

International VIEWPOINT

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INSIDE:

GULF CRISIS

Chronicle of a war
foretold — *Salah
Jaber*
Plus

Steps forward for
antiwar movement

TROTSKY

Murder in Mexico

CANADA

The Mohawk
struggle
Plus

Quebec challenges
Canadian state

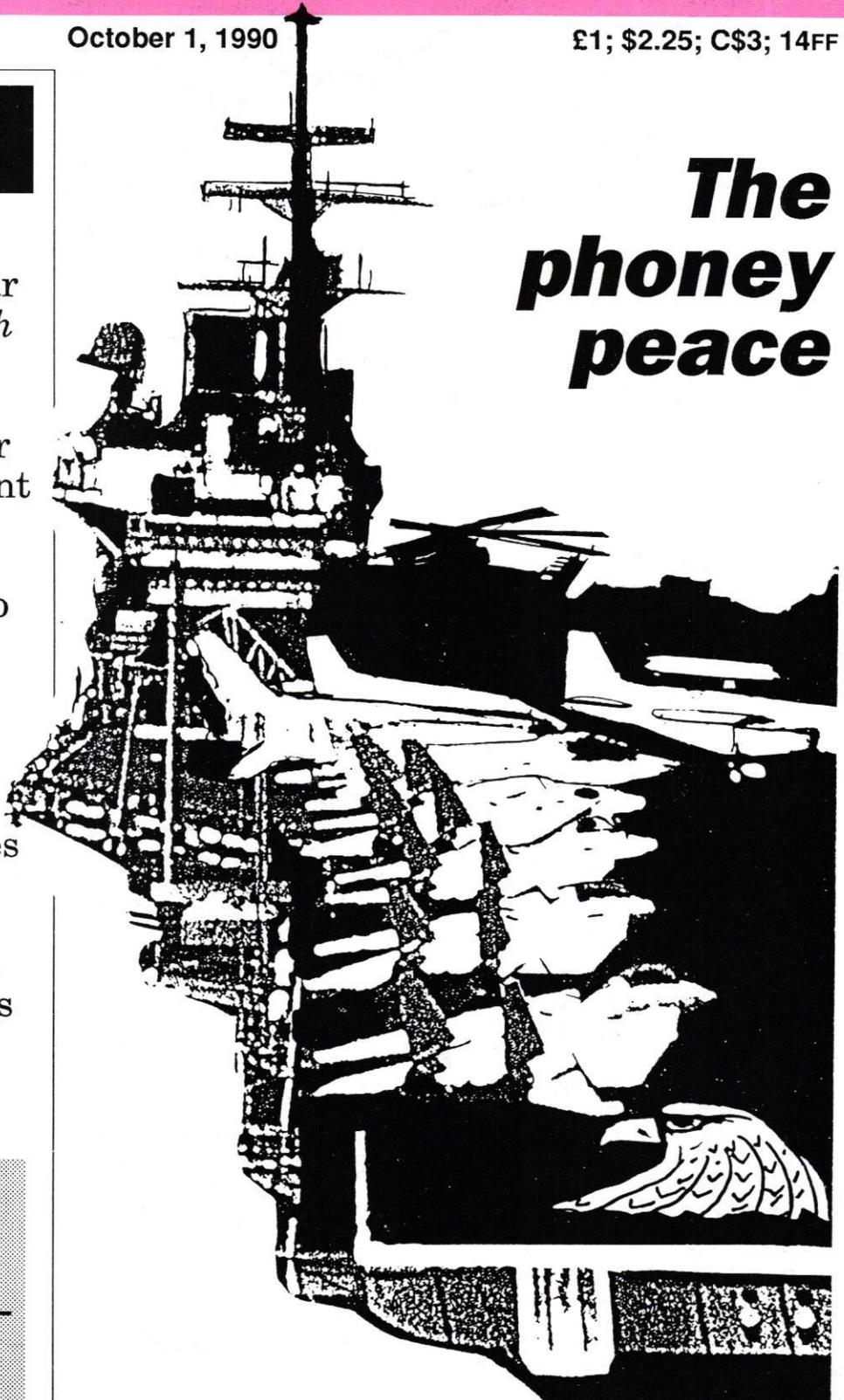
YUGOSLAVIA

The slide towards
civil war —
Michelle Lee

SOUTH AFRICA

The Reef War —
Sophie Hawes

The phoney peace



Contents:

GULF CRISIS 3

BUILDUP for blitzkrieg — *Salah Jaber* analyzes the moves of the US and its allies

Plus

The growing international antiwar movement

SOUTH AFRICA 7

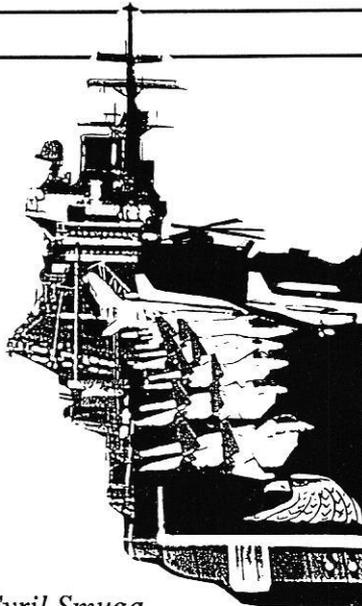
SLAUGHTER in the Black townships — *Sophie Hawes* looks at the underlying causes behind the “internecine warfare” damaging the anti-apartheid struggle

YUGOSLAVIA 10

WAR among the nationalities? Who wants it, and why? — *Michelle Lee*

POLAND 12

ECONOMIC CRISIS widens divisions in the forces supporting the non-Communist government. Prelude to new presidential elections —



Cyril Smuga

LATIN AMERICA 15

THE NEW US plan for restructuring the region’s \$12 trillion debt — *Alfonso Moro*

NICARAGUA 17

DEBATES in the Sandinista Front — *Eric Toussaint*

CANADA 19

SHARP rise in support for Quebec independence
Plus
REBELLION of the Mohawks,

challenge for the Quebec sovereignty movement — *Michel Lafitte*

Around the World 24

● Panama ● Soviet Union

Obituaries

● Louis Sinclair
● Reba Hansen

TROTSKY 25

HUNGARIAN MASS media discuss the life and death of the Bolshevik leader on the anniversary of his assassination

Plus

SOVIET writer promises new revelations about Trotsky’s murder
TROTSKY commemorated in Mexico

CORRECTION

This week’s apology... is to *Törk Hansen*, whose name was omitted as the joint author of the article on “The costs of German unification” in the last issue of IV (#190). Sorry!

International VIEWPOINT

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Chronicle of a war foretold

THE biggest deployment of US forces since the Vietnam war, the biggest British military intervention since the Malvinas war, the biggest French expeditionary force since the Algerian war — three reference points which speak volumes on the nature of the imperialist crusade underway against Iraq. The concentration of imperialist and allied troops and arms in Saudi Arabia, in the coasts and waters of the Gulf and in the Red Sea, bear no relation to their declared objective.

SALAH JABER

VERY MUCH less would be needed to dissuade Saddam Hussein from attacking the Saudi kingdom, supposing that was the intention. Infinitely less would be needed to impose the embargo decreed by the UN Security Council. And it is not over! Beyond the continued build up of their own troops on the ground (the Pentagon envisages 250,000 in total), the United States is maintaining pressure on its imperialist partners and on their Arab, Muslim and other Third World henchmen to send new forces.

Thus, on September 15 and 16, it was announced in quick succession that France would send 4,200 more men; Pakistan 3,000; Bangladesh 3,000; Egypt 15,000; and Syria 10,000. These thousands of soldiers, with equipment including several hundred tanks, are to be added to the thousands already sent by the same countries since the beginning of the crisis. They will all be deployed on Saudi territory, in coordination with the 150,000 US troops already in place. The French reinforcements are specialist anti-tank and anti-helicopter troops, representing a significant boost for the US plan of action. The presence of the others has a primarily political function, that of giving an Arab and Muslim cover for the essentially American and western character of the deployment underway — and of the aggression which is being prepared.

The countries concerned are to receive a fat reward. Egypt, already the principal world beneficiary of US aid after the state of Israel, will see its military debt of \$7 billion to the United States simply written off. To this can be added the billions of dollars which will undoubtedly be channelled to it by the Arab potentates of the Gulf, as well as by the pool of imperialist backers rounded up by Washington. Syria, previously struggling with a grave financial crisis, will be bailed out and have its

projects financed by the oil sheikhs. James Baker himself came to Damascus to assure himself of the good intentions of the regime of Hafez El-Assad, not long ago held up to obloquy by the White House.

Assad has given the green light for the sending of Syrian reinforcements which will be put, for extra security, under the command of a Saudi Emir. Nonetheless, the US administration cannot, at this stage, and faced with the pro-Israeli lobby in Congress, directly pay off Syria. It has therefore pushed Thatcher, who Bush himself has publicly declared to be his most trusty ally, to lift her veto on the granting of 146 million ECU that the EEC had promised to Syria.

United States divides up the cash

In all these operations, the US has imposed itself not only as military master of the imperialist world order, but also — and this is new — as apportioner of the international financing of this order. Certainly, the Saudi kingdom with its petrodollars, has been a reliable additional backer for Washington, both for operations in accord with US legality (Afghanistan) and illegal operations (Nicaragua). But this time, the pool of backers being asked to contribute is much bigger. To the \$12 billion from the Arab oil sheikhs, including the Kuwaiti government in exile (from its supposedly frozen assets), must be added \$4b from Japan, \$2b from Germany, \$2b from the EEC and even \$150 million from Italy.

This "Band Aid" of gigantic proportions (how deep must be the bitterness of those who have struggled to raise a few millions for the famine in Africa!) is destined, in part, to compensate and reward the efforts of the local participants in the imperialist encirclement (Egypt, Jordan,

Turkey, and so on) under the aegis of the United States. But a big part of the kitty will go into financing the US intervention, whose cost is incessantly being revised upwards by the Pentagon — \$15 billion on the latest estimates.

This estimate is a revealing one. It corresponds officially to the cost of a year's stationing of the US forces deployed on the ground — whereas Baker vows, to whoever will listen, that the departure of troops will take place "as soon as the crisis ends". But to envisage a cost of \$1.25b a month for 12 months, as much as for the first two months (\$2.5b in total to the end of September) with their enormous costs of transport and installation on the ground, shows that there is something in the wind.

Taking account of the fact that in addition to direct financing, the Saudi monarchy furnishes oil, water and other products and services free to the US forces, the proposed budget corresponds much more closely to a scenario of armed confrontation (albeit of short duration) than to that of a simple application of the embargo decreed by the Security Council.

In this respect the disclosures made to the *Washington Post* by Michael Dugan, then chief of staff of the US Air Force, which led to his dismissal, should be taken seriously.

They confirmed what many other declarations coming from Pentagon spokespersons have already made clear. The only serious military option for the US generals is to strike a heavy military blow at Iraq at the beginning, in such a manner as to bring about a rapid surrender, or even rout, of its troops. Iraq is to be brought to its knees, whilst three major risks are avoided: a vast confrontation between ground forces, with a high human cost which US public opinion would tolerate with difficulty; the extension of fighting to the Saudi oilfields by the Iraqis — their major dissuasive option; and/or an intensive conflict of longer than 72 hours which could spread to the whole Arab region, where long accumulated frustrations nourish a solid

Death threat to anti-imperialist activist

Saïd Seif, leader of the Bahraini Popular Front, has been arrested in Damascus, where he was living in exile. The reason for his arrest is the position that his group has taken against the imperialist intervention in the Gulf, in contradiction with the Syrian regime's stand. He is in danger of being extradited to Bahrain, where he is under a death sentence. Action to demand his immediate release is needed. ★

Palestinian leaders play musical chairs

THE GULF CRISIS has presented the Arafat leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) with one of the most serious dilemmas in its history. It is torn between the Saudi kingdom, which has always been one of its main sources of funds and Iraq, with which it has developed close links in the past decade, after some years of conflict.

In the Iran/Iraq War, Saudi money was also going to Iraq and at this time Arafat became strongly compromised with Saddam Hussein, with whom, besides he shared a common hostility to the Syrian regime. Arafat moved most of the forces loyal to him to Iraq, where a number of command posts are also located. Now, Arafat finds himself in the same uncomfortable position as Jordan's King Hussein, caught between economic dependence on Iraq and its links with world imperialism and its local satraps. The PLO leadership, furthermore, like the Jordanian king, faces strong pro-Iraq popular feeling, which is evident on both sides of the Jordan.

The Arafat leadership is trying to face both ways. It has not condemned Iraq and is maintaining its good relations with Saddam Hussein, trying all the while to convince the Saudis that they would be just the people to mediate. On the other hand, it has sent a public message has been sent to the Saudi King Fahd, putting their forces at His Majesty's disposal for the defence of his kingdom.

The leftwing of the PLO is facing a rather different dilemma. Its close ties with the Syrian regime now come into conflict with its anti-imperialism (and Arab nationalism), which tend to push it into supporting Iraq. George Habash of the popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) has gone the furthest towards the latter position. In the early days of the crisis he went to the Iraqi capital Baghdad for a mutual admiration session with Saddam Hussein. Thus there is a reconciliation between the two men. Moving in fixed opposition to Arafat, the PFLP has been violently opposed to the Iraqi regime for the past ten years, after being its protégé in previous years. — S. J. ★

hatred of the United States and popular solidarity with Iraq.

This scenario requires its "Tonkin Gulf Incident" (the pretext for the US aggression against Vietnam) to inaugurate the hostilities. The Pentagon strategists intend to have the initiative in any armed conflict — carrying out what they call, with breathtaking hypocrisy, a "preemptive strike". Surprise is moreover a major element of their military option — that of a lightning, intensive and massive bombardment ("carpet bombing") which would flatten most of Iraq's defences as well as the morale of its troops and population.

The imperialist armies dispose of overwhelming air superiority over Iraq. The former have nearly double the number of aircraft in the theatre of operations than the Iraqi army (50% more for the US aircraft alone) whereas two thirds of the Iraqi machines are obsolete. But even supposing that the quantity and quality of the airforce were equal, the imperialist forces would still be superior in this domain.

Aviation is the favoured weapon of the technologically advanced countries, for more than material reasons, for after all material can be bought or delivered. It is also and above all for reasons of human competence — the sophistication of modern aircraft is such that they demand a high level of know-how to be fully utilized. It is this that explains, for example, Israeli air superiority over the Arab countries. When, on top of this, the quantity and quality of material is added, the superiority becomes overwhelming. It contrasts with the relative vulnerability of the impe-

rialist troops in the case of a land confrontation with the Iraqi army, be it only for psychological reasons. It is this superiority which the US generals wish to put to full use.

The aggressive intentions manifested by the Pentagon are in total harmony with the political attitude of the White House. The signs of a weakening of Saddam Hussein's position multiply — he has never in reality ruled out compromise, authorizing his friends, Yasser Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan, to continue their search for a face-saving solution. But contrary to the misinformation campaign in the media of the imperialist countries, it is Bush and Thatcher who are being intransigent rather than Saddam Hussein, champion in every kind of volte-face. Washington exercises permanent pressure on those among its allies, European as much as Arab, who might be tempted by an "Arab solution" to the crisis.

Thus, French imperialism, which has a lot to lose in Iraq, has expressed its preference for this type of solution. In the same way, the Moroccan, Jordanian, Algerian, Tunisian and Yemeni regimes, as well as the leadership of the PLO, are attempting to negotiate a compromise and avoid a regional conflagration which will rebound against them.

Washington is working non-stop to thwart them in this area. Baker is multiplying his trips abroad to this end. At the end of his last tour, on September 15, he declared at Bonn airport: "We have received political commitments to accept

no resolution of this crisis which does not involve an unconditional Iraqi withdrawal". In other words, no compromise is acceptable. For the masters of the world imperialist order, the only choice open to Saddam Hussein is that of grovelling or being crushed.

And there is no point in looking to Moscow to dissuade the US from exercising the military option. More bogged down than ever in its internal problems, more concerned than ever to benefit from the political and economic benevolence of the imperialists, Gorbachev is literally selling them his connivance, indeed his complicity. Such is the meaning of the transaction of September 9 at Helsinki; George Bush went there accompanied by a host of American businessmen, who waited in the antechamber of the summit for authorization to continue their voyage to Moscow with investment proposals.

The go ahead was not long in coming, and Bush was able to publicly congratulate himself on the "remarkable cooperation shown by the USSR" on the subject of the Gulf crisis, the theme of the summit, promising to recommend to Congress on his return "as close a cooperation as possible in the economic sphere".

Moscow gives green light for military action

The common declaration of the two presidents at the end of their meeting did not limit itself to confirming the collusion already realized at the UN Security Council. In envisaging "supplementary measures", it legitimized in advance a recourse to force, if the embargo should prove insufficient. As *Newsweek* commented on September 17: "Moscow insists that the Gulf crisis can be settled peacefully, but Gorbachev shows no sign of actively opposing Bush's strategy, even if the American president chooses to use force".

For a number of reasons, including climatic considerations, the need to complete the deployment, and the necessity of at least trying to obtain the capitulation of Saddam Hussein by sanctions, Washington must mark time for the moment, before passing to the offensive. This time must be put to good use by all the anti-imperialist forces of the world to assemble a genuine anti-war movement. Some progress has begun to be registered in this area: to the popular mobilizations in the Arab world, we can now add political or social reactions in countries like France or the Spanish state which are not negligible. It is necessary to intensify our campaign around the following demands:

- Immediate withdrawal of the imperialist forces from the Gulf region.
- An end to the blockade of Iraq and the freezing of its foreign holdings.
- Refusal of all the costs of the military intervention and immediate annulment of all austerity measures imposed on the masses.★

The politics of oil

WHATEVER Moscow's anxieties about the political and military consequences of the US crushing Iraq, it stands to gain economically from any conflict in the Arab-Persian Gulf which leads to higher oil prices. The Soviet Union is the world's biggest oil producer, with much under-exploited potential. The Kremlin hopes that oil exports will become an important source of hard currency.

For this to happen, the profitability of its oil extraction has to be improved, something that requires a long-term price rise. Technical aid from the United States is also needed. Bush is working on it. On his way to Helsinki, he told the businessmen with him that he wanted to see "the best American know how on oil production, drilling and seismic work going to the Soviet Union" (*Newsweek*, September 17).

The US oil industry, to which Bush is personally tied, also has an interest in seeing a relatively high stable price. This would have the effect of reducing American dependence on oil imports, for two reasons: through a reduction in domestic consumption because of higher prices; and an increase in local production making it profitable to reopen shut down wells and the drilling of new ones.

