

International VIEWPOINT

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SUMMER SPECIAL

Due to our coverage on China, we have decided to publish an extra issue of IV this year. This issue will appear in three weeks time, on August 1. It will contain a feature on Western Europe, including material on the recent Euro-elections and on the communist parties. Subscribers please note: your sub will still only last for 21 issues this year! ★

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THE LIGHTNING growth of the Independent Workers' Union. An independent unionist from Hong Kong describes the Chinese workers' first steps in self-organization



International VIEWPOINT

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革命

THE DESPOTISM and greed of the corrupt officials and mandarins has reached new heights! There is not a scrap of truth left in the whole of China! No reactionary power is any longer able to hold back the waves of the anger of the whole people; the people can no longer believe the poisonous words of the authorities who deceive the people. Therefore we write on our banner: science, democracy, liberty, human rights, a legal system.¹

On April 21, 1989, in Beijing we officially founded the Workers' Union of the city of Beijing in order to protect the interests of the workers and issued two documents — "Letter to the People of the City" and "Ten Questions". In an editorial on April 26, 1989, the *People's Daily* nevertheless treats us as reactionaries. Our reply is: since you do not dare to publicly answer our ten questions, publish our two documents. Have you not put forward for forty years the slogan "have confidence in the broad masses"? We demand the total repudiation of the editorial of April 26, and the severe punishment of whoever was responsible for this article, along with their clique behind the scenes.

We have carefully established the facts about the exploitation of the workers. The mode of exploitation has been analyzed according to the method taught by Karl Marx in *Capital*. We subtracted from the value of production: the workers' wages, premiums and benefits; socially necessary accumulation; the social facilities; and the expenses for the expanded reproduction of capital, and we have discovered to our amazement that the "people's public [state-owned] enterprises" are expropriating the whole of the surplus-value extracted from the sweat and blood of the people! The rise in exploitation is unheard of! Atrocious! Such is the flavour of the "specificities of China". Throughout the country, the "people's public enterprises" build, out of our sweat and blood, luxurious villas (protected by the army under the pretext that they are forbidden military zones) and deluxe automobiles. The functionaries organize pleasure trips (supposedly inspection visits), on which the officials take along their children and even their nurses! Women functionaries spend hours making themselves beautiful, while the male officials run after pretty women, and so on. It would take too long to recount all their villainies, not to say crimes.

Starting from the interests of the people and the nation, comrade Fang Lizhi expressed a correct point of view on the question: "what good does it do us to attract foreign capital?" We support and agree with him, because, as in the past, this "foreign capital" will be transformed by legal means into the individual fortunes of the degenerate officials. It is the

"There is not a scrap of truth left in the whole of China"

THE documents of the students and workers organizations from the Chinese May 1989 are now becoming known. We publish below a text from the Beijing Independent Workers' Union produced before the Tiananmen massacre. It is translated from the May 17 issue of *October Review*, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong.

DOCUMENT

nation that pays, while a "tiny handful" profits; It is the broad masses of the people that pay the debts. It is they who must do the accounting!

"The great market of the mandarins"

We are opposed to that brutal violation of human rights, the forcible sale of Treasury Bonds.² We demand the publication of the incomings and outgoings of Treasury Bonds in recent years and how they have been used. We demand that the whole value of the Treasury Bonds currently in circulation amongst the population be restored, and the closing of the market in Treasury Bonds. This is the great market of the mandarins, the great financial resource of the degenerate bureaucrats.

We repeat: in order to raise wages and stop inflation, it is necessary that the two, even three generations have similar wage levels. We call for the opening of an inquiry into the Heads of State and government, the Military Commission of the

Central Committee (CC), all the Commissions of the State Council [government], and the Central Committee and Secretariat of the CC of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The first group of people who should be investigated for misappropriation of public funds are — Deng Xiaoping, Zhao Ziyang, Li Peng, Chen Yun, Li Xiannian, Yang Shangkun, Xi Zhen, Wan Li, Jiang Zemin, Ye Xuanping and their families. It is necessary to investigate at once the whole of their fortunes, inspect the national registers of accounts, and publish the accounts for the whole population to see.

The students have matured! In front of Tiananmen, it is clear that millions of people uphold revolutionary order! The people have awakened! They have understood that in any society, in any epoch there are only two classes, the dominant class and the dominated. Those classes, parties and organizations that follow the current of history are progressive and revolutionary, those that resist are retrograde and reactionary.

This is the fundamental reason that, from the time of Qin Shi Huangdi³ to our days, the Chinese people has cherished "upright officials", and needs, praises and commemorates them....

At the present time we must be especially vigilant that political opportunists from the CCP do not profit from this democratic movement to achieve their objective of an autocratic usurpation of supreme power. Deng Xiaoping used the "April 5" popular movement⁴ and its repression to reveal his true colours after mounting the throne. The "successes of the reform" that they talk about are false and superficial. The reality is that the standard of living of the majority has fallen, while borrowing increases, on the assumption that the people will pay it back!

Comrade workers of the broad masses, it is urgently necessary to unite around the workers' unions, under the leadership of the workers' unions of the cities and push the present democratic movement to a new level. Our union is calling for a big workers' demonstration of the whole city to support the student movement and to launch a peaceful petition campaign.... The slogan of the demonstration is "There is not a scrap of truth left in the whole of China!" ★

1. Legal system. Due to the weight of tradition and the effects of pseudo-Marxism, there are very few written laws in China, thus the insistent demand for a legal system with written laws.

2. The state forces employees to "invest" in state-issued bonds that then depreciate in value.

3. The first Chinese Emperor, 221-208 BC, infamous for his exceptional cruelty, tyranny and bloodthirstiness.

4. April 5, 1976. Uprising against the "Gang of Four" after the death of Zhao Enlai.

"Tell history about our struggle"

AN APPEAL for independent union activists in China was made to the international metalworkers conference in Copenhagen in the third week of June.

Trini Leung, an activist of the Hong Kong Trade Union Education Centre, explained that a few hours before the massacre in Tiananmen Square worker activists there asked her to take their message to the outside world: "We are surrounded, tell the world what happened to us. Tell history about our struggle."

REPRESENTING a Hong Kong organization that promotes independent union organization, Trini Leung is also the author of a book on the Chinese workers and market socialism in the 1980s. She had good contacts with workers in China interested in independent unionism going back well before the recent events.

Leung explained: "The workers were indirectly very much inspired by Solidarnosc in Poland. The Chinese media had said practically nothing about it. The workers were very interested and curious, and asked me to translate everything I could get hold of about the way the Polish workers organized themselves, about their attitude to students and so on."

She told the gathering of metalworkers: "The short history of the free unions in China belongs to you as metalworkers."

The founders of the independent union set up their banner and a tent in Tiananmen Square. They handed out leaflets reporting that thousands of workers at the Beijing steelworks were on strike. But they also reported that the works was surrounded by troops. That was two days after the demonstration of a million people on May 17, in which large contingents of the workers at the steel complex marched. Banners from most of the city's big industrial plants were also present.

革命

CHINA REACTIONS

Nine days later, the Beijing free unionists issued their first resolutions. The authorities immediately arrested three of the leaders.

The workers hoped to win the sympathy of a section of the state controlled union movement, Leung explained. They wanted independent unions that could really represent the workers and were indignant about the growing corruption and the widening gap between the living standards of the workers and the leaders, the lack of security for the workers and the absence of democracy in the workplaces. But they declared that they did not want to go outside the law.

However, in a speech on TV a few days before the massacre, Premier Li Peng officially declared the idea of independent organizations counter-revolutionary. On June 12, a week after the massacre, the TV showed leaders of the Shanghai independent union who had obviously been beaten. Leung called on the metalworkers representatives to get their unions to protest against the repression in China and to campaign to save the lives of those arrested.

She also appealed to them to "go to the foreign firms that operate in China and make sure that they respect the workers' rights." ★

Moscow People's Front condemns massacre

DURING a rally devoted mainly to discussing the course of the Congress of People's Deputies, a resolution was adopted on the events in China. In particular, it said:

"THE participants in the rally are shocked by reports from Beijing about an attack by the armed forces on demonstrators resulting in thousands of deaths. We consider that this tragedy is not simply the result of the development of events within the country but a sequel to the Tbilisi precedent [where MVD troops attacked Georgian nationalist demonstrators with poison gas and sharpened shovels, killing at least 20]....

"In connection with this, we make the following proposals to democratically inclined deputies: 1) to condemn the





CHINA REACTIONS

repressive actions of the Chinese authorities aimed at crushing the centers of the people's democratic revolution and which resulted in bloody clashes between the army and police and the demonstrators in Beijing. 2) To declare the support of the people's deputies of the USSR for the just demands of the students, intelligentsia and workers of China. 3) To outlaw the use of armed force against peaceful demonstrations in our country, thereby setting an example for other countries."

Unfortunately, this appeal got no response from the deputies participating in the Congress, including the progressive group. In the Congress, a "neutral" resolution proposed by the Presidium, was adopted. ★

"A rule of terror"

IN AN EDITORIAL on June 15, *October Review*, a magazine published in Hong Kong by sympathizers of the Fourth International, made the following comment on the repression of the democracy movement in China:

THE ROLE of the students as the vanguard in awakening the masses has been fulfilled: from this point of view, the students movement has succeeded! However, it suffered bloody repression at a time when the students movement had developed into a revolutionary movement involving all layers of the masses fighting for democracy, but before the working class could rise up in time to act as the central force in the struggle. People's blood has been split! The red blood wakes up the people....

"The massacre tragedy revealed that the entire bureaucracy is the slaughterer, that the massacre was meticulously planned. From the very beginning the regime refused to have a dialogue with the students....The repression was carried out only after the majority of the top and middle leaders of the bureaucracy expressed support for the central bureaucracy....

"After the June 6 massacre, the entire bureaucracy continues to hunt down and kill the democratic vanguard and is carrying out a rule of terror. This further indicates that the people cannot depend on the armed forces of one faction of the bureaucracy to strike at, or contain another faction. The only way out is through the struggle of the people as the central force and winning over the good elements quit-

ting the Party and the soldiers to support the struggle of the people....

To show the political prospect and the aim of the struggle, viz., to overthrow the rule of the bureaucracy, it is necessary to tell the facts to the people everywhere and to the army, to draw the lessons from the Beijing massacre, especially the nature of the rule of the bureaucracy and its irreformability....

The revolutionary struggle of the people to overthrow the rule of the bureaucracy has made an important stride. To overthrow the rule of the Chinese bureaucracy, to realize the rule of the people as master, struggle to the very end! ★

Selections from the left

■ While Gorbachev took a Pontius Pilate attitude to the massacre in Tiananmen and the repression that followed it, Boris Yeltsin declared: "What is going on in China is a criminal act against the people....it is a crime against the country's own citizens, just like Tbilisi." The former chief of the Moscow Communist Party, along with various opposition personalities, also called for a demonstration, which brought 15,000 people into the streets of Moscow on June 9.

■ The president of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, firmly condemned the bloodbath in Beijing... "You cannot apply a double standard in these cases of violence. They have to be condemned, regardless of the political system or the country concerned. We cannot applaud the violence in China, just as we cannot applaud the violence in Venezuela."

■ In Peru, the Mariateguist Unity Party (PUM) also condemned the massacre and declared its support for the Chinese students.

■ The Brazilian Workers' Party (PT)

condemned the repression as contrary to socialism. It broke all ties with the Chinese CP, led a demonstration against the repression in China and dedicated its congress beginning on June 16 to the Chinese students.

■ Protest demonstrations brought out several thousand people in Poland and in Hungary, as well as in various European capitals. In East Germany, a demonstration in support of the Chinese students was dispersed.

■ The French Communist Party condemned the repression in startlingly strong terms, which were probably not unconnected to the fear of the effect it might have on its showing in the then upcoming European elections. The Political Bureau statement sounded almost "Trotskyist":

"These events are not a condemnation of socialism and communist ideas. They are the contrary. Socialism is not authoritarian methods, the power of a caste, a leader cult, arbitrariness and resort to force, bureaucracy, privileges and corruption, social inequalities, incompetence or irresponsibility. These features are the survivals in a society of the evils of capitalism or feudalism, of conceptions alien to socialism....

"For this reason, the French Communist Party has long striven to extirpate from its policy and practice, from its rules of life, the Stalinist conceptions that marked it for a whole period."

■ The strongest statement of support for the Chinese authorities seems to have come from the East German parliament, which declared: "The deputies of the People's House state that in the present situation the political solution of internal problems determinedly sought by the party and state leadership of the People's Republic of China has been obstructed by the bloody excesses of anti-constitutional elements. As a result of this, the People's Power was forced to send the armed forces in to restore order. Lamentably, this led to many people being injured and even to some being killed."

■ Finally, while in Norway one of the last big parties of Maoist origin broke with Beijing (see /V 166), another surviving Maoist formation — the Labor Party of Belgium — decided to support the Chinese party against "the rise of counter-revolution," even though it rejected the "disproportionate military means" used by its Chinese comrades. ★

Trade unionists discuss new directions for labor

AS A cross-union newsletter and network, *Labor Notes* provides an invaluable forum where trade unionists can compare experiences and begin to draw some lessons. Seeing its task as putting "movement back into the labor movement," *Labor Notes* invited some of the key leaders of today's labor struggles and used the conference to focus on the elements essential to building a revitalized workers' movement.

About 40% of the participants were women, 15% were African-American, with a sprinkling of Asian-American and Latino trade unionists. There were significant delegations of public sector workers, Teamsters organized in a national rank-and-file organization — Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) — and, for the first time, a significant group of workers from the basically unorganized South.

Unionists from 17 different countries attended, including 50 from Canada. Despite the fact that 40% of all Canadian workers are unionized, while in the United States less than 18% are in unions, industrial workers in both countries are often represented by the same "international" union. With seventy different unions participating, the biggest delegation by far was the more than 200 auto-workers from the UAW.

Concessions did not save any jobs

The American union movement is dominated by a right-wing bureaucracy that has collaborated all along the line with the employers' offensive launched during the 1974-75 recession. Their "business unionism" bargained away the shop-floor fight over the work process years ago (in exchange for higher wages), accepting corporate profitability as the sole framework for any negotiations. In the last decade they have imposed concessions on their members, with the promise that this would save jobs. Concessions didn't save jobs — but it did result in weakening the union movement.

Disarmed in the fight against concessions, the US labor bureaucracy has responded enthusiastically to the latest employer schemes of speeding up the workday. The "team-concept", modelled on Japanese management methods, attempts to make individual workers, plants and production units compete with each other, thus undermining labor solidarity. Workers become more responsible for the results of a work process that they do not in fact control. Team concept

OVER a thousand trade unionists attended the fifth national *Labor Notes* conference, held in the Detroit area May 19-21. This year's theme — "New Directions for Labor" — was explored in three major panels, sixty workshops, and twenty meetings by union or industry.

DIANNE FEELEY

schemes are perhaps the most advanced in the auto industry. Here, the UAW leadership has sugar-coated these programs, heralding them as providing job security and greater democracy in the workplace. Beneath all the rhetoric about management/union cooperation, however, is the reality that if the union does not "sell" the team concept to the workers, the plant will be closed down.

But over the last few years, as these teams have been introduced into the workplace, a movement has arisen inside the auto union to develop a strategy that could blunt the speed-up and begin to organize an ideological counter-offensive. The term "New Directions" is identified with this growing political trend in the UAW. This trend has drawn the conclusion that taking concessions was a disaster. It forced workers in the same union to compete against each other through two-tier contracts (institutionalizing substandard wages for the new hires) and "whipsawing" (where local unions outbid each other by bargaining away their work rules).

UAW leaders organize picket of the conference

Currently "New Directions" candidates (Jerry Tucker and Don Douglas) are running for the directorship of the UAW in two separate regions of the country. This means that more delegates with an alternative to the leadership will be at the UAW convention this June than have been present at such a gathering since the beginning of the Cold War. Those at the *Labor Notes* conference were able to see the heavy-handed manner with which the UAW Administrative Caucus deals with its opposition. Before the conference, reports surfaced that UAW President

Owen Bieber was personally phoning trade unionists, pressuring them not to attend the event because of the prominence given to the New Directions caucus. Some UAW locals complied with Bieber's request and a few speakers cancelled out.

Labor Notes offered Owen Bieber a chance to debate the issues over what direction the union movement should take, but the only response they received was a two-hour picket set up by the UAW Administrative Caucus at the conference site. The situation was explained in the conference's opening session and UAW New Directions members organized themselves to escort conference-goers inside.

Conference organizer Phil Kwik pointed out to the press that the picket line had nothing to do with any labour dispute, but was "a political action aimed at the reform forces in the UAW who are participating in this conference".

