

International VIEWPOINT

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Manifesto for the European elections

No to the bosses' Europe!



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International VIEWPOINT

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Regime takes a leap into the dark

THE ROUND-TABLE ACCORD signed on April 5 in Warsaw between representatives of the bureaucracy and Solidarnosc leaders is unprecedented in the history of the bureaucratic regime.

Unlike what happened in August 1980 in Gdansk, it is not a concession wrested from a regime threatened by a general strike, whereby the government yielded to some demands of the masses in order to preserve the essential, that is, its power. Nor is it an initiative taken coolly by a regime recognizing that it has reached the limits of its way of running the economy and the society, on the model of previous attempts by the bureaucracy at self-reform, such as the Prague Spring or Gorbachev's reform.

General Jaruzelski's regime is determined to take the leadership of a profound transformation at once of its form of political domination, the mechanisms governing its economic system and especially of society.

CYRIL SMUGA

THREE SCENARIOS may be envisaged now. The first (the worst, and I hope it will never come to pass) is sharp conflicts in the enterprises, an escalation of demands by the unions, mass protests, demands and strikes; disruption of production and the market; the loss of all the political capital gained by the round-table, both for the government and for Solidarnosc and for the OPZZ¹; a disastrous impact of these developments on *perestroika* in the Soviet Union; and, as a result of the growth of these conflicts, the need for a tough counter-attack....

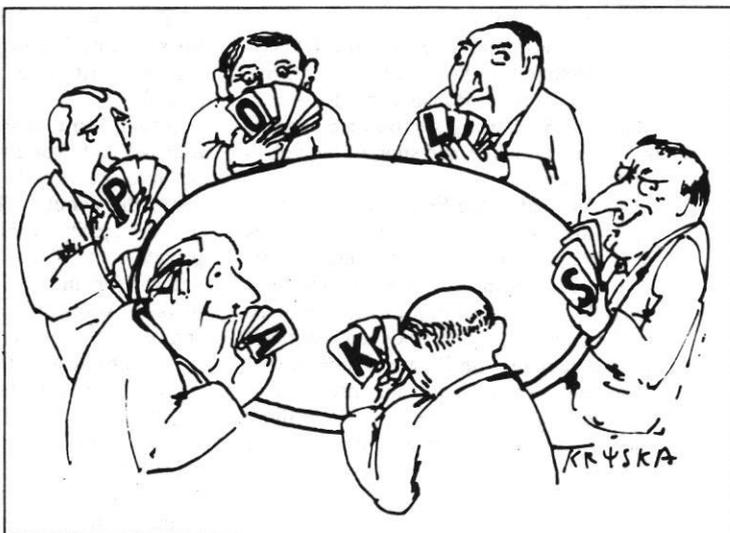
"The second (optimistic) scenario is the new unions operating without clashes; the differences being settled without confrontation in the name of higher social interests; the unions competing for the good of the enterprises (that is, to produce more and better so that there will be more to distribute and so that people will steadily earn more); new lines of foreign credit being opened up and restructuring of the debt; and as a result of this a rise in the threshold of what the society can endure (a threshold

that it is impermissible to exceed), making it possible to accelerate the reform process.

"This second scenario, however, seems to me to be unlikely. Undoubtedly, the events will follow a third scenario combining elements of the two preceding ones."²

Such was the official point of view expressed shortly after the signing of the round-table accord by one of the leading figures in the regime in a weekly regarded as the semi-official organ of an influential faction of the bureaucracy. It has the merit of highlighting the fears and hopes of representatives of the Polish bureaucracy.

General Jaruzelski's regime initiated this process after exhausting all the resources of its traditional form of domination and under the threat of a vast social rebellion foreshadowed by the strike waves in the spring and summer of 1988. In pursuance of this, it decided to make an alliance with a trade-union and political leadership — the Walesa leadership — which, while weakened and out of step with the aspirations of the working class, still symbolizes the continuity of the mass workers' movement from the 1980-81 revolutionary



upsurge.

In making this move, the regime is taking the risk of opening up a breach through which all the potential combativity and radicalization of the Polish working class can burst. And this at a time when it has no economic margins for maneuver that would enable it to buy social peace, and when only massive economic aid from the imperialists can enable it to avoid exceeding the "threshold of what the society can bear."

Imperialists fear of revolutions

The Polish bureaucrats are fully aware of the fact that today the imperialist leaderships fear above all "having to face in an undetermined but probable future a chain of revolutions upsetting the raw-materials markets, trade and regional political alliances,"³ revolutions generated by the growing indebtedness of third world economies and some workers' states. Therefore, it is counting on massive aid, and in return is declaring its readiness to open up a crack in the Polish market to imperialist capital, and holding out the prospect of other openings in the East.

The initial reactions from the imperialist leaderships seem to justify the Jaruzelski regime's wager. For example, on April 17 US president George Bush announced an economic aid plan estimated to be worth a billion dollars. Besides granting Poland most-favored nation status, enabling it to export its products to the US without paying tariffs, and the support announced for

1. The National Entente of Unions (OPZZ) was set up by the Polish bureaucracy at the end of martial law in order to occupy the trade-union space. In recent months, facing the threat of competition from a legalized Solidarnosc, its leading personnel have taken more radical stands and tried, not without certain results, to take over the arena of action for economic demands.

2. "The Coalition of the Wise," a discussion with the deputy premier, Ireneusz Sekula, *Polityka* 15, April 15, 1989.

3. According to the terms of the international financial expert Pierre-Yves Dugua, in *Libération* (Paris), April 25, 1989.

rescheduling the Polish debt, this plan is designed particularly to promote US private investment in Poland. It will contribute to exchanging Polish debts for stock, enabling US enterprises to become partners in Polish companies and support the Polish private sector.

Likewise, after the French foreign minister made statements filled with promises in Warsaw, the ministers of foreign affairs of the European Community, meeting April 24 in Luxemburg, decided to speed up the conclusion of a trade and cooperation agreement with Poland. Nonetheless, the country's needs are immense. Its foreign debt amounts to nearly \$39 billion, and repayments represent 400% of its annual trade surplus.

Establishment of a new economic order

The image of General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the impresario of martial law, shaking the hand of Lech Walesa, the historic leader of independent trade-unionism, should not obscure the fact that the round-table agreement goes a lot further than granting the legalization of *Solidarnosc*. What is at stake first of all is the establishment of a new economic order favoring the market and privatization of important sectors of the economy and, secondly, of a new political order through which the bureaucracy will try to coopt the elites that have come out of the independent social movement.

The deputy premier could not have been clearer about this: "We are modifying the philosophy of the state's activity. If it should not be all powerful, if it should not run everything, it cannot be asked to 'grant' things. Rather, the demand has to be that it create the conditions making it possible for social needs to be met through the operation of market mechanisms, as well as the free activity of the enterprises, local collectives and citizens."⁴

As regards the general features of the new economic order, the round-table agreement goes no further than asserting a few principles that were already present in various documents published in the context of introducing the "second stage" of the economic reform. Their essential function is to get oppositionists to take the responsibility for these choices. For example, "the transformations leading to the new economic order involve primarily:

"The development of self-management and worker's participation.

"The free development of the structure of ownership.

"The development of market relations and competition.

"The liquidation of the vestiges of the centralized system of management and the limitation of planning to the formulation of the state's economic policy, to be implemented with economic instruments.

4 "A unified financial policy toward the enterprises.

"The subordination of the mechanisms for selecting leading cadres in the enterprises to criteria of professional competence."⁵

In fact, some of the developments enumerated go beyond what has already been put into practice. In particular, the document talks about "selling public enterprises or the majority of their components to the private sector," about transforming these enterprises into "limited companies or workers' cooperatives," about "issuing and selling stock," about "shutting down enterprises chronically in the red," about "eliminating the rationing of goods and administrative directives on setting prices, currency exchange rates and discount rates" and about "the creation by early 1991 at the latest of a stock exchange." All of this is put in the framework of establishing "constitutional guarantees of the permanency of the pluralist system of ownership in the economy."

This is not essentially to restore the confidence of the domestic capitalist sector, which is weak and does not have enough capital to achieve a rapid, substantial change in its role in society. It is rather to offer guarantees for foreign investment, which has been marginal up until now but which is expected to play a major role in the Polish "new economic order."

Moreover, the final part of the accord, devoted to overcoming the debt barrier, specifies: "From Poland's foreign partners we expect understanding and concrete support for the turn undertaken in our country in all areas of public life" and, in particular, "a greater interest by Western investors in placing their capital in Poland" and "operations to reduce the debt with the help of unconventional financial solutions, including 'eco-conversion,'" that is, transforming debts into shares in the Polish enterprises.

"Normalizing financial relations with the West"

In order for "Western investors" to be fully reassured, it is also stipulated that "the program of the International Monetary Fund or any other program worked out with the international institutions and the creditors can be the basis for normalizing financial relations with the West."⁶

The opening to the market economy and to foreign investment is, however, not really a surprise. The failure of centralized economic management of the economy, recognized today even by the bureaucracy and demonstrated by the steady drop in the yield of fixed capital in state industry, has long left room for the development of a private sector on the margins of the Polish economy whose profitability is much higher than that of the state sector and in which wages are also much higher.

In 1987, the private sector employed 6% of labor and produced 17.2% of the national non-agricultural income (its share was

7.3% in industry and 27.7% in construction). Between 1980 and 1987, while the total labor force tended to decline slightly (again, outside agriculture), numbers employed in the private sector increased by 78%. The same phenomenon can be observed in the gross fixed capital formation in industry. In the nationalized sector, permanent fixed capital increased by 24% between 1980 and 1987. On the other hand, in the private sector, the increase was 58% (although this represented only 1.5% of total industrial fixed capital).

Thus, while the private sector remains very marginal (outside of agriculture and certain industries, such as construction and road transport — 42% of truck transport is privately owned!), the general trend is clear.⁷ What is more, in 1987 and early 1988, there was a major acceleration in the growth of the private sector. I do not have statistical data for this period, but the phenomenon has been recognized by everyone. To cite only one example, of the 75 limited companies whose formation was authorized by the prefect of the small department of Skierniewice since 1986, 60 were formed in 1987! Some may be regarded as medium-sized enterprises, such as the Flama company, employing 1,500 workers; or the foreign-financed Junopol, which last year, among other things, filled a government order for 300,000 pairs of shoes.⁸

A risk for the bureaucratic regime

Likewise, while private exchange bureaus, buying and selling hard currency at what was previously considered a "black-market" rate (3,000 zlotys per dollar, as against 600 at the "official rate" at the beginning of April), have only been legalized this year, trade in currencies grew considerably in the preceding years. In 1987, it reached a turnover of \$596 million, corresponding to 3% (at the "official" rate) or more than 20% (at the "black-market" rate) of the turnover (in zlotys) of retail trade in the same year.⁹

General Jaruzelski's economic plan in many respects represents a leap into the dark and a definite risk for the bureaucratic regime. Nonetheless, it is based on the trends that have been operating in the Polish economy for nearly a decade. The Polish bureaucracy, thus, has decided to go along with these tendencies or even to anticipate them instead of opposing them

4. *Polityka* 15, April 15, 1989.

5. "Attitudes concerning social and economic policy and the reforms of the system taken at the round-table," *Zycie Gospodarcze* 16, April 16, 1989.

6. It is specified, moreover, (in contradiction at least with the initial versions of the IMF's plans) that such a program "should not lead to a decrease in per capita consumption but even guarantee that it will increase on the average by 2% a year."

7. All these figures are taken from *Rocznik Statystyczny 1988*, published by the Central Office of Statistics (GUS).

8. *Gazeta Przemysłowa* 4, March 16-31, 1989.

9. *Rocznik Statystyczny 1988*.

by administrative means. It recognizes that such opposition would be condemned to failure, since the bankruptcy of its system of management is obvious.

The introduction of market mechanisms into a centrally managed economy has traditionally run up against resistance from the immense army of intermediary petty bureaucrats whose privileges depend directly on the old model.

However, in this area, the Jaruzelski leadership enjoys a more favorable situation. This multitude of those enjoying petty privileges experienced the onslaught of the mass movement in 1980-81. This layer has been profoundly destabilized. The decay of the Communist Party testifies to this. The regime that came out of the December 1981 crackdown has not allowed it to reorganize. More than in the other bureaucratized workers' states, the exercise of power has become the prerogative of the functionaries of the state apparatus, and the party has been relegated to a secondary position.

While General Jaruzelski has secured control of the party's central bodies, at the base he has systematically favored the state institutions. Only the trade-union apparatus, the OPZZ, set up after the rescinding of martial law, can afford today to express differences. But its position is precarious, in view of the competition it will undoubtedly face from Solidarnosc. Thus, the weak social roots of the Polish bureaucracy have today become a source of strength for its leadership.

Regime preserves the essential levers of power

The agreement on reform of the state's functioning, which General Jaruzelski's team put above all else, is intended to enable the bureaucratic elite to preserve the essential levers of its power, while offering guarantees (all of which are instruments of cooption) to the Walesa leadership. First of all, the constitution has been modified to establish a strong presidency. Elected for six years by a joint session of the two houses of parliament, President Jaruzelski (because it is assumed that he will inaugurate this office) will be able to rule by decree, refuse to sign laws passed by the parliament, dissolve parliament and declare a state of emergency. He will retain sole responsibility for foreign policy and defence.

This institution will thus be a useful complement to the "leading role of the party"



1920 May Day poster produced by the original Polish Socialist Party (PPS)

inscribed in the constitution, and can serve as a last resort for the bureaucratic elite. It is not, however, an "American-style" presidency. The president must stay out of day-to-day politics and leave running current affairs to the government and to parliament.

The Diet (and to a lesser degree the Senate, whose powers are more limited, even if it is to be elected in a more democratic way) are to serve as the mechanism for co-opting the opposition elites. Within parliament, the governmental coalition is guaranteed a 65% majority of the seats, which from the outset excludes any possibility that it might kick against the traces in the coming four years. As the text of the agreement says, "free election to parliament will be limited by the division of the seats worked out at the round-table."

The new parliament, nonetheless, will serve as an institutional bridge for the oppositionists elected, making it possible to get them to share in the responsibility for decisions, or even to entrust certain posts to them.

Moreover, the two contracting parties agreed at the round-table that "the indispensable reforms of the state will have to be achieved through evolution, with respect for the national state interest." This also concerns future elections, in which "the two parties...pledge to keep their election programs and campaigns within the limits of the accord signed at the round-table."

Thus, the institutional framework for collaboration between the two parties has been established, and the Walesa leadership has already demonstrated its determination to conform to it by denouncing the strike mobilizations that developed during the negotiations or by taking control of them in order to halt them as soon as possible.¹⁰

However, the goodwill shown by the Solidarnosc leadership is not in itself a guarantee of the success of the transforma-

tion that is underway. If the legalization of Solidarnosc has not for the moment been accompanied by an upturn in the independent activity of the working class, that does not mean that the workers have been pacified. The Walesa leadership itself is approaching the new period in a ticklish situation.

During the years of clandestinity, the various union apparatuses largely detached themselves from rank-and-file work-

ers. The union structures in the plants often shrunk to their hard core, or disappeared altogether. After 1983-84, they no longer provided an indispensable material base for the union leaderships. The latter got the bulk of their resources from the aid provided by the Western trade-union organizations, in large part by the AFL-CIO.¹¹ They even went so far as to use these resources to put pressure on the rank-and-file activists, by turning on and off the resources essential for their work.

Signs of bureaucratization inside Solidarnosc

The dependence of the central union structures on aid from the Western trade-union bureaucracies in turn produced signs of bureaucratization inside Solidarnosc itself.

The legalization of the union has considerably altered this situation. If they prove capable of rebuilding mass trade-unionism, the factory organizations will again have weight in Solidarnosc. In this respect, it is significant that, while in the first days after the signing of the accord, the Walesa group leaders were essentially preoccupied with the future electoral campaign and preparing to run, finally not only Lech Walesa but also Wladyslaw Frasyniuk (a historic leader in Lower Silesia) and Zbigniew Bujak (Warsaw) announced that they would not be candidates.

For his part, Bujak did not hide the fact that his decision was linked to resistance among the ranks: "I have problems in the union," he said. "I am not covering up the fact that the round-table and participating in the elections, all that, has been very

10. See IV 159, March 20, 1989.

11. AFL-CIO, American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations, the principal US union organization, with a close relation to the government.

much attacked in my region." ¹² The Walesa leadership's decisions have been the object of considerable criticism among opposition activists.