The American oil interest would be happy with a stable price of between \$25 and \$30 per barrel, which the world economy could stand. In fact at today's dollar prices oil was selling for \$70 per barrel in November 1980. All the experts say that the present price rise was inevitable, with or without Saddam Hussein. OPEC's production capacity was being used at 85% and demand was continuing to grow, owing to a price lower in real terms than in 1973, before the first "oil shock".

Washington also profits from the rise in revenues of the oil producing states consequent on a rise in the oil price, above all through the purchase of American Treasury bonds by Saudi Arabia, which can help to finance the US budget deficit. This is one of the most important aspects of the Saudi kingdom's involvement in the US economy.

The main motive for the rush to restore the emir of Kuwait is to maintain states of this type — underpopulated in relation to their oil wealth — in existence, so that the "excess" capital is recycled in the imperialist countries (see IV 190). —

S.J. ★

Steps forward for antiwar movement

SINCE the end of August there have been demonstrations in most of the big cities of the Spanish state (see IV 190). On September 16, a number of actions took place throughout the country, at the call of a national committee against the imperialist intervention. Some 400 to 500 people demonstrated in Madrid, several hundred in Cadiz (against the departure of conscripts). The committee has drawn in most of the far left, along with peace, anti-militarist and women's groups. The Communist Party (hiding under the label of United Left) has finally come out clearly for the recall of the imperialist troops, but is manoeuvring over the question of united action. The CP was involved in the preparatory committees for September 16, but pulled out of joint activity over the inclusion of an appeal for insubordination. The Young Communists were nonetheless present on the demonstrations.

SOME 3,000 people attended a meeting in New York on September 13 to call for an end to the US -led war drive. Actions have also taken place in many US cities. On September 18 a National Coalition for Peace in the Middle East was formed, drawing in activists from throughout the USA. Leading figures from the Rainbow Coalition, associated with the Rev. Jesse Jackson took part in the meeting, although not as official representatives of the Rainbow Coalition. There was a discussion at the meeting over whether to include the call for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait in the platform — this was finally included by a 2-1 vote.

The Coalition is drawing up plans for a rapid response in case war breaks out, and is considering how to mobilize for the October 20 demonstrations called by a New York-based group,

which some activists in the Coalition consider is insufficiently critical of Iraq.

AMID rumours of a right-wing counter-demonstration, plans are under way for a united anti-war demonstration in Amsterdam in Holland on September 29. Efforts are being made to involve the major Dutch peace movement in this action.

THE West German far left has organized a series of meetings with the Communist Party and unions, including the powerful metalworkers union, demanding the recall of the NATO troops from the Persian Gulf and against the West German government's support for the war-drive. For the West German government to send forces to the Gulf legally it would be necessary to change the constitution, which forbids the deployment of West German armed forces outside NATO territory.

A BIG demonstration is being planned in Belgium out of a meeting to be held on October 5. This initiative is being supported by big Flemish and Walloon peace movements, the Flemish Greens and other

Workers block military deployment

MORE than 4,000 tons of military equipment, including armour, has been leaving the French port of Toulon since September 20. But the dispatch has been disrupted by a strike by sailors from the largest French trade union federation, the CGT, closely tied to the French Communist Party (PCF). The sailors stopped work to condemn "the requisitioning of civilian ships and their crews for the war."

The CGT's national ports and docks federation has "condemned the decision to use merchant vessels and requisition merchant crews for military ends." It has called on "the port workers to refuse to be a part of decisions dictated by the logic of war."

Furthermore Corsican sailors affiliated to the independent nationalist union, the STC blocked the sailing of a car ferry from Bastia to Marseilles for four hours, demanding a daily risk payment of 1,224 francs.

These are the first significant signs of the workers' movement taking practical steps to resist the "logic of war" entered into by President Mitterrand. While the CGT has stated that "in the Gulf affair, there is no justification for the over-arming of the region, nor the requisition of civilian ships and their crews", the CGT and the PCF continue to demand the application of the United Nations' resolutions, including those on the blockade of Iraq. Meanwhile, a demonstration for the recall of French forces took place in Paris on September 8, drawing about 2,000 people, mostly from the far left. ★

Tunisia — popular support for Iraq

THE bulk of the population and opposition forces have taken up a position of support to Saddam Hussein to one degree or another. Arab nationalist sentiment has revived.

A "Committee against aggression and in support of Iraq" has been formed on the initiative of the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) the single union centre in which the whole left, including the Trotskyists are participating. Public meetings, leafletting and demonstration have been taking place throughout the country. Trade unions have been refusing to handle British and American goods.

The government has maintained a position of embarrassed neutrality. The Arab summit in Cairo has been boycotted, but the August 14 demonstration was repressed. At least 46 fundamentalists and 14 militants of the far left were arrested and a far left journal, *Elbadil* has been provisionally closed down.

The government is not the only one to have been walking the high wire. The Communist Party will pay for snubbing Arab national feelings by losing a part of its base. The fundamentalists, meanwhile, are torn between their pro-Iraqi supporters and their Saudi paymasters. They have swung about wildly, from denouncing the invasion to supporting Saddam Hussein, and from justifying the Saudi's appeal for imperialist aid to denouncing the presence of the "eaters of pork and drinkers of alcohol" in the holy places. For each leader, a different position! ★

organizations, including the SAP/POS, Belgian section of the Fourth International.

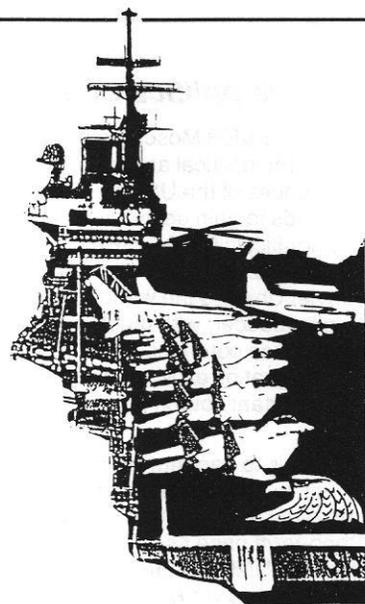
The Gulf crisis has sealed the break between the Flemish social democrats (SP) and the peace movement, in which the SP once played an important role. In 1987, the SP led an active campaign against military participation in the military escalation in the Gulf. This time it has been swallowed up by the Holy Alliance.

IN Britain, an antiwar demonstration in London on September 15 drew over 5,000 people, receiving coverage on national TV and radio. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the main British peace organization, was divided over the call for the immediate withdrawal of troops, supported by the Campaign Against War in the Gulf (CAWG), the main force behind the demonstration. The bulk of the demonstration was made up of the far left and independents, although Labour MPs and Ken Cameron of the Fire Brigades Union spoke from the platform. A conference against the war-drive is being planned by CAWG and pickets of the US Embassy are being held.

JAPAN has been under great pressure from the United States to get involved in the imperialist intervention in the Gulf.

On September 14, the Japanese government voted \$3b in money plus material support for the war-drive. Under the existing Japanese constitution, Japan cannot send troops to fight abroad. However, there is said to be discussion within the government about changing this.

The Japanese far left, including the Japanese section of the Fourth International



(JRCL) has been organizing pickets and protests — as yet small — demanding no arms and no money for the intervention. A demonstration in support of these demands is planned for October 7. The Japanese Communist Party supports these demands but has yet to take action. The Socialist Party on the other hand has supported the Japanese government line.

Nonetheless opinion polls indicate that around 50% of Japanese people do not support their country's involvement in the Gulf crusade ★

The end of Swedish neutrality?

Sweden was the first country in the world to publicly adhere to the UN sanctions against Iraq. In the big mass media, however, an intense campaign has been waged to draw Sweden even further into support for the imperialist mobilization. In the first weeks of August, for instance, conservative politicians and bourgeois mass media attacked the Social Democratic government for "cowardice", since it was not immediately prepared to send troops to the Persian Gulf.

The government's answer was to send 50 million crowns (£5m) as financial aid to the refugee camps in Jordan. At the same time, however, it declared that it would be willing to send troops later as part of a UN contingent.

In spite of right wing criticism of this measure, it can in no way be pictured as a radical step from the government. For a country so proud of its policy of non-alignment, for a Social Democratic party world famous for its support for third world aspirations and "North-South dialogue", the present alignment behind imperialism's campaign is quite conspicuous.

It also reflects a general right wing turn of foreign policy, following the current campaign to bring Sweden into the Common Market. Some weeks ago, the director of Volvo, P. G. Gyllenhammar wrote an article arguing in favour of abandoning the traditional policy of neutrality. His pretext was Iraq but his immediate goal was to speak in favour of EC membership.

There have been very few voices publicly challenging this view. Early in the conflict representatives of the Left Party (VS — formerly the Communist Party) supported the UN measures. The editorial of the party paper also greeted the new "vigour" shown by the UN, only regretting that the USA cannot be seen as "reliably" defending human rights.

The Socialist Party, the Swedish section of the Fourth International has argued against Swedish participation in the war efforts, even in the disguise of the UN. A declaration from the party national committee denounces the UN sanctions as another form of maintaining imperialist control over oil resources and military strategic positions. The SP however stresses that this does not mean support for the Iraqi dictatorship or its assault on Kuwait and raises the demand that Hussein's troops are withdrawn from Kuwait as well as Kurdistan. ★

The Reef War

THE BRUTAL violence which swept through major black townships of the Transvaal Reef within days of the second round of talks between the de Klerk government and the ANC has shattered the atmosphere of the "new South Africa". In weeks of intense, bitter carnage and counter carnage, many hundreds of people have died and thousands more have been injured and left homeless with most of their belongings destroyed.

Finally, after much prevarication, and with the tacit agreement of the ANC, the state sent troops into the townships to "restore order". A thinly disguised new state of emergency has been declared. This is barely three months after the much heralded partial¹ lifting of the previous state of emergency, which had been in force since 1986. The sheer scale and brutality of the "Reef War" has etched a question mark on the reform process and the prospects for a peaceful transition period. The following analysis of the underlying causes of the reef war was written at the start of September.

SOPHIE HAWES

THE DAY following the signing of the "Pretoria Minute", which included the ANC's announcement of a cease-fire, vigilantes from the East Rand hostels of Thokoza, Katlehong and Vosloorus launched a series of murderous attacks using "traditional" weapons on former hostel dwellers and squatters. Police did nothing to prevent the bloodshed.

Township residents counter attacked and within three days, 44 people in the area had been killed and hundreds wounded. Within a week, the war had escalated to most areas of the Reef, the country's industrial heartland.

Although there had been similar attacks throughout the previous months², the scale, intensity and brutally personalized form of the violence — beatings, and stabbings with knives, knobkerries, sharpened sticks and spears, use of the "necklace" and the burning of people with petrol as well as shootings by individuals and police — as well as graphic coverage in the media has had a major impact.

Media hacks as well as right wing academics have been quick to raise the specters of "ethnic/tribal conflict between Zulus and Xhosas", "internecine squabbles between black organizations" as well as "tribal warrior traditions, weaponry and initiation rites."

More perceptive observers pointed to the exclusion of Inkatha from the two recent "talks about talks" as a cause of the

frustration of Inkatha members which spilled over into violence, and urged ANC leader Nelson Mandela to sit down and discuss with Inkatha leader Gatsha Buthelezi.

Beyond the bare facts of Inkatha-inspired and far right vigilante attacks on anyone regarded as a supporter of the liberation movement or of being anti-Inkatha, both the immediate and underlying causes of the violence are extremely complex.

This is hardly surprising in a society which is experiencing a simultaneous process of disintegration and renewal, requiring whirlwind shifts in the alignment of forces.

Violence rooted in apartheid system

In a fundamental way, the roots of the violence reach to the core of the apartheid capitalist system — the way in which the black labour force is still rigidly structured along "ethnic" lines; the reinforcement of this through the phoney "homelands"/bantustan system; consequent patterns of male migrancy from "tribal" homelands to work "temporarily" in "white" South Africa; as well as the generally appalling housing conditions and shortage of amenities in general, especially in hostels, labour compounds and squatter camps.

Despite the abolition of influx control

regulations in 1986, most of the structures of the migrant labour system still exist. "Zulus" are formally citizens of the kwaZulu "homeland", "Xhosas" of the Transkei and so on. A Zulu man wishing to work in "white" South Africa must leave his wife and family and seek work and accommodation as a "single" man.

Migrants enjoy few rights and benefits. Forced to live in a mine compound, a single sex hostel, squatter camp or overcrowded township house, they face the insecurity of only temporary residence and employment.

Conditions in the hostels are notoriously bad with usually 20-50 men sharing a room, each with only a single bunk demarcating "home". All washing, toilet and cooking facilities are shared and public. No privacy is possible. A visiting spouse or girlfriend or children must be accommodated in the only space available — the single bunk.

The economic crisis has only aggravated the situation. It is estimated that 1.1 million jobs were lost through production stagnation in the 1980s and many migrants are unemployed.

In addition, a worsening housing and amenities crisis has meant increased competition for all resources including water, electricity, sanitation and so on. In many cases, township residents "look down" on hostel dwellers and squatters, who have been traditionally prey to the maneuvering of various right wing, gangster and vigilante elements.

Ethnic solutions to material problems

Just as in Natal, Inkatha has exploited this situation by posing "ethnic" solutions to material problems. If you join Inkatha or the Inkatha trade union, they say, we will find you housing, protect your job, provide you with land at home and so on. The price paid is "warrior" service to Inkatha.

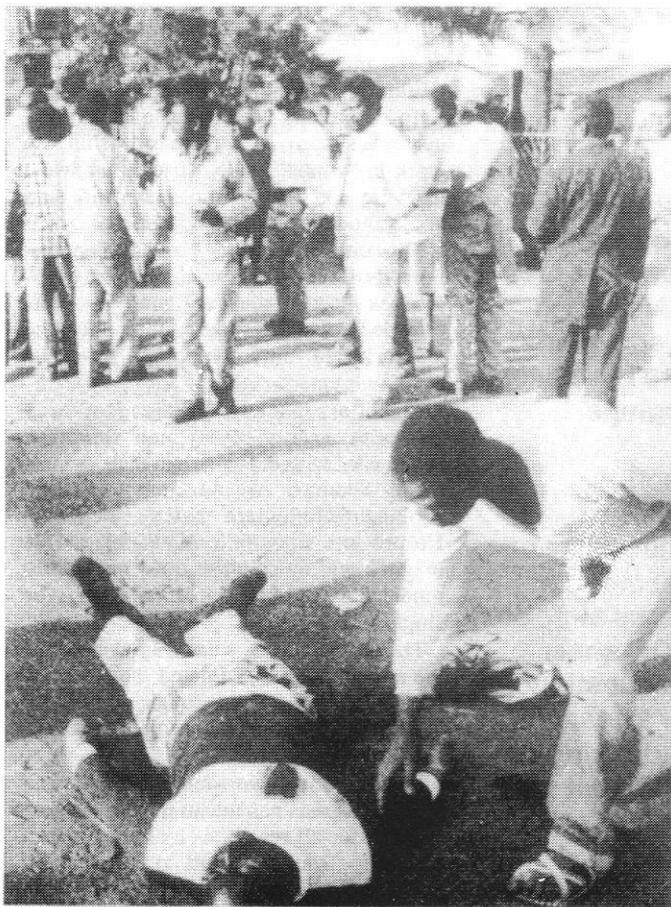
When the call is made there is little choice but to fight or be killed. Many who resist forced recruitment can never again return to kwaZulu for risk of assassination.

But why has the tinderbox exploded now? At one level, Buthelezi feels he has been publicly humiliated by being excluded from the ANC/government talks. He is also anxious about the proposed reforms, especially those related to the homelands and the migrant labour system.

At another level, Buthelezi desperately needs to move beyond his base in kwaZu-

1. It is still in force in Natal province.

2. Even before the Reef War, over 500 people died in violent "politically-related" incidents between January and June, bringing the death toll in 1990 already dangerously close to the violent years of 1984-1986. In March, riot police killed 11 people and injured scores of others at Sebokeng, an incident leading to a government Commission of Inquiry which has just reported, blaming the police for being "trigger happy".



lu and the Zulu speaking areas of Natal if his claim to a national political profile is to have the slightest credibility³. But Buthelezi is not the only force who would like to derail the reform process. In fact there are three main elements that have been instrumental in provoking the violence:

- Inkatha as an organization and the security forces of the kwaZulu "homeland";

- Right wing elements within the South African Police as well as "askaris" — black former members of liberation organizations who have turned informer and now work for and are protected by the police;

- Organized far right vigilantes and extremist elements, both black and white, acting in various degrees of coordination with the above⁴.

Buthelezi makes call to arms

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's disquiet at the special relationship between Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk developing since February, and Inkatha's exclusion from the process of "talks about talks" has been growing increasingly rancorous. Since July especially, Buthelezi has made several "calls to arms to defend the national pride and forward the aims of the 'Zulu nation'". Indeed there had been several warnings — for example from the COSATU trade unions and in the *New Nation* newspaper — that Inkatha was planning to spread the Natal violence to

the Reef. For example, COSATU warned that Inkatha was busying armed vigilantes to attack Sebokeng on July 22. The police did nothing and 22 people were killed. Again, on August 12, just before the talks, Inkatha held a rally for all hostel dwellers on the Reef at which it warned that Xhosas and their organizations were preparing an attack on Inkatha Zulus in the townships. Yet, despite the potential threat this posed to the talks, de Klerk made no attempt to instruct the police to disarm Inkatha nor protect vulnerable communities.

Inkatha has consistently been using violent coercion

to force hostel dwellers to join Inkatha and resign from other organizations and to participate in Inkatha attacks. This is aimed at both Zulu and non-Zulu dwellers. Inkatha warlords have spread the idea that war is coming and that their members must arm themselves. Hostels have been used as launching pads for attacks and fortresses for defence. The police have colluded in this and have consistently refused to raid "Inkatha hostels" or disarm them. Inkatha as an organization has supported the attacks with weapons and transport. Several hostel dwellers have been assassinated for not joining raiding parties.

There are also incidents where police have engaged directly in the violence, as evidenced by medical reports that some of the wounded have been shot with police-issue ammunition. Several observers have alleged that the police had "fronted" for Inkatha by undertaking killings, then leaving bodies stabbed by sharpened sticks and pongas to lay the blame on Inkatha. Several reports told of police being called in to "quell the violence" and then firing tear gas into communities to disperse their defences, allowing in raiding parties of vigilantes. In addition police consistently refuse to disarm the vigilantes and/or Inkatha.