"No mob control. No government control"

A central panel at the conference illustrated how militant, democratic reform movements can organize to win. Participants included Glenn Berrien, newly-elected national president of the Mail Handlers Union and a member of the Team for Democracy caucus; Diana Kilmury, co-chair of the rank-and-file Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU); and Jerry Tucker, UAW Region 5 director and leader of the New Directions movement.

Kilmury described how she spoke up at an International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) convention several years ago that the union had to rid itself of organized crime. She said she felt like the kid who remarked that the emperor had no clothes. As a Canadian organized into a union that represents both US and Canadian workers, Kilmury described her indignation when the US government filed a civil suit to impose a trusteeship on the union. She explained how TDU developed a position against the government lawsuit, saying that the membership could take care of their own problems if they had democratic rights. Their slogan was "No mob control. No government control. Teamsters need the right to vote".

This March the suit was settled out of court, with the union agreeing to a democratic procedure for their 1991 convention, allowing for the direct election of union officers and establishment of an Independent Review Board to deal with complaints of corruption or racketeering. Even the *Wall Street Journal* noted that

LABOR NOTES

Ten Years of "Pushing the Movement Back in the Labor Movement"

735 MICHIGAN AVENUE, DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48210 PHONE (313) 841-6882 #118 APRIL 1989

Community Rallies to Back Pittston Coal Miners Over 1,000 Arrested as Strikers Block Coal Trucks

A series of rallies have been held in support of the 10,000 coal miners who have been arrested in the last 10 days of their strike. The rallies were held in support of the 10,000 coal miners who have been arrested in the last 10 days of their strike. The rallies were held in support of the 10,000 coal miners who have been arrested in the last 10 days of their strike.

Labor Board to Allow Eight Bargaining Units in Hospitals

The National Labor Relations Board has ruled that hospitals can have up to eight bargaining units representing different categories of workers. This decision is a significant victory for labor unions in the healthcare industry.

Decision Should Boost Health Care Organizing

Health care workers are encouraged by the NLRB decision to organize their own unions. The decision allows for more representation of different job classes within the same facility.

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paigned, and Bill Fletcher, from the Boston Labor for Jackson Committee, critically evaluated their electoral experiences. Both saw the Rainbow Coalition as an appropriate model for working people. While recognizing that there are problems in organizing within the Democratic Party, both felt that it was utopian to attempt an independent political formation at this point.

Fletcher, as a Black union organizer, also reminded the conference that racism is a key political question for the working class. Thus, he projected a rainbow coalition (that is in fact rooted in a Black working class) as having a better chance of overcoming the historic racism of US society than any other formation.

Unions not prepared to launch a labor party

On the other hand, Amy Newell, secretary-treasurer of the United Electrical Workers Union, maintained that "only a labor party, a political organization based on trade unions, has the money, resources, stability and organization to successfully unite working people." The final speaker, Sam Giordin, assistant to the president of the Canadian Auto Workers, and a member of the New Democratic Party, spoke about some of the concrete problems and advantages of such a party.

There was more diversity on this particular question than probably any other at the conference, but the panels and the workshops that explored the questions in greater detail were interesting precisely because participants spoke from their own experience. Despite sharp disagreements, participants were honest enough to examine the problems inherent in their own perspectives.

The fact of the matter is that the Rainbow Coalition is not a democratic, grassroots organization. But the existing bureaucratic unions are not willing or able to launch a class-based political party. The big problem, therefore, is to figure a way out of the current impasse, where workers end up voting for the bosses' candidates.

The final panel focussed on international solidarity. Discussing the political situation in their countries were José Lopez Feijoo, from the metalworkers' union in San Bernardo and member of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT); Roberto Ortaliz, General Secretary of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) of the Philippines; Dumisane Mbanjwa, from the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA); and Susanna Youn Soon-nyo, chair of a Catholic institute that supports the growing trade union movement in South Korea.

There were also international representatives from unions in Palestine, Sweden, Mexico, France and Canada, but the Salvadoran trade unionists who were invited were denied visas by the US government.

A number of workshops took up the particular tasks of labor solidarity, discussing grassroots networks and sister union projects, and evaluated the pernicious role of AFL-CIO [the American union confederation] foreign policy.

There was a great deal of enthusiasm and solidarity at the conference, most obvious in the reception the strikers from Eastern Airlines received, and in the standing ovations for international trade unionists.

Throughout the conference — and in sharp contrast to business unionism — there was a vision of a social unionism. Concretely this means union democracy, a call to organize the unorganized workers (who represent more than 80% of all workers), as well as linking community issues of Black empowerment, women's rights, the growing awareness of ecological interdependence and the peace movement. This broad view of the needs of the working class was also reflected in time set aside for caucuses where women, Blacks, Latinos and Asian-Americans met to build their networks and exchange experiences. Lesbian and gay workers met as well.

Keynote speaker, Tony Mazzocchi, secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) remarked that although the base of his union is relatively well-paid white male workers, they are becoming more aware of the political necessity to speak out against discrimination, build alliances with ecologically-minded people, and develop a perspective for an independent labor party.

Rank and file organization in UAW

Victor Reuther, whose remarks concluded the conference, also pointed out that: "We cannot cope with fighting the corporations, social injustice, racism and environmental problems without a movement towards a labor party." In addition, he announced what may be the most important step forward for labor in 1989. Whatever happens at the upcoming UAW convention, he stated, the New Directions movement in the UAW would seek to become an organized rank-and-file movement, with a membership base and a national newspaper. ★

Labor Notes

An overseas surface subscription to *Labor Notes* is \$15 a year, \$25 for two years (US: \$10 for a year, \$18 for two years). *Labor Notes*, 7435 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, MI 48210.

Threats to Namibian independence process

EVENTS IN NAMIBIA since April 1 were an inauspicious beginning to the independence process. While the military wing of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), were preparing to hand themselves over to the non-existent UN peacekeeping forces in the north, they were ambushed by the South African Defence Force (SADF).

The ensuing slaughter, as the SADF operated a shoot-to-kill policy against PLAN and a scorched-earth policy against the civilian population, led to over 300 PLAN and civilian deaths. Included in this was a number of surrendering PLAN combatants who were executed. At the time of writing, South African forces are supposedly now confined to bases and the independence process is back on course, but reports are still coming in from Namibia that some SADF are still operating freely in the Caprivi Strip.

ROS YOUNG

USING PLAN's presence in Namibia as a pretext (claiming that SWAPO fighters had "infiltrated" the country), the South Africans were able to break the formal cease-fire on April 1 and launch a surprise attack on PLAN with the UN's agreement. Together with British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, the South Africans had pushed the UN special representative in Namibia, Martti Ahtissari, into sanctioning the use of South African police, and later military, against the combatants.

In what can now be seen as a carefully orchestrated attack against SWAPO, the British, US and South African governments and the international press joined forces to denounce SWAPO as having broken the cease-fire. SWAPO was roundly blamed for contravening UN Security Council Resolution 435 and the Geneva Protocol and, as a result, responsible for putting the independence process in jeopardy.

The exercise was aimed at isolating SWAPO internationally. The South Africans also seized the opportunity to see how far they could manipulate the UN peace-keeping forces (UN Transition Assistance Group, UNTAG), and established yet again that they were going to dictate the terms of the independence process. Instead of international opinion rallying to the side of SWAPO, the majority

swallowed South Africa's version of events. South Africa's propaganda machine skilfully turned the SADF into the victim of a fabricated SWAPO invasion, and the South Africans became the defenders of Namibia's integrity and democracy overnight. The central issue of South Africa's illegal occupation and war in Namibia was ignored.

The diplomatic rows that followed centred on the interpretations of the provisions for PLAN forces in the UN project for Namibia's independence, Resolution 435 (and its related resolutions and documents), and in the agreements reached at last year's peace talks between Angola, Cuba and South Africa.

UN fudges in the face of South African offensive

The South Africans claimed, with no factual basis to back their assertions, that all SWAPO fighters should have been north of the 16th parallel in Angola by the time of the cease-fire. Resolution 435 does, in fact, make provision for the confinement of PLAN forces to UNTAG-supervised bases in Namibia by the time of the cease-fire. Although South Africa complained bitterly about this procedure, the decision was never reversed in the UN's Security Council. And, although SWAPO was seeking clarification up



until the last moment on the exact provisions, the UN did nothing but fudge and avoid the issue.¹

SWAPO was also accused of breaking the Geneva Protocol of August 5, 1988 (signed by South Africa, Cuba and Angola), a secret document that they were not a signatory to. Contrary to South Africa's claims, the Geneva Protocol only deals with PLAN forces already stationed in Angola by the time of the cease-fire in Namibia and their confinement to bases north of the 16th parallel in Angola.²

South Africa was also able to exploit the situation to score a few military points against PLAN. However, things didn't go all their own way. The PLAN forces (supported by reinforcements from their bases inside Angola) fought back bravely, to the extent that the South African military could not keep secret — as they are wont to do — their heavy casualties. While the bodies of PLAN combatants, civilians — and even Black SADF troops — were dumped unceremoniously into mass graves, white SADF corpses, amidst pomp and glory, were taken back to heroes' burials in South Africa.

Whole operation turns to farce

After a week of fierce fighting, SWAPO president Sam Nujoma announced on April 8 that SWAPO, in a major concession, was recalling all its combatants from Namibia to deprive South Africa of "every pretext to stop Namibia's independence process".³

Meetings of the South African, Angolan and Cuban Joint Monitoring Commission (JMC) took place throughout April and May to reach agreements to stop the fighting and to get the independence process back on course. The meetings — observed by the USA, USSR and the United Nations — and the decisions reached at them, such as the Mount Etjo Declaration (April 9), took place without SWAPO's presence and resulted in decisions firmly

1. Background to the fighting in northern Namibia, SWAPO, London, April 3, 1989.

2. Geneva Protocol, August 5, 1988.

3. Press statement by Sam Nujoma, president of SWAPO, Luanda, April 8, 1989.

favouring South Africa. The Mount Etjo Declaration laid down procedures for the withdrawal of PLAN combatants from Namibia and requested that they report to UNTAG assembly points, hand in their weapons and then be escorted by UNTAG to Angola. The declaration did not implement a cease-fire to enable the combatants to do all this in safety, nor did it require the restriction of the SADF and its South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF) battalions to base.⁴

The whole operation turned into a farce. The assembly points were swarming with the SADF and units of the notorious Koevoet counter-insurgency unit. Rows broke out between the UN and South Africa over whether PLAN should "surrender", and whether the SADF should be allowed to "interrogate" them before being handed over to UNTAG.

"Contempt for Namibian sovereignty"

While South Africa lost those arguments, the fact that they arrogantly put them forward in the first place, together with the presence of their troops, led to SWAPO viewing the whole set-up as a trap. They instructed their combatants to proceed straight to Angola and, in fact, only five wounded fighters turned up at the assembly points.

According to the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) in a statement released in April: "The [Mount Etjo] declaration is once again an example of how some countries have nothing but contempt and disregard for the sovereignty of the Namibian people and the reality of the liberation struggle in Namibia. The Mount Etjo talks were intended to resolve the problem of SWAPO's armed presence in Namibia. But SWAPO — a key historical actor in the entire situation — was not invited to them."⁵

With the Mount Etjo Declaration a failure and South Africa insisting that the peace process could not go ahead until all the combatants were out of the country, a JMC meeting at Ruacana on the Namibia/Angola border on April 20 agreed that South African troops be confined to bases for 60 hours, beginning on April 26, to enable the remaining combatants to get into Angola safely. The confinement of the SADF to bases was only the result of SWAPO's insistence on this at a secret meeting with South Africa held two days previously, also at Ruacana. Since the time period was still not long enough, a JMC meeting in Cape Town on April 28 agreed to extend the deadline to May 13. But, instead of using this opportunity to keep the SADF restricted to bases, the JMC agreed to allow them to carry out "verification" patrols to check whether all the combatants had left. This was giving South Africa *carte blanche* to continue its terror tactics against the local population.

The question to be asked is why would

Angola, Cuba and the USSR endorse these decisions in favour of South Africa? First, in terms of the regional conflict, their main objective is to end South African aggression against Angola. Namibia's independence is secondary, and even seen as a means to this end. It was very much feared in Angolan government circles that South Africa would use the fighting in northern Namibia as a pretext to launch another invasion of Angola. Secondly, it may also be the result of a lack of understanding on their part of the real situation in Namibia, and the extent of the devastation and war being wrought there by South Africa.

Despite UN Secretary General Pérez de Cuéllar's criticism of the JMC decision on the "verification" patrols⁶ and his appeals that the SADF be confined to bases, the UN's role overall is to help smooth the way for a settlement in Namibia agreeable to the imperialist powers. UNTAG has been widely castigated for its unpreparedness and incompetency in dealing with the fighting. The responsibility for UNTAG's disarray lies with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (USA, USSR, Britain, China and France) who agreed to a reduction in UNTAG's forces from 7,500 to 4,650, and a reduction in the budget. Moreover, South Africa was able to dictate that Sweden, seen as pro-SWAPO, could not participate in UNTAG.

The UN's failure to get the SADF and its local battalions into bases, and its failure to stop attacks on civilians, has left many in Namibia cynical about their ability by the time of the elections to stop further South African attacks. Other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, the World Health Organization and so on, will be involved in the independence process — particularly in relation to the repatriation of the refugees — and no doubt the South Africans will exploit the differences that exist among them in relation to their attitude to SWAPO.

SWAPO forced to go along with "massive compromise"

It has taken over a decade since UN Security Council Resolution 435 was passed to set the process in motion, and few believed that this year would see its implementation. SWAPO has long said that Resolution 435 was a massive compromise that they were forced to go along with. Had they not, they would have been accused of trying to hold up the implementation of Namibia's independence.

This resolution is, in fact, a watered-down version of an earlier one, Security Council Resolution 385, passed two years earlier in 1976. Resolution 435 was drafted by the now-defunct Western Contact Group, together with South Africa, in an attempt to side-step the UN and set out terms favouring South Africa. For example, Resolution 435 relegated the UN's

role to one of monitoring the elections, with South Africa's colonial Administrator General in Namibia, Louis Pienaar, organizing them.

Furthermore, SWAPO has not been party to any of the peace negotiations since July/August 1982! Since then the South Africans, backed by Reagan and Thatcher, have consistently argued that they would not sit at the negotiating table with SWAPO. This situation continued last year with SWAPO's notable absence from the peace talks between Angola, Cuba and South Africa over Namibia's future.

Despite all the setbacks in the last few months, it is still likely that the independence process will go ahead because of the convergence of conflicting events and interests that have occurred in the last couple of years. First, and an often ignored factor, is the struggle being waged by SWAPO itself and the growing militancy and strength of the mass movements of students and workers inside Namibia.

Mass mobilizations of workers and students

The relaunch of the National Union of Namibian Workers in 1986, together with the formation since that time of six national trade unions affiliated to it, plus the growth of the Namibia National Student Organization (NANSO), has meant that South Africa and its Western backers were faced with two choices: either to escalate the war, exploitation and repression and face a revolutionary situation in the not too distant future; or agree to implement the UN project while preparing plans to try to ensure that very little will change after independence.

Both the trade-union and student movements are staunchly pro-SWAPO and see the election of a SWAPO government as the only serious alternative to South African occupation. Mass mobilizations of both movements have been continuing since April 1 in protest at South Africa's continuing presence in Namibia and their attempts to sabotage the elections.

On May 18, over 19,000 school students walked out of classes to begin a schools' boycott in protest at the intimidation and harassment of civilians by Koevoet. At the time of writing, this boycott — now involving over 250 schools, mainly in northern Namibia — is continuing and the students are threatening to take it nationwide. Similarly, the NUNW led a 20,000-strong demonstration on April 1 in protest at South Africa's moves to nationalize

4. *Mount Etjo Declaration*, Namibia, April 9, 1989. The South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF), instead of being disbanded under the terms of Resolution 435, were demobbed on full pay.

5. *Namibian workers call for solidarity*, situation report from the NUNW, Namibia, April 1989.

6. Statement by the Secretary General at informal consultations of the Security Council, May 4, 1989.

most of Namibia's public services. And in the Kavango region, both the teachers' and public workers' unions (NANTU and NAPWU) have come out on strike in support of the students and to protest against the sacking of teachers.

Massive support from rural population

Secondly, SWAPO's military wing has been scoring increasing successes against the SADF, despite the fact that they have been up against the largest and best-equipped army in Africa. One only has to look at the massive increase in SADF personnel and hardware in northern Namibia in the last ten years to realize that the SADF's periodic pronouncements that they have wiped out PLAN are wishful thinking. PLAN forces have been engaged in countless acts of sabotage, in particular against military and economic targets. While SWAPO has not established "liberated zones", they would not have been able to keep the armed struggle going for so long without massive support from the rural population (mostly women), especially in the north, in terms of feeding and hiding the combatants who, after all, are the sons, daughters, wives and husbands of many of them. South Africa's escalation of the war in northern Namibia and the daily acts of brutality meted out to civilians have been aimed at breaking PLAN's civilian support.