Participation in the round-table was denounced, among others, by the Fighting Solidarnosc Organization (OSW); the Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution (PPS-RD); the historic leaders assembled in the Working Group of the National Commission of Solidarnosc; a number of regional coordinating structures; and a good part of the underground press.

Likewise, while the leaders grouped around Lech Walesa seem to be orienting toward a campaign focused on calling for participation in the future elections, many organizations have already issued an appeal for a boycott of what they regard as an attempt to legitimize General Jaruzelski's regime. This is the case, notably, of the Regional Strike Committee (RKS) of Solidarnosc in Lower Silesia (the underground leadership that has maintained continuity and which influences a good part of the union activists in the region), the OSW and the PPS-RD, as well as the former vice-president of Solidarnosc and the present head of the Working Group, Andrzej Gwiazda. The unionists at the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk have also threatened to call for a boycott of the elections, if the procedure for shutting the yard down is not rescinded. A section, undoubtedly a minority but not an insignificant one, of the Polish opposition is standing up against the process that is underway.

This opposition can count on an echo among the population, and mainly in the working class. In fact, the workers' material situation has continued to deteriorate. Inflation is expected to go over 100% in 1989, while the agreement signed at the round-table provides for a coefficient of 0.8 for adjusting wages to meet cost-of-living increases. In other words, the sliding scale will offer only 80% compensation for the rise in prices.

Major cuts in the social wage

Worse still, the system is supposed to be run by the enterprises, without any subsidies from the central budget. It is projected, moreover, that in enterprises in a precarious situation the coefficient of adjustment may be lower. ¹³ At the same time, there is a provision for limiting or even eliminating redistribution funds (for example, the housing fund will be abolished), which amounts to a major cut in the social wage.

Furthermore, after 1990, subsidies to hold down the prices of food products will be gradually reduced, and already this year their structure will be modified. In fact, right after the accord, in honor of the occasion, the price of bread was increased.

Recent studies carried out by the team of sociologists headed by Wladyslaw Adamski suggest the beginning of a turnaround

in working-class opinion regarding market/economy reform. A member of this team, Lena Kolarska-Bobinska, has pointed out, among other things: "In 1984 and 1988, in the group of specialists and technicians, people with higher education, support for the market increased. On the other hand, skilled workers are beginning to withdraw their support for this sort of economic order." She also noted: "The full-employment policy that had been losing supporters is now beginning to regain them." ¹⁴

Another Polish sociologist, Wladyslaw Markiewicz, in an article commenting on the results of various recent studies of Polish opinion notes: "In Polish society at the end of the 1980s, the conviction is becoming general that under the conditions of the present system of government and of the functioning of the state administration, it will not be possible to carry out a deep-going reform of the national economy, and therefore that it will not be possible to improve either the material condition or the situation of the workers."

"A rejection of socialism in its current form"

"The society cannot believe in the regime's ability to resolve complex problems, such as those of building housing, achieving equilibrium in the market, protecting the environment and so on because successive governments have proven themselves incapable of settling many simple problems....While the society accepts the principal values of socialist ideology, it rejects socialism in its present form." ¹⁵

The evidence of the failure of the bureaucratic system of management is the driving force of radicalization, which is particularly marked among the youth. This also has contradictory aspects. According to the "Poland 88" study already cited, "acceptance of privatization is much greater for those industries where social needs have been least satisfied...for example...housing construction." ¹⁶ The experience of the crumbling of the bureaucratic model has produced at once an acute awareness of the conflict of interests between the

bureaucracy and the workers and a "false consciousness" about the ways out of this situation.

"Guerrilla warfare" of strikes will continue

This complicates reactions to the bureaucracy's economic reform projects. But, at the same time, as the authors of this report note, when the bureaucracy's projects begin to be applied you see spectacular turnabouts of opinion. As long as full employment was seen as an empty slogan of bureaucratic propaganda, it was massively rejected, in particular by the younger generation. But the moves to close some enterprises have led to a reversal of the trend.

This situation puts obstacles in the way of an alternative emerging to the policy pursued by the bureaucracy with the support of the Solidarnosc leadership and, it seems, that of the imperialist leaders. For the moment, opposition is focused on rejecting what is seen as an electoral farce, where the conflict between the democratic aspirations of the masses and the "new political" order are directly perceptible. In the absence of a credible alternative to the economic reform supported by Solidarnosc leaders, we cannot expect to see the immediate emergence of a mass movement rejecting this policy.

However, "the guerrilla warfare of strikes" will undoubtedly go on in the plants, along the lines of the situation that has prevailed since early this year. In the immediate future, the bureaucracy will try, as far as possible, to avoid any head-on attacks on the standard of living of the working class as a whole in order to fragment the picture, and to be able to counterpose exemplary successes in some enterprises to the disastrous situation of others.

Plant closures — at the moment there are plans to close at least 15 pits and several foundries — will undoubtedly be accompanied at the beginning by social measures to re-employ the workers concerned. But the situation will remain explosive for a long time, since the fact is — and no one denies it — that the market economic reform will involve privations for the greatest number. This is a difficult situation to juggle with, even for a government that is a past master in the art of social manipulation. ★



12. Quoted by Sylvie Kauffmann, *Le Monde*, April 25, 1989.

13. This was accepted by the Solidarnosc negotiators at the "round-table" in the name of the need to combat inflation. It offered the OPZZ leaders the chance for a bluff that was all the more demagogic because their attitude had no influence on the decisions taken. Nonetheless, this made a very bad impression on a good number of rank-and-file Solidarnosc activists.

14. Interview published in *Zycie Warszawy* of December 15, 1988, which relates some results of the study entitled *Poland 88*.

15. "The Consciousness of Poles," *Wektory Gospodarki* 1, 1989.

16. *Zycie Warszawy*, December 15, 1988.

Interview with Lech Walesa

“Poland has turned a page”

THE INTERVIEW below with Lech Walesa was published in the April 20 issue of the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* on the occasion of the Solidarnosc leader's visit to Italy.

JUST BEFORE you came to Italy, you met General Jaruzelski, the man who outlawed Solidarnosc in 1981. What did you feel as you shook his hand?

Since I became a politician — and I did so against my will — my feelings have no longer had any importance. I can tell you, in any case, that I went to the meeting with Jaruzelski with a very clear idea, with the certainty that Poland has turned a page, that the time of struggle and confrontation among us is over, and that a new period — undoubtedly a still more difficult one — is opening up. It is the era of dialogue to build the future of our society.

We know that Solidarnosc has won a great political victory, but we would be irresponsible if we rested on our laurels. The hardest road, both for us and for the government, remains ahead. And I am not sure if I did the right thing in changing methods. The future will tell whether I was wrong.

■ **Would the round-table's success have been possible without the moderating role of the Church? Will this role be sufficient to guarantee the continuation of the democratization process?**

It has to be remembered that in Poland there is a perfect symbiosis, unique in the world, between the society and the Catholic Church. This is why the relations between Solidarnosc and the bishops become tighter in difficult moments, but the union movement retains its indepen-

PPS-RD document on the elections

IN ITS LEAFLET for May Day, the PPS-RD explained its attitude toward the new elections provided for in the round-table agreement:

Since the establishment of the state framework of the People's Republic, the elections to parliament and the National Councils have served to legitimize the Communist Party's monopoly of power. The SD, the ZSL and PAX, along with the CHSS and the PZKS [legally recognized parties supposedly representing non-Communist sectors allied with the CP], are no more than a decoration designed to give the impression of democracy.

As a result of the accords at the round-table, some opposition groups will be participating in the coming elections. They have agreed to do this, despite the fact that the function of the elections has remained the same. The opposition's role will be to help the Communists' regime acquire a new legitimacy. The function of the new parliamentary groups, which will be kept in a minority of 35 per cent, will be even more limited because their members, for obvious reasons, will represent a range of views, while the so-called Coalition [the CP and its satellites] will vote as a bloc on the important questions.

The Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution calls for boycotting the elections to the Diet and the Senate for the following reasons:

1. You cannot have democracy by percentages. Either it exists, and in that case we elect a Diet that represents us, or it does not, and in that case the only response is a boycott. Thirty-five percent opposition in the Diet is enough to legitimize the electoral farce but too little to influence the fate of the country.

2. The creation of a Senate whose powers are too limited and too poorly defined will not change the parliamentary relationship of forces. In that case, we will be faced with an archaic construction, less and less common in modern constitutional systems. Instead of a Senate, we demand a return to the program of the Self-Managed Republic and the creation of a Self-Management House that would directly represent the workers' interests.

3. The establishment of the office of president guarantees the continuity of the present system. The president will be elected by the parliament controlled by the PZPR [United Polish Workers Party, the CP] and not the voters. This institution makes it possible to make arbitrary decisions such as dissolving parliament, imposing martial law and changing laws.

The struggle for free elections continues!

Warsaw, April 10, 1989 — General Council of the PPS-RD



dence. We are neither right nor left, neither too linked to the Church nor insensitive to its advice. We are simply something different. But we know that without the help of the Church we would not have managed to fight on and resist for so many years. Polish society as a whole might have given in, if it had not been guided by the words of the Pope and his bishops. At certain times, I can assure you, the round-table resembled a boxing ring. The Church played the role of referee, a referee who proved capable of assuring victory for both of the contending parties.

■ **Do you think that the great politi-**

cal reform outlined in these last days in Warsaw is irreversible?

That is precisely our concern. But I must tell you right away that the answer to that depends on both of us, on the Poles as well as you in the West. We must not fail, we must not betray the spirit and the letter of the social pact that we have signed. That would be a catastrophe. But for the moment, I cannot see the conditions for this. It is you, the great Western democracies, that have to understand that an unparalleled historic opportunity has been created in Poland.

I will strive to explain to the Italian political leaders and unions that it is not up to us to guarantee the final victory, because we have won it, regardless. The problem is to shorten the road that has to be travelled, to reduce the number of obstacles, to manage a smooth transition from a system that recognizes its bankruptcy to a freer and more just Poland closer to Europe. It is to achieve this end that we need aid, both economic and political, but also advice about how to make a democracy work.

■ **Do you think that the Polish turn would have come about without Gorbachev and Gorbachevism? If you went to Moscow to meet the Kremlin chief, what would you tell** **7**

him?

It is hard to answer that question because our entire bloc urgently needs to reform itself, and it is not yet clear whether Gorbachev is the product of this urgent need or vice-versa. It can be said with certainty that if the conservatives still had the upper hand in the Soviet Union, the struggle in Poland would be even harder. But, as I told you, the final outcome is historically inevitable, and it is not, and has never been in doubt.

What would I say to Gorbachev? I would tell him what Jaruzelski told me, that is that people sooner or later have to meet and come to an understanding. I would tell him also that he came late, and that if he had been in power instead of Brezhnev in 1980-81, things would probably have happened differently.

■ **The social pact will impose economic sacrifices on the population. Do you think that the Poles are ready to endure these without protesting?**

Sacrifices will undoubtedly have to be made. The society can confront them in two ways — either by considering that the system is unreformable and therefore looking to revolution; or by thinking, as I do, that there is a possibility of evolution without revolution, and therefore agreeing to pay the price of the reforms. It will be difficult to convince people, to overcome apathy, to regain enthusiasm. But, if you aid us, if together we provide the necessary guarantees, then I am sure that we can succeed.

■ **How do you judge the behavior of Miodowicz and the official unions? Is there a serious danger that the more conservative groups in the party will obstruct application of the accords?**

I don't think that is a real danger. There is a current in the party that is relying on demagoguery, and something similar also exists in Solidarnosc.

But demagoguery won't get very far in our country or in yours. It is necessary to work in such a way that the enemies of the reform will not be justified in the end and we will not suffer a failure that would wipe out the hopes for evolution and leave only the revolutionary alternative.

■ **What democratic gains did you fail to obtain at the round-table that you intend continuing to fight for?**

There are many, in every sector of social life. It is inevitable that we have only been able to take the first step. Our objective is a truly free and democratic Poland, like Italy.

That has always been our dream, both yesterday in clandestinity and today in our new role. The difference is that the dream has become concrete, and is now a real

8 hope. ★

Lula for president!

PRESIDENTIAL elections will be held in Brazil next November. It will be a tricky test for the ruling class in a situation where successive Cruzado economic plans for stabilizing the currency have failed, inflation is worse than ever, the agrarian question remains explosive, and the debt burden continues to weigh heavily on the exploited.

DANIEL BENSARD

AS IN OTHER countries coming out of dictatorship, the democratic opening, far from being consolidated, remains under threat — the army and the repressive forces have made an orderly retreat to barracks — without being challenged as vigorously as in Argentina or Uruguay.

However, the differences are just as well-known. In terms of dependent countries in Latin America, Brazil is the most advanced in terms of indigenous industrial development. The bourgeoisie there has much greater social solidity than in the Andean countries and more political agility than in Mexico. As a result of the powerful expansion of the 1970s, an independent social and workers' movement emerged and consolidated itself during the "democratic" transition, finding its expression in the formation of the United Workers Confederation (CUT) and the Workers Party (PT).

Can the PT follow up its municipal victories?

During their terms of office at the head of the municipalities and in local government, the two big majority bourgeois parties and their candidates saw their support decline rapidly. In the November 1988 municipal elections, the PT met with spectacular success, reaching scores of more than 30% in some large cities and winning some city halls such as São Paulo, Porto Alegre, Vitoria, and working-class suburbs in São Paulo (see IVs 157, 158 & 161).

Buoyed up by this momentum, the PT has decided to present Luis Inacio da Silva, known as "Lula", as their candidate for the



next presidential elections. Opinion polls today give him scores of between 20% and 30%, which would put him in second place, if not in first place in the first round of a two-round system of voting (similar to the French one).

The right has no more than six months to find a credible national candidate. For the time being, Lionel Brizola — ex-governor of Rio and leader of the Democratic Labour Party (PDT), the heir of traditional Brazilian populism, who is affiliated to the social-democratic Second International — seems to be the sole charismatic candidate challenging Lula.

Brizola's handicaps and contradictions

Brizola's handicaps, however, are not minor ones. On one hand, while he has significant local bases in Rio and in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, he cannot rely nationally on a well-oiled and well-implanted apparatus. And in a country the size of Brazil, these things are decisive. On the other hand, Brizola, who was previously exiled by the dictatorship, has some formidable right-wing enemies. So he will have big problems assembling all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle around his candidacy in the second round of the elections.

Brizola claims that he will withdraw in favour of Lula if it is a race between the latter and the right wing in the second round. But, at the end of the day, in order to present himself as a credible candidate against Lula and to offer the necessary guarantees to the right, he will be obliged to take a harder line against the Workers Party and, via the PT, against workers' demands and the social movements. He has already begun to do this in his pre-election campaign, at the risk of paying an electoral price for it.

Having been entrusted with new responsibilities, the Workers Party is also entering an exciting — but difficult — stage of its history. It must simultaneously lead explosive social movements (agrarian struggles and the recent general strike [see following

article], for example), demonstrate a capacity for efficiently running huge municipalities like São Paulo, and wage a determined campaign in the presidential elections with a minimal, but not zero, chance of winning.

The PT can only do all this coherently on the basis of a democratic and anti-imperialist programme that breaks with the bourgeoisie — non-payment of the debt, which is strangling social budgets; a radical agrarian reform; index-linked wages; urban reform and so on. Beyond this, its capacity to resist foreseeable blackmail, threats and sabotage will depend above all on the strength of its links with the social movements and the prestige it acquires in the

eyes of the other Latin American peoples.

Outside of the question of programme, another problem will be whether or not to desist in the second round in the event of a run-off between Brizola and the right (the reappearance of an old hopeful like Janio Quadros is not excluded). In such a situation, there will be a strong temptation to vote for the "lesser evil", including in the PT's ranks — although for the time being the aggressiveness of Brizola's campaign is arousing PT "party patriotism".

All these questions will be discussed and probably decided at a special PT congress planned for June, to give a real send-off to the presidential campaign. ★

General strike by 35 million workers

IT WAS one of the biggest general strikes in Brazil's history. On March 14 and 15, 35 million workers responded to the strike call put out by the two big union federations, the CUT and the CGT. The central demand of the strikers was for a 40% minimum wage rise to compensate for losses in buying power. In the last round of negotiations, José Sarney's government offered a non-backdated increase of 14.6%, while the bosses did not want to go higher than a 7.1% offer.

