Arrests are continuing and Kosovo is in the grip of fear.

## Constitutional changes will provoke new protests

As a result of a flood of demands for political asylum from Albanians, West German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has announced that a visa requirement will soon be instituted for Yugoslav citizens. In a meeting with Genscher, Yugoslav minister for foreign affairs Budimir Loncar claimed that Yugoslavia is capable of settling this problem of Albanian political refugees. The state's cynicism points clearly toward a situation where the majority of Albanians will be left without passports.

Morina, Azemi and Shukrija have resigned, but the Kosovo problem remains. The Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic has no interest in yielding to Albanian demands, and most Serbs support him. The governments of the other republics have been intimidated by the pressures of Milosevic's mass politics. In Slovenia, all organizations, associations and enterprises have come out against the institution of the state of emergency. However, in Belgrade, the Slovene delegates distanced themselves from public opinion and backed the Serbian decision. It can be expected that the changes in the constitution will be adopted, and that this will provoke new demonstrations in Kosovo. ★

Nina Jerkic

9

# "Social democratic" model blows up

**"FOR A LONG TIME, the Sandinistas were hard-nosed, dogmatic, totalitarian....Their economy is in ruins. The democratic solution is the only way out." That was the message trumpeted in November by Carlos Andrés Pérez ("CAP"), then presidential candidate of Democratic Action (a party belonging to the Socialist International).**

**He was elected on December 4 with 54% of the vote, as against 43.7% for his Christian Democratic rival Fernandez and 2.7% for the candidate of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), Petkoff. In February, only 25 days after his inauguration, Pérez — called "the great hope of Latin America" — was responsible for the slaughter of more than 500 people who rebelled against his austerity policy.**

**"CAP" doubtless inherited this particular way of "restoring order" from his predecessor, Lusinchi, a member of the same party. In November 1988, the latter's political police (Disip) and army slaughtered 14 fishermen who were accused of "aiding the Colombian guerrillas." In the wake of this, they opened fire on students who were demonstrating to protest against these murders, killing two of them and wounding dozens of others. This, it seems, is what passes for "social democratic" methods in Latin America.**

## SERGIO CABRERA

**I**T WAS all laughs, back slapping, champagne and big promises on February 2 when the president elect was inaugurated. It was a lavish celebration, marked by a week of parties in which millions of dollars were squandered.

Shortly before the December 4 elections, Pérez granted an exclusive interview to *UNO-Review of the Americas*, in which he presented his program in the following terms: "My first measure will be to define an overall economic policy. In order to have an effect on a pluralist and capitalist economy like Venezuela's, it will have to be the product of a concentration of the private economy and of the labor of the workers in the cities and the countryside. On the economic level, my administration will be based on these two sectors."

Asked whether he would maintain "the marked social emphasis" of his previous term as president, Pérez said: "In the present circumstances, there will be serious

financial difficulties, but in any case a social emphasis must be the central axis of any democratic movement." (*UNO* 2, November 1988.)

Obviously, Pérez has a peculiar notion of the "social emphasis" his government is supposed to have. On February 16, exactly two weeks after taking the oath, the "social democratic" president announced his first economic measures — floating the exchange rate for the dollar, opening the way for a devaluation of the bolivar that might exceed 100%, ending controls on interest rates and prices and eliminating subsidies for necessities.

The first symptoms of discontent were the strikes of teachers, court employees and threats of work stoppages in other sectors. But the "sensible" Pérez did not stop there. He could not because of the accords with the IMF. On Monday, February 27, gasoline went up by 90%, transport fares by 30%, and the prices of necessities doubled.

Venezuela exploded with a force unseen for 30 years, since the overthrow of the dictator Pérez Jimenez. It is estimated that more than a million families came onto the streets of Caracas and other cities, sweeping everything before them, storming the supermarkets, burning luxury cars, confronting the police, the National Guard and the army with stones and firearms. It took the forces of order two days to regain control of the situation, after slaughtering 500 people and arresting thousands, by establishing a curfew and suppressing all democratic rights.

## Savage repression meted out by Pérez

The fury against the big stores and shops had a specific cause. At the speed things were moving, Venezuela was on the brink of a breakdown of supply. Knowing that prices were going up, the merchants had hoarded all the products. With his savage repression, the "social democrat" Pérez refreshed the memory of Venezuelans, who had called him "the trigger" at the beginning of his political career when he was minister of the interior in the Romulo Betancourt's government in the early 1960s.

Parallel to these events, the government rushed to offer some wage increases and to announce (and later deny) that it would not pay the foreign debt. It dumped the responsibility for the massive and spontaneous rebellion against its economic program on the developed countries to which Venezuela owes \$32 billion.

What has become of the populist Pérez who governed the country from 1974 to 1976, who nationalized the oil and steel industries and brought a lot of currency into the country? Is this really the same Pérez who today is applying the IMF's savage policy? Certainly he is the same person. The present situation, moreover, is largely due to the policy his government pursued in that period and to that of the following Social Christian government of Luis Herrera Campis (1979-1983). The same policy was continued up until February 2 by President Lusinchi, a member of Pérez' party.

The times are not favorable for populism, as they were in the 1940s and 1950s when the big raw-material producers were able to take advantage of the post-war boom. The heyday of the oil bonanza that Venezuela enjoyed as Latin America's biggest producer has also passed.

At the time of Pérez' inauguration, Spanish premier Felipe Gonzalez compared Venezuela with Nicaragua and Cuba in the following terms: "There are some countries that are working, and others that are not." So, Venezuela was supposed to be a country that was "working."

In what state did Pérez' first administration leave Venezuela? In November 1979, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America published some eloquent facts

about Venezuela in its report entitled "Latin America on the Threshold of the 1980s." For example, 25% of Venezuelan families were below the poverty line. "Relative poverty" (an average level of satisfaction of needs) marked 38% of households. Ten per cent of households got 36% of total income, while the poorest 40% got only 9.8% of income.

This situation has grown worse with the years, and today it is estimated that 1,900,000 homes are "poor," and that 500,000 are unhealthy. Half of the latter are in the gigantic shanty-town belts, the *ranchitos* that surround the cities in the shadow of the the oil magnates' mansions.

In Venezuela, "spectacular" economic growth has never been synonymous with "development" in the broad sense, in terms of not just economic but also social and human aspects, improvement in the quality of life and so on. Venezuela is a clear example of those countries that seek development in the image of the imperialist centers, that adopt "an imitative capitalism of the periphery," that "nationalize dependency," with the process of transnationalization of economic relations.

According to Raul Prebisch in *Latin America in the possible scenarios of a widening income gap*, "the consumer society created by imitative development is incompatible with integrating into the system the vast masses that are vegetating in a society of underconsumption. The cause of this is that the fruits of increased productivity, which accompanies the spread of technologies from the centers to the countries of the periphery, tend to concentrate largely in the higher-income levels, above all because of the economic power of these strata."

### Populist alternatives are fading

Despite the nationalization of hydrocarbons, their sale remains in the hands of multinationals. The irrationality of the first Pérez government and its successors in seeking to channel the considerable income obtained during the oil boom to advance Venezuela toward economic independence has been compounded by indescribable waste, a massive currency flight, and a "Miami"-type life style for some privileged natives. The latter collected the profits, bought homes in the United States, and built luxurious "clubs," arousing stronger and stronger social hostility.

The Venezuelan case is not new in Latin America. We have seen evidence of this in Mexico and Brazil. Populist alternatives are fading; the "democrats" and "social democrats" are showing their true nature, and anger is rising like a wave among the disinherited of Latin America. ★

■ *From the March 9 issue of Combate, newspaper of the LCR, Spanish state section of the Fourth International.*

## UN fails to condemn human rights violations

**FOR THE FIRST time, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights drew up a report on the "disappearances" in Colombia. In preparation for the Forty-Fifth Session of the Commission in Geneva, a Working Group visited Colombia last October and November. On February 6, it submitted a 39-page report in English containing important revelations about the responsibility of the government of Liberal Party president Virgilio Barco Vargas for human rights violations.<sup>1</sup>**

### RODRIGO O'FARREL

**A** CONCLUSION of the report was that "legal protection of citizens against abuses by the public forces seems to have diminished. Thus, the vague provisions of anti-terrorist legislation have increased the phenomenon of disappearances." More precisely, the report recognized that units of the Colombian armed forces have been involved in the disappearances. "After carefully weighing the available material, the Working Group considers that in the majority of known cases there is circumstantial evidence pointing clearly to the participation of units of the armed forces and security services in forcible and involuntary disappearances."

The UN report, which has been largely censored in the Colombian press, notes that



the government has done absolutely nothing to remove functionaries responsible for violating human rights from office and to prosecute them (Point 130 of the report), and it specifically states that the high degree of impunity prevailing in Colombia is one of the major challenges for establishing public confidence in the institutions of the state.

### Over 1,000 political murders in 1988

During the meeting of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, some European governments sharply denounced this state of affairs. Swedish representative Maikael Dahl declared that his government backed the Working Group's recommendations on Colombia, which accept the involvement of the armed forces in the disappearances of citizens but also in extra-judicial executions, as revealed in another report by the same commission drawn up by a special relator (a term for private citizens who initiate public legal proceedings), Amos Wako.

In the latter document, which compiles complaints of illegal executions in 47 countries, the Colombian chapter contains one of the longest lists of recorded violations,

1. The document reference is E/CN.4/1989/18/Add. 1.6 February 1989 — United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, Forty-Fifth Session, agenda item 12.

along with Israel, Iran and Iraq.<sup>2</sup> In Point 80 of the Wako report, it is said that in 1988 more than a thousand people were murdered by members of the Colombian security forces or by paramilitary groups.

Among the security forces accused are the National Police intelligence unit (F-2), the army intelligence division (B-2), the Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence Battalion (BINCI) and regular battalions of the army and regional brigades. The report specifies, moreover, that military and police personnel, as well as civilian auxiliaries, are working in the death squads.

"Many of the victims are trade-union leaders and activists, members of political parties, peasants, human rights advocates, lawyers, judges and journalists."

### Colombian delegation heads off condemnation

The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that attended the Forty-Fifth Session documented their own lists of crimes by official and semi-official bodies in Colombia. Pax Romana spoke of the impunity prevailing in the country, indicated by 14,000 murders on which no court has yet pronounced a verdict. The spokesperson of this agency quoted the testimony of Carlos Eduardo Lozano, a former director of the Instrucción Criminal (Criminal Investigation Bureau), who publicly stated that "sections of the army and the police are sponsoring and covering up the actions of the paramilitaries who have killed thousands of opposition leaders, peasants, unionists, priests and so on."

The Andean Jurists' Commission declared that the Colombian government "has taken laudable steps to strengthen institutions that contribute to maintaining respect for human rights," but that it has "not succeeded in improving the situation."

The World University Service demanded that Virgilio Barco's government repeal Article 10 of Decree-Law 48 (1968) and decree-laws 180, 181 and 182 (1988) "which give aid and comfort to paramilitary actions and restrict fundamental rights, such as that of habeas corpus."

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions complained that the Colombian government "which is so ready to combat the international drug traffic, is not showing the same determination in the fight against violations of human rights."

Similar statements were made by other NGOs, such as the International Labor Organization, Terre des Hommes, and the World Federation of Educational Professionals' Organizations. In all, 12 NGOs took stands on Colombia, demanding the appointment of a special relator to investigate personally what is happening in that country.

In the protocol of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the appointment of a special relator amounts to a condemnation. In

order to forestall such an eventuality, the governments concerned by complaints received during sessions take preventive action. For this reason, the chief of the Colombian delegation, Alvaro Tirado Mejia, advisor to the president on human rights, moved to head off an unfavorable decision for his government by issuing an invitation to Amos Wako to visit the country and make an "on-the-spot" investigation of human rights violations.

