

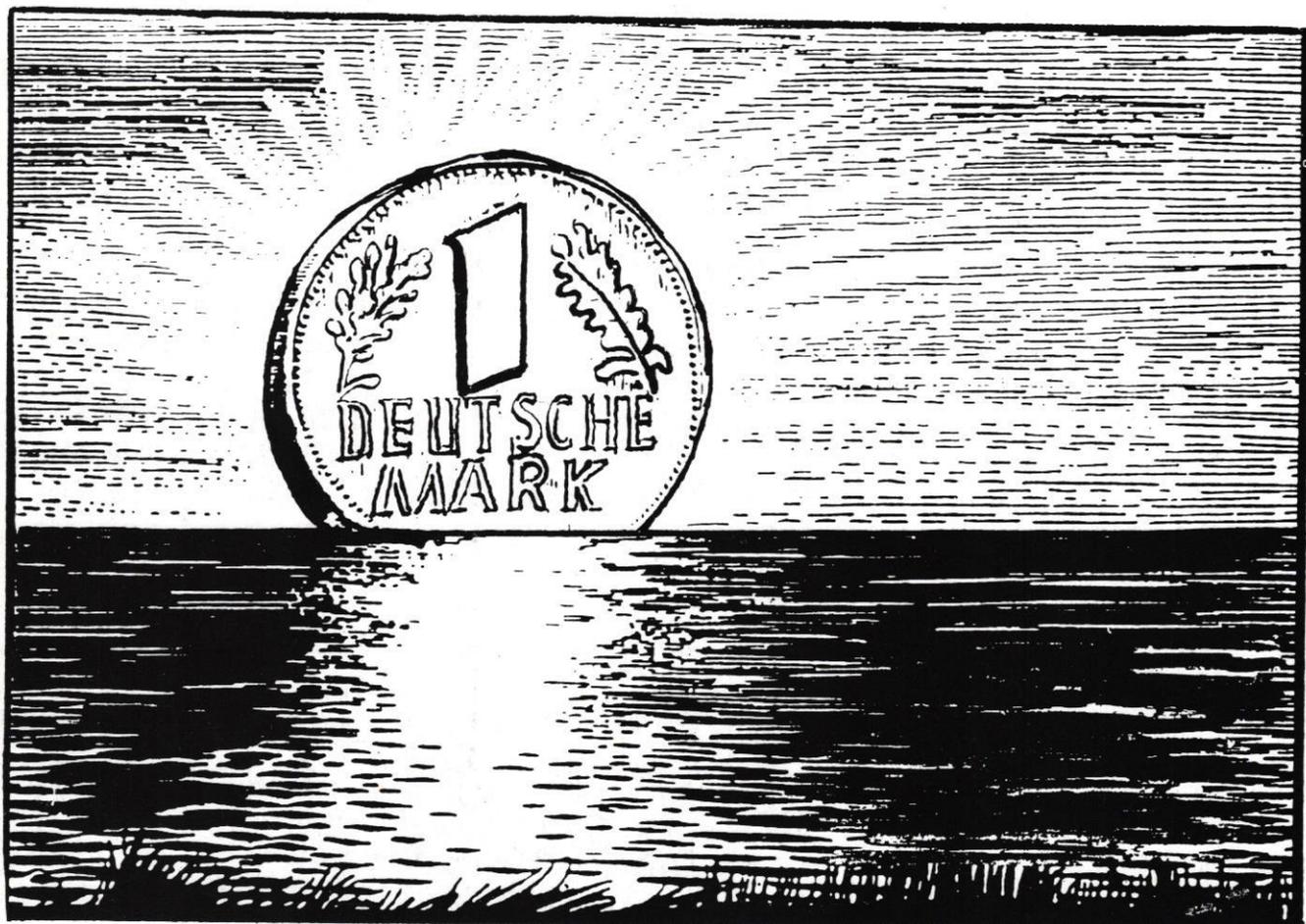
International VIEWPOINT

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GERMANY: the land of the rising deutschmark



EUROPE Articles on:

- The consequences of German unification
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INSIDE:

SOVIET UNION

Who gets the enterprises? — *David*

Seppo

PLUS

The Kremlin cracks the whip

GULF CRISIS

Talking peace and preparing war —
Salah Jaber

PLUS

Growing US antiwar movement plans march on Washington, January 26

Contents:

GULF CRISIS 3

SALAH Jaber analyzes Washington's plans for attacking Iraq

Plus
Peter Drucker describes the plans of the growing US antiwar movement

USSR 6

GORBACHEV threatens crackdown against the opposition movements and gets political "food aid" from the West — *Gerry Foley*

Plus
WORKERS grow more suspicious of bureaucracy's "privatization" schemes. *David Seppo* reports on the First All-Union Conference of Work-Collective Councils

GERMANY 12

DEFEAT for the left in the first all-German legislative

elections — *Manuel Kellner*
Plus
WINFRIED WOLF looks at the processes set in motion by the capitalist takeover of East Germany

EL SALVADOR 15

A YEAR AFTER the guerrillas broke into the capital, they are mounting a new offensive. Interview with representative of the liberation forces

COLOMBIA 17

ELECTIONS produce constituent assembly without authority — *Alfonso Moro*

ISRAELI STATE 19

FOURTH Internationalist leader recently released from prison speaks out — Interview with *Michel Warschawsky*

WESTERN EUROPE 20

DIFFERENCES over European unity split the British Tories and helped to topple Thatcher. *Claude Gabriel* describes the

The next issue of *International Viewpoint* will be dated January 21, 1991.

dilemmas of the capitalist unification schemes

GREECE 24

"NEVER have so many reactionary and anti-social measures been taken in so short a time" — *Nikos Simeonidis*

POLAND 25

PRESIDENTIAL elections show rising tide of discontent with pro-capitalist economic policies — *Cyril Smuga*

Around the World

● Chad ● Senegal ● Japan

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 27

VIETNAMESE Trotskyist talks to Vietnamese workers in Prague. Interview with *Ha Cuong Nghi*

INDEX for 1990

International VIEWPOINT

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Talking peace and preparing for war

GEORGE BUSH'S idea of sending US Secretary of State James Baker to Baghdad for a "face-to-face" with Saddam Hussein seemed quite surprising given that it came at the end of a month full of political and military preparations for war. While Iraq announced on December 6 the release of all hostages, the US administration kept upping the ante.

SALAH JABER

THREE weeks before Bush's offer, Washington had announced a significant reinforcement of the already massive American deployment in the Gulf. By January the number of soldiers in place should rise from 230,000 now to 430,000. To this must be added another 100,000 or so "allied" troops, from Arab countries, Europe and elsewhere. The original reason given for sending the extra 200,000 troops, some of them from the National Guard, was to relieve those already there. The idea was to rotate the troops on the ground, which would be indispensable in the case of a long stay. This seemed in line with a "peaceful" strategy of strangulation by blockade.

The Bush administration, however, has turned these new troops into pure and simple reinforcements, at the cost of sowing disarray among some of the military top brass, who were caught on the hop. The Pentagon big shots are in fact rather worried about the morale of their troops in Saudi Arabia, who are feeling ever less in sympathy with their obscurantist and puritan hosts.

They are, furthermore, experiencing huge logistical difficulties in sustaining the quarter of a million troops already on the spot, who were deployed in record time — in particular in comparison with the build up of forces in Vietnam between 1961 and 1969. The Pentagon is already using more than a hundred cargo ships to ferry supplies to the Gulf, a region which normally imports almost all its food.

At the end of November, the American press learned that the increase in the number of troops was going to be accompanied by an important boost in the air forces deployed in the Gulf. The number of aircraft is to increase from 1,600 to 1,900. The 300 extra will include a second squadron of the radar-invisible F-117 Stealth bombers — the most expensive and sophisticated airplane in the Penta-

gon's repertoire. Furthermore, "the ground support units for the air force have started to build up stocks of spare parts and munitions sufficient to ensure several hundred combat sorties per day."¹

In addition to the logistical problems, the total cost of these military expenses continues to grow, a serious issue for a state which is already \$6,000bn in debt. The Bush administration has already forecast a record budget deficit of \$254bn for 1991. In October alone, before the despatch of the latest reinforcements, military spending had passed \$24bn, an increase of 17% on the previous month (\$20.5bn)². This is hardly the \$50bn reduction in the federal budget deficit promised as part of the "peace dividend" before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

Economically rational prodigality

This prodigality has, of course, an economic rationality. It is intended to spare the military and para-military sector, which is of decisive weight in the United States, from the pangs of recession. But it depends to a very great extent on external financing, and this can only make the American debt worse. Bush hoped to avoid this by getting his rich allies and protégés — the Gulf oil monarchies, Germany and Japan — to make direct financial contributions to the intervention against Iraq.

Thus, the monthly budget report for October notes, on the credit side of the balance, \$1.63bn provided by the "Defence Cooperation Account," that is to say the contributions of Washington's allies. This sum however covers only a third of the growth in costs between October 1989 and October 1990, which is some \$5bn, or 25% more. The result is the record deficit forecast for the coming year, and an aggravation of a problem which is weighing heavily on the global economic outlook, and besides which the Third World debt is small beer.

For all these reasons, the "long haul" strategy, otherwise known as "sanctions", is in fact ruled out as an option for Washington. When administration officials say they are convinced that the embargo will not be enough to make Saddam Hussein back down, what they are really saying is that the US is not able to maintain its present effort for a long time. Henry Kissinger spelt this out with particular frank-



ness in his deposition to the Armed Services Committee of the US Senate: "The presence of a large force puts pressure on Saddam Hussein, but it also makes it more difficult to sustain it for an indefinite period of time. And this is why we will come to a point of decision...sometime in the next few months."³

This is the background to the sending of the new troops. The size was decided between General Powell, head of the US joint chiefs-of-staff, and General Schwarzkopf, commander of the forces present in the Gulf. This decision answers the needs of an "offensive punch" to borrow the phrase of Bob Woodward, the well-known *Washington Post* reporter. As he explained it: "the political objective set by President Bush is to 'evict the Iraqi army from Kuwait'. The military task is as a consequence to realize this objective rapidly and with minimum losses, which implies massive firepower."⁴

Pentagon's new military doctrine

According to Woodward, General Powell and the Defence Secretary, Dick Cheney, are the proponents of the Pentagon's new military doctrine, which was put to work during the invasion of Panama in December 1989. This strategy, according to the *Washington Post* journalist, entails: "secrecy, the figurative 'decapitation' of the enemy leadership and the crushing shock of combat power intended to be so

1. *International Herald Tribune*, December 1/2, 1990.
2. *The Wall Street Journal*, November 26, 1990.
3. Quoted in *Newsweek*, December 10, 1990.
4. *IHT*, December 3, 1990.
5. See *International Viewpoint*, no. 177, January 29, 1990.

formidable as to prove invincible...

"The doctrine represents a reaction to, and a rejection of, the gradualism of Vietnam."⁵

More precisely, in this specific case of confrontation with the Iraqi army, which is a wholly different proposition to Noriega's, the Pentagon aims to achieve its objectives with the minimum of ground combat. They are counting first and above all on the airforce, envisaging: "days — and perhaps weeks — of intense, round-the-clock aerial bombardment designed to pulverize ground fortifications and terrorize and demoralize Iraqi troops."⁶

In its December 10 edition, *Newsweek* magazine gives more detail on the American generals' plan: "the offensive would begin with a massive aerial bombardment. At H-hour, warplanes would take out Iraqi air defenses and chemical-tipped missiles aimed at Israel, as well as Saddam's command links to his forces.

What the USAF believes

"The US Air Force believes it can destroy half of Saddam's forces within a week. In Baghdad, Saddam's headquarters would be flattened. But in general, civilian targets would be spared. At the Pentagon, military planners believe Bush would order a halt to the bombing after several days to give Saddam a chance to surrender."

It would be at this point, according to the plans, that the ground forces would go into Kuwait. According to *Newsweek*, this would be a frontal land attack, since the option of a flank attack by air or sea has been found to be impracticable (the Marines' disembarkation exercises in Saudi Arabia have been lamentable). Washington would prefer — for political reasons, but also, and above all, to minimize its own casualties — that Saudi and Egyptian troops should bear the brunt of this ground fighting.

These latter however are not overly-enthusiastic about the idea and are not militarily reliable. Thus the air phase is decisive for the whole scenario, and the Pentagon would hope that it alone would be enough to make Saddam Hussein back down, or provoke his overthrow, or at least the demoralization and disintegration of his army, little inclined to sustain another massacre for no result, as in the war with Iran.

To complete its war preparations, on November 29 the White House gained the approval of the United Nations for military action. The January 15, 1991, deadline gives the Pentagon exactly as much time as it needs to deploy the reinforcements and prepare for the attack. This was the context behind Bush's November 30 proposal for a meeting with Saddam Hussein.

4 In fact, the American president has been confronted since September by a constant erosion of support in the United States

itself for his aggressive policies. In November alone, he suffered a series of political reverses, including a unanimous resolution from the National Council of Churches demanding the immediate withdrawal of the bulk of American forces from the Gulf region (except those required for the embargo, and on the condition that these act under the UN flag). There have also been a number of antiwar declarations by retired generals and military experts testifying before the Senate's Armed Services Committee. The previous month had seen a political offensive by the Arab and world supporters of a compromise that would allow Saddam Hussein to withdraw without losing face.⁷

Bush had to act without further loss of time. He had to show both that he does not want war and that he had made sure that, if it happens, it takes place in the best possible conditions for his troops. He also has to answer both those who accuse him of not seriously exploring the opportunities for a bloodless resolution of the conflict and those who accuse him of being light-minded about the realities of war with Iraq and of under-estimating that country's capacities. Thus, at one and the same time, we see the further build-up of the forces on the ground, in line with the doctrine of overwhelming superiority, and the offers of discussion.

Certainly, Bush is ardently hoping that Saddam Hussein will give in to the threats against him, thus sparing the American president a war which, whatever the Pentagon's plans, will be extremely risky. The minimal demand for Washington is that the Iraqi dictator takes his troops out of Kuwait without getting anything in return.

Bush demands surrender

That is to say, he must submit totally to the will of the United States and its allies, since there is no other way in which his regime can survive financially. Even if this happened, as Dick Cheney put it in a TV interview: "We still are going to be faced with an Iraq that has enormous military capability and has developed a desire to develop even more nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles etc"... "It would be important to fashion in the international community a set of sanctions that were targeted specifically on these technologies."⁸

If, however, Saddam Hussein does not give in, which is far from certain, given his track record, there will be war. In his November 30 speech, Bush declared to American public opinion: "I assure you that if military action is required, it will not be another Vietnam. This will not be a prolonged war." Rather, his generals' plans point in the direction of another Hiroshima. ★

6. *IHT*, December 1/2, 1990.

7. See *IV*, no. 194, November 12, 1990.

8. *IHT*, December 3, 1990.

Growing US antiwar movement plans January 26 march on Washington

A RAPID, qualitative leap in antiwar activity in the United States followed the November 29 UN Security Council vote to authorize a US attack on Iraq. Until November 29, most people in the US had been confused by the Bush administration claims that the deployment in Saudi Arabia would prevent war, not prepare it. After November 29, thousands of people reacted with fear and protest to the obvious drive towards war.

PETER DRUCKER

TWO days after the Security Council vote, on December 1, over 10,000 people turned out for a regional antiwar demonstration in Boston and 5,000 in Seattle. The turnouts were high for these medium-size cities, comparable to 100,000 or more in New York or at a national march in Washington.

A week later on December 8, regional demonstrations took place in Chicago (5,000 people), Berkeley (5,000 people), Washington and Denver. Several demonstrations took place in smaller cities in response to a call by several national peace organizations (Mobilization for Survival, Pledge of Resistance, and War Resisters League). The call was also picked up in the Canadian state, where

demonstrations took place in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Victoria, Halifax and St. Johns.

The antiwar movement expanded simultaneously in several sectors. Until November, antiwar positions in the labor movement had been confined largely to several left-leaning Labor [trade union] councils in Northern California, while the national AFL-CIO trade union confederation took a prowar position. Jan Pierce, a New York leader of the Communications Workers of America, broke with the top AFL-CIO leaders in late November by endorsing the National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East. The progressive monthly, *Labor Notes*, jumped into the fray with an antiwar editorial.

Student opposition to the war escalated as reports spread of possible reinstatement of the military draft (discontinued in the US since the end of the Vietnam War). There were antiwar teach-ins on hundreds of university campuses on December 7.

The National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East gave national expression to the new upsurge in its second national meeting, which took place on December 1 in New York. The meeting brought together almost 300 people representing 164 organizations: almost every national peace and anti-intervention organization as well as local antiwar coalitions from dozens of cities across the country.

Timetable for national antiwar actions

It adopted a timetable for national antiwar actions: the December 7/8 actions already underway; vigils for peace on December 22-24; a national radio teach-in against the war on January 13, which will be broadcast across the country by satellite; local actions marking Martin Luther King's birthday on January 15 and 19-21; and national marches on Washington and San Francisco on January 26.

The liveliest discussion on December 1 concerned the date for the national marches. Many people argued for marches just before or after the January 15 deadline set by the UN Security Council. But the many students at the meeting spoke with almost one voice for January 26, spontaneously and with almost no prior discussion. Most US universities return from their holidays only in mid-January, and student organizers said that January 26 was the earliest possible date for a successful student mobilization.

The importance of students for a large turnout convinced the majority of organizations represented to vote for January 26. After an appeal for unity from the chairpeople, all but a handful of votes were cast in the final count for united marches on January 26.