The latest train of governmental measures to try to stem inflation — called the Summer plan (plano Verão), and popularly christened by workers the "Thieves' plan" (plano Ladrão) — had been barely announced when it began to founder. Sarney's prediction of a 3% inflation rate in March doubled in reality to over 6%. But the general strike, with the participation of around 70% of the country's 50 million workers to defend their living standards, was the biggest single blow to the government's project.

ISAAC AKCELRUD

THE GENERAL STRIKE was a battle on a variety of fronts that was begun even before the two days of work stoppage on March 14 and 15, and which culminated in paralyzing the country. And it went on even after the mobilization had apparently stopped. Each of these three phases had its own characteristics. In the beginning, the government tried to prevent the strike. Afterwards, it had to cover up its demoralization and isolation. Finally, it tried to minimize the scope of the workers' immediate economic gains and to limit their political impact.

The government attempted to prevent — or at least to reduce — the dimensions of the strike through a campaign of disinformation, police and military threats and demagoguery about non-existent future "discussions". The generals demanded that President Sarney himself make a televised broadcast to declare his opposition to the general strike. But his self-preservation instinct kept him from sticking his neck out, so he sent his new justice minister, Oscar Dias Correa, instead. The latter, a survivor of a reactionary current, prepared a fire-and-brimstone speech. Sarney then

Brazil paralyzed by general strike

IN THE Northern region of Brazil, the strike paralyzed 75% of the metallurgy and electrical industries, and 85% of civil servants and 90% of transport workers took part. In the North-East, 90% of metal, oil and bank workers joined the strike. Civil servants came out in force in the Centre-West region with 80% taking action, plus a partial paralysis in industry and services. In the South-East most transport and public services were brought to a standstill, with the finance and service sectors also hit. In industry, the most significant strikes took place in São Paulo (60%), and Rio de Janeiro (70%), involving 2.6 million workers.

Metalworkers stopped work in four states — São Paulo: in the suburbs; in Campinas and more than 15 towns; Rio de Janeiro: in the capital, in Volta Redonda (100%) and in two other cities; Minas Gerais: at Belo Horizonte, Contagem and Acesita; Espírito Santo: partial strike in the capital.

In this latter region, the strike was more or less successful among oil workers and electricians, in the chemical, plastics, glass and food industries, and among civil servants in the education, health and insurance sectors.

In the Southern region, those most involved in action were metalworkers (64%) in Porto Alegre, Joinville, Curitiba and Cascavel; and electricians (75%), especially at Electrosul. Telephone lines were almost totally cut off in Rio Grande do Sul.

Nationally, metalworkers came top of the strike chart with an average participation level of over 55% — a million workers! ★

opposed a whole paragraph of it, saying: "the cup is already running over, as it is". Correa's television appearance was delayed for half an hour. This was the first sign of dissension and political divergences inside the authorities' ranks.

Workers mobilized in every corner of Brazil

These manoeuvres were largely neutralized by the militant climate during the final run-up to the general strike. In a number of cities, many categories of workers brought forward the day of action, sometimes beginning unlimited strikes. Metalworkers at Belgo Mineira in Minas Gerais state, for example, occupied their factory for a number of days. In Campinas, São Paulo state, the strike leaders decided to extend the mobilization from 48 to 72 hours. In São Paulo itself, workers in many workplaces also anticipated the movement. In total, half of the metalworkers went on strike.

The figures estimated by the unions confirm the generalized character of the strike,

although its impact was uneven (see box). The strike's success has altered the relationship of forces and changed the political situation to the workers' advantage.

Quantitatively, the general strike affected all the states and territories in the country. It mobilized workers in the towns and countryside in every corner of Brazil. A number of localities that had no previous tradition of struggle and where strikes had never been seen before joined in the mobilization. From the Amazon to the industrialized southern central region — albeit unevenly — a total of 35 million strikers responded to the united strike call made by the United Workers' Confederation (CUT) and the General Workers' Confederation (CGT). Its scope both numerically and geographically — since it covered the whole country — is a clear indication of the merging of struggles at a national level.

A step forward for workers' unity

Qualitatively, the general strike represented a step forward in the building of unity in struggle. This time, unity was somewhat easier to achieve than usual. This was partly due to the weakness of the CGT, which was forced to tag along behind the CUT, and partly because the joint struggle against the austerity plan's wage freeze rattled the reformist and class collaborationist leaderships, who had previously been oriented towards the objective of a social pact. The militant slogans against the "Thieves' plan" — direct, simple and easy to understand, even by the least experienced and politicized workers — made the way forward from the economic struggle to the political level clear. The CUT and those trade unionists sensitive to the vital interests and aspirations of the workers were bolstered during this test of strength.

At the political level, the trade-union movement was able to make use of its broad capacities for initiatives and of the self-confidence built up by the workers' movement after the recent victories in the municipal elections. It took the initiative and began an offensive against the government and the bosses. The March 14-15 action marked a break from isolated strikes and the predominance of the service and civil servants' sectors. It was an audacious united mobilization led by the proletariat in the ABC working-class suburbs of São Paulo, the concentrations of metalworkers from Volta Redonda in the state of Rio de Janeiro and from Vale do Aço in Minas Gerais, shoulder to shoulder with the unions in the big urban centres.

The strike also had important repercussions in the countryside — for example thousands and thousands of agricultural workers from Pernambuco joined the workers' demonstration in Recife. There were many other examples of broad solidarity and sympathy from the population in the industrial regions of São Paulo. ★

The strike and the political crisis

THE GENERAL strike came at a time when the crisis of the ruling classes' political front was intensifying in the run-up to the presidential elections due to be held in November. The following article is from *Em Tempo*, monthly paper of the Socialist Democracy current inside the Workers Party.

D OUBTS were expressed even among the bourgeoisie, not only about the specific issue of the wage freeze. They went almost so far as to justify the general strike.

The most important example was that of the President of the São Paulo Stock Exchange, Eduardo Rocha Azevedo, a supporter of Ronaldo Caiado of the UDR. In substance he stated that many industrialists had made a lot of money out of the price readjustment that preceded the price freeze. They were therefore in a position to pay higher wages without raising prices. It seemed that he had drawn the conclusion that for the time being the capitalists should be cautious.

The group whose interests are most immediately at stake is the commercial bourgeoisie who are at loggerheads with the industrialists over the issue of prices and of the distribution of the surplus value between the two sectors. The president of the Chamber of Commerce, Abram Szajman accused the industrialists of being "backward and obscurantist" and of going after "easy money". The industrialists have promised to reply. Many beans get spilt in the course of these mutual accusations.

The final resort of those who want to condemn the general strike is to claim that it was a political strike. This is close to being a cry of despair. Nobody, in fact, made at any time any attempt to hide the political character and content of the strike. It is obvious that a protest by tens of millions against the economic policy of the government, a massive demonstration against the national authorities, and open denunciation of the way that people's wages are being stolen under the "Thieves' Plan" are all political acts.

This charge against the workers' movement rebounds on the government, since it is the regime's determination to hamstring the workers' movement politically. All this only serves to strengthen Lula's candidacy.

Another "argument" used by the officials and bosses is to claim that the success of the strike was due solely to the fact that transport was paralyzed at the behest of the municipal councils controlled by the PT.

Public transport paralyzed all over Brazil

But, if this is the case, why was there also a transport strike in municipalities such as Rio de Janeiro which are not led by the PT? Public transport was paralyzed by strikes throughout the whole country. Could it be that the idea of depriving these sectors of the right to strike is being contemplated? The press reported that Mrs. Dorotheia from the Ministry of Transport had talked about such a possibility. This comes from someone who wants to revive the defunct social pact!

Even in those parts of São Paulo which are served by the train or metro, which were not on strike, the workers in the big multinational firms went on strike. These firms' own transport services were not working because there were not enough passengers.

Secondly a PT local council is there to support strikes, not repress them. The capitalists are angry because they have found that they cannot buy the PT's elected representatives with offers of government funds. (See *IV* 161, April 17, 1989.) Olivia Dutra on a picket line, Erundina refusing to send the police to run the buses, Buaiz physically confronting police violence — these are all signs of the changes set in motion by the PT's recent victories. The PT uses its power to support the people. And if the state machine cannot be used



for that purpose then it will have to be replaced by something more adequate.

Another weapon used against the general strike was the role of Antonio Medeiros, the leader of the metalworkers' union in São Paulo. The slanders against the general strike of March 14/15 were in contrast with the praise lavished on the isolated and partial strikes led by Medeiros. He is regularly showered with praise by Mario Amato, the President of the Employers' Federation (FIESP), just as he was previously praised to the skies by the aspirant President Leonel Brizola.

Medeiros was a parasite on the strike

What did Medeiros, who refused to participate in the leadership of the strike as a representative of the CGT, do that was so useful and constructive? He offered the bourgeoisie an alternative. Instead of uniting the workers and concentrating their forces in the general strike, he kept them isolated at the factory level. The effect of this fragmentation is to dilute the strength of the workers and would inevitably lead to leaving them defenceless in the face of a new offensive by the employers. The crumbs gained one day will be lost the next.

Medeiros took advantage of the general strike to increase the number of local and limited agreements. Although he supported the action, he was in reality a parasite on the general strike. The results that he is so proud of are spurious. In reality he lowered the level of wage increase demanded from a minimum of 40% to a maximum of 29%. This was a good deal for the employers frightened by the general strike.

It is thus necessary to patiently explain to the metalworkers of São Paulo in the grip of Medeiros that they are isolated, weakened and vulnerable to the blows of the bosses. But if they were to unite with other workers, and first of all with their fellow metalworkers of the ABC suburbs under the banner of the CUT, then their strength would be multiplied.

In the second phase of the battle, the government ended up by contradicting itself, when it was compelled to recognize the real wage losses of the workers, which it had previously denied. The Employers' Federation for its part has decided to reconsider its previous refusal to pay a wage increase and has also had to recognize that the general strike was justified. This shows clearly who the winners were in this national confrontation.

The independent class-struggle workers' movement now has the responsibility to formulate and spread the lessons of this memorable episode in the class struggle. The bourgeoisie will also be drawing its own conclusions and will return to the fray with fury and hatred.

This discussion will have to take place

in the course of the struggle. We do not have the time to stop and think, and the workers cannot go on a spiritual retreat to meditate on the general strike.

The first lesson of the general strike is the example of mass mobilization around basic economic demands. In order to be a truly general strike, the movement had to draw in new layers of non-politicized workers without any previous experience of the struggle and give them a baptism of fire.

Being general, however, the strike was inevitably political, and this fact raised the working class to a higher level of understanding and action. The level of the class struggle was raised to higher thresholds by means of the most basic economic demands. That is the dialectic of the general strike.

The most responsible union leaderships and the most politically aware workers are involved in discussions based on the clear facts observed in the heat of the struggle. They wonder why, in spite of their aspirations and their dedication, the strike only received its decisive impulse during the last few days of its preparation.

It seems clear that there were signs of a lack of confidence in the strike and in an adequate response from the masses. The final surge was full of energy and vitality. But there was a pause before the big mobilization was launched. Why?

Two facts provide the most likely answer. One is the negative experience of the last attempt to organize a general strike in November 1987. The other is a structural reason, that is to say, the problems in building the CUT and the individual unions, which need to enlarge and improve their grassroots organization in order to measure up to the dimensions of the impending struggles. This also involves the development of a layer of competent medium level leaders.

Weakness of political leadership

A sense of responsibility and a determination to avoid mistakes, dictated a very cautious and moderate approach to preparations for the strike in many cases. Perhaps there was also a lack of political preparation.

But the situation now is very different and much better. It seems that the lack of a middle leadership was the crucial weakness, given that the leadership of a strike of these dimensions could not left to the 14 members of the national leadership.

When there are only a handful of people taking the responsibility for transmitting the overall orientation and instructions, adjusting them to local conditions and transmitting the living experiences of the masses back to the central leadership, these few are overworked. They try to be in several places at the same time and cannot make proper contacts with a whole

series of sectors in the country.

The broadening of the middle layer of union leaders would also ensure the renovation and rejuvenation of the union leaderships.

A criticism should also be made of the largely spontaneous nature of the popular support for the strike. There was not systematic work started early enough to build up the material support needed by the workers in their confrontation with the government. This is a sign that the PT is not sufficiently involved in the great struggle against the "plano Verão". At every level the leadership of the PT took the easy option of leaving things to the leadership of the CUT.

This default reflects a political overestimation of the trade union struggle, which also explains the absence of a serious attempt to educate politically the young workers who are coming to the fore in the workers' movement.

Good grounds for confidence in the future

Despite all this we have been through a stimulating and enriching experience. The response of the workers passed all expectations, just as the masses surprised the leaders in the recent municipal elections.

There are good grounds for confidence in the morale and level of understanding of the people and the workers. The general strike has consolidated this determined and confident frame of mind and rooted it in the political and trade union movements.

A great wave of strikes, sector by sector, spreading contagiously to the more isolated factories until whole categories of workers are involved, is a real possibility.

The wage demands of the working class are more and more clearly intersecting with the struggle for non-payment of the foreign debt. The capitalist government is trapped by the vicious circle of the debt. Whatever it does, the debt gets bigger and cannot be shaken off. The bourgeoisie is powerless to deal with the debt crisis. As a result it tries to squeeze the money to pay the interest and the dividends out of the working class.

The explosive nature of the situation has already been shown by the many important actions that have taken place since the end of the strike in a number of States. A number of militant sectors will be putting in their claims in April and May.

The eruption of a wave of strikes in the second half of April and the first half of May is practically inevitable. This is also when the price freeze on a number of products will end. Inflation may well take off again.

May Day 1989 promises to be intense and exciting, taking place against a background of powerful mass struggles. The lessons of the general strike need to be learned to prepare for what is already looming on the horizon. ★

A new course for the Italian Communist Party?

THE EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) met March 18-22 in Rome. It included 1,039 delegates (1,042 were elected by provincial congresses), representing a little under a million and a half members. There were also 270 "external" delegates, non-party members with the right to speak but not to vote. Thirty-four per cent of the delegates were women, as against 28 per cent of the membership.

A minority document presented by Armando Cossutta, an old leader from the 1950s, was rejected with only 21 votes for and seven abstentions. The Central Committee (CC) was elected by secret ballot. The best known representatives of the right, in particular, found their names frequently crossed out by delegates. For example, Lama, the former chief of the Italian General Confederation of Workers (CGIL) got only 103 votes out of a total of 837 voting. There were 143 abstentions.

According to the party general secretary, Achille Occhetto, this congress marked a turning point for the PCI. He saw it as giving impetus to a "new course" for the party, whose electoral fortunes have been on the wane.¹

LIVIO MAITAN

TO DETERMINE whether the PCI's Eighteenth Congress marked a turning point, as its leaders claim, you have to first analyze the document adopted by the CC in November, which was finally voted by a large majority at the congress.

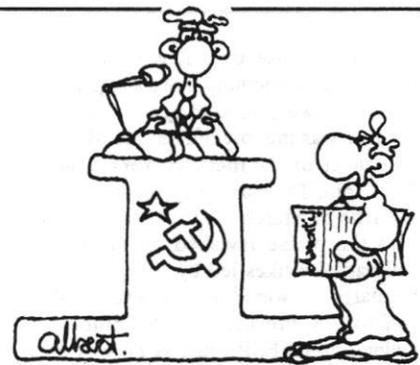
The sections of this document that concern the international situation serve up once again conceptions worked out in the past and which to a large extent take account of the notions developed by the new leading group in the Soviet Union. The first is the idea of interdependence.

According to the document, we have to move on from "a phase marked by division and bipolar competition to a phase recognizing the link of interdependency." Indeed, "a radical turnaround" is supposed to have occurred in international relations. All this, moreover, is supposed to confirm the correctness of the perspective of "a world government" that [former party leader] Berlinguer talked about, and therefore "the need for efficient and democratic

international institutions capable of orienting and overseeing the choices made by the big centers of economic and financial power. In this context, it is necessary to give the maximum support to the UN and the other organizations that belong to the UN family."

As regards Europe more specifically, the document stressed the need for "an institutional reform of the Community that would assert the sovereignty of the European people," as well as the need for "defining, building and reinforcing a European social space."