These developments coincided with a flagging South African economy due to the drop in the gold price and the effects of sanctions. They can no longer afford to continue their occupation of Namibia and their costly and disastrous war in Angola. However, it was their military defeat in Angola last year at the hands of the combined forces of FAPLA, the Cuban internationalist forces, and PLAN at Cuito Cuanavale, plus their loss of air superiority to the Angolans, that finally pushed them to the negotiating table (see IV 158).

From a position of military weakness in Angola, the South Africans, backed by the USA and Britain, were nevertheless able to reassert the upper-hand in the peace negotiations with Angola and Cuba. Both the USA and the South Africans were able to secure the deal they have long been lobbying for — Cuban withdrawal from Angola in return for Namibian independence.

This has been enthusiastically supported by Thatcher, who wants to hold up Namibia's independence as proof of the correctness of her "diplomacy without sanctions" policy. An independent Namibia will increasingly be used to argue that sanctions should now be dropped and the apartheid state brought back fully into the international capitalist fold. In fact, South Africa is already using Namibia's impending independence to secure new international bank loans. On the other hand, the USSR — as part of its rap-

prochement with the West and in order to drastically reduce its financial and military support in southern Africa, particularly in Angola — is behind the concessions Angola and Cuba are being forced to make to the South Africans.

Namibia is being used as a pawn in this game, and South Africa is up against little opposition in its delaying tactics over Resolution 435. These tactics include their terrorizing of the civilian population, preparations to rig the elections, massive financial support for pro-apartheid groupings and so on.⁷

One of the worst aspects of Resolution 435 is that it does not insist that Walvis Bay or the off-shore islands are an integral part of Namibia. As a result, South Africa has been able to hold on to the area and is refusing to recognize it as part of Namibia. Walvis Bay is the country's only deep-water port and the sole alternative to the rail route through South Africa. It handles roughly 86% of Namibia's exports, namely uranium, diamonds, copper and other minerals. And the country's only fish-processing and packing factories are situated there. Walvis Bay was annexed by South Africa in 1977 (using 19th century British colonial treaties!), together with several off-shore islands. South Africa says it will negotiate the future of Walvis Bay and the islands with a "friendly" government.

Strategic importance of Walvis Bay

The residents of Walvis Bay (around 20,000 people) will be excluded from the elections, but Black voters — who make up half the population there, the majority of whom are pro-SWAPO — will almost certainly travel into Namibia to vote. By holding on to Walvis Bay until after formal independence, the South Africans plan to use it to strangle Namibia's economy if a future SWAPO government acts against its interests.

Walvis Bay is also the site of major SADF military installations, and there are fears that the SADF will station many of its forces there instead of withdrawing completely from Namibia in line with the UN proposals. It has been reported that they are now spending 22 million rand on upgrading and expanding their military installations in the enclave. South Africa has already staked out a 200-mile zone around the coast of Walvis Bay and the islands, thereby cutting into Namibia's fishing grounds. A separate Security Council Resolution in 1978 (432) declared the area an integral part of Namibia and called for its reintegration with the rest of the country. But no-one has acted on this since, and Britain and the USA have kept particularly quiet on the issue. They receive intelligence on sea and air traffic movements in the south Atlantic and Indian oceans from South Africa's "Advocaat" naval communications radar

sub-station in Walvis Bay.⁸ And Walvis Bay was used as a supply station by Britain during the Malvinas war.

Another major issue is that of Koevoet, a counter-insurgency unit numbering around 3,000. It was set up in 1979 by General Hans Dreyer at the instigation of General Magnus Malan, now South Africa's defence minister, ostensibly to hunt out PLAN combatants. In reality their job is to terrorize the civilian population in the north to stop them supporting SWAPO. Over the years their catalogue of torture, rape, murder and destruction of villages has grown. Some of their more well-known exploits include the parading of dead SWAPO fighters strapped to army vehicles, the Oshikuku massacre, dressing up as SWAPO combatants and going on killing sprees, and so on.⁹

Koevoet's intimidation and thuggery

These thugs are made up of white South African officers, local Black Namibians (mainly from Ovambo and Kavango) and Angolans, ex-members of UNITA and the FNLA.¹⁰ Under the terms of the UN plan, Koevoet was to be disbanded. Instead, they were incorporated into South Africa's local police force, SWAPOL, on the pretext that they were police not army, and it was better that they were usefully employed rather than unemployed and taking up arms against SWAPO during the election campaign (a sentiment echoed by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

There is now the frightening and bizarre situation where Koevoet, as part of SWAPOL, are responsible for keeping "law and order" during the election campaign. No pressure has been brought to bear on South Africa, or its Namibian agent, Louis Pienaar, to disband Koevoet, and the UN peace-keeping forces are pathetically ineffectual in dealing with the hundreds of additional cases of intimidation by Koevoet and the South African military since April 1.

It is still unclear how the elections are going to be run. On April 24, Pienaar issued a draft proclamation setting out the voting procedures. At first glance, this looks quite reasonable: a minimum voting age of 18; the requirement that voters were born in Namibia, or are the natural child of someone born in Namibia, or

7. South African control of the mass media in Namibia is being used to promote pro-apartheid groupings, particularly the DTA, and to slander SWAPO. Other aspects of South Africa's attempts to disrupt independence is their creation of an assassination squad, set up to murder SWAPO leaders; infiltration of SADF personnel into the ranks of UNTAG; instructing Koevoet and other SADF/SWATF Black conscripted troops to attack UNTAG while disguised as civilians dressed in SWAPO colours. (*South Africa's secret agenda*, Namibian Press Agency, Luanda, June 3, 1989.)

8. "Walvis Bay threat to SWAPO", *Alternet*, May 26, 1989.

9. "Dreaded Koevoet to help with UN plan?" *Action on Namibia*, Spring 1989.

were resident in the country for four years prior to registration; and a 21-day appeal procedure against non-registration or contested registrations.

But the omissions are alarming. The draft proclamation does not stipulate that the voter registration list is arranged alphabetically, a basic requirement for any serious election. There would be no way of knowing who has been omitted, who is on the list more than once and so on. Recently, SADF personnel have been spotted in graveyards writing down names of deceased, for what purpose one can only guess. Proof of identity is also left vague and there appears to be no requirement that registration officers keep proper records.

If this proclamation goes ahead without being challenged the election will not be "free and fair".¹¹ South Africa is almost certainly preparing more dirty tricks for the actual election itself. For example, their civil servants may be looking after the ballot boxes and counting the votes (and probably adding on a few thousand here and there to pro-South African coalition totals). The UN Special Representative has yet to approve Pienaar's election proposals, but on past performance he may well go along with whatever the South Africans have in mind.

Meanwhile, South Africa is trying to get as many non-Namibians as possible to register as residents. This includes UNITA bandits from Angola, who have been registering as Namibians for some time now, as well as South African troops.

The continuing terror in Namibia and South Africa's refusal to disband Koevoet has meant that the repatriation of Namibian exiles (the majority of whom are SWAPO members), which is due to start on May 15, has been postponed indefinitely by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The longer this is delayed, the better for South Africa. When SWAPO's external leadership, headed by its president Sam Nujoma, enter the country it will give an enormous boost to the mass of the people. Meanwhile, 40,000 exiled Namibians have applied to the UNHCR for repatriation, and SWAPO's provisional headquarters in Luanda have reported that they are now ready to be airlifted into the country.¹²

Refusal to repeal racist and oppressive laws

Repatriation centres have been established inside the country by the Council of Churches in Namibia (as the UNHCR's partner) to receive the returnees. It will be the largest airlifting of refugees that the UNHCR has organized in Africa. Strong reservations are being voiced about security for the returnees in these centres due to the activities of Koevoet.

The delay in the repatriation process is also due to Pienaar's refusal to repeal all

racist and oppressive laws as agreed under Resolution 435, with the excuse that only those specifically related to voting procedure need be abolished. For example, he has refused to repeal AG8, which deals with school segregation and separate "ethnic" administrations. The Protection of Fundamental Rights Act is to be rewritten to give SWAPOL wide powers of arrest during the election campaign and it is feared that it will be used to prosecute anyone accused of lobbying people to vote for SWAPO. This is despite the fact that the Act was effectively scrapped as a result of a court judgement.

At the time of writing, the repeal of racist and repressive laws is on the verge of being signed in Pretoria and an amnesty is about to be enforced for all those SWAPO members who could have been arrested on their repatriation to the country. It has taken the South Africans two months of prevarications (in contravention of the UN plan) to finally implement this — a critical delay for SWAPO's external wing and almost certainly engineered by Pretoria to ensure that SWAPO is not sufficiently prepared for the start of the election campaign in July.¹³

Up to 50 parties competing in elections

Since South Africa concedes that SWAPO will win a landslide victory if the elections are "free and fair", it is attempting to reduce its majority. The elections will be run on a proportional representation basis and a two-thirds majority is needed in the Constituent Assembly in order to pass each clause in the future constitution.¹⁴ If SWAPO gains slightly less than two-thirds it will be at the mercy of some of the small pro-South African parties who will have a veto on SWAPO's proposals. The whole process of deciding on the constitution leading to the declaration of independence may then take considerably longer than envisaged in the UN plan. That is, if South Africa does not then step in to re-invade Namibia or instigate a major destabilization operation using Koevoet and SWATF forces in what may turn out to be a similar scenario to the fate of Angola or Mozambique.

There are between 40 and 50 parties competing in the elections, either independently or as part of an alliance, an incredible number for a country of only around 1.5 million people. The majority of these parties are small, ethnically-based, and have little support. Louis Pienaar urged all these small political groups in August 1988 to form common fronts against SWAPO in the elections.

SWAPO's main challenger is the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), not because of their support (which is very small) but because of the millions of rand South Africa is pumping into their election campaign. It is a virulently pro-South

African grouping, supported actively by the SADF and Koevoet, and is campaigning for the retention of "group rights" — a euphemism for white privilege. In 1978, the South Africans installed them in a "government" (that quickly collapsed) after sham elections, which were boycotted by SWAPO.

South African attempts at economic sabotage

Financial support is also being sent to the DTA from their right-wing supporters in West Germany. The DTA's tactics include violence against SWAPO supporters, the formation of its own "police force", and handing out bribes at its rallies (T-shirts and food). Koevoet and the SADF/SWATF troops are parading in DTA T-shirts and beating and shooting anyone who refuses to return their DTA salute.¹⁵

Much of Namibia's economy is controlled by foreign interests, mainly British and South African. Before it resigned in March, South Africa's puppet government recommended sweeping privatization of public services including health, post and telecommunications, water and transport. The union federation, NUNW, rightly claimed that this proposal was aimed at sabotaging the independence process, and launched a campaign opposing privatization in March. They have threatened a general strike if this policy is not reversed.

If everything is privatized by the time of the elections, the pro-South African capitalists in Namibia will easily be able to sabotage essential services. If services are re-nationalized, financial compensation will no doubt be demanded from the future SWAPO government.

The election campaign is set to officially start on July 1, and the fight is clearly between SWAPO and South Africa. Although the South Africans have had a head start (through the campaigning propaganda of the DTA, SADF and their pseudo-cultural organizations, Ezuva and Etango), their strategy is to try to reduce a SWAPO majority, knowing full well that

10. UNITA — National Union for the Total Independence of Angola; FNL — National Liberation Front of Angola. Reactionary nationalist factions, backed in particular by the USA and South Africa (see IV 158).

11. *International Newsbriefing on Namibia*, London, May 1989. The draft proclamation was challenged by SWAPO, the NUNW, the Namibian Council of Churches and the Legal Assistance Centre, but the outcome to date is not known.

12. The repatriation finally got underway on June 12. Under pressure from South Africa, the UNHCR are refusing to allow Namibian church officials to meet the returnees at the five entry points.

13. On June 6 the amnesty was declared and finally 36 laws were repealed and ten others amended, out of a total of 59 repressive and racist laws. AG8 was not among those repealed.

14. There are a number of different proportional representation systems and it is still not known which will be used.

15. "Namibia's election line-up", *Action on Namibia*, Summer 1989.

SWAPO will win hands down.¹⁶

SWAPO is, in fact, the only truly national movement in Namibia. As in all nationalist liberation movements, the politics it embraces are wide-ranging, but importantly it contains left-wing socialist currents. Come independence, SWAPO will be in the unenviable position of leading a country that at present is heavily dependent on South Africa, with most food and consumer goods imported from South Africa.

In the short term, a SWAPO government may have little room to manoeuvre. SWAPO has already stated in their economic policy document that they will opt for a "mixed economy", will not nationalize foreign companies but will enter into new agreements with them, and will only take over land that is owned by absentee landlords.¹⁷ Mindful of the mass exodus and destruction wrought by the white colonialists in Mozambique and Angola, they have tried to allay the fears of the white community over their future in an independent Namibia.

Struggle will continue after independence

The struggle will certainly continue after formal independence has been declared. Initially, the key question is not whether SWAPO nationalizes the transnationals or not, but how they develop the democratic participation of the masses in the reconstruction of the country to enable them to take forward the demands of the Black majority and defend the newly independent state.

SWAPO has the benefit of hindsight in being able to draw on the lessons learnt in newly independent countries in the rest of Africa. If a SWAPO government is able to rally the people behind them and explain at every stage what options are open to them and why they are taking certain actions, there is the possibility of resisting potential destabilization.

Key to this is SWAPO's support for the continuing autonomy of the trade-union and student movements, and the building of an autonomous women's movement, without this being counterposed to national unity.

Ultimately, Namibia's future, together with that of the other front-line states, is tied up with the defeat of capitalism inside South Africa linked to imperialism being challenged in its heartlands. ★

16. One aspect to this is their divide-and-rule policy in trying to persuade people (and organizations internationally) that SWAPO is a "tribal" organization based on the Ovambo peoples of the north — an assertion being daily contradicted by the support SWAPO receives from all sections of the Black population.

17. "Namibia's economic prospects brighten up", an economic policy position document of the Political Bureau of SWAPO's Central Committee, Luanda, November 28, 1988. According to SWAPO, an estimated 48% of white-owned farms/ranches are owned by absentee landowners.

Repression follows Argentine hunger riots

HARDLY TWO WEEKS after the May 14 presidential election — which saw the victory of Peronist candidate¹ Carlos Menem and the defeat of President Raúl Alfonsín — the country's second largest city, Rosario, was rocked by a mass rebellion against poverty. Dozens of people died in this uprising, which spread rapidly to the suburbs of Buenos Aires.

The regime responded by launching a campaign of repression against the far left, represented essentially by two Trotskyist organizations, the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) and the Workers' Party (PO). A number of activists and leaders of these parties were arrested.

CECILIA GARMENDIA

TELEVISION pictures showing the anger of the Argentine people, driven to looting in order to find food, put their country back in the center of the international stage for some time. For nearly 10 days, violent riots shook the main Argentine industrial cities. The shantytown dwellers sacked the supermarkets and stores. After the ill-starred attack on the La Tablada barracks in January, these hunger riots exposed the destitution and desperation gripping the Argentine masses.²

The victory of the Peronist candidate, Carlos Saul Menem (a leading figure in the Peronist right wing) was a result of the failure of the economic management of the ruling Radical Party. But it did not open up any perspective for the workers. The Peronist program went no further than demagogic promises such as a "productive revolution" and "big wage packages" (*salarizos*).

Besides, before the May 14 vote, Menem, along with Alfonsín, had signed a recognition of the debt to the World

Bank. The international money-lenders wanted guarantees, and the Peronists are intent on maintaining good relations with them! Reforms can hardly be expected from the new government. Its only hope is to muzzle the workers' movement, which is organized by the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) led by a Peronist bureaucracy. Outbursts of anger, such as the one in recent weeks, have revealed the limitations of such transmission belts.

In fact, in the present economic situation, the Peronists can hardly hope to play the role they did in the 1950s and channel or manipulate the movement. Moreover, they are paying the price for the compromises they made during the military government. Argentina's crisis and indebtedness make it impossible for the Peronists to carry out the sort of reforms Perón did in the post-war years.

Shopkeepers changing prices twice a day

In terms of the economy, Alfonsín continued to follow the ultra-free-enterprise model established by the military in 1976, yielding the real economic power to the transnational trusts. The latter speculated on the international market rather than developing production, and this produced a terrible flight of capital, bankruptcy for many national enterprises without access to foreign credits, hyper-inflation (30% to 40% a month) and a devaluation of the national currency by more than 12,000% in five years.

According to the Argentine institute of statistics and censuses, 2.5 million people are unemployed or under-employed, while 7.5 million working people live below the poverty line. Over the last three months, the dollar has gone up by 600% against the local currency, necessities have become scarce, and shopkeepers are changing their prices as much as twice a day in order to protect themselves against inflation. Often people pick up a product in a big store and find out when they go to pay for it that the price has already gone up.