The December 1 meeting also achieved complete unity around the march demands. The National Campaign for Peace's founding meeting on September



18 had been marred by deep divisions over whether to condemn Iraq and support an international peace conference, reflecting in part some Palestinian activists' desire to use the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait as a occasion to build opposition to Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

But the December 1 meeting forged broader unity for the January 26 marches. It rejected (by one vote) a proposal to make an international peace conference one of the march demands. Instead it overwhelmingly adopted three slogans for January 26:

- No war in the Middle East.
- Bring the troops home now.
- Money for human needs, not war.

The meeting emphasized the January 15 and 19/21 local actions, both as events building for January 26 and in their own right. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday (which falls on January 15, but is now officially celebrated the following Monday) has become a national day of opposition to racism; a day of hypocritical lip service by the government but genuine antiracist organizing in the African-American community.

Martin Luther King anniversary hijacked

The government has provoked outrage in communities of color and the left by naming Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who happens to be African-American, as grand marshal of the official King birthday celebrations in Atlanta. This militarist appropriation of the King holiday is all the more outrageous in that King was not only an advocate of nonviolence in the civil rights movement, but a strong opponent of the Vietnam war before his assassination in 1968. The December 1 national meeting expressed the movement's determination to reclaim King's legacy for peace.

The January 15 and 19-21 events will provide a special opportunity to make the

connections between the US war drive in the Middle East and racism and austerity at home. People of color are disproportionately represented both among those who suffer from drastic social service cuts and among US troops who would die in a war with Iraq. People of color (along with working class people and women) have expressed a disproportionate level of opposition to the war in polls. But so far people of color have not been proportionately represented in antiwar protests.

The call for January 26 has gotten strong support from around the country. The organizers of the December 1 and 8 regional demonstrations in Boston, Seattle, Washington, Berkeley and Chicago are all supporting the call for January 26 marches. A meeting in San Francisco on December 3 endorsed the call for a January 26 march by 102 votes to 2. The San Francisco meeting united the Committee Against a Vietnam War in the Middle East (CAVME), the major force behind the October 20 antiwar demonstration in San Francisco, with a range of other groups.

The biggest obstacle to a strong mobilization against the war is the existence of two rival organizing efforts for a march on Washington. The Coalition to Stop US Intervention in the Middle East, the Workers World-led group¹ initiated by former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark which organized the big October 20 demonstration in New York, preempted the December 1 National Campaign meeting by issuing its own call for a January 19 march on Washington.

The December 1 meeting tried to avoid a split by calling for local demonstrations on January 19; by offering to share decision-making for January 26 with the Coalition to Stop US Intervention; and by adopting slogans for January 26 which are

1. The Workers World Party — also known as "the Marcyites" — a group which split from the American Socialist Workers Party in the 1950s. They have a "campist" political approach.

completely acceptable to the Coalition. Despite this olive branch, and despite the absence of any political disagreement around the march call, the Coalition persisted with its call for January 19.

Although the Coalition is not strong outside New York, its strength in New York counts heavily, because New York, the largest US city and only five hours from Washington by bus, usually provides the largest number of participants for national marches on Washington. The Coalition's organizing apparatus has also been in place since before October 20, while the National Campaign was still putting its staff and office together after December 1.

The Coalition has focused its propaganda on its base among African-American and Latino organizers in New York. The National Campaign's failure to include organizers of color adequately in its leadership (despite backing from major African-American figures like Jack O'Dell, director of international affairs for the National Rainbow Coalition and Californian Democratic Congressman Ron Dellums) is its most serious political weakness.

Two rival marches — a disheartening prospect

Faced with the disheartening prospect of two rival antiwar marches on Washington, left forces such as the New York-based left newsweekly, *The Guardian*, have called on the two efforts to unite. The split looks unlikely to be healed in the short run, however. The Campaign and Coalition are now publicly identified with their respective dates. Even an agreement on dates would not resolve the thorny issue of control. The Coalition is unlikely to settle for anything less than a veto on all decisions.

The Campaign is unlikely to concede this veto to one organization, however strong, with a base mostly limited to one city and a leadership identified with one political tendency.

Amidst the division, the three US groups affiliated with the Fourth International are showing a striking unity. Solidarity, a revolutionary socialist regroupment with a substantial Fourth International Caucus, is solidly behind the call for January 26. So is Socialist Action, which has played a leading role in the Committee Against a Vietnam War in the Middle East in San Francisco. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency, the third FI group in the US, has endorsed both January 19 and January 26, while saying that the January 26 date is "objectively superior" for a number of reasons.

The Socialist Workers' Party, which was formally the FI's sympathizing section in the US until its break with the FI last June, is also backing the January 26 marches, as are the Communist Party and Democratic Socialists of America. ★

6

Kremlin cracks the whip

SPEAKING on television at Gorbachev's request on November 11, KGB head Vladimir Kryuchkov raised the stakes in the counteroffensive against the independent movements which has been pursued by the bureaucracy for several weeks. The secret police chief intoned the old Stalinist music.

"The KGB has made its choice, to defend the socialist motherland.... The KGB will protect law and order and block all forces trying to tear the union apart... When our country needs unity as never before, we are coming up against forces who would undermine our fraternity."

At the same time, Kryuchkov raised the old spectre of foreign secret services trying to destabilize the USSR. Paradoxically, two days after Kryuchkov's speech, following in the wake of other Western governments, Washington announced that it was going to begin aiding the USSR. Journalists writing for such central US capitalist publications as *Newsweek* and the *International Herald Tribune* have begun to reveal that Western aid corresponds more to a policy of supporting Gorbachev than to any urgent needs of the Soviet people. In fact, nearly all reports agree that the supply crisis in the USSR is the result of bureaucratic mismanagement and misappropriation and not of deficient production.

GERRY FOLEY

A CALL for a "return to order" was raised by Gorbachev at the November 17 session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, accompanied by a series of measures designed to strengthen the regime. Under the third of six headings, he said: "Demands are justly being raised to reinforce law and order, to defend the security of every citizen of our country. Immediate organizational and cadre changes are indicated in the center and in the republics, in the localities."

In the first week of December, Gorbachev appointed a new minister of the interior, Boris Pugo, former commander of the Latvian KGB. That was another provocation against the national democratic movements. The previous minister, Vadim Bakatin, had been accused by neo-Stalinists of softness toward the national movements and independent republic governments.

The Baltic and Georgian governments have been trying either to get rid of their local KGBs or force them to accept republican authority. This has been a permanent point of conflict, particularly in Latvia, where the Soviet military and special forces have a heavy weight in the society. Moreover, service in a force

charged with repressing a conquered nationality is a classical school of reaction.

For several weeks, the Soviet authorities have been stepping up their anathemizations of the national movements again. An occasion for this was Gorbachev's speech on November 15 to military members of the Congress of People's Deputies. The chief of the Soviet bureaucracy concentrated on defending the army, mainly against the attacks of the national democratic movements, which are opposing the present military system in varying degrees, from demanding the removal of all Soviet troops from their territories and the ending of conscription of their youth by the Soviet authorities (notably in the case of Lithuania), to insisting that local conscripts serve in their home republics and not be used elsewhere without the permission of the republic government.

Violent attacks on national movements

In the discussion with Gorbachev published in the November 16 *Pravda*, a number of the military deputies made extremely violent attacks on the national movements, quite worthy of Unionist

MPs in Northern Ireland. For example, Major A. Sokorchuk, first secretary of the Samborsk city committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, said:

"Throwing off all masks, antisocialist and separatist forces, with overwhelming representation [presumably, majorities] in the district and local soviets, under slogans of developing national consciousness, are waging a determined struggle for power, mounting a campaign of mass moral terror against Communists, war and party veterans and against members of the military forces.

"Illegal acts are taking place against members of the armed forces, staff headquarters and airbases are being picketed, the army is being characterized as an 'occupation force', the draft is being boycotted."

The most violent speech came from Captain K. Akhaladze, a member of the Estonian Supreme Soviet [presumably one of the representatives of the Soviet military forces in that body]. *Pravda* said that he spoke "vividly and emotionally". "I don't want to say a word against *perestroika*. But understand me honored comrades, honored President. *Perestroika* brought a tragedy for me and continues to do so. I have many comrades whose family life has been broken. Look into the hall. Before you are people who with their mothers' milk drank in the words 'motherland, honor, devotion to the fatherland.'

Marx and the motherland

"The concepts of motherland and mother are sacred for everyone. When our mother is in convulsions, how can we fail to express our thoughts? There is a lot of talk, but no concrete actions. Remember the words of Marx, when an idea takes hold of the masses, it becomes a material force. And today the idea of separating from the Soviet Union, the idea of 'the collapse of the empire', has become a force in the Baltic, and the parliaments of the republics are carrying it out legally.

"We have to think again today about where the country is going, where its armed forces are going, who will be with us.

"When I left for Moscow, my comrades asked me to ask the leadership of the country, the army and the fleet, who will be with us tomorrow? You saw the November 7 parade in Tallin. You would have seen eyes of the non-native people filled with tears. They said, "Don't leave, and if you leave, take us with you or save us some way....

"Mikhail Sergeevich [the captain exclaimed —*Pravda*], I am one of the many who from 1985 to 1988 loved you boundlessly. You were our ideal....But from 1988 [when the national movements took off], I have been slowly moving away from you, and everyday there are more and more such people, who once were enthusiastic about *perestroika* but

Defense of Lenin, defense of Trotsky?

THE "LAST TRENCH" of the ruling bureaucracy's anathematization of Trotsky has been to argue that he was really the same as Stalin. Now some official ideologists have had to respond to right-wing ideologues using similar arguments to brand Bolshevism en bloc as an original sin from which all the horrors of Stalinism flowed.

In the discussion page of the December 5 *Pravda*, V. Perfilov, director of the Ul'yansk section of the Lenin Central Museum; and N. Fomin, a professor at the Ul'yansk Normal School, polemicize with an article entitled "If Trotsky Had Won" by A. Cipko in the July issue of the Latvian journal *Daugava*.

"Here, this author, who has become known as an intransigent critic of Marxism-Leninism, has exceeded himself. He declares that all representatives of the Leninist or Bolshevik old guard 'were in the same mold.'"

In reply, the two Soviet historians argue "it was precisely against the Leninist old guard that Stalin and his entourage aimed their main blow." They go on to cite M. N. Riutin, one of the last anti-Stalinist oppositionists in the party to the effect that "in the 1930s entirely different people came into the party apparatus. He [Riutin] wrote that after the overthrow of the Stalinist dictatorship, many years would be necessary to get the party and the country out of the... abyss into which the 'great leader' had brought it. Such a position was taken by 300 delegates to the Seventeenth Party Congress [1932].... Everyone knows the tragic fate that befall almost all the congress delegates". ★

are beginning now to become allergic to it."

November 20, *Pravda* published a communiqué from the USSR Ministry of Defense Press center on "anti-army provocations in the republics." It ended with the statement: "There is no doubt about the aims of the organizers of these anti-army actions. The answer is also clear as to whom they serve, who is hiding behind the direct participants in these actions. It is those for whom the Soviet Armed Forces, which are called to guard the security of the country and the stability of the state, are an obstacle, those whose political ambitions, whose separatist schemes they block. All necessary measures will be taken to end such actions."

This communiqué did not show any concern for the appearances of democratization. It made it quite clear that the "unity" of the state would be maintained by military force, as it was under Stalin and Brezhnev. The use of the term "separatism" as something that is self-evidently nefarious, or criminal, is revealing. According to the constitution of France, Turkey and other capitalist countries, separatism is in fact a crime; but according to the Soviet constitution it is formally an inalienable right.

Counteroffensive in Ukraine

In the beginning of November, the bureaucratic authorities launched a counteroffensive in Ukraine against the opposition movements, in particular the Ukrainian People's Front, Rukh, which had won important victories in the previous weeks through mass mobilizations. On November 6, an activist of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic church [outlawed by

Stalin], Yaroslav Demidas, was arrested and disappeared. It was later learned that he was being held in an isolation cell in Kiev and had gone on hunger strike.

During the night of November 6-7, police attacked and beat up a group of students holding a picket in Kiev against the scheduled military parade. They did not succeed, however, in ending the protest. On the morning of November 7, according to Rukh activists, in an underground walkway, a man attacked a women member of the picketing group. A Rukh deputy, Stepan Khmara, came to her aid. The attacker was armed, and proved to be a police colonel, Igor Grigoriev. The official media began a campaign praising Grigoriev as an exemplary policeman and claiming that Khmara and others had assaulted him.

"Workers" against nationalism

"Workers' protests" were organized against what were supposed to be "excesses" by "extremist and destructive forces in the parliament of the republic". Groups of workers were bussed in to the Ukrainian parliament building on November 12 to call for the impeachment of the "nationalist and anti-Communist" deputies. At the same time, 500 police demonstrated for the recall of Khmara and other members of Rukh. The demonstrations continued. On November 14, the Supreme Soviet (which still has a large CP majority) removed Khmara's parliamentary immunity and called for his arrest. He was taken prisoner on November 17. A campaign of mass actions was launched demanding his release.

Tensions increased in the Baltic coun-

tries also after military parades were held on November 7 at the order of the central authorities in direct defiance of decisions of the republic governments. On November 9, in Jurmala, Latvia, the city committee of the Communist Party was supposed, according to a state order, to be moved out of a building it occupied. It called on Soviet troops and special police for protection. In response to this, on November 14, the Latvian parliament passed a resolution, by an 80% vote, to ban the special police and Soviet armed forces from intervening in the life of the republic, and calling on the Latvian state bodies not to offer social and material support to Soviet armed forces stationed on Latvian territory.

Apparently in response, Marshal Dmitri Yazov threatened that if local authorities cut off services to the bases, he would order troops to take over the water and power works.

Protesters threatened by soldiers

In the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, on November 17, protesters at a Soviet base were threatened with firearms and beaten by soldiers. The speeches by Gorbachev and others at the November 17 USSR Supreme Soviet session were taken as direct threats by the Baltic leaders. On November 21, the Baltic heads of state responded with the following statement:

"On November 17, 1990, in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, unconcealed threats were raised — attacks on the sovereign rights of our states and peoples, including the threat of forcible removal of the democratically elected institutions of government and suspension of the laws of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

"In the face of these threats, we declared that the Baltic countries are exercising their inalienable right of self-defense. The peoples, parliaments and governments of the Baltic countries will resist a new aggression, and not permit a repetition of the tragic events of 1940.

"We call on the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to stop the escalation of political threats and violent pressure on the Baltic countries, which are moving by a peaceful road toward reestablishment of their rights.

"Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia do not intend to sign the Treaty of Union, but they are ready immediately to enter into negotiations on concluding state-to-state treaties with the USSR and its republics regarding economic and other forms of collaboration."

Gorbachev has said that his proposed new Treaty of Union is the "last trench" of the defenders of the Soviet [bureaucratic] state. It is this document on which he has chosen to concentrate his fight and to make the banner of his crackdown. It was

the focus of his speech to the CPSU Central Committee plenum, published in *Pravda* of December 11: "We all understand why the question of the Treaty of Union has been put before this plenum. This question has a key importance for continuing our course to *perestroika*, democracy and socialist renewal... From the first steps of *perestroika*, the party adopted as one of its basic orientations increasing the rights of the Union republics."

The last statement dropped another totalitarian lead ball, like Kryuchkov's reference to the "socialist motherland" and "our fraternity". In fact, Gorbachev has tried to reduce the national rights that had become accepted under Brezhnev. One of his first moves after the April 1985 plenum, which launched *perestroika*, was to appoint a Russian first secretary of the party in Kazakhstan, breaking the rule that the first secretary of a republic CP should always be a native (controlled of course by a Russian second secretary).

When this move provoked an uprising of Kazakh youth, Moscow went on an anti-"nationalist" witch-hunt reminiscent of the 1950s. Then, at the end of 1988, Gorbachev launched a project of amending the constitution to make it easier for the central government to intervene in the republics. During this battle, he proclaimed that his objective was not to loosen the ties that bound the republics to the center but to strengthen them.

It has been precisely on the national question that Gorbachev has most clearly lost his ability to control the genies released by his liberalization and been forced to retreat. But he has disputed every inch, and tried desperately to maintain a firm line. Now he says that the Treaty of Union is his "last trench." In other recent speeches he has been saying that the Soviet Union is at the same stage as during the Battle of Stalingrad, when no further retreat is possible.

No fundamental gains in new treaty

Actually, his new Treaty of Union fundamentally goes no further toward meeting the demands of the national movements than the special CPSU plenum on the national question in July 1989.



The central government retains supremacy over the economy. Thus, Section 2, Article 2 calls for: "Defining in common with the republics a strategy for economic growth and the creation of conditions for the development of an all-Union market; the conduct of a single financial, credit and monetary policy, based on a common currency; establishing and implementing an all-Union budget; maintaining a gold and diamond fund and using it in agreement with the republics; the implementation of all-Union programs; the creation of development funds."

At the same time, a single Soviet citizenship is maintained, which the republics have no right to qualify, and therefore no right to defend themselves against population movements engendered by decisions of central planners, or to reverse the erosion of national rights caused by what Gorbachev admits was a "unitary" state.

The republics "are the owners of the land, its minerals and the other natural resources on their territories, and also of state property, with the exception of those parts essential to exercising the competence of the USSR." But since the essential instruments of the "regulated market" are to remain in the hands of Moscow, it is far from clear what this formal ownership would amount to in practice. And the history of Moscow's relations with the republics is one of formal rights for the latter that have meant nothing in reality.

"Defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Soviet Union, the defining and defense of the state borders of the USSR, maintaining the state security of the USSR, organizing defense and leadership of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union" are maintained as prerogatives of the central government.