The second part of the document, which deals with domestic questions, is centered on the idea that "the republic's political and constitutional system went into a crisis stage some years ago." This crisis cannot be resolved by maintaining or refurbishing the present governmental coalition, whose axis is collaboration between the Christian Democracy (DC) and the Socialist Party (PSI). Therefore, the perspective that has to be advanced is that of an "alternative." It is



precisely in this area that a new, or partly new, orientation is taking form.

In fact, the PCI had already started talking about an alternative ("the democratic alternative") about ten years ago, after abandoning its national unity orientation. But there was far from unanimity about what this was supposed to involve, even among the party leaders. Now they seem to agree that "the historic compromise strategy is definitely behind us" and that the alternative is an alternative to the Christian Democrats and their political regime. In order to offer this, the PCI has to work toward "bringing about a change in the PSI's line," without whose collaboration such an alternative cannot be seriously envisaged.

Specialists in inventing new terminology

Inventing new terminology has always been a speciality of the PCI, and Occhetto is carrying on the tradition. The new watchword is "riformismo forte" ("tough reformism"). In this respect the congress document says that the "left has to rethink its central ideas," that is "freedom as the enjoyment of a plurality and variety of goods (material and immaterial) from which no citizen, man or woman, can be excluded; equality of rights, access to culture, education, information, goods and services, without differences being abolished but rather being guaranteed; work, in the context of a radical transformation of the relationship between humanity and nature, development, resources, production and reproduction, working and living time; solidarity as an element of the moral autonomy and sociability of individuals; the value of sexual differences as a full affirmation of freedom for women."

Over and above such general proclamations — whose originality is at least questionable — "tough reformism" is focused, especially in this stage, on constitutional reforms. In this area, discussion has been going on already for years, but the only change introduced so far has been the limitation of the secret ballot in parliament. The PCI itself has made little progress in this

1. Only 26.6% at the last legislative elections in 1987. See IV 124, July 13, 1987.

area. From the outset, it gave up the fight for the only reform that might bring even a little improvement in the functioning of the parliamentary institutions, that is abolition of a totally paralyzing bicameral system.

The PCI explains that "the decisive step" now is a reform of the election law to enable citizens to decide directly on the "program to be implemented in practice and the political forces and individuals to implement it." But no concrete proposal in this regard was made during the congress.

"Economic democracy is a new frontier"

It is significant that the problem of labor, workers and their "centrality" was taken up only in the very last part of the document. But here again there is nothing more than generalities, or in the best of cases democratic demands that in principle no one could challenge. There is not the slightest allusion to any anti-capitalist dynamic of the struggles that are to be waged. To the contrary, the goal of "economic democracy," which is presented as one more objective of "tough reformism," is summed up as follows:

"Economic democracy represents a new frontier of political democracy and its extension in the sphere of the social powers. It must take up the problems in different arenas — reform of the social state; democratization of the enterprises; redistribution of income, wealth and property; the creation of new kinds of enterprises. The fight for economic democracy has to be characterized as a growth of the possibilities for access by the workers to knowledge and to managing the transformations of enterprises and their social and human implications."

Such statements could be shared by liberal democrats and even by vaguely progressive entrepreneurs, especially since the document adds that all these objectives have to be conceived in the framework of an economic orientation "whose primary objective has to be broadening the productive base and reinforcing the overall productivity of the system."

At the congress neither Occhetto's report nor his conclusions introduced any changes or new elements. This is shown by the following passage from his report and from one of his conclusions that illustrates still better the PCI's gradualist approach and the insubstantiality of its "new" responses. Taking up the question of the relationship between the state and the market, Occhetto, dodges the issue by saying: "We are going beyond the old quarrel over whether there should be more market and less state. We are changing the terms of the problem by saying that there has to be a better state and a better market."

His summing up of his, so to speak, strategic approach, is quite as revealing: "The task of a force such as ours, which is

inspired by a strong socialist ideal, is to work in our society for our society — not with the aim of imposing another model on it, but to transform it, to govern it by following a tolerable path of development and by being ready to collaborate with other regions and systems in the world."

In reality, if there is anything "new" by comparison with the the preceding congress it is in the disappearance of any class-struggle approach both in the area of analysis and of orientation. Not only does the PCI no longer present it itself as the party of the working class or the workers. Even the most general term, "the workers' move-



ment," is no longer used (if the reports are accurate, it appeared only in Gorbachev's message). Cossutta was right, therefore, to say that the party "is heading toward a liberal democratic shore." In fact, the party is already beached on it.

Traditional left has evaporated

Like the pre-congress debate in the party press², the debate at the congress itself was less animated and argumentative than at the 1986 congress. The right, overall, had good reasons to be content, especially inasmuch as the the notion of integration into the "European left" is now fully developed, and any idea of a "third force" has been explicitly abandoned.³ Some of the champions of the latter idea (such as Macaluso, a member of the leadership) did of course express reservations, in particular about the the way of taking up the problem of relations with the Socialist Party. But at the moment, such differences are quite secondary.

The more traditional left has simply evaporated. Its main representative, Pietro Ingrao, offered his explicit support both to the CC document and to Occhetto's report. He limited himself to stressing certain themes ("new internationalism," that is good relations with everyone; sexual differences; and so on) and to calling on the party not to give up "its active and exhaustive criticism of the capitalist system of production." As for former members of *Il Manifesto*⁴, Magri adopted an extremely low profile, and Luciana Castellina, who

had waged a battle over an important amendment on international policy at the previous congress, did not even speak.⁵

Thus, Amando Cossutta's group, which put forward an alternative document this time, was left to fight alone against an overwhelming majority in the CC and in the congress. A part of the international press pointed especially to the end of his speech: "After this congress, will there still be room for those who oppose the genetic mutation of the party but want to remain Communists?"⁶

This tougher language and attitude, however, was not accompanied by any evolution in the conceptions of Cossutta and his comrades. Their intrinsic weakness remains their fundamentally reformist approach, and their reference point continues to be the CP of Togliatti's time. Moreover, they can take comfort from the Soviet Union's recent evolution, which they think proves that they were right to oppose the "strappo" (wrenching turn) at the beginning of the 1980s.

Women playing greater role in party

The fact is that Gorbachev does not pay the slightest attention to them, and both in a recent meeting and his spectacular message to the congress, he expressed his support for Occhetto in the most explicit way.⁷ Finally, it has to be added that at the CC meeting that took place immediately after the congress, Cossutta voted for Occhetto as general secretary, explaining that his confidence in him was "indisputable."

The statistical data indicate clearly that women are playing a more and more important role in the party, which is unquestionably an achievement. The proportion of women on the CC, for example, has risen from 18% to 31%. The PCI leaders have accepted, without any reservations or distinctions, the "philosophy of sexual difference." This is a fundamentally opportunist attitude, as confirmed by the fact that generally they do not offer much explanation

2. The written discussion, which was conducted for a little more than two months in the daily *l'Unità* and the weekly *Rinascita*, made it possible to publish only a limited number of contributions, although hundreds of others arrived at the editorial offices. It was much less interesting than on other occasions. On the preparatory discussion for the Seventeenth Congress, see *IV 92*, February 10, 1986.

3. Lama, the former chief of the CGIL, greeted the abandonment of Berlinguer's "third way" view with particular enthusiasm. Another rightist, the president of the cooperatives, Turci, praised Occhetto for "his courage, his intelligence and his flexibility."

4. The *il Manifesto* current split to the left from the PCI in 1969 under the pressure of the social movements and the far left, but the majority later rejoined.

5. On this, see my article on the 1986 congress in *IV 99*, May 19, 1986.

6. Ironically, the most representative bourgeois daily, *Corriere della Sera*, answered "no."

7. Gorbachev appeared at the congress on a giant screen to read his message. He credited Occhetto with the idea of transmitting his message by "this unusual means."

of what this involves, and stick to elliptical interpretations that probably do not satisfy the more radical champions of this "philosophy."

As was to be expected, most of the women who took part in the debate took up this question. But they did not offer any more precise idea of their conceptions, generally restricting themselves to very general appeals. When they were obliged to translate their conceptions into demands, they expressed democratic aspirations that do not seem to be necessarily linked to the theory of the difference.

Three themes proposed on women

Livia Turco, one of the best known leaders and a member of the party secretariat, summed up the themes proposed by Communist Party women as follows:

1) Defending the ethical content of the principle of self-determination of women in regard to sexuality and procreation; preventing abortion; honoring the options of motherhood. 2) Recognizing the rights of working women. 3) Reform of the social state.

The discussion on the feminist question, however, gave the CP a chance to give an additional demonstration of its ecumenism. It offered the platform of the congress to Luce Irigaray⁸, who is more than ever ready to collaborate with the PCI, thereby confirming that the party and its conceptions can fit in quite nicely with ultra-reformist political orientations.

One of the innovations of the Eighteenth Congress was the adoption of statutes that are the end-product of a long evolution and represent an attempt to adjust the statutory forms more to the reality of the organization. The headline in the party daily was quite revealing: "Goodbye, democratic centralism!" The fact is that the PCI insists on the traditional obfuscation that equates democratic and bureaucratic centralism, attributing to the former all the undemocratic features of the latter.

However, you have to give the authors and presenters of these statutes credit for carrying the theoretical justification of this further than social-democratic parties that have been integrated in bourgeois institutions for a century. One of Occhetto's closest collaborators, Fassino, said that the new statutes represented "a model inspired by the democratic and constitutional state." It was also explained that "the statutes introduce a new constitution inspired by the parliamentary model....The Central Committee is conceived as a Chamber of Deputies, the leadership as a government, the Secretariat as the office of the president of the Council of Ministers, and the post of chair of the Central Committee has been introduced."

14 If you take into consideration that the PCI has declared itself favorable to a reinforcement of the premier's powers, it fol-

lows from this that its secretary should play a preponderant role in the leadership. It is true that *l'Unità* has already portrayed the PCI as "the party of Occhetto." It should be noted that while the new statutes establish a series of guarantees for minorities, they continue to exclude the right of tendencies. In fact, Cossutta himself complained about the norms in force for the conference, which made it possible to present his document for a vote in only a very limited number of branches (where, according to him, it got 26% of the vote).

Furthermore, at the congress, a veritable wall was erected against resolutions and amendments adopted by provincial congresses that the leadership was not ready to accept. The worst case was that of amendments adopted by 16 federations calling for an end to the concordat between the Vatican and the Italian state, which dates back to the period of fascism. Finally, an evasive document was imposed by a maneuver that aroused the dissatisfaction of a series of delegates (the former party secretary, Natta, himself abstained).

Leadership elected by secret ballot

On the other hand, the outgoing leadership (or its majority) did not get its way on the question of a secret ballot. Those who wanted to make this conditional in all important cases on a demand from a certain number of delegates (10% to 20%) were beaten. It was decided that in the congress the leaders would be elected by secret ballot, if at least 10% of the delegates demanded it, and that the election of the leading bodies by the CC, the Regional and Provincial Committees and the elections of the control commissions would have to be by secret ballot. It remains to be seen if this measure makes it possible to put an end to the practice of what amounts to essentially coopting members of the leading bodies.

The new CC in fact corresponds quite well both to the spirit of the statutes and to the reality and role of the party. It is now made up of 300 members — a real parliament! — and it includes all the regional secretaries (about 20), 67 provincial secretaries, about 50 deputies and a dozen mayors. It is not hard to imagine who will have the most weight in this unwieldy assembly. It will certainly not be the little group of workers elected (only two workers spoke in the congress).

In the pre-congress period, very sharp debates took place over the question whether the PCI would enter the Socialist group in the European parliament and whether it would unify with the PSI. The latter's secretary, Martelli, an ultra-opportunist maneuverer, raised the idea of a "common home" for Communists and Socialists for 1992. Occhetto's answer was "why not before, if possible?"

It would be quite wrong to pose the problem in purely ideological or purely prag-

matic terms. It is unquestionable that the reasons for the split in the old Socialist Party in 1921 no longer exist today.⁹ The PCI in no way distinguishes itself from the social democratic parties or from the PSI itself. But it does not necessarily follow that a unification is on the agenda.

In fact, the PSI does not for the moment seem to have any intention of changing its orientation. Its game is to exploit all the room it has for maneuvering between the Christian Democrats and the PCI. It wants to maintain its position in the government, with all that this involves in terms of jobs at all levels, while at the same time opposing the Christian Democrats, who are the majority in the government coalition. It thinks that this policy has paid off, and that it will continue to do so for some time.

What is more, the PSI is convinced that the relationship of forces in the workers' movement can evolve further in its favor and that, therefore, a unification could be carried out in terms more favorable to it at a future congress.

These considerations explain why the PSI leader, Craxi, sabotaged a meeting of a PCI delegation with the European Socialist group, for which a date had been set, apparently with his agreement. They explain why he made a very negative assessment of the PCI congress, insinuating that it had broken only very partially with the party's history (which is the opinion of hardly any of the bourgeois observers, whether they are favorable or not to the PCI entering the sphere of the government).

European elections will be important test for PCI

In these conditions — which could have been envisaged well before the congress — the PCI is obliged to defend itself by reasserting its own identity, with the aim in particular of forestalling further electoral decline and a more drastic change in the relationship of forces in favor of the Socialists. For this reason, one of the themes of the congress was proclaiming the party's independence, in a spirit of party patriotism that seemed to have been forgotten.

Occhetto exerted himself to express all this, and apparently he succeeded, to judge from the reactions that he aroused almost everywhere in the party. Whether this effect will last is quite another matter.

In this context, the European elections in June will be an important test for both the PCI and the Socialist Party. ★

8. Irigaray, a psychoanalyst and author of books on women, last September praised the national festival of *l'Unità*, and said among other things that "love is the only answer to all the mental and moral illnesses of our time."

9. In 1921, the Communists split from the Socialist Party on the question of joining the Third International and accepting the famous "21 conditions" it imposed. Unlike what happened at the Congress of Tours in France, the Communist split involved a minority (close to a third of the members).

"We want the right to choose!"

ALMOST 400,000 WOMEN marched through the centre of Rome on April 15. Even the least enthusiastic observers estimated that there were at least 100,000. They were protesting against recent attacks on Law 194, which made abortion legal, and against sexual violence.

LIVIO MAITAN

THE DEMONSTRATION was called by a number of political organizations — the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), the Italian Republican Party (PRI), the Radical Party (PR), the Italian Social Democratic Party (PSDI), Proletarian Democracy (DP) and the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, Italian section of the Fourth International), as well as the women's sections of the two trade union confederations, the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) and the Italian Workers' Union (UIL). There was a contingent of women from France, and messages of solidarity were received from Germany, the Spanish state, Holland and the United States (to be precise, from the National Organization of Women, who organized a massive pro-choice march in Washington on April 9 — see IV 162).

Recent attacks on abortion law

Mobilization for the demonstration took place around the basic demand *vogliamo scegliere* ("we want to choose"). More immediately, women wanted to show their opposition to the recent attacks on the law legalising abortion (law 194) mounted by a variety of conservative and reactionary forces, including the so-called "right to life" movement, the Catholic Church and Carlo Donat Cattin, the Christian Democrat Health Minister. The application of that law

continues to be thwarted by a variety of means, which is why the whole demonstration took up the chant "Apply 194!"

A second factor in the mobilization was the fate of the law on sexual violence, which has got bogged down in endless debates in the two houses of parliament. A few days before the demonstration, just when it seemed as if the law was finally going to be passed, (although with some important limitations, in particular in relation to the rights of young people), the Senate introduced some amendments, that, as the conservative press itself agreed, robbed it of its content. An ad hoc majority made up of the Christian Democracy (DC), the Italian Social Movement (MSI, the neo-fascist party) and some thirty freelancers from other parties voted down a clause which stated that sexual relations between consenting partners over the age of 13 could not be punished. Since Italian law does not provide for legal penalties against those under 13 regardless of the crime, this clause would have effectively put an end to the criminalisation of sexual relations between consenting minors. The Senate's vote reintroduced this notion.