There is widespread sympathy among the police for Inkatha, many of whom favour Buthelezi as a black leader over Mandela. This is true throughout the "white" community which is attracted by Buthelezi's espousal of the free enter-

prise system and the perpetuation of ethnic structures. Buthelezi has also managed to avoid actively engaging in or propagating violence directly. He constantly presents a mask of "peace, freedom, and democracy" which cuts little ice with the vast majority of blacks³ but which corresponds to the expectations for "moderate" black leadership of a large layer of whites.

The police have also provoked the situation by their regular raids on squatter camps and hostels. Shacks have been bulldozed, and people sent back to homelands throughout the last few months. In addition even journalists have reported that they watched police standing by while vigilantes and gangs have openly attacked and murdered people. It is also highly suspicious that very few arrests were made during the two week period at the height of the killings and none of these were of known killers, warlords or vigilante leaders.

Vigilantes exploit chaos

The chaos caused by the violence has also been exploited by "unorganized" vigilantes and gangs. It is known that many off-duty policemen and members of far right groups and "askaris" often form vigilante groups to carry out armed attacks on anyone considered radical, or simply on black people in general.⁴ In addition, the situation has been used to settle old scores among rival gangs and carry out robberies and looting. Of particular concern is the organized provocation by means of rumours and smear pamphlets. Malicious rumours have been consistently spread in the fertile climate of fear in the townships. Leaflets purporting to come from the ANC, UDF or COSATU attacking Inkatha and "Zulu ethnicity" and calling for "Xhosas to fight Zulus" have been widely circulated to fan the flames of violent sectarianism⁵.

But Inkatha does not have a monopoly on political intolerance. Indeed, in the months since the release of Mandela, many township youth, wearing the colors or invoking the name of the ANC, have also engaged in acts of provocation and

3. Two recent opinion polls carried out by commercial companies confirmed the lack of support for Buthelezi among blacks. The first showed that Buthelezi would get the votes of only 1% of blacks in a presidential election (Mandela received 58% and de Klerk 22%); the second showed that Inkatha as an organization enjoyed support from only 2% of blacks, the ANC receiving 38% support.

4. Armed attacks by the far right are steadily increasing. A recent spate of bomb and grenade attacks in black shopping centres, taxi queues and outside more enlightened Afrikaans newspapers have been traced to far right groups. Various police investigations also point to the existence of very well-organized networks of "spare-time" vigilantes inside the police force and army.

5. Smear leaflets are beginning to feature more and more in the arsenal of the far right. Practically every struggle and organization within the liberation/workers/left movement now has to deal with a regular flow of leaflets cleverly worded to sow discord among fellow organizations.

Who is behind the violence?

THE MASSACRE continues. The armed groups, usually in minibuses, attack once or twice a day, in the centre of Johannesburg where the majority of the city's black workforce is concentrated. According to witnesses, these people are both black and white, but the whites have blackened faces. On Thursday September 13 there was an attack on a Johannesburg commuter train in which 26 persons were killed and 100 injured. The next day another attack on another train led to 15 deaths, whilst an attack on a taxi line led to 5 deaths. Since August 8 there have been 764 people killed in the Transvaal.

In South Africa, the public debate centers on the possible existence of a "third force", in addition to Inkatha and the ANC. In fact, it is clear that the police apparatus is involved in the violence. Furthermore, in addition to the participation in these attacks of Inkatha and groups from the white far right, there is also talk of the possible utilisation of mercenaries from UNITA or Renamo (armed groups sponsored by the South African state in Angola and Mozambique), regrouped in camps to the north of Transvaal.

De Klerk now recognizes that an unknown "third force" could very well exist. But he has not explained why the emphasis of the violence has shifted from the township conflicts to organized attacks in the centre of town without discrimination between ethnic groups.

There can be no doubt that there is a strategy of low-intensity war, although it is debatable whether the government as a whole is involved or only a part of the state apparatus with the silent complicity of de Klerk.

A large part of the black population sincerely believes that this is a conflict between Inkatha and the ANC. The conditions have been created under which the army sent by de Klerk can appear as a peacemaking force. This disinformation favours also the idea among the Zulu population that Mandela is more a Xhosa chief than a national figure.

Buthelezi is trying to capitalize on this reactionary radicalization. He is making an increasing number of attacks on Mandela, accusing him of pursuing an anti-Zulu and communist project.

The government has set up a meeting between the Xhosa president of Transkei and the Zulu king under the patronage of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pik Botha. All this is intended to highlight the inter-ethnic dimension of the conflict.

A meeting of Zulu traditional chiefs finished with a communiqué which says, among other things, "We call on the ANC to apologize to the King of the Zulus for its call for the disbanding of kwaZulu and for the disbanding of the kwaZulu police force." (*The Citizen*, September 15)

The ANC is experiencing severe problems. Having called for the army to step in, Mandela has now made a self-criticism. In fact, the first act of this force was to look for arms in the pro-ANC hostels. The ANC is not responsible for this violence — the only violence that can be attributed to it is that of the groups of youth in Natal who have defended themselves from Inkatha independently of the ANC leadership.

Mandela has said that this war is being organized by a force other than Inkatha, but he has not pointed the finger at the state apparatus, and he does not seem to have any means of threatening the government and the process of negotiation.

In this situation, it is urgent to build a united front of all progressive forces — ANC, PAC, AZAPO, WOSA and the unions. The very minimum that is required is that the ANC should withdraw at once from the negotiations with the government. The ANC has decided to suspend its "armed struggle", which had become a formality for several months. But many ask now whether it is capable of physically protecting the people in the townships. ★

From our correspondent in South Africa. 17/9/90

intimidation against non-members, members of other political tendencies and hostel dwellers (especially Zulu speakers). There have been many complaints from township, hostel and squatter residents of this growing "culture of political intolerance". This has often taken the form of members of street committees, civics or residents committees — not to mention youth groups and trade unions — being

forced to declare allegiance to the ANC, sometimes with the use of physical intimidation.

This degree of factionalism has often had the outcome of pushing working class people away from organizing around important material issues, not to mention from other political organizations. Worse still, it sometimes results in pushing them into the arms of conserva-

tive or reactionary forces. This sectarianism is undermining working class unity and the will to participate in strategic alliances with the forces of the working class and liberation movements. Indeed the leadership of both the ANC and the Communist Party has shown itself to be particularly deaf to the problems being created by the unruly and extremely undemocratic practices of certain "young lions" on the ground and in the unions. This negligence can be ill-afforded during this crucial period which demands unity in action, especially by the mass organizations.

The violence against the Reef communities is an assault on the working class and all the forces struggling for a democratic end to apartheid capitalism. It serves the interests of the sectarian nationalists, both black and white, and the far right. (At this stage, it is not really in the interests of the state, which would much rather go through a process of peaceful transition, which would offer it more legitimacy than putting troops back into the townships.)

The backdrop is the whole edifice of apartheid capitalism. Add to this the fact that Inkatha's social base — "ethnically" divided homelands, communities, job reservations and so on — is gradually eroding. The ever-growing urban working class has turned to a range of other organizations to fight for their interests. Organized "ethnicity" is incapable of improving conditions, especially once ties to rural life are no longer materially important. Workers join trade unions, residents join civic associations, tenants' associations and parent-teacher-student associations, school students join student organizations and so on. Through this people are exposed to organized political alternatives.

Conflict not ethnic but ideological

As these differences become expressed in more organized and political ways, the tensions between them spill into violent confrontation. Oskar Dhlomo, former Inkatha ideologue who recently resigned from the organization, has stressed that the conflict is not ethnic but ideological. He is right, but this ideological difference goes beyond differences between Inkatha and the ANC.

At the end of the day, it is a clash of different strategies for solving the deep socio-economic problems created by apartheid capitalism — the bantustans; the migrant labour system; the housing/hostel/squatter problems; the lack or inadequacy of services and amenities in the townships; and massive unemployment.

Unless the organizations of the liberation and working class movements unite on a clear class strategy for tackling these issues, as well as supporting the capacity of communities to defend themselves from attack, the prospects for a peaceful transition process are remote indeed. ★

The slide towards civil war

THE unknown factor in the current power struggle is the Yugoslav People's Army. Its birth and development took place firstly as a part of the revolution and anti-fascist national liberation war, and then as a part of the emergence and consolidation of the Communist system. The relative autonomy of the armed forces, and their role in policing internal dissent increased substantially as a result of extensive party purges in the early 1970s, at precisely the time when a major devolution of state power to the Republics and provinces was initiated. The collapse of Communist Party rule has left the armed forces without a political master.

The representatives of the chief republics — Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia — have become in their different ways the spokespersons for a new post-Communist order. The effects of this turn, combined with professional self-interest, political conservatism and Serb preponderance in the officer ranks, have produced an unstable and potentially dangerous force. As the army seeks a new role, it is possible that sections could emerge as a serious threat to the new parliamentary-democratic system, using as a pretext the need to defend Yugoslavia's territorial integrity.

Army's diminishing qualms about intervening

In 1981 the army could still be found grumbling over the politicians' incompetence which had required it to intervene in the majority-Albanian Kosovo province of Serbia. Such qualms seem to have diminished with the crumbling of unity within the party-state leadership. Two years ago the army was involved in trying to inhibit political democratization in Slovenia. Last year it participated in dismantling the political and cultural autonomy of Kosovo — a move both violent and unconstitutional.

This summer it staged military manoeuvres in Bosnia in which Slovenia and Croatia were designated as the "enemy" (coloured blue). Within weeks of this exercise, it intervened in the internal affairs of Croatia by sending two of its MIGs to turn back police helicopters despatched by the Croatian authorities to recapture the town of Knin from a group of armed Serb insurgents, who had cut off road and rail links between Zagreb and

THE federal organization of the Yugoslav state has made the transition to post-Communist rule particularly chaotic. Some republics have already had multiparty elections, others not. Over the past three years, a muffled conflict within the Communist Party leadership over the desirability and terms of a radical change has been transformed into an open conflict between the federal units — or rather, between Serbia and all the others. Most worrying for the future of the country is the burgeoning violence in the ethnically mixed areas of Yugoslavia's central regions.

MICHELLE LEE

Split.

These actions amount to little more than occasional harassment — as yet. Indeed it is difficult to ascertain whether they commanded the full support of the Minister of Defence and the Chiefs of Staff. If some generals harbour political ambitions, they are at present kept in check by the multinational character of the conscript army, by the legitimacy of the new governments in Slovenia and Croatia and — last but not least — by fear of possible Western reaction. Yet a military putsch cannot be altogether excluded. Much will depend on the outcome of forthcoming elections in the republic of Serbia.

In the spring of 1990, the Communist Parties of Slovenia and Croatia, bowing before the inevitable, organized free and fair elections, in which they lost power, but gained around 20% of the popular vote (less in Slovenia and more in Croatia). Despite the fact the CPs emerged as a respectable parliamentary opposition — with no single party winning the absolute majority of the popular vote — they are faced today with a drastically declining membership and severe political disorientation. What is more, the constant pressure from Serbia is forcing them into a coalition with domestic parties to their right in defence of national and republican state sovereignty. This autumn, it will be the turn of the other republics to go through the electoral process, in which ethnically-based parties are likely to win the lion's share of the vote in individual national constituencies.

It is unlikely that the Serbian elections will be as equitably organized, or proceed

as peacefully, as was the case in Croatia and Slovenia. In Kosovo itself, it is practically certain that the Albanian parties will be banned. Kosovo's provincial assembly was in any case dissolved in July by a unilateral decision of Belgrade and will not be reconvened. The locked-out deputies, the Kosovo opposition parties, and the newly formed Alliance of Independent Trade Unions, have signed a declaration proclaiming complete independence of Kosovo from Serbia. This will be used as the pretext for not holding elections in the province.

The future of Yugoslavia will be decided in Serbia. Serbia's ruling party — a party whose ideology and practice are taking on fascist tones — has adopted a twin track strategy whose ultimate aim is to dismantle Yugoslavia and replace it with Greater Serbia. One track of this policy looks on the Serb diaspora as the chief (though not the only) instrument of destabilization of the other republics. This summer — after Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro — it was Croatia's turn for the treatment. Bosnia-Herzegovina — with elections scheduled for November 18 — is coming next. The Belgrade media were engaged in a vicious propaganda campaign against Croatia well before its new government was in place. Since then, they have been fanning fear among the Serb population in Croatia by alleging that the new authorities there are planning to massacre them en masse.

Belgrade tries to provoke civil war in Croatia

Belgrade has been organizing and even arming local militants with a view to provoking civil war in Croatia — in which Belgrade would intervene as protector of the Serbs. The Serbian regime has at its disposal thousands of "volunteers" ready to march anywhere in Yugoslavia, and can also rely on full support from most of the Serbian opposition parties for such action. A current joke — which is not really a joke — is that Serbian leader Milosevic's power rests on four pillars: the daily *Politika*, the army, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences. In Serbia, in other words, forces with the politics of the rightwing Russian nationalist Pamyat movement both hold power and provide the chief opposition.

The other track is winning the elections, scheduled for later this year. There is a theoretical possibility that the coming elections in Serbia will break the back of the ruling party, and open the door to a new intra-national settlement in Yugoslavia. The chances of this happening, however, are remote. For one thing, there is the Kosovo myth. Over the past three years, the Serbian Communist Party has built up national hysteria around the issue of Kosovo, creating a right-wing emotional and political climate in the Republic. Whenever the party's influence has appeared to be in decline — as in the immediate aftermath of the elections in Slovenia and Croatia — the party has used the Kosovo card to cow its opposition.

The July decision to dissolve the Kosovo assembly and take over all the economic, political and cultural institutions in the province was announced simultaneously with the decision to fuse the Communist Party with the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Serbia — the organization which, according to the current constitution, organizes elections. The ruling party, now named the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), has thus killed two birds with one stone. It has gained control over the vast infrastructure of this parasite organization (financed by deductions at source from each and every wage packet) and over the mechanism of the electoral process.

At the same time, it has pushed through a new draft constitution by means of a fraudulent referendum, which imposed stiff conditions for the registration and activity of the opposition parties. The muted and incoherent response of these parties proved their essential impotence — not a single one in Serbia felt strong enough to call for a boycott, despite the obvious adverse effects the new regulations would have on their electoral chances. This was in sharp contrast to Kosovo and Vojvodina, where the referendum elicited a far sturdier response. In Vojvodina, the Social Democratic League under Nenad Canak has been particularly outspoken.

The undemocratic character of the whole process has encouraged the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences to proclaim SPS leader Slobodan Milosevic the greatest personality in Serbian history. Mihajlo Markovic, the *ex-Praxis* editor and one time critic of the Yugoslav Communist Party from the standpoint of "humanist Marxism", sits today on the SPS Central Committee together with the



writer Dobrica Cosic (removed from the Serbian party central committee for nationalism in 1968) and a host of corrupt nonentities elevated to power by Milosevic. Unlike in Croatia and Slovenia, where the opposition gained reasonable access to the state-run media prior to the elections, in Serbia the media remain the exclusive property of the ruling party.

Kosovo back in the Middle Ages

In Kosovo, the Albanian-language radio and television have been closed down, prompting an Albanian deputy to declare at a recent session of the Federal Assembly that Kosovo finds itself today back in the Middle Ages. The Belgrade press, on the other hand, maintains an output of unrelenting abuse that would put to shame the most notorious of British tabloids. Over the past eighteen months, for example, *NIN* — Serbia's most prominent weekly, once noted for its liberal political and cultural orientation — has published a respectful interview with Israel's Ariel Sharon, a paean of praise for Oswald Spengler's Decline of the West (as an example of "post-modernist vitality") and a warm appreciation of the "iconoclasm" of Gabriele D'Annunzio, without mentioning the poet's role in the annexation of the Croatian and Yugoslav port of Rijeka to Italy on the eve of Mussolini's coming to power.

A new stock in trade of the government controlled Belgrade press is the charge that Yugoslav Communists came to power in 1945 as a result of a Vatican-Comintern conspiracy directed against Serbia. All other Yugoslav nationalities

— Albanian, Croat, Slovene, Moslem, Macedonian, Montenegrin — are regularly depicted as radical enemies of the Serbs. In these conditions it is hard to describe Serbia as a bastion of Communist conservatism — it might indeed be shaping up as the vanguard of a fascist counter-revolution in Yugoslavia.

The coming elections in Serbia will thus be state-managed. Unlike in Slovenia and Croatia, the opposition parties will not sit on the electoral commissions, whose members will be appointed by the state. Yet the plight of the Serbian economy and the desperate condition of the Serbian working class are making the regime nervous. Despite all the preparations, the ruling party is not certain of victory. A public

opinion poll conducted in August in Serbia proper (that is, Serbia without Vojvodina and Kosovo) suggested that the SPS would gain one third of the vote. Vuk Draskovic's Serb National Renewal Party was trailing far behind with around 10%. The largest proportion of those questioned, however, were undecided.

To help them make up their mind, the SPS will move at an appropriate moment — most likely in Kosovo, but it could be anywhere — to create a civil war situation and present itself as the only force capable of saving the Serbs from national extinction. The Knin incident in Croatia is only a dress rehearsal for future action in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro. There are historic precedents for this tactic — the most sinister being Hitler's use of the German question in Czechoslovakia and Poland on the eve of World War 2.

The regime's most tempting option, however, is to provoke the Kosovo Albanians into an uprising. Belgrade has spent the summer months busily sacking Albanians from all positions of responsibility in Kosovo and replacing them with Serbs, some of them well known for their anti-Albanian fanaticism. Kosovo workers, the majority of whom have not been paid since April, are also being summarily dismissed and replaced where possible by Serb workers. The Serbian police has subjected the population to systematic harassment and is increasingly trigger-happy. A chemical war of a kind is being conducted against the local population as hospitals and clinics are closed to Albanians seeking medical help.

In Belgrade, officials of the ruling party and the opposition speak openly and calmly of the coming war in Kosovo and of the desirability of killing tens of thousands of Albanians. The idea is that Alba-

Elites and counter-elites

THE "Balcerowicz Plan", the new Polish government's economic programme for a controlled return to capitalism, worked out under the eye of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, currently

enjoys the support of a mere 26% of the population¹, while 64% consider that the government has no economic programme, and does not know what to do.² Six months of the government's economic policy has seen a fall of industrial production by a third and a similar fall in the purchasing power of wages. At the same time mass unemployment has appeared.³

The united front preserved by the leaders from the Solidarity stable until May 1990, has collapsed. Solidarity's Union of Individual Farmers has called on the peasants to declare war on the government. On July 6, for the first time, the Prime Minister found himself in a minority in parliament — where the Citizens parliamentary group related to Solidarnosc has only 35% of the seats, owing to the Round Table compromise — when the deputies refused to fully endorse changes in the government.⁴ Thus, a year after the establishment of its first government with a non-Stalinist leadership since the war, Poland finds itself in a grave economic and political crisis, which will be at the centre of the debate in the presidential elections likely soon.