Union retains key prerogatives

Another prerogative of the Union is adopting and amending an all-Union con-

stitution, which will be superior to the legislation of the republics. This constitution will be enforced by a Constitutional Court empowered "to determine whether or not the laws of the USSR and the republics correspond to the Treaty of Union and the Constitution of the USSR". The Constitutional Court of the USSR has already systematically rejected laws passed by the republic legislatures in an attempt to regain real sovereignty.

One of the main legal battlefields has been the language laws passed by the non-Russian republics. The new Treaty of Union establishes Russian as the "language of communication among different nationalities", thus exempting Russians in the non-Russian republics from having to learn the local language.

Furthermore, the president of the Soviet Union is given the status of "guarantor of the Treaty of Union, the constitution and laws of the USSR, and commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union." Thus, the four pillars of the Stalinist unitary state remain — one Soviet citizenship, an all-Union army and political police, one all-Union language and central control of the basic instruments of economic policy. And they are reinforced by a president endowed formally with full powers to defend the Union.

In view of the meager concessions offered to the non-Russian peoples by Gorbachev's new Treaty of Union, it has gotten negative reactions even in one republic where the old regime remains intact. Thus, in *Pravda* of November 23, the president of the Uzbek republic, I. Karimov, said: "Recently, some papers have claimed that Uzbekistan was ready today to sign the Treaty of Union without further ado....I want to clarify this question. We cannot sign the last variant that was sent to us. It does not take account of even one of our suggestions.

"It says nothing about the main question, about the parity and equality of all subjects of the future federation. You get the impression that the center, for the sake of certain objectives of its own, is holding back the process. In this, they are not taking account of the fact that in the present conditions within half a year the Treaty of Union may not suit anybody. I also consider it improper that the Treaty of Union will be discussed in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and in the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. The process should be reversed. It should be the subjects of the federation that work out the treaty and sign it."

Ter-Petrosian, chair of the Armenian Supreme Soviet, which is now controlled by national-democratic forces, was more indirect, but no less clear: "They maintain that law and order should be reinforced and then everything will settle into its place. That is an error. In that event, the center will run up against serious opposition from the republics, inasmuch as sovereignty is already a reality for us, and no

republic is going to retreat one inch from the positions that have been won".

It is evident that the Treaty of Union is no compromise but an attack to block and roll back the national movements. And the counteroffensive of the Unionist bureaucracy in the Baltic and Ukraine is quite consistent with Gorbachev's attempt to impose it.

A new and important confrontation is shaping up between the opposition movements and the decaying bureaucracy. In this crisis situation, the policy of the Western capitalist governments is likely to become more and more important. Contrary to the alarms raised by Kryuchkov, there is no evidence that they are supporting the national democratic movements (although it is probable that they

are encouraging right-wing ideologues, and not just in the national movements). On the other hand, there are a lot of signs that they are supporting Gorbachev. That is notoriously the reason for the readiness to offer aid, although the shortages in the USSR are minor in comparison with many third world countries where there are real famine dangers.

Thus, in a feature article on the Russian shortages in its December 17 issue, *Newsweek* quoted a German aid worker in Minsk as saying: "I've seen families worse off in Cologne".

It also cited the worry of François Jean, director of operations for a major French welfare service, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, that the hullabaloo over the shortages in the USSR could distract attention from the threat of famine in Sudan. ★

Who gets the enterprises?

THE problem of "destatization" — often also referred to (with conscious ambiguity) as "privatization" — is the subject of vigorous debate in the various Supreme Soviets and in the press of

the Soviet Union. Yet, characteristically, under the present regime of selective *glasnost* (more flexible, and so much more effective, than the old censorship), the voices of the work-collective councils (WCC), the self-management organs established by the 1988 Law on the State Enterprise, are scarcely heard.

The Soviet press almost totally ignored the First All-Union Conference of Work-Collective Councils that took place in Tolyatti between 31 August and 4 September 1990.

DAVID SEPPO

THE central daily, "Workers' Tribune", did publish the conference's resolution. But this was primarily as a response to the challenge made at the conference by Nikolai Travkin¹, leader of the Democratic Party, that he would "eat his hat" if the official press published a resolution of the conference critical of the government. The national television news programme, "Vremya", was also present, but its purpose was apparently to film V. Yarin, a "nomenklatura" metallurgical worker and a member of Gorbachev's Presidential Council².

He informed the conference that Gorbachev had entrusted him with the mission of organizing the representatives of the WCCs around himself and the Presidential Council.

The delegates' failure to respond to this proposal might explain why no news

of the conference appeared on Soviet television screens.

This conference, the first of its kind³, was called in reaction to the new law "On Enterprises in the USSR," adopted by the USSR Supreme Soviet on June 4, 1990. This law effectively calls an end to the election of managerial personnel. It does not even mention the WCCs.

Its passage was explained at the time by the need to remove obstacles in the way of the democratization process and the transition to the market. However, the conference of WCCs, for its part, assessed this law as anti-democratic, directed against self-management and aimed at strengthening the arbitrary power of the enterprise management and the ministries.

There were also other opinions at the conference. Some argued that the WCCs had been created in state enterprises in the

early period of the *perestroika*, when the idea of privatization had not yet arisen. They had played a positive role in furthering democratization, but they now should cede their place to more "progressive" forms. Besides, it was no secret that in very many, probably most, cases the WCCs had been created on initiative from above and served as instruments of management.

Why, then, hang on to outdated forms? Besides, the new law clearly stated that enterprises are to be managed in accordance with their charters, which are established by the owner(s). And since, it was argued, the work collectives are about to become the owners, why raise a fuss? If the collective judges it useful to have a WCC, it can decide to keep it.

Work collectives cannot be owners

But the assumption that the work collectives will inherit the destatized enterprises was seen by the majority of delegates as far from certain. Indeed, according to the programme of the R.S.F.S.R. (Russian) government (the "500-Day Plan"⁴), the new owners would be private individuals and groups of individuals, but it specified that work collectives should not be more than partial owners, and certainly not majority stockholders.

And it is the owners, or their hired administrators, who will manage, the workers playing at best a limited role. As for Gorbachev's latest programme, it provides for different kinds of ownership, up to and including full foreign ownership. It makes no special provision for ownership by the work collectives nor for their role in management of the enterprises.

Some speakers blamed the 1988 law, with its broad self-management provisions, for the spread of "group egoism" — the decline of discipline and of responsibility in enterprises toward consumers (i.e. both other enterprises and individuals) — as collectives put their own income first, regardless of the means through which it is obtained.

These criticisms are not unfounded. The 1988 law and accompanying reforms removed most of the remaining elements of central control over the ministries and enterprises. These now find themselves, producers in a monopoly-dominated market, with their hands virtually untied. Exhorted by the liberal ideologues, as well as by official spokespersons, to fight for their "cost-accounting" [khozraschet] income, they act with typical market rationality — by raising prices, cutting back on output and quality, preferring foreign clients with hard currency or those able to provide scarce consumer and producers goods to traditional partners.

Nevertheless, most delegates refused to attribute these phenomena to self-management as such, which they contin-

ue strongly to support, but rather to the conditions in which self-management was introduced. Speakers explained that the directors had "beat a path to the Kremlin," where they complained that the election of managerial personnel by the work collectives was the cause of the growing disorder in the economy. The directors found a sympathetic ear in the Kremlin.

While the conference approved the new law's intention of expanding the economic autonomy of enterprises, it vigorously protested against the attack on self-management and on the right to elect managerial personnel. It demanded that the USSR Supreme Soviet suspend the law pending review at its next session. It also called on republican supreme soviets not to carry out the new law's provisions relating to management and self-management.

"We consider that the reduction of the rights and powers of the worker collectives of state enterprises in the execution of their self-management functions will hold back the processes of demonopolization and de-statization of state enterprises, the establishment of their collectives as owners through leasing, joint-stock forms, buyouts, or the free transfer of the enterprises to the work collectives, as well as other forms of autonomous economic management."

The conference demanded that the WCCs themselves be given the right to choose the form of property for their enterprise. In particular, in state enterprises the WCCs should have two options: either to become collective owners — without payment for the enterprise — or to leave the enterprises as state property managed by the WCCs.

Management should be hired employees

In discussing the first option, some argued that the enterprises should be paid for, since they were built, not by the worker collective, but by the society as a whole and that if they were transferred free of charge, the collective would not value its new property.

However, most rejected these arguments, not least because workers simply lack the means to purchase their enterprises. As for administration, the conference was unanimous that under both options, the managers should be hired employees of the collective and work under its supervision. The conference thus expressed the workers' view of "destatization". As such, it gave a first open, organized expression to the underlying differences in the motives behind the workers' and the liberals' (including the Soviet and various republican governments') support for the market reform. The liberals, whose ultimate goal is the restoration of a "full-blooded" capitalist market (including labour and capital mar-

kets) want to establish full private property rights in the enterprises.

They correctly see self-management and the transfer of the enterprises to the collectives as an obstacle to this goal (for example, it is implicit in the idea of ownership or management by the worker collective that the enterprise could not be sold). The workers, for their part, support the market reform and the enterprise autonomy that it would provide as creating conditions for real self-management by the collectives. They are clearly not at present prepared to give up their rights (even if they have been largely formal over the past 70 years) as owners of the economy.

There is deepening suspicion among Soviet workers and in the population as a whole that destatization in practice will mean the transformation of their enterprises into the personal property of the bureaucrats, whom they increasingly see as fused with the affairistes of the "shadow economy". This fusion is referred to in common parlance as the "mafia". It is this social group that is broadly seen as holding the real power in society and, to the growing alarm of the workers, it is this very same group that is being called upon by the liberal reformers to carry out the market reform.

These reformers, having abandoned their initial (in any case rather superficial) infatuation with democracy, are now trying to cut back on the democratic powers that *perestroika* was supposed originally to give to society and to the worker collectives.

Official retreat from self-management

Alongside the official retreat from self-management in the enterprises, a parallel retreat from democracy in the state is occurring (though both were always more formal than real). With increasing frequency, the calls for a "firm hand" are voiced by yesterday's democrats to enable the government to carry out the needed "unpopular measures". Gorbachev repeatedly requests and obtains extraordinary executive powers and now speaks darkly of the eventuality of a dictatorship. A week after the new law on the enterprise was passed, the workers of the main assembly-line of the Volga Auto Factory adopted the following resolution: "[We] are deeply angered by the fact that the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, on June 13 1990, passed a "Law on Enterprises in the USSR", in secret from the people, without first even publishing a draft in the press and submitting it for discussion to the work collectives.

"In essence, a gross provocation has been committed against the toilers of the country. A law affecting the interests of every work collective has been passed without any consideration of the opinions of the toilers themselves."⁵

Similarly, on the enterprise level, without asking the opinion of work collectives, directors are turning enterprises into joint stock companies, entering them into "concerns", and establishing banks with enterprise funds. There is no attempt even to explain the purpose of these operations to the workers, and the latter, not without basis, tend to suspect the worst.

Phoney joint ventures to rob state purse

The practice, on the part of management, of creating "pocket co-operatives" and phoney joint ventures for the sale of raw materials has become widespread. Again, all this is done behind the back of the workers, who see these operations as a means of transferring state and enterprise funds into the pockets of the "mafia". Some of this concern was reflected in the resolution of the conference that declared "impermissible the transformation of ministries into concerns and their assuming the role of leasees, as well as the transformation of ministries into joint stock companies."

The conference demonstrated that "privatization" (along with growing shortages, price rises and unemployment) seems destined to become a major source of social and political confrontation in the months that come. Scattered conflicts related to this issue have already begun to occur.

In Leningrad last year, the workers of a factory making equipment for the gas industry struck when they learnt that management had squandered enterprise money in a deal with a "pocket co-operative" that failed to fulfill its contract. In Zelenograd, near Moscow, the police had to intervene last October when irate citizens and employees protested the decision of the local soviet executive — which had consulted neither the population nor the 130 employees — to sell a newly repaired food store to a co-operative. (The repairs had cost the state 460,000 rubles, twice the sale price).⁶

From a socialist point of view, the economic conception of the Conference of Work Collective Councils is not unambiguous. Its anarcho-syndicalist bent could serve as a basis for an eventual capitalist restoration as well as for the construction of a socialist economy based upon self-management, depending on whether the accent is on the market or on workers' power.

There are signs that the initial enthusiasm for the unfettered market is beginning to ebb among workers. The conference, for example, felt it necessary to appeal to work collectives "not to show egoistic tendencies by deciding economic questions at the expense of one's partners."



At the coalminers' congress in Donetsk at the end of October, concern for the fate of the branch in market conditions was repeatedly expressed, especially by the delegates from the Donbass, faced with the specter of mass unemployment. But the fact remains that the workers still have no conception of an alternative. Nor do they yet link the onslaught against self-management with the "radicalization" of the market reform.

Self-management and capitalist restoration

It is also perhaps worth recalling that Solidarity's original programme allotted an important place to self-management, and that Soviet liberals themselves initially promoted the self-management idea to prepare the ideological ground for a restoration.

Nevertheless, the conference does show that, beside the "objective" economic difficulties, a capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union faces major political obstacles.

The conference decided on the following practical measures:

"To form an Organizational Committee

to co-ordinate the actions of the WCCs and workers' committees of the enterprises of the country, giving it full authority to defend the interests of the worker collectives in the Supreme Soviet and in the government of the USSR and mandating it to organize an All-Union Congress of Work-Collective Councils and Workers' Committees in December 1990.

"To propose to the worker collectives of the enterprises to study the documents of this conference and to support its initiatives.

"To propose to the committees of the Supreme Soviet to include the Organizational Committee for Coordinating the Activities of the WCCs and Worker Committees of the country in the process of drafting a new law on the enterprise. (...)

"To propose to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR that this new draft law on enterprises, that will have taken into account the proposals of this First All-Union Conference, be submitted to an all-people's discussion(...)" "In the eventuality that the Supreme Soviet of the USSR fails to adopt a law on enterprises that includes the proposed changes, the worker collectives reserve the right to take additional, more decisive actions." ★

1. Among the many liberal parties, Travkin's has made the most effort to court workers. He regularly appears at large worker gatherings, advertising the fact that he himself was a construction worker (in fact, a manager). His basic message, primitive anti-communism, has won him few supporters among the workers, who so far are withholding their allegiance from all political parties. *Rabochaya tribuna*, Sept. 9, 1990.

2. Gorbachev has since announced his intention of disbanding this largely symbolic advisory council, one of whose main functions was to buy off potential opposition to his policies. In the case of Yarin, who had been co-president of the anti-liberal United Front of Toilers, Gorbachev's success appears complete. Yarin, who has since received a spacious apartment, trips abroad

and a generous salary (besides much official honour) has come around fully to Gorbachev's policies. The UFT, whose fortunes have been stagnating since its founding in the summer of 1989 — its worker support is very thin — has recently ousted Yarin.

3. The WCCs that sent delegates represented over 2 million workers. Because of the incomplete representation (due to time and organizational limitations), the meeting was called a "conference". The next gathering, in December of this year, is to be a full-fledged congress.

4. In a private conversation, one of the author's of this plan, Yavlinskii, referred to it as "the Chilean model... only from the left (!)".

5. *Sobstvennoe mnenie* (Tolyatti) no. 7, 1990.

6. *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, Nov. 6, 1990.

A black and yellow day

THE results of the first pan-German elections since 1932 have underlined the dominance of conservative and liberal bourgeois forces. In the absence of any credible alternative, the capitalist *Anschluss* has led to a deterioration in the relation of forces to the detriment of the exploited and of the left in general. The mirage of the Deutschmark has gained an important victory.

MANUEL KELLNER

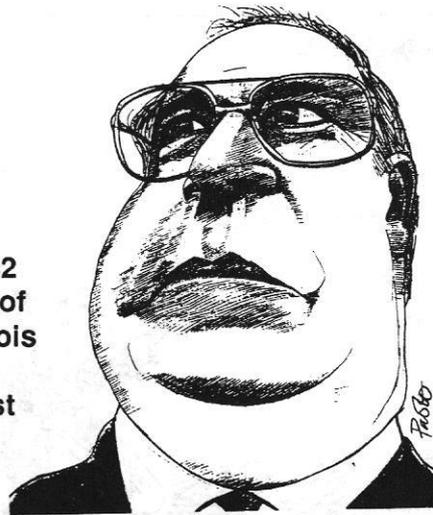
TO the 43.8% won by the Christian Democrats/Christian Socials (CDU/CSU) must be added the 11% vote for the Liberals (FDP). Thus the parties of the outgoing government won an absolute majority of the votes. If we include the 2% for the extreme right Republicans (a defeat for them) and another 1% for a number of rightist groupuscules, that gives the right wing as a whole 58%. It is true that the turnout was down from 84.3% in 1987, to a total of 77.8% (78.5% participation in the West and 74.5% in the East), but the level of the recent regional elections (see IV 194) was maintained.

The success of the government parties and the offensive by capital expressed in the *Anschluss* policy is shown in equal measure in the results obtained in East and West. In the ex-GDR, the CDU obtained 43.4% and the Liberals 13.4%. Only the German Social Union (DSU), tied to the Bavarian CSU, suffered a defeat, with only 1%. In any case the inhabitants of the East, including the majority of industrial workers, chose Kohl, while being well aware of three things:

- The personnel of the Conservatives and Liberals is much the same as that of the former bloc parties which supported Honecker.

- Kohl's promise that after unification life would be easy, made before the GDR elections in March 1990, has not been kept.