In order to maintain their buying power, many workers invest their wages in buying dollars, changing their australes [the

1. Peronism, or as it calls itself, the "Social Justice Movement," is a bourgeois populist movement founded by Juan Domingo Perón (1895-1974); it held power in Argentina from 1946 to 1955. A second Peronist government, installed in 1973, was overthrown by a coup d'état in 1976.

2. On January 23, a group of a few dozen civilians attacked La Tablada barracks in the Buenos Aires region. This action was suppressed by the army with a bloodbath.

Argentine currency] for \$5 and \$10 at a time so that they can eat. Or else they invest their australes for 24 hours or for a week, getting interest that goes as high as 150% a month.

The left made an important breakthrough in the recent elections with the score achieved by the United Left (IU) coalition, made up mainly of the Communist Party and the MAS (Movement toward Socialism, founded by Nahuel Moreno around the Socialist Workers' Party, PST). For the first time, it got people elected, all of whom were members of the MAS.

National unity against the "germs of subversion"

The repression set in motion by the Alfonsín government, which declared a state of siege, sealed the reconciliation between this regime and various factions of the military. The seizure of La Tablada barracks had already offered the pretext for forming a National Security Council, whose program called in the clearest possible terms for a "struggle against subversion," in a line of continuity with the generals' "dirty war."

The military closed ranks, and its quarrels with the government became muted. This grand show of "national unity" against the "germs of subversion" unfortunately was met only with silence by the left (with the exception of the PO and human rights organizations). Such factors, aggravated by hunger, explain how these riots could develop without an underlying political perspective.

In the present phase, there is scarcely any solution for the political and economic crisis rocking Argentina. The powers that be do not intend to hand out any more presents. Despite the zealotry of the government in applying the austerity plans, mobilizations such as the one that has just occurred continue to put Argentina in the category of "risk countries" (the foreign investors are quite aware of this, as well as the local ones, who keep on sending their currency holdings out of the country).

Moreover, neither the Radicals nor the Peronists are able to assuage the discontent. Menem's taking office may offer a few months respite to the possessing classes in the country, since many workers still harbor scraps of hope. But the continuation of austerity will only provoke a new outburst of anger from the working people. ★



"The government is a corpse waiting to be buried"

THE RECENT mass riots were used by the Argentine government as a pretext for repressing the far left, and in particular one of its main organizations, the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS, linked to the International Workers' League).

The following interview is with Silvia Diaz, who was elected to the Buenos Aires provincial legislature on the MAS slate on May 14.

WHAT IS the significance of Menem's victory and the return to office of the Social Justice [Peronist] Movement?

Menem and the Social Justice Movement are getting ready to install the new government a few months earlier than the time set by the constitution in order to fill the existing power vacuum and offer a solution to the present revolutionary crisis.

The power vacuum and the crisis were

caused by the great upsurge of working-class and popular struggles that threaten to lead to a *Caracazo* (a massive explosion such as happened in the Venezuelan capital). Hyper-inflation of 13% a day created very acute social conflicts and the collapse of the Alfonsín government, the system and the state.

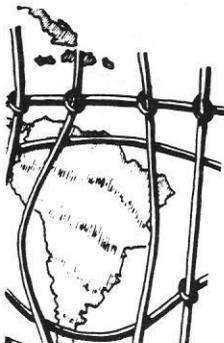
Menem finds himself the object of hostility and contempt only three weeks after the elections that put him in power with 46% of the vote, and he has now adopted a line of severe repression of this popular protest.

■ How did the mass rebellions unfold?

Rosario is Argentina's second biggest industrial city and a very important river port. For five years, this province has been governed by the Social Justice Movement. Menem got his best score in the May 5 elections there and also the broadest rejection of his social peace plan on May 29. For three days, the people of Rosario went into the streets in the suburbs and the city, stormed the big stores and carried out anti-capitalist expropriations.

At the beginning, the population of the working-class neighborhoods seized food from the supermarkets. Then, the middle classes followed after them to take advantage of the situation to grab all sorts of goods (including cars). Finally, marginal groups went into action, pillaging even the small stores. Out of a population of around a million people, between 20% and 30% of the inhabitants of the city participated in the riots.

This massive mobilization then spread to Greater Buenos Aires and other places in the country, involving broad layers of the society. The police did not intervene, and in fact some of their men took part in the expropriations. Since several sections of the army were unavailable for repressing the movement, the government was forced to bring in troops that had been concentrated on the borders of the coun-



try. This forced the masses to retreat into their neighborhoods. The Argentine *Caracazo* was a victory all along the line. The rebels expropriated merchandise with a value of tens of millions of dollars, and the government had to grant a wage increase of 100%, as well as undertake a free distribution of food throughout the country.

There were a number of causes for this uprising. Already before the elections, more than a million workers threw down the gauntlet to the Social Justice Movement trade-unionists and staged very militant local strikes. In this context, the Rosario rebellion was the workers' response to the capitalist curse of hyperinflation. This revealed the crisis and the weakness of the regime's institutions, as well as Menem's impotence.

■ **Did the political and trade-union organizations play a role in the uprising?**

The Rosario revolt was not led by any trade-union or political force; it was entirely spontaneous. Nonetheless, these events did not take the MAS by surprise. Since 1982, we have said that there was a revolutionary situation in Argentina, caused by the growing economic crisis and the mass struggle. During the five years of his government, Alfonsín was unable to resolve this situation, which sooner or later had to lead to a revolutionary explosion.

In February 1989, we wrote in a document on the situation in Argentina: "We are heading for elections in the context of a capitalist crisis and social pauperization." We decided to participate in the elections by forming the United Left Coalition (IU) with the Communist Party. And we took part in the struggles that developed subsequently on the basis of our socialist program. In April, we said that "the rise of struggles may provoke a revolutionary crisis before or after the elections."

Moreover, we added, "The rise of the workers' and people's movement has brought on a crisis of the government and opened up the possibility of its falling. It would be desirable for this to be brought about by mass struggles, but it is probable that Menem will be obliged to take on governmental responsibility in an unpredictable situation. Another possibility is that there could be a power vacuum, or even a situation in which Menem could not represent an alternative to the crisis."

These positions were the basis for the MAS's intervention. In our electoral campaign, we called on the masses to organize their struggles independently, placing no confidence either in Alfonsín or Menem, to expropriate the imperialists and the big capitalists and form a workers' and people's government.

14 This campaign got a broad response. On May 2, the United Left held a rally of

50,000 people. It was a national event. And, because of the very large number of workers who came, it was a historical occasion for the left. The election result confirmed this growth. In the big cities and working-class concentrations in the country, the United Left got 6% of the vote. Among its successful candidates were the leader of the MAS, Luis Zamora, who has been described by the press as "Argentina's first Trotskyist deputy"; Luis Cuejo, who owed his election to the Rosario workers; and Lipropio Caso, who was elected in the working-class suburbs of Buenos Aires.

In its May 18 issue, the daily *La Nación* noted a statement by the general secretary of the Labor Confederation calling on bosses to make concessions to the strikers in order to "ward off a further growth of the influence of MAS members in the Factory Committees." In the union elections, the slates backed by MAS got between 20% and 30% of the votes, despite the fraud the bureaucracy engaged in. It was after this statement, in the wake of the elections, that MAS called for a general strike for higher wages and for confiscating the food held by the big capitalist businesses. We also demanded the ouster of the government and the calling of a constituent assembly so that the people could decide democratically on forming a government of their own.

The MAS's contacts with the workers involved in struggles and some of those who participated in the May 29 riots in Rosario served as a pretext for the Social Justice Movement governor of the province to accuse the MAS of organizing the revolt. On the evening of May 29 itself, in his announcement of a state of siege the minister of the interior explicitly accused Zamora and the MAS of being the instigators of the uprising.

■ **What is the explanation for the repression, the state of siege and the other measures adopted by the government?**

During the supermarket expropriations, 14 people were killed, almost all of them by bullets fired by the shopkeepers. Through the state of siege, the government has tried to set up a more effective repressive system, directed in the first place against the left organizations. Up until now, there have been about 300 arrests. The biggest wave of repression hit the Workers' Party (PO).

The pro-government papers, as well as the radio and television are continuing to fulminate against the MAS, 30 of whose members have been arrested (20 were later released). The inability the government has shown to carry through a mass repression can be explained only in the light of the present power vacuum, which is a typical manifestation of a revolutionary crisis.

After the proclamation of the state of

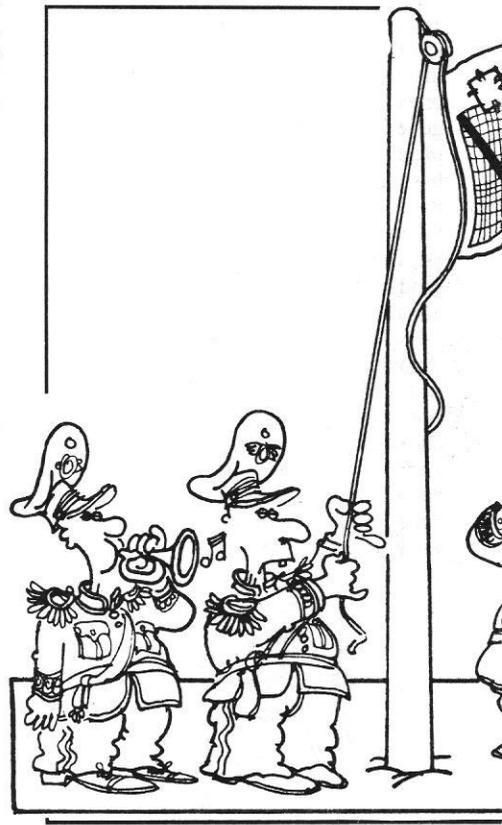
siege, the students mobilized in the capital to demand the revocation of this measure and the ending of censorship. They were not repressed, and they ended their demonstration by occupying a university.

The government is nothing more than a corpse waiting to be buried, surrounded by the worst crisis the country has ever experienced. In May, inflation reached 78.5%, and it is expected to be worse for June. In the last three months, there have been three ministers of the economy. In the last 20 days, the banks have been closed ten days by official decree, and in the other ten they have restricted withdrawals. The interest rate has been set at 1,200% per year. The food store chains have also been hit, both by the expropriations and the recession and closures of enterprises, which often continue to pay those dependent on them to avert still graver consequences.

The government is totally impotent. Nobody is paying taxes. The public administration is, in fact, on a continuing undeclared strike. And in several offices, they have decided not to pay the top functionaries so that the worst-off employees can get their wages. Forms of self-management are also beginning to take shape in the hospitals in order to find the resources that are lacking to take care of the patients.

If the government has not yet fallen, that is because of the support it has had from Menem and the trade-union bureaucracy, which is blocking the organization of a general strike.

■ **What would be the reaction of the**



army in the event of a coup d'état?

The armed forces were dealt a historic defeat by the rise of the mass movement, which forced them out of power in the context of a revolutionary crisis. The defeat in the Malvinas war had already weakened the army, but its crisis was essentially the result of working-class and popular struggles, which made the mass murder carried out under the dictatorship (the "missing persons") an insoluble problem.

The military tried to demand a sort of legitimization of the dictatorship. But the masses prevented that. Videla, Massera and a lot of other generals are still in prison.

What is more, you have also to consider the lack of weapons and very low wages owing to the economic crisis. As a result, the soldiers have come into conflict with their superiors and raised demands similar to those of the workers.

So, we are seeing a very grave social and political crisis in the army. This makes the Argentine army the weak link in the repressive apparatus in Latin America and also explains its complete ineffectiveness. This crisis has been reflected by three mutinies in two years. We are seeing a similar phenomenon among the police where there have been 50 strikes for higher wages; and one section, supported by the MAS, has been calling for joining the trade-union organizations.

At the moment, there are three factors standing in the way of a coup d'état. First, the rise of the workers' and people's movement — which is at the origin

of this crisis in the army — is far from over. Second, no section of society is prepared to support a coup d'état. Finally, the Latin American and the world situations point to the impossibility of a military solution.

Confronting the crisis and the rise of the mass movements, the bourgeoisie and the imperialists are offering a democratic and not a military response. Of

course, this does not prevent a resort to military repression in specific instances such as in Caracas in Venezuela and Villa Redonda in Brazil. In Argentina, the only possible option for the bourgeoisie and imperialism is represented by Menem, in the perspective of a capitalist solution to the crisis through a reconsolidation of the army and a defeat of the workers' movement. ★

Workers' Party statement on the repression

THE WORKERS' PARTY (PO), a Trotskyist formation that broke with the Lambert current in the early 1980s, has been one of the main targets of the repression. Its principal leaders were arrested, but on June 6, as a result of public and media reaction and of the occupation of his offices by PO activists, the prosecutor was obliged to release them.

The following is an official statement made by the PO following the arrests.

“ ON JUNE 1, Judge Larrenvere in the town of Moron, a suburb of Buenos Aires, issued a warrant against the Workers' Party for "criminal conspiracy," accusing it of being responsible for disorders and the pillaging of supermarkets. The judge's decision was preceded and accompanied by a governmental campaign over radio and TV blaming the far left and the Trotskyists for the events that have occurred in these last months in Argentina. This judge's decision was directly dictated by the government and the repressive services.

The judge ordered the police to search the headquarters of the PO and to arrest its national leadership. Thus, the police came into our central headquarters in Buenos Aires on Thursday night [June 1] and arrested the following people: Catalina Guanigni, leader of the Committee of Relatives of Missing Persons and Persons Jailed for Political Reasons, a mother of two missing persons and a candidate in the May 14 legislative elections; Pablo Rieznik, a candidate for senator, who was kidnapped during the military dictatorship; and Gregorio Flores, a leader of the 1969 Cordoba uprising and candidate for vice president in the recent elections.

While the police were searching the party's central headquarters, a delegation from its national leadership went to the government to denounce these provocations. They were also arrested as they were getting ready to hold a press conference. Those involved were Jorge Altamira, presidential candidate; Juan Carlos Capurro, the party's lawyer and a candidate in the legislative elections; and Cristian Rath.

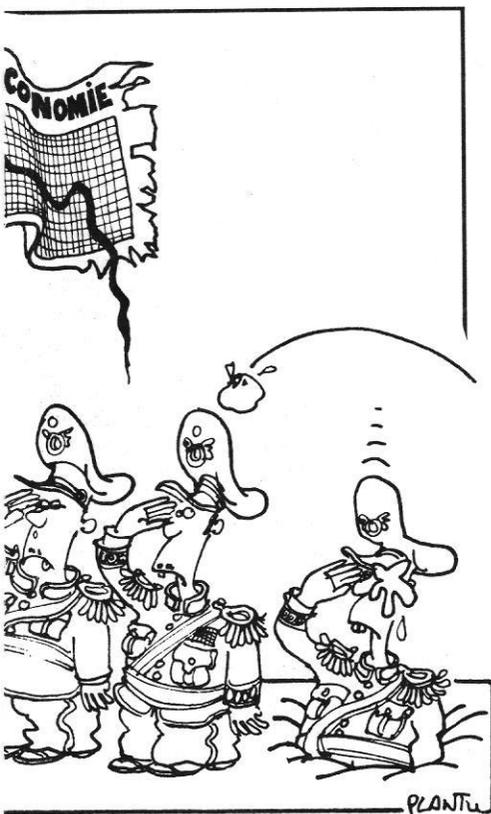
The six prisoners were isolated and placed at the disposition of the judge in the premises of the political police. Later, Juan Carlos Capurro was released. On Monday, June 5, after a meeting with police chiefs and members of the political police, as well as government functionaries, the judge decided to order preventative detention of the five other persons accused.

Not even an appearance of "independence of the judiciary" was maintained. The government and the judges decided to stage a provocation against the PO, and through it against all the people's organizations, in an attempt to put the "blame" for the demonstrations on them, although it was really the government's starvation plans that were responsible.

The PO is a legal organization. It carries on all its activities publicly. It participated in the 1983, 1985, 1987 and 1989 elections. The provocation staged against it is a very grave violation of democratic rights, of the freedoms of association and expression. If this maneuver succeeds, the mere fact of belonging to a left party, of distributing or reading its press will become a crime.

This provocation is part of the repression launched by the government against the popular mobilizations last week, against thousands of men, women and children who went into the street in search of food. The government decreed a state of siege, which was subsequently ratified in Congress, thanks to the votes of the Peronists, Radicals and right-wing parties. It unleashed a repression that cost the lives of 17 people, and it arrested several thousands.

We demand the immediate lifting of the state of siege, the immediate release of all the political and trade-union activists detained, as well as an end to the repression against the Workers' Party and the immediate release of its leaders.