CYRIL SMUGA



Continued from previous page

nians, once brought to their senses, will meekly accept either a reduction in their status to that of second class citizens or the partitioning of Kosovo between Serbia and Albania. In the Serbian half, containing at least half-a-million Albanians, the "alien" population would either be expelled or assimilated by force.

The Albanian democratic opposition is well aware of these scenarios. Its adoption of the Gandhian tactic of peaceful civil resistance has earned it much respect in the country and abroad. In July the European Community and the US House of Representatives passed resolutions severely criticizing the conduct of the Serbian and Yugoslav governments in Kosovo.

The Croatian and Slovenian parliaments, especially the latter, have condemned the dissolution of the Kosovo assembly. In Kosovo itself, the growing lawlessness of the occupying power, the deliberate engineering of the economy's collapse and pressure from angry workers have pushed the Kosovo Alliance of Independent Trade Unions into calling a general strike from September 3.

Despite the fact that they face a state armed with the most sophisticated weapons of "riot control", the Kosovo Albanians have, it seems, taken up the challenge. They have accepted that they may have to die for their freedom, if necessary, while

hoping that domestic and foreign pressure will combine to prevent such a bloody outcome.

Growing resistance to Milosevic's plan

The Kosovo Albanians cannot stop the growing counter-revolution in Serbia on their own. To be sure, as in the past, the defence of national rights and sovereignty will play a crucial role in the struggle for democracy in Yugoslavia.

Non-Serb nationalities are today erecting a defensive ring around Belgrade which, in the last instance, only a military putsch can dismantle. Belgrade's intervention in Croatia misfired, however, precisely because the army drew back from starting a civil war.

The relatively moderate response of the Croatian government to the Knin incident, directed partly by wisdom and partly by necessity, has raised both its own standing and that of the republic's president Franjo Tudjman in the eyes of the Croatian population.

The previously suspicious opposition — in particular the left-leaning Croat intelligentsia — rallied to the government. Serb deputies in the Croatian parliament elected on the Communist Party ticket also stood by the Zagreb govern-

ment. Sympathy for Croatia's Serb minority grew as a result, preventing a complete Croat-Serb split.

Responses of this kind, however important they are in keeping the danger of civil war at bay, will be of limited import since national homogenization in other parts of Yugoslavia will feed the idea that the Serbs are a beleaguered nation.

This could deliver them straight into the hands of Milosevic and his gang. What is needed is a breach in Serbia itself. This is why — despite the intended electoral machinations of the SPS — the coming elections in Serbia will mark a crucial political date in Yugoslav history.

In the absence of an alternative, the Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic's newly formed Union of Reform Forces could emerge as a major challenger to Milosevic's SPS — provided that Belgrade can be prevented from unleashing civil war in the meantime.

It is becoming clear that an outline of a new Yugoslav settlement scrupulously respectful of national equality should be offered by anti-Milosevic forces in advance of the Serbian elections.

Their ability to do so will provide a critical test of Yugoslavia's emerging democracy. The alternatives are too dreadful to contemplate. ★

THE ROOTS of the crisis are to be found in the compromise between the post-state of emergency bureaucratic leadership and the Solidarnosc leadership. The deal was intended to ensure the preservation of the state apparatuses in the framework of the restoration of capitalism, and to avoid the danger that the dynamic of anti-bureaucratic mass mobilizations might lead to the appearance of an independent workers' leadership as had happened in 1980-81. The compromise enjoyed the passive support of the masses, who hoped that it would enable them to realize their democratic aspirations.

A situation of "dual power by proxy" was established. On the one side were the leaders of the social movement, aiming to get their own social base to pay the costs of capitalist restoration, on the other a battered bureaucratic leadership fearful that any new strike wave would finish them off for good. Self-interested imperialist support for the restorationist project and the benevolent neutrality of the Soviet leadership completed the picture, creating a double pressure, that of financial dependence on imperialism (a debt of \$40b) and political-military dependence on the Soviet Union.

Communist Party disappears

For this edifice to stay stable, the Solidarnosc leadership has to be able to keep the population obedient to the state and prevent strikes. The disappearance of the PUWP (Communist Party) — perceived by the masses as one of the guarantors of the compromise — and the collapse of the bureaucratic regimes in the surrounding countries, combined with the problems facing the Soviet leadership, have shaken this edifice. The social cost of the Balcerowicz Plan has reduced the social base of the regime, worsening the instability.

The reality of the Round Table compromise has thus at last begun to become apparent to the population — as an agreement between elites reached apart from the majority of the society and to its detriment. The poor showing of the candidates of Solidarnosc' Civic Committees during the May 27 local elections⁵ as well as the railway workers strike which paralyzed North Western Poland in May⁶ were the first signs of this new awareness.

The government has chosen to respond to the first signs of social mobilization — from the railway workers and the peasants — with contempt and threats. Police were sent to break the peasant blockade of the Gdansk-Warsaw road and then to evict peasants and deputies who were occupying the Ministry of Agriculture. This choice has provoked profound unease in Solidarnosc, a significant proportion of whose militants interpret it as a concession to the routed Stalinist bureaucracy.

Sensing the danger of an explosion of the union movement, Lech Walesa

stepped in. With the slogan "stability at any price" he opposed the road of "accelerated changes" aligning himself with the Centre Alliance, a populist, pro-capitalist grouping opposed to concessions to the bureaucracy. He tried at the same time to keep control of the civic committee movement that the Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, with the support of oppositional intellectuals such as Bronislaw Geremek, Adam Michnik and Jerzy Turowicz, had tried to turn into a governmental fan club, leading to a crisis of the politico/trade unionist Solidarnosc edifice. The governmental group replied to this threat by a big campaign accusing Walesa of being an autocrat and prospective dictator.

Privations with a meaning

Lech Walesa presented his ideas in a series of interviews: "The idea that a man who is on strike, but is ready to talk to the government, should be crushed and conquered is a bad one. You do not have the right to do that. You have to convince him, make him understand that the situation demands that he grit his teeth and work. But you also have to convince him that his effort and his privations have a meaning, that they are serving the country and will end up by bringing him wellbeing later on. You do not have the right to humiliate him — on the contrary, he must feel that he has won a victory."⁷

In an interview in Adam Michnik's daily, he reiterated this credo: "There is no hope of economic handouts, and in consequence it is necessary to guarantee to the society a large measure of participation in the exercise of power, and thus to ensure acceptance....But instead we have said 'keep quiet, because the best people are in charge, and wait.' Meanwhile explosive forces have accumulated owing to non-participation."⁸ He dotted the "i"s on July 8 in a speech to the assembly called by the union commission of the Gdansk naval shipyard: "If there is no communication of your great efforts to the society, then, even if you deal with a thousand things, one little puff from the miners or the peasants will chuck all your efforts into the dustbin....It is necessary to return to the enterprises and listen to what people are

saying, for their support is indispensable for these very difficult reforms".⁹

While Walesa has criticized the worst effects of the government's economic policies, he has not questioned the social and economic logic of the government's choices. On the contrary: "inflation and recession must be fought through the development of competition. And competition must be created through the granting of credit to the private enterprises, by speeded-up privatization, by de-monopolization and by restructuring....Let us get our economy into order by creating its natural basis — private enterprise....It is necessary to allow Western banks and firms to make real profits."¹⁰

The July economic programme of the Centre Alliance, which Walesa is supporting, only differs from that of the government in secondary details. It pronounces itself in favour of the introduction into Poland of the "West European capitalist model" and proposes a radical reduction in the transition period by privatization and "shock" de-monopolization. This requires not only the "invisible hand of the market" but also state intervention to accelerate the process, and in particular to liquidate the bureaucratic apparatus and change the personnel. The Centre Alliance is also proposing to free wages in the private sector and stabilize agricultural prices by a state buying policy.¹¹

The basis of the disagreements is thus the issue of the relation of the government with the masses on the one hand and with the old Communist nomenklatura on the other.

Maintaining the compromise

As opposed to the Centre Alliance, Tadeusz Mazowiecki is seeking to maintain the compromise with the old bureaucracy and stay clear of accelerations imposed by extra-parliamentary pressure. Ernest Skalski, a pro-government editorialist, summed up the fears aroused by Walesa's initiatives: "Lech has gained the support of the peasant militants and preserves the support of many regional Solidarnosc leaders. The former are calling into question the whole of the government's economic policy because in practise they are demanding that agriculture be

1. According to a CBOS poll in mid-July 1990 (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 27, 1990).

2. An OBOP poll on June 1990.

3. On August 15, 1990 there were 762,200 registered unemployed — about 6% of the non-agricultural labour force. The government has stated that there will be at least 1 million out of work by December 1990.

4. Tadeusz Mazowiecki presented the resignations of five ministers, all from the old nomenklatura. Parliament accepted the changes at the head of the Ministries of the Interior — where Krzysztof Kozlowski, a Catholic journalist tied to the ex-opposition replaced General Czeslaw Kiszczak, Jaruzelski's right hand man during the state of war; Transport — where a Solidarnosc militant Ewaryst Waligorski replaced a former member of the PUWP; and Defence — where Vice-Admiral Piotr Kolodziejczyk replaced another figure from the emergency period; General Florian

Siwicki. Parliament did not however accept the resignation of the Minister of Communications Marek Kucharski and did not accept the candidate put forward for the head of the Ministry of Agriculture, which remains unfilled.

5. Bronislaw Geremek, who leads the OKP's parliamentary fraction understands this perfectly well: "In the local elections we got 42%, but if the rate of abstentions (58%) is taken into account, we got less than 20%. Let's face facts; we are weak." (*Rzeczpospolita*, July 9, 1990.)

6. See IV 187.

7. Interviewed in *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, June 8, 1990.

8. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 20, 1990.

9. *Rzeczpospolita*, July 9, 1990.

10. *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, June 8, 1990.

11. *Rzeczpospolita*, July 16, 1990 and *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 23, 1990.

protected from the market economy. The regional leaderships, in an understandable reaction to the price rises, are *de facto* coming out in favour of the maintenance of subsidies, which are an essential element of the command economy....Walesa may one day find himself trapped between his own slogans in favour of speeding up changes, and especially economic changes, and the demands of his own social base."¹²

It was with the concern to keep the support of the old apparatus in case of an eventual confrontation with popular mobilizations in mind, that Mazowiecki presented his reshuffled government to parliament on July 6.

No policy of revenge

A short while before, he and other Solidarnosc leaders opposed to Walesa had met General Jaruzelski and his entourage. It would have been during this meeting that the green light was given for the replacement of the old regime's Interior Minister with one of Jaruzelski's associates. "We are firmly opposed to a policy of revenge," explained the Prime Minister to parliament. "We have created the chance for a peaceful transition to democracy, thanks to a compromise between those forces in Poland with pro-democracy aspirations and that part of the nation which, following on from our tragic fate, is more or less tied, whether by conviction or convenience, with the old order....The government will not deviate on the road to an inflation-free market economy....Any straying from this road... would deprive Poland of foreign aid and would remove any possibility of seeing our indebtedness fall — and we are on the right road to get this."¹³ Talking three weeks later to the heads of the Defence Ministry and the commanding officers of the army, Tadeusz Mazowiecki insisted once more on the element of continuity: "Poland needs a strong army....The state must have a strong support for its power....The army today has the chance to become the backbone of the state's stability."¹⁴

Having failed to transform the civic committees movement into a political party supporting the government, Walesa's opponents launched their own party, the Citizens' Movement for Democratic Action (ROAD).

An old Solidarnosc leader, Zbigniew Bujak, and one of the current leaders, Wladyslaw Frasyniuk,¹⁵ head this organization, within which are found the big names of the intellectual opposition of recent decades. The new grouping rejects the label "left-wing" which Walesa and the Centre Alliance have tried to stick on it¹⁶, preferring to locate themselves "to the West of the Centre". Presenting the organization, Frasyniuk explained to *Gazeta Wyborcza*: "Our immediate political aim is to speed up the presidential election, in which the

whole nation can choose their president....To demand a strong president is to bet on chaos and disorganization; we are betting on a strong government and a strong parliament."¹⁷ According to ROAD's number one propagandist, Adam Michnik: "the price rises and spectre of bankrupt enterprises are creating frustration. But I do not believe there is any other road for the Polish economy....Jaruzelski sees his role in contributing to the peaceful realization of the timescale of democratic changes....Nobody can say if the constitutional amendment proposed by ROAD will be voted through¹⁸....It appears doubtful to me that Jaruzelski will resign as president if the amendment is rejected. Will the supporters of speeded up change for the post of president then have recourse to other solutions? Will they support destabilization to impose this change?"¹⁹

The division that has appeared inside Solidarnosc has also shown that it is Tadeusz Mazowiecki who has the support of the West. At the height of the polemics, the president of the World Bank, Barber Conable, revealed that he wanted Western governments to reduce the Polish debt.²⁰ At the beginning of August, American president George Bush decided to invite General Jaruzelski to visit him in September 1990 — at just the moment when the Polish parliament was talking about sacking him.

Atmosphere of haste

The noisy battle of the elites has obscured the preparation of a fundamental change in the structure of the Polish economy. On July 13 in an atmosphere of haste, and ignoring the reservations of numerous sections of Solidarnosc, the parliament voted laws allowing the privatization of industry through by 328 votes to 2

(with 39 abstentions). On July 26, the Senate followed suit (60 votes to 7 with 2 abstentions). Jaruzelski signed the laws on July 27.

Privatization is to take place in two ways. Some enterprises will be transformed as a whole into share companies to be sold off by the state, others, especially small and medium enterprises, would be liquidated and sold either as a whole or in parts, even turned into the property of their employees. The workers would have one third of the seats in the controlling council of such a firm. Up to 20% of the shares could be sold at a reduced price to the enterprise workers or to peasants connected to it by cooperation agreements. All Polish citizens resident in the country will receive treasury bonds that they can use to buy shares in the privatized enterprises. It is also proposed that shares can be bought on credit or in the framework of leveraged buyouts.²¹ In the privatized enterprises the wage freeze will be lifted. The second letter of intent from the government to the IMF announces the privatization of at least 10 large and 200 to 300 small and medium sized enterprises before the end of the year as well as 70% of the retail sector.²²

Napoleonic analogies

In June, during a meeting with foreign investors, the industry minister, Tadeusz Syryjczyk, presented the government's difficulties in an imaginative way: "We have a problem like that faced by Napoleon. In France the revolution killed the aristocrats, but when it turned out that the state could not function without them, Napoleon began to create new ones. In Poland we have to create capitalists."²³ The process has already begun, in sub-legal fashion, through the growth of "nomenklaturist limited companies", formed by erstwhile Stalinists.²⁴

12. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 14, 1990.

13. *Rzeczpospolita*, July 7-8, 1990.

14. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 21-22, 1990. A few days later the press reported the destruction of the archives — lists of agents and offices, the Jewish file (a file on all persons with Jewish ancestry or a Jewish sounding name had been kept since 1945), files on the deportation of Ukrainians and so on. According to *Gazeta Wyborcza* (July 24, 1990), the destruction of compromising files is continuing.

15. Several of Solidarnosc' union commissions in big enterprises in Wroclaw not tied to the Centre Alliance have demanded Frasyniuk's resignation from his union post. Frasyniuk is accused of misusing his mandate for partisan ends.

16. Before the founding of ROAD Adam Michnik, one of its moving spirits, explained during a debate in the Citizens' Committee: "If I am the secular left and a crypto-communist, then you, my dear opponents, are pigs." Jacek Kuron stated: "I would like to be a man of the moderate left in a respectable capitalism. But we don't have such a capitalism, thus I want to take part in building it — which is certainly not a leftist programme."

17. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 6, 1990.

18. While the Centre Alliance deputies signed a motion for Jaruzelski's resignation, ROAD's deputies decided to put an amendment to the constitution in favour of a presidential election by direct suffrage, explaining that the election of a new president by the present parliament would contribute to "preserving the

communist structures" and would go against the desire for "acceleration".

19. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 6, 1990.

20. Conable writes: "The per capita national income of Poland is low, around \$1,500 — the same as Peru....Poland has to repay \$40b in debt — five times what it earns in exports; if the debt was repaid on schedule it would eat up 45% of export earnings....we are all interested in the success of the Polish reforms and must cooperate for that."

"The repayment and the effective use of credits will take years, the limitation of the weight of the debt on the economy needs only months." (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 3, 1990.)

21. In this framework, after the payment of the first installment of the credit, the enterprise becomes the buyer's property and the debt becomes the enterprise's debt.

22. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 16, 1990.

23. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 21, 1990.

24. The Parliament, after having voted through a law radically opposed to enterprises of this type on the initiative of deputies connected with the unions in February, finally amended it on June 21 on the initiative of the Senate. The new law only allows the liquidation of these flagrant cases of abuse of social wealth when a complaint is made and the final decision is to be made by a tribunal. Private property, however come by, must be protected! It should also be noted that reports are starting to appear in the press about the misuse of public positions by personalities near to the government.

Despite the fact that these changes got overwhelming support in parliament, they still met with hostility from workers. The notion of privatization has had widespread support amongst the working class, owing to the evident need for investment in the enterprises, where the stock of machinery is only being used at 70% of capacity — and given the lack of capital in Poland, this investment must come from abroad. Furthermore the workers believed that privatization meant that they would come into their property — and thus take control — of the enterprises. Thus their protests were not directed against the idea of privatization, but against the fact that the law leaves no place for control of the enterprises by the workers.

Block dividend payments

Thus, during a meeting of representatives from several dozen self-management councils held in Gdansk on July 27, the proposal was made to block the payment of dividends to the state if the government refused to modify the texts they had adopted. The militants demanded that the watchdog councils of the share companies should be entirely made up of elected workers, and employees should be guaranteed 51% of the shares.

The Union for Wage-Earners Ownership, which brings together Solidarnosc trade union organizations in 96 enterprises has for its part decided to oppose the new law, demanding that all employees should be shareholders.

Finally at the first national meeting of the Network of Union Commissions in the big enterprises on August 24²⁵, Solidarnosc-supported deputies got a rough ride: "The deputies who started out in Solidarnosc have nothing in common with the union. The union is not useful either to the government or the Civic Parliamentary Group (OKP)" explained one of the deputies from the (small) Group in Defence of the Interests of the Workers created within the OKP in Spring. "The OKP is dominated by the neo-liberals who treat the workers like hired hands." The Network also came out for the modification of the privatization laws and has decided to present its own candidates at the next parliamentary elections, in order to create a new pro-union pressure group in the parliament.