- Capitalist restoration will not lead to a rapid improvement in the standard of living. Millions of people are going to be worse off. Indeed, although the media do not publicize this, large scale immigra-



tion into West from East Germany has continued since the *Anschluss* — a reasonable estimate of the number of emigrants would be 30,000 people each month.

But the discrediting of socialist ideas in whatever shape or form, the absence of any credible reformist alternative and the victory of capital in deeds led the majority to believe that the capitalist market was the only realistic way. They thus voted for capital's most authentic ("competent") representatives.

Lafontaine's simplistic balance-sheet

The Social Democrats' (SPD) vote fell from 37% in 1987 (already a decline) to 33.5%. On the eve of defeat, the SPD's Presidential candidate, Oskar Lafontaine, drew a rather simplistic balance-sheet: he claimed that the themes he had tried to raise — social and ecological problems and the price of an over-rapid unification — had "not yet" got through to people because Kohl was still able to present himself as the architect of unity.

Lafontaine puts on a right or a left face according to Machiavellian considerations — he has at one time or another been in favour of a reduction in working hours without compensating wage increases, legislation to restrict the granting of the right of political asylum, against "too much patriotism", for a policy that is a "little bit" social and ecological and so on. In these elections, far from proposing an alternative to Kohl's policy, he reproached the Chancellor above all for not saying that sacrifices would be necessary.

In Berlin, where elec-

tions to the city council took place at the same time as the national elections, the results were a disaster for the parties of the outgoing "red-green" (SPD-Greens) city administration. The outgoing Mayor of Berlin, Momper, who just a few months ago was putting himself about as a leftist and a tolerant man, provoked a split with the Green Alternative List. He tried to present himself as more patriotic than the Conservatives and ordered the brutal repression of squatters in East Berlin (see IV 196).

Now, Momper is the junior partner in a "grand coalition" with the Christian Democrats, who won a brilliant electoral victory in Berlin.

West German Greens lose representation

In the West, the Greens failed to get over the 5% barrier and are thus not represented in parliament — a real catastrophe, and not only for them. An alliance between the Greens and the civic movements in the East got 5.9% there, and the East German Greens are thus in the Parliament, but on many questions they are to the right of their Western counterparts.

Finally, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the rebaptized East German Communist Party, maintained its score in the regional elections. It got 9.9% overall in the East, with its best result in East Berlin, where it got about a quarter of the vote.

Despite an alliance with various personalities from diverse leftist currents in the West, it got only 0.3% in the ex-FRG. This is a long way from the objectives set out by PDS president Gregor Gysi before the elections — and before the recent financial scandal revealed corruption in the party's apparatus, which was heavily exploited by the right against the PDS.

Thus, we are a long way from seeing the emergence of a new credible force on the left which can attract trade unionists and other currents which aspire to an alternative, radical democratic and socialist, policy. ★

% of votes in Germany's elections	All-German general election Dec 1990	Western Germany †		Eastern Germany †	
		Dec 1990	Jan 1987 ‡	Dec 1990	Mar 1990 ▲
Christian Democrats	36.7	35.0	34.5	43.4	42.7
Social Democrats	33.5	35.9	37.0	23.6	20.8
Free Democrats	11.0	10.6	9.1	13.4	5.5
Christian Social Union	7.1	9.1	9.8	-	-
Greens (west)	3.9	4.7	8.3	-	-
Alliance '90/Greens (east)	1.2	-	-	5.9	4.5
Democratic Socialists (ex-communists)	2.4	0.3	-	9.9	15.2
Republicans	2.1	2.3	-	1.3	-
Other	2.1	2.1	1.3	2.5	11.3

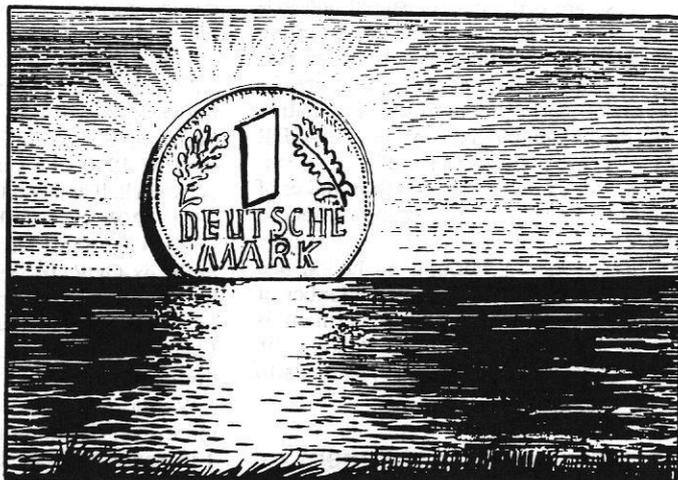
† Excluding Berlin ‡ West German general election ▲ Volkskammer (East German parliament) election

The consequences of unification

"NOW we can develop what we hold in common". These words of Willy Brandt have been belied. Rather than development there has been pillage. The writer Günter Grass said in Paris during a congress on "Germany in Europe" that he saw a "German danger" in the *Anschluss*:

"Behind each measure lurks a limitless greed for profits". This is indeed the conclusion that has to be drawn from an analysis of the social and economic consequences of the annexation of East Germany by the Federal Republic of Germany.

WINFRIED WOLF



ON SEPTEMBER 27, 1990, less than a week before the *Anschluss*, Egon Hölder, then president of the Federal Statistical Bureau in Wiesbaden, and his colleague Arno Donda from the GDR's Statistical Bureau, presented together the "last annual balance-sheet of the two German states," and the first figures on the new Germany. Despite the decision taken by the government in Bonn in recent weeks to tread lightly and avoid all indiscreet propaganda on the strength of the Greater Germany, the figures speak eloquently for themselves.

Firstly, population and space. Germany has grown by some 108,000 km², and is now Western Europe's third largest country, behind France and Spain. The population has grown from 62.6 millions in West Germany in 1989 to 79 million for the united state. This makes it the most populous country in the EEC. To this figure must be added the foreigners without political rights. They make up 5,037 million of the population — 6.4% of the total. Many of them have lived a long time in the country and, owing to this, and its social composition, this group contributes a proportionately larger share of the national surplus value than the average German with his Aryan passport.

This great human potential is a productive element from two points of view. Firstly, insofar as the population of Germany are wage workers or women assuring the reproduction of the labour force — for example through domestic work and unpaid childcare — they produce surplus value. This is a working class with an above average level of professional education, which means that the value created per hour is higher than in most other European countries. This can only increase the

material basis of capitalist dreams.

Secondly, this population is also the largest national market in Europe. This means that an increased part of value and surplus value contained in goods will be realized on the national market, escaping the fluctuations of the world market.

The dominant position of the German economy can be clearly seen when one looks at the international figures. A united Germany represents a third of European production of steel. As for export of goods and capital, the new Germany will be — after about two years — as powerful as any two of its EEC "partners" combined. In recent years the Federal Republic has already been neck-and-neck with the USA in this respect. The weakening of the economic position of the US at the same time as the reinforcement of the German economy through the *Anschluss* will, after a short period of adjustment, make Germany the dominant force on the world market, some way ahead of the USA and even further ahead of Japan.

Eastern opportunities

At the same time, there are two strategic aspects that need to be kept in mind: the opportunities for West German capital due to the defeat of the post-capitalist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and at the same time the 1992 European single market project.

We do not here have the space to examine these two important issues, an awareness of which is essential to any analysis of the social and political consequences of the *Anschluss*, in a detailed manner. We will thus limit ourselves to the following points:

1. German imperialism will benefit more than its imperialist competitors from

the downfall of the Warsaw Pact countries. Thanks to its geographical position, its more intensive commercial exchange and its numerous contacts in the East, it has the most favourable starting point. The next step in the penetration of German capital eastwards will involve developments such as: the building by German industry of hundreds of thousands of homes for members of the Red Army currently living in the ex-GDR; several billions of DMs in credits from German banks to the USSR; the possibility of Volkswagen swallowing up Skoda; the "aid programme" for the frontier regions of Western Poland, and above all for the German minorities in Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union.

2. In these conditions the "1992 European Community" will appear more and more as a project for the construction of an imperialist bastion under the leadership of the banks and German trusts. It is hard to say if the goals linked to the creation of the single EEC market will be reached. However, one thing is sure: every step forward for this project — elimination of customs, creation of obstacles around the EEC to the penetration of external capital, monetary union and so on — will be a step forward in the strengthening of German capitalism. But, even if there is significant resistance from other EEC states to particular points of the European project, it remains the fact that Greater Germany is strong enough to control an important part of the EEC, and on this basis, launch itself into new markets.

From the start of the unification project and, notably at the time of the shock therapy of monetary union, several efforts have been made to analyze this policy's social consequences¹. Sometimes mention has been made of an adventurist policy on the

part of German finance capital². What appeared at the start of the year, or at the moment of monetary union, as a rather shaky prediction, has been a clearly visible prospect this autumn. "The truth is that, currently, there are 1.5 million unemployed in the GDR, although only 350,000 of these are officially registered and getting benefit. There are already a million workers on part-time, 90% of whom are not in fact working at all." These are the words of the President of the Association of the Unemployed in the ex-GDR ("DDR-Arbeitslosenverband")³. Meanwhile — by mid-October — the number of registered unemployed receiving benefit and of people on short-time ("Kurzarbeiten") working no hours, had reached two million. Thus the number of unemployed for the whole of Germany is some four million, without making the necessary normal upward adjustments to the official figures.

Massive unemployment

Now, the media are speaking openly about this — even if the whole truth will not be revealed until after the December 2 elections. According to the Berlin-based German Institute for Economic Research (DIW — Deutsche Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung), official unemployment in the ex-GDR will rise to 1.5 millions and part-time working to another million. Some 250,000 people will arrive on the West German labour market, where, confronted with two million unemployed, they will tend to accentuate unemployment in the West. Thus, according to the DIW, in 1991, the grand total of unemployed will be more than four million. This is backed up by other analyses.

Meanwhile, new figures have been presented by the Institute for Economic Sciences (IWW — Institut für Wirtschaftswissenschaften) and by the Central Academy/Institute for Economic Sciences in Berlin (East) in collaboration with Professor Peter Fleisser from Vienna. Their analysis has the advantage of taking into account predicted Western investment in the ex-GDR as well as expected aid from Bonn. These people are not apologists for the ex-GDR. One can read in their document such things as the following: "in an independent republic [of the ex-GDR] the situation would be even worse. The growing losses would have led in a few years to economic collapse."

Here are their predictions:

1. By the end of 1991 the number of unemployed in the ex-GDR will reach 3.5 million, without including "seasonal workers."

2. This is only "one aspect of the labour market". The old will be sent home, to make up a "quiet reserve".

3. In particular we will see the "departure to the blessed west of the skilled workers." According to the IWW analysts, more than a million people will emigrate

to western Germany until 1994.

4. Unemployment will hit hardest in the combines of the ex-GDR. Of their 8.5 million jobs, only 4.7 million will remain at the end of 1991. In this sector, the unemployment rate will thus be 42%⁴.

5. Equally alarming figures are produced for the sectors of public administration and agriculture. About a half of the 1.74 million jobs in the ex-GDR's public administration — leaving aside post and railways — will go⁵. Agriculture will be even worse affected. Of 840,000 jobs at the start of 1990, the plan is to get rid of between half and two thirds (600,000).⁶

The IWW study at the same time underlines an enormous growth in productivity in the ex-GDR. In 1994 it will have risen by 76%. Even this would leave a "deficit of 46.6% in comparison with the western Länder", above all due to the mass emigration of skilled workers.

Western aid is expected to be nothing more than "a stimulus for investment". The study foresees the possibility of a "supplementary investment" of 200,000 billion DMs between 1991 and 1993. This would mean the creation of 680,000 jobs. In this (optimistic) scenario, unemployment in the ex-GDR would be "limited" to about three millions.

In this context, these experts emphasize that any significant investment in east Germany would only yield results after several years. For example, Volkswagen foresees the production of about 250,000 Golf cars a year in the Mosel factories, near Zwickau. But this objective will not be reached until 1994.

Die Wirtschaftswoche ("Economic Weekly") summarizes this study under the title "Painful medicine".

All these analyses refer more or less directly to two factors — the evolution of the world economy and the explosive growth of debt.

Almost no economist now denies that 1990 will mark the end of the seven-year long period of growth. Recession had set in the United States at the start of the year. The car sector has gone into recession on a world scale (with the exception of West Germany). The Gulf crisis has accelerated this evolution, making the banks' difficulties worse and leading to stock-market falls worse than the most pessimistic forecasts. "All the industrial countries are threatened with falling into crisis", declares Professor Wilhelm Hankel, ex-

chief of the Hessischen Landesbank. In his view, the present situation is marked by a "dangerous recessionary potential"⁷. He goes so far as the prophesy that this will be true for more or less all the Western industrial nations, with one exception, Germany. Here, the "reunification of the two economies will mean an exceptional counter-cyclical programme of about 100 billion marks a year." He adds, "this is unprecedented." This is *almost* true — in fact, "this" has already been seen at the start of the 1980s, when Ronald Reagan launched the rearmament programme and doubled the state deficit.

It is worth pointing out at this juncture that one can scarcely anticipate that, with the coming of an international recession, the country which holds the best place on the world market should come out of it the best. At the very least one must foresee the evolution of the world economy having negative effects on German social and economic evolution.

Financial risks

Another element of risk is embodied in the quotation from Hankel and in my comparison with American economic policy in the 1980s. Germany's state budget is threatened with a financial crisis. In 1990, despite declarations about a "policy of stability", the Bonn government has turned in twice the predicted debt, and this has already had important financial consequences. The debt — which was forecast for 25.8 billion marks — in fact reached 57 billion in 1990. The IWW economists predict a financial deficit of at least 75 billion marks in 1991. If the "supplementary investment" which we mentioned earlier occurs, then the financial hole will amount to 90 billion in 1991 and almost 100 billion in 1992. If we remember that the idea is to turn the ex-GDR into a "tax-free oasis" (Steueroase), it becomes clear that this financial black hole will be very difficult to overcome. Furthermore, the figures do not include the additional state debts incurred through the "Fund for German Unity" which add up to another 100 billion marks. For the moment this money is "hidden" somewhere, in the same way that the American government "hid" the additional debts accruing from the collapse of the Savings and Loans. A dramatic increase in state debt cannot only be explained by allusions to the increase in size of the national state. The increase in gross national prod-

of GNP — the most important figure — had risen from 43.3% to 49.6%. If the new debt decided on in Bonn for the next three years — leaving aside that of the Länder, the municipalities, the post and telecommunications and the railways — grows each year by between DM75bn and DM90bn, by 1993 another DM250bn will have been added onto the total budget deficit. This is equivalent to an increase in the debt by a quarter of the total rise over the past 40 years. The proportion of this debt to GNP will go from 50% to 80% in 1993. By way of comparison, in Italy and Greece the proportion of public debt to GNP is over 100%. See E. Mandel/W. Wolf: *Cash, crash and crisis*, Hamburg, 1989, pp. 87 and 147.

1. See Törk Hansen: "Zerstörungskraft des Marktes", SoZ, no. 11, 1990.

2. Winfried Wolf: "WAS da so alles auf uns zukommt...", *Beilage* April 4, 1990, or Karl-Heinz Roth in the review *Konkret*, no. 10, 1990.

3. See *Neues Deutschland*, September 3, 1990.

4. All the IWW studies can be found in *Wirtschaftswoche*, October 12, 1990.

5. See *Stern*, no. 36, 1990.

6. See *Die Tageszeitung*, September 8, 1990.

7. *Stern*, no. 43, 1990.

8. Here are some figures that give the general idea: the FRG's debt, which was DM692bn in 1982, had reached DM1000bn by 1989. This debt as a proportion

uct does not compare with the *doubling*, let alone the *quadrupling* of the state debt — and this for a period of at least three years.

Without going more deeply into this aspect of the problem, the following conclusion can be drawn — in the framework of the annexation policy, the federal government is following an adventurist debt policy of a kind already followed by the Greek, Italian and US governments, and which have led the finances of these states to the edge of the abyss⁸.

These social and economic consequences of the *Anschluss* are the logical result of the “destructive force of the market”. The extension of this economic policy into a “space in formation” has *accentuated* the destructive effects.

Destructive policy

Even capitalism's own ideologues recognize this. The destructive policy has been more or less conscious. Even the socially destructive consequences have been spelt out. At the end of August, Lothar Julitz wrote an editorial in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* dealing with this economic policy. Entitled “through the valley of destruction” it foresaw a “creative destruction” thanks to the intervention of the authorities.

Otto Schlecht, the Secretary of State at the Finance Ministry in Bonn, has made the same predictions. He affirms that in the next two or three years: “between 2.5 to 3 million people (from the ex-GDR) will become seekers of work”, work which “does not yet exist”. There is a “disposable potential” of 30% of the presently employed labour force which is on the way to exhaustion. Thus “after the turnaround...it will be no longer possible to maintain structures at the expense of the West German taxpayers simply to maintain jobs....”

One example shows the irrationality of the market economy, whose end is not human beings, but profit. The Pentakon firm in Dresden has declared total bankruptcy. This was the most important producer of photographic equipment in Germany and one of the largest in the world. During the recent photo and cinema exhibition in Cologne, Pentakon presented a new model, which in the medium term, could have become competitive on the world market. But the “destructive force” of the market gave another verdict. It is more profitable from a capitalist point of view to close a big enterprise and put 4,000 workers on the dole than to finance a transition period of a few years.