US changes tack in anti-Nicaragua campaign

ON April 13, the US Congress approved a renewal of "humanitarian" aid to the contras to the sum of \$66.6 million. This vote marks the end of a chapter in US foreign policy that lasted for the eight long years of the Reagan administration. The objective was the defeat of the Sandinista revolution through military pressure by the contras and international diplomatic isolation. At the same time efforts were made to overcome the "Vietnam syndrome", and create the necessary conditions in the US itself for direct military intervention in Nicaragua.

The Bush administration is now seeking to re-establish US political and military hegemony in the region, smash the Sandinista regime, and reverse the situation through a "democratic counter-revolution". This is the real reason behind US support for the Central American peace plan. The old policy of the carrot-and-stick has been re-baptized under the more subtle name of "incentives and penalties".

G. BUSTER

SINCE the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship by the Sandinista revolution in July 1979, the policy of the Reagan administration towards Central America — a region which receives less than 2% of US investments and foreign trade — has been centred around the definition of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and subsequently the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) as a strategic threat to US interests. The substance of this menace are the revolutionary processes that are challenging US dominance in its "own backyard" and the possibility that they will lead to a Soviet military presence that, as with the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, would upset the strategic nuclear balance.

At the start of the election campaign that led to Reagan's second victory, only 37% of US citizens had heard of Nicaragua, and a mere 17% expressed support for contra aid. Almost three-quarters of those interviewed feared that this policy could lead to direct US military involvement.

Given the lack of support in the country, Reagan's Central America policy had to be carried out by subterfuge. The Contragate scandal and the trial of Colonel Oliver North revealed the existence of a whole parallel structure. Congress has continued to vote through "humanitarian aid" for the

contras, under pressure from the blackmail of the Reagan administration concerning the unknown strategic dangers to US security represented by the Sandinistas. Events such as Ortega's journey to Moscow in June 1985 were taken as clear evidence of the danger.

Contras were never a serious military threat

After eight years the balance-sheet of this policy for US imperialism is negative. The contras have never been a serious military threat to Nicaragua. The Contragate scandal put paid to whatever credibility the Reagan administration might still have had, and added a new and peculiarly virulent syndrome to the Vietnamese one.

The Central American oligarchies have drawn the conclusion that the United States is no longer able to remove the danger of revolution using the direct methods of the recent past. They were thus obliged to deal with the crisis according to their own interests, by seeking an accommodation with the Sandinistas that would allow them to avert the danger of a regionalization of the crisis and pursue a local counter-insurrection policy in the guise of a "democratic counter-revolution". The various Central American peace plans have arisen in the void created by the failure of the

Reagan policy.

The 1988 election campaign again tied the US's hands. As in 1983, the two candidates, on the advice of their campaign staffs, did all they could to keep the issue off the agenda. They had different reasons. Bush, as everybody knew, was up to his neck in Contragate. His campaign statements restricted themselves to supporting the search for peace "but not at any price". He launched an appeal for collaboration with the democracies of Latin America, denounced Sandinism as a new incarnation of Marxism-Leninism and expressed his support for the contras, without ruling out the need for military aid.

Central American leaders relaunch Esquipulas II

The Democratic presidential candidate Dukakis promised to end contra aid, support the Esquipulas II agreement¹ and start a new stage in relations with Latin America, by calling a "Hemispheric Conference". But the last stage of his campaign was a game of upping the ante in the face of Bush's charges of liberalism.

The five Central American presidents decided to take the opportunity presented by the total failure of Reagan's policy, the void created by the transition between two administrations, and the problem of the need to negotiate bi-partisan agreement for the new policy, to relaunch Esquipulas II. They set out a peace plan based on the agreements of August 1987, which would, at the very least, allow them to re-negotiate their place in Washington's policy from a position of strength. If they did not do this, there was a danger that the scheduled elections in Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in 1989 and 1990 would disrupt the network of personal relations between the presidents that was established during the complicated negotiations at Esquipulas. The United States would then put pressure on the Central American countries one-by-one, which would lead to internal radicalization and oblige the oligarchs to give their main attention to the domestic balance of forces. Furthermore the refugee problems and the remnants of the contras would impose new expenses and would lead to further destabilization.

The right moment presented itself at the end of November of last year, with the accession of the Mexican president, Salinas de Gortari. A month previously, at the United Nations General Assembly, the Honduran foreign minister, Lopez Contreras, proposed the creation of an internation-

1. The Esquipulas II Accords were signed on August 7-8, 1987, by the five Central American presidents (from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Costa Rica). The accords established the principle of the legitimacy of the existing governments and the illegitimacy of the irregular forces. They called for an end to military aid, a process of national reconciliation, the re-establishment of pluralism and complete freedom of expression in all the countries concerned. All these aspects were indivisible, with precise dates and verification procedures.

al peace force that would disarm, repatriate or redeploy the contras out of Honduras. This initiative, coming from the Central American country most deeply implicated in Reagan's policy, was a sign of how scared the local oligarchies had become. On, November 30, with the agreement of the five presidents, the Central American foreign ministers sent a letter to UN secretary-general, Pérez de Cuéllar, asking him to coordinate the creation of an inspection machinery for the points regarding security and non-interference set out in Esquipulas.

The third front was calling a summit of Latin American presidents. This would put the Central American leaders under all kinds of internal pressure, and all of them together under the pressure of the United States. It finally took place on February 13-14, 1989, at Playa del Tesoro in Salvador, helped along by a message of support from the European Community (EC) and thanks to the good offices of the Group of Eight of Caracas², offered when the new Venezuelan president, Carlos Andres Perez took office.

The Playa del Tesoro accords laid the foundations demanded by Pérez de Cuéllar. On the one hand, they preserve the Esquipulas II compromises on internal democratization — generally applied unilaterally against Nicaragua. These envisage the holding of elections in February 1990 and the opening of negotiations with the civilian opposition to reform the electoral laws. Duarte of Salvador made it a condition of his support for the summit that no mention be made of the FMLN proposals on elections in Salvador [see IV 164]. From the other side, a 90-day time limit was set for a technical commission to work out a plan for the work of the Inspection Commission and for verification, demobilization and removal of the contras stationed in Honduras.

The comprehensive nature of the accords took the Bush administration by surprise. But the diplomatic momentum was maintained with the support of the EC and the Group of Eight at the meeting at San Pedro de Sula on February 27. This support was backed up by an injection of \$420m for food, development of an inter-regional commercial network and recapitalization of the Central American Bank.

The first US reaction to the Playa del Tesoro accords came after weeks of daily accusations in the press, reflecting three main themes. The first was that it was necessary to put pressure on Honduras to prevent the demobilization of the contras and the dismantling of their bases. Any massive transfer of contras to the US was ruled out, sometimes by the use of racist arguments. Given the grave difficulties presented by any attempt to resettle them in other countries in the region, the only

other alternative open was to send them back to Nicaragua. (This applied, of course, only to the contras' peasant base. The leaders have been sunning themselves in Miami for some time.) In spite of the sale of arms on the black market — to the profit of the FMLN and also, to some extent, of drug racketeers — and the social danger that the contras pose for Honduras, Baker's envoys, Busby and Kimmitt, descended on Tegucigalpa to force on President Azcona the maintenance of the contras, alleging that this was

reaffirm the idea that the accords did not involve direct negotiations between the US and Nicaragua. On the contrary, Managua must negotiate not only with the civilian opposition, but with the contras. Cuba was also excluded — its role in the zone was to be negotiated directly with the USSR, according to the timetable for the settlement of regional disputes.

Although it retained some of these points, the first reaction opened the way for a total revision of US policy towards Central America, which took priority over the strategic negotiations with the Soviet Union. This was the moment to negotiate with the US Congress the bipartisan accords offered to Bush three days after his victory by the Democrat leader, Jim Wright.

Throughout March, Baker and Aronson held talks with all the senators and representatives who might be in any way interested in Central America. The last of these meetings took place on March 24 at the White House between President Bush and the Democrat and Republican leaders of Congress. Agreement was announced the same morning. The basic points were:

- The US supports the efforts towards peace and democratization of Esquipulas II.

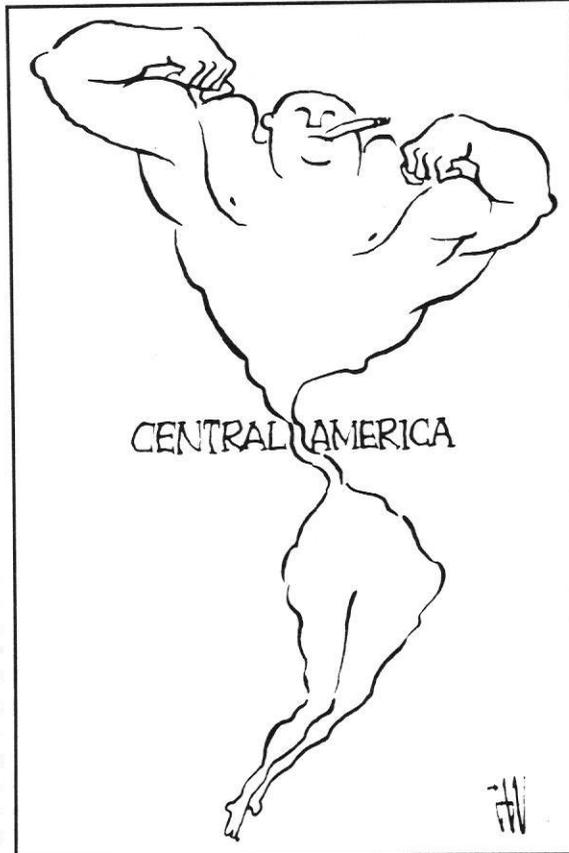
- As for Nicaragua, the US will put pressure on the Sandinista government by diplomatic and economic, but not military means, to keep its promises regarding democratization and ending its aid to the FMLN. Baker pledged in writing to Congress that the contras would not undertake any military action before February 1990.

- The contras will get \$66.6m in humanitarian aid (double the previous sum) until February 1990, but prolongation after November 30 will be subject to the unanimous approval of the leaders of Congress.

- The repatriation or transfer of the contras must be voluntary as soon as conditions of security and democracy exist, although the possibility of using the support funds to finance the return of individual contras to Nicaragua is also left open.

- Responsibility for the application of this policy and the definition of the national interest rests with the executive which must set down a time-table for the implementation of the Sandinistas' undertakings. After evaluation by Washington, the Sandinistas will get their reward or punishment, piously described as "stimulation and dissuasion".

It soon became clear that this mechanism of pressure and constant harassment of Managua, in which the collaboration of



the only reliable way of putting pressure on the FSLN to keep its promise of elections in 1990.

"A cover for Nicaraguan aid to the FMLN"

The second idea was to cast doubt on the effectiveness of the Inspection Commission on the grounds that it lacked the necessary means to keep watch on all the frontiers. It was said that it was no more than a cover for Nicaraguan aid to the FMLN, which was in the process of rearming — according to the CIA, with a whole arsenal of AK47s (in no way the same as the Chinese ones supplied to the contras by the US!). Washington demanded to be a part of the negotiations over the technical plan, called for the number of personnel to be increased, and for control to be extended not only over the Gulf of Fonseca but over all the territorial waters of El Salvador.

Thirdly, it was considered necessary to

2. The Group of Eight: consists of both Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Panama whose leaders launched the Contadora plan in September 1984; and Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Uruguay, who, as the Group of Lima, supported the Contadora plan.

the Latin American and European allies is demanded, is not the beginning of a move in the direction of the political line supported by the liberal Democrats in Congress. Rather it represents the outer limit of the concessions that the Republican executive is ready to make. The first proof of this came on April 25, a date on which the presidential decree on the blockade of Nicaragua coincided with the announcement of the approval of the new electoral law in Nicaragua and the start of Ortega's visit to Europe in search of political and economic support. In order to "pass the test", the FSLN must negotiate the electoral law with the civilian opposition.

Most democratic electoral law in Central America

This was the start of a whole process of wearing down launched by the US, which, if carried through would call into question Bush's promise to respect the Esquipulas II accords. For Washington, the 1990 elections in Nicaragua only make sense if the Sandinistas lose them, or at least, are so seriously weakened that their hegemony is called into question.

The opposition inside Nicaragua, the "Group of 14", took up a petition campaign for changes in the proposed electoral law, raising the stakes every time the Sandinistas make a concession. But on April 22, two days before the approval of the most democratic electoral law in Central America, on the pretext that the Sandinistas had not given enough to the internal opposition, Bush reaffirmed the blockade.

Bush's charges reveal once again the bias of imperialism:

- "The electoral council will be under Sandinista control". Ortega explained before leaving for Europe that the council would comprise two Sandinistas, two representatives of the opposition and a "person of good will" chosen by consensus. It seems to have escaped Washington's notice that during the "democratic" elections in Salvador, only ARENA was represented on the electoral council.

- "The 'exiles' would not be able to vote outside Nicaragua". No Central American electoral law allows this. The most liberal position, that laid down at Esquipulas, was for an amnesty to accompany the electoral process.

- "Foreign finance". The FSLN finally agreed that imperialism could finance its supporters, while reserving 50% of the sums allocated for fair distribution by the electoral council. Apparently this is contrary to electoral democracy, but only in Nicaragua, for in the US itself the law strictly prohibits all financial support to parties from abroad.

- "Lack of press freedom". Ortega also explained that the national television channels would give 30 minutes each day to each party, and the parties would be able to buy additional time.

The electioneering began on April 25. Ortega went off to Europe, where he got the explicit support of Mitterrand, Felipe Gonzalez and the European social democracies as a whole for the economic and political programme of the FSLN. The civilian opposition meanwhile was in Washington to defend, in the shadow of the Bush administration, its project of "national reconstruction". But this opposition has neither a common programme nor a candidate and may well turn out to be just as useless from the point of view of imperialist policy as the contras' military efforts.

For the FSLN, international solidarity, in the form of economic support, which this year amounted to \$250m (as opposed to \$66.6m for the contras), is indispensable to cushion the social costs of the austerity policy and reconstruct the economic basis of the country after the war. That is why the social-democratic government of Sweden has called a conference in Stockholm to coordinate the aid. Only Washington's financial support provides imperialist "carrots" to the civilian opposition to assist it in its task of building a social base out of the discontent of sectors of the population, itself caused by the misery created by the blockade and the war.

The incentives — partial lifting of the blockade and normalization of the functioning of respective Embassies — offered by Washington are poisoned fruits that will be employed to weaken the FSLN. On the other hand, the penalties would seem to be of doubtful efficacy, once it becomes practically impossible to resurrect the contras' military campaign. Only the international isolation of Nicaragua could make them real.

But after Ortega's visit to Europe, Washington has to face up to the loss of credibility of its Central America policy in the eyes of its Western allies. And this lessens its ability to apply pressure on Venezuela and Mexico.

US foreign policy outflanked by Soviet initiatives

When Bush arrived in the White House, he found US foreign policy outflanked by the Soviet peace initiatives. He brought back with him much of the team of advisers of the Kissinger era (Scowcroft, Eagleburger), who are convinced of the need to renegotiate respective zones of influence with the Soviet Union. To do this, however, the first requirement is to lessen the impact of Gorbachev's diplomatic offensive, and therefore his credibility in Europe. This is the underlying reason for the wide-ranging "revision" of US policy.

At the same time, however, Washington has found over the last few years that, as far as regional conflicts such as Afghanistan and Angola are concerned, the relationship of forces at the negotiating table has moved in its favour. It has thus decid-

ed to establish a series of "linkages" to reinforce its position in strategic negotiations. Given the crisis of Reagan's policy in Central America, this means trying to put indirect pressure on Cuba and Nicaragua, explaining that the regional crisis is the product of Soviet "subversion".

Independence of the Central American revolutions

Gorbachev's visit to Cuba was the occasion for a propaganda campaign that had an enormous resonance, with the sole objective of reducing Gorbachev's power of attraction in Latin America. Fidel Castro profited from the campaign, because it allowed him to channel all the internal tensions engendered by the visit — the hopes invested in *perestroika* by sections of the population and of the cadres unhappy with the type of solutions to the economic and social crisis contained in the rectification campaign — towards the issues of independence and the indigenous character of the revolution. Castro's line was that Washington must understand that negotiations on matters affecting Cuba must be held directly with Havana and nobody else. The restatement of this principle was especially important after the negotiations over Angola and Namibia. At the same time it represented a hope that it might be possible to profit from the international situation to revive diplomatic dialogue between Cuba and the US.

Central America is not a priority for the Soviet Union; It is a regional conflict. Over and over again, Moscow has urged on the FSLN and FMLN a "moderation" incompatible with their revolutionary project, going so far as to suggest the Afghan solution — marked by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan calling for a government of national reconciliation with the Mujahideen — as a model. But the independence of the Central American revolutions conditions the Soviets' own capacity to make concessions. Furthermore, given the lack of encouragement from the US, Moscow is continuing to take initiatives at the level of strategic negotiations. Moscow might find it more useful to make a unilateral statement expressing support for Ortega's declaration that Nicaragua, once the contra danger disappears, would need only to maintain its present defence capacities and might even reduce them. Soviet aid could then be doled out commensurately.