These groups seeking to formulate a line in defence of the workers interests are as yet weak and their programmes unclear. But the public explosion of differences inside the Solidarnosc elites and the implicit presidential campaigning have broken the previous unanimity. These first attempts to organize opposition to the privatization laws at the trade union level are a sign of the opening up. ★

25. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 27, 1990. A similar initiative played a big role in getting Solidarnosc to adopt the idea of self-management in 1981. The new Network refers to this precedent.

A continent for sale

A FREE TRADE ZONE from the port of Anchorage (Alaska) to Tierra del Fuego¹. This was the objective set out by United States' President George Bush on June 27 when he launched his "Latin American Initiative Plan". In exchange, the US government would promote the restructuring or reduction of the Latin American debt, which, according to Bush himself, now stands at \$12,000b. This plan is in the spirit of Bush' previous statement that "Latin American needs business, not aid."

ALFONSO MORO

THE PLAN has three main elements: the reduction or restructuring of the debt; the creation of a "Fund for the Americas" of \$300m per annum, of which the US would provide \$100m; and US government support in GATT negotiations over the reduction of import taxes on products from Latin America and the Caribbean².

In return the region's governments would undertake to: draw up or reinforce plans for liberalizing their foreign trade and their rules concerning foreign investments; implement "debt for equity" and "debt for nature" swaps; give concrete undertakings for steps towards the creation of an integrated free trade zone on a continental scale; negotiate and agree to the preliminary accords of the IMF and World Bank on the various countries' adjustment programmes; and conduct debt negotiations with the US country by country.

All that for \$100m! Latin America and the Caribbean seem to be going cheap these days. There has been a stampede of declarations and compromises from the Latin American governments to see who can make the most concessions in the shortest space of time.

Why now? The reasons are complex. The first reason is to do with the process of commercial and financial integration in Western Europe, leading up to 1992. This "Europe without frontiers" poses a serious challenge to North American imperialism, not only in relation to the US' loss of competitiveness, but also because European integration means the start of a new phase of inter-imperialist conflicts. Eastern Europe may offer a field for this struggle over the lion's

share³.

The United States is already showing the first signs of recession, with an over-production of commodities and over-accumulation of capital. How better to dispel this nightmare than to increase the sale of surplus goods to Latin America?

On the other hand the US invasion of Panama caused some friction between Washington and some Latin American heads of state⁴. The welcome these same heads of state have given the Initiative for the Americas contain the reassuring message that, nonetheless, business is business.

Last but not least is the fact that, as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) puts it: "...after nine years of brave efforts to overcome the crisis, in 1989 most Latin American and Caribbean countries have reached the limit of their ability to make external adjustments with their existing productive structures."⁵ In other words, the decade of austerity to which the peoples of these regions have been subjected according to IMF diktats, has not got the region out of its deep and prolonged crisis. The results of this decade have been not only the deterioration of all social indicators, but also the growing exasperation of the population with governmental promises, and a reappearance of large-scale social movements.

Commercial and political integration

Since the explosion of the debt crisis in 1982 the Latin American governments have been proceeding towards increasing commercial and political integration with the US. The Bush plan merely formalizes the rules. As a result of the debt and a whole variety of neo-liberal economic measures, the countries of Latin America are undergoing significant limitations of their national sovereignty. This is occurring not only on the strictly economic level — with the generalized dollarization — but also, and most fundamentally, on the

1. *International Herald Tribune*, June 29, 1990.

2. General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). At the round table in Uruguay it was clear that there was a conflict between the United States and the European Community (EC) on the former's plans for the "freeing" of agricultural prices. The US is hoping to profit from its advances in the field of bio-technology and get into the European market.

3. In 1988 the Federal Republic of Germany was the world's biggest exporter, followed by the USA and Japan. At the same time the joint exports of four EC countries — the FRG, the UK, Italy and France — made up 27% of world trade, compared to 11% for the United States. (see *L'évolution du commerce international; Problèmes économiques*, no. 3150, November 1989).

4. The chancellors of Mexico and Venezuela, during a meeting with their EC counterparts, accused the US of violating international law by invading Panama (*El Pais*, April 11, 1990).

5. CEPAL: *Balance Preliminar de la Economía Latinoamericana en 1989. Comercio Exterior*, México, February 1990.

political level, with the IMF playing a key role in the drawing up, application and supervision of austerity plans.

Latin American governments form a queue

With Mexico at their head⁶, most of the governments have applied programmes liberalizing foreign trade, as Bush has wanted. On a visit to Washington, the Social Democrat president of Ecuador, Rodrigo Borja, fresh from his defeat in the legislative elections, was the first to announce that he had reached an agreement with Bush for his country to take part in the Initiative.⁷ Borja was followed by the presidents of Argentina and Brazil, Menem and Collor, who agreed to the creation of a joint commission to discuss with Washington the "establishment of a free trade zone." Bolivia and Colombia supported this idea, and after them the governments of Chile, Uruguay and all the Central American governments.⁸ Furthermore the Group of Seven richest countries have also implicitly given the scheme their blessing.⁹

Until now, the reality behind the offers of the imperialists and the Latin American bourgeoisie to "come into the modern age" has been the modernization of poverty and a wave of privatizations in which the national wealth has been sold off to foreign capital. To give just some examples of recent privatizations: in Mexico, this year alone, the telephones and banks; the main airline in Venezuela; in Honduras the electricity and water companies; in Bolivia the Lloy Aero Boliviano airline, the railways and some mines; the Aerolíneas Argentinas airline, the railways, roads and oil fields in Argentina; Brazil has announced for November — before the elections — the sale of steel and petrochemical enterprises and industrial equipment factories.

Bush and his acolytes talk about the new free trade zone coming into being in between two and four years. But time is not the key problem. Given their situation as dependent countries, there is no possibility that Latin America can create a real free trade zone with the US on an equal basis.

Tariff barriers will come down on the grounds that these have contributed to the decline in labour productivity and that there no longer remains any reason to maintain the differences between the imperialist and under-developed countries. There is a vision of a "dual world" in all countries — ultra developed zones, side by side with regions of extreme deprivation.

But in reality in Latin America the norms of work will be under the control of the multinationals, given the unequal starting point for this "equal exchange". It is here that all the weaknesses in, and dangers of, the plan are to be found. Weaknesses, in that all the region's economic,

social and political instability will be working against the plan, dangers, in that there is no effective and coordinated response from the Latin American peoples to this new offensive.

This means that the continent may have to absorb incalculable and irreversible costs. The CEPAL report that we quoted earlier indicates that the average Gross National Product per head in Latin America has fallen to the level of 1977-78, whilst average inflation has reached an unprecedented 1,000%. Three additional factors should be added: in the same year the region's external debt reached \$416b, three of the main countries with the biggest debts, Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela, stopped paying their debt at the same time, and the region transferred \$25b in services on the debt. This has to be added to the \$200b paid in the course of the decade. The crumbs being offered by Bush will not get these countries out of their crisis.

Two reports from institutions that nobody could accuse of being left-wing reveal the effects of the adjustment measures carried out at the behest of the IMF and repeated by Bush. Surveying ten Latin American countries, CEPAL concluded that "whilst in 1970 some 112 million people in Latin America lived in poverty, the figure for 1989 was 183 million (44% of the population). Of these 88 million are destitute, 28 million more than in 1970".¹⁰ Destitute means, according to World Bank president Barber B. Conable, that these people "do not have \$370 per year."¹¹ That is, there are 88 million people who do not have \$1 a day.

No reduction in poverty foreseen

Will "trade, not aid", alleviate this situation? Certainly not before the end of the century. "Although one can predict improvements in average per capita income in all regions, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa will probably not attain their full long-term growth potential in this time. The reduction in debt planned for by Brady will allow Latin America to achieve a growth rate per inhabitant of 2.3% (it was 3.4% between 1965 and 1980). If this projection is correct, the poor population in Latin America will not decrease during the decade."¹²

However, although the debt reductions involved in the Initiative will probably not reduce poverty, they, plus the \$100m tip,¹³ are enough to buy Latin America.

What can stop the Bush plan? The "San Paolo declaration"¹³ issued by a meeting of Latin American leftwing parties in July, takes a clear position against this new United States offensive. The signatories of this text, along with a wide range of democratic forces in the region now face the task of taking practical measures to construct the means to resist.

Even in the context of the collapse of

the "Socialist camp" and the electoral defeat of the Nicaraguan FSLN, those forces and organizations which continue to believe that the only real way out for the exploited peoples is an egalitarian and democratic system — real socialism — can take advantage of the increasing wave of mobilizations and actions throughout the continent, to put a stop to the imperialist pillage.

Such mobilizations have been developing in every country in Latin America, against the austerity plans and those who are implementing them.

New wave of workers' struggles

In Argentina almost 900,000 workers went on strike in July to reject the policies of the weak Menem government. Menem, who had an 80% popularity rating when he came to power, now has 41%. In Uruguay the Workers' Intersyndical (PIT-CNT) carried out its fourth general strike against the Lacalle government in June. Agricultural workers and healthworkers have been striking in Honduras, where the government used troops to put an end to the Tela Railroad strike. At the start of July a massive mobilization in defence of the conquests of the Sandinista revolution took place in Nicaragua. A third general strike against the Borja government is being prepared in Ecuador under the auspices of the United Workers Front. In Brazil, the number of workers on strike in June was up on the previous year, in its turn considered by the Ministry of Labour to have seen the largest number of strikes since 1964. Some 1.5 million people have taken part in strikes, without counting the Ford workers of San Bernardo del Campo.¹⁴ On August 1 a strike of the internal revenue oilfield workers (YPPB) in Bolivia was launched to protest against privatization. There have been strikes in Peru against Fujimori's austerity plan and so on.

On this evidence, the peoples of Latin America do not seem to have noticed the "end of history" and seem indisposed to sell their future to the United States for \$100m. ★

6. The secret talks between the US and Mexican governments were revealed in March 1990 by the North American press. See *Proceso* número 700, Mexico, April 1990.

7. In the elections on June 17, 1990, Borja's ruling Democratic Left Party got less than half of its previous seats in the Chamber of Deputies, going from 30 to 14 deputies. See *Informe Latinoamericano*, London, July 19, 1990.

8. See *Pensamiento Propio*, nos. 27, 29, 31, Nicaragua, July 1990.

9. *Le Monde*, July 9, 1990.

10. CEPAL: "Magnitud de la Pobreza en América Latina en los ochenta", Chile, July 1990.

11. World Bank: "Poverty", Paris, June 1990.

12. *Ibid.*

13. See the article by Sergio Rodríguez in *IV* 1990.

14. The Ford strike in Brazil ended on July 30 after 50 days. The strikers accepted a 50% pay rise and the reinstatement of 80 sacked workers.

New debates inside Sandinista front

THIS summer, a few months after the defeat of the Sandinistas (FSLN) in the Nicaraguan elections in February, the victorious UNO government's attacks on the gains of the revolution ran up against a massive popular movement. The strait-jacket into which the civil war had pressed Nicaraguan political life has burst asunder. With the disarmament of most of the Contra rebels and UNO's aggressive policies, class struggle is back on the agenda.

ERIC TOUSSAINT

THE confrontation was not sought by the FSLN: it was provoked by the bourgeoisie which, despite differences between so-called moderates (Chamorro, Lacayo, Cesaret) and the hardliners around Vice-President Godoy, is united in its desire to reverse the changes wrought during the period when the FSLN was in power. Once the wave of protests had started, the Sandinista leadership, under pressure from below, became more and more involved in the struggle.

At the same time, despite the activism on the ground of a part of its social base, sharp debates continue inside the FSLN and make it unable to arrive at a strategy for dealing with the new situation and seeing the way to a return to power. The Sandinistas' international isolation — the product of the counter-revolutionary policies of both international social democracy and the Soviet bureaucracy — counterbalances the revival of popular struggles. Their situation is not helped by the fact that the FSLN's leadership continues to adhere to a line close to that of 1988.

Until the elections the main issue was the struggle against the military aggression. The FSLN believed that, in order to fight this aggression, it was necessary to find a modus vivendi with all sectors of the bourgeoisie ready to keep production going. This meant that the FSLN did everything possible to avoid strikes that might inconvenience "patriotic entrepreneurs". In June 1988, in the same perspective, the Sandinistas decided to apply IMF-style austerity policies, which meant increasing hardship for the social base of the revolution. The working class, including industrial workers, agricultural workers, teachers, health workers and public sector white-collar workers, as well as the small owners, were expected to tighten their belts in the interests of national unity, while the bourgeoisie continued to organize the flight of capital.

This policy aroused a malaise in the Sandinista ranks, even if there was no

open crisis — since most of the militants took into account the war situation, the US economic blockade, the absence of significant lines of credit from Europe and the reduction in aid from the "socialist camp".

Ostentatious leaders resented

The discontent then turned against the ostentation of a number of Sandinista cadres in the state apparatus, the vertical functioning of the Front and its relations with the mass organizations, the sharply increasing wage differentials, and the absence of an adequate social cushion against the effects of the economic austerity measures at a time when the people were continuing to give their quota in blood to defend the revolution.

According to Orlando Nuñez (*Barricada*, June 14, 1990): "The people were paying in human lives, while the negotiators contributed signatures to agreements — with no end in sight."

Indeed, on the eve of the elections, pressure was coming from some rank-and-file militants for the calling of the first congress of the FSLN. In fact, it was only after the disarming of the Contras on June 10 that the Sandinista Assembly, on a proposal from the National Leadership, decided to call the congress for February 1991. The Assembly adopted an important document to launch the debate which takes up, to use the Front's own terms: "in a very detailed way the mistakes in the political work of the FSLN, its style of leadership, the weakening of its links with the masses, the question mark over the exemplary character of certain Sandinista cadres and militants, and the opening of a critical discussion inside the FSLN" (*Barricada*, June 26, 1990).

This text¹, besides a long self-critical balance-sheet of the electoral defeat, addresses the question of the period ahead. There is no mention of a social pact, although this is not explicitly ruled out either. The objective set out in the text is "to reject all attempts to call into question the conquests of the revolution — the agricultural reform, the nationalization of natural resources, of the national bank and of foreign trade, the active role of the state in production and development² and the participation of workers in the running of the economy."

The question of the recapture of governmental power is posed cautiously, in a perspective that is not purely electoral: "The FSLN aims to regain power by the electoral road in 1996. It must also consider different options, depending on circumstances, for assuming the government before that date, within a constitutional framework." On the forms of

1. The text was published in *Barricada*, June 26, 27, 28 and 29, 1990.

2. The state sector in industrial production, agriculture and distribution known as the Space of People's Property (APP) is not mentioned as such, suggesting that some sectors of the APP are negotiable, probably excepting agriculture.



struggle: "Our main form of struggle will be the direct action of the masses and the politico-ideological struggle....The FSLN will preserve its political independence....Each body, cadre and militant must take their place in the front-rank of the popular struggles."

This text, however, is only the start of the debate. One of the main discussions is about the necessity for a social pact between the FSLN and the modernizing sectors of the bourgeoisie. After the UNO victory, the FSLN negotiated with the victors an agreement on the transfer of power. It had a number of strong cards in its hands. It was the largest party in parliament, with 40% of the vote, and it controls the Sandinista police and armed forces. The negotiations resulted in a curious situation — the constitutional army remains under the FSLN's control at the level of the command and the officer corps. The UNO president on the other hand is the supreme commander, but does not have any absolutely guarantee that her orders will be carried out.

Hopes for deal with Chamorro

At the time a discussion developed in the Front on the possibility of arriving at a national accord in which UNO would agree not to call into question the main revolutionary measures, and in exchange for this, the FSLN would agree not to destabilize the government. There were big expectations about such an agreement being reached in some quarters in the FSLN, including in its leadership.

Then one of the nine members of the national leadership, Victor Tirado Lopez, in an interview published on March 20, 1990, announced the end of the cycle of anti-imperialist revolutions in Latin America, and stated his retrospective belief that the FSLN had been wrong to push ahead with over-rapid social transformations.³ This declaration shocked the Sandinista base. Some of the leaders changed their line of fire: "The setbacks suffered by socialism for structural reasons in Eastern Europe, and also our experiences, do not at all mean the end of the perspective of anti-imperialist struggle" (Bayardo Arce in *Barricada* March 29, 1990).

Nonetheless some of the Sandinista leadership have remained firm on the need to seek a national agreement with the bourgeoisie and with the moderate tendency in UNO, which includes the president and the executive in the National Assembly. Martinez Cuenca, ex-Sandinista minister and one of those responsible for the monetarist-style plan of 1988/89 wrote in *Barricada* on June 16, 1990: "It is clear that for the so-called modernizing bourgeoisie, the rout of the [armed] counter-revolution allows it to govern, but it is also true that this rout offers advantages to the people, allowing

it to work for the improvement of its living conditions; these modernizing sectors continue to understand the need to avoid revanchism against what the people of the town and countryside have managed to construct over the past ten years."

Cuenca attributes to the modernizing sectors a power over the bourgeoisie as a whole that it does not have. He argues from the assumption that the freedom to organize and struggle are conquered once for all time, and believes that alternations of power can take place in the way they do in Western bourgeois democracy. Similar statements have been made by other Sandinista leaders such as Rafael Solis, Carlos Tunnerman and Joaquín Cuadra. The latter has envisaged the conclusion of a social pact of the Spanish type, whereby the transition from the Francoist dictatorship to the constitutional monarchy was carried out non-violently (*Barricada*, August 3-4, 1990).

The impact of defeat

These positions are criticized in the columns of the press and in the Sandinista assemblies. One of the strongest critiques is provided by Pedro Rodriguez: "history teaches us above all with respect to the spectacular events that we have lived through, that when the revolutionary movement suffers a defeat that seems decisive, and when capitalism seems to be in an ascendant phase, it is normal for voices to be raised in the revolutionary camp saying that it is senseless to attempt to jump over stages and launch into premature social revolutions. Explaining that it is necessary to leave the field open to capitalism to develop, these same comrades think that in the present conditions, revolutionaries can do nothing more than fight for the "least wild" capitalism....But can capitalism develop in a "non-wild" form in Nicaragua? Is a social democratic capitalism possible here?"

"Yes. On condition that the new regime obtains each year a sum of around \$800m to \$1,200m. Otherwise it will be obliged to accept savage recipes along the lines suggested by the COSEP (employers' organization) plan, a perfect example of backward, primitive, troglodyte, even 'wild' capitalism.