Discussion on sexual violence in marriage

There was also a second important change. The law as passed by the Chamber of Deputies proposed to make any case of sexual violence a criminal offence automatically. In the version as amended by the Senate, however, if the violence takes place in the framework of a marriage, then criminal proceedings will only be initiated if the victim brings charges. It is true that the original version of the clause was a subject of some debate in sections of the women's movement — some felt that it was necessary to uphold the right of women to decide for themselves. But it is clear that only automatic criminal proceedings would offer an adequate guarantee that rape would be punished within marriage as well given that it is very difficult for the majority of women to bring charges against their male partners. The government representative himself commented after the votes had been taken, "we have taken a step backwards in comparison with the *code Rocco*" (the code introduced by the fascists). While it is true that the law must now be taken back to the Chamber of Deputies, which could result in further changes, this cannot be done for at least another six months. This presents the danger that this bill will hang around for a long time, be blocked by procedural questions or be adopted without regard for the most basic rights and aspirations of women. We can be sure that the



pressures in this direction from conservative sectors in society and above all from the church will be powerful.

Furthermore the Pope has not been wasting time. On the day after the demonstration in Rome he made another speech against abortion, stating that "the law must help the citizens to recognize and respect the value of life by means of legislation which embodies the inviolable rights of the person." His conception of the "inviolable rights of the person" is clearly not shared by the hundreds of thousands of women who marched through the streets of the Italian capital.

The Christian Democracy was not of course one of the parties supporting the demonstration. This was to be expected in the light of the struggles which it has led — and lost — against divorce and abortion. Nonetheless the organizing committee of the demonstration thought it necessary to send an open letter to the women of this party. It states:

Women's right to sexual freedom

"We have called this demonstration not in order to urge women to have abortions, but to demand the application of law 194 which allows abortion to be performed legally. We have come into the streets to demand the right of women to sexual freedom and for their right to choose when and where to have a child. It is for this reason that we call for the proper implementation of law 194, as well as further laws to make it more comprehensive and effective.

"We are aware that you, the Christian Democrat women, are ready to discuss some of these points with us. We hope, in any case, that there will be a new and different conformity between words and deeds both in the country and in parliament." ★

15

Unification process in the far left



AT THE END of 1988 discussions began between Democrazia Proletaria (DP), one of the most important organizations of the non-traditional left in Western Europe and the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the Italian section of the Fourth International. The aim of these discussions was to explore the possibility of the militants of the LCR joining the DP as a group.

These discussions were positive and at the congress of the LCR in February 1989 there was a large majority in favour of entry into the DP. At the end of March the Delegate Assembly of the DP took a parallel decision and instructed their leadership to bring the unification to fruition before the European elections in June. The discussion on the conditions for the entry of the LCR into the DP are currently underway.

We publish below major extracts of the resolution accepted by the LCR congress, which appeared in the March issue of the LCR's paper, *Bandiera Rossa*.

DEMOCRAZIA Proletaria has been a positive force on the Italian left, insofar as it has succeeded in retaining important layers of militants on the left, within a Marxist framework and with the perspective of a working-class alternative. However DP is now facing an identity crisis which could lead to the disintegration of these gains if the discussions which are currently underway within it do not produce a solution in time.

Democrazia Proletaria has organized a significant part of the militants who went through the experience of the struggles of the 1970s as well as of the radicalized youth, environmental and peace activists who emerged from the social struggles and mass movements of the 1980s. It has thus helped to launch important political battles for the defence of workers' interests, the

defence of democratic rights and also within the anti-nuclear and anti-militarist struggle.

The DP's identity was formed in these battles. It has been one of participation by its supporters in attempts to effect radical changes. It has also involved an effort to present an alternative to the disastrous policies of the Communist Party (PCI). This project itself, however, is now in crisis because it has proved unable to provide answers to the basic problems of programme and strategy posed by the bankruptcy of the traditional left.

The wide-ranging debate that has opened up in the DP must be carried through systematically and thoroughly, and must address these basic problems. This is the only way in which the organization can counteract the tendencies towards disintegration which threaten it.

The discussion must now turn to the problem of the party, since only a redefinition of the concept of the party that is to be built can reawaken the energies, restimulate the initiative and bring about a reorganization of militant layers.

Realignment of class-struggle forces

That is why the national congress of the LCR set the objective of working towards a recomposition of all those forces who base themselves on Marxism and the class struggle, and who are ready to work for the construction of a revolutionary and anti-capitalist alternative. It is in this context that we are proposing unity with the DP, in the form of the LCR joining as a group as part of a larger process, as a means towards the realignment of potential class struggle forces on the left, which are at present in danger of being cast adrift by the crisis.

A unification which represented a real fusion of the social radicalism and prestige of the DP and the heritage of the experiences, initiatives and militancy of the LCR could show all those who wish to remain active that it is possible to counteract the present trends on the left towards adaptation to the system.

On the basis of a class struggle and revolutionary identity, it will be possible to construct an alternative project capable of addressing the new and old contradictions in the trade unions and in the struggle against unemployment, in the fight for the emancipation of the masses of the Mezzogiorno (the South, the poorest region of Italy,) in the social struggles, against rearmament and imperialism, in the anti-racist struggle, in defence of the environment, in the mobilizations of young people and women. Without effective conscious intervention, these contradictions could not be overcome in a positive fashion.

Regroupment and clarification

Such a unity project would, furthermore, establish an important means for an attempt to clarify and regroup those in the CP who continue to aspire towards change and socialism, and reject the free enterprise new course of Occhetto [see article on p.12].

To be sure, this is not yet an overall strategic response equal to the problems and challenges that the left and the workers' movement has to confront. This is only the first element of such a strategy, an attempt to stem the progress of the crisis, halt the political and ideological disarray, re-establish a clear basis for class-struggle initiatives and restart the process of reflection about fundamental questions.

The LCR has gone through a positive political and organizational experience

which has allowed it to grow in the recent period, improve its image and test out the strategic options which underpin its programme and political activity.

The congress has made entry into DP its objective because it is aware of the scope of the crisis of the left and the dangers of political regression that the crisis implies. At the same time we want to invest our forces, our experiences and our links with the Fourth International in a party-building project that can offer a more adequate answer to today's problems.

The LCR has made this choice with the intention of participating fully in building DP, respecting its statutes and organizational mechanisms. However, although we will be giving up the independent form to which we have hitherto adhered, the comrades who have taken part in this experience do not propose to abandon their link with the Fourth International, for the following reasons:

- The International represents the only instrument for linking up the experiences of the revolutionary movements on a world scale that exists at the present time. For DP to have to relate to the fact of the Fourth International (which would not exclude the possibility of establishing relations with other political currents on the alternative left) would provide an incentive for the development of the internationalist profile that is indispensable for dealing with the problems posed by the class struggle, in a world where the ruling classes have strengthened their centralization on the world scale, while the oppressed classes have been fragmented and trapped in particularism.

Common development of theory and practice

- It offers a framework for the common development of theory and practice for revolutionary organizations confronted by capitalist integration in Europe. It is necessary to meet the bourgeois attacks with the unity and co-ordination of the workers' struggle.

The coming together in action of different revolutionary currents could be an important factor working in that direction. Already this June, with the European elections, we have the possibility of counterposing the project of a worker's Europe to the Europe of capital.

- The relevance of our heritage and our political programme is shown by our ability to understand the nature of the crisis in the East and the possible responses to it. These are essential instruments for building a communist alternative to the crisis and bankruptcy of the traditional forces of the workers' movement in the West, and a genuine socialist alternative both to the power of the ruling classes in the capitalist countries and to the bureaucracy in the countries of so-called "actually-existing socialism". ★

"It is not simply a matter of tidying up the political map"

AFTER THE LCR CONGRESS *Bandiera Rossa* spoke with Giovanni Russo Spina, the general secretary of Democrazia Proletaria on the prospects for the integration of the militants of the LCR into DP. We publish some extracts below.

DOCUMENT

I HAVE a very positive assessment of the results of the LCR congress. I would like to remind you that we have been proposing that the LCR enter the DP as a group for some years. It is not simply a matter of tidying up the political map. We respect the identity of every organization on the ideological as well as on the political level.

Nonetheless, in the present phase of crisis on the left and on the class struggle left as well, it seems to us that it would be a step forward if different experiences, characterized by their great intellectual and cultural worth, as well as by the value of their project and their political practice were to be brought together into a single collective effort. It would run counter to the disintegration, the fragmentation and the confusion, which, to be blunt, are prevalent on the Italian left....

Facing up to the PCI's new course

In the next period we will have to face up to the new course of the PCI which, in a certain sense, is trying to escape from the stagnation of recent years, by introducing an element of dynamism. Some parts of the PCI majority document offer inter-

esting aspects and positive elements that could allow us to work together. Among these are the theme of sexual difference, the transformation of the party through taking into account the issues raised by feminism, and the large scale turn towards the movement in defence of the environment. All this however is incorporated into a free enterprise programme that we do not share....

We must also pay more attention to what is going on in the Catholic and Christian milieus. We are very aware on this issue, but we must discuss it further, in order to fully grasp the consequences of the decision at the last congress of the Christian Democrats, which calls for it to continue to run the state apparatus, at a time when that organization is in decline. We have to try to grasp the social effects this will have.

"We want to be enriched by a collective heritage"

A big debate is going to start among the ecologists — indeed it has already started, partly as a result of our activity — between those who believe that it is possible to have a project for the environment that is objectively anti-capitalist (that is, a critique of production options, of the quality of work and of production) and those who place the Green experiment in the framework of purely institutional processes....

As I have said on other occasions, what is involved here is not the entry of the militants of the LCR on an individual basis. We want to be enriched by a collective heritage, a leadership, a group of militants that, although small in numbers, is an important element in the history of the international communist movement and is thus, if you like, also an element of DP's own history, insofar as it involves the struggle against Stalinism, that is to say, against bureaucratic or state capitalist deformations.

I do not want to deal here with the problem of the analysis of the countries of the East, a subject on which we are probably not in total agreement, and which mirrors a larger discussion developed by theorists such as Bettelheim, sometimes with changes of position. This discussion is more than just historical or cultural. It is also a political question, as you often insist, because it involves one's attitude to what is going on now in those countries, and therefore, an assessment of the Gorbachev phenomenon, of the social forces which support him and the likely outcome. We will have to discuss all this together. But in any case I believe that it is of the greatest importance to grasp the dynamic of contemporary events in Soviet society, the results of which are not predetermined. One possible result is a straightforward opening to the Western market and to its laws, but there is also the possibility of the development of a social dynamic that will stimulate and help to regroup the forces of the proletariat in a

revolutionary direction.

In my view it is important to avoid the mechanical transfer of the international affiliations of the comrades of the LCR inside the DP so that it becomes a wall which cuts off a part of the membership which maintains its own organizational structure. It is important to avoid such a separation and a situation where the comrades from the ex-LCR act as a "pressure group" in the debate, especially at the most difficult moments in the life of the organization. I believe that appropriate solutions can be found.

The comrades who enter DP from the LCR must have the right to participate fully in the democratic life inside DP and in its present debate, which is rich and sophisticated and by no means as horrible as the bourgeois press suggests. There is plenty of room for discussion and activity. At the same time the LCR comrades must integrate themselves in the decision-making structures of the organization, and respect the rules of the game established in the statutes and the decisions of the leading bodies.

"A creative solution to international links"

I believe that this framework will make it possible, given mutual goodwill and the renunciation of factional attitudes, to find a creative solution at both the political and organizational levels to the problem of the international links. Perhaps this can be achieved through the publications and other means which DP has or perhaps by participation by DP in the life of the International, in a way which does not imply that DP as a whole would be involved.

It is our view that it is not necessary to form an International at this time. This position is neither a whim nor a prejudice. We believe that the processes at work on the international level are very wide-ranging, and that our relations must be better developed and involve wider forces than those that would identify with an International.

But, in this framework, and with collective discipline, I believe that it would be possible for the comrades to safeguard their historical heritage through their affiliation to the International. We will find a solution not through pragmatism or half-way houses, but in a political way. ★



Historic strike of Narmada Dam workers

THE LABOUR movement in India has been on the retreat for a long time, in particular since the defeat of the Bombay textile workers' strike in 1983. Since then opposition movements have tended to center around environmental questions.

The following article describes the eruption of a major strike in which the demand for trade-union rights has come together with environmental and social protests. The main union leader in the strike, a member of the Indian section of the Fourth International, has been wounded in an assassination attempt.

AMAR JESANI

OVER 2,000 workers went on indefinite strike January 30 against J.P. Associates, the main contractors for the Sardar Sarovar Dam. The dam is being built over the River Narmada at Kevadia Colony in the Bharuch district of Gujarat state. This strike has now entered a critical phase, with an attack on the strikers' chief organizer, the general secretary of the Vadodara Kamdar Union (VKU), Thakorebhai Shah. An indefinite hunger strike was begun on April 4, 1989, the day the strike completed 65 days, in front of the main office of the Narmada Nigam company in Baroda, Gujarat.

The Narmada Valley Development Project is the largest single river project in India to date. This scheme involves the construction of 30 major, 135 medium and 3,000 minor irrigation works along the River Narmada and 41 of its tributaries. One of the largest dams, the Sardar Sarovar, will submerge 19 villages in Gujarat, 33 in Maharashtra and 182 in Madhya Pradesh.

Tens of thousands of people living in those villages will be permanently displaced to make way for the dam. Singled out for resettlement are the weaker and more disadvantaged section of the population, most of whom are from Scheduled Tribes (tribals) and Scheduled Castes (dalits).

It is well-documented now that the government has neither the resources nor the will to ensure speedy and equitable rehabilitation for those ousted. Besides, resettlement of tribals will lead to a major social and cultural disruption of their lives. In the last few years those slated for removal have gradually organized themselves and are

agitating for a comprehensive resettlement policy.

The government has responded to their agitation by imposing the colonial Official Secrets Act at the dam site and in the surrounding area. The Act prohibits all "outsiders" from entering the proscribed area, thereby preventing the dam workers and thousands of the displaced from mobilizing their activists.

Arrests for spying and conspiracy

On January 30, the day the dam workers began their strike, hundreds of people in the area demonstrated against the Official Secrets Act. Eighteen activists were arrested under the charge of spying and conspiring with the dam workers to dynamite the completed section of the dam. The Vadodara Kamdar Union, the dam workers' organization, participated in the January 30 demonstration against the Act, initiating close links between the dam workers and the displaced.

The basic issue involved in the dam workers' strike is the violation of their fundamental human rights. They are not striking for higher wages. They are also not striking to stop construction of the dam definitively, although environmentalists have presented a strong case against the dam based on the ecological disaster it is likely to cause.

Construction workers everywhere in India are treated in the most inhuman way. For them, completing a construction project means dispersal, transfer or outright dismissal, because they get neither any job

security nor any social security. They are part of the unorganized sector of the labour force. Their employers, the contractors and builders, have strong underground (mafia) and political connections. Black market money transactions are most rampant in the construction business. These employers are a law unto themselves; they hardly deign to recognize the country's labour law.

It is also immaterial whether the real employer is the government or a private company. While constructing the stadiums and villages for staging the Asiad (the Asian games), the government flouted all the basic labour laws, including the Minimum Wages Act.

A human rights group had to take this issue to the Supreme Court, which ruled in favour of the workers.

Still, the government failed to comply with the Supreme Court order. And the workers lacked the organization to pursue the fight.

Similarly, in the case of the Narmada Dam workers, the ultimate employer is the government,

and the government established the Narmada Nigam corporation. Here, too, the workers' basic human rights are being shamelessly violated by government-appointed contractors. However, the situation is radically different because the workers are organized, and they have gone on strike to get the labour laws implemented.

Several independent organizations, individuals and journalists have responded to the struggle of these workers, and their reports have given much needed credibility to the workers' demands. An investigation team appointed by the Bombay Union of Journalists, the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights and the People's Union for Civil Liberties has described in detail the inhuman condition of workers and their intense oppression.

A journalist from *The Indian Post*, Niche-ta Desai, managed to get through the police and the contractors' thugs to visit the Kavadia Colony labour camp. His report on the front page of his paper brought the workers' plight to the general public. From this account and others, the following picture emerges:

The workers are forced to work 12 to 16 hours a day, and are only being paid for eight hours. They are not issued with identity cards. When wages are paid, no pay slips are provided, and no attendance mus-

ters are kept. Thus, whenever individual workers raise their voices they are summarily dismissed, and afterwards they have almost nothing to prove that they ever worked at the dam site.