The US demands have a fundamentally ideological character expressed by the formula: "Stop US military aid to the contras and Soviet military aid to the FSLN". The FSLN is thus presented as one of the belligerents in a civil war, rather than the government of the country, which is clearly unacceptable.

In this situation, international solidarity takes on a new importance for thwarting the Bush administration's pressure moves. ★

Sandinista leaders on the Nicaraguan crisis

AT THE END of January the Nicaraguan government announced a drastic austerity programme in response to a situation of economic collapse, including an inflation rate of 20,000% in 1988, resulting in a drop in the purchasing power of the working-class of some 85%. The state budget was to be slashed by an estimated 44%, 35,000 military and civilian state employees were to be dismissed, credit was be tightened and subsidies abolished or reduced.

At the same time appeals were made to the Nicaraguan private sector for a new spirit of cooperation and the agriculture minister, Jaime Wheelock, explained that land expropriations were to cease. All this formed the backdrop to Daniel Ortega's visit to Europe in April in search of desperately needed economic and diplomatic assistance. Here we publish extracts giving the views of four leading Sandinistas on these developments.

DOCUMENTS

"It is necessary to reinforce pluralism"

TOMAS BORGE, Nicaraguan Minister of the Interior, explains here the recent economic measures adopted by the Sandinista government.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY of increasing spending in health and education is objective. Unlike what happens in other social systems, where the absence of social programs is bound up with the nature of these systems, in our case this is against our will....

As for the use of market mechanisms, for a long time the theory of scientific socialism has gone beyond the idea of associating market relations only with capitalism, as if they were totally contrary to socialism. We could go back to Lenin's NEP and other historical instances to show that market and monetary relations are objective conditions. The problem is to use them in a conscious way and prevent them from operating in a blind way....

The danger of a distortion of values

exists. But the National Leadership was able to discern this threat in time. I think that if there is a time when we should be more demanding toward our forces, it is now. Thus, we have to demand a commitment to principles, to austerity, to honesty. If there is a time when we have to confront bureaucracy, egoism and other human deformation, it is now. And only revolution, and in the present case the Sandinista Front, can succeed. The National Leadership has a firm intention to exercise strict vigilance over the personal conduct and ideological purity of members of our organization.

"Economic collaboration is an objective necessity"

From the outset, we expressed our intention to build a mixed economy and political pluralism. The war, which is about to end, made it very difficult to put these aims into practice, but it did not put in question their validity. Now the military defeat of the counter-revolution makes it possible once again to stress these programmatic conceptions in conditions that are still difficult but new. Economic collaboration is an objective necessity of the post-war period. But it is also necessary to reinforce pluralism for the same reasons, because it would not be consistent to look toward implementing only one of these two points....

We think that the fundamental element of democracy is the people, but above all

the working people. Practice has shown us the close inter-relationship that exists between democracy and the working people.

This is the reason for the existence of mass organizations, which are the expression of democracy at a high level. It is strange that these forms of democracy, such as the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS), the workers' organizations, youth organizations and so on are being put in question as para-state organizations.

Democratization should open up new spaces

However, if people think a moment about this, they will conclude that these organizations are the product of authentic democratic action that developed in the struggle against the dictatorship and in the struggle against a backward dependent system. This is very important for the National Leadership, because the democratization efforts are intended to recompose the civil society and its organizations.

Over all these years, in addition to the 1984 elections, the people have exercised democracy and defended the motherland and its sovereignty. The democratization should open up new spaces for initiative by the revolution and the people's organizations. ★

[Barricada, March 7-8, 1989]

Restoration or democratic socialism?

ORLANDO NUNEZ is a Sandinista cadre and an advisor to the FSLN leadership on agrarian reform.

ON THE BASIS of the economic reforms in the socialist world and the collaboration policy in Nicaragua, people have begun talking about an alternative between restoring the previous capitalist system and the transformation possibilities of the socialist model applied in the twentieth century. We think that this alternative is part of the struggle and, facing the threats of restoration, we are inclined to rely on the possibilities of a democratic socialism that would select out the best of state socialism and the need for socialism based on the civil society.

The final stage of capitalism and the first stage of capitalism cross in the state.

Capitalism ages as state capitalism, while socialism is born as state socialism....

The socialist-oriented revolutions in our countries have entailed major state intervention to achieve political, social and economic changes whose urgency appeared in the course of the transformation process. Over time, we have realized that history has changed more rapidly than the economic conditions, and that a dysfunction has occurred between these two processes....

Problems faced by the revolution

Thus, the revolutions in power have had to do violence to their own societies in two respects:

a) State intervention in the economy (nationalization, planning and bureaucratization). The revolutions have done this precisely to transform the social relationships of production from above, given the limitations of the material conditions in which they developed.

b) The intervention of the party in the class (a single hierarchical party, authoritarianism and exclusivity) in order to remedy the previously existing social injustice (exploitation and the domination of one class over another). Often the party has had to serve as the agent for carrying out the tasks of popular classes with great socio-cultural limitations.

The points noted before lead us to recognize the existence of two rules, or laws, of socialist-oriented revolutions in underdeveloped countries.

a) If the transformation of the social relationships (political changes) goes faster than the development of the productive forces (material conditions), this gap will ultimately wipe out the changes and set back development.

b) If the degree of intervention by the state in the economy and by the party in the class is greater than the state's management capacity and popular participation, the gap arising will ultimately limit social and popular supervision of the state and set back democratization of the society.

All this has been necessary, and we believe that where socialist-oriented revolutions occur in a context of underdevelopment, we will see similar processes. However, it is also a good thing to become familiar with the limitations and contradictions of the first stage of such revolutions, and it is still better if we know how to surmount these conditions without abandoning the revolutionary and socialist road, as we are experiencing through the processes of rectification, *perestroika-glasnost*, reforms and so on.

Once socialist-oriented revolutions have completed their first stage, excluding the bourgeoisie from power and gaining economic and political hegemony for the people's state, they... must prepare themselves to open the way for the inde-

pendence of the civil society from the state and for general self-management of the popular classes in all arenas of cultural, economic and social life. In other words, this means moving on from state socialism to a community socialism, which would not eliminate the role of the state but would regulate it so that the adjustment processes would not lead us to the restoration of the free-enterprise economy and bourgeois democracy....

Sandinism, as a conception and as the practice of a mixed economy, of political pluralism and non-alignment makes possible a transition from one model of socialism to the other:

a) Radical transformations in the state and economy have created the objective conditions making possible revolutionary hegemony.

b) The FSLN's nature as a vanguard party, as a front of revolutionary unity and national unity.

c) The process of autonomy for the Atlantic Coast communities.

d) The massive participation of the people in defense.

e) The process of liberating women in the countryside and in the cities.

f) The broad and majority character, from the standpoint of production, of our popular classes (peasants, workers, tradespeople, and so on).

g) The immense experience of popular participation of all social, political, economic and cultural sectors of Nicaraguan society — peasant cooperatives, trade unions, Sandinista Defense Committees, health-service brigades, people's education collectives, associations, regional councils of all sorts, self-defense cooperatives, producers' associations, peasants' stores, women's stores, popular cultural centers, base groups of all religions, trading cooperatives, community movements, and so on.

A continuous campaign of education

Guaranteeing the transition involves the following: Reinforcing the class consciousness of the Nicaraguan people against the bourgeoisie and imperialism. Consolidating the previous transformations. Guaranteeing that the decentralization of the state coincides with the recovery by the civil society (the organized people) of all those state functions that can be taken over by community blocs, and the organization and advancement of all possible forms of association and cooperation among all the social, economic and cultural sectors of society. The launching of a continuous campaign of education, propaganda and dissemination of the new values of solidarity and cooperation against the old values of competition and aggressiveness in social relations. The advancing of Sandinism as a socialist alternative to the crisis of capitalism, and of state socialism....

This can be one of the ways of clearing away the positions of all those who, basing themselves on *perestroika* and on the processes of adjustment and stabilization underway, have raised the flags of scepticism, defeatism, demoralization, passive dissidence or petty-bourgeois reformism or the spirit of restoration and counter-reform.

We have to fight to show why things are the way they are, that it is capitalism that is in crisis and that state (authoritarian, developmentalist and bureaucratic) socialism is not enough to confront this crisis, and so we have to complement it by committing ourselves to democratic, decentralized socialism to the fullest extent possible, in which the civil society and the people will regain their independence and adjust it to modern conditions. ★

[*Barricada*, March 31-April 1, 1989.]

Perestroika and the third world

COMMANDANT Victor Tirado, a member of the National Leadership of the FSLN, commented on *perestroika* and its impact on the third world in an interview with the Agencia Nueva Nicaragua (ANN). The following are some excerpts.

PERESTROIKA is a revolution in the USSR. It is shaking up and transforming intergovernmental relations....The Soviet government has excluded war, the arms race and reinforcing its military capacity as a means of guaranteeing its security. Today, it wants to base its security on its economic power, on its growth, and not only its external security but also its internal security.

The battle between the socialist system and the capitalist camp has been lost temporarily by socialism. In other words, socialism has not been able to defeat developed capitalism in the economic arena. The Soviet leaders have realized that investing so much in the military sphere retarded economic development, as did excessive centralization and forced collectivization of agriculture. They now want to devote the resources formally channelled into the military apparatus to strengthening the country's economy.

If tension is reduced in the world and in the regions, the military aid the USSR

offers to some third world countries will be transformed into economic cooperation, and clearly this change will be positive. In such a context of détente, which the USSR has fostered by starting to disarm unilaterally, the regional conflicts are in the process of being settled....

We are entering a period when revolutionary changes can emerge in a climate of peace, of civic struggles. So, strategies and tactics have to be adapted to these new realities, without losing sight of the essential goal, the perspective of socialism, of a pluralist society, without forced collectivization, a decentralized socialism. We do not seek to achieve this before the society has reached a high level of development. It has been proven that you can't jump over historical stages without paying a price for it, that you cannot establish socialism by decree. We must never lose sight of the need to move forward in a way favorable to the majority of the people....

It is clear that the USSR is prepared to maintain its aid to the underdeveloped countries "in accordance with its possibilities." It does not have the means for giving countries such as ours all the aid that they need. Its help in most cases is limited. Another element has to be taken into consideration. The USSR has never, or almost never, gotten back the aid that it has given to third world countries, and what is more this aid has seldom been followed by economic successes in the countries concerned.

"Everything has to be subjected to criticism"

According to the Soviet leaders' new conception, aid has to be matched by economic gains in the countries that get it. In accordance with the ideas of efficiency and modernization, the Soviets consider that if they themselves aim to increase their production and productivity, the countries that benefit from their aid should do as much. In other words, aid has to be profitable.

What is going to be cut, and in some cases eliminated, is military aid. This new reality has been created by agreement with the US, Washington's pressures and the interests of the USSR itself, along with its allies, in disarmament.

In this new outlook, the revolutionary movement and the Marxist-Leninist parties have to make a balance sheet of their experiences, of their errors, and of their successes over these last 70 years.

However, it is up primarily to the Soviet Communists to undertake this work, because they are the ones who have led or inspired the activity of the Communist parties and many anti-imperialist movements. Everything has to be subjected to criticism — ingrained ideas, hallowed traditions, Marxism, Leninism, and as has been done, Stalinism, which little by little has been extirpated. Marxism is critical,

nothing stops it; that is why it is revolutionary....

Often from the outside, Nicaragua is described as a strong, or even excessively strong state. This has been forced on us; we did not want it. When an underdeveloped country makes a revolution, it has to build a state stronger than the socio-economic base on which it rests in order to defend the strategic interests of the working people.

In our case, the problem was to assure the future of the Sandinista project as it was outlined in 1968, and as Sandino conceived it. This can require building a state virtually standing above the civil society, as strong as had to be built here or in Cuba, in Angola and in other revolutionary countries of the third world. It is necessary to build a military force to meet aggression. This sort of state can last for years. It is inherently linked to the foreign pressures and aggressions to which the revolution is exposed.

In order for the power of the state to be reduced, a climate of peace is necessary. It is necessary to be very conscious of the stages that have to be completed in order

to be able to restore the role of the civil society, for it to be able to develop in harmony with the economic and social structure....

There are already theoretical analyses on this subject. A capitalist state is organized to defend the interests of the bourgeoisie, and for this purpose it does not have to interfere in the running of businesses. You can say, for example, that Reagan's replacement by Bush is not going to change anything there; the organization of the state is going to remain overall the same....

This assumes that the presidency is going to continue to defend the same class interests. It has an instrument, the army, to defend its interests abroad and not domestically. The state can exist without controlling a single economic sector. It is maintained to look after national security and foreign interests...On the other hand, a socialist state, a state of the new type that works for national liberation, cannot share this conception if it wants to achieve its project. Experience shows that it has to keep an eye on everything... ★

[Managua, April 2, 1989.]

Crisis in Latin America

EXCERPTS from the speech given at the 1989 Hatofer economic fair by the president of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega.

NICARAGUA's place in Latin American cannot be forgotten. Its situation is rather difficult because of the wrong economic policy that has been conducted up until now, and which is rocking all the countries on the continent. I am referring, obviously, to the political choices made by the industrialized and developed countries of the North, but also to the responsibilities of those who have run this continent's economy for long years, that is, the Latin American capitalists. In Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina and all of Latin America, they have achieved considerable development at the price of foreign debt....

Those responsible for the present situation are not the working people, the workers and the peasants, but the businessmen and the capitalists. And what has been the result of this policy? Has it been positive? No, it has not, and I am not the only one to say this. In Venezuela, the reins of government have been taken in recent months by President Carlos Andres Per-

ez, who enjoys very broad national and international support, both from countries that agree with the Venezuelan economic model and revolutionary countries such as Cuba and Nicaragua. In the space of a few days, when he tried to apply a body of economic measures a million times less severe than those implemented in our country, he faced a social explosion.

I called Carlos Andres to offer my solidarity, that of the Nicaraguan people and of the Sandinista Front, but also to condemn the domestic and foreign policies that lead to such situations. Carlos Andres answered that the problem was in fact a social explosion touched off by the economic situation and not by an organized revolutionary force. It was, as he himself said, the reaction of the poor against the rich, the oppressed against the oppressors.

The malaise provoked by capitalism in Latin America

We cannot deny the reality that shows that the capitalists who hold economic power in Latin America have not been able to offer an answer to the economic problems of the Latin American countries. This has provoked a malaise that has finally been expressed in a violent and tragic explosion with hundreds of dead, as in Venezuela....

Consequently the Nicaraguan problem cannot be solved by the capitalists. If we gave the economic leadership of the country back to the capitalists, we would be obliged to make a revolution again. But we have already gone through that experience. ★

[Barricada, March 1, 1989.]

The impact of the Soviet reforms on Castro's Cuba



THIRTY YEARS AFTER the Cuban revolution¹, the charging of high officials for involvement in drug trafficking attests to the breadth of the crisis in the Cuban Communist Party apparatus. The accords reached with the Soviet Union at the time of Gorbachev's visit in April point up the economic difficulties and the political impasse in which the Castro leadership finds itself.

JANETTE HABEL

IT IS NOW possible to make a preliminary assessment of the effects on Cuba of Soviet aid and integration into Comecon.² Studies by specialists in the field of Soviet-Cuban trade³, as well as the information that the Bank of Cuba is obliged to provide for the Club of Paris in the framework of debt renegotiation, show that the amount of aid has declined in the 1980s. They also reveal the price paid by the Cuban economy to meet the needs of "socialist integration", which has involved concentrating on the production of sugar and citrus fruits, nickel mining and fishing.

- In 1987, Cuba was paying the same price for petrol as in 1986⁴, when Poland and Bulgaria benefited from a drop in prices of 10.6% and 13.2% respectively.⁵

- In 1986, the Soviet Union paid 10.9% less for sugar.

- As far as nickel is concerned, the Cubans have suffered big losses because they are bound by long-term contracts. The value of their exports has remained the same, although the price of nickel on the world market has risen considerably. Even in 1979 and 1980, Cuba lost between \$32 and \$37 on the sale of nickel to the USSR.

New trade deal less favourable than previously

- In 1986, Cuba paid 113% more for cement than Mongolia. Even in 1978, the USSR was charging Cuba 32% more than other Comecon countries for cars and 21% more for cement. As Brezinski explains: "such examples show how difficult it is to arrive at a precise account of the value of Soviet subsidies to Cuba". Even so, he arrives at a trade deficit of 1,628 million pesos with the Soviet Union in 1987, the highest figure to date. As for the re-exportation of petroleum, while this earned 500 million in currency in the years 1983 to 1985, the figure fell to 248 million in 1986 and 370 million in 1987.