"In the absence of foreign subsidies, capitalism in our country — and this is not a question of bad faith or cruelty, but of necessity — must develop in a wild fashion. Such is primitive accumulation.

"Some of our comrades who — with the best intentions in the world — dream of a social democratic capitalism, are only reinforcing the illusions and demobilization of the masses, instead of preparing for the ferocious struggles that are approaching." (*Neuvo Diario*, May 23-24, 1990).

For his part, Orlando Nuñez, a member of the Sandinista Assembly, expressed his opposition to the search for a social

pact: "All this talk of concrete proposals for working together means nothing but playing the bourgeoisie's game and aiding its counter-revolutionary project." (*Barricada*, July 14, 1990) He makes it clear in what context "working together" could be justifiable: "These agreements [the Sapoa accords and the handover agreement] were signed in the context of the military and economic pressure of American imperialism. For the Sandinistas and the revolutionaries, these agreements were justified by the need to defend the revolution in the face of a force that had vastly superior means from any point of view. For the gringos and the national bourgeoisie and its parties this "working together" was all about getting concessions to weaken the revolution."

Alliance of popular forces

As an alternative to the line of social pacts, Nuñez advances the notion of an alliance of the popular classes. Against the "reactionary and counter-revolutionary alliance between the modern and neo-liberal sectors of big capital and the Catholic Church" it is necessary to construct "a revolutionary alliance between the working class and urban elements of the Sandinista forces on the one hand, and the peasants, especially those peasants who took part in the Contra "National Resistance'."

In his reply to Nuñez, Martinez Cuenca described the former's arguments as "demagogic" and writes that "his arguments are more like something from May 1968 than an attempt to address the dramatic and difficult process of constructing democracy in Nicaragua in the 1980s and 1990s." (*Barricada*, June 16, 1990). Nonetheless, it is clear that it is Nuñez who expressed the sentiments of the majority of Sandinista militants and cadres engaged in a fierce struggle with the government. This is certainly the impression that was given by the Sandinista Assembly of June 16-17, 1990.

Beside the ideological debate, the impossibility of reaching a social pact, or at least one that does not involve capitulation on the Sandinista side, is becoming ever more clear in the class struggle on the ground. The failure of the government to carry out the agreements that were reached after the strikes of May and July 1990 are a clear sign that the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie has set itself the aim of turning the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas into a rout of the revolution. It intends to fundamentally change the balance of forces between capital and labour, by inflicting a social defeat on the working class and its allies. ★

3. The position of the Fourth International on these matters can be found in the resolution of its International Executive Committee, published in *International Marxist Review*, Summer 1990.

Quebec challenges Canadian Federation

MORE THAN 200,000 people came into the streets of Montreal on June 24, the Quebec national holiday. Counting the display in the evening, more than 500,000 people were involved during the day. Opinion polls had already indicated before the collapse the same weekend of the Lake Meech accords, which had attempted to reintegrate Quebec into the Canadian federation, that support for Quebec's sovereignty stood at between 60% and 70%.

RONALD CAMERON

THE road to and from Lake Meech started after 1982, when, at the time of Trudeau's Liberal government, the Canadian state "repatriated" its constitution from the hands of the British Queen. This was Trudeau's answer to the 1980 sovereignty referendum of the then Prime Minister of Quebec, Rene Levesque. The provincial Parti Quebecois government headed by Levesque refused to endorse Trudeau's unilateral reform. Since then Quebec has technically not been part of Canada.

The new attempt to reach a constitutional agreement was put forward at Lake Meech in 1987 by the Prime Ministers of the 10 provinces on the initiative of Trudeau's Conservative successor, Brian Mulroney. Despite the fact that it was rejected by the majority of worker and national organizations in Quebec, this accord became the rallying point of the autonomist struggle, which the Liberal Prime Minister of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, wanted to win, evidently in alliance with Mulroney.

In fact, these accords gave Quebec no more areas of control than had been recognized in similar agreements over the previous ten years. The crowning point of the accord was a clause formally recognizing



Quebec as a distinct society; the agreement was careful however to avoid granting the right to self-determination. Some left Canadian nationalist currents, while evading the issue of the distinct society clause, emphasized the rights of women, Amerindians and individuals in order to reject these accords and ride out the wave of chauvinism with regard to Quebec in Canada's anglophone population.

Some more pragmatic political personalities, of the school of ex-PM Trudeau, envisaged the need for an increased centralization of the federal state at the expense of Quebec national rights.

A constitutional reform, such as Lake Meech, demands a consensus by the legislative assemblies of the ten provinces and the federal parliament, three years after the signing of the accords. This period ended on June 23, 1990, the eve of Quebec's national day.

Surreal atmosphere at Lake Meech

Intensive week-long secret negotiations took place in what even the Prime Ministers described as a surreal atmosphere. These worthies were already on the verge of walking out when an Amerindian provincial deputy from Manitoba made use of procedures to prevent the legislative assembly in that province from ratifying the accords. The house of cards collapsed.

The failure at Lake Meech marks the start of a profound crisis of the Canadian state. This crisis of unity, of legitimacy and federalism, is expressed first of all

through the inability to carry out constitutional reforms, as has been shown by the Oka crisis with the Amerindians (see accompanying article). The federal government cannot give concessions to national or territorial demands, since any concession tends to place its own legitimacy in question. Canadian politics will be bogged down in regional rivalries aggravated by economic slowdown.

The crisis also finds expression in defections from the federal Liberal and Conservative parties. Brian Mulroney has lost his main lieutenant in Quebec, Lucien Bouchard, who has formed a Quebecois bloc of defector deputies in the federal parliament.

This bloc got trade unionist Gilles Duceppe elected in a by-election in Montreal with 66% of the vote, leaving the federal parties to share out 30%. Mulroney's candidate got 3%. The aim of the Bloc Quebecois is to defend Quebec's interests in Ottawa, despite Bouchard and co's stated support for Mulroney's overall policies.

The rejection of the Lake Meech accords came as a shock in Quebec. The post-referendum trauma after 1980, the return to private life and scepticism about collective action are all things of the past. Quebecois sovereignty is possible again. But there is a battle underway to define the precise road to follow to realize aspirations for self-determination.

Basically, the bourgeois political forces in Quebec are trying to create a relation of forces to "negotiate" sovereignty with the federation, whether this is a part of, or separate from, Canada or free exchange with the US.

Robert Bourassa's project is to find the weakest possible variant of this perspective and to channel national sentiment in a way that will not involve a break with the

federal state or threaten the stability of the present socio-economic system. The impression of making gains will camouflage the fact that the basic instruments of the Canadian state remain.

He wants to set up a parliamentary commission that can bring together representatives of the Quebecois establishment, entrepreneurs, financiers and political figures such as Bouchard and the leaders of the Parti Quebecois (PQ). This commission would suggest a constitutional line of action for Quebec from now until next spring.

For Lucien Bouchard, this relationship of forces demands that all socio-political forces in Quebec fall in behind the banner of sovereignty/association. His group in the federal assembly is meant to serve as a transmission belt for this project.

The PQ, meanwhile, finds its projects threatened. After the collapse of the party's electoral base after 1980, Jacques Parizeau took over from Levesque's successor, Pierre-Marc Johnson. Parizeau came to power criticizing Johnson for diluting the PQ's stand for independence. Today Parizeau wants to see a pro-sovereignty leadership without sacrificing the PQ's respectable image, by participating in the national unity movement. His assent to the use of the Canadian army against the armed Amerindian group, the Warriors, is the clearest proof of this.

Sovereignty and national liberation

The thinking in these circles is that the establishment of a strong pro-nationalist relationship of forces will give these political forces a valuable means of influence at the federal level, enabling the realization of sovereignty without turmoil. In terms of such a strategy, the establishment of a sovereign Quebec does not imply the national liberation of the Quebecois people. The idea is to reinforce Quebec's position within North American capitalism. The free trade agreement with the US, adopted last year by the federal parliament, has the unanimous support of the Quebecois political leaders, including Bourassa, Parizeau and Bouchard.

In reality, however, the dismantling of the Canadian state requires a clear and definitive break. The other options will lead back into the shifting sands of negotiations over a new statute. A unilateral declaration of independence is the only way for Quebec to enter onto the path to its liberation. Lithuania is already being cited as an example and a warning, although the pro-federalist forces are sure to point up the differences between Quebec and the Baltic States. Finally, complete independence raises the question of the social nature of a sovereign Quebec.

In May and June two union confederations in Quebec, the Teachers Federation (CEQ) and the National Confederation of Trade Unions (CSN), adopted the per-

spective of independence for Quebec. Simply giving form to a widespread sentiment among the unions' membership, these resolutions were adopted almost without debate. This may seem surprising given that these same organizations refused to take a clear position on the 1980 referendum. But times have changed.

With its explicit support for the PQ and with its overall social-democratic tradition in electoral terms, the position of the Federation of Quebec Workers (FTQ), affiliated to the Canadian Labor Congress (CTC) may seem more pro-independence. However, although the FTQ came out for a "yes" vote in the referendum, its positions remain compatible with a new statute negotiated within the Canadian framework.

The positions of the three union federations are important milestones in the development of an independent workers' movement, whose absence weighs heavily in Quebec. The unions are steering clear of partisan political action, but after taking these pro-independence positions, the question of a political alternative is on the table.

Union support for bourgeois candidacy

The CSN's Gilles Duceppe stood on Bouchard's Bloc Quebecois ticket in a by-election on August 12. The union centrals gave their support to Duceppe's candidacy, which thus enjoyed a very wide political base. It included youth from the federal Liberal Party breaking with a centralist concept of the federation, the local deputies from the provincial Liberal Party as well as city councillors, the official support of the PQ, different nationalist groups and the New Democratic Party of Quebec (NPD-Q), a formation consisting of Quebecois Socialists and Democrats who had split from the federal NPD. Nonetheless, the union movement cannot count on the leaders of the national movement to promote its social goals.

While Bouchard's group does not have party discipline he himself has supported Mulroney over such matters as the recriminalization of abortion, the introduction of the indirect Tax on Products and Services (TPS), and the trade agreement with the Americans. The stand taken by the union centrals provides a starting point for a discussion on an alternative to Bouchard's line. There is a long way to go.

To advance towards a political alternative, the union movement must start to challenge the total control by the bourgeois political parties over the national struggle. The unions have the possibility to increase their weight in the national movement. But it remains the case that the workers' movement cannot fully take the lead in the national struggle without its own independent political party. ★

Native Americans confront the state

IN SCENES horribly reminiscent of the massacres of native peoples by white armies in the 19th century, the Canadian armed forces employed more than 3,000 soldiers and over 350 armored vehicles in early September to occupy the whole of the Mohawk reserve of Kahnawake on the south bank of the St. Lawrence river, less than ten kilometers from Montreal. They also surrounded the last twenty armed resisters and a hundred other Native Americans on the Mohawk reserve of Kanésatake, 20 kilometers north west of Montreal.

MICHEL LAFITTE

THE ONLY Mohawk territories that are not occupied either by the Sureté de Québec (SQ — the Quebecois police force) or the Canadian army are the hunting grounds of Donnacona, 50 kilometers north of Montreal. But 95% of the Mohawks of Québec² live in the occupied areas.

The current crisis is only the culmination of several centuries of attempted genocide by all the regimes of European origin in the Americas, and of active or passive resistance from the native peoples.

For several years, the Conservative federal government of Brian Mulroney has been slashing public expenditure. Native peoples have been among the foremost victims of this policy — cuts in subsidies for health and social welfare, reduction of the personnel of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, cuts in the money

allocated to post secondary education for native peoples, and so on. The response of the native peoples has been very varied, ranging from rallies and demonstrations to occupations and lawsuits.

The question of land rights also remains very central to the concerns of native peoples. The events of this summer were sparked off by a police attack on July 11 on a barricade erected by Mohawks on the reserve at Kanesatake. The thousand Mohawks of the area were attempting to stop the municipality of Oka from transferring land that they have claimed for over 150 years to a private golf club. The historic burial ground of the reserve, as well as the only virgin pine forest to survive in the region, are also found on these lands. No level of government (municipal, provincial or federal) had agreed to negotiate. Only some ecologists, concerned about the forest, had given their support to the Mohawks. It seemed to be a minor conflict. But small conflicts become big when they take on the character of a symbolic and exemplary struggle.

On July 10, the mayor of Oka asked the SQ to implement a judicial injunction from the Superior Court of Quebec instructing the Mohawks to dismantle their barricades on the roads and railways which cross the reserve and the municipality of Oka. The Mohawk community strengthened the barricades and about 15 armed members of the paramilitary group, the Warriors Society of the Mohawk Nation, previously absent from the reserve, joined the community.

On July 11, over 100 SQ agents attacked the barricades using heavy assault rifles, concussion grenades and tear gas. In the shooting that followed, an SQ corporal was killed, in circumstances which remain unclear. The SQ, which has become accustomed over the past ten years to brutalizing native peoples, encircled the reserve and stopped the entry of provisions and medicines.

In solidarity, members of the community of Kahnawake, protected by armed warriors, established barricades around the reserve to the south west of Montreal and cut all access to the Mercier bridge across the St. Lawrence river. They threatened to blow up this bridge (one of five which give access to Montreal from the south bank) if the SQ attacked the Kanesatake community again. The SQ immediately encircled the Kahnawake reserve with their own barricades, depriving the 7,000 permanent inhabitants of the reserve of supplies and medicine. Some

2,000 armed policemen surrounded the two reserves until the entry into action of the Canadian armed forces on August 29.

On July 12, the minister of Indian Affairs in Quebec, John Ciaccia, agreed to negotiate at Kanesatake. The subsequent negotiations have been disrupted by the repeated refusal of the provincial government and, later, the federal government, to discuss any thing other than the



lifting of the barricades and the unconditional surrender of the armed natives. The federal government offered to buy the lands of the Oka golf club, but this was to be done with funds already allocated for the reserve.

Propaganda campaign and racist mobs

The mass media exploded in denunciation of the Mohawk "terrorists". The general sympathy among the Quebecois population for the Mohawks began to erode under the tide of anti-Mohawk declarations coming from all the bourgeois politicians and virtually all the media. A phenomenon new to Quebec emerged — angry racist mobs, led to a large extent by former policemen of the SQ and heavily

infiltrated by previously marginal far right groups. But it was the "anti-terrorist" declarations of Mulroney and Quebec premier Robert Bourassa which legitimized the racist mobilizations.

As for the leader of the Parti Quebecois (the main nationalist party in Quebec), Jacques Parizeau, his denunciation of the "weakness" of the Bourassa government has only opened the road to the xenophobic nationalist sects.

The frustrations of pro-independence Quebecois have thus been channelled into traditional ultra-Catholic and ultra-anglophobe themes. Slogans have appeared against "the new Anglo-Iroquois alliance"³.

The roots of the current crisis can be found in the history of the native nations and their relations with white Canada.

Nobody knows the size of the native population of North America before the first European colonists arrived at the beginning of the 17th century. One thing is certain — it was very much bigger than traditional white historiography has maintained. Some scholars estimate that

there were at least a million people speaking Iroquoian (farmers, unlike many other native Americans who were nomadic hunters) before the arrival of diseases transmitted by the Europeans. The demographic and social impact of the epidemics which raged in the course of the 16th century was enormous.

After an initial period of collaboration, the native peoples began to resist the genocidal incursions of the colonists and the French, English, Dutch and Swedish armies. One of the first groups to lead this resistance in the north east of the continent was the Iroquois confederacy. And the Iroquois nation⁴ which was located the furthest to the east and bore the brunt of the European attacks was the Mohawk nation.

150 years before the establishment of

1. The Canadian armed forces consist of a small number of professional soldiers (40,000), equipped and trained primarily for counter-insurrectionary struggle. Only the Israeli army has a higher ratio of officers and non-commissioned officers to ordinary soldiers and a higher ratio of mobile arms.

2. There are between 80,000 and 100,000 people in Quebec who identify themselves as being of native origin, out of a total population of 6,500,000 — between 1.0 and 1.5%. French speakers constitute 80% of the population and English speakers 8%. Other ethnic groups, of recent immigrant origin, are for the most part integrated into the still dominant anglophone community.

3. In 1608, Samuel de Champlain, the leader of the first French colonists, attacked the Mohawks. Between 1608 and 1667, there were three wars between the French colonists and their native allies and the Iroquois (in this case their Mohawk compo-

nent). In these wars, the Iroquois accepted arms first from the Dutch and then from the British. In the course of the wars, the Iroquois won several victories against the French colonists.

These are characterized by official historiography as anti-French massacres. During the conquest by the Iroquois of territories controlled by the Hurons (Wendats), allies of the French, three French Jesuit missionaries were killed, becoming the "holy Canadian martyrs" of Catholic hagiography.

From 1667 onwards, there was a peace treaty between the French, the Iroquois and the Hurons and it was at this time that the reserve of Kahnawake was established.

4. The term "tribe" is completely chauvinist — as the African film maker and author, Ousmane Sembène, has ironically put it, "is it not obvious that 14 million Hausas are only a tribe whereas 200,000 Icelanders constitute a nation?"

the first European colonies, around 1450, five people-nations which spoke variants of the same language, and which occupied all the north of what is now New York state, united. This union of the Mohawks, the Onondogas, the Oneidas, the Cayugas and the Senecas⁵ called itself, and still does, "Haudenosaunee" or the Confederacy of the Long House. The European invaders called them the Iroquois, and the mythology propagated in Quebecois school books and in the hagiography of the "holy Canadian martyrs" of the Catholic church³ testify to the power and tenacity of this confederacy.

The structure of this confederacy was complex, combining the broadest unity with the minimum of coercion. Each nation was divided into an equal number of matrilinear clans. Each clan of each nation had the right to a certain number of representatives to the Confederacy Council, who interpreted and applied the Great Constituent Law. These representatives (who the whites called "chiefs" although they were not military chiefs, the latter being named only provisionally, for the duration of a struggle) were named by the matriarchs (the Mothers) of the clans. The biggest and strongest nations on the military plane (the Mohawks in the east and the Senecas in the west) had less representatives than the others to block any desire for domination. The goal was a consciously chosen unity. Without complete consensus, nobody could pretend to act in the name of the Confederacy.

Native peoples divided during Revolution

This structure, at once centralized and democratic, made the Haudenosaunee the most powerful native people of the north east of North America⁶. At the time of the American Revolution, the Confederation was not able to arrive at a unanimous position. The Mohawks opted for an alliance with Britain, whilst some small groups allied themselves with the rebel colonists and the majority remained neutral.