It should be added that these 4,000 unemployed will cost some 80 million marks a year, without counting the overall loss to the national economy. Each year, Pentakon produced 400,000 Praktika cameras. If the 80 million marks to be spent on unemployment benefit were invested in production, this would amount to subsidiz-

ing each camera to the tune of 200 marks. The price of a Praktika is between 200 and 400 marks. That is to say, for the resources that society is going to spend on unemployment benefit, this firm could produce cameras and give them away.

Evidently, a transition programme would demand considerable investments and measures of adaptation with important consequences on the social level. In principle, such a policy would not contradict a non-social market economy, as has been shown in such sectors as agriculture, steel and construction. But it does contra-

dict the annexation policy that is concretely being followed.

Can one draw conclusions from this analysis? The balance-sheet is gloomy. It is quite clear that the tendencies unleashed in the ex-GDR will have negative effects in the West, above all on the workers' movement and other emancipatory movements. I will spare the reader the usual “lines of march for possible resistance.” Providing that would need a much better idea of the reactions and discussions going on amongst those directly affected. ★

A year after the FMLN offensive

ON NOVEMBER 11, 1989, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador launched a general offensive which succeeded in entering and occupying significant parts of the capital, San Salvador (see IV 174, November 27, 1989). The far right government of Adolfo Cristiani responded by bombarding the poor neighbourhoods and massacring dozens of civilians, among them 6 Jesuit priests — but it was forced to enter into negotiations with the revolutionaries, under the aegis of the United Nations (see IV 188 and 194).

One year after, on November 20, 1990, the FMLN launched wide scale military operations in several regions of the country (Chalatenango, Morazan, Usulután, Guazapa, and others) and, near to the capital, paralyzed the airport of Ilopango — the current upsurge has already claimed 400 victims in the ranks of the armed forces. The renewed fighting comes at a time when the FMLN has just announced its intention of bringing together the revolutionary forces in a single army, at a time when the negotiations with the government have reached stalemate — the latter above all not wishing to discuss the demilitarization of the country. The United States Senate has decided to freeze half of the aid earmarked for El Salvador (\$85 million was officially accorded to Cristiani).

Mario Lopez, who is interviewed below, is a member of the Diplomatic and Political Commission of the FMLN. The interview was carried out by Sergio Rodriguez.

THE negotiations between the FMLN and the government have attracted a lot of attention — what balance sheet do you draw from them?

Before drawing a balance sheet, I think it is necessary to consider the meaning of the negotiations in the framework of our strategy. The FMLN believes that the armed struggle is a necessity when all other options are exhausted — if there was any other alternative which could meet the needs of the Salvadoran people, we would have chosen that road.

In this context, the negotiations have, for the FMLN, a strategic character. Our struggle for a new society envisages a model of social organization where the

problems of the population are the central preoccupation of the regime. This project can only be realized with human and material resources — we all know that war destroys them.

If a negotiated solution is possible, a solution which, without smothering revolutionary expectations, reduces the cost of war and the destruction, it is necessary to understand it from a strategic point of view, for it preserves the means to rebuild the country and the new society.

On the other hand, it should be stressed that negotiations do not necessarily bring about a reconciliation — it is above all a question of the relationship of forces. As long as those who hold political and economic power, and those who contribute to

its maintenance, have the hope of being able to win a victory while conceding nothing, they will seek only to crush the FMLN. Negotiation is not only a problem of political will — even if this latter is important — but, above all, of the relationship of forces.

■ **It is not then, as has been seen elsewhere, a process of negotiated surrender, but, as you have said, a question of the relationship of forces.**

Exactly. The aim of fighting for a political solution is to economize on human and material resources and to obtain political stability in the region — the Salvadoran conflict has a direct relevance in Central America.

As long as the Salvadoran government hoped to crush us militarily, the dialogue underway had no chance of leading to genuine negotiations — what has changed the situation is the offensive of November 1989. Before then, starting from the analysis that the new situation was going to lead to the international isolation of the revolutionaries, President Cristiani thought that the FMLN would accept a surrender and that it was only necessary to propose to it the legal framework for doing so — the concept of negotiations was only a tool to bring this about.

But the November offensive modified the co-ordinates of the problem — no longer could anybody believe that the FMLN was weakened and that it would accept a demobilization — the dialogue was thus transformed into a genuine negotiation.

■ **The FMLN analyses the November 1989 offensive as a success then, which has shown the true relationship of forces in El Salvador.**

The speech of General Maxwell Thurwell before the United States Congress in January 1990 proves the extent to which we have overturned the idea according to which a military defeat of the FMLN was possible. After November, Thurman said, "there is no chance of arriving at a military solution in El Salvador". And this soldier is surely not a partisan of political solutions — he participated in the invasion of Panama and he was chief of the Southern Command of the US Army!

■ **You have said something that seems to me very important — the armed struggle is born of the need for an expression of the people, as a democratic right in the face of a closed oligarchy. I think that the FMLN has always been guided by the concern to give priority to the interests of the nation. From this point of view, all military operations, all mass actions or any negotiation confronts the other forces in the country with the problems of the whole of Salvadoran society.**

It has often been said, for example, that it is the Sandinista revolution that has really created the Nicaraguan nation. The propositions of the FMLN — its last appeal to the nation, its practice, and so on — flow from this vision of the national interest, which, once again, shatters the idea according to which the Salvadoran problem is part of the East-West conflict.

In the doctrine of low intensity conflict, fomented by the US government, there is a strategic factor — the necessity of a political component which opens the road to the military solution. The Christian Democracy (CD) and Duarte have fulfilled this role. Before, this party was in the opposition and had a broad social base. Duarte was a popular leader and the best instrument through which US military aid could be justified. From the time when he left the military junta in which he had participated to become a constitutional president, unrestricted military support began. The CD became the cover for the low intensity war and Duarte was our principal enemy. Today we have every interest in the CDs' participation in the search for a popular solution.

The relations established with those who, not so very long ago, were our principal enemies, shows the national interests which guide us. For example, the CD used its trade union, the National Union of Workers and Peasants, created by Duarte, as a social base against us. For the FMLN, on the contrary, an alliance with this federation was justified even before Duarte left the government, because the National Union had its own specific interests.

After losing the last elections, the CD has ceased to be the ally of the United States, to become an opposition force that we consider as an allied sector — not as an organization which supports our positions, but as a force which, distanced from the government, must also participate in the national struggle.

The project today of the CD to retake political power situates itself above all on the electoral terrain; all its calculations are guided by this, but conditions have changed. For us, this change is positive.

The attitude of the FMLN is not rigid, it depends on the circumstances, and the role played by this or that force.

■ **Today, despite the problems, negotiations are underway and the FMLN explains that their outcome will depend on demilitarization. What is the interior and international situation of the Cristiani government in this new context?**

The Alliance for National Renewal (ARENA) has launched a clearly neo-liberal economic programme, abandoning the clearly counter-insurreccional reforms of the CD.

To implement his project, Cristiani

entered into negotiations — he had to lower the tension of war, and play for time, but he in no sense sought to resolve the conflict. Thus he said publicly: "We are agreed on a dialogue, but not on negotiations".

But the offensive of November 1989 has changed things — the project of Cristiani to reduce the military conflicts so as to apply his project collapsed. He was then obliged to admit that, to achieve his goal, he needs peace, without for all that renouncing his economic programme — but he maintains his project of dialogue without negotiating anything.

Before the electoral victory of Cristiani and ARENA, the international context favoured the CD — when ARENA came to power, the US administration was obliged to help them to break their international isolation and to construct a good image of the president, "the man who wants to modernise the country", "he is fair", "he is reasonable" — but without great results, notably after the assassination of the 6 Jesuits in November 1989.

In El Salvador itself, this government is still more isolated than during the elections. It should be recalled here that only 20% of the electorate participated in the elections — very many people were not registered on the electoral lists, and the majority of these who were did not vote. Finally, ARENA had led people to think that it would be capable of putting a final end to the war and that it could crush the FMLN. Cristiani had also promised that poverty would be eradicated. Today, numerous Salvadorans, of different social sectors, have been disappointed.

■ **In Latin America, two interpretations are put forward of what is happening in El Salvador which are in my opinion false. Some see in the FMLN's proposals for negotiations the very essence of its strategy — "even the FMLN has come to negotiate", they say. Others try to differentiate between the propositions of the FMLN and its strategic goal, as if the Front was Machiavellian.**

I think that there are very close links between the two projects (how to make alliances? how to isolate the immediate enemy? what is the meaning of entering into negotiations?) and the very principles of the FMLN. To analyze all this separately runs the risk of analyzing events in El Salvador in a partial manner.

As I just said, for the FMLN negotiations have always had a strategic character — whatever our enemies say, we do not treat this subject in a tactical manner — which does not mean that we ignore the tactical questions.

Those who claim that "even the FMLN negotiates" are wrong because they think that we have not been sincere in seeking to negotiate and that negotiations represent a turning away from the revolution. If

this was the case, they would be right, but we have renounced nothing. We desire that El Salvador should preserve a maximum of resources with which to build a more just society — that is what impels us to negotiate. If, on the contrary, the process undertaken with the government reduces the possibility of building a more just society, it would have no sense. The negotiations have a clear purpose — they must not undermine the revolution.

But obviously those who have pushed us to the situation where we have taken up arms wish to use these negotiations to maintain the present state of affairs and crush the revolution. Evidently we are not in agreement.

■ International solidarity with the Salvadoran revolution is essential. At this level, there is, apparently, a contradiction — whereas the government of the United States is reducing its aid to Cristiani, US public opinion is beginning to understand that this war is very costly and the strength of the FMLN is beginning to be recognized — both because of its military capacity and because of its popular base — everything seems to indicate that solidarity has diminished compared to the 1980s.

Indeed, the level of solidarity has fallen. Certain reasons for this are easy to understand. In the 1980s, the perspective of victory seemed almost immediate — to the extent that the war has continued, the euphoria has diminished. Moreover, other poles of conflict have broken out and have diverted solidarity.

An important part of the solidarity movement was of a humanitarian nature and there are very many problems of this kind (the famine in Africa, the difficulties in the countries of the former socialist bloc, and so on) — the centrality of the Salvadoran case is therefore diluted. In my opinion, political motivations were not central in solidarity, if not it would be stronger.

The Salvadoran people have great hopes in relation to what is happening elsewhere in the world, in Eastern Europe, in the Soviet Union, in the countries of the third world which adhere to a socialist project.

The Salvadoran revolution is in movement — it is necessary then to maintain hope, and this must encourage a wider solidarity. The political forces of the left have a great responsibility in this reduction of support to El Salvador — some do not give the necessary attention to those struggles which truly have need of it. For example, in Latin America, it is necessary today to defend the Cuban revolution, it is the task of all the left, who can do it without illusions. Imperialism will enjoy a great success if it crushes Cuba! And the message Cuba hears today is, "OK, we will give you petrol, but at world market prices" — the dominant model of account-

ing is no longer socialist.

The Salvadorans have a great responsibility today. They must make the revolution in totally new conditions and with supplementary problems; if we come to power we must take into account, in our international relations, the weight of capitalist forces, whether that pleases us or not — one can no longer speak of "socialist relations" or of "relations with the socialist camp". In general, the trend today goes in the direction of capitalism. The Salvadoran revolution must advance in this new, more complicated context —

in Salvador itself, we must establish a much wider framework of alliances.

International support could reinforce the popular sector of this alliance, otherwise the internal or international allies of a different character will have a greater weight. The Latin American left must reinforce that of El Salvador and I believe that this objective is not truly shared.

It is necessary to avoid any foreign intervention that will destroy the chances of the revolution and, for this, it is crucial that international, above all popular, solidarity is as effective as possible. ★

A Constituent Assembly without credibility

AGAINST a background of an abstention rate of 75%, military operations by paramilitary groups, army actions against insurgents and last minute manoeuvres aimed at ensuring a majority for the Liberal party, elections to a Constituent Assembly took place in Colombia on December 10. Between January 1991 and the middle of that year this assembly will have the task of working out a new constitution to replace the existing one, which dates from 1886.

The events preceding and during this vote point towards the conclusion that, rather than heralding a new phase of political consensus and stability, the social and political turmoil in the country is going to get worse.

ALFONSO MORO

IN SPITE of the efforts of Cesar Gaviria's government to establish a new consensus which would renew the legitimacy of the state institutions, and despite the cooperative attitude of M-19 (April 19 movement — ex-guerrilla movement, now a "legal" political party), who are participating in the government, the bulk of the population, in the absence of any offer of a clear idea of how the crisis and the massacres of the last 30 years or more are to be brought to an end, decided to stay at home.

On the face of it, the only winner is the Democratic Action/M-19 list, which increased its score over the May 1990 elections, gaining more than a million votes, and now has 19 of the 70 seats in the Constituent Assembly. The rest of the deputies — on lists headed by members of the Liberal and Conservative Parties — saw their votes fall.

The traditional system of alternation

between Conservatives and Liberals is now in a deep crisis, with these parties openly divided in front of the electorate. There are differences on the attack on the Palacio de Justicia in 1986, which left more than 60 dead; the trials of the military personnel who took part in this attack; the new project for capitalist restructuring, and so on. The only remaining point of agreement was to keep the Constituent Assembly in a framework that they could control. But reality does not always match up to desires.

The Liberal Party is experiencing an explosive crisis, which has got worse in the past four months, as is shown by the multitude of electoral slates which feature Liberal leaders. This fragmentation has also been used by the regime to ensure a majority in the Assembly.

The Conservatives, although divided into two large currents, are nonetheless solidly opposed to cohabitation with the

M-19 leadership, which has recently converted to right-wing Social Democracy. The M-19 slate, however, was the most successful in these elections; this goes against the wishes of the traditional parties and will accentuate their problems, both inside and outside the Assembly.

The existence of a "third force" has definitively broken up the two party system, and, furthermore, neither of the two traditional currents has any short or medium term plan for dealing with the situation.

Gaviria's Liberal Party, despite its apparent majority in the Assembly and M-19 support — pledged even before the elections — is in fact the weakest of the bourgeois fractions. It has lost more than it has won.

Massive support for Constituent Assembly

Its first defeat was in the May 1990 elections, when Gaviria got only about 60% support among those who also expressed support for a Constituent Assembly. The High Court then declared its backing for the calling of such an Assembly, in opposition to the President's project for a "Constitutional Assembly" which would only amend the 1886 Charter. The dispersion of the Liberals has reached the point where some of them turned up on the M-19 slate.

Under these conditions, Gaviria's current cannot be certain of controlling events in the Assembly, while the LP's internal battles are continuing, notably with the Liberal sectors associated with the most backward parts of the bourgeoisie and army.

The High Court decision of October 1990 was more than a simple legal decision. Gaviria's first proposal — for which the M-19 expressed support — did not convince the public. Worse, it was an insult to millions of Colombians who had voted for a Constituent Assembly. This opened the way for a collapse in the legitimacy of the state institutions, encouraged growing social agitation and left burning social problems, such as the issue of the extradition of drugs' traffickers to the US or the negotiations with the armed organizations grouped in the Simon Bolivar guerrilla coordination, unaddressed. Furthermore, Gaviria was jeopardizing his international image, since even from a formal point of view it is difficult to sound like a "modernizer" while refusing to respect a vote.

The most enlightened wing of the bourgeoisie represented in the High Court carried the day on the vote, but got no further. Fourteen of the 26 magistrates voted for the Constituent Assembly, without however affecting the limitation of its size to 70 members — various social and political organizations demanded 300. The issue of new electoral cards was vetoed, so that more than three million Colombians

ARGENTINA — Military rebellion and rumours of a coup

ON DECEMBER 3, 1990, Argentina was the scene of yet another military uprising, in the course of which military rebels confronted troops loyal to the government. The fighting claimed 21 lives, among them several civilians. The mutineers, who took over the army headquarters and an infantry regiment in the middle of the capital, were demanding the ouster of the army high command and the installation of Colonel Seineldin, currently in gilded exile in Neuquen province, following another military rebellion, as new army chief.

This is not the first such uprising. The first took place in April 1987, two years after the arrival of the constitutional government of Raúl Alfonsín. Then lieutenant Aldo Rico demanded the cessation of all legal proceedings against military personnel guilty of crimes under the dictatorship. Alfonsín engaged in secret negotiations and a few months afterwards promulgated the law of so-called "due obedience", according to which soldiers and officers were only obeying the orders of their superiors when they massacred and "disappeared" 30,000 Argentines between 1976 and 1982.

Further rebellions pushed the Radical government to the point where a "full stop" law was adopted which stopped all proceedings against the military, and changes in the high command. Thus, there has never been a real trial of the guilty among the military apart from that held, as an example, of the members of the former junta — who Menem, the current president, has in any case promised to pardon.

Today, when the country is undergoing an economic debacle (there were 10,850 deaths from hunger in Argentina in 1989, according to official figures), many Argentines see more in this recent coup attempt than a corporate malaise in the army. There is talk of a coup d'état being organized by a group of army officers, (no doubt supported by sections of the financial bourgeoisie) who can no longer tolerate the government's incapacity and want to step in to halt the decline.

Menem, unlike Alfonsín, has felt the wind and hit back hard against the mutineers, going so far as to threaten them with death. He can hope in this way to increase his popularity with a population which has had more than enough of the repeated capitulations of the civilian governments to the military. On December 6, the traditional Resistance March, organized by the Mothers of the Plaza del Mayo and human rights groups, brought out 60,000 people in Buenos Aires alone. ★

were not able to vote, as was any referendum by the "primary constituent" — the population — on the outcome of the Assembly's labours. It was under these circumstances that Gaviria accepted the Supreme Court's advice, at the same time pushing forward with proposals for an agreement with the "extraditable" drug traffickers and putting pressure on the armed groups for negotiations to start before the Constituent Assembly should meet.