This practice is compounded by the main contractor leasing out parts of the work to sub-contractors. And while doing that, the contractor transfers workers from one sub-contractor to another, thus making it difficult to prove who is the principal employer. Such transfers lead to breaks in services affecting workers' claim to various benefits, such as gratuity [severance pay].



(After five years service, workers are entitled to 15 days' pay for every year worked at the end of their service).

Further, in violation of the fundamental rights granted in the constitution, women workers are not paid equal wages for equal work. Workers are given no medical benefits or medical care. The nature of the work is such that many workers sustain injuries while on duty. Instead of giving them medical care and statutory compensation, the injured workers are thrown off the job.

Parallels with Bombay textile strike

The most contentious issue, however, is the workers' right to organize. Just as in the historic Bombay textile strike (1982-83), the workers are calling for recognition of the Vadodara Kamdar Union as their central demand. The right of workers to organize is one of the basic rights inscribed in the constitution, but there is no provision requiring the employers automatically to recognize the workers' organization.

The 1982 textile workers' strike was called by the Maharashtra Girmi Kamdar Union led by Datta Samant, which had the overwhelming support of the workers with some 90 per cent of them following the

strike call. But the government and the employers stubbornly refused to recognize the union, and took brutal measures to crush the strike.

The situation of the Narmada workers is similar. After the strike started, the contractor's stooges floated their own union. Instead of negotiating with the striking workers, the company is holding secret parleys with its own company union.

Through this union, the company has announced acceptance of two demands — scrapping house rents for workers staying in the labour camp and reducing meal

prices, which were increased by over 100 per cent a few days before the strike. However, it is not prepared to recognize the VKU, the authentic union of the workers.

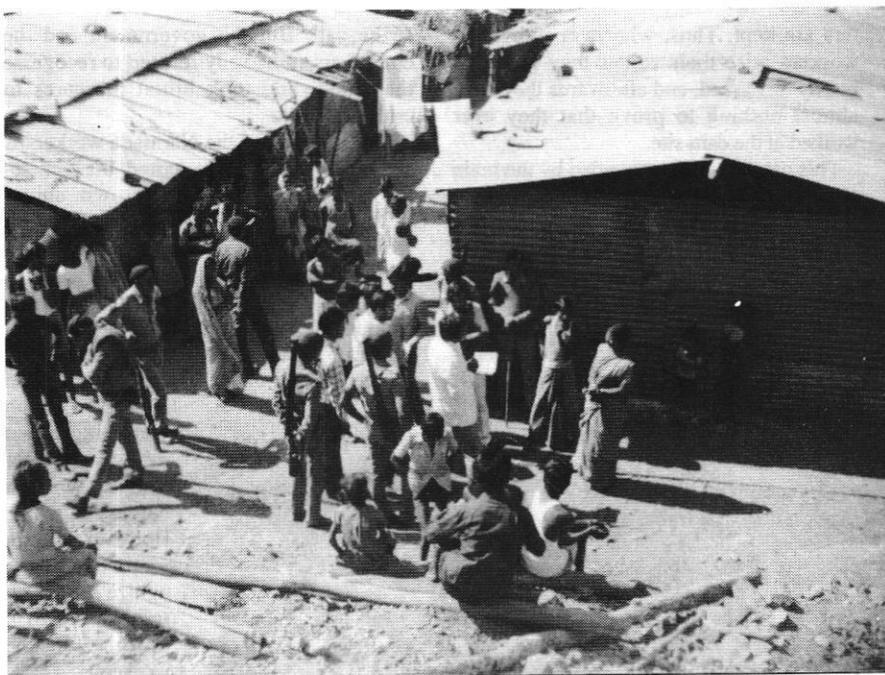
The workers know very well that recognition of their union is essential to the survival of their organization. In fact, the labour camp, including the land it is built on, is owned by the contractor. Even before the imposition of the Official Secrets

Act, the contractor's security guards refused to allow union activists to meet workers inside the labour camp. In order to sustain the union's day-to-day activities, access to the labour camp is crucial. Thus, the right to organize has no meaning if the necessary conditions for sustaining union activity are not provided.

Many workers have made heroic sacrifices in their attempt to build the union over the last year and a half. The first attempt was made in September 1987. Six workers who approached the Vadodara Kamdar Union in its office in Baroda were summarily dismissed the following day and forced to leave the Kevadia Colony without collecting their belongings.

On March 15, 1988, workers came together and decided to participate in the Bharat Bandh [India strike] organized by trade unions and opposition parties. Three of the workers' leaders were immediately rounded up and held incommunicado in their rooms. In the evening, they were called together. In the presence of the subdivisional magistrate and the company's officers, the police sub-inspector forced them at gun point to sign back-dated transfer orders. They were then promptly thrown out of the labour camp.

Another resemblance between the Narmada Dam workers' strike and the textile



**Armed police
combing the labour
camp at Kevadia
Colony to arrest
strike leaders
(Photos by dam
workers)**

strike is the collaboration of workers and peasants in support of the strikers. It is well known that during the strike of 250,000 Bombay textile workers, strikers went home to their villages and mobilized immense material and political support among the peasants. Given the location of the dam site and the striking workers' solidarity with the displaced landless labourers and peasants, a worker-peasant alliance developed almost spontaneously.

As the strike got underway, the major concern of the underpaid dam workers was how to avoid starvation. The leadership of the Vadodara Kamdar Union worked tirelessly to mobilize material support from other trade unions, human rights groups, women's organizations and other concerned individuals and groups.

Government's propaganda barrage

A major problem was the government's and the contractor's propaganda barrage aimed at dividing the Gujarati workers and peasants from the non-Gujarati workers. Most of the non-Gujarati dam workers stay in the labour camp, whereas the Gujarati workers come from nearby villages. However, class instinct ultimately overcame regionalism, and in no time peasants from the surrounding villages declared their support for the striking workers.

A handbill issued by various village leaders blunted the government's attempt to portray the strike as the handiwork of non-Gujaratis who were trying to deprive Gujarat of its well-deserved and needed dam.

The peasants contributed materially as well. Grain was collected for the striking workers, supplementing the VKU's efforts to keep the workers supplied with minimum rations. Some of the organizations of the displaced also rose to the occasion. They collected grain, not only from the vil-

lages of Gujarat but also from Maharashtra. Undoubtedly, without such solidarity from village people, the striking workers could not have held out.

The dam workers' labour camp was converted into a concentration camp reminiscent of fascist brutality. The private army of heavies paid and pampered by the contractor is being shamelessly aided by the police to break the spirit of the striking workers. Section 144, which prohibits meetings of four or more people, has been imposed on the entire area and never lifted. Even peaceful demonstrations are attacked by the police and hired thugs.

In February 58 workers were arrested for undertaking a peaceful march. They were kept in jail for more than 10 days. The district magistrate refused to grant bail. Ultimately, an appeal was made to the High Court to get them released.

A systematic campaign to terrorize the workers is being carried out by the contractor's thugs. Workers are being kidnapped, in the presence of police, beaten up and tortured. So far, 17 workers, including women, have been mercilessly tortured. Many have suffered broken arms and legs, and one person was made deaf.

Over 400 workers arrested after protests

On March 8 this year, the workers who had come out of the labour camp were assaulted by the director of the contractor company in the presence of the police sub-inspector. When some 520 rushed to the rescue of these workers, the police resorted to firing in the air to disperse them. To protest against such behaviour on the part of the police, on March 11, workers staged a peaceful demonstration by squatting in front of the company gates.

In the presence of the police, officers of the company, along with their goons,

resorted to stone-throwing, and attempted to run over the workers with a staff bus. Many workers, including two women, were seriously injured. Over and above this, the police, acting like dutiful servants of the contractor, arrested 436 workers and charged them with various offences, including one charge of attempted murder.

The driver of the bus that was brought in to run over the workers filed a complaint with the police that the workers had tried to kill him. It is ridiculous to believe that more than 500 workers tried to kill one person and failed even to injure him. Arrested workers were denied bail, and dispatched to jails in Ahmedabad, Baroda, Bharadi, Rajpipla, Godhra and Chhota Udaipur. They were released only after the appeal to the High Court.

Murderous attack on strike leader

The March 8 and March 11 incidents, however, were a slap in the face of the government, which had till then consistently maintained that there was no strike at the Narmada Dam. After the arrest of 58 workers in February, it changed its story, saying that only 150 workers were on strike, but that this was not affecting the dam work.

After the March 11 incident, the government was forced to issue a statement that about 500 workers were on strike. The way the government kept changing its story made ordinary people who had been unaware of what was happening at the dam site, ask the government some uncomfortable questions.

At this time, the Vadodara Kamdar Union announced on March 27 its intention to take the campaign to the state capital, Gandhinagar. The next day, workers from Baroda held a rally in front of the office of the deputy labour commissioner for his failure to intervene and bring the contractor to the negotiating table. All these events unnerved the company, and it sent a hired thug to eliminate the strike's central leader, Thakhorebhai Shah.

On March 25, after the rally in front of the deputy labour commissioner's office, Thakhorebhai Shah had to come back to the union office, and had a discussion with the leaders of the workers. He also met his comrades from the Inquilabi Communist Sangathana [Revolutionary Communist League, Indian section of the Fourth International], of which he is also a central leader.

After these meetings, as he came out on the road and went toward his scooter, he was stabbed from behind. It was very dark, and fortunately he had bent over to kick-start his scooter, so the assailant missed his target. Instead of hitting him in the kidneys, the knife slashed one of Thakorebhai Shah's buttocks. A comrade accompanying him chased the assailant, but under the cover of darkness, he escaped. Bleeding, Thakorebhai was rushed to hospital. It was found that the assailant had inflicted a 12cm-long wound, needing 14 stitches.

Immediately labour leaders, human rights organizations and other concerned people condemned this attempt to assassinate Thakorebhai. On April 1, hundreds of workers from Baroda marched in unison to protest against the assault. They demonstrated in front of the police commissioner's office. The pressure of public opinion and press reports criticizing the government rocked the Gujarat State Assembly, forcing the chief minister to revoke the Official Secrets Act.

As already announced, in order to take the agitation to the state capital a hunger strike of workers was to begin on April 3 in front of the State Assembly, which was then in session. However, in a sudden development, the Assembly was adjourned on March 31. So the workers decided to shift the venue to the office of the Narmada Nigam in Baroda. Accordingly, on April 4, after 65 days of strike, 65 workers began their indefinite fast in front of the Narmada Nigam office in Baroda.

Dam workers set militant example

All the signs are that the state has thrown its full weight behind the company, and that, as in the textile strike, it is taking the dam workers' action very seriously and is determined to smash it. In these efforts, the Narmada Nigam and its chair, Sanat Mehta, a former socialist and labour leader, is actively conniving with the company to deprive workers of their rights.

Clearly, the government knows that if building workers are able to organize and win at one place, the unorganized workers at many other big construction sites would be encouraged to launch struggles against their inhuman exploitation. Therefore, it wants to nip the democratic aspirations of the unorganized workers in the bud.

However, the Narmada Dam workers have already thwarted the government's attempts for a long enough time to spread their message to thousands of such workers all over the county. They are determined to win their demands. But even if they lose, their movement has already set an example that will inspire more and more workers to rise to get their fundamental democratic rights. ★

(Stop press: the workers decided to end the strike after 85 days. We hope to have an update shortly.)

Manifesto for Europe

THE APPROACHING European elections have focused discussion on the capitalist integration of Europe.

Revolutionary organizations have to take up the challenge involved in the implementation of the Single European Act (SEA¹) for the workers' movement. The starting point should be an analysis and an interpretation of the present phase of European integration, of the capitalist project and of its contradictions.

The European sections of the Fourth International have already begun this process. These organizations are continuing the discussion while collaborating on common campaigns and initiatives. In addition, a number of the sections (in Portugal, Belgium, Luxemburg, Italy and Greece) will be presenting candidates in the June elections, either independently or in an alliance with other forces.

This manifesto is a first step marking a process of collective reflection that will be continued in future discussions.

DOCUMENT

THE JUNE 1989 European elections are going to be mainly centered around the theme of the "single market" of 1992 and the Single European Act (SEA). After years of austerity and growing unemployment, European unification is the focus of hopes for new growth and a big reduction in unemployment. Built up into a real myth in certain countries, the promises of the big internal market of 1992 constitute a major ideological offensive of the bourgeoisie. The European elections will be the occasion for attributing this Europe with miraculous virtues with the implication that the crisis, which cannot be overcome at a national level, can be transcended on a Europe-wide scale.

For the United Socialist States of Europe

1 For years we have defended the idea of a United Socialist States of Europe against all national chauvinism and concepts of

"national unity". We are for a Europe without frontiers, that develops comradeship between workers, brings down artificial barriers between the peoples and frees oppressed nationalities from the straight-jacket of the old states. We are for a Europe that opens up new and broad horizons for the development of material wealth, of technological resources and of human capacities, which are today fragmented and confined in narrow nation states. We are for a Europe rid of all inequality between men and women. We are for a Europe that upgrades social gains (in wages, jobs and social protection) to the level of the most advanced and that promotes equal rights to jobs, health and education — the most basic of human rights. We are for a Europe oriented towards the future, capable of overcoming regional inequalities, of foreseeing the damage caused by the race for

1. The SEA, signed on February 17, 1986, marked a new stage of European integration, including the project for a total opening up of borders inside the European Community, for the free circulation of goods and capital.

profit and the unbridled pillaging of natural resources. We are for a Europe of peace and disarmament, which uses the resources today squandered on military budgets to satisfy real needs, to carry out research and to protect the environment. We are, finally, for a Europe that overcomes — rather than deepens and consolidates — the split that has divided it for almost 50 years between an imperialist “West” and a bureaucratic and Stalinist “East”.

The Europe of the SEA is a step towards another kind of Europe. The European “Community” is a Europe of capitalist plunder. This “Europe” divides Europe!

It is a Europe of sharpened competition, which has already created 16 million unemployed, and whose first effects will be new concentrations, restructuring and the dismantling of social gains — leading to more unemployment. It is a Europe of increased inequality between the countries, regions and peoples: a Europe that excludes immigrants and discriminates against women. A Europe of the nuclear and conventional arms race, which is trying to get out of the crisis on the back of the Third World. A Europe ravaged by increased competition between individual interests, where the pillage of natural resources goes along with unlimited exploitation of human labour. A Europe that presents itself as an open hunting ground for all multinational speculators and predators. A Europe that, far from encouraging “European” cultural creation, is opening up to the invasion of commercialized rubbish. A Europe that, far from pulling down the walls dividing it, consolidates them and creates new divisions that mutilate it. A Europe that reduces itself to simply Western Europe, at the very time when the people and especially young people of Eastern Europe are also seeking exchange and dialogue to overcome the twin crises created by the unbridled capitalist market and authoritarian bureaucratic planning.

A statement of free-market beliefs

2 This Europe is a statement of free-market beliefs. The single market means competition between national regulations and norms, tax systems, levels of productivity and working conditions. This “emulation” is supposed to produce a thorough reorganization of European industry and an economic upturn. Certain defenders of the “single market” even explain that abolishing the frontiers, eliminating all the non-tariff barriers², and allowing the free circulation of capital will give rise to a new economic order once the laws of the market have finally purged the system of all protectionism and too much state intervention.

3 The supporters of this Europe also want to get the workers’ agreement to this by brandishing the threat of competition from American and Japanese companies. The only way of saving jobs in this framework is to speed up the unification of the European market. They will thus try to fabricate a sort of European chauvinism to try to justify all the industrial restructuring — above all redundancies, productivity speed-ups, wage freezes, and so on.

There is nothing that indicates that a



“European capitalism” is really on the agenda. The perspective of the “single market” is certainly one of the ways in which the big European companies can defend themselves in the world market, but it is not the only one. In certain branches, for certain products, research or markets, their solution has already been alliances or mergers with American or Japanese companies. The fundamental trend in the situation is an increased internationalization of the capitalist economy, the Europe of 1992 being only a link in the chain of this reorganization. The need for a single market, for a huge free-trade zone, does not mean that European bosses either want or can achieve a common industrial policy. The choice of inter-European alliances or extra-European alliances is made, as always, on the basis of the particular interests of the capitalists and not on the basis of a so-called ideological choice in favour of a united Europe.

Thus, the ideological attempts to create a “European patriotism” — in reality “Eurochauvinism” — in order to make the bitter pill of the social costs of restructuring easier to swallow, have to be denounced in the same way as “national” chauvinism.