The most recent agreement between Cuba and the USSR is less favourable than previous ones. The price of sugar is fixed at 850 roubles per tonne as against 915 roubles for the previous decade. The proper comparison here is not with the world market price — the sugar "dustbin" as Fidel Castro put it — but with the quota prices used in a good number of transactions.

Long-term agreements between Cuba and USSR

Outside the Eastern countries, such transactions are made for sugar exports from the ACP⁶ countries to the European Economic Community (EEC) and from Latin American, Asian and African countries to the United States. The preferential prices granted are higher than the world market ones, and often equal to, or even higher than, those paid to Cuba by the USSR. But the conditions for setting these prices are never guaranteed. And, in particular, the import quotas accepted by the US have shrunk considerably in recent years, sometimes dramatically cutting the resources of exporting countries. However, Cuba enjoys guarantees offered by long-term agreements with the USSR.

Finally, the interest rates on credits granted by the USSR are higher than in the past. The situation is much more negative with regard to other Comecon countries. Hungary has stopped extending credits, as have Poland and Romania. The most important partners are East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria.

Since 1976, Cuba has taken part in the coordination of Comecon's five-year and long-term plans. Its specialization in agriculture and primary materials has been maintained. The planned target for the sugar harvest is 12 million tonnes in 1990, while production of citrus fruits is to rise

from 1.4 million tonnes in 1985 to 2.6 millions in 1990.⁷ Nickel production has been given a boost, but two thirds of the extra production must be exported to the Comecon countries that have helped in the building of new factories, as repayment of loans. Some 90% of nickel production has been sold to the Soviet bloc, according to the *Financial Times* of February 2, 1989. This means that Cuba will not be able to fully benefit from the substantial rise in the nickel price since 1987.

It is true that under these long-term agreements Cuba participates in scientific and technological projects in computer technology, electronics and biotechnology. And here there have been some impressive results.⁸ For example, the development of an advanced biomedical industry has enabled Cuba to export chemical and pharmaceutical products — above all to Latin America, where Cuba hopes to play a leading role in preventative medicine and sophisticated surgical techniques.

Soviet economists against continuing "subsidies"

However out of the 93 projects and 930 sub-projects in Comecon's development plan running up to the year 2,000, Cuba is only involved in 52 sub-projects in nuclear energy, electronics (computer terminal

1. See IV 159, March 20, 1989.

2. See the work of Turits, Brezinski, Petr Gey et al.

3. Comecon, or the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). Cuba joined in 1972.

4. In fact, this is an estimate made on the basis of exchanges of imports and exports in the context of barter agreements.

5. Brezinski.

6. The ACP countries: 66 countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific associated with the EEC through the Lomé Convention.

7. Credits, including some in hard currency, have been granted to make the necessary investments.

8. *Financial Times*, February 17, 1989.

keyboards) and bio-technology. Brezinski believes that Cuba's involvement is in fact very limited, despite official claims that the less developed countries of Comecon get preferential treatment.

The Forty-Fourth Session of Comecon in June 1988 and the Prague conference in April of the same year revealed that Cuba will continue to benefit from preferential tariffs until the end of the present five-year period. However, Soviet economists have spoken out against the continuation of "subsidies" to Cuba in the 1990s insofar as these do not open the way for "improvements in the performance of the Cuban economy".⁹ In any case, Cuba remains to a large extent confined to the role of producer/exporter of raw materials, and this is to continue for a long time.

Regardless of the ups and downs of aid and the difficulties of judging how extensive it actually is, a second point needs to be made. It is true that the Soviet Union is Cuba's most important supplier. But over and above the fact that the financial conditions attached to some imports are not always advantageous, the quality of capital goods and products from the USSR is challenged. Moreover, it is by no means unusual to hear Cuban officials claim that the worst Soviet products are "bestowed" on Cuba.

Cubans have a severe assessment of Soviet aid

Whatever the truth of the matter, it is undeniable that whenever the Cuban government has the opportunity to choose its own suppliers, it prefers to pay hard currency and buy from the market-economy countries, despite the limits of Western credits.¹⁰ Although this is never said officially, the Cubans make a severe assessment of Soviet aid, claiming that, apart from the strings attached, it is not suited to the needs of their economic development. The Cuban criticisms can be summed up as follows:

- Deliveries are made according to Soviet priorities and not Cuban needs.

- The equipment and machines are obsolete and often delivered after a considerable delay. The enormous difficulties encountered by the transport system in the autumn of 1988 are laid at the door of the late delivery by East European factories of spare parts for the maintenance of the buses.¹¹

Impossible to arrive at precise aid figures

- It is a matter of public knowledge that the USSR did not keep its side of agreements, causing a halt in nickel production and an estimated 10-year loss.¹²

- Some promised goods have never been delivered. In 1979, the USSR failed to deliver 40% of the 500,000 tonnes of lumber promised. Furthermore, useless goods are substituted for certain products, and agreements are abrogated without any warning, which means that purchases have to be made in hard currency at the last minute and thus at the highest price.

With respect to their efficiency, the costs of certain services are high. It is particularly shocking, for example that Soviet technicians get 80% of their salary in hard currency, on top of free housing, transport, medical care and access to special shops.

All these factors have to be included in reckoning the cost of the aid. It is impossible to arrive at precise figures. The Soviets say their aid amounts to \$2.7 billion annually. But Western estimates cite a total of \$4bn. The US State Department's last estimate, for 1986, was \$6.8bn, including \$4.7bn in the form of subsidies included in purchases of sugar and nickel in exchange for petroleum, \$600 million for specific projects and \$1.5bn for military aid (traditionally granted free of charge by the USSR).

A final objective fact must be added, which is not dependent on the will of

either partner — exorbitant transport costs due to the distance between the USSR and Cuba. Soviet tankers, which arrive at least every two days, make a journey of some 12,000km, representing 7% of the total cost of Soviet petroleum imports.¹³ Agreements have also been made for supplies from Venezuela, but only limited quantities are involved. During a visit to Cuba, grain producers from the USA claimed that they could deliver grain to Cuba at prices 30% less than the Soviet Union.

These figures clearly raise the question of the American embargo and the Cuban interest in seeing it ended. This was one of the points raised by Gorbachev during his visit, and it will also be a part of summit negotiations and any bargaining that takes place over Central America.

The 25-year Cuba-USSR Friendship and Cooperation Treaty signed by Gorbachev during his visit was primarily of symbolic importance. It was a reaffirmation that the special relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union would be maintained at a time of considerable speculation about an eventual break between the two countries. But, while the Treaty reaffirms the need to "restructure international economic relations on just and democratic foundations in order to eliminate unequal exchange and all discriminatory practices in world trade...to exclude economic coercion for political ends from the relations between states...[and to] sort out the grave problem of the external debt which burdens the overwhelming majority of Third World countries"¹⁴, the Cuban debt to the USSR was not cancelled.

Reasons why USSR did not cancel debt

This fact is all the more significant because this occasion could have been the opportunity for a public announcement that would have cost little, since the repayment of this debt is more-or-less ruled out. Such a declaration would have been a bonus point for Soviet diplomacy, which is looking for closer economic relations with Latin America. The likelihood of such a decision even led to a headline on the front page of the Italian Communist Party paper.¹⁵ It had taken Gorbachev at his word when he said at the United Nations on December 7, 1988, that the USSR was "ready to put in place a long-term moratorium, of up to 100 years duration, on the servicing of the debt of the less developed countries, and in some cases, to cancel them altogether".¹⁶

9. Brezinski.
10. Mesa-Lago/Gil, *Documentation française*, December 1988.
11. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 1989.
12. Robert Graham, *Financial Times*, February 17, 1989.
13. Mesa-Lago/Gil.
14. *Granna*, April 16, 1989.
15. *L'Unità*, April 4, 1989.
16. *Documentation française, Problèmes politiques et sociaux*, March 31, 1989.



It seems that the decision not to cancel was well thought through. It probably resulted from two considerations. One would be the relative lack of importance of the Third World in Soviet foreign policy and the need to avoid destabilizing or embarrassing Western governments over the issue of debt renegotiation. The other would be a desire to hold on to a useful means of pressuring Cuba to quietly accept changes in its economic policy or at least "a search for the most efficient forms in the framework of bilateral interaction" in economic and commercial cooperation and "socialist economic integration in line with the resolutions of the CMEA".¹⁷

A "radical alteration of Soviet foreign trade"

All this fits in with the fact that the idea of preferential agreements for the developing countries (proposed by the Group of 77) and the "new international economic order" proposed by Fidel Castro were rejected by the Soviet government in favour of an undertaking to remove trade barriers. It also refused to meet the request of developing countries that it devote 0.7% of its budget to them.¹⁸ The 1989 trade protocol between Cuba and the Soviet Union, signed on March 26 in Moscow, provides for the USSR supplying fuel, raw materials, machines and various types of industrial equipment; and Cuba supplying more than 4 million tonnes of sugar, fresh or canned citrus fruits, nickel and some new machines for the electronics industry in accordance with the recent specialization of Cuba within the CMEA, that is, in the manufacture of computer keyboards and electronic circuits. But although an increase in trade is envisaged, the Soviet officials have made it clear the sort of aid and conditions offered in the past cannot be continued.

This is also hinted at in an elliptical comment by *Granma's* Moscow correspondent: "the agreements have been negotiated in the context of the process of restructuring and reorganization of the central state administrative organs and of the enterprises in the USSR. This required a lot of work, determined effort and flexibility".¹⁹

Everything suggests that Soviet pressure will be applied in an indirect manner, using the possibilities offered by the new rules of the economic game. Since April 1, 1989, Soviet firms have had the right to plan and organize their external relations as they wish, and to cooperate freely with other firms and foreign countries. According to Aleksandr Kashanov, vice-minister of commerce, this measure "will radically alter Soviet foreign trade".²⁰ This is certain to apply to Cuba. The same official, furthermore, specified that Cuba would have to adapt to the new reality:

"It is necessary to change the forms of

collaboration in order to improve their efficiency". It seems that the Nineteenth Session of the Soviet-Cuban inter-governmental commission for scientific and technical collaboration was devoted to a thoroughgoing reorganization of the mechanisms of economic collaboration. The commission was chaired by Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, the vice-president of the Cuban Council of Ministers; and Vladimir Kamentsev, vice-president of the Soviet government. It adopted measures to assure implementation of the agreements on reciprocal trade and greater efficiency in the economic projects undertaken with Soviet aid. According to Carlos Rafael, this reorganization is the result of both *perestroika* and the rectification process underway in Cuba.²¹

It seems certain that vital oil deliveries will be governed by specific intergovernmental agreements and guarantees, and therefore not at the mercy of the interests of individual Soviet firms. But in all other areas, the Cubans are starting to feel the effects of the new system. According to a document published in the *Miami Herald*, and corroborated by information of the defector Perez Cott, an ex-official of the State Technology Committee, Soviet firms are already giving preference to supplying their Western clients who can pay in hard currency, to the detriment of Cuba and in spite of the agreements reached between the two states.

The message is clear: Cuba is, of course, "free" to decide its own economic policy. But if Cuba does not shape up to the demands of profitability and efficiency, it will have to take the consequences — isolation and difficulties on a far greater scale than previously. The irresistible force of *perestroika* that Gorbachev has talked about brooks no exceptions.

New forms of cooperation envisaged

As for bartered goods, in particular sugar, Kashanov specified that the present annual delivery of 4 million tons "represents an optimum level, which may only slightly increase in the future".²² This statement is ambiguous, since we do not know if it calls into question the perspectives of the CMEA, or if it is connected to the Soviet wish to diversify their imports using other sources of supply in Latin America, as they have done already with Honduras and with the Dominican Republic, signing contracts calling for a lower price for sugar than is paid to the Cubans.²³

One of the new forms of cooperation envisaged by the USSR is that of assembly factories (*maquiladoras*) on the lines of those which flourish along the Mexican/American border. Under this new system, the Soviets would send processed raw materials to Cuba, where they would be made into clothing and shoes which would then be re-exported to be sold to

Soviet consumers.²⁴ The aim is to stimulate direct contacts with Cuban firms, who will be directly dependent on their Soviet partners, so that the latter can make their operations more profitable by using a cheaper labour force and improving the distribution of consumer goods, which has been disturbed by the crisis that is hitting those firms where the reform has been applied first.

Restricting possibilities for opposing *perestroika*

This type of collaboration will make the working of Cuban firms closely dependent on Soviet management and will restrict the margin for manoeuvre open to the Castroists to oppose *perestroika*. This is in any case the wish discreetly expressed by the Soviet officials who accompanied Gorbachev on his travels.²⁵

There is a further aim of Soviet policy — to use Cuba as a way into Latin America. There is a lot at stake here for Gorbachev's diplomacy. Cuba is to be used to penetrate the Latin American market, distributing certain Soviet products and breaking down the linguistic and cultural barriers to trade with the continent.²⁶ This economic rather than ideological approach requires a diplomatic turnaround in Cuban policy. At this level there is agreement between Gorbachev and Castro. The specialization in electronics, biotechnology and the advanced medical industry are part of this framework.

However there are basic problems in the way of carrying out this new role. As Brezinski emphasizes, the prices of agricultural products and raw materials are subject to numerous fluctuations "and will not rise as fast as those of industrial products".

Once again, the problem of the American blockade raises its head. According to Mesa-Lago and F. Gil: "the low level of world prices for sugar and petroleum does not favour imports, while the restrictions imposed on imports of certain products may lead to bottlenecks and bring on a drop in production." Thus, if the present policy of reducing imports, increasing exports and improving productivity does not offer the expected results, the Cuban economy may come under considerable pressures. The recent agreements with Moscow have not reversed the previous trends.

This puts in question the whole balance-sheet of Cuban economic development, and its integration in Comecon. In order to

17. Friendship Treaty, Articles 2 and 4.

18. Mesa-Lago/Gil, p.70.

19. *Granma*, April 2, 1989.

20. *El País*, April 3, 1989.

21. *Granma*, May 28, 1989.

22. *Financial Times*, April 12, 1989.

23. *The Economist*, August 27, 1988.

24. *Miami Herald*, April 23, 1989; *Latin American Monitor*, May 1989.

25. *Miami Herald*, April 23, 1989.

26. Tim Coone, *Financial Times*, April 12, 1989.

develop an industrial infrastructure, Cuba, with the benefit of high sugar prices in the early 1970s, was able to import Western products and use the technology thus gained. Re-exportation of oil then took over. After the sugar and oil prices fell, the government tried to maintain the same level of imports through borrowing from the West. Today, all these resources have dwindled²⁷ and repayment of the debt is sucking up the available hard currency. From June 1987 to June 1988, the debt owed to the imperialist countries increased by 15.5%. It stands today at \$6.4 billion.²⁸

Despite these constraints, a certain amount of industrialization took place in the 1970s, even if assessments of this vary considerably. A. Zimbalist underlines the very considerable progress made in mechanizing the sugar harvest. Two thirds of the cutting and collection are mechanized, and progress has also been made in the treatment of sugar derivatives. The same author believes that Cuba's industrial base has been transformed since the 1960s.

Imports of manufactured products went from 58.9% in 1970 to 44.7% in 1983. The construction of a nuclear power station — scheduled to come on line in 1995 — should reduce imports of petrol in the next decade, although Cuba will remain dependent on the Soviet Union for its enriched uranium. He also gives weight to the technological progress made in the medical industry and the possibility for exporting sophisticated pharmaceutical products.

Brezinski, on the other hand points out that, despite the progress in industrialization, sugar still represented 77.2% of Cuban exports in 1986. He calls into question "a strategy based on growth funded by the export of traditional products, given that import substitution has not achieved the planned levels". He notes that in 1986, the economy remained characterized by "the typical model of exchanges between industrialized and developing countries". This foreign trade structure is made worse by the lack of hard currency resources that would allow Cuba to import from the West. Finally, he believes that Cuba's international competitiveness "has declined since its integration into Comecon". These assessments converge with those of Mesa-Lago and F. Gil, who consider that Soviet aid has helped to maintain imbal-

ances in the economy and long-standing distortions.

It is recognized that some high-tech industries have been developed. But doubts have been expressed about Cuba's reliability as a supplier in these sectors "when the workers producing such quality goods have to spend a large part of the time waiting for the bus or queuing for tomatoes". There is also a question mark over the outlook for exports. "it is one thing to produce interferons, another thing to sell them to the rest of the world".²⁹

To sum up, Cuba's independent economic development seems to be fettered



by external dependence, the prevailing disorder in the firms and in the organization of production, the effects of the Comecon division of labour and above all by the uncertainties about the future course of its economic relations with the Soviet Union. Contrary to some superficial assessments, neither Gorbachev's visit nor the agreements signed have removed the clouds on the horizon for the Cuban economy.