In 1988, this special relator sent many letters to the Bogotá government asking for clarification about summary executions and massacres perpetrated in the country. In response, he got six communications from the government informing him that in most cases the judicial investigations had not produced any results.

In one of these replies, dated January 9, 1989, the Colombian government declared that it "had no information about the possibility that members of the state security forces had abused their authority and committed illegal actions."

Bogotá's explanations were considered unserious. A day after this reply was sent, a local judge, Martha Lucía Hurtado, issued summonses against five officers of the Bomboná battalion and the police commandant of Segovia (in the department of Antioquia). In this region, soldiers of this battalion and the 30 members of the police force stood by, without lifting a finger, while a paramilitary squad killed 43 people and wounded another 30.<sup>3</sup>

### Tip of the iceberg of political murders

The judge's decision was communicated to the minister of defense, General Jaime Guerrero Paz, at the beginning of January by the director of the Criminal Investigation Bureau, Carlos Eduardo Lozano, who was later removed from his post. In October 1988, a police officer, sergeant and six policemen were indicted by a judge in the course of an investigation of the murder of two Indians in Guajira.

In other words, Tirado Mejia could not have been unaware of these facts, which are the tip of the iceberg of the state's responsibility in the multitude of political murders. Nonetheless, he tried to deceive the UN agency in order to avoid condemnation. And, in the last analysis, that is what the Bogotá government achieved.

At the Forty-Fifth Session, the Colombian delegation joined the bloc of Latin American countries that opposed the US attempt to condemn Cuba for human rights violations, and got the bloc to head off any condemnation of Colombia. This tactic, which runs counter to the purpose of these annual sessions, was used successfully by Colombia last year. This explains why governments who violated human rights by their actions or failure to act, managed to get through the 1989 meeting in Geneva without being condemned so long as they

did not allow themselves to become politically isolated.

Thus, Rumania was the only government condemned by the Forty-Fifth Session in Geneva. The Ceaucescu government certainly deserved to be condemned. However, the Colombian case is as bad or worse than that of Rumania, and so it was an outrage that the Latin American country was "absolved."

### Bloodbath looks set to break new records

This "not guilty" verdict will objectively widen the margins of impunity enjoyed by the paramilitary groups and the death squads of the Colombian state security services, and discourage those who risk their lives to defend human rights. The murder on March 3 right in the middle of Bogotá's international airport, of José Antequera, the number two leader of the Unión Patriótica (the left party led by the Colombian Communists), and the serious injuries suffered by Senator Ernesto Samper Pizano, a progressive figure and candidate for the Liberal Party's nomination for the coming presidential elections, are evidence that the extermination drive against the legal left and its allies has gained momentum since the Geneva verdict.

In the month of January alone, there were 251 political murders in Colombia, and 30 persons disappeared. On February 27, the Communist leader Teófilo Forero was murdered, along with his wife and two companions. In 1989, the bloodbath in Colombia looks set to break the terrible records set in previous years. ★



### International solidarity essential

**IT IS essential to keep up protests and international pressure on President Virgilio Barco's government. Letters and telegrams demanding that the paramilitary groups be dismantled and that all those responsible for human rights violations be punished should be sent to Colombian embassies and to the following address:**

**President Virgilio Barco Vargas, Presidente de la República de Colombia, Palacio de Nariño, Bogotá, Colombia. ★**

2. This document's reference number is E/CN.4/1989/18/Add. 1, 6 February 1989, agenda item 10 (c).  
3. See IV 153, December 12, 1988.

**W**HAT'S your attitude to this proposal that you stand as a unity candidate in the EEC election against Hume?

The original proposal was mooted by Father Des Wilson, Father Joe McVeigh, and a small number of that kind of human-rights, anti-imperialist activist. It was originally mooted in terms of an agreed candidate. I think their intention was to force the SDLP into discussion.

My own position was that the idea of an agreed candidate between Sinn Fein and the SDLP was not only not realistic but had a number of serious principled political problems. The republican movement took the same position. So, the possibility that emerged was one of a broad anti-imperialist candidate for the European elections.

Since there are ongoing discussions, it is clear that there is a willingness in Sinn Fein to open out, which is in complete contrast to the days when they basically made the position of "support the prisoners, support the war" a condition for being allowed to march in demonstrations.

■ In this case, at least, they are prepared to support a candidate who is not one of their own people.

And quite clearly prepared to do that. There have been ongoing discussions, and I think that they have been worthwhile and principled. First of all, this has proved a concrete basis for Sinn Fein to have discussions internally on working with people outside the movement. Such discussions have been going on at various levels. In that sense, it has been useful, and certainly it would appear that there is a great majority within the organization for that kind of approach.

The difficulty arises in the overall context of developing unity of the anti-imperialist forces, both North and South. I think a measure of the seriousness of Sinn Fein's approach is their concern for working out an overall strategy for unity in action, basic unity on a program with other groups. The problem is the timing of this proposal. I tend to think myself that if you are in the business of building unity, there are serious problems raised by creating illusions.

■ Illusions in what?

In the degree of success it might have. We're talking here about an election where a broad candidate will not make any meaningful difference in the vote. The movement will not make any inroads on the SDLP vote, will not make a dent in John Hume's position. I think that's a bad start for a fledgling broad front.

The people involved in the discussions clearly understand what's afoot. The mass of the people don't. I do think that at this stage of the struggle we have to be very careful about marching people to the top of yet another hill.

# An international program for the Irish revolution

**INTERVIEW WITH BERNADETTE McALISKEY**

**ONE OF THE first concrete initiatives resulting from Sinn Fein's adoption of the perspective of building a broad anti-imperialist front at its congress early this year was the republican movement accepting the idea of running a unity candidate in a key EEC race.<sup>1</sup> The proposal was to run Bernadette McAliskey against John Hume, the leader of the bourgeois nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP).**

**McAliskey fought a previous EEC election as a means of raising the issue of political prisoners and won a substantial vote, despite opposition from Sinn Fein, which was then opposed to collaborating with independent forces. Gerry Foley discussed this question with her in Belfast in the third week of February. Subsequently the idea of a unity candidate was dropped. But this discussion was symptomatic.**

■ Why do you think it's not possible to make any dent in Hume's vote?

Because between the last election and this one, we are in a retrieving situation, we would be moving forward to stand still. I think the Sinn Fein vote is holding. But the electoral device here is a difficult one.

The elements that would make up the broad front are probably passively included in the Sinn Fein vote anyway. Therefore the electoral tactic seems to be me to be a bad tactic to demonstrate a move forward. I would rather see unity in action built around smaller projects, where people can see some progress, especially in the South.

■ What sort of projects?

Well, there are any number of issues around which we can begin to mobilize on a more unified basis — emigration, extradition, the economy in Southern Ireland.

■ The economy is not a smaller issue.

No, but I mean in terms of smaller groups actively working on them. When I say smaller, it's smaller steps I mean. The European election is going to be a three-week fanfare. But for what?

■ There has been controversy in Sinn Fein for some time over wheth-

er the SDLP vote is a straight class vote, and therefore that a working-class organization cannot make any inroads into it.

I don't think it's a straight class vote, because a lot of working-class people still vote for the SDLP.

■ Others say that the problem of the SDLP is a problem of program, that they don't have a program for going after the SDLP voters. What sort of a program could that be in the context of the EEC election?

I don't think that in terms of the EEC election, starting now and moving toward the EEC election, I don't think it matters. I think the political realities are that in the existing European election neither the program nor the candidate will make any sizeable difference, because we are in a position where hard lines are drawn.

We can begin to break those down with the correct program. But that's not something we are going to do by the European election. And that's why I think you could create an illusion that within the European election you could do it, and by setting an unrealistic goal you could lose support for

1. On the republican project, see the interview with Jim Gibney in *IV* 160, April 3, 1989.

the whole concept, certainly among the rank and file of the movement, who are very pragmatic.

■ **You have already lost a European election.**

But I won the issue. That's the pragmatic problem. People say, well it worked the last time. There is no reason why, because it worked the last time, it will work this time. The conditions are different.

■ **You see no possibility for identifying an issue or issues that could make an impact on the vote?**

You have to be clear about what the issue is here. If you go back to the first European election, it was much easier because it was on a single issue. Externally — that is publicly — it was about prisoners. And internally, in the movement, it was about the right to independence of the broad movement.

Here we're not talking about an issue. We are not talking about a disagreement within the movement about politics or organization. We are all agreed about what we should be doing in principle. The question is whether or not taking it into the electoral area at this particular point has any benefit. It would stand to reason for the grassroots person, as opposed to a political person, that the broad movement ought to be bigger than part of it, and ought to be able at least in some way to move forward. Elections are not necessarily a good measure of that. But that's how people would judge it.

You could have a serious problem after the European election of your rank-and-file republican saying, "Sure we could have done all that on our own."

■ **The problem is that what the republicans seem to be proposing now is not an immediate action, but a series of discussions. Presumably the discussions are supposed to produce a program, and on the basis of the program, the alliances would be made. Do you see any possibilities through the European elections for making progress in developing this program? Is Europe part of the problem of the program, a new program for the Irish revolution?**

Not part of the program, it's part of the problem. But it is not a question in the movement.

■ **You talk about broadening the anti-imperialist base, particularly in the South. But isn't one of the most important obstacles the argument that the time of independent small nations is past. What's the answer to that argument?**

When I say that it is not a problem, there is not a dispute on the general political position toward the EEC, or basically on how to fight it either.

■ **There is not a dispute in the sense that everybody is against it, but in the sense of having an alternative to it, some argument more than "We're against the EEC because it's a rich men's club," or that "it's a danger to Irish sovereignty, and so back to Irish sovereignty, back to the De Valera era."**

I don't think that this is the position put forward by Sinn Fein. I think that part of the problem has been that people no longer start the European discussion by saying "We are against the EEC." The fight is really against the particular and direct effects of the EEC on the community.

We're in a position where in this European election, despite the fact that 1992 is looming large, Europe is not the issue here. The question is simply one of tactical use of the election.

■ **Some revolutionary organizations underestimate European elections, arguing that they are not real elections.**

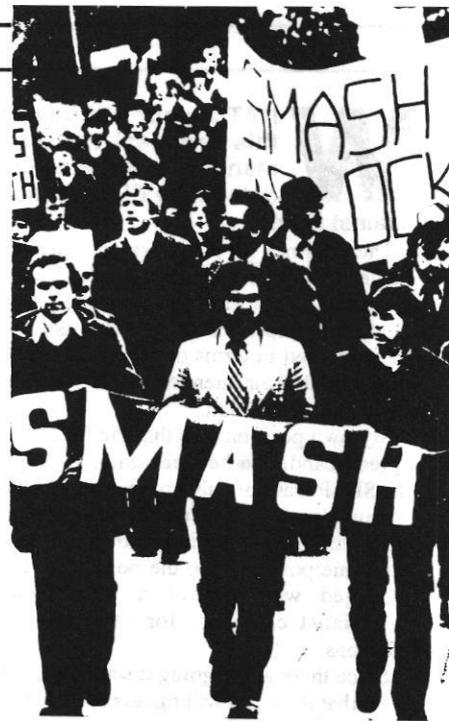
Don't forget, we are talking about one European seat here, one currently held by John Hume. The deciding factor in making John Hume the European MP is not his position on Europe, its agricultural policy, removal of tariffs, any of those things. He is the MEP because he is the leader of the SDLP. John Hume may or may not produce a political manifesto. But I can tell you now how many votes he'll get.