4 The SEA is thus completely oriented to capital accumulation. It is an answer to the needs of the biggest European corporations: to face up to competition, open the markets, deregulate and reduce production costs by economies of scale. But it is not by any stretch of the imagination a way of satisfying the main social needs, of attacking unemployment and poverty.

The social costs

5 The bosses want to make a “unified”

Europe with the same methods and same recipes that they have been implementing in each individual country for the last 15 years. The profits of “today” are supposed to be the jobs of “tomorrow”, the restructuring of the European steel, textile or ship-building industries is supposed to be followed by an upturn in employment and an upturn in economic activity in the regions concerned. None of this has happened. So a new refrain appears: if this has not worked up to now it is because there has been too much “national egoism”!

6 But the social cost of Europe has not been considered at all. At the end of the day, it will be workers who pay the price. The acceleration of industrial restructuring, mergers and take-overs, will create many redundancies. The promise of a “virtuous” regulation of the market will in fact lead to an increase in monopolization, to challenges to workers’ status in the public sector and to de-skilling.

7 Privatization is an integral part of this framework, encouraging the exclusive use of free-market strategies with utter disregard for social needs, particularly in education, transport, energy, communications and the media. Challenging the particular status of personnel in these public services will go alongside the projects of restructuring or privatization.

8 The single market will not unify a homogeneous Europe. There are already significant differences between different countries or regions. The economic crisis has deepened these inequalities, and the single market — despite the compensatory mechanisms introduced *a posteriori* — will increase them. Certain regions will experience cumulative growth while others will sink deeper into crisis, deindustrialization and unemployment. The growing effects of unequal development will be added to unresolved national questions. In the rural areas of southern Europe thousands of small peasants will be pushed off their land.

Pressure on wages

9 The competition between different sets of regulations and standards is going to increase the pressure on wages and the deterioration of working conditions. The present disparities in social legislation in different countries of the Community are a means of exerting pressure on the workers, who are told that realism consists in maintaining the competitiveness of their companies with the hope of a return to full employment later.

In reality the trends introduced by the “single market” will be strict control of

² Non-tariff barriers include all protectionist import regulations, excluding taxes and duties.

wages and increases in flexible working.

10 Today in the EEC there are 44 million poor with an income of less than half the average earnings of their country. More than 16 million people are unemployed, 40% of whom are young people. None of this will be changed — quite the contrary. To the official unemployment figures will be added the spread of insecure, part-time, and temporary jobs, particularly aimed at women and young people. The Europe of 1992 will still be a Europe of unemployment. While certain sectors and companies could eventually benefit from the new markets offered by the removal of all the non-tariff barriers, this will not in itself increase employment. Whole sectors are going to be affected by large-scale restructuring and rationalizations that will have a big fall-out effect on the job market.

11 The competition between tax systems, the need to bring VAT rates into line, and the attempts of each country to prevent the flight of capital towards more financially profitable countries will all lead to the introduction of governmental measures that will end up attacking the incomes of wage-earners more than those of the capitalists, either by increasing the tax burden on income or by severe cuts in social budgets.

A challenge for the workers' movement

12 The interests of the big financial and industrial groups are increasingly intertwined; there are more and more alliances, making the confrontations between the workers and their bosses increasingly complex and difficult. The growing number of subsidiaries and alliances between European multinationals puts the decision-making centres definitively outside the national framework, and confronts the trade-union movement with new problems and dangers.

13 The introduction of the single market is a challenge for the European workers' movement. Already the bosses are using the argument of increased competition to refuse demands and attack previous gains. They are trying to introduce a better relationship of forces to fragment and divide the labour movement. The stakes are considerable. We have to unceasingly denounce these capitalist projects and this Europe of big capitalism, which is being built on the backs of the workers. During these European elections there will be a lot of noise about the problems of the European institutions, the relationship between the states and the political workings of the Community.

Convinced of its needs on the economic plane, the bourgeoisie is hesitating on the question of the European institutions and their relationships to the national states. The perspective of the single market does

not remove regulatory functions from national governments. This is why there are contradictions accumulating between the project of a united Europe and the still irreplaceable control functions of the member states. The discussion on the European institutions, on the role of the European parliament and the European Commission are part of this question.³ The same goes for the conclusions of the Delors committee on the perspective of economic and monetary union. In certain countries this dilemma is increasing the crisis of the right-wing parties. Workers have no interest in these arguments and should not support one bourgeois camp against another.

14 The Europe that is being established is the product of capitalists' needs. The European elections aim to give democratic legitimacy to the idea of a united Europe. But it is enough to see the disparity in the electoral systems to realize that each state intends to interpret in its own fashion the demagogic claim to involve the mass of the people in "building" Europe, through the electoral game and the election of parliament. The Brussels Commission is a new bureaucratic and technocratic power escaping all control. There is nothing democratic about it.

For a workers' Europe

An expression of a real internationalization and concentration of capital, the Europe of the Common Market and the SEA remains at the crossroads between the formation of a real European capitalism and advances on the road to a European state on the one hand, and implosion and a retreat back into national borders on the other. The recessions of 1974 and 1981 did not resolve this dilemma. Industrial Europe has not really taken over from commercial Europe — but nor has there been a retreat into protectionism. Over and above its chronic crises, the Europe of Six, and then of the Twelve, has held together. After the shock of 1974, from 1977 on French President Giscard d'Estaing and West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt took the initiative for a European upturn with the establishment of the European Monetary System (EMS⁴) and the election of the Strasbourg parliament. After 1981, François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl restarted the process, first with the extension of the Community to twelve countries and now with the Single European Act.

In fact, the bourgeoisie does not believe in its own speeches on the virtues of economic liberalism. The bosses know very well that international relations do not simply boil down to market or economic relations. It is not enough for them to have competitive enterprises if they do not possess a currency, a diplomacy, an army, a state. In this, the United States still has a comparative advantage in the international arena, despite its relative decline. Without such instruments, Europe can only become a

huge free-trade zone open to pressure from all directions.

This is the problem that the European Commission and certain sections of the European bourgeoisies want to address. But they come up against the crisis or the lack of real political leadership. At the level of the different countries, neither France nor West Germany alone are able to provide the motor force, for different reasons. At the level of the different political forces, the right, prisoner of its pro-American traditions, is divided and hesitant.

The "Euro-left"

It is therefore social-democracy that increasingly presents itself as the most coherent and determined champion of Europe. Having experienced the ineffectiveness of its traditional Keynesian policies at the national level, it claims that capitalist Europe is the appropriate framework for an upturn or concerted expansion, on condition that industrial, regional and social policies are brought into line. They argue that there should be a European-wide social treatment of unemployment, and a gradual redistribution of public powers between the regional, national and European levels. But their total and unquestioning submission to the capitalist logic of the SEA leads them to accept and organize the social attacks implied in the 1992 project. The joint manifesto of the European social-democratic parties goes so far as to proclaim the necessity of nuclear weapons within the European defence system.

Faced with this, the traditional policy of the communist parties — for example, in France — of a reactionary withdrawal behind their national borders in the name of national unity, seems increasingly old-fashioned and inoperative. The direction taken by the Italian CP, in the name of its integration into the Euro-left, is significant. It relates both to the attraction of social-democracy, which seems to have a more credible reformist project at a European level, and the effects of the international policy of Gorbachev, who has decided to coexist, trade and cooperate with a Western Europe that is becoming gradually less attached to its Atlanticist roots. The recent hesitations of the French CP on Europe, putting the emphasis on "international cooperation" and the new criteria of management applied to Europe, are one significant example of this dilemma.

The growth of the Green parties testifies to popular disaffection with the traditional parties and worries by a growing section of the population about the main options chosen for society. The Greens are against the SEA, denouncing the threat of the free mar-

3. The European Commission is made up of 17 commissioners appointed by their governments. It is charged with the management of community policies.

4. The EMS was set up in April 1972 by the six member states then belonging to the EEC. Its role is to limit the margins of exchange rate fluctuation between the relevant currencies to 2.25% (6% for the Italian lire).

ket to the environment and the logic of European arms policy. But why separate the ecological commitment from class commitment as some Greens do, when the logic of profit, the reduction of human labour and of nature to commodities are at the root of the evils they are denouncing? This refusal to take a clearly anti-capitalist position and to turn towards the labour movement is gradually leading the Green parties to conciliatory positions. In the future it will not be enough to denounce the dramatic consequences of the free market, there will also have to be proposals for concrete struggle and a project for an alternative society to capitalism.

How far has European integration gone?

15 It is important to participate in all the discussions within the labour movement. The extent of the integration process already underway and its consequences for the working class have to be carefully measured. It would be wrong to think that this is just hot air: although there are obvious contradictions and divisions within the bourgeoisie on the question of economic integration and European unification, we should not lose sight of the objective needs of capitalism and the consequent actions taken by the big firms and the multinationals and thus by the European Commission and national governments. Our immediate problem is not to speculate on the capacity of the bourgeoisie to build a European state, but to measure the political and social damage for the labour movement that this attempt to pursue European integration is going to cause.

But we should not fall into the opposite trap — as certain Euro-communist currents do — of accepting this Europe as a fatality and thus give up the struggle at the national level. While a relationship of forces favourable to the workers has to be established at the European level as soon as possible, it is nonetheless the case that the first step is centred on the relationship of forces established in each country. We are against the EEC, and at certain decisive moments of the class struggle in a given country or when a real mass movement against the disastrous social consequences of capitalist European integration develops, the necessity to put forward the demand to break with the Community may be on the agenda. This is why it is legitimate for workers' and revolutionary forces in countries that have not yet joined the Community to fight against entry.

The "social dimension"

16 Faced with the attacks and the risks, the workers' movement must unhesitatingly oppose the SEA. Against the bosses' Europe demands must be raised for cooperation and unity, for a new internationalism that can meet the challenges of the situa-

tion.

It is urgent for the trade-union movement to establish means of coordination and centralization of information and struggles on a company-wide basis. The separations, the national divisions have to be broken down and chauvinist prejudices swept away. The trade-union movement must create the necessary instruments within the multinationals and European companies.

17 Faced with austerity policies and the social dangers of the SEA, the answer must be to struggle, and not to have a utopian idea of a "European" social dialogue between bosses and unions. After everything about the single market has already been decided, all of a sudden there is a concern about the social aspect. It is considered as a sort of amendment or addition to the SEA negotiated in carpeted offices in Brussels, sheltered from the discussions and control of the workers, and in any case at the mercy of a veto from governments as reactionary as Thatcher's — because the "social dimension" is precisely an area in which the rule of unanimity has been maintained. This "Social European Act" is being discussed among people who are already convinced that the "single market" is the miracle solution. In their negotiations, the European employers' associations and union leaderships organized in the European Trade Union Congress (ETUC) are all believers in the "benefits" of the single market. And in the name of deregulation and liberalism, the bosses and the Commission have already announced that there is no question of introducing regulations to impose common social measures. While the bosses want to internationalize their capital as far as possible, they refuse the workers the benefit of the same advantages everywhere.

The workers' movement has nothing to gain from "co-management" of the introduction of the single market. It should first of all be concerned about the relationship of forces between the workers and the bosses. It is through struggles that the capitalist projects can be blocked, and not in first accepting the logic of the SEA and then adding on the social dimension as an amendment.

Before 1992, all the main social demands should be counterposed to the SEA and form the basis for a united, independent struggle of all organizations identifying with the working class. Strengthened by this unity, the trade unions could then demand, on the basis of their mobilization, the formalization of new social gains that would allow all workers to benefit.

18 Several major workers' mobilizations (the British miners' strike, the defence of the sliding scale in Italy, the fight for the 35-hour week in West Germany, the general strike in the Spanish state) have shown that it is possible on the basis of social struggles to fight against austerity policies and to block the free-market pro-

ject of 1992, rather than choosing the utopian road of pressure on the European institutions.

The nurses' strikes in Britain and later in France, West Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, showed that struggles could be brought together and given common objectives. The same goes for the struggles by young people against austerity policies in education, for railworkers (France and Italy) and teachers (France, Spanish state, Italy).

Against downward "harmonization"

One of the goals must be to oppose the trend to drag wages, working conditions and social benefits down to the lowest common denominator. On the contrary, they should be upgraded, and the advantages acquired in one country or one sector applied to all the workers concerned in Europe. Attempts to introduce competition between workers in Europe through different wages, working conditions or levels of social protection should be resisted.

It is in this framework that the trade unions could demand that the gains obtained in certain countries could be applied in their own. But here again such objectives can only be achieved by struggles and the relationship of forces, and not by social consensus and incantatory appeals to a united and co-managed Europe.

19 Certain countries like Greece and Portugal, indeed the Spanish state and Ireland, suffer social situations that are quite different from those of other EEC states in terms of the level of wages, social benefits, the working week, working conditions, and so on. In these countries, the governments and bosses hold up the gains that the single market would bring if the "comparative advantages" for investors could be maintained.

In these countries the first objective for the workers' movement should be to fight against this logic and in the first place impose alignment with the social conditions in the other EEC countries (such as the 40-hour week for example).

But the European workers' movement as a whole has to adopt common objectives that demonstrate its united commitment to an alternative social project to that of the bosses' Europe.

20 There is now a big discussion among members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA⁵) on the usefulness of joining the European Community. The ruling classes are more or less in favour, certain sections think that it would be better to be associated in one way or

5. EFTA has six member countries: Austria, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. Most EFTA countries have signed free-trade agreements with the EEC.

another rather than formally joining. Here again, the workers' movement must not fall into the trap of the comparative advantages of EEC membership for their own bourgeoisie. The workers and their organizations should first of all demand that there is no challenge to the social gains they have made, rejecting any downgrading for integration into Europe. The workers' movement should involve itself in these discussions, in complete independence from the arguments exchanged within the bourgeoisie, and starting from its demands and the goal of an improvement in social gains. It is only in this context that it is possible to say no to the bosses' Europe.

The Europe we want

21 In opposition to capitalist Europe we put forward another project, another Europe. The Single European Act is simply a free-market project for capital accumulation. The only alternative to the market economy and its destructive consequences is a socialist, democratic, fraternal, internationalist Europe, built on political and social institutions based on direct democracy and direct self-management.

Such a Europe would be able to combat all oppressions:

- That of women, for whom the Common Market and single market have been and will be — despite the everlasting "recommendations" of Brussels-based institutions — incapable of fulfilling their aspirations: equal pay for work of equal value; the right to work; the right to education and training and an end job insecurity; free contraception and abortion on demand; increased social services, particularly child-care; full participation in political and civic life.

- That of immigrants from the colonial and semi-colonial countries, who suffer from racism, discrimination at work, in housing and access to social services, who are refused equal political rights.

- Those of the oppressed nations and nationalities in the heartlands of Europe, in particular in the North of Ireland and in Euskadi; and outside Europe, in the colonies like New Caledonia.

22 The Europe we want is not a Europe of big capitalism, of imperialist ambitions, of militarism and of repression. The search for greater profits does not end with the rationalization of the Common Market, it also implies greater coherence of the different national policies towards the Third World, a greater aggressivity of the European multinationals, and gradual military integration. From now on the Community countries will act as a group in negotiations with Third World countries on the debt. They will act as a group in talking to the

US and Japan about the major questions for the world market and the monetary policies that are subsequently imposed on dependent countries. They will act together in intervening in negotiations in the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) or the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).⁶

The Lomé Convention, a mechanism regulating trade between the EEC and 66 countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific⁷, has not reduced trade inequalities. Under cover of protecting the exports of these countries and compensating for the ups and downs of the market, it has increased their economic and political dependence. It has ghettoized them into commercial dependence at a time when the international division of labour and the imperialist countries' needs for raw materials for industry are changing rapidly. The



Stabbex system⁸, which is supposed to regulate the receipts and the exports of these countries, has now been overtaken by these developments and deliberately holds back from taking into account the trade terms between export and import prices.

23 The Community countries spend between 2% and 4% of their Gross National Product (GNP) on their military forces. Their military budgets are never reduced to the same extent as their social budgets. A growing portion of research is directed towards immediate military applications. France exports 13% of world arms exports, Britain 6%, Germany 2.8%, Italy 1%. A lot of this goes to reactionary and repressive regimes in the Third World. The bourgeoisie's European project implies a strengthening of these tendencies, greater military integration and a centralization of the arms industry. The Franco-German bri-

gade is the precursor of a project for gradual European military integration after the resurrection of the Western European Union (WEU⁹).