After the defeat of the British, the majority of Mohawks and a great part of the five other nations crossed the new white frontier and settled on reserves in what became Quebec and Ontario. But they never recognized this frontier, and in 1792 a treaty between Britain and the new American republic confirmed the right of the Iroquois to pass unhindered across the frontier with their goods. There are today nearly 25,000 Mohawks in all, and 10-12,000 in Quebec, on the three reserves of Akwesane, Kahnawake and Kanasatake and in Montreal itself.

Successive white governments, whether US or Canadian, have not been content simply with stealing the land of the native peoples, or killing them with alcohol, disease or bullets. They have always tried to assimilate them to bourgeois values —

individual private property, male domination and capitalist democracy with suffrage restricted to men.

Over a period of years, white federal governments have created Band Councils (on the Canadian side) and Tribal Councils (on the US side) to administer the funds "granted" to the native peoples.

Generally less than 20% of the inhabitants of the reserves participate in the "elections" to the Band Councils or the Tribal Councils — they are perceived at best as being irrelevant and at worst as a simple relay of white power.

The relationship of the native peoples of Canada to the anglophone/francophone division of that country has been complex. In the 19th century, the beginning of an alliance was forged between French speakers and a big part of the native peoples of British North America against the anglophone drive to assimilate them. The majority of the native and mixed race peoples of Quebec and the Canadian west used French as a second or maternal language. At the time of the execution of the mixed race leader, Louis Riel, in 1885, there were mass demonstrations in Quebec leading to the mobilization of the Canadian army.

Iroquoian language dying out among youth

To counter this alliance, the federal government decreed in the early part of this century that English would be the only language taught on the reserves. This had two effects amongst the Mohawks. Firstly, Iroquoian became a minority tongue as a maternal language amongst the Six Nations, almost disappearing amongst the youth. Secondly, English replaced French as the language of communication with the white majority, distancing the Mohawks from the Quebecois majority. Amongst the other native nations of Quebec, only those denied official recognition by the white bureaucracy retained French as a language of communication with white society.

Yet the tradition of the "Long House", of the Great Law, has never totally disappeared among the Six Nations. In the 1960s, amidst the revolt of all the non-white peoples of North America, a movement developed that was both a renewal of native culture and a demand for territorial rights.

Unnoticed by all but a few whites, the Long House, the traditional socio-cultural-religious (and in the final analysis, political) structure, began to regain its influence among the Six Nations. This was particularly true amongst the Mohawks. The "traditionalists" contested the Band Councils, with growing success.

In the mid-1970s, the Long House sanctioned the creation of the Warriors Society, according to the tradition of the Great Law where the military leaders were sub-

ject to the authority of the representatives of the clans and the nations. They were to replace the white police forces and defend the rights of their people.

Since World War 2 more and more young Mohawks, on the Canadian side as much as the US, have found employment in the US Marines. It was the Mohawk veterans of the Vietnam war who were to constitute the Warriors.

The macho ethos of the Marines did not prepare these Mohawks for a protracted struggle. When some Seminole native peoples in Florida found a legal loophole in the mid-1980s which allowed them to open lucrative casinos on their reserve, the US government found the ideal way to foster "native capitalism" as a solution. Congress speedily adopted the "Indian Gaming Act" encouraging the creation of such casinos.

Some of the Warriors, impatient in the face of the apparent impotence of the "old guard" of the Confederacy, were seduced. On the US side of Akwesane casinos were opened, creating a few hundred jobs at five or six dollars an hour for Mohawks, whilst the "investors" pocketed millions.

Because of this situation, a conflict developed between the Warriors and the Confederacy Council, tragically culminating in a mini civil war at Akwesane in the spring of this year. Since then Akwesane has been occupied by the Suretés from Ontario and Quebec and by the State Troopers of New York.

At Kahnawake, there was also a conflict about gambling and the sale of cigarettes⁷, although this dispute never degenerated into physical battle.

Competing political structures on reserves

Thus at the beginning of the current crisis, there existed three more or less competing structures on the Mohawk reserves — the Band Council, the Confederacy Council and the Warriors Society. But the frontiers between the different groups were not very clear. Mohawk culture does not promote vendettas or permanent political factions and extremely fluid alliances between currents are common practice. A form of permanent election of representatives, recallable at any time, was part of the Great Law of the Six Nations. On the other hand, native Americans, like any other people, are not immune from internal conflicts or even sometimes the settling of accounts.

The refusal of all layers of government and media to even try to recognize and understand the native nations explains in part their confusion in the face of the multiple changes of the Mohawk delegation to the negotiating table. But this has also served as a pretext to repeatedly break the negotiations and finally to send the army onto the reserves.

On August 12 the government accepted the Mohawks' demand that a team of

observers from the International Federation of Human Rights investigate the situation. Their report, made public on August 26, criticized the failure of the federal and provincial governments to respect the agreement on the free passage of provisions, medicine and spiritual leaders. On August 27, when the Bourassa government again suspended negotiations and resorted to the army, the observers withdrew.

At Kahnawake, the army and the Warriors agreed to dismantle the barricades without bloodshed. At Kanesatake, there was no agreement but it seems that the matriarchs of the clan intervened to block any attempt at armed resistance by the Warriors.

Meanwhile the negotiations reached deadlock, even though the federal government said for the first time on September 1 that it was ready to negotiate on the territorial demands of the community of Kanesatake. The SQ has not yet intervened, leaving that to the army, but hundreds of agents still surround the two reserves. The SQ can be expected to make many arrests — they have already been accused of maltreating and even torturing Mohawks arrested since the assault on July 11. At Kanesatake, 30 arrests are already reported.

Silence of the workers organizations

The most worrying aspect has been the weakness of the non-Mohawk response to the events. Certainly there has been a movement of solidarity with the Mohawks amongst the Quebec population. But it is essentially limited to left groups, as well as some ecological, artistic, or left Christian currents. The big organizations of the workers movement, in anglophone Canada as well as Quebec, have been conspicuous by their silence. There is a lot of work to do.

Solidarity has been much more massive and active amongst the other native peoples of Quebec and Canada. They have built barricades of solidarity (and in defence of their own demands) on the roads and railways in Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. There has even been an attempt to divert a river in Alberta, by the Lonefighters, a Warrior-style group amongst the Peigane nation⁸.

In anglophone Canada, there have also been movements of solidarity amongst whites but these were fundamentally of the same nature as in Quebec. All the bourgeois parties and provincial governments have proclaimed their solidarity with the federal and Quebecois governments, with the exception of the government of the North West Territories, where native peoples are in a majority.

The New Democratic Party, the social democratic party of anglophone Canada, has denounced the use of the police and army (whilst deploring the fact that the

Warriors are armed). But the NDP's provincial parties, concerned with winning the next elections, have not followed this lead. And in Quebec, the NDP has no real presence — its sole deputy in Quebec comes from the south bank of Montreal and has been remarkably absent this summer.

The bourgeois parties and the Canadian-English media are using the crisis and the racist reaction of a fringe of Quebec's francophone population to portray the Quebecois nation and the whole of Quebecois society as xenophobic and narrow minded. Premier Bourassa, PQ leader Jacques Parizeau, the far right nationalist groups and the racist mobs have all given to the enemies of national liberation in Quebec their best weapon — the comfort of their own moral superiority.

The Canadian government's decision to use solely francophone troops against the Mohawks is not accidental. It placates the francophone racists and the anglophone anti-Quebecois forces whilst at the same time reinforcing the tensions between the Mohawks and the francophone majority of Quebecois society.

At the moment of writing all is not over. The repression will surely continue. The effects inside the Six Nations are not yet clear. Reactions of despair cannot be ruled out amongst young Native Americans who can no longer bear the continued genocide against their people and who have nothing in particular to lose.

Ambivalent role of Warriors' Society

The prestige of the Warriors Society has grown thanks to the police and military intervention, but its dubious practices inside the communities (violence against opponents, defence of the casinos and trade in cigarettes, and so on) continue to undermine its prestige and its long term credibility.

The Confederacy Council is participating for the first time since the mid-1920s in negotiations with white governments, which constitutes an indirect form of recognition. But these governments have accepted it as a moderating force, a counter weight to the Warriors. This can only undermine its credibility amongst the youth and the most active and angry forces in the Six Nations. If the Council cannot regain its influence amongst these forces, it is foreseeable that the government will once again exclude it from all consideration in favour of a return to the chiefs of the Band Council.

The Mohawks and the other members of the Six Nations will surely experience

Electoral gains for Canadian left

ANOTHER sign of growing turbulence in Canadian politics was the surprise victory of the New Democratic Party in the September 6 provincial elections in Ontario, Canada's richest province. The NDP, which describes itself as social democratic, won 74 of the 130 seats, overturning a big Liberal majority. The party also made substantial gains in Manitoba. The NDP candidate in Ontario has, according to *The Economist* of September 15, promised to raise the minimum wage by nearly 50%, index pensions, and cushion laid-off workers with increased severance pay. However "moderate" the NDP may be, this election shows the depth of opposition in Canada to the attacks on welfare undertaken and planned by the Federal Conservative government.

some painful and sad discussions and debates in the months to come. But 400 years of genocidal interventions have not yet vanquished them and they know well how to handle such debates.

The tasks of Quebecois progressives are clear. It is necessary to demand the immediate withdrawal of the armed forces and police from the reserves, as well as the unconditional withdrawal of all accusations pending against the Mohawks around the events of Kahnawake and of Kanesatake. The land sought by the Oka golf club should be recognized as belonging to the Mohawks of Kanesatake. On a wider level, it is necessary that all levels of government recognize the right of the native nations to sovereignty and self-determination.

Those who desire the independence of Quebec have every interest in renewing the old alliance between Quebecois and native peoples against the common enemy, the Canadian state. White militants must prove themselves in the defence of the rights of the native peoples of North America. "We are all natives in somebody else's eyes"⁹. ★

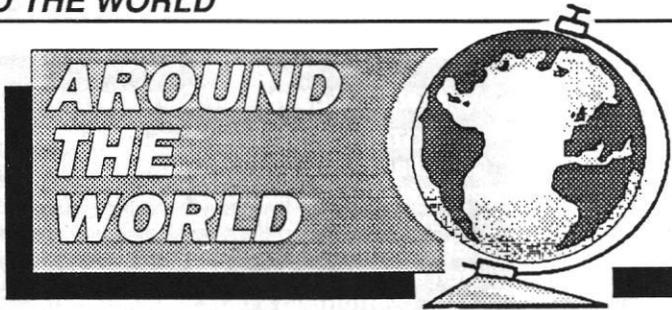
5. One of the first rights colonists arrogate to themselves is the right to name the colonized. Thus the names "Mohawk" and "Seneca" correspond in no way to the actual names of the nations in question, Ganienkahaka and Tsontantouan respectively. For the moment, the peoples themselves still use the names given them by the whites. This can be expected to change shortly.

6. In the 18th century, another nation of Iroquois origin, the Tuscaroras, refugees from Virginia, entered into the confederacy which became the Six Nations Confederacy.

7. The native peoples do not pay customs duties or sales tax and can thus sell cigarettes much more cheaply than white traders outside the reservations.

8. The Peiganes are fighting against the construction of a dam which will destroy a complete region of the south of the province, submerging lands that are sacred to them.

9. The quotation is from a song by the Quebecois singer, Sylvain Lelièvre.



PANAMA

Talking of annexations...

IN December 1989, Panama was invaded and President Noriega arrested by the United States. The justification was the "war against drugs". At the time the so-called "international community"

applauded the American action.

The current Panamanian Justice Minister used to be the director of the First Interamerican Bank, closed in 1985 by Noriega who accused it of laundering drug money. Meanwhile Panama's post-invasion ambassador in Washington is a

founder of the Dadeland Bank of Miami, which is also known for its involvement with drugs' money.

The invasion of Panama was followed by the arrest of thousands of people. Almost all trade union leaders have been held. Their houses have been repeatedly requisitioned by US soldiers. Since the invasion the situation has deteriorated both in social and human rights terms. Political oppositionists have been persecuted and death squads have made their appearance. Some 70% of people in the camps for those whose houses were destroyed by the occupiers are unemployed.

In the course of the invasion the poor quarters of the capital were reduced to

Obituaries — Louis Sinclair and Reba Hansen

Louis Sinclair

THE DEATH of Louis Sinclair after a serious illness, on Saturday July 7, 1990, has removed from the ranks of the Fourth International one of its outstanding intellects. Louis entered the Trotskyist movement when he joined the Glasgow branch of the Revolutionary Socialist League, an affiliate of the International Left Opposition in 1937, and for a short time after its founding in 1945, was a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party, then the British Section of the Fourth International.

For the rest of his long life he was not formally a supporter of any organization, but he remained a loyal supporter both politically and materially. He spent the greater part of the next 20 years compiling his massive Trotsky Bibliography.

In pursuit of this project he accumulated an unrivalled collection of Trotsky's writings and books and articles on Trotsky and Trotskyism. This collection is now in the library of Glasgow University and should surely now be named The Louis Sinclair Collection.

He must have visited every major library in Europe and America in his search for material; he ransacked the archives of any Trotskyist or ex-Trotskyist he could get hold of. There can hardly be a secondhand bookshop which he did not enter or write to. It was quite a revelation, when accompanying him on some of these excursions to see how readily he was recognized by the shop-keeper. As soon as he entered the premises the bookseller would say: "Mr. Sinclair, I have the book you have been looking for" and produce it from under the counter.

He corresponded with people in all parts of the world and nearly every post would bring him something. I remember with what pride he showed me a copy of Trotsky's "Germany, What Next?" in some obscure Indonesian

dialect. Louis rarely spoke from a public platform. He was most at home speaking to small groups and especially enjoyed talking to young supporters, probing their brains and helping them with their problems. He was always being consulted by students writing theses on Trotskyism and related subjects and by would-be authors.

He took a great interest in recent events in the Soviet Union, always on the alert for new material on Trotsky and the Left Opposition emerging from the archives. He also compiled an index of prewar internal bulletins of the national sections of the Fourth International which should be a valuable source for historians and students of the period. He will be sorely missed as friend and teacher by all who knew him and learned from him. — **Charlie van Gelderen. ★**

Reba Hansen (1909-July 3, 1990)

REBA died of a stroke in her native Salt Lake City, Utah, at the age of 80. She had been a member of the Trotskyist movement almost all her adult life. For four decades, she held key organizational responsibilities. In 1931, she married Joseph Hansen, who was one of the leaders of the American Socialist Workers' Party until his death in 1979. Joe Hansen was a secretary of Trotsky and the organizer of his guards in Mexico, an assignment on which Reba accompanied him. In the 1940s, she was the secretary of James Cannon, founder of the SWP.

In 1963, Reba and Joe went to Paris to put out *World Outlook* (later *Intercontinental Press*), an international news bulletin for the reunified Fourth International. It was the first time the international Trotskyist movement had a regular publication that systematically followed events in world politics as they happened. For health reasons,

Joe Hansen had to return to the United States in 1965. But after an interval, he and Reba continued to put out *World Outlook*, at first from their loft in lower Manhattan.

In the 1970s, *World Outlook/Intercontinental Press* grew into a 48-page weekly with a relatively large circulation and an international staff. For a number of years, Reba had virtually the sole responsibility for organizing the business side and technical work of the magazine. She set the standards as high as possible, and was unrelenting in maintaining them.

She also had a remarkable ability to keep a cheerful and friendly manner despite the magazine's work schedule. She took a personal interest in all of the staff members and volunteer workers, and kept up numerous hobbies, from flower growing and tropical fish raising to collecting stones (she shared an interest in geology with Joe, who had spent time in the mining industry in Utah and kept a number of books on the subject in his library).

Reba had considerable experience of international work, and retained a keen interest in the politics and culture of Paris. She and Joe were insistent that *Intercontinental Press* had to be an international magazine, with no special connection to the United States, a magazine to build the Fourth International. In the years from about 1968 to 1976, they achieved the sort of magazine that they wanted. Those years were the pinnacle of their political careers.

The magazine that they developed was wound up in 1986 by the Barnes leadership of the SWP, which abandoned the political program on which the party was built and purged those who continued to defend it. But Reba, as well as Joe, made contributions to building an international movement and an international press that continue. — **Gerry Foley ★**

rubble by rockets and incendiary bombs from American helicopters. Some 12,000 people were left without shelter. Nothing has been done to rehouse them. It is rumoured that there is a plan to build luxury accommodation at El Chorillo, one of the areas destroyed, which is nicely located on the seafront. The homeless have launched a campaign for compensation by the US.

However they are not destined to benefit from the \$420m aid package. The lion's share of this is to be devoted to the "reactivation of the banking system and increased credit" for private enterprise, and, of course, to get rid of some of Panama's debt arrears. That is to say that a large slice of the money will be going straight back to the US.

Estimates of the number killed in the invasion vary between 2,000 and 7,000 with some 15,000 wounded. The vagueness of the figures is due to the Bush administration which has been blocking investigations. Charles Rangel from the US Congress' House of Representatives, has asked the Pentagon to release the many video cassettes shot during the invasion. The administration has refused, citing national security. However, a commission of inquiry into the invasion is now underway in the US. Among its discoveries is that bodies found in 14 mass graves had been summarily executed by a bullet in the back before being wrapped in bags with a chemical decomposing agent.

As the US installed Panamanian president Endara has recently remarked "the United States did not undertake their action to liberate Panama, but for their own reasons." ★

SOVIET UNION

Monument for women prisoners

IN a small news item in its September 10 issue, *Pravda* reported that a memorial to women victims of the gulag had been opened in the Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, where some of the biggest and worst camps were located.

"The modest stone monument was built by activists of the local Memorial society alongside a preserved camp barracks. The investigation work continues." ★

Politbureau appeals to Lithuanian People

THE STATEMENT published in the September 15 issue of *Pravda* was hardly calculated to make a favorable impression on the Lithuanian people, especially because of its references to the discredited Moscow loyalist Lithuanian CP (CPSU), locally called the "fly by night party."

"Expressing support for all healthy forces in the republic, the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU places hopes in the Twenty-First Congress of the

Communist Party of Lithuania (CPSU). This congress is called upon to work out documents mobilizing Communists and the entire society of the republic to defend social gains, to achieve the constructive program of *perestroika*."

The statement concluded: "The Politbureau of the CC of the CPSU appeals to all those to whom the future of Lithuania is dear not to allow a further heightening of tensions in the republic or any deliberate stirring up of all wrongs or distortion of the past, and to make a correct choice in a difficult stage of historical development."