■ **On the other hand, isn't a large part of John Hume's position this image he has as an international statesman, someone who holds forth in the European parliament, holds forth in Washington — the voice of moderation, internationalism and so on.**

Exactly. But I think we make a mistake by testing an attempt to get broader unity in our movement in an electoral arena before it even gets started. Regardless of how correct the program, or anything else is, we cannot produce any tangible gain, however small, by contesting the European election. And we could do serious damage by doing that, when we do not have to.

One of the things that has to be taken into consideration is that this movement of ours is still limited. My contention is that it is limited by the South of Ireland — not by the Dublin government, it is limited by our lack of strength there.

Our biggest historical mistake has been the South. We cannot make inroads in the Protestant working class until we begin to seriously weaken imperialism; we cannot seriously weaken imperialism until we move a sizeable section of the Southern working class. We cannot begin to move a section of the Southern working class unless we begin to take up the class struggle in the South. Now it seems to me that that is where the great bulk of our energy should be concentrated. And we are in



grave danger while we are still caught by not being able to do anything very much, we are in grave danger of marching our people to the top of one hill too many. We took them out on the streets in the H-Block campaign and we showed them how absolutely powerless they were.

We could expose the British. We couldn't do anything else. We couldn't force them to do anything. We couldn't force the Free State [Dublin] to do anything, because we had no power. We had no industrial base. We couldn't call a strike. We could fool ourselves with the odd walkout here and there, that vaguely resembled a strike.

■ **You can also lose out when you miss opportunities.**

The problem with the European election is that the discussions have not gotten as far as program.

■ **Of course, it would be a pretty useless exercise if you didn't have a program that could inspire people.**

Exactly, but I don't think that in the context of this European election you have the possibility of doing that. Therefore, you're on a morale booster. You're really thinking that with my beauty and their brains, you can hold the line until we find a program!

■ **How much can you initiate the program yourself, if you're a candidate?**

I've no doubt that I could write any program I wanted, if I was the candidate for the European elections. I don't see that there would be any disagreement over principle, that Sinn Fein would say you have to take that out. But I don't think that that is a program.

■ **But if it caught on? You know what the republican movement is like historically. The biggest weakness in Sinn Fein's proposals for a broad anti-imperialist front seems to be a lack of any concrete perspectives.**



Everyone is at the same stage. Every conference that is called has conflicting resolutions from the various participants for more conferences. This is the hallmark of where we are. What people are not calling for, what people are not coming to meetings and conferences with, is concrete activity, saying "that is an issue, that is how we should organize around it, that is where it fits into the overall picture."

■ **But in a way, the workerist left has done that. What they propose is very clear. They propose a conference in three months to build a demonstration in August against 20 years of British troops. The problem is not that they were not concrete, but that their view of the problem is too narrow, that they do not see the connection between the economic questions and the national question.**

In terms of the reality we're discussing, how do we begin to deal with the economic question in the South? As far as I can see, at none of the conferences has there been any clear setting out of this elusive program. Nobody has got it. If somebody at least put the program on the table for everybody else to argue over. ...

■ **Someone has to take the initiative.**  
Nobody's got the program.

■ **OK, but it's no use sitting back and waiting for other people to do it either. You've got as much right to do it as anybody else — more than most. As an outsider, of course, I don't know what the electoral prospects are in a campaign against Hume. But what seems interesting is the chance to discuss Ireland's place in the world. The traditional anti-imperialist arguments seem to be losing credibility.**

Yes, in an overall context. But in this election, unity is only being talked about in

the North. There's no question of broad candidates in the South, where that argument might very clearly help to make the breakthrough.

■ **If you offer new ideas, when no one else does, a campaign can become exemplary and influence other things. There are already a number of coalitions around the idea of a "Europe of the Peoples."**

This has become more of an issue since the Govan by-election in Scotland, where the Scottish Nationalist Party raised the slogan of "independence in Europe" and Thatcher responded by saying that she would have no truck with "separatism" nor would any other members of the EEC. That exposes the real nature of the EEC as an alliance of imperialist powers, not a European unity that involves the various peoples on an equal basis.

The majority of people in Ireland, for good, bad and indifferent reasons do not like being in Europe. They have not perceived over ten years any great benefits. And they perceive even less coming forward.

■ **In the South, at least for a while some sections of farmers benefited, and then there is European money coming in.**

Maybe in the South. But in the North, people are not impressed with money coming in. They have seen that for a long while and it has not changed anything. And in many sections, they are annoyed by European interference. It has seriously affected the quality of lives of the people in the country areas, of small farmers, dairy farmers, who are now being paid to do what they don't want to do, to become market gardeners — much to the annoyance of market gardeners. The whole question of food hygiene has created an anti-EEC feeling as well.

■ **One good reason is the EEC convention on terrorism and European collaboration against the IRA.**

Yes, people are very conscious of the European influence in the extradition treaty in the South.

■ **But, if Europe is a problem, isn't it also worth campaigning against?**

Except that in the European election, Europe itself is not the center of the campaign. On the outermost fringe of Europe, when the European election is fought in the North, like all other elections it will be a polling exercise on internal issues.

■ **On internal issues in the sense that Hume is the moderate, the modernist, and therefore best suited to represent Ireland in the EEC. It is true, that is domestic. It is the whole problem of why people continue to**

**vote for the SDLP. But it also involves the way in which the EEC and the world bear on Ireland.**

I don't think we can change that in this election.

■ **Surely this time, or the next, this is something that has to be faced. There is not enough debate on Ireland's place in the world. It is as if there are two reflexes, the old soldiers with the old arguments, and the new lefties who think Ireland is Nicaragua or South Africa.**

Ireland is an old European country, the Irish liberation movement has had traditional alliances in Europe, and there is the question of the destiny of small nations in the European order. That is something that the left in Sinn Fein doesn't think about, if they did they would pay attention to the rise of the national movements in the USSR, which is posing once again the question of a democratic world order in which there is room for the development of small nationalities.

That's my biggest problem with all of them. People have become used to 20 years of struggle, and look forward to 20 more and 20 more and so on. There doesn't seem to be, anywhere, amongst the far left or any of the groups a serious realization of what we are about, the consequences of being about it and the relationships to other people. They don't see 1992 and the effect that the free-trade zone in Europe is going to have on them.

Nobody in the movement took the opportunity of the Russians pulling out of Afghanistan to make a comparison with the British soldiers here. They could have pointed out that nobody asked the Russian government for a guarantee that there would be instant peace on their departure.

Nobody's talking about 1992, what's going on in Russia and its relationship to disarmament in the West, to NATO. Nobody seems to think that any of those things have any bearing on Ireland.

■ **What Sinn Fein is doing now is what we would have hoped it would have done after the H-Block campaign. Instead, for five years after the hunger strike, it turned inwards. And now the Marxist left is not in as good a position to help as it would have been five years ago.**

That is a problem.. I have that feeling that people keep applying to today's problem the solution that they should have applied to yesterday's. I have that feeling about the European election.

At the minute, we're holding on, and we have to be careful about tactics. And I don't think that if you're in the process of building unity that it is a good idea to put it in the front line when you are under attack, when it hasn't been tried, when you're not sure how it will work. ★

# Rise of class conflict in Nicaragua

**I**N A FEW MONTHS, the tenth anniversary of the July 1979 victory will be celebrated in Nicaragua. After the Cuban revolution of 1959, the Sandinista revolution marked the second deep crack in imperialist domination in the so-called backyard of the United States. The coming to power of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) as the result of a liberation war and a popular insurrection opened up a new era in Central America. In the wake of the Nicaraguan July, came the revolutionary rise in El Salvador and Guatemala.

As early as 1981, a counterattack by the United States and the reactionary forces took form, with financial boycott measures by the US and the international financial bodies, followed by the unleashing of hostilities in 1982 by contra forces set up by the CIA. Also in 1982, the revolutionary forces suffered a severe setback in Guatemala. Thousands of Indians were slaughtered, with the complicit silence of those "democrats" who were raising a hue and cry about so-called violations of human rights in Nicaragua. Back in 1981-82, the US, with the support of the European right, began mounting a political and military counter-offensive in El Salvador.

Starting in 1982, the Nicaraguan revolution was forced to adjust to this difficult regional context. At the same time, a severe economic crisis broke out in the South American continent and in the Central American isthmus. The bloodletting inflicted by the military aggression was compounded in 1985 by the embargo imposed by the United States. It paralyzed and disorganized a part of the country's economic life.

## Imperialism tries to isolate Sandinista regime

Parallel to this, a disinformation campaign was orchestrated internationally about the rise of "totalitarianism" in Nicaragua. Its objectives were to isolate the Sandinista revolution, reduce the crumbs of aid it was still getting from European countries and legitimize the contras. This operation partially failed, but it cost the Nicaraguan people dear.

Thus, 1985 marked the beginning of the collapse of the economic and social model adopted in 1981. It was based on investing in the health and education system; subsidized prices for necessities; credits and land for the peasants; investments — sometimes not very realistic ones — in order to make the public sector the axis for changing the structure of production; and various stimuli for the private sector, which were decisive for agricultural exports. This whole project depended on access to suffi-

**IN ITS March 10 issue, *La Brèche*, the French-language journal of the Swiss section of the Fourth International, published the following analysis by a Nicaraguan sociologist of the role of the mass organizations in defending the interests of wage earners and small farmers. The introductory comment is by its editors.**

cient foreign aid and on relaunching production that would bring in export income.

A combination of factors explains the collapse of this scheme. There was the war and the blockade, a drastic reduction of grants and loans; payments on the foreign debt (it amounts to \$7 billion, and interest on it is now absorbing 70% of export income); deterioration in the terms of trade (the relationship between export and import prices); and the growing imbalance between imports and exports (three to four times more imports than exports, the latter coming mainly from agriculture and without the benefit of any modern sector).

In the private sector, investment was subordinated to the question of who was going to control the state. So, private firms refused to make medium- and long-term investments and contributed to a flight of capital. There were also great difficulties in managing the state sector.

All these problems were aggravated by natural catastrophes, including most recently Hurricane Joan in October 1988. According to the UN Economic Commission for Latin America, the *direct* damage caused by this hurricane amounted to \$840 million, the equivalent of four years' exports for Nicaragua. For reconstruction, Nicaragua got 95% less aid than Jamaica.

In this context, the internal and external deficits became overwhelming. Financed by printing more money, they led to galloping inflation. The poorest layers were hit the hardest, and the holders of dollars were favored. Considering its handicaps at the start and the effects of a strangulation policy, without a major injection of resources from the outside, it is hard to imagine a country like Nicaragua regaining the levels of production that existed before the 1978-79 civil war, improving the living standards of the masses and beginning to change its economic structures.

Even "self-centered" development

focused on meeting the basic needs of the population could not be accomplished in the present economic context without an injection of resources from the outside. Without that, the limits of the various economic options, which are also obscured by the disappointments of the "planned economies," are very narrow.

But the aid from the "Eastern bloc" countries is getting scarce. The good relations between Gorbachev and the Republican administration in Washington are not unrelated to this "weaning" of the Nicaraguan economy.

## Government adopts drastic austerity measures

Faced with catastrophic inflation and economic crisis, in January the Sandinista government adopted drastic austerity measures. This is a program for "economic survival." It involves accelerated devaluation, ending subsidies on basic foods, cutting back the state apparatus, reducing credits, freezing wages and ending price controls, stopping the agrarian reform, and giving concessions to agricultural exporters in the area of export controls. It is hard to imagine, over and above an overall contraction of demand, that such measures will not result in transfers of income from one social sector to another (from the poor to the rich) and in a polarization of incomes between wage earners in different industries.