We must oppose this military and imperialist Europe. We demand that all European countries that are members of Nato and the Atlantic Alliance leave. Nato is having some difficulty in developing a new unified strategy in the present context where the peace movement has broad support and Gorbachev is taking a series of initiatives to reduce nuclear weapons and military defence in general. In this situation, sectors of the bourgeoisie and the social democrats are trying to strengthen European military integration, going so far as to give military responsibilities to Community bodies. All this should be fought against and denounced. The French and British labour movements must fight for the unilateral destruction of the nuclear weapons in their own countries.

24 The Europe we want involves a complete restructuring of the economy, which takes into account the urgent need to put an end to the dramatic deterioration of environment and which radically resolves the problem of energy sources. Against the threats to the environment, to the misdeeds of the multinationals, to unequal regional growth we should put forward the need for a socialization of major firms and of the means of communication and democratic European planning for the big choices for energy and industry as well as the use of land.

25 In opposition to the capitalists' Europe we put forward the perspective of a European socialist federation.

This Europe will be born out of the convergence of anti-capitalist struggles in the West and anti-bureaucratic struggles in the East.

Perestroika and *glasnost* are not miraculous solutions for re-establishing socialist democracy and freeing the workers of Eastern Europe from the repressive and wasteful straightjacket of the bureaucracy.

6. GATT covers custom and trade tariffs, and is a multilateral agreement that came into force in 1948. Linked to the United Nations, it is the principal international body that regulates international trade.

UNCTAD aims at giving the "under-developed countries" advantageous prices for their manufactured and semi-manufactured goods.

7. The Lomé Convention consists principally of regulations governing access to the EEC of raw materials exported by participating countries, on the basis of tariff exemptions.

8. The Stabbex system is an EEC compensation procedure for the 66 countries participating in the Lomé Convention, to guarantee stability in export receipts for 12 raw materials, in spite of stock exchange fluctuations and years of low production.

9. The WEU was created in 1954, and holds conferences of parliamentary delegates to discuss military questions. It was originally set up to deal with the question of German rearmament.

Comecon is no more a voice for internationalism and solidarity between the peoples than is the EEC. Bureaucratic unification, like market unification is a source of inequality and oppression.

But what is happening in Eastern Europe today makes it possible to improve links with the independent social movements in these countries. Without waiting any longer we have to organize a convergence of struggles, between the workers' movement in Western Europe and the independent organizations in Eastern Europe.

Unity of action against the bosses' Europe

So will these multinational bosses and politicians succeed in building the united Europe of their dreams? Will they succeed in settling their differences, in unifying their interests, in overcoming their competition? Can they impose their plans on us?

They will only be able to do so if the workers' movement shows itself incapable of meeting this challenge and counterposing its own revolutionary and internationalist project to the bourgeoisie and its various hangers-on.

This is why the European challenge today for us is our ability to struggle together — sweeping aside national frontiers — for the same objectives.

The coming European elections will be an opportunity for defending this alternative conception of Europe. The only way to really oppose the free-market policy of the Single European Act is to take popular aspirations and the most pressing needs as our starting point. These initial demands are:

- **Against all austerity policies**, whether implemented by parties of the right or left. For workers' unity, against all class collaboration. For the intransigent defence of social security. For maintaining buying power through the sliding scale of wages. For joint campaigns on the indexation of wages. Against the dismantling of the public services. For the right to study; for free publicly-funded schooling.

- **Against unemployment**, for a shorter working week without loss of pay and with job creation, for the 35-hour week.

- **Against industrial restructuring**, which is carried out to the detriment of employment and the satisfaction of social needs. Against redundancies: the workers must keep their jobs with equal skills and equal wages, in the regions where they live. Control by the workers and their organizations over the use of new technology and vocational training.

- **Against competition between European workers**: for identical conditions of work, health and safety, paid holidays and retirement throughout the Community at the most favourable level. For a general ban on nightwork and a strict control over exceptions.



- **Against all sexist discrimination**: for the right to abortion and contraception free and on request. For women's right to work and against discrimination in pay, training and promotion. For adequate childcare provision. For positive efforts to promote women's participation in political life.

- **Against racism and oppression**: Equal political and social rights including the right to vote and to stand for election for all immigrants. For a real European citizenship not limited to first category (EEC) Europeans, but open to all women and men working and living in Europe. For free East-West circulation. Against the visas imposed on non-EEC citizens, against the screening by race and class planned in agreements on control of the external borders. Against anti-democratic restrictions on the right to asylum, against a Europe which sends refugees back to their torturers, or which limits their free speech even in their countries of "refuge". Against the Europe of police and security. For the release of political prisoners.

- **Against imperialism**: cancellation of the Third World's debt. Britain out of Ireland! Independence for New Caledonia!

- **Against militarism**: No to the modernization of the nuclear arsenal. Immediate, total and unilateral nuclear disarmament. Withdrawal of American troops. Reconversion of the arms industry to production of social useful goods.

- **Against the destruction of the environment**: a stop to nuclear power stations and Super-Phoenix.¹⁰ Ecological questions are never confined to national borders: the populations of several countries can be concerned by problems of land use or pollution. They should have, together, a right of veto!

Who decides?

All this poses the question of democracy. Who decides? They claim that Europe is decisive but everything is being done on the sly, in the corridors. And the elections

for the European parliament are in no way a democratic mechanism that allows for intervention around the main options already decided for the bourgeois, free-market Europe.

These are the reasons behind our opposition to the European Economic Community and the Single European Act. For revolutionaries there is nothing more urgent in Europe than to start on the basis of demands and social needs to create a new internationalism, to take initiatives that make it possible for struggles to converge, to cross-fertilize each other and defeat the capitalists' projects. ★

- **Sozialistische Alternative (SOAL)**, Austria
- **Socialistische ArbeidersPartij (SAP/POS)**, Belgium
- **British section of the FI**
- **Socialistisk Arbejderparti (SAP)**, Denmark
- **Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR)**, France
- **Organosis Kommounistike Diethnistike tes Elladas (OKDE-Spartakos)**, Greece
- **People's Democracy (PD)**, Ireland
- **Lega comunista rivoluzionaria (LCR)**, Italy
- **Revolutionär sozialistische partei (RSP)**, Luxembourg
- **Socialistische Arbeiderspartij (SAP)**, Netherlands
- **Partido socialista revolucionario (PSR)**, Portugal
- **Liga comunista revolucionario (LCR)**, Spanish state
- **Socialistiska Partiet (SP)**, Sweden
- **Sozialistische ArbeiterPartei (SAP/PSO/PSL)**, Switzerland
- **Steering Committee of FI members in the VSP**, West Germany

May 1, 1989

¹⁰ Super-Phoenix is a fast-breeder nuclear reactor in the Grenoble region of France.

Homage to Colvin de Silva

ONE OF the four founders of the communist and Trotskyist movements in Sri Lanka, Colvin R. De Silva died recently in Colombo. His death marks the disappearance of one of the central figures in the history of the revolutionary movement in the Indian subcontinent.

ERNEST MANDEL

COLVIN's first contact with a Trotskyist group was established when he was studying in London in the 1930s. After his return to his native country, Colvin became a leader both of the country's first trade union and of the popular movement for national independence. At the end of 1936 these two developments came together in the foundation of the first independent working class party in Ceylon (the name of the island when it was a British colony,) the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP, Ceylon Socialist Party.) Colvin became the president and undisputed leader of this party. While the LSP had a mass influence, and had two deputies from 1937, it had few militants — a hundred at the time of its foundation and some 700 at the outbreak of the second world war.

At first the LSSP took a position halfway between Stalinism and Trotskyism. But the rightist orientation of the Comintern led to a rapid evolution of the majority of the leadership of the LSSP. In 1938 contacts were established with the Fourth International. In December 1939 the complete break with the Comintern was made official. The Stalinist minority was expelled from the LSSP, going on to found the Ceylonese Communist Party in 1943.

After the outbreak of the war, Colvin and most of the other leaders of the LSSP were arrested by the colonial authorities, but succeeded in escaping. They made their way to India where they played a key role in the consolidation of the first Indian section of the Fourth International, the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India, from 1943 onwards.

On his return to Ceylon, along with Leslie Goonewardene he presided over a big expansion of the LSSP, which was seen by

the working masses as the main working class party and as the leading anti-imperialist force in the country. The highest point of its mass influence came with the *hartal* (general strike) of 1953, which was led from start to finish by the LSSP. In this struggle, Colvin showed admirable personal commitment and courage.

From that moment on, however, important weaknesses in the LSSP's strategy for power became apparent. The leadership of the LSSP developed a theory of "Ceylonese exceptionalism" based on a real, but temporary weakness of the armed forces of the bourgeoisie. On the basis of this they believed that the conquest of power was possible through electoral means. A tragic mistake! The course of events has transformed that island into the part of the Indian subcontinent where armed conflict has played the biggest role.

Furthermore, a large part of the island's working class was made up of Tamil plantation workers, of whom only a minority had the right to vote. The LSSP underestimated the deep-rooted and explosive character of the national question, which means that Tamil workers who could vote tended to vote for Tamil candidates rather than for the LSSP. The LSSP also had an incorrect view regarding the need for a worker/peasant alliance in the Sinhalese part of the island, which resulted in an under-estimation of the importance of demands specifically related to the needs of the Sinhala-speaking rural population. The result was that in the 1957 elections, which they were expecting to win, they in fact came third. It was the liberal bourgeois SFLP who carried off the elections.

Crisis of orientation inside the LSSP

From then on a crisis of orientation began to develop in the LSSP, which found itself hesitating between taking the road of extra-parliamentary action by the union and mass movements, which were still strong, and the road of de facto collaboration with the SFLP.

After various twists and turns, the LSSP decided to enter a coalition government with the SFLP. Both Colvin and Leslie capitulated. Colvin became a minister. Only a small group, led by Bala Tampoe, stood out against the capitulation and stayed faithful to the principles of class independence, Marxism and the Fourth International.

The consequences of the capitulation were a disaster of historic dimensions for

the working class, the workers' movement and the LSSP itself. Thirty years of gains were thrown away in a few years. Even from the electoral point of view, the working class lost its independence. In the last elections, only three of the elected deputies presented themselves as representatives of the labour movement. From enjoying the highest standard of living in South Asia, the working class of Sri Lanka has seen its wages plunge to among the most miserable. The working masses are tearing each other to pieces in bloody nationalist conflicts. Democratic rights have been suppressed. The LSSP is a mere shadow of what it once was, and has undergone a series of splits. The NSSP, which is trying to revive the tradition of the old LSSP, is the product of one of these splits and like the LSSP has one deputy.

Coalition government guilty of real crimes

The coalition government in which Colvin participated was guilty of real crimes such as the agreement with the Indian government on the repatriation of a part of the Tamil workers on the expiry of the period of their contract, which excluded them from the right to vote, and the bloody suppression of the uprising of young people led by the JVP, in the course of which atrocities took place. This was accompanied by the personal degeneration of the old warrior. He became increasingly immersed in his professional life as a lawyer, accumulating a large personal fortune and living a life of luxury which became a scandal.

But as Trotsky underlined when Kautsky died, Marxists should judge parties and political leaders on the basis of their whole life's work and not only through the memory of their betrayals. From this point of view, in spite of the severity of the judgement that has to be passed on the later degeneration of the LSSP from the 1960s onwards, we should not forget the image of Colvin leading the masses of his country against imperialism and against the Ceylonese bourgeoisie in 1953. ★

Fallen comrades

IT WAS with great sadness that we learnt of the following deaths:

Raul Sendic, Uruguyan militant and revolutionary leader, founder of the National Liberation Movement (MLN), the legendary *Tupamaros*, died recently in Paris

Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, the two main leaders of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) were shot on May 4 in Ouvéa.

/V will carry homages to these comrades in our next issue. ★

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Mexican teachers strike for pay and democracy

ON APRIL 17, almost all school teachers in Mexico City and the states of Chiapas and Oaxaca followed the strike call of the National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE), the democratic opposition current in the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE). The SNTE groups together in a single union all employees of the Ministry of Public Education — that is, 1.2 million people.

THE DEMANDS of the mobilization are: for a 100% wage rise and a democratic congress of what is the biggest union in Latin America, in which the rank and file would have the right to elect a new leadership. The government offered a 10% rise, which would bring the average monthly salary up to \$150, plus a 10% increase in benefits. Given the breadth of the mobilization, the government was finally obliged to order the union's "leader for life and moral guide", Carlos Jongitud Barrios, to step down in order to pacify the teachers, replacing him however by another governmental supporter, Elba Esther Gordillo Morales.

On Monday April 24, hundreds of thousands of teachers celebrated this event in one of the largest demonstrations ever seen in Mexico. At the same time they decided to continue the strike until offered a wage rise sufficient to ensure they would "no longer have to have second jobs as taxi drivers or street sellers", and a guarantee that the workers themselves would elect their leaders.

The authorities have declared the strike unjustified, because a bigger rise would "put the precarious economy of the country

into difficulties and increase inflation". Nevertheless, the strikers have been supported by the school students' parents who have organized raffles and collections, as well as by independent unions. The teachers are continuing their movement, although the government's offer has now been increased to 25% in all (wages and benefits). A further demonstration on May 3 reaffirmed their intention to continue.

Bus drivers take solidarity action

The bus drivers of the capital withheld their labour on April 23 in solidarity with the teachers. Then, also on May 3, a strike call was followed by 14,000 of the 20,000 bus drivers of the Ruta-100 company. The government answered by ceasing relations with the Ruta-100 company, which is equivalent to sacking all 20,000 drivers.

This upturn in workers' struggles shows the depth of the regime's crisis. On the one hand, buying power has officially fallen by 50% in the last six years. On the other, the majority of trade unions in Mexico are affiliated to the Partido Revolucionario

Institucional (PRI), the ruling party since its foundation 60 years ago, so the majority of workers are nominally members of this party. Workers' leaders thus enjoy many economic and political privileges. In the SNTE for example, there are two senators, 16 federal deputies, 42 local deputies and 500 mayors. Added to this is the impunity with which leaders practise corruption and gangsterism to maintain their power. Carlos Jongitud took power at gun-point in 1982, and between 1980 and 1985 150 leaders were assassinated.

The teachers' movement represents a continuation of the defeat suffered by the PRI in the presidential elections in July 1989 (see IV 145 and 146, July 25 and September 19, 1988). The government attempted to call a halt to this succession of defeats when it imprisoned the leader of the oil-workers' union. However, the state cannot calm the democratic desires of the masses with superficial changes, such as changing the leadership of the SNTE. This measure, which it was forced to take by the pressure of the mass teachers' movement, is an indication of the possibility of major workers' struggles for the democratization of Mexican trade-union life. ★

Hunger strike protest for José Ramon

ON MAY 4, leaders of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT, Mexican section of the Fourth International) announced at a press conference their intention to go on hunger strike from May 10 if José Ramon Garcia Gomez, who "disappeared" from outside his home in the state of Morelos, Mexico on December 16, 1988 (see IV 155), was still missing.

Over four months after his disappearance José Ramon is still missing despite an international campaign demanding that the Mexican government ensure his return. The central international secretariat of Amnesty International in London issued a call for urgent action on this case in January 1989. In many countries letters of protest and petitions have been delivered to local Mexican embassies.

In Mexico itself the campaign has also been widely supported by political and human-rights personalities, including two former presidential candidates, Rosario Ibarra and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and the Bishop of Cuernavaca. The National Forum Against Repression assembled over 2,000 people on February 25-26, including international representatives from Europe and North America. A National Day of Protest took place on April 14.

However, despite this broad support, there is still no move by the Mexican authorities to release José Ramon. The seriousness of the step announced by the PRT leaders indicates the continuing importance of the campaign to put pressure on the Mexican government. Calls for the safe return of José Ramon from political, trade-union, artistic and human rights figures and organizations should be sent to:

Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Presidente Constitucional, Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Palacio Nacional, Mexico D.F., Mexico;

Fernando Gutierrez Barrios, Secretario de Gobernacion, Bucareli 99, Mexico D.F., Mexico;

Antonio Riva Palacio Lopez, Gobernador Constitucional, Estado de Morelos, Palacio de Gobierno, Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico. ★