At once the clientelist machinery, which has always determined the outcome of Colombian elections, went into operation. All means were employed, including buying votes and spending millions of dollars on a campaign of massive demagoguery, and so on. At the same time Gaviria showed how far his convergence with the M-19 leadership had gone, something for which some sectors of the bourgeoisie and army were not able to forgive him.

The so-called opinion polls conducted during the campaign gave the majority to the AD/M19 slate, with the encouragement of the government. This slate got significant media time, while the United

List for the Right to Life, led by Alfredo Vazquez Canzosa, and supported by many left, popular and union organizations was boycotted by the media, and several people from the groups that launched this List were murdered.

The weakness of social resistance to Gaviria's policies has also been a feature of this campaign, along with the divisions on the left, above all in the Simon Bolivar Coordination. The social situation in Colombia cannot be understood if the terrible violence to which the people have been and are being subjected is minimized. During the last four years of the Virgilio Barco government (1986-1990) there were more than 18,000 violent deaths — including thousands murdered by the army and paramilitary groups, 400 "disappearances" and dozens of bombardments of villages. The dirty war encouraged by various bourgeois sectors decapitated the vanguard of the social movements and terrified the population.

Things have not changed under Gaviria, even if he prefers a different language and has been trying to win over some sectors of the Simon Bolivar Coordination to his plans — Gaviria has succeeded with a fac-

of Quintin Lamel. But the overall political project has remained the same. There have been dozens of assassinations during his 100 days in power and he has signed a blank cheque for the army to attack the guerillas and the population. "Under this government, the armed forces do not need to ask the president's permission" said President Gaviria himself, about the bombardments of the headquarters of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) on the eve of the poll.

During the general strike of November 14, 1990, called by four union centrals against the new reform of the Labour Code, the privatization of national enterprises and the so-called "economic opening", the president declared that workers who would not work should be sacked immediately, unions would be outlawed and transport sectors who supported the movement would lose their licence. He also forbade the press to mention the protests, while the whole country was put under military control. The M-19 leadership publicly supported all these measures.

Crisis of guerilla organizations

Thus it was only the telecommunications and cement workers who held a national strike, even if the overall number of strikers was higher than during the movement in October 1988. The left political organizations and the guerillas gathered together in the Simon Bolivar Coordination are also undergoing a profound crisis. They have, it seems, missed the moment to try and organize and centralize a confrontation with the government, by, for example, addressing themselves to the five million people who voted for a Constituent Assembly in May 1990.

In the case of the FARC and the Camilist Union/National Liberation Army (UC-ELN), although, at a meeting of commanders, they decided to support the Constituent Assembly, they nonetheless decided to continue their armed actions without regard for the consequences they might have for the population. Furthermore, they allowed their forces to take part in the vote without any clear political direction, which may be another element of division.

The Coordination has not functioned as a real political leadership. Some militants may well think therefore that, whatever the situation, there is only one political line — direct confrontation with the state.

The Union Patriótica (UP) and A Luchar (which supported the List for Life) also have internal problems and their poor results in the elections will lead some of their militants to question their political projects. There is a temptation to retreat into local work which can only work to the detriment of an independent national project and social self-organization.

Waiting for war

ON November 9, 1990, Michel Warshawsky, director of the Alternative Information Centre (AIC) was freed after four months in prison. Sophie Massouri interviewed him by telephone on November 29, 1990.

WHAT were the conditions of your detention and liberation?

I was relatively well-treated. I had a certain freedom of movement and my conditions of detention were the best possible. Although I did not have any contact with other political prisoners, my relations with the common law prisoners were quite good. This was due to the literacy courses that I gave in the prison and because I was editor of the prison journal.

The Shin Beth (Israeli secret services) tried to make things more difficult for me. My first permission to go out only arrived a week before my conditional parole, and they tried to prevent the reduction in my sentence. In the end, I got out quite fast [Warshawsky was originally sentenced to 30 months in prison]. I am now on parole and my activities are under surveillance.

■ Israel is directly interested in the Gulf conflict. After the massacre in Jerusalem (see IV 193) has there been increased violence towards the Palestinians?

There can be no doubt today that all the Israeli leaders want war. They hope that this will unblock the internal situation in Israel and solve the Palestinian problem. They are doing everything possible to, at one and the same time, prepare public opinion for war and its consequences, and to urge the US to "behave like men" and teach Saddam Hussein a lesson.

But the battle for the Constituent Assembly, whatever its limits, continues, even if, given the electoral results, it is not clear who will lead this struggle.

Navarro Wolf, the M-19 leader and formerly Gaviria's Health Minister, now elected deputy, will surely not be a part of this struggle; it is no longer part of his political project, although this does not mean that he is safe. Serious threats to his life are being made, since, despite his conciliatory positions, he is not a recognized part of the bourgeois two-party game. ★

The idea that the international confrontation can resolve Israeli internal problems is not the sole property of the leaders, it is also shared by a large part of the media and press.

■ What has been the general reaction of the public?

One could say that on the whole people are keyed up for war. They are waiting anxiously of course, but it is a contradictory thing, because they are also impatient.

The general trend of public opinion is a melange of fear of the coming conflict which may be very costly, with, at the same time, the impression that, if all goes well, this will be the moment to deal with the Palestinians. People like Sharon and Shamir express the feelings of a big majority of public opinion that a solution to the Palestinian question is on the cards.

■ What has been the reaction of the population in the occupied territories?

Confronted with the hardening of Israeli policy, in the absence of any obvious way out, and in the new situation opened by the conflict between Iraq and the West, there is also a hardening of attitudes on the West Bank and in Gaza. This is more a popular feeling than a clearly harder political line.

This is expressed by violent individual acts for example, and also by some leaders making more intransigent statements than they would have done six months ago.

■ What about the Israeli left?

For the first time in a long while, the Israeli left is divided. What one might call the broad pacifist movement, which includes a moderate Zionist wing, has split into two.

One part has come over to complete identification with the "sacred union", and has made it clear that they have separated from the Palestinians, telling them: "now you have supported Saddam Hussein, we have unmasked your bad faith and your real intentions."

This position is a step back for the progressive forces in Israel and has provoked divisions in the moderate left. The shock has hit the Civil Rights Movement, where there are two contradictory positions, the Left Zionist organization, Mapam, its youth organization and "Peace Now", whose spokespersons have adopted opposed positions.

■ What do you intend to do now?

I am hoping to resume my work for the Alternative Information Centre, which I have been unable to do since the beginning of my case, four years ago. But I am now also rather concerned about the penal world and I have decided to try to take part in work concerning common law prisoners, to maintain contact with the prison through publications, cultural activities and so on. ★

The British case is perhaps the most spectacular, given the radical positions taken by Thatcher. But in other countries, the traditional right has divided over the European question. Moreover, the inability of some right-wing parties to respond positively to this challenge has given the social democrats an open field to present themselves as the only coherent European political force.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the situation differs very much from country to country. The German right, for example, has obviously not dragged its feet in playing the game of European unification. In other words, the European "rights" are responding differently to this challenge in accordance with the pressures put on them by various sections of the capitalist class.

In some countries, where the 1992 Single Market will force an abrupt reorganization of the economic fabric by removing all protectionism and eliminating obstacles to foreign competition, sections of the traditional right are taking the risk of advancing increasingly systematic criticism of the scheme of economic and monetary union. This is not easy for them, inasmuch as they have to reconcile the interests of part of their electorate with those of big industry and banking.

Right wing parties play double game

None of these parties can easily give up their relationship with small and middle-sized enterprises or a section of the petty-bourgeois voters who are frightened by the European future. So, they have to play a double game, and find a scapegoat by putting all the blame on the Brussels bureaucracy and the European Commission for problems that they claim are arising from too rapid economic unification. This is the classical denunciation of "Euro-statism." But it makes impossible any bloc of the right-wing parties in the Strasbourg European parliament, and this accentuates the new role of the social democrats as offering more up-to-date answers to capitalist needs.

What very much worries people like Thatcher in Britain or Chirac in France is the new relationship that all this involves between the "national" state and EEC institutions. Over and above the reactionary stupidities of the former British premier, there is in fact a contradiction today between the national authorities and the supranational ones. And this puts a big question mark over the future of the European project.

The problem is indeed one of the legitimacy of the state and its intervention in regulating social relations. The multiplication of decisions, measures and regulations now proclaimed as coming from "Brussels" is tending to undermine some "social consensus" that have been built on the acceptance of "national" institu-

European Monetary Union: the stakes

MARGARET Thatcher resigned as leader of the Conservative Party so that it would have a chance of winning the next elections. Her fall can partly be explained by the unpopularity of the poll tax, as well as rising inflation and the economic state of the country. It was certainly also because of the European question, which has deeply divided the British ruling class, to the point of provoking an open crisis in the Tory party and in the government.

CLAUDE GABRIEL

tions. Either the latter may no longer look effective and credible, and the unresolved problem will be one of the "democratic" and historic legitimacy of the EEC bodies that partially substitute for them. Or the state may seem to be the unwilling victim of cosmopolitan pressures exercised by Brussels functionaries, and then some will take the option of defending "national" values against the liquidators of the fatherland!

In the final analysis, this lack of an effective solution to the question of a partial transfer of sovereignty from the states to the EEC bodies poses serious problems. This can already be seen in the total loss of credibility of certain national agricultural policies. For example, "Brussels" has just decided that agricultural price subsidies need to be lowered by 30% in order to seek a consensus with the United States in the GATT negotiations. This decision was obviously made after discussion among the governments through the European Council. But some ministers of agriculture have preferred to plead not guilty to the farmers, fostering the feeling that everything is now being imposed by Brussels.

Delors plan is basis for discussion

The so-called Delors Report on Economic and Monetary Union was presented in April 1989 to the European heads of states and governments. It has remained until today the basis of discussion and negotiation about what has been portrayed as a necessary acceleration of the process of integration. Although it has at times been described as a logical sequel to the Single Act signed in December 1986, this new project will require a modification of the original treaty.

The Delors plan provides for three "stages" in arriving at a full monetary union. The first, which opened on July 1, 1990, calls for a convergence of the economic and monetary policies of the mem-

ber states. It was inaugurated with the free circulation of capital (according to the Single Act, this was supposed to begin with the "big market" in 1992). In principle, this should open the way for the formal entry of all the EEC currencies into the European Monetary System (EMS).

Transition to common monetary norms

The second phase is portrayed as a transition — a "learning phase" — leading to collective decision making, with the responsibility for the decisions still falling on the "national" authorities. This is supposed to be a gradual approach leading up to the establishment of common monetary norms, the pooling of a part of exchange reserves and a reduction in the fluctuation of the various currencies. A supernational body for coordinating monetary policies is supposed to be set up to oversee the activity of the central banks.

The three phases will involve establishing fixed and immutable exchange rates, setting up a single European central bank (already dubbed "Eurofed") and making the ECU the single currency of the EEC. The currency reserves of the central banks would then be pooled.

This new project was in reality an option opened up from the beginning by the hazards of the Single Act. The freedom to set up banks and insurance companies and the freedom to offer services in fact usher in free-for-all competition, in particular because of the different tax systems in the various countries for savings and capital. Any financial service offered in one country under local conditions by any banking body can be proposed freely in this form in all other EEC countries. Since the Single Act permits such free circulation of capital, very large imbalances can suddenly appear as a result of differences in competitiveness or in movements of funds seeking more profitable placements. And this is to say nothing of the speculative attacks that are always possible against

one or another currency.

There is, therefore, an objective risk of the states' losing control over the money supply. The disorder of "free circulation" would, therefore, require a new monetary order. And the risk of things getting out of hand cannot be definitively removed in the EEC until the third stage of the Delors plan is reached.

What advances have been made in that direction? In June 1989, the Spanish peseta entered the EMS. It was temporarily allowed to fluctuate by up to 6% against the other currencies. In September, the Portuguese escudo was included in the "basket" defining the ECU.

In January 1990, the Italian lira, which up until then had participated in the EMS with a fluctuation range of more or less 6%, became "adult," coming into the bracket where the basic range of fluctuation is 2.25%.

In May 1990, the Belgian franc established a fixed parity with the German Mark, after the Dutch guilder. The French government is considering doing the same thing soon.

So, we have certainly seen a strengthening of the role of the EMS in recent months and a tendency toward relatively stable parities for some of the currencies concerned. In October, the turn came of the pound sterling to enter the EMS, despite the Thatcher government's past blustering.

These trends have essentially corresponded to concrete industrial and commercial realities. Interdependence has increased. Now the EEC accounts for more than 50% of the foreign trade of these countries. The monetary question is thus the logical conclusion of all the other European processes begun long ago.

Private use of ECU still limited

But the use of the ECU in private transactions has seen only a very modest growth up until now, because it has had no function in general transactions. In order for it to have that, it would be necessary to "break with the ECU," and make a choice of currency, with the costs and risks that would be involved. The Delors plan is designed to definitively overcome this problem.

None of this for the moment opens the way for eliminating all the contradictions created by the Single Act. Let us look at some of them:

- Until things are further developed, the risks inherent in a gap between capital movements and the shattering of the institutional frameworks can give rise to grave problems. An example is the unevenness and instability of interest rates, which are sources of speculative movements. When interest rates went up in West Germany at the beginning of 1990, the Dutch government almost took the guilder out of its fixed parity with the Mark.

- But there are even more problematic aspects. In the present EEC, goods and capital can circulate without any hindrance, while producers' goods do not have the same mobility. Capital is more mobile than factories. Factories are more mobile than labor. Therefore, you cannot get a "spontaneous" adjustment of wage costs to productivity differentials.

- No one yet knows how the budget deficits of each state can be monitored and mastered. But this is a necessary task in the second phase of the EMU. The Delors plan originally called for very tight supervision from Brussels. But there is no reason to think that by that point the transfer of political authority that this involves will have reached such a level.

Draconian policies needed to cut deficits

The various states all have their traditions as regards monitoring the volume of money, wage policies and so on. No two price indexes have yet been established on the same criteria! Moreover, no one knows exactly how in some countries draconian policies for reducing the deficits are going to gain social acceptance (this is true for Italy, but also for Denmark, where all this puts in question the famous Scandinavian model of social development).

- The scope of these problems could lead to a two-level or a two-speed EMU, with countries like West Germany, France, Denmark, the Benelux and maybe Italy, if it manages to cut its budget deficit, forming a leading group.

On the national level, there are important gaps in economic performance from one region to another. But at present, the states have not been able to curb the destabilizing effects of such differences, for example through a relatively free circulation of labor, which in most countries does not run up against any linguistic barriers. They have also been able to devote not inconsiderable means to economic and social incentives.

However, nothing of this sort exists today at the European level. The compensatory funds still represent only a derisory sum. Free circulation of labor belongs to the realm of fiction. And the differences in inflation rates remain very pronounced, between at least two groups of countries (see table p. 22). In such conditions, it is hard to see how in the short term the yawning gaps in economic performance among countries can fail to force the EEC to make a difficult choice — either a two-speed EMU for different groups of countries, or a draconian application of reconversion plans that could lead to very sharp social tensions.

It is quite significant that on the eve of the conference on the EMU, the idea is going around about a subgrouping of countries that are moving faster than others toward monetary union. The chair of

the German central bank, Karl Otto Poehl, has publicly accepted this idea of "two speeds."¹ But it would then be necessary to solve the problem of the gap between the realm of the Single Act (with all the present EEC countries and undoubtedly going even wider) and that of the EMU properly speaking.

How can you fit together all these various levels and make them into a coherent whole? How can you provide a viable institutional system for all this?²

The British proposal for having a common currency alongside the national currencies has not so far been accepted. For the Thatcher government, the aim was to try to keep national control over the money supply. Thus, the government would decide to change only a certain percentage of the monetary volume into ECUs. Total mutual convertibility of the European currencies would make it possible to use the strong currencies to boost the weaker ones. Such a half-way solution was not supported by the Delors report, nor has it been by the majority of the governments.

ECU as single currency most coherent solution

The option therefore has been for the ECU as a single currency. The reason is that, although this solution may appear maximalist, it in fact emerges as the most coherent. It will inflict a real "Darwinian purge" on the most fragile of the European economies — a rapid decline in inflation, control and reduction of the public deficit. For Delors and his colleagues, it is a way to march straight ahead to European unification, while the British solution seemed to be a procrastination that could open up other contradictions. The Delors project is designed to be an express track, avoiding any stopovers that might delay the process.

However, the radicalism of this course does not in itself solve the underlying problem. This is why, at the end of the day, John Major's coming to power in London is going to reopen the debate. The new Conservative government's opening to Europe can make it possible to refloat the idea of the "parallel" (or hard) ECU, combining it with a two-speed EMU. The most advanced countries could then adopt a single currency, while the others could manage for a time with a "parallel" currency. Jacques Delors very demagogically ridiculed Thatcher's theses. But they did point up the real problems of unification.

The Delors plan set January 1, 1993 as the date for the start of the second stage. This was far from getting unanimous support, in view of the pitfalls to be avoided and the difficulties that will have to be resolved before then. The Spanish state

1. *Financial Times*, November 26, 1990.

2. You can see this problem, for example, with the Schengen conference on free circulation of persons and immigration control, to which for the moment only six of the EEC states have adhered.

	1979	1987	1990*
France	10,8	3,1	3,2
FRG	4	0,2	2,3
U.K.	13,4	4,2	9,4
Italy	14,8	4,7	5,8
Belgium	4,5	1,6	3,2
Denmark	9,6	4	4,8
Ireland	13,3	3,2	4
Holland	4,2	- 0,7	2,1
Greece	19	16,4	13,7
Spain	15,7	5,3	7
Portugal	23,9	9,4	12,7

Annual inflation rates of EC countries

economics minister, Carlos Solchaga, distinguished himself in particular in this debate, arguing for putting the date back to 1994. It was thought that the Spanish state needed this time to bring its competitiveness into line with that of the more efficient countries.