After responding victoriously to the challenge of the contras, although at a high price, the revolution now faces the extremely acute challenge of economic survival. At the same time, state intervention has been reduced, and a question mark is hanging over the "common" participation of the private sector and the masses in the "productive effort."

The presidential elections have been moved forward from November to February 1990. A new political confrontation is in the offing between the FSLN and a divided opposition with little capacity for polarizing forces on a political level.

After ten years of a revolutionary process, the role of the people's organizations and their relationship with the institutions of the state are a subject of debate in Nicaraguan society. This debate will increase in a future in which the contradictions between popular expectations and economic policy are going to sharpen.

The following article by Luis Serra, a sociologist and professor at the Central American University in Managua, analyzes these various problems on the basis of a study done in 1988. It was published in the December 1988 issue of the Nicaraguan magazine *Pensamiento Critico*. ★



Young tobacco pickers in Nicaragua (DR)

## The problems of maintaining mass participation

**T**HE ABILITY of the people's organizations (POs) to respond to their members' interests depends on a series of internal factors, such as their participation in elaborating a work plan, the effectiveness of the organization itself, the available resources and the formulation and execution of a coherent strategy.

On the other hand, the participation of these organizations also depends on external factors, such as the relationship of social forces in the country, the capacity of the organizations to influence the decisions of the state and the party (the FSLN), as well as on the economic and political conditions in the country.

Internally, in general the people's organizations have been capable of expressing the demands of the social sectors that they represent. Likewise, they have suggested avenues for solving problems and have participated actively in undertaking certain approaches. Nonetheless, the subordination of the particular demands of their members to the general objectives determined by the party and the government — such as national unity, defense and production — has constantly imposed limitations on their activities.

Such subordination can, of course, be explained from the overall perspective of maintaining the Sandinista revolutionary project in the very difficult situation created by war and economic crisis. But it has

not been easily accepted by the members of these organizations, who have suffered severely from these manifold problems. This contradiction has affected the legitimacy of the people's organizations, especially when the tasks imposed on them by governmental objectives have brought them into conflict with the immediate interests of their members.

### Conflicts with ranks of people's organizations

An example is the layoffs involved in applying the policy of economic adjustment, which were supported by the Sandinista unions. Another is recruiting for the Patriotic Military Service for the army reserves to meet the attacks of the *contras*, which was supported by the Sandinista Defense Committees [CDS, the neighborhood organizations]. Still another is the sale of agricultural products at low prices to the governmental distribution agency (ENABAS), which was supported by UNAG [the Sandinista peasants' organization]. There were also the limitations placed on workers' demanding wages sufficient to support their families.

Externally, the demands of the rank and file of these organizations have often received a satisfactory response. After the revolutionary victory of July 1979, the relationship of forces was obviously favor-

able to the workers and peasants, and there was a receptivity to their demands both in the state apparatus and in the FSLN.

Nonetheless, the nature of the mixed economy, which accords a considerable weight to the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, and the reflection of this on the political level — national unity and pluralism — set a very clear limit to the demands of the masses for a more just distribution of income and resources.

On the one hand, the people's organizations defend the revolutionary government against the counter-revolution and the opposition. On the other, they criticize its bureaucratic deformations and fight to get a larger share of state resources relative to the other social sectors. There are many state authorities in which these organizations participate in the working out of policy and projects concerning the sectors that they represent. Nonetheless, such participation is generally only of a consultative nature, and they are in a minority with respect to the government's delegates.

### Dependence on governmental institutions

The high degree of dependence of some of the POs' base organizations on governmental institutions has led some analysts to describe them as para-state. One example discussed is the agricultural cooperatives that are regarded by UNAG as one of its constituent parts. But these cooperatives get considerable direct technical assistance controlled by state institutions and the FSLN, especially the so-called priority cooperatives. This obviously limits their autonomy and the character of their membership in UNAG.

Direct participation by representatives of the POs in the legislative branch, as it existed in the Council of State until 1984, was modified by the system of representation on the basis of party affiliation introduced in the election of the National Assembly. From this change it flows that the particular interests of social sectors are subordinated to the strength of political parties.

Of course, the FSLN made it possible to legalize certain features fundamental for the society through the adoption of legislation permitting the existence of parties, municipal governments and legislative bodies. Nonetheless, it left aside deeply felt sectoral demands, such as the workers' demand for reforming the labor code or the demand by the peasant producers for several penalties against misuse or violation of the laws.

### Channels for public discussion

In a parallel way, new mechanisms for participation by, or communication among, the social sectors and the POs were put in place. They are an essential instrument for creating direct liaison between the governmental authorities and the popular strata. These attempts at direct communication include various channels, such as direct TV or radio talks with the president of the republic. Such programs have been called *De Cara al Pueblo* [Facing the Public], *Cabildos abiertos* [Open Meetings] and *Linea directa*.

The assemblies are another form of public discussion establishing an exchange between the authorities and the masses. But they serve more as a means of education and expression than as an instrument for solving collective problems. The essential weakness of these assemblies lies in the fact that there is no follow-up on agreements and promises, and especially in their inability to solve the real causes of the problems brought before them. Moreover, you have to add to this the inefficiency of the intermediate officials, bureaucracy and a very low degree of self-management, as well as the economic crisis and the war.

The POs recognize the FSLN as a vanguard inasmuch as it has played a decisive role in the fight against the Somoza dictatorship and imperialism. The FSLN has had a threefold objective in giving impetus to the POs — to promote mass participation in solving the problems facing each social sector, to develop a training ground for leaders and to mobilize the population in defense of the revolutionary project.

This relationship presents aspects that are more than problematic simply because a large section of the leadership of the POs are full or candidate members of the FSLN. This situation involves twofold responsibilities. They are easily distinguishable in theory, but much less so in practice. An analysis of what most of these leaders say reveals a confusion between the role of par-

### Membership of the people's organizations

THE STUDY concerns the Sandinista Workers' Confederation (CST); the National Union of Farmers and Stock Raisers (UNAG), which has quite a heterogeneous membership of small and middle producers; the Association of Rural Workers (ATC); and the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS).

The statutes of the people's organizations provide for voluntary membership regardless of sex, religion or political ideology, except for those who were linked to the Somoza regime. This openness has been reduced in practice by an ambiguous interpretation of the last point, and there have been cases in which disagreement with the FSLN has been considered as grounds for expulsion.

It is estimated that between 40% and 50% of the population are formal members of these organizations, varying according to the different social sectors. UNAG claims 125,000 members, out of a total of 280,000 peasants. The CST claims 120,000 members out of a total of 214,000 industrial and agri-industrial workers. The ATC is supposed to have 50,000 members out of a total of 70,000 permanent agricultural workers and 70,000 temporary workers. In practice, only about 40% to 50% of the total membership of these organizations actually participate.

It is estimated that there are 16,000 women in UNAG, out of a total of 125,000. In the rural cooperative sector, in 1986, only 7.3% of the 60,000 cooperative members were women, and very few of those held leadership posts. A study of the existing organizations in three rural regions showed that women represented 37% of the members and only 19% of the leaderships. Their participation was concentrated in educational, cultural and religious organizations.

It is estimated that 30% of the membership of the ATC are women and that there is a similar percentage of women leaders. At the ATC's third national assembly, important advances were highlighted in the areas of equal wages and pre- and post-natal benefits, and setting production norms that fix the workday at 8-10 hours. The most strongly felt problems were low wages, lack of child-care, lack of health and hygiene facilities on the job, as well as a lack of technical training and sexual education. ★

ty members and leaders of social sectors. This affects the development and pluralism of the POs, as well as their ability to attract the non-Sandinista sectors.

### Problem of autonomy of mass organizations

The centralism and verticalism [leadership from the top down] recognized by the FSLN are necessarily reflected in the people's organizations, and link indissolubly the problem of participating in both types of body (the FSLN and the POs). Moreover, the party's hierarchy and discipline prevails over the role of the POs. Thus, the specific tasks and orientations of party cadres take precedence over those that they should assume in the POs.

In many cases, the FSLN committees in the POs take on the role of discussion and decision-making that theoretically belongs to the POs' bodies, and thereby reduce the latter's possibility for development. On the other hand, you frequently see a transfer of FSLN members working in the POs to other tasks, without taking into consideration the opinions of the members of the base organizations and the way that this can weaken them.

The problem of autonomy for the POs comes up openly when a conflict arises between the specific demands of a social sector and the general orientation of the FSLN, if only because it is not always pos-

sible to harmonize a sectoral demand with a national orientation. On several occasions, clashes have occurred between working-class demands for better income or working conditions and the FSLN's decisions not to aggravate social, class conflicts and to assure production.

In 1988, when the new economic measures gave priority to the profitability of enterprises and left all other freedoms to the law of supply and demand in a context of galloping inflation, the unions had to take a more militant line in order to defend jobs and wage levels.

The CST unsuccessfully proposed automatic cost-of-living increases and wages that would cover 50 per cent of the essential expenses of families (calculated on the base of 27 products), assuming that every family had an average of two wage earners. The ATC distinguished itself by fighting for wages sufficient to meet the basic needs of families for five essential products. To this end, the ATC built mobilizations. On the other hand, the entrepreneurs tried to use the workers' demands to get an increase in the bank credit facilities extended to them. Some FSLN leaders openly opposed the ATC. But the struggle has continued, and criticisms of the FSLN's positions have grown until it is being accused of "trying to conciliate antagonistic classes."

In this situation, Commandant Luis Carrión, member of the National Leadership of the FSLN and economics minister, declared that a union's role "should not be that of

defender of immediate demands because they cloud workers' consciousness and separate them from their collective identity."

This leader, thus, considers that the primary task of the unions is to get the workers to understand the reality of their enterprise and to make them conscious of the special way that they can participate in its development "in the great effort to defend the economy."

The situation of prolonged war acquired its own logic, involving a special definition of social relationships and the symbolic world. In this way, in practice it perceptibly modified the democratic and socialist project, quite over and above the political will of the leadership.

The armed forces are growing rapidly in a society that is living through a war situation. This means the organization of a large part of the population is acquiring a "military structure," which is everywhere characterized by a hierarchical nature.

The repercussions of this can be seen in the POs, inasmuch as the war situation gives priority to military tasks over defending the interests of their members. Organizational methods become impregnated with a military logic. The use of resources for the war means likewise an inability to meet adequately the material needs of the population, most particularly those of the lowest-income sections.

This scarcity comes on top of the exertions demanded on the job and leads to an attitude of rejecting the military conflict. Then, a conflict takes form between the need to get the POs to support the war effort and that of maintaining their nature as voluntary organizations, or still more their role as an instrument for responding to the immediate needs of their members.

The war involves suppressing the normal, peaceful processes of struggle and negotiation between conflicting social groups. Political polarization sharpens to such a point that for sectors involved in conflict, the alternative is simplified to be "for" or "against." Criticism of a party to the dispute is interpreted as helping to justify the enemy. In a war context, room for alternative political projects narrows.

The secondary social contradictions are relegated to the future, to be confronted when the main contradiction between the "empire" [the US] and the nation [Nicaragua] is resolved. This can lead to weakening the attractiveness of the national

independence project for those social sectors that find no answer to the problems that they consider the most pressing.

In national liberation wars, the need is seen for establishing a broad anti-imperialist front, both for internal reasons (marshalling all forces against the external enemy) and for reasons of international policy (getting solidarity and support). Nonetheless, the deterioration in the economic situation for the worst-off sectors is leading toward challenging this broad unity in the name of a more equitable distribution of the shortage of available goods. It is a very difficult challenge to avoid the objective conflicts between antagonistic classes through a political orientation that puts the priority on broad national unity.