After three years, the initial objectives of the rectification campaign announced by Castro seem to have become blurred. The leadership's primary aim now is to gain time. Gorbachev's visit gave Castro the opportunity to occupy centre stage and reaffirm, in the name of the principle of non-interference, "the right of each country to apply its own formulas for building socialism". Then he put his guest on the spot: "If a socialist country wants to build capitalism, we cannot intervene, just as we demand that nobody should interfere in the sovereign decision of any country, whether capitalist or semi-

capitalist, whether in the developed or under-developed world, to build socialism".³⁰

Over and above the rhetorical formulas, the two speakers expressed different conceptions on peace, debt, defence and building socialism. However, Castro's rejection of the "methods of capitalism" has had to give way in the face of the hard realities of joint ownership agreements with European and Japanese firms in such fields as tourism, textiles, and the food and canning industries. They have demanded in some cases control over hiring and firing, wage levels and sometimes the right to repatriate their profits.³¹

According to one observer, "Perestroika is creeping in by the back door, but nobody dares to say it out loud". To adapt to the national peculiarities, President of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, Julio G. Oliveras, calls this "cha-cha-cha socialism".³² Thus, they are orienting toward a coexistence of economic sectors managed in very different ways, which is exactly what Fidel Castro denounced at the start of the rectification process as a source of division and inequality.

Such pragmatism results in part from constraints over which the Fidelista leadership has no control. But it also testifies to the absence of any overall conception of the relationship between economic and

social democracy and political democracy in a transitional economy in an underdeveloped country.

The contrast between a waste deeply ingrained in the general organization of the economy and the growth of some high-tech industries reflects quite well the incoherence and chaotic character of the policies followed. "The inability of the political structure to respond adequately to the severe economic constraints and to planning failures"³³ is central to the economic dysfunctions.

The combination of decisive control over the major economic options by Fidel Castro and his lieutenants and the monopoly of power held by the Communist

27. The negotiations with the Club of Paris in May 1989 failed to produce any results, and repayments on the debt eat up the hard currency available (*Financial Times*, February 17, 1989).

28. *Financial Times*, February 17, 1989.

29. Tim Coone.

30. *Granma*, April 16, 1989.

31. *International Herald Tribune*, January 12, 1989.

32. *Newsweek*, June 5, 1989.

33. Tim Coone.

Party has the effect of obscuring responsibilities, of concealing incompetence and corruption, of favoring the tacit understandings among bureaucrats that the Cubans call "*sociolismo*," the socialism of *socios* (pals).

Political-organizational means for correcting dysfunctions are nonexistent. The monitoring mechanisms are bereft of any power. The mass organizations are only echo chambers. And the People's Power structures, which had aroused a lot of hopes, have no political weight, although they do play a real administrative role.

Voluntarist notions increasingly on the wane

The idea that the bureaucratic paralysis could be corrected by voluntarism — and what is more, a voluntarism limited to a few — is more and more waning, although, unlike the USSR, the regime can still count on the disinterest and devotion of some sectors. Only a confrontation of ideas, of policies, a transparency of responsibilities and decisions, the establishment of monitoring mechanisms and freedom of criticism could be effective against the opacity of the system. Unlike Castro, Gorbachev has well understood the role of *glasnost* in economic restructuring.

It is already clear that the "rectification of errors" has not corrected the defects of the system. The Cuban people have shown an ironical scepticism with regard to what they have termed the process of "ratification of horrors". The effect of a combination of verbal radicalism and appeals to work harder — "it is necessary to work hard, it is necessary to work a lot" as Castro repeats³⁴ — is to make people more cynical, if nothing else changes.

Many young people are already concentrating on trying to improve their place in society, and the prospects for this are uncertain, since there are not always openings commensurate with their qualifications. The official posts in every field are occupied, in the best of cases, by veterans of the revolutionary war, or by those who came over at the last moment, and who often lack real authority.

The ideological evolution and capacity to mobilize the new generation as well as its adherence to Castroism, are essential for the future of the revolution. But the fact is that a lot of the youth lack consistent revolutionary motivation. Such demobilization is fostered by the contrast between a disappointing domestic scene marked by a lack of debate and political democracy and economic waste; and the anti-imperialist speeches, which have lost some of their credibility, inasmuch as their real scope is limited by the diplomatic opening to Latin America.

This policy is itself the source of contradictions. It reinforces the need for a political liberalization, of which, despite some recent concessions, there is no sign as yet.

At the same time, cultural relations with Latin America are expanding. As regards news, the regime faces the problem of a radio station in Miami that gives Cubans all the information that their own press does not provide. For example, the Cuban media barely mentioned the Chinese events for the first few weeks. Moreover it seems that soon there will be a television channel operating out of Florida.

On the diplomatic and trade fronts, the Cubans' search for support in Latin America could compromise the backing traditionally given to Castroism by revolutionary organizations. This was shown by the turmoil caused by Castro's recent visits to Mexico and Venezuela. As Lazaro Cardenas commented "they [Castro and Ortega] have their reasons for taking part [in the inauguration of the dubiously elected Mexican president Salinas de Gortari], but there will be a price to pay". Moreover, the riots in Venezuela and Argentina render the prospects for stable trade with these countries uncertain.

Thus, Castro risks pyramiding contradictions and losing on several fronts. On the domestic front, by not taking the initiative in launching the inevitable *glasnost*; and externally, by losing valuable sources of support without getting new ones in return. The disastrous effects of the confusion of roles between party and state and their symbiosis in a single leader have become apparent. In this field also openness is what is needed.

The new Soviet policy in Latin America as elsewhere is going to reshuffle the cards both on the diplomatic front and in the ranks of the traditional left and the revolutionary movements, where the effects cannot yet be foreseen. For the third world countries, the first settlements of "regional conflicts" can only arouse disquiet. The agreements in southern Africa for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola in order to open the way for Namibian independence in no way entailed a halt in US aid for Savimbi's UNITA.³⁵

A bad omen for Namibian independence process

The circumstances in which SWAPO³⁶ guerrillas were massacred on returning to their country's border by South African troops able to act with impunity is a bad omen for the independence process and for what are supposed to be "free and democratic elections." [See also article on p.8.]

According to the Cahama (Angola) accords signed on May 19, 1989, by the South Africans, Angolans and Cubans, "the armed elements of SWAPO were confined to their bases north of the sixteenth parallel." Angola and Cuba were charged with seeing to this. The accords also state, "in conformity with UN Resolution 435, the Namibian police will continue to play its fundamental role, which

is to assure the maintenance of order" and strive "to uncover the arms caches left in Namibia" by the SWAPO guerrillas driven back to Angola.³⁷

So, here is a country gaining its independence after 74 years of South African occupation, and those who have fought to liberate it have to return unarmed and submit to the diktats of the colonial power. This example of settling a regional conflict and of "national reconciliation" will no doubt be cause for reflection for revolutionary movements involved in liberation struggles. This is no doubt why the Cuban government, although it signed the accords, has strongly criticized the decisions taken by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (including the USSR) to cut by 40% the UN forces that are supposed to supervise the application of Resolution 435 and Namibia's accession to sovereignty.

The Cuban press has pointed up the role played by Pretoria's army and police, as well as SWAPO's fears of a massive repression aimed at preventing it from getting the two-thirds vote necessary to abolish the discriminatory laws left over from South African colonial domination.

Castro attacks UN Security Council members

Fidel Castro could not be taken in. Despite the military victory the Cuban troops won over the South African army at Cuito Cuanavale, the political agreements reached in Africa are not a success. In the past, the Cuban leader linked the departure of Cuban troops to the end of apartheid. His grievances no doubt explain why he challenged UN Security Council members (including the USSR) so sharply in February 1989. He said that they "have acted together, as a tight little group enjoying the privilege of the right of veto." And he reminded them of "the great responsibility that will fall on them if the racists are able to block the self-determination and free choice of the Namibian people".³⁸

These warnings were to be reiterated during Gorbachev's visit in April. In the speech that he was to give after Fidel, the Soviet chief came out "against any theory or doctrine that seeks to justify exporting revolution or counter-revolution and against all forms of interference in the affairs of states".³⁹ This reference to exporting revolution could only exasperate the other participants on a continent

34. July 26, 1988.

35. See IV 158, March 6, 1989. UNITA, National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, a movement founded in 1964 by Jonas Savimbi. It fought the Angolan government with the support of South Africa and the United States.

36. South West Africa People's Organization, founded in 1960 by Sam Nujoma. A nationalist guerrilla organization fighting for Namibian independence.

37. *Le Monde*, May 21/22, 1989.

38. *Granma*, February 12, 1989.

39. *Granma*, April 16, 1989.

where there has been no letup in the export of counter-revolution to crush native revolutions. Fidel Castro made the first move, launching a counter-attack that provoked the US representative to walk out of the National People's Assembly.

Castro attacks US imperialist interventions

The Cuban leader cited the case of Afghanistan, where "the US reserves the right to continue to supply arms to the Afghan oppositionist and counter-revolutionary forces", despite the withdrawal of Soviet forces; the case of south-east Africa, "where the US reserves the right to supply arms to UNITA"; Nicaragua, where the United States "reserves the right to maintain organized counter-revolutionary forces on Honduran territory as a means of applying pressure on the government and people of Nicaragua".⁴⁰ In this way, he answered the false symmetry between revolution and counter-revolution made in Gorbachev's speech in order to "demand the abolition of this theory and this doctrine" — the exact terms used by the Soviet leader — "by virtue of which the US arrogates the right of aiding irregular forces against established governments by providing arms". This shed quite a different light on the settlement of "regional conflicts".

In these circumstances, one can understand why the parallel made by the Soviet ambassador between the negotiated settlement in southern Africa and the one called for in Central America is so disturbing. Yuri Petrov in effect said: "In order resolve the conflict in Central America, the same approach should be used as in southern Africa. In the same way as we have collaborated with the United States in the case of Angola and Namibia, third countries should play the role of mediators in the case of Nicaragua and El Salvador".⁴¹

However, not only the nature of the states but also of the organizations concerned differ profoundly. (How can you equate the MPLA and SWAPO with the FSLN and the FMLN?) Moreover, the relationship of forces on the ground is not comparable. This explains the indignation that this aberrant comparison aroused.

The conditions for a solution of the Central American crisis have been clearly defined by the US government. It claims that the region holds no strategic interest for the USSR but that it does for the US. Therefore, the USSR should respect the spheres of influence drawn by the Monroe Doctrine. There can consequently be no idea of a bilateral halt to military intervention as Gorbachev proposed but only a unilateral one. Thus, the USSR's halting its supply of arms to Nicaragua "is not enough."

As Oscar Arias, president of Costa Rica, said in Washington, echoing state-

ments reiterated many times by James Baker, what is needed is a halt to Cuban arms deliveries to El Salvador⁴², or even pressure on the USSR to cut its aid to Cuba.⁴³

Cuba's position is that "peace is a two-sided coin — reduction of the worldwide nuclear threat and a just settlement of the regional conflicts".⁴⁴ Over and above the differences in the approaches to peaceful coexistence, the USSR and Cuba have very different state interests as regards Central America. This is only a secondary matter for the USSR. But it is a major question for the Cuban revolution, which is going through a very dangerous period.

In a context of economic and political crisis, attested to by the accusations of corruption at the top of the hierarchy and ousters from the apparatus, pressures are being applied from all quarters. They come from the USSR; from the US, which is making the dropping of its economic blockade conditional on a change of course in the region; from the Latin American bourgeoisies; and from the European bourgeoisies, which are demanding economic and political *quid pro quos* for renegotiating the debt in the framework of the Paris Club.

Regional relationship of forces decisive

In this tug of war, the regional relationship of forces is decisive. The outcome of the conflicts in Central America will have a crucial influence on the evolution of the domestic situation in Cuba.

Gorbachev's offensive has put the Cas-

troist leadership on the defensive, and promoted distrust of Cuba in the international workers' movement. There is speculation about the possibility of links between Castro and Ligachev and the conservatives in the various Communist parties. The fact that representatives of the Czechoslovak, East German, Portuguese and French CPs were in Havana at the same time could create such an impression. However, it does not seem that any such coming together can crystallize (unless there is a reversal of the relationship of forces in the USSR itself), because Castro needs Soviet aid too much.

On the other hand, the defense of Marxism-Leninism that Fidel would like to embody can only be effective and credible if the gauntlet thrown down by Gorbachev is picked up. This would make denouncing the evils of the market-economy reforms or a conception of peace at the expense of the oppressed peoples more popular.

"No" to *perestroika*, "yes" to *glasnost* is the only answer to those in the international workers' movement and in Cuba who see no democratic salvation except in the market reforms.

This would be the underpinning for a genuinely internationalist offensive that would popularize the influence of the Cuban revolution. ★

40. Ibid.

41. *Le Monde*, April 7, 1989.

42. *El País*, April 6, 1989.

43. *Newsweek*, December 5, 1988.

44. Rafael Hernandez, *Granma*, February 26, 1989.

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革命

Chinese workers had begun to organize

WHAT MOST struck you about the mobilization in Beijing?

It was the independence of the movement. In all of China's history, from its liberation in 1949 until today, there have only been mobilizations directed from the top. But this time it was the people themselves, the workers, students and intellectuals, who organized a movement from the bottom up and not from the top down — a movement for democracy and against the bureaucracy and the corruption of the past.

The students built their independent organization, and they had the project of building a national organization. Workers also set up the Independent Union of Workers on a national scale, as well as unions in several cities.

■ Do you think that, through this desire for self-organization, they demonstrated their refusal to support any current [in the bureaucracy]?

The workers told me very clearly what they thought about the General Federation of Unions, that it did not defend the workers' interests and that the only thing good it did was hand out movie tickets! The students thought the same thing about the student federation, whose leaders are all over 40.

On the other hand, they never said, "Down with the Communist Party," they only wanted to reform the party, to have the right to organize freely, to be able to have a check over the party, to end corruption. In the beginning, the party spokesperson said that they agreed with these demands.

However the party could not allow all its vices to be exposed before the Chinese people. The party could not have its role as ruler be challenged by the ranks. As long as the questions are raised by the top echelons, there is no problem. But if the ranks question decisions, demand democracy, challenge the leadership, then all opposition has to be crushed.

■ The Workers' Union was just getting started?

Yes, it was not yet a big organization in Beijing. They came out spontaneously to support the students. First, they protected the students, surrounding them with lines of stewards. Then, they announced that they were forming the Independent Union of Beijing Workers. Their official declaration dates from mid-May. They existed for only two or three weeks.

What they told me about their demands shows a similarity with those of the students — against the corruption of the bureaucrats, for real involvement in the decisions in the plants. They had already drawn up statutes; they were setting up a leadership, recruiting members. I think

LEE CHEUK YAN, a representative of a radical Christian workers' organization in Hong Kong, was in Tiananmen Square on the night of the massacre. He had brought a large sum of money collected for the students by the solidarity movement, which was confiscated by the police, and he was jailed for three days.

Lee had close contacts in particular with activists trying to form an independent union movement in China. He described this activity in an interview given in the British colony to our special correspondent, Laurent Carasso.

they had about a hundred members. They had intended to do a tour of the factories to explain to the workers why they needed to organize, to educate themselves politically and to register officially and demand legal rights for the union. At the same time, they were very courageous. They said that if only one of them was left at the end of the fight, that person would keep the flag of the independent union flying.

■ Did they have the time to organize in the factories?

They were mainly in Tiananmen, but they had support in several factories that they wanted to organize.

It is very significant that two days before the massacre, the Beijing papers reported that 40 factories had denounced the Beijing Independent Workers' Union as illegal. If 40 factories took the union seriously, it is because it had sympathizers in at least 40. And one of these factories was very big, the Beijing steelworks, with 220,000 workers. This plant is as symbolic for the Chinese workers as the Gdansk shipyards in Poland. I heard that the army surrounded the steelworks to

keep the workers from coming to support the students.

■ It is clear that in the beginning the police went after the workers in particular.

It was announced that activists of the independent workers' unions were arrested in at least five cities, the main industrial cities. So, in a very short time the movement had spread to several cities. The [Beijing] activists told me that the workers had come from other cities to meet them. A national network was beginning to form. This demonstrates quite clearly the general discontent with the party and the desire of the workers to have organizations of their own.

■ What is the situation of workers in Hong Kong?

Hong Kong workers are the victims of an ultra-free-enterprise economy. We do not have social security or medical insurance. If there is any accident, the workers are on their own. Wages are very uncertain. A lot of working people, in particular industrial workers, are paid by the day or by the job. No work, no wages! If the level of activity drops off, workers are not paid.

Workers have no voice. The Hong Kong government is not elected. It is a council of representatives of different social and professional organizations. The unions have two seats on this council. That means that in Hong Kong, the working people do not even have the right to vote. So, when you criticize the lack of democracy in China, you have also to criticize the British government that denies elementary democratic rights to the working people here. ★