It was in fact the Germans who settled this point. Helmut Kohl confirmed on October 17 in an interview on French TV, that it was necessary to take 1994 as the date for inaugurating the second stage of monetary union. In so doing, he settled a debate inside the German establishment itself on the tempo of the process. On October 28, the European Council adopted the later date.

As for the third stage, the outlook remains undefined. The conclusions of the October European Council meeting stipulate that after three years of the "second stage" the Twelve will take stock of things "in order to prepare the way for the decision concerning transition to the third stage that will come within a reasonable time."³ François Mitterrand was to stress that for his part he wanted a time period of four to six years, which would mean real monetary union around 1999 (Delors reportedly wanted a shorter time period). But there are already many unknown twists and turns along this course, and first of all the effects of the American and British recessions.

Conference on political union planned

In any case, nothing in all this settles the question of the institutions and the states. Parallel to the conference on economic and monetary union, a conference on political union will be held in December 1990. The communiqué issued by the Rome European Council in October defined the objective of this meeting as strengthening the EEC's ability to act by extending its authority to other sectors complementary to economic integration that are essential for social cohesion. This great confabulation aimed, finally, at achieving a common foreign and security

policy as soon as possible.⁴ It can be seen today, in the light of the Gulf crisis and the "hostages" question, how hard it is for the Twelve and the EEC to define common interests!

However, the biggest difficulty remains the matter of institutions. On this point, there is a total tangle. The first problem is the dividing line between the authority of the Brussels Commission and the nation states. The second is the authority that the European parliament should have. There is now a strong current in this body that wants to make it a real European legislature, which would deprive not only the Commission but also the European Council and national parliaments of a major part of their prerogatives.

What is supposed to be applied today is the principle of rounding out. The supranational institutions will only make decisions in those areas where a general decision is necessary to maintain the equilibrium of the whole. These are fine words to reassure the supporters of national sovereignty. In reality there is already such a fabric of interdependence that it is getting harder and harder to make national choices that are not at least subordinate to the big European project. Everything (starting with budgets and wage policies) will increasingly depend on the macro-economic choices made at the European level by the Commission and the governments.

Second house proposed for European parliament

In most of the states, the parliamentary institutions have been presented with a fait accompli, and can only respond to European decisions.⁵ So, there is talk now of a second house of the European parliament that would enable national representatives to meet directly, a sort of senate. This is the proposal made, for example, by Chirac in France, or Michael Heseltine in Britain. But by reinforcing the role of the national parliaments as intermediaries, such a solution would lead to reducing the authority of the Brussels Commission.

The French Socialists have preferred to propose holding an assembly of European members of parliament, including representatives of the Strasbourg parliament and the national parliaments, on the eve of the big European choices. Such a meeting has just been held in Rome at the end of November, apparently to prepare the way for governmental conferences in December on EMU. Two hundred and fifty eight "national" deputies, senators and their "European" colleagues met to discuss, among other things, the celebrated "deficit of democracy" of the European institutions.

Is this a European senate or regular interparliamentary conferences? In reality, two radically different options lie behind these choices — a sort of confed-

eration, beloved of a part of the European right (a "Europe of the nations") and a long-term federal project, which the social democrats and Christian Democrats tend to support.

The Single Act, properly speaking, is a declaration of faith in free-for-all free enterprise. A lot of people have discerned in it the irrefutable mark of a historical tendency towards "less state." In fact, contradictory tendencies are operating in this respect, reflecting the needs of a worldwide reorganization of capital on the one hand and the problem of the political means for economic regulation and preserving social relations on the other.

Single Act raises question of para-state bodies

The Single Act barely began to be implemented before it started raising the question for its sponsors of a higher level of para-state institutions to respond to the new European needs. The deregulation of public services is going hand in hand with the privatization of these services — breaking down the divisions among markets, making alliances and undertaking new concentrations. But this has not been the mark of a change in the functioning of contemporary capitalism.

The role of the institutions, the state apparatus, is more than ever the cornerstone of the system. Those who have pushed bourgeois free-trade theses in recent years are getting a painful lesson about this from the current debate on the importance of political control over the upsets caused by the Single Act.

The question of institutions has raised its head again over the status of the future European central bank. The central banks in the various European countries currently have very different relationships with their respective states and political authorities. However, an agreement seems to have emerged now that the future Eurofed will be totally independent, as the German Bundesbank is, for instance (unlike the French central bank, which is totally subject to the orders of the government).

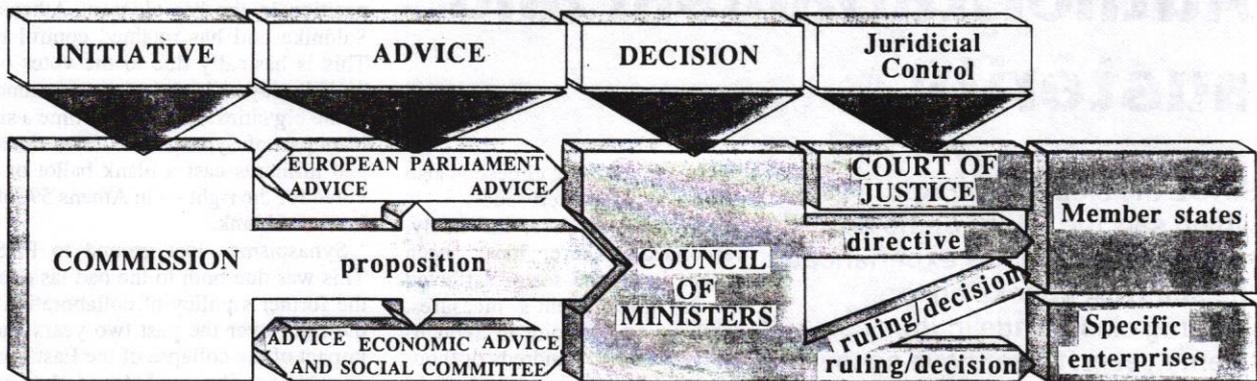
To what extent does this choice reflect doctrine, and to what extent pragmatism? In fact, it is quite clear that since the problem of the political institutions of the future EMU has in no way been solved, the European states are quite incapable today of taking any other option toward the Eurofed. It will, therefore, be "independent," because that is the position of

3. *Le Monde*, October 30, 1990.

4. *Le Monde*, October 30, 1990. On European defense, see my article in *International Viewpoint* No. 194, November 12.

5. *Le Monde*, November 21, 1989.

6. This has kept the same people from proposing a central bank system modelled on the American one, that is, twelve banks crowned with a federal structure. If this were the choice, then it would be necessary, in the last analysis, for the twelve banks all to be independent of their respective "national" authorities. That is easier to say than to do!



How a European Community decision is taken

the Germans and because no one has any idea of what a European bank under political control could look like⁶.

Another feature of the EMU project is the desire to use this process to block the spread of a recession from the United States. The 1930s depression led to the collapse of the gold standard based on the pound sterling.

This fed protectionist drives. It took a whole transitional phrase, from the strengthening of the dollar after 1934 to the 1944 Bretton Woods Accords, which confirmed US world dominance, to achieve a new international monetary equilibrium.

Mark is basis for new world monetary system

Today, we are in a situation that is both analogous and different. While the capitalist crisis has not yet been resolved, and the threat of recession is growing, with EMU, the Germany-EEC couple is trying to pull off a bold monetary operation in order to resolve the upsets in the world economy in its favor.

Inasmuch as the only free international reserve currency is the Mark, and not the franc or the pound, the creation of a European currency that would play a key role in reorganizing the world monetary system would be based on the German currency.⁷ This is why, among other things, a lot of people are talking about the "Mark zone," rather than EMU!

The idea is also that, thanks to unification, German demand on the European market can generate overall growth in the EEC that will make it possible to escape the recession.

But this operation remains especially hazardous since it is impossible to say whether the German economy is going to be capable of carrying through both the EMU operation and the absorbing of the former GDR.

The real costs of German unification remain a mystery, or at least a major sub-

ject of controversy. It involves a big risk of inflation, despite the federal government's decision to reduce public spending.

In the present unsettled situation of the capitalist economy, the challenge of EMU to restabilize the world monetary system takes on the appearance of a race against time.

We can always take comfort from the difficulties the European bourgeoisie is facing in achieving unity. It would have been surprising if on this crucial question the old rule of capitalist contradictions did not raise its head again.

It is more serious, however, to ask whether the workers' movement and all the social movements are going to be able to resume the offensive quickly and take advantage of the factors of instability linked to this transition.

It has to be noted that the main (not the only) initiatives taken to press demands on the European level have come from the farmers' unions, that is, fundamentally bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces. With the benefit of a long-standing clearly European agricultural price policy, the farmers' unions have been able to mount a number of international counterattacks.

Inadequate response of workers' organizations

The workers' unions, however, have been far from able to do this, for reasons that have to do with the chauvinism and conservatism of the bureaucrats who run these organizations.

In the European trade-union movement today, the weight of social democracy makes any independent reaction still more difficult.

However, the pressure extends beyond these leading circles. The building of Europe as it is envisaged today tends to be portrayed as "good sense," apparently without any class stakes.

The workers' movement, meaning here the reformist leaderships and the state of organization and consciousness of the

workers, is light years from doing what needs to be done immediately in order to respond to the European offensive of the ruling classes.

Many factors combine here, and it is not possible to say for sure whether the European bourgeoisies are going to be able to carry through the EMU scheme.

But rather than trying to read the tea leaves, it is better to present a certain number of factors that are already at work:

- For reasons both strictly "European" and because of worldwide reconversions, the dominant sectors of capital want to achieve such economic and monetary union.

- Some of the contradictions and difficulties the project is running up against can be solved, providing the workers' movement does not act in a way that would obstruct the European capitalist project as a whole.

A part of the solution depends therefore on the ability of the bosses and the governments to force the workers' movement back a bit more and to make working people pay the price for their Europe.

- A sharp world recession could delay the project but not necessarily sink it. The structural reasons for such unification will remain in the long term.

- If this project does not come to fruition, especially in the prescribed time periods, this will not keep the many partial measures being taken now from being blows to the social gains and political capacities of the working class.

- Already in this stage of the bourgeoisie's European project, the workers' movement and revolutionaries are faced with new strategic problems.

What sort of struggle should be waged today in Europe?

What forms can continent-wide solidarity take?

And what sort of political and organization project should the left have if it wants to respond to these new challenges? ★

7. Cf. Charles André Udry's article in *International Viewpoint*, No. 195, November 26, 1990.

Authoritarianism and austerity

SINCE the elections in April 1990, which saw the return of the right to power, Greece has experienced the sharpest attacks on the working class made in the past twenty years. Never have so many reactionary and anti-social measures been taken in so short a space of time.

NICOS SIMEONIDIS

IN 1990 alone, workers' purchasing power has fallen by 17%, and a new fall of 10% is forecast for 1991. Inflation reached 29% in 1990. Pensions have been effectively devalued through a change in the way in which they are calculated, and social benefits have also been reduced. Some 90,000 public sector workers have been sacked and a new wave of 300,000 layoffs is being forecast for so-called "problematic" enterprises (that is, enterprises that have declared themselves bankrupt and are functioning under state control).

The largest nationalized industries are to be privatized and the ruling circles are trying to get some nationalized factories declared bankrupt so that they can be sold to their friends for half price. Agricultural income has also fallen, owing to EEC directives, and the peasant cooperatives, which are responsible for 27% of agricultural production, are on the edge of the abyss, and are ceding their role to private intermediaries. As for education, here there are plans for authoritarian and obscurantist measures that will push this sector back 15 years.

The police are the state

Repression is obviously needed to enforce such a programme. The Prime Minister's message to the police has been clear: "You are the state." Such talk has been followed up by police violence against all forms of protest, including charges against demonstrations, and against strikes. A new anti-strike law is before parliament which will outlaw strikes with the threat of instant dismissal. Under cover of "anti-terrorist searches," the far left is threatened with attack.

Greece's foreign policy has also been totally reoriented. Now there is 100% support for the Pentagon and agreement has been given for the return of US mili-

tary bases to Crete. Greece is also joining in the Gulf crusade.

The workers have, inevitably, responded. There have been strikes in all the sectors affected by the government's measures, reaching a high point in September 1990, when hundreds of thousands of workers, above all in public and national enterprises, went on strike against the reduction in pensions and the reduction in the retirement age. But, despite its size, this movement has only involved those directly affected.

The leaderships of PASOK (the Socialist Party) and of the Synaspismos (the left alliance dominated by the Communist Party) have been calling for dialogue and looking for a way to retreat without losing face. They have thus striven to avoid any politicization of these strikes or the emergence of a political alternative as a result of them.

The strikers have thus been cut off from other workers and have met with hostility from the petty bourgeoisie, even though many of these have also been hard hit by the new measures. Deprived of wide social support, the struggles have petered out in a way which amounts to a defeat. Opposition has continued — including some very tough struggles against layoffs and the closures of national factories — but there is no coordination. The government thus feels able to remain intransigent.

Left alliance formed for elections

This was the climate at the time of the October 1990 municipal elections, which gave an opportunity for the anger of thousands of workers to express itself. PASOK and the Synaspismos were compelled to form an alliance against the ruling New Democracy party.

After much negotiation and horse-trading, agreements between the two parties were reached in 200 of the country's 300 municipalities. In many cases, however, this was pushed through at the top without the involvement of local activists, and this led to sectarianism and resentment on the part of the latter. Thus the leadership of the Eurocommunist faction in the Synaspismos, EAR, called, a week before the elections, for the voters to cast their ballots "according to their consciences," rather than urging them to vote for the united lists.

While these elections showed that the credibility of the right was on the decline,

compared with the April legislative elections, the right more or less maintained its position in the big cities of Athens and Salonika and has retained control there. This is basically due to the votes of the "middle layers" who are most numerous in the big cities. At the same time a significant part of Synaspismos' own electorate and militants cast a blank ballot or even voted for the right — in Athens 5% of ballots were blank.

Synaspismos lost ground to PASOK. This was due both to the bad taste left by the former's policy of collaboration with the right over the past two years and the impact of the collapse of the East European regimes. Thus on balance, the government has come out of these elections in a strong position, and is able to claim popular support for its economic policies.

The opposition parties could have launched a frontal charge against the government a long time ago. They could have denounced it as the government of a minority, given that its majority of two seats in parliament (152 out of 300) has been won by bribery of a deputy from another party and by a scandalous judicial decision at the end of October which awarded a PASOK seat to the right. They could have contested its right to take such measures. And yet they have shown themselves above all determined not to obstruct the government. Thus they have entered into a profound crisis.

Populists in bad faith

In PASOK the two principal currents are known as the "populists" and the "modernists". The first group present themselves as spokespersons primarily of the trades unionists and the layers of workers hit by the government's measures. What they demand, with a characteristic bad faith and in a confused manner, is a "combative opposition" and "no compromise with the right". In the recent strikes, they played a very important role.

The modernists represent layers of the petit-bourgeoisie and technocrats of the public and private sectors. They advocate a "responsible opposition" and collaboration with the Synaspismos in the face of the government's policy. They seek dialogue and consensus with the government. The leader of PASOK, Andreas Papandreu, plays the role of point of equilibrium between the two groups.

Yet the crisis which has broken out recently in PASOK should be seen as the reaction of numerous cadres to authoritarianism and to Papandreu's personal leadership rather than that of a confrontation between two positions. But behind this there is also a desire to clarify the reasons for PASOK's electoral defeat in 1989.

The crisis has lost its intensity but there is much anger and impatience in PASOK which — as the trade union and municipal elections have attested — remains the majority party of the working class. Only

the fear that a new internal crisis would serve the right holds back the explosion.

But it is in the Synaspismos that the crisis has broken out in all its intensity. In the KKE (the Greek Communist Party) the biggest component of Synaspismos, two positions exist — that of the “traditionalists”, with majority support in the leadership, who wish to keep the party in the Stalinist-Brezhnevite tradition, and that of the “renovators” who have significant support among the middle cadres. The latter are Moscow-aligned and support a greater integration of the KKE into the bourgeois system. Both groups now support collaboration with PASOK, even if the leaders of the “renovators” have been more instrumental in the building of contacts with the New Democracy and the formation of the ND/Synaspismos government of summer 1989.

In the Eurocommunist EAR (Greek Left, which came out of the split in the KKE-E, the so called “Communist Party-Interior”), second component of Synaspismos, a difference exists on the question of whether to collaborate with PASOK. One wing supports the necessity of this collaboration and a resolute opposition to the right, and the other, with majority support in the leadership, rejects all collaboration and calls for dialogue and consensus with the government.

Far left marginalized

The traditional organized far left is totally marginalised and its influence is almost non-existent. The most important group, despite its problems, is the NAR (New Left Current) which came out of an internal split a year ago in the KKE, principally in its youth organization the KNE (See IV 172). The split had a clear left dynamic, in reaction to the rightwards course which the KKE was following and which culminated in the ND/Synaspismos government. Several positions exist within the NAR, from revolutionary Marxism to nostalgia for the KKE of the preceding period. In certain of their public positions, and particularly in their journal, one can also detect Stalinist-Brezhnevite remnants.