If the pre-1979 system [the Somoza dictatorship] was based on coercion, there was also ruling class hegemony expressed through a fabric of social relations of the "patronage" type or characteristic of a paternalist system of "big landowners."



Such relationships of subordination specific to rural societies were instituted between the dominant and the dominated sectors through a series of norms regarding mutual rights and duties expressed in the exchange of material and symbolic goods.

In these relationships, domination was masked by personal ties —patronage, various forms of protection, and so on — that were internalized in the traditional cultural model that prevailed in both the rural and urban sectors.

Such relationships, typical of the links between landowners and farmers, were extended to various social milieus, such as the relationships between entrepreneurs and workers, political authorities and citizens, adults and children, men and women, mestizos and Indians, clergy and laity, teachers and pupils.

The basis of these unequal relationships lies in differences in access to power, that is, to economic, political and symbolic resources. The essence of this relationship

is the subordination of the popular masses to the profit of the ruling class minorities.

A revolution is a prolonged process in which the seizure of the state apparatus by representatives of the popular sectors is an indispensable step, but in and of itself insufficient to transform the structures of the past. Building a new social project has to be done with the existing social groups, which carry with them the old ideology and practices, well above and beyond their immediate consciousness and desires.

The old social relationships contain a deep-seated inertia that tends to lead to their reproducing themselves in new forms as long as their structural foundation is not altered. The paternalist or patronage relationships continue as long as there are different degrees of access to material, educational and political resources.

In the various milieus of political and civil society, varying from case to case, arguments are repeated about the need for such subordination. Some political leaders consider that they alone have "the revolutionary ideology" and ability to lead. Others, bourgeois or petty bourgeois, think that they alone have the ability to manage the enterprises in order to develop the country's productive forces.

It is, of course, wrong to see the reproduction of these relationships as the conscious and planned work of the ruling groups. Such attitudes of the popular masses as passivity, laziness, "what do I know about it?" and so on, going hand in hand with an underestimation of their own capacities and a fatalistic and magical conception of social reality, are also factors reproducing such relationships of subordination.

In the first decade of the revolution, with ups and down and limitations, the POs provided important channels for democratic expression of the interests of the masses and for solving the most important problems, despite the increasingly acute problems arising in the unfavorable context imposed by the war, the economic crisis and the heritage of the past.

There is no doubt about the great advances the masses have made in participation in political life by comparison with the situation that existed in 1979. But it is just as evident that there is still a long way to go in order to establish social relationships at all levels characterized by equal participation of everyone in the decisions that concern them. ★

# PT administration consolidates its territory

**THE WORKERS PARTY (PT) was extremely successful in the municipal elections last November (see IV 157). The most difficult task confronting it now is managing 14 councils in São Paulo state including the one in the capital São Paulo, a city with a population of 10 million.**

The PT's first six weeks at the head of the São Paulo council can be described, using a military analogy, as an occupation of conquered territory, and its defence against harassment and guerrilla operations from an enemy that is still on the retreat. The position adopted by the new administration is related to this situation: exploration of the new territory, the strengthening of key positions that allow control of the area, and a refusal to be goaded into any major confrontations that can be avoided. It is an attitude dictated by prudence.

[The following articles are taken from the February issue of *Em Tempo*, monthly journal of the Socialist Democracy current in the PT.]

**JOSE CORREA**

**A**N INITIAL PHASE of the PT's administration of São Paulo is now being surmounted. This was a time when the bourgeoisie and the big media were waiting for events that they could exploit to provoke a rapid weakening of the PT's municipal team (for example, the paralysis of essential services or a strike by public workers). In the absence of such events, they have turned to other themes such as street-sellers or the nepotism supposedly involved in giving contracts to relatives of members of the administration. This is without counting the pressing problem of housing, which is insoluble in the present context, and which has been brought to the fore by occupations.

This has already enabled our party to draw a lasting lesson: members of the administration and the PT are going to continue to be harassed by the mass media, which is going to use every single opportunity to discredit them in the eyes of public opinion.

In addition, we must have a very responsible policy towards the mass media, and not allow it to become a platform for play-

ing up the existing political differences in the party. We must rapidly establish the necessary means of communication to socialize information and unify the political understanding of party activists in order to transmit, without distortions, our view of what is happening.

## Total lack of municipal resources

The caution of this initial period was likewise conditioned by a total lack of municipal resources, resulting from a major depletion of funds by the previous administration, headed by Janio Quadros. This situation forced us to make agreements, in an unfavourable balance of forces, with the private transport (bus) and refuse collecting companies. In some cases this was at a certain political cost (such as the increase in bus fares). Building up a minimum of financial reserves and organizing popular support for measures opposed to the capitalist sectors ought to get us rapidly into a more favourable situation for taking up these sort of problems.

But for now, it is already evident that there is a need to restructure aspects of certain public services by defining a different approach to the problems (like, for example, adopting a social fare in urban transport).

Finally, it is necessary that the PT administration win real control over the main decision-making and executive centres of the administrative machine, and begin to define a new system of administrative functioning. Caution was the only attitude we could take, above all given the PT's inexperience in managing a municipal executive. In this context, a series of important measures were taken, although the mass media did not report them (reinstating public employees dismissed by Quadros; beginning to apply a policy of democratization and popular participation).

We are beginning to have a much more concrete idea of the possibilities for widening PT's social base. We are in a position now to relate to sections of the population that the party has had hardly any contact with up until now.

## Problems facing the homeless

Thus, until now, those sectors whose activity is directly governed by the municipality were the basis of support for the clientelism of the right. We therefore had to spend a lot of energy on the street-sellers, taxis and members of the Samba schools. And this will probably be the case tomorrow for the stall-holders or small traders.

The problems of homelessness cannot be resolved in a municipal framework, but we have to give a very clear perspective to the hundreds of thousands of families concerned. This forces us to demonstrate concretely that we are going to satisfy their hopes as far as possible, and lead their struggles against those who are really responsible for the lack of housing.

We are in a better position to measure what it means to lead a section of the state apparatus, a machine that was set up to reproduce the domination of the ruling class and the logic of capital accumulation. To be effective, bourgeois pressure need not necessarily be put on via a boycott or an open confrontation. At present, it tends to be applied through manipulation of the present structure and precariousness of services for the working population, and by the defence of criteria of capitalist profitability as regards the performance of these services.

When we raise bus fares — not only to avoid a confrontation with the bus owners, but also to avoid increasing the deficit of the municipal public transport company — we are applying the same anti-popular policies as the bourgeoisie, and we are prisoners of the logic of capital reproduction in the domain of the municipal administration.

Breaking with this logic is only possible

in the framework of an overall policy that affects all the ramifications of the administration and its relations with the population. This can be done by reversing priorities, but also by renegotiating the debts and putting pressure on creditors, as well as looking for alternative sources of revenue. And by an intense mobilization and mass participation, but with a different sort of administrative machine than we have now.

The result will be pronounced social tension, a sharp political struggle, and an intense mass mobilization headed up by the PT's municipal administration against the governments of the state and the federation. This is the only possible road that can meet the aspirations for change of those who supported us with their votes.

Applying the PT's programme in the administration demands a reversal of the present logic of organization and functioning of the municipalities. The problems of reaching this goal are many, but they start from the fact that the PT has not succeeded, for the time being, in formulating a policy for municipal administration: we have elaborated a number of sectoral policies — proposals on education, health, transport — but not an overall conception that brings together all these aspects and integrates them with other elements such as administrative reform, popular participation, and social communication.

It is indispensable for us to get out of our present defensive position and go onto the offensive. But some preconditions are necessary for that:

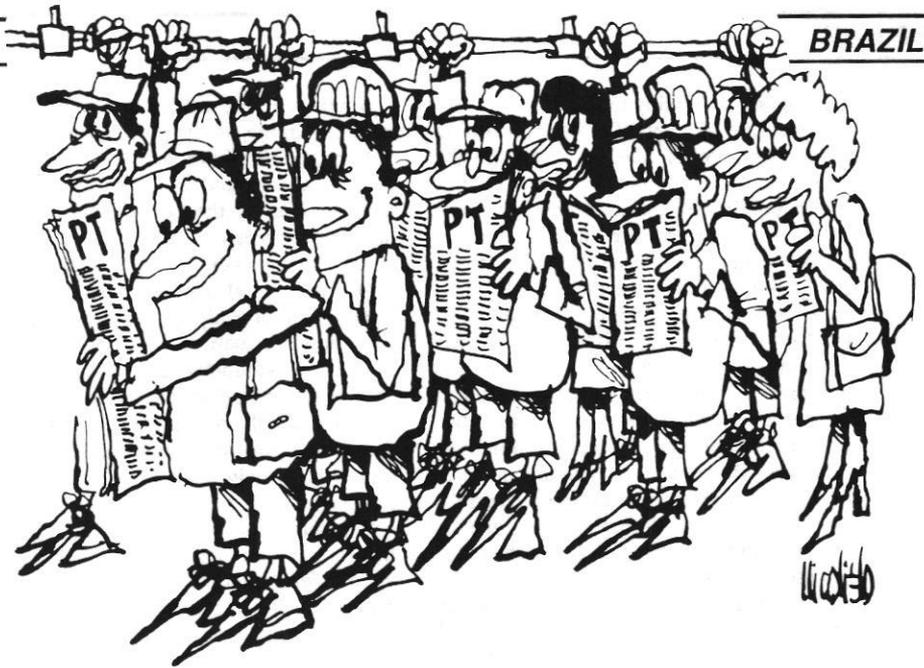
- Drawing up concrete measures — compatible and inter-linked — that we are going to try to implement, which are accompanied by details of stages, time-scales and proposals for the necessary resources to set them up.

### Effective control of administrative machine

- An effective control of the administrative machine, with a coherent leadership that can restructure and re-orient its functioning around the interests of the workers. This implies an administrative reform that will have to be realized much more rapidly than was first envisaged, in particular concerning decentralization, democratization, setting up channels for popular participation and other forms of public control, replacing personnel who cannot be retrained.

- Building up a base of political and social support organized on a mass basis to back up these initiatives. On the one hand this relates to the municipal leadership's participation in the general political workers' struggle and confrontations with the central government, and on the other to the process of setting up People's Councils.

- And, finally, establishing appropriate and collaborative relations between the party and the municipal administration in tackling problems that arise. ★



## People's Councils and the fight for socialism

**AN IMPORTANT debate is taking place inside the Workers Party (PT) around the creation of People's Councils. *Em Tempo* analyzes the role of People's Councils as elements of popular control over the PT's municipal activity, and as embryos of popular power following an alternative class logic.**

**Discussions on this subject will continue in the months to come, with a municipal seminar on the theme of People's Councils scheduled for April 23, followed by a municipal meeting in May.**

**T**HE MAIN strategic question raised by the new situation following the PT's electoral victory concerns the formation of People's Councils. Because of the features of our society, the popular urban movement has to become the central organizer for the camp of the popular forces in Brazil, alongside the trade-union and rural workers' movements. An important section of the urban population is not integrated into the formal labour market, and can only be involved in political struggle via mobilizations for better living conditions and on the basis of neighbourhood organization in the big urban conglomerations.

In the last decade, the PT, the CUT [trade-union federation] and broad mass movements in the countryside have been formed in Brazil. On the other hand, the popular urban movement in the big cities has not progressed. It has even, in many cases, retreated back to the same level it was at during the latter part of the 1970s. Fragmented, sectoralized, regionalized, depoliticized, it is one of the most important areas of support for the bourgeois parties. A significant step forward in the independent organization of the urban poor under the PT's leadership will be decisive for establishing a new relationship of social forces to the benefit of the workers qualitatively superior to anything presently existing.