The blessing given to the Kremlin's stooge party in Lithuania is likely to give a sharp edge to the memory that the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was carried out in the name of an appeal to the "healthy forces," — local bureaucrats who could maintain their positions only with the support of the Red Army. As for "distortion of the past," despite certain admissions, the Soviet central authorities refuse to give up their claim that the Baltic peoples democratically chose incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1940. ★

Deserters

AFTER the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet's declaration of sovereignty, which demanded that Ukrainian soldiers not be used outside the Ukraine without the agreement of the Ukrainian legislature, the September 3, *Pravda* reported, "some young soldiers in various bases in the country decided on their own to leave the service and to go home" The Kiev military district authorities appealed to the parents of soldiers not to encourage them to leave the Soviet army and if they had already left their units to try to persuade them to return." ★

Invest in the new Europe!

THE collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe brings new hope, but also new responsibilities, for socialists. Our voice must be heard in the great debates taking place in these countries. It is necessary to ensure that advocates of capitalism do not have a monopoly of the press.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International is launching an international campaign to gather the means to respond to the new situation, to make known its opinions and analyses and help its supporters in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to organize themselves.

Donations should be addressed to:
Eastern European Solidarity
AMRO bank, Account no.444 531
092, Amsterdam, Holland (Central Agency AMRO, Rembrandt Plein 1). ★

Murder in Mexico

FOR THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY of the assassination of Leon Trotsky, Hungarian television ran a film about the event, with a commentary by experts, including Miklós Kun, one of the country's leading authorities on Soviet history (among other things, he is the author of a biography of Bukharin). Before the broadcast, *Népszabadság*, formerly the Communist Party organ and still the most important daily, published an article, reprinted below, by Miklós Kun about the assassination. In his television commentary, Kun distanced himself from Trotskyism. However, the article presents a sympathetic view of Trotsky's fight against Stalin's dictatorship. It is a reflection of the growing interest in Trotsky in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and a symptom of a sharpening debate about the history of the October revolution.

DOCUMENT

ON AUGUST 17, 1940, Leon Trotsky was busy writing an extensive study. He wanted to point up the foreign operations of Stalin's notorious political police, the GPU (renamed the NKVD). The time had already passed when he was held back by the thought that publishing such writings harmed a Soviet Union that was building socialism.

Having seen the "purge" that wiped out almost the entire old party leadership — including Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov, Krestinsky, Shliapnikov — he was finally convinced that in his former homeland it was not a new society that was being built but a degenerate, violent

bureaucratic elite that would stop at nothing to maintain itself in power.

Nothing held him back after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact had been signed, displaying to the world Stalin's complicity with Hitler.

One of Stalin's "tricks" was to present himself to influential world left public opinion as the repository of Lenin's idealism. Therefore, Trotsky resolved to destroy the myth. That led him to write the stunning article published in the American press under the title "Super Borgia in the Kremlin."

It was entirely certain, he wrote, that Stalin, who had done away with so many people, had been involved in some way in Lenin's death.

Trotsky preparing offensive against Stalin

Trotsky intended the Borgia article to be the introduction to a big public offensive against Stalin. Many documents relating to the discussions in the Soviet Politbureau in the 1920s had already accumulated on the exiled political leader's desk, as well as

many other sources that could reveal dirty doings behind the scenes. There was another thing that may have worried Stalin.

Massive study of Stalin taking shape

At the time, Trotsky was sending more and more chapters to the translators of his biography of Stalin, which was planned to amount to at least 800 pages. Trotsky intended the book to be ready in January 1941. Besides history and political analysis, it would also use psychological methodology.

For the first time, it would answer the question of how Stalin seized power, and how he wiped out all his opponents, as well as all his allies.

Trotsky was preparing to reveal to the world in an independent study who stood behind the criminals. This work, however, was still just a draft on his table. To prevent him from finishing his biography of Stalin, in an event unprecedented in history, the hero of the biography in progress killed the author.

The writing of the biography had been interrupted by a savage interlude. On May 24, 1940, an armed commando group broke into Trotsky's home. The murderers sprayed the building with bullets, and threw hand grenades into what they thought was the political leader's bedroom.

They took away with them one of the Americans guarding the villa, and later killed him. They left thinking that they had killed Trotsky.

In the half century since the murder, it has become clear that the idea of assassinating Trotsky had been in Stalin's mind for a long time. In the last months of Lenin's life, when a bitter struggle started for succession to the Soviet Olympus, Stalin made a cautious suggestion to his allies of the time, Zinoviev and Kamenev: What if we were freed from Trotsky?

Stalin then went back on the secret thought that he had expressed. If we did that, he said, Trotsky's followers would revive the traditions of Narodnik terror and respond with the weapon of assassination.

Zinoviev and Kamenev told Trotsky

New facts and old distortions

THE TASK of working out a new, more credible line on Trotsky for the Soviet bureaucracy has apparently fallen to General Dmitri Volkogonov, who, after publishing articles on the revolutionary leader, is about to publish a biography of him. (See *International Viewpoint*, No. 147, September 19, 1988.) In an interview in the July 26 issue of the Italian daily *La Stampa*, Volkogonov said that his book would include new revelations about the assassination.

"Most of all, I have worked in the archives of the secret services, and I have discovered many things there. I have found personal documents by Stalin concerning Trotsky, including those linked to the decision about his fate, about the pursuit of Trotsky. All this will be published for the first time....I have about 40,000 copies of documents, but I think that the most interesting thing is the discovery of the man who directed the operation to murder Trotsky...."

"He is still alive. He is 85 years old. When I first met him, he did not want to tell me anything, because he is a man of the system, who keeps his secrets well. But finally, I convinced him....After the arrest of Lavrenty Beria [chief of Stalin's secret police], Khrushchev ordered the arrest of those responsible for political assassinations abroad, and this person spent 15 years in prison. He is an interesting figure, who knows a lot of things. He had the rank of general."

"The only person much talked about in the West is Eitingon, who was part of his group." (Eitingon, a GPU general, was the lover of Caridad Mercader, the assassin's mother, who also worked for the GPU in Spain.) "But he was the brains....His name will be revealed in my book. As for the operation, I can tell you that it provided for many eventualities, and involved a great number of people, both in Mexico and the United States."

Volkogonov's line on Trotsky has been that he was a sort of estranged brother of Stalin, accusing Trotsky, quite falsely, of having "decided on the extermination of the Kulaks in 1927-28". But this position is cushioned in the interview: "Trotsky's great merit is that from the beginning to the end, he was the only one to come out against Stalin. In the most difficult and dramatic moments, in the 1920s, he had the historic courage to oppose Stalin. That is sufficient reason for Trotsky to go down forever in history."

The revolutionist's great error, Volkogonov said, was that "Trotsky was a hostage, a prison of a false big idea, the idea of world revolution. Even a week before his death, he wrote that he believed in the world revolution. It was a false idea, but a big one. That is why he also is a great man, a moving personality."

Volkogonov also said, "to tell the truth, I found it much more interesting to write about Trotsky than about Stalin."

It seems that increasingly in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, even the official historians of the regime have to recognize that Trotsky is a compelling figure for study and reflection. However those wishing to learn Trotsky's real views should turn to Trotsky's own writings and the biographies by Isaac Deutscher and Pierre Broué. ★

about this conversation — not without some embarrassment — in the winter of 1926, when they decided to form a “united opposition” with him against Stalin. They accorded a surprising amount of credibility to the story. The brutal and barbarous Stalin — they knew him well — was capable of anything. “If Il’ich were alive, Stalin would put him in prison,” Lenin’s widow said bitterly in 1926.

In contrast, others, Bukharin for example, were impressed by Stalin’s “Asiatic barbarism,” which he affected most readily among intellectuals. “A man of action,” the Bolshevik leaders said at the time about the party general secretary, until the noose started to tighten around their necks.

Trotsky had a presentiment early on that the circle was closing around him. From the end of 1926, he hardly ever left his home without being accompanied by a couple of armed followers — mainly cadets or secretaries.

On his forty-ninth birthday, November 7, 1927, when he drove through Moscow together with Kamenev to greet a demonstration against the Stalin-Bukharin leadership, unknown assassins fired on him. Several well known political figures were eye-witnesses, among others Semyon Budennyi, the cavalry commander. This officer, who had formerly served under Trotsky, nonetheless tried to pretend that he had seen nothing.

The affair reached the Politbureau, which was obliged to answer the accusation by the Opposition. The question was put as to why the regime had dealt with the demonstration through armed hooligans, and this on the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. Why did they rough up Trotsky’s wife and the economist Preobrazhenski and several hundreds of demonstrating workers?

The party leadership responded to the charges in their own way. The victims were expelled from the party, and some of them were thrown into prison.

Trotsky’s murder planned since 1926

From a still unpublished letter that Trotsky wrote in 1938, we know that the wife of a colleague, who at the time was close to Stalin’s circle, had warned him already in 1926 that the party general secretary was preparing to rub him out.

Paradoxically, it was not Trotsky who was afraid of assassination but rather Stalin, who was becoming the all-powerful master of the Soviet Union. In these months, discontent came to a peak.

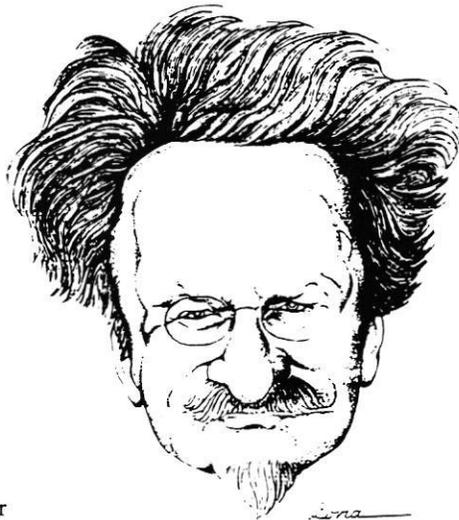
Party oppositionists demanding a (more) democratic course landed in prison, where they received more brutal, more ruthless treatment than had been meted out to the many among them who had

been sentenced to prison terms under the Czar. That aroused an outcry among relatively broad and still influential circles. A well-known Trotskyist, the cavalry officer Dmitri Schmid, threatened Stalin with a sword at the Kremlin gate.

On another occasion, an officer named Okhotnikov, also a member of Trotsky’s inner circle, in the sight of a soldier, hit Stalin on the head and sent this personality, who carefully tried to conceal his cowardice, into flight.

Diagnosis of paranoia confirmed

The two clashes produced a serious breakdown in the party general secretary. He called in a prominent psychiatrist,



Bekhterev, and underwent an examination. Without a more detailed examination, the specialist told the truth of the matter. The patient showed signs of paranoia.

Stalin’s reaction was a further confirmation of the diagnosis. He had the doctor killed. And now he could give free reign to his persecution mania. From then on, Stalin, thinking that his own life was in serious danger, kept careful track of Trotsky and his entourage, thinking constantly of assassinating him.

However, since for the time being he judged this plan unrealizable, he wanted at least to free himself from the physical presence of his opponent. He rightly believed that while his great rival was nearby, either in prison or internal exile, his followers would not fall into line, or in the rather exaggerated language of the time, “lay down their arms”.

That was the background to the fact that in January 1928, when Trotsky was

already in exile in Alma Ata, the GPU’s local representatives delivered the conclusion of the prosecutor’s office investigation.

According to a document that has now come to light, the political leader was obliged to leave his country for an undetermined time because of his “counterrevolutionary activity.” The document, bearing an enormous red stamp, was greeted by Trotsky with the exclamation, “What scoundrels!”. Trotsky was exiled to Turkey.

Trotsky exposed to new dangers

Despite promises, Trotsky was sent into exile from the territory of the Soviet consulate. In this way, they exposed him to new assassination attempts. It was no secret that many representatives of the old Russia sought his life. Several extreme rightist White emigrants had sworn to do away with him. It would have suited Stalin well if some one else did the dirty work.

However, on Prinkipo island in the Sea of Marmara and in Trotsky’s other places of exile, in France and Norway, successive Czech, German, Austria, Belgian and American armed bodyguards watched over “the Old Man” day and night.

This sort of hiding was no better than house arrest, and it ruined Trotsky’s active life. He had to limit meetings that were all the more important in exile, and if he left his home, every minute of the journey was planned in minute detail. Before the bigger trips, they sometimes disguised themselves.

There was every reason for taking care. The morning mail almost without exception brought terrible news. More and more relatives, acquaintances, young and older students were falling victim to Stalin’s revenge.

GPU operatives set fire to the first floor of the villa in Prinkipo, destroying part of Trotsky’s archives. Another time, they stole the Trotskyist movement’s rich collection of periodicals in Paris.

However, even in such difficult conditions, Trotsky mounted a serious challenge to the power of the Soviet party bureaucracy and its security apparatus.

In his best known works, he brought all his international prestige to bear in a war against “The Stalin school of falsification.” He did this in his memoirs, entitled *My Life*, in *The History of the Russian Revolution*, which recalled the events of 1917, and in the extensive articles and studies that he produced almost daily and which were published in several world languages.

Trotsky hastened his end by maintaining regular contact with “discontented” Soviet political figures. Up until 1933, the

Trotsky commemorated in Mexico

ON AUGUST 20, 1990, in Mexico City, the municipal government inaugurated a museum devoted to Leon Trotsky in an annex to the house where he lived and was buried. It includes his library, his works, a collection of periodicals published by the organizations that claim to be Trotskyist, cinematographic documents and the only copy of Trotsky's archives in the Harvard University Library. A public meeting was held in connection with the opening of the museum, presided over by the mayor of the city, with many guests, including Ernest Mandel (who represented the Fourth International), Esteban Volkov (Trotsky's grandson), Manuel Aguilar Mora (of the PRT [Revolutionary Workers' Party], Mexican section of the Fourth International), Marguerite Bonnet (executor of Natalya Trotsky's will) and the Soviet historian Podsielkoldin. The presence should be noted of the Soviet ambassador in Mexico, Oleg Darusenskov, who gave the museum a copy of an anthology of Trotsky's works that has just been published in the USSR in a press run of 150,000 copies. It includes notably, *Results and Prospects*, *New Course* and *Lessons of October*. His participation in this event, as well as many articles that appeared on this occasion in the Soviet press, clearly mark the beginning of a de facto rehabilitation of Leon Trotsky.

The PRT organized five days of discussions, in which between 400 and 500 persons participated, and a national rally attended by a thousand people. ★

Bulletin of the Opposition published in Paris and later in Berlin was relatively widely read in the Soviet Union, and it constantly attacked Stalin and his regime.

Trotsky by no means wanted to be only a "living conscience" for the political forces that were gradually turning against his victorious rival. He tried to offer a ready made alternative. Such a scheme — which had precious little political realism about it — was taken seriously by many people in the West.

Even Hitler, who profoundly hated Trotsky, thought, in considering the Soviet political perspectives, that it was either Stalin or Trotsky. Stalin also got himself all worked up over this conjecture. And every day, he said, "Too bad for the one who loses."

Stalin's secret police murder oppositionists

Through former White officers, the GPU did away with Ignacy Poremski (Reiss), a former Comintern functionary who went over to Trotsky; as well as, Klement, a Trotskyist Fourth International leader who had earlier been Trotsky's personal secretary. They murdered Lev Sedov, Trotsky's oldest son and most important political collaborator.

In the Soviet Union, they imprisoned almost all members of Trotsky's family. Trotsky's youngest son, Sergei; his older brother, Aleksandr Bronstein; and his younger sister, Olga Kemeneva, were brought before firing squads.

But Trotsky was still alive! He was badly shaken by the destruction of those close to him. But he did not break. He still had the strength to launch an international counter trial to the Moscow Trials, putting Stalin's "administration of justice" in the dock in its turn.

He began this work in Norway in difficult circumstances. At the time, activists of the local fascist movement (probably on the initiative of GPU officials) wrecked the home in which he was a guest, and, not finding him at home, they announced that they would soon finish him off.

Trotsky and his entourage then decided to ask for asylum in Mexico. They thought that in this faraway country, where the president and many influential political leaders respected Trotsky, Stalin's diplomats and secret service officers would not be able to move around as freely as in the Old World.

Initially, that proved to be true. Trotsky was able to do his work without distractions in the home of the world famous painter Diego Rivera. However, after he fell in love with his host's beautiful wife, he moved into a regular fortress. The house was surrounded by high stone walls topped with barbed wire. The outside was watched by Mexican police, the inside by mainly American bodyguards.

The American guards, however, were not sufficiently far seeing. On May 24, 1940, a commando group made up of Mexican Communists wearing police

uniforms broke into the fortress housing Trotsky and his entourage.

For a long time, it seemed that the only well-known personality in the Americas involved in the murderous action was the muralist Siquieros.

The organizers of the May assassination attempt proved to be dilettantes. The person responsible for the action, GPU colonel Eitingon (who was later jailed as a collaborator of Beria, and since has published scholarly articles in Moscow under an assumed name, and is even getting an academic degree), could see that it would be hard for a group to break into Trotsky's villa again.

The guard towers were reinforced with machine guns, and police patrols were stepped up in the vicinity.

The solitary assassin from Catalonia

It was probably at that time that the idea was put forward of having a supposed follower of Trotsky, a "solitary assassin," do away with him. They found their man in the Catalan Ramón Mercader, whom the world came to know first as Frank Jacson and Jacques Mornard.

Already in France, Mercader had wormed his way into the affections of one of Trotsky's female collaborators. His amatory success (not immediately, to be sure) opened his way into the carefully guarded villa.

An accommodating, well educated young man, he swept almost everyone off their feet, with the exception of Trotsky.

The exiled political leader's grandson, Esteban Volkov, told me not long ago how Mercader took in the guards, how he did little favors for the family, how many times he took him, a bored little boy, out for car rides, how he won the confidence of Trotsky's wife, Natalya Sedova.

Finally, he made a breakthrough with Trotsky himself, who, with all his burden of work, regretted the time spent in the society of uninteresting people. He began to receive Mercader. The rest is well known.

After he was certain that guards would not search him, on August 20, 1940, Mercader, in his raincoat, slipped a dagger and an icepick into Trotsky's study. With the latter, he dealt a powerful blow to his victim from the back, while the unsuspecting Trotsky was reading a manuscript by Mercader. The mortally wounded man lived another day, and remained conscious almost to the end. Loudly, so that his entourage would understand him clearly, he hailed his movement, the Fourth International. To his wife, however, he spoke softly, as at the time of their first meetings in Paris.

Then, on August 21, his heart stopped beating. When he read the secret dispatch from Mexico, Josef Stalin could breathe freely. He had waited for this moment for more than 15 years. ★