### Clans, corruption and clientelism

The example of São Paulo gives the clearest demonstration of this. We find ourselves faced with an overall confrontation with the whole structure of right-wing organization in the urban area — the clientelist practices of its parties, the clans who live under the wing of the municipal state apparatus and rampant corruption (the whole framework of clientelism linked to the state and federal governments and the police and military apparatuses still sur-

vives intact, according to them).

After the victory of Luiza Erundina [elected mayor of São Paulo on the PT list], Eduardo Suplicy's election as municipal council president and the beginnings of a fight to reform the structures represented an important blow against a crucial bridge linking the bourgeoisie and its mass urban base (the other being the municipality itself). But the ramifications of this structure remain intact — its nervous system extends into every neighbourhood, to residents', cultural and sporting associations and so on. The regional administrations are obliged to work with this reality.

The stakes are high: through the formation of People's Councils, we have to measure up to some difficult but absolutely essential tasks that are now facing us: destructuring to the maximum extent this organizational network and the political and economic relations that reproduce bourgeois domination in the popular neighbourhoods; and disconnecting the mass base from this network's elected agents and the representatives of the conservative leaderships and reorganizing them under another hegemony, on a class basis. The setting up of People's Councils certainly implies a reorganization of the totality of day-to-day political relations with the urban population, and could represent a shift of large sections of the masses towards the popular camp, towards the sphere of independent workers' organization under the PT's leadership.

### **Risk of unbalancing the party's work**

The PT's electoral success is very significant. But it carries with it the risk of making this institutional activity the centre of gravity of the party's work. However, this success must go in tandem with the independent organization of workers, the autonomous activity of the masses and popular self-organization.

In order to find this new equilibrium, the party's intervention has to be shifted towards autonomous popular activity. There is also a strategic consideration in all this. The workers' struggle for power in Brazil seems to follow a path combining two aspects that are simultaneously qualitatively distinct and interdependent.

On one side, there is the winning of posts inside existing institutions, parliamentary as well as executive seats (at different levels of local and national government), with the control of limited sections of the bourgeois state apparatus. We know that winning governments is not the same as winning power, even on the federal level, but that this provides workers with better conditions for pursuing their struggle.

On the other side we have the setting up of forms of popular power — mass, combative and united organization of workers and all the oppressed based on direct

democracy in the workplaces, neighbourhoods or in the countryside. These organizations, originally created as instruments of struggle around immediate demands, can, insofar as the social and political struggle sharpens, develop their character as organs of power. This will only become apparent in another political situation and another relationship of forces (creating a dual power situation vis-à-vis the dominant class institutions of the bourgeoisie).

Only advancing on the institutional terrain will result in not preparing workers for a situation of a struggle for power, which is decisive for those fighting for socialism. The best way of creating the conditions to meet this challenge is from this moment on at each stage to push forward independent mass organization in the broadest and most advanced possible form.

### **Laying the basis for socialist democracy**

Popular participation has always been one of the axes of the PT's programme. Today we are discussing how the PT administration in the São Paulo municipality can make the biggest contribution to this. But this must be precisely defined. It can take on the character of participation in the bodies or channels of the administration, in the councils or commissions, with the goal of democratizing the management of the state apparatus and socializing information, allowing much greater control and collaboration between public employees and the population concerning the services for which they are responsible. This institutionalized participation, however, does not guarantee the autonomy of those involved who take the side of the working class against the state.

In the city of São Paulo, we have had the pretty negative experience of the Covas administration, which, through various sorts of councils, co-opted a large part of the popular movement, preventing any subsequent possibility of resistance to the initiatives of the Janio government.

This participation only takes on lasting significance for a socialist perspective if it is linked up to other forms of political participation by working people, in the mass organizations and independent struggles, as an expression of popular self-organization.

This is the only way that steps forward in mobilization can express all their energy and authenticity, laying down the basis for a new institutional legitimacy, for a socialist democracy.

The formation and development of autonomous People's Councils as axes of popular participation in the cities that have PT administrations are the best guarantee that the party's presence in the various institutional channels does not lead to "domestication" and cooption of the popular movements.... ★

# **Resolution on People's Councils**

**IN THE CITY of São Paulo, the PT has begun to elaborate a policy aimed at setting up People's Councils. The resolution published below was approved by consensus at a delegate meeting of the municipal council.**

**1** The question of People's Councils has been placed on the agenda by the PT's victory in São Paulo. Discussions and initiatives on this question have multiplied, raising the demand for a minimum orientation for the party that would help its members intervene in a united way, as well as help organize and deepen the discussion. That is the objective of this resolution.

**2** The elaboration already undertaken by the party, and integrated in the PT's "Programme for Government", starts off by distinguishing autonomous organizational forms, independent from the state and from the administration machine (what we usually call the "movement" or "civil society").

Raised in this framework is the question of People's Councils, and the organization of institutional channels for popular participation in the administration (as is the case for councils on health and transport, commissions of public employees or other mechanisms for democratizing state structures in the municipality).

**3** People's Councils are therefore bodies independent of the state. They are not created by secretariats, regional administrations or any other bodies of the administration. To be structures that broaden the organization of working people in order to facilitate their involvement in struggles, they must be unitary (with all those

directly concerned participating in them, independently of their party, religious or other affiliations), and they must be democratic (based on the direct participation of those involved and respecting the plurality of opinions expressed inside them).

This implies that they will be a space for debate, organization and political struggle, which it is the party's priority task to promote and in which we seek to win and maintain our hegemony in a confrontation with the other political positions existing in society.

**4** Affirming that it is not up to the administration to create People's Councils does not mean that it will not have to play a role in developing them, and that the PT administration will not have an active role in this process.

An important element in stimulating the setting up of Councils that have a political and social weight is the fact that the PT's municipal administration won a popular mandate and must introduce, without prejudging other possible forms, a mechanism that will enable it to give an account of its activities to the population organized in the Councils.

In addition, for the population these Councils must be a channel for discussion (and for taking positions) on the problems raised by the PT administration. For its part, the administration must recognize the Councils as a superior instrument for taking into account popular demands, which in any case will continue to be placed on the administration, and encourage those bodies and movements that take up such demands.

**5** People's Councils cannot be created by decree simply on the basis of the political wishes of leaders of the movements. Their formation is conditioned by the accumulation of workers' experiences of political participation, by the level of consciousness and, above all, by the real extent of existing mobilization. However, their development is essential in order for the PT municipal administration to enjoy the mass organized support necessary to implement its programme.

**6** The People's Councils have to include and unite in action the leaderships and the mobilized sectors of the population who are involved today in neighbourhood friendly societies, militant tenants' associations, Church base communities, bodies linked to the democratic and popular camp (such as trade-union sections, regional bodies of the CUT, factory committees, sporting and cultural associations and so on), sec-



Lulza Erundina,  
PT mayor of  
São Paulo  
(DR)

tions of the middle layers who respect internal democracy and, especially, the existing movements.

On the basis of struggles underway, they must also seek the maximum broadening of popular participation, the involvement of new sectors in political action, the incorporation of unorganized sectors and the most deep-going possible structuring of mass organization in every neighbourhood.

**7** People's Councils are forms of government based on direct democracy, aiming for popular organization for carrying out struggles at different levels (municipal, state or national), and a form of political representation for the organized population. They can and must carry out a number of functions:

- Supporting concrete struggles taking place today (for example, around problems of housing, transport, health and so on), and unifying these popular struggles.

- Establishing new political reference points outside of traditional schemas, which go beyond the existing institutions.

- Control over the administration's activities.

- Collaboration and pressure on the popular administration (or pressure/confrontation with the administration when it is led by conservative forces).

- Participation in the popular administration's decision-making at a level to be established, while guaranteeing their total independence and maintaining their distinctiveness from the municipality.

Naturally, carrying out these various functions and the extent of their application will depend on the stage of development of the People's Councils, their representativeness and the more general political situation (the extent of workers' self-organization and the level of democratization in society). The extent to which these Councils are structured must be looked at in this concrete framework.

The People's Councils will adopt positions on different themes and will, therefore, vote. Another problem is

whether the PT's municipal administration should respect their decisions. That depends on a whole series of factors: how representative the Councils are; the questions discussed; how far decisions mesh with the PT's programme and so on.

**8** Where to begin? The popular assemblies that we organized in December could be one way of approaching this problem. We could convene them on the party's initiative, with the objective of discussing a common list of themes of crucial interest to the working population. (However, this does not resolve the important problem of unequal levels of mobilization and representation in the organized movements that were apparent in December and which we must take into account.)

These meetings could even be politically strengthened through the presence of representatives from the administration; broad and representative coordinations could be set up (it is recommended that the presence of PT comrades with major responsibilities in the administration be limited). This would complement the struggles and allow a deepening of the debate in the Councils themselves.

A practice of regular report-backs from elected representatives could be developed so that the popular assemblies would establish themselves as legitimate forums of popular organization, as authentic People's Councils.

Slowing down this process would be ill-advised. We can set up these meetings (that we can consider as embryos for Councils in the future) in greater numbers than the popular assemblies in December, as long as that does not mean spreading them too thin politically, and if it represents an important broadening out in terms of participation.

Holding these assemblies implies a close relationship with the regional administrations, but the definition of the territorial sphere of responsibility of each Council must be discussed in more detail, both in the party and with PT comrades who have responsibilities in the municipal administration.... ★

# West Papua's national liberation movement

THE FOLLOWING article deals with a conflict that has been largely neglected by the bourgeois press and even the revolutionary left.

One reason for this may be that the Free Papua Movement (OPM) — the national liberation movement of West Papua, called "Western New Guinea" by the colonialists — does not quite fit into the usual pattern of liberation movements, such as those in Latin America or the

Philippines. However, over 20 years of armed struggle against the colonial ambitions of one of imperialism's closest allies in the region, the Suharto military dictatorship of Indonesia, more than justifies a closer look at this struggle.

In a forthcoming issue, we will be publishing a longer article on recent developments in Indonesia.

MALCOLM GAULT-WILLIAMS

**A**FTER NEARLY a quarter of a century living under Indonesian rule, West Papuans (Melanesians inhabiting the western half of the island of New Guinea) are even more resistant to their subjugation than when Indonesia first incorporated West Papua into the Indonesian republic as its 26th province — what Indonesians now call "Irian Jaya."

Over 11,000 refugees have fled across the West Papua/Papua New Guinea border in recent years. The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), an independent international organization based in Denmark, gathers information about worldwide oppression of indigenous peoples. The IWGIA concluded in its 1986 yearbook that, in West Papua, "the refugees have been fleeing from the increased oppression stemming from the occupying forces of Indonesia."

Worse than the numbers of refugees fleeing into Papua New Guinea (PNG) are the estimates of the numbers of West Papuans killed or who have died as a result of Indonesian repression, suppression, or neglect. According to the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign (TAPOL), the number of West Papuan Melanesians killed ranged from 100,000 to 150,000 between 1962 and 1984.<sup>1</sup>

Without weaponry and high level training from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, Australia and Israel, Indonesia would be unable to prolong its mobilizations in West Papua. Indonesia's 1985-86 military development budget was comprised approximately 45% of funding from foreign aid and credits. As an example of the ample aid given, Australian aid to Indonesia's military, ABRI, has averaged \$10 million in recent years and has included Sabre jets, small arms train-

ing, air navigation training, aircraft maintenance and research and development. Between 1974 and 1984, some 1,032 Indonesian military personnel undertook training and/or study in Australia. Yet, Australia is not Indonesia's major arms supplier. According to Robin Osborne, an Australian journalist who has written much on the plight of the Melanesian people in West Papua, "Indonesia's largest military supplier is the USA"<sup>2</sup>

## Resistance led by Free Papua Movement

The resistance to Indonesian occupation is led by the Free Papua Movement (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka* — OPM). The first OPM armed action occurred in Manokwari, in the western end of West Papua, on July 28, 1965. According to Thomas Agaky Wanda, a political refugee quoted in the *TAPOL Bulletin* 80 (April 1987), other very early actions took place in the Central Highlands in 1965, "in response to...arrests" made following the Indonesian takeover of administrative control of West Papua from the Dutch in 1964. "Many people fled and formed a unit that attacked an army post in Erambu village, Kalimoro...OPM troops, armed with knives, choppers (machetes), and bows and arrows killed two Indonesian soldiers and a government employee."

The Free Papua Movement has surprised most observers and foes alike in its resilience. Even so, the unification of the political and military wings of the OPM took twenty years to achieve. It was on July 11, 1985 that the dual leadership of the resistance movement signed an agreement to fight together, in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The political side of the OPM is headed by

Jacob Prai, closely linked with the Papuan underground, who believes in the self-sufficiency of the struggle and holds as futile the hope of outside aid. Prai is known to have always been against the Indonesian presence in West Papua. Seth Rumkorem, however, was a West Papuan who had been an Indonesian intelligence officer. Rumkorem is in favor of soliciting arms from any country willing to assist the Melanesian people in West Papua.<sup>3</sup>

The Port Vila Declaration contains a pledge to safeguard the "survival right of the Melanesian race in West Papua." Further disunity, the two leaders stated, would result in "the obliteration of the Melanesian race in West Papua."<sup>4</sup>

The Free Papua Movement's military arm, Papepal — or *Pasukan Pembebasan Nasional* (National Liberation Forces) — is organized into seven regional commands, each one consisting of a large number of posts known as *basis*. According to Jacob Prai, the person in command of each *basis* takes charge of both military planning and community activity, including population movements where necessary. Women comprise a significant proportion of the troops.

The OPM's most serious logistical problems are the lack of modern weapons and the serious shortage of medicines. The most widely used weapons are bows and arrows,

1. *West Papua: The obliteration of a people*, TAPOL 1984, p.6. (TAPOL can be contacted in Britain at 111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Croydon, Surrey CR4 8HW.)

2. *Indonesia's secret war: The guerrilla struggle in Irian Jaya*, Osborne, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, p.147.

3. "Organisasi Papua Merdeka: The Free Papua Movement lives," Malcolm Gault-Williams, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol.19, No.4, Oct-Dec 1987, p.37.

4. "The war nobody's told you about: Indonesia in West Papua," Malcolm Gault-Williams, *Northern Sun* (Minneapolis, USA), Vol.9, No.10, November 1986.

spears, and long, sharp cassowary bones. Most of the firearms are World War II rifles left over from Dutch times, or guns seized from the Indonesian military — the *Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* (ABRI). Seth Rumkorem estimated the number of OPM firearms as only totalling about 300 in 1983. Yet, as reported in the 1984 *West Papua TAPOL* appendix, on several occasions, Papenah has succeeded in shooting down enemy planes, as documented in captured Indonesian military documents.

Following OPM unity, Indonesia undertook a major military operation code-named *Operasi Sate* (Operation Skewered Meat). Highlighting the operation were both attacks on OPM military headquarters and also a program of strategic village control. *Operasi Sate* was intended to wipeout the Free Papua Movement before the April 1987 elections. In August 1986, F-5 Tiger aircraft carried out a series of aerial attacks lasting four days, to smash *Markas Victoria*, the mobile OPM command post. The target was not hit, but widespread damage was inflicted on surrounding countryside.

Additionally, restrictions were placed on villagers throughout the northern coastal region. These were strikingly similar to the restrictions imposed on the inhabitants of strategic villages in East Timor, which Indonesia forcibly took over in 1975.

Peter Hiatt, a BBC journalist, reported on

## Human rights abuses in West Papua

one of the many counter-attacks made by the OPM during this time. Hiatt said the Indonesian military station he and other journalists visited in the village of Arso Kota, east of the provincial capital of Jayapura, was well-fortified and armed. "Such facts suggest that the OPM is a substantially greater force in these areas near the border with Papua New Guinea — where the OPM is believed to have its bases — than the authorities would have us believe."<sup>5</sup>

The Indonesian aim of the trip by thirteen foreign correspondents was to give them a guided tour of transmigration sites in West Papua, attempting to contradict foreign criticism of the transmigration program. In the December 1986 *TAPOL Bulletin* Hiatt said that following the OPM attack in the Arso Kota area, Indonesian officials were reluctant to take them to a second transmigration site, and that "there was one particular village on the way back to Jayapura that they did not want to pass through in the dark."

And three months earlier, Roman Catholic Bishop of Vanima John Etheridge told the *TAPOL Bulletin*: "I believe very strongly that there are human rights abuses happening in West Irian, by the Indonesian army and police. I've heard so many stories about the abuses..."

## Whole populations dispossessed of land

The causes of political and social unrest in West Papua extend far beyond the question of persecution of an indigenous people and their self-determination. Whole populations are being dispossessed of land and resettled to make way for both the plundering of their natural resources by a foreign power and the transmigration of Asians — Javanese — on Melanesian soil. W.F. Wertheim has written that "under the present Suharto regime the old myth of an overpopulated Java and the underpopulated Outer Islands appears still to haunt not only the minds of Indonesia's present rulers, but also of those determining the policies of the World Bank and other Western donors of so-called 'Development Aid' cooperating in the IGGI (Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia)."<sup>6</sup>

Specifically, funds are provided by the World Bank, World Food Program, the EEC, Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, West Germany, France, the Netherlands, the United States, and the United Nations Development Pro-

gram. Wertheim added that the Indonesian "military power-holders are...intent upon putting the most ambitious targets into practice, being mainly motivated by strategic and security considerations...the *transmigrasi* strategy, far from being operated in consultation with the people concerned and on a voluntary basis, is both in the area of origin and in the locality of destination largely being effectuated through sheer compulsion and deceit."<sup>7</sup>

## Indonesian plan to move five million people

Indonesia's 1984-89 five-year plan calls for the movement of five million people from Java, Madura, and Bali specifically to those areas that resist Indonesia's imposed sovereignty: Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the South Moluccas, East Timor and West Papua. Government figures show that the target of 750,000 families may even be overfulfilled by the end of this year. In 1986-87, 158,333 families were moved — 8,333 above target.

Nonetheless, the World Bank told the Washington-based Environmental Defense Fund, in a letter dated July 29, 1987: "In response to increased awareness of the implementation issues such as those you have raised, and to reduce constraints, targets for new settlements have been reduced from more than 100,000 families per year to 2-3,000 families this year." It remained unclear whether the Bank figure referred to sponsored and/or unsponsored transmigrants. At best, the Bank's letter was highly misleading.<sup>8</sup>

Over the next twenty years, some 65 million more Asians are planned for migration to Javanize the Fourth World territories

5. *BBC Despatch*, October 28, 1986. Quoted in *TAPOL Bulletin* 78, December, 1986, p.11.

6. "Transmigrasi: Myths and realities; Indonesian resettlement policy 1965-1985," Mariel Otten, IWGIA Document 57, October 1986, p.1.

7. *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

8. *TAPOL Bulletin* 83, October 1987, p.23.



claimed by Indonesia. Robin Osborne has come to the conclusion that "it is now clear that in Irian Jaya the prime aim of the (transmigration) program is to quell local separatist feelings by sheer force of numbers." Osborne has brought attention to the "strong presence of Indonesian military families, many of them retired personnel, amongst transmigrants in the border areas. Reports from Jakarta have spoken of army families being the 'foundation' of many new settlements. Said OPM's northern area commander James Nyaro: 'Don't think of these settlers as ordinary civilians. They are trained military personnel disguised as civilian settlers'."<sup>9</sup>

As groups such as Cultural Survival, Survival International, Environmental Defense Fund, TAPOL, and Friends of the Earth, as well as published works in *The Ecologist* and IWGIA Documents point out, transmigration has not just resettled Javanese, but has resulted in "the spread of poverty; forced displacement of indigenous peoples from their homes, communities and lands; de-forestation and soil damage; destruction of local governments, economies, means of sustainable resource use; forced assimilation programs; widespread use of military force to 'pacify' areas and to break local resistance by bombing and massacring civilians."

While the transmigration process continues — combined with Indonesian repression towards the natural inhabitants — the pervading sense of insecurity in West Papua has created an "unregistered floating mass." John A. MacDougall, editor of the *Indonesia Mirror* wrote in the October 1987 *TAPOL Bulletin* of the forcibly returned West Papuans back in Indonesian hands: "many returnees comprise an extensive pool of 'internal refugees' whose existence persists and whose conditions are often perilous in many respects."

### Forced repatriation of refugees

The lack of support by the government of Papua New Guinea for the OPM and especially the refugees crossing the border has been striking. While refugee camps have been established (after international pressure was exerted) Papua New Guinea has not been very responsive to the critical life or death needs of the incoming West Papuans. A glaring example of this is the action taken just last May, when PNG authorities airlifted West Papuan refugees out of Blackwater refugee camp, near Vanimo, to Kiunga and then on to East Awin.

The evacuation of Blackwater followed the preposterous claim by Indonesia that the Blackwater refugees were responsible for an attack on a transmigration site inside West Papua. The March 1988 attack had actually been caused by two different *translok* (transmigrant) groups clashing with one another.<sup>10</sup>

Papua New Guinea politician Warren

Dutton condemned the relocation of Blackwater refugees to East Awin, believing that the action was taken under strong Indonesian pressure to remove active OPM supporters from an area close to Jayapura and the scene of intense Free Papua Movement activity. The evacuation took place despite representations made last year by Blackwater refugees not to be moved to East Awin. In a declaration in March 1987, Blackwater camp refugees rejected the idea of going to an inland site. The Blackwater refugees are primarily coastal people who are now finding it difficult to integrate with inland people and inland life-styles.

The roots of the refugee situation along the West Papua/PNG border go back several years. Initially, Papua New Guinea wanted to rid itself of the problem by repatriating the vast majority of refugees. A program of forced repatriation began in 1985 when several groups were forced to return into West Papua. Gerard Thomy, an OPM leader given asylum in Ghana, represented the West Papuan attitude toward repatriation: "They will not return home, and if an attempt is made to return them home, they will disappear into the bush. They know that their villages and gardens were destroyed after they left and they know that we are fighting a war of independence."<sup>11</sup>

### Strong opponents of relocation

World protest halted this policy and led to the collapse of Michael Somare's government. When the government led by Paias Wingti took office, it decided to accede to the United Nations Convention on Refugees and involved the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in finding a solution. One aspect of the resultant new policy was the relocation of refugees a good distance away from the border. Another aspect provided political asylum for more politically active refugees in Papua New Guinea and overseas.

Yet, relocation had strong opponents, especially in Australia where it was feared that providing long-term accommodation for West Papuans in Papua New Guinea would entice additional masses of West Papuans to cross the border. This was a clear recognition of West Papuan dissatisfaction toward the Indonesian occupiers.

Consequently, Australia withheld funds for relocation, insisting that the UNHCR should instead persuade Indonesia to allow an international agency to monitor the return of refugees back inside West Papua. The assumption was that this would encourage refugees to return home voluntarily. However, Indonesia refused all efforts either by the UNHCR or the International Red Cross to establish a presence in West Papua.<sup>12</sup>

In October 1986, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea signed a Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship and Cooperation.

Under the terms of this long debated treaty, the two countries have agreed not to threaten or use force against one another and not to cooperate with others (that is, the OPM) in hostile or unlawful acts against each other, or allow their territory to be used by others.<sup>13</sup>

Although Indonesia failed to get Papua New Guinea to agree to joint border patrols and the right of "hot pursuit" for Indonesian troops trying to track down Papenai guerrillas operating within PNG territory, Indonesian military commander Benny Murdani worked out a deal with PNG's Brigadier-General Anthony Huai, the commander of the PNG Defense Force (PNGDF), for coordinated action to control security in the border region, especially during the refugee relocation process.

### Objective to eliminate the Free Papua Movement

Murdani's primary aim has been to "sanitize" the border region and ensure close collaboration between the Indonesian armed forces and the PNGDF. This is especially in regard to operations against the OPM, but also includes the exchange of military attachés as the channel for military intelligence exchanges concerning primarily the border region.

Following his March 1986 visit to Jakarta, Huai said that PNG and Indonesian military authorities had reached an understanding to pursue the common objective of eliminating the *Organisasi Papua Merdeka*, which he described as "a bunch of terrorists" that he was resolved to "wipe from the face of the earth."<sup>14</sup>

Moses Werror, then acting chair of the OPM's Revolutionary Council in Papua New Guinea, warned Huai to keep out of the Free Papua Movement's struggle against Indonesia. Speaking further on OPM strategy, Werror explained that Papenai's main tactic was to go into Indonesian administrative centers and "to hold the stations as long as possible and capture food, ammunition and weapons."<sup>15</sup>

Appointed only that year as commander of OPM forces in the north border region, Bas Mekawa urged Huai to stop "trying to destroy the Melanesian race and impose Asians in the Pacific." The 50-year-old former district chief claimed to be in command of about 7,000 guerrillas in his region. He said they were armed primarily with axes, bows and arrows, spears and clubs, plus a number of rifles. The OPM, he

9. *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Sydney, July 1984; see also *The Guardian*, New York, April 13, 1948, and *ACFOA Briefing*, May 1985, p.6.

10. *TAPOL Bulletins* 87 & 88, June & August 1988.

11. Interview by Alan Smith in the *Papua New Guinea Times*, 1986 (exact date unknown).

12. *TAPOL Bulletin* 87, June 1988, p.2.

13. *Niugini Nius*, October 28, 1986.

14. "OPM: The world's least-known guerrillas," Malcolm Gault-Williams, September 1986; see also *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol.19, No.4, p.42.

15. Gault-Williams, *ibid*.

went on, carries out mobile warfare because it is the only viable strategy against a far better-equipped enemy. "If they knew where we are, they would move in and immediately crush us. That's why we're always moving."<sup>16</sup>

## New OPM/Indonesian army clashes

Indonesia has wanted to make sure that no refugee camps remain anywhere near the West Papua/PNG border, providing sanctuary and support to the OPM. Blackwater camp has been considered as the most dangerous camp because many political activists lived there, including deserters from ABRI. The Indonesian army still smarts from the humiliating blow struck by Blackwater refugees in October 1984, when visiting upper-level Indonesian officials were forced to beat a hasty retreat because angry West Papuan refugees greeted them with a hail of rocks.<sup>17</sup>

Following documented Indonesian financing of sympathetic PNG political parties' election campaigns in 1987, Huai was sacked as the Defense Force commander for making unauthorized visits to Jakarta, receiving gifts from Indonesia's Murdani, and for leaking details to him about the Joint Declaration of Principles between Papua New Guinea and Australia.

There are reports of renewed fighting in West Papua between the Free Papua Movement and the Indonesian army. According to reports in the PNG press, heavy fighting took place in Sarmi sub-district, west of Jayapura (the territorial capital) and in the highland sub-districts of Paniai and Nabire. A Papenai military leader, Mathias Wenda, regional commander in Jayapura, spoke of fighting in several places causing the deaths of more than 150 people.<sup>18</sup>

The heightened level of activity has been accompanied by widespread arrests. Many people held for varying periods within the last 20 years have been re-arrested and subjected to interrogation and maltreatment. There were also reports in the local press in April and May last year of more Melaneseans fleeing across the border, into Papua New Guinea from Komovai and Bewani. The adults are being charged with illegal entry.

The Indonesian army has been trying — for the past 22 years — to crush Free Papua Movement operations in West Biak. The West Biak OPM is led by Melkianus Awom, known by his *nom-de-guerre* as *Konsup* (*Komandan Superiuri*). Operation Clean-Out (*Operasi Sapu*) is meant to succeed where the previous operation, *Operasi Sate*, failed.

The chief target in this latest operation is *kampung* dwellers in the countryside who are suspected of supporting the guerrillas and supplying them with food. Their sago stands and gardens have been cut down and burnt. By depriving the Papenai guerrillas of food, the Indonesian hope is that they

will give up the military struggle. To put further pressure on Melkianus, the Indonesians have arrested his wife and children. The district military command in the town of Biak hopes to force *Konsup* to surrender, thereby demoralizing the OPM in West Biak.

As a result of Operation Clean-Out, *kampung* dwellers are now facing severe food shortages due to their great dependency on their local sago stands and food gardens. Forbidden to hunt or gather food in the forest for fear of their making contact with OPM fighters, the villagers are suffering under the Indonesian policy of systematic pressure, intimidation, and denial of essential food production.

There is actually nothing new about these operations. One such — *Operasi Pamungkas* (Operation of Extermination) — was launched in the early 1970s. The operation was then concentrated in Bird's Head and North Biak, which was at the time a base area for Melkianus Awom and his fighters. The Indonesian military, equipped with modern weapons against a core group of 167 OPM guerrillas — who had no more than 15 firearms between them — inflicted many losses on the Free Papua Movement.

Melkianus Awom is the brother of Ferry Awom, the renowned founder and original leader of the OPM. Melkianus fought side by side with his brother — "The father of the OPM" — and other leaders like Lodewijk and Barend Mandatjan when the Movement first launched the armed struggle in Manokwari in 1965. All these leaders were captured and killed

## Twenty-three years of liberation struggle

Before continuing the armed struggle in Cendrawasih Bay region, Melkianus Awom and Zacharias Kafiari undertook a dangerous and historic mission. Travelling by sea to Wutung, Papua New Guinea, Melkianus and Zacharias submitted documents setting out the aims and ideals of the OPM to Australian government officials for forwarding to the United Nations. After accomplishing their mission, the two West Papuans returned home and have been leading the OPM struggle in West and North Biak ever since. The struggle continues in its twenty-third year without any political or material help from abroad (Vanuatu is the only nation that recognizes the Free Papua Movement).

Jacob Prai has said that Indonesia's presence in West Papua "ensures the OPM's continued existence....The behaviour of the military guarantees the growth of the OPM despite the dangers and difficulties of maintaining such an organization. Everyone backs us against the alien Indonesians and we have thousands of active supporters."<sup>19</sup>

During the first OPM mission ever to visit Australia, in November and December of 1986, the Free Papua Movement represen-

tatives Jacob Prai, Otto Ondowame and Nick Messet asked the Australian government to:

- Discuss with Indonesia human rights claims by the OPM-FPM, and also put these claims to the United Nations Human Rights Commission;

- Support the UN High Commission for Refugees in resettling West Papuan refugees;

- Assist refugees in camps with medical, welfare, and educational aid — including a scholarship program;

- Seek at the United Nations a thorough re-examination of the 1969 so-called "Act of Self-Determination," with a view to a "timetable for independence being determined by the UN's Decolonization Committee."<sup>20</sup>

## "The new 'Ulster' in our part of the world"

Sir Garfield Barwick, a leading architect of the transfer of West Papua from Dutch to Indonesian hands in the early 1960s, has stated that the developments within the western half of the island of New Guinea did not surprise him at all. "It is the new 'Ulster' in our part of the world." He indicated that he, like other diplomats involved at transfer time, always suspected that the Asian-stock Indonesians would treat the Melaneseans badly. Osborne noted in *Secret War*:

"What Barwick had underestimated was the ability of West Papuans to fight back and the reluctance of PNG's indigenous leadership to seal the historically disastrous border."<sup>21</sup>

Worldwide ignorance of West Papuan colonization by Indonesia, the nature of the repression, and the degree of resistance has made it possible for Indonesia to proceed with its destruction of native Papuan life largely unhampered by international condemnation.

By their complicity and acquiescence, most Western countries have lent their support to the atrocious crimes and the deaths of over 150,000 West Papuans at the hands of the Indonesian military.

Should the present situation continue, the cultural extermination of the Melanesian people inhabiting West Papua is certain. There is some hope, however, that by bringing the plight of West Papuans to the attention of increasing numbers of people, the *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* will, in enough time, muster the international support necessary to facilitate Melanesian expressions of what the West Papuans themselves wish for the future of their land. ★

16. *Ibid.*

17. *TAPOL Bulletin* 66, November 1984.

18. *Post Courier*, May 2, 1988.

19. *The Australian*, November 25, 1986.

20. *TAPOL Bulletin* 80, April 1987.

21. Osborne *idem*, p.189.

# Pravda on the Soviet elections

## "The people have made their choice"

"THIS WHOLE WEEK, our lives have been dominated by the experience of the election of USSR people's deputies. The emotions are giving way to serious analysis and reflection. Everyone agrees that we have never had such elections. After April 1985 [the CP plenum that launched *perestroika*], these elections hold a special place in the country's history....They have once again convincingly demonstrated the potentialities of socialism, of our democracy....

"But to be honest, the elections brought many surprises. Today there are things that we have to think seriously about. Why in a series of cases were candidates strongly supported by party committees rejected by the voters? Why was the desire of party committees not to see people not approved of by the apparatus become deputies (B.N. Yeltsin, for example) overturned by powerful support from the people? Why were some first secretaries of district party committees not elected, although they were the only ones left on the ballot! Why did some workers, military figures, and scholars not get a majority?....

The people no longer fear to stand up for their opinions....That is a conquest of *perestroika*....

"Along with that, we must not close our eyes to the fact that some party organizations suffered certain 'losses.' When a district committee first secretary fails to get elected, that is a signal for serious thought. Of course, nothing tragic happened. The party itself proposed the system of competition....Nonetheless, to call things by their right name, defeat of a party leader in the elections means that he [sic] has to change his style of work, take a critical look at himself." (Pravda editorial, April 1.)

## "Advance toward democracy"

"THE RESULTS of the elections show that the voters as a rule rejected attempts to put pressure on them, both of the administrative-command type and the psychological type (from various types of informal groups). Those who 'overdid it' in advertising themselves in most cases did not win. And that also is a testimony to a growing democratic consciousness in the society.

"Unfortunately, it has to be acknowledged that in the choice of the forms and methods of their work party committees not infrequently fell behind the needs of

this process."

(V. Liubitskii and A. Chernyak in Pravda, April 4.)

## "The lessons of the elections, the lessons of truth"

"THE JOINT plenum of the Leningrad district and city Communist Party committees held today was devoted to a deepgoing self-criticism with respect to the election for the Congress of People's Deputies. For the first time in many years, a list of speakers was not drawn up in advance and anyone who wanted to express an opinion about the unusual events of March 26 could do so.

"A series of leading party and Soviet personalities, including the first secretaries of the CP district and city committees failed to get sufficient votes to be elected. Participants in the plenum conducted a sharp, principled discussion, relating the vote to the new social and political situation that has emerged in the country as a whole, as well as in Leningrad....



Boris Yeltsin

"The plenum characterized the election results as a serious political lesson. It strongly recommended that Communists relegate the old approaches and methods to the archives and constantly concern themselves with preserving and reinforcing the party's vanguard role in society. The need was stressed for working out measures to meet the criticisms expressed by the voters during the campaign and election."

(Pravda, April 5.) ★

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