At the time of the split, the NAR regrouped around 7,000 militants, but today more than half have left and those who remain are hardly active. The organization has not been able to define a clear ideological base and has not succeeded in elaborating a policy for the period. After the elections of April 30, where it had very bad results, it turned in on itself and it is only latterly that its trades unionist have begun, very timidly, to collaborate with the other militants of the far left where they have a common implantation.

Beyond the NAR there are a good number of left trades unionists, independent and radical, who work in the context of trade union regroupments — often they play an important role in trade union

mobilizations.

For the moment the situation in Greece appears very sombre. The government, despite its very slender parliamentary majority, can rely on the disappointment of the masses in the bankruptcy of PASOK in government and the pitiful policy of the Synaspismos. This is all the more reinforced by the international climate and the absence of a true opposition. Thus the government continues to step up its anti-worker offensive, leading to a

growing discontent in the working class.

The parties of the opposition, in crisis, are incapable of offering an alternative solution. The serious problems they are meeting will very likely lead to new splits and ruptures.

More than ever, there is an imperative necessity for a new left movement, which can attract all those who no longer have illusions in PASOK or Synaspismos. ★

Walesa's hollow victory

WHEN he announced his intention of running for the presidency of the Polish Republic in June, Lech Walesa was conscious of the growing gulf between the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki — identified by the masses with Solidarnosc — and large sectors of society, victims of his policies. “One could not hope to obtain economic results and, as a consequence, it is necessary to guarantee a broad participation of the society in the exercise of power, and thus to assure its acceptance”, he explained.

CYRIL SMUGA

ALL through his campaign, he repeated incessantly “my programme will be what you want”, seeking to present an image as a candidate who listened to the masses.

The result of the second round of the presidential elections witnesses the defeat of this initiative.

Confronted by an inconsistent candidate, whose sole merit was that of serving as an expression of social discontent, the leader-symbol of Solidarnosc only received the support of 39.65% of those eligible to vote! In this first free nationwide election 47% of the electors took refuge in abstention whereas more than 13% of eligible voters chose to support the eccentric Tyminski. The victory of Walesa, obtained in such conditions, is indicative of disorders to come. And his goal — to gain the people's acceptance of the suffering necessary for the reestablishment of capitalism by participation and social manipulation — is not yet won.

It is among the youth and the workers that Walesa's challenger obtained the highest percentages of the vote — 30% of voters under 25 and 26% of workers taking part in the vote declared their support

for Tyminski. The latter obtained his best scores in Higher Silesia, the industrial heart of Poland and in the rural regions of Greater Poland. At Elblag, city of the first important investments of foreign capital (the Swiss-Swedish holding ABB has recently taken over the Zamech enterprise there, one of the most important of the city) Tyminski received 35.7% of the votes. These figures reflect the disarray which is particularly strong among the young workers.

The zealous application of the recipes of the International Monetary Fund has led to a lowering of 30% in industrial production, a reduction of the real average wage of the order of 35%, and a vertiginous rise in unemployment, which has already passed — before the big waves of dismissals linked to privatization — the threshold of a million. The social deficit which had overshadowed Mazowiecki in the first round of the presidential election has not spared Walesa.

The latter has suffered also from the democratic deficit. In voting for the candidates of Solidarnosc in the June 1989 elections, the electors had pronounced themselves for democracy. They could then have only a single reference to this hope — that of the democracy which reigned inside Solidarnosc in 1980-81. A democracy from below, with election and recall of representatives, organized around workplace collectives capable of influencing the decisions taken at the summit. A decentralized democracy, where each link — in the workplace as in the region — was sovereign and could reject the decision of the superior echelon if it went against its interests.

This memory, at the same time blurred and idealized during the decade of the state of emergency, was the sole experience of democracy on a mass scale that the great majority of the population knew. Far from corresponding to this ideal, the parliamentary democracy installed in Poland has been that of the absence of alternatives, justified in a language mixing pseudo-scientific argumentation and an authoritarian morality, all the more authoritarian when its actors felt them-

selves invested with a historic mission.

Paradoxically, the election of Lech Walesa thus bears witness to a growing rejection of the theme he has made his own — that of the return to capitalism. For all that, in this election none of his opponents have presented an alternative to this choice. Not even the ex-apparatchik Stalinist student Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, whose programme stipulated “an indispensable privatization of a large part of productive capital”. Social discontent, of which the strikes in the mines and in urban transport on the eve of the first round were the expression, has thus not been able to

find an electoral expression. It is a time bomb that the new President must dismantle and which could weigh on the struggle for his succession opened inside Solidarnosc.

The immediate stake will be to preserve the internal democracy of the Polish trade union, put in danger after the attempts of its national leadership to muzzle the leaderships of the combative branches (miners and urban transport workers) on November 20, as well as the national agreement of the workplace commissions (the “Network”) on November 7. ★

ment.

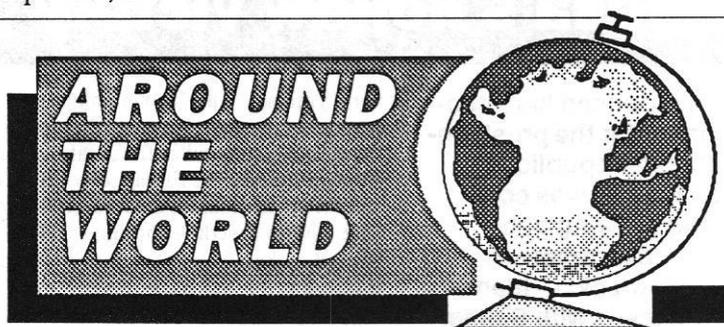
Finally, all the independent trade unions — in electricity, health, national education, higher education, posts and telecoms — have gone into action. These are unions that have broken in the course of the years with the official regime-controlled trade union.

They have now decided on a wave of general strikes: the first on December 14-15, the second between December 18 and 22, and then an indefinite all-out strike starting on January 9.

Their aim is to beat back the government and win a reduction in taxes, the price of basic necessities and of some other products.

Notice of the strike was given before the municipal elections, at which time the government made its first concessions, the suppression of an extra tax which involved taking 5% off income.

A social conflict of the highest importance is developing in Senegal. The coordination of opposition parties has decided to actively support the strike. The idea of a political mass strike is gaining support; appeals are being made to shopkeepers and transport workers to help bring the country to a standstill. The corrupt and enfeebled Abu Diouf regime (a member of the Socialist International) is sinking deeper into crisis. ★



CHAD

Coup d'etat

ONCE again, Chad has returned to the headlines. Idriss Deby, former commander in chief of the army of Hissan Habré, has just overthrown the latter after a lightning war launched from the frontier zones in the east of the country. In the course of a few weeks the capital Ndjamenas has fallen — troops loyal to Habré were incapable of resisting and Habré himself precipitately left the country.

In 1986 France and the United States intervened to defend the Habré regime against a coalition between certain Chadian groups and Libya. The stabilization of the situation, after the deployment of the imperialist forces had permitted the defeat of the Libyans, was then hailed as the victory of a certain national legitimacy in the face of totalitarian threats. However, the French forces based in Chad were ordered not to intervene this time, and the so-called democratic regime of Habré has collapsed like a house of cards.

Why has the French government allowed the collapse of a regime as “legitimate”, in its eyes, as that of Habré? How has Paris been able to explain that, having waged as costly a war as that of 1985-86 to defend its Chadian ally of the moment, nothing has been done to support him this time?

The Chadian state is an abstract construct and imperialism accords it a legitimacy when it needs to do so. Because Paris has an account to settle with Washington in this region, because it seeks a new relationship with Libya, because it is preparing for a possible crisis in

Sudan...the regime in Ndjamenas suddenly ceased to be “democratic” and “legitimate”.

But the cynicism does not stop there. The victory of the Deby group has led to the discovery that nearly 700 Libyan prisoners had been trained by the Americans, under the protection of Habré, to launch terrorist actions in Libya. After the fall of the capital, a lightning operation allowed an American plane (registered with NATO forces) to land at Ndjamenas and to take a group of these Libyans away to an unknown destination. The White House, usually so prompt to denounce international terrorism, has for the moment made no comment. ★

SENEGAL

Rising tension

THE call for a boycott of the recent municipal and rural elections from all the opposition forces in Senegal was largely heeded. The consensus among the opposition is that there was a turnout of about 15%. Even so, the government has not hesitated to make extravagant assertions about the turnout, claiming 75% in Dakar and 90% in some places.

Since then, tension has mounted. At the start of December, the schools were on strike and school students' protests were systematically broken up with tear gas, as is the custom. Students have been holding regular general assemblies in order to launch a similar move-

**JAPAN:
Trotsky symposium**

About 30 Japanese scholars of economics, history, literature and politics organized a symposium to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Leon Trotsky. The meeting was held at the University of Tokyo on November 2-4. Five Soviet scholars were present: V. Billik (historian); V. I. Startzev (editorial staff of official CPSU history); A. V. Pantzov (Institute of History of the International Workers' Movement); A. M. Podschekoldin (CPSU Institute of Marxism-Leninism); and E. Kotelenets (P. Lumumba University). Other guest participants were B. Kagarlitsky (USSR); P. Broué (France); Bala Tampoe (Sri Lanka); E. Volkov (Trotsky's grandson — Mexico).

About 200 people attended the discussions on November 2 and 3, and over 400 came to hear speeches by Volkov, Broué, Startzev and Kagarlitsky on November 4. Discussions were held around four topics: “Trotsky on culture”; “Trotsky on Asia”; “Trotsky's perspective on the crisis of world capitalism in the 1930s”; and “Trotsky and perestroika”.

Several notable scholars associated with the Japanese Communist Party helped organize the symposium, and many JCP members were in the audience, but the JCP itself has maintained a complete silence about the event. ★

A Vietnamese Trotskyist in Prague

WHY did you make your trip to Prague?

Tens of thousands of Vietnamese workers and students have directly experienced the upheavals in Eastern Europe. It would obviously have been out of the question for we Trotskyists to miss the opportunity to see how these Vietnamese had reacted, and what their conclusions were for their own countries.

How did you make your contacts?

We have been exchanging letters with the groups of Vietnamese students who produce *Tribune* in Prague. It was one of them who met me at the airport, along with a comrade of the Fourth International who lives in Prague.

First of all I had a discussion at the hotel with two students. They were very cautious. They asked what Trotskyists were and what I was doing in Prague. The ice was only broken after a meeting with Petr Uhl, currently head of the Czechoslovak press agency. They told him about their difficulties in the face of rising racism, and I asked Petr how they could be helped. The suspicion then disappeared and I was able to go to where they lived, where I talked with a group of five students, who were between 25 and 35 years old.

What were the main topics you discussed?

I thought that we would be talking about present-day Vietnam, their situation in Czechoslovakia and their compatriots in France. In fact, I was bombarded with questions about Stalinism, Trotskyism and the reasons for the failure of "really-existing" Socialism. They were very politically aware. Of course we also discussed their situation in Prague. There are some 30,000 Vietnamese in Czechoslovakia, 5,000 of whom have left for West Germany.

After the attacks they suffered six months ago, they have organized to defend themselves.

Things have been more or less calm for the past three months, but now the trouble has started up again. They go out in groups of four or five in case they are attacked.

They are very critical of their Embassy and government, who have done nothing to foster friendly relations with the Czechs and Slovaks; nor do they have any meeting place such as a cultural centre. Hanoi finds them a place and gets a large part of their wages, while Prague uses

HA CUONG NGHI, a member of the Vietnamese Trotskyist group which produces the journal *Cahiers Vietnamiennes*, spent four days in Prague in November of this year. The Spring/Summer issue of the *Cahiers* included a dossier on the situation of Vietnamese workers in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, who have faced racist attacks. Louis Couturier asked Ha about his impressions.

them for jobs that Czechs won't do.

Did you meet any workers?

Yes, in an unexpected, and unplanned, way. One day, I met a Vietnamese who asked me what I was doing there. I said that I was a journalist and wanted to talk to journalists. We chatted and then he took me to a place in the environs of Prague where there is a foreign workers' hostel. Of the 1,000 people there, some 500 are Vietnamese. I talked from 8pm to midnight with a group of seven young building workers. I had with me a case full of documents in Vietnamese — notably Khrushchev's secret speech, with a commentary by the Fourth International. These contacts went more easily than those with the students. They discovered another vision of communism to that which they had known. They asked me many questions about Stalinism and the Trotskyist programme.

They were very friendly and offered to put me up in the hostel — in one of the rooms made free by the flight to West Germany.

They had a front row seat during the events at the end of last year. What were their reactions and had they made any connection with what they had known in Vietnam?

The people I met had lost all confidence in the Vietnamese leadership. They were very much in favour of renewal. They found it hard to understand why the Communist Party, which claims to represent the interests of the workers, has suffered such a failure.

They are anxious and disoriented. Their contracts expire in two years, and they are frightened that they will not be able to find work in Vietnam (they fit central heating boilers).

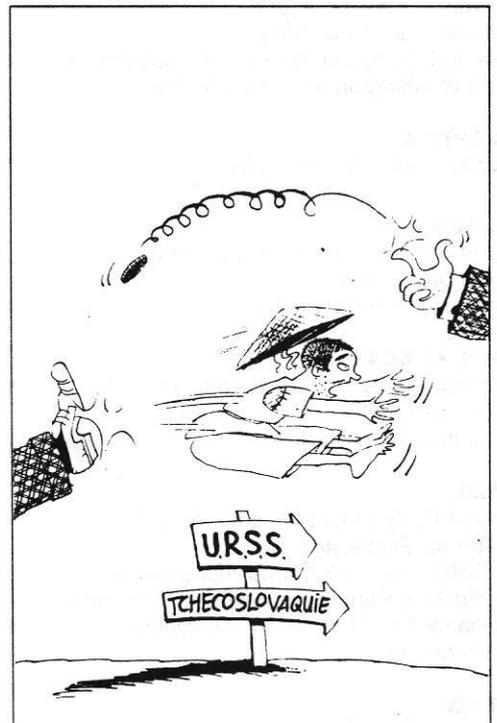
What are you planning to do now?

First of all, to keep my promises. I promised to send them magazines from different points of view, as well as novels that they cannot get hold of due to their isolation.

Then we will regularly be sending comrades to take part in discussion and education groups. This makes me feel young again. We did this sort of thing at the time of the workers' camps in France, but the cultural level is now much higher — in 1945 the workers were illiterate.

We are going to produce a Vietnamese language supplement to *Cahiers Vietnamiennes* and probably educational videocassettes.

Finally, I must mention that I met by chance the son of an old comrade of mine, who went back to Vietnam in 1952, was arrested by Diem's police in 1965 and died in obscure circumstances during the Tet offensive in 1968. I told him that his father had been a Trotskyist rather than simply a Communist. This was a very moving encounter for both of us. ★



1990 Index

(Issues 177 — 197)

THIS INDEX of articles published in *International Viewpoint* for 1990 is ordered alphabetically by country or region. There are also categories for articles on the antiwar movement, Communism, economics, the Fourth International, Trotsky and women. Material on the Gulf crisis will be found under the antiwar and Middle East headings. These articles also appear in country categories where applicable. (NS) denotes "news short".

ALBANIA

The last bastion begins to crumble 189 16 July 90
Bernard Gibbons

ALGERIA

Social crisis brews as Algeria opens up 182 9 Apr 90
Interview with *Chawki Salhi*
Women against fundamentalism 182 9 Apr 90
Interview with *Samira Fellah*
The fundamentalist earthquake 189 16 July 90
Interview with *Chawki Salhi*
Gulf reactions (NS) 192 15 Oct 90
Oil and solidarity — interview with *PST militant* 193 29 Oct 90
First issue of *El Khatwa* (NS) 196 10 Dec 90

ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

Drawing a line against the war drive 190 17 Sept 90
Steps forward for antiwar movement 191 1 Oct 90
France, Holland, Britain (NS) 192 15 Oct 90
Stop the imperialist war drive! — *Document* 192 15 Oct 90
October 20 — an international day of action 192 15 Oct 90
Paris demonstration (NS) 193 29 Oct 90
Antiwar mobilizations intensify — Germany, France, Italy, USA, Japan 194 12 Nov 90
Soldiers against war (NS) 194 12 Nov 90
Growing US antiwar movement plans march on Washington — *Peter Drucker* 197 24 Dec 90

ARGENTINA

Mayday against Menem (NS) 188 2 July 90

BELGIUM

Step forward in fight for abortion rights 188 2 July 90
Ida Dequeker
Belgian teachers' strike (NS) 196 10 Dec 90

BLACK AFRICA

Mass revolt against neo-colonial austerity 181 26 Mar 90
Claude Gabriel
A turning point in Black Africa — *Claude Gabriel* 187 18 June 90

BRAZIL

Workers Party's election breakthrough 178 12 Feb 90
Juarez Guimaraes
The Collor plan — *Eduardo Albuquerque* 184 7 May 90
The Workers Party's proposals — *Document* 184 7 May 90
Brazilian PT outlines vision of socialism 194 12 Nov 90
Document

BRITAIN

Outlook for Socialism 1989 (NS) 177 29 Jan 90
Thatcher's flagship hits the rocks 182 9 Apr 90
Bernard Gibbons

The Welsh language and capitalism 182 9 Apr 90
Interview with activists

Poll tax riot underlines crisis of Thatcher government — *T. Conway and A. Thornett* 183 23 Apr 90

New attack on abortion rights fails — *Anne Kane* 185 21 May 90

Antiwar demonstration (NS) 192 15 Oct 90

UK economy — a spiral of decline 193 29 Oct 90
Alan Freeman

Scottish nationalists turn left — *Gordon Morgan* 193 29 Oct 90

The price of oil — *Norman Lockhart* 193 29 Oct 90

From Thatcher to Euro-Thatcherism 196 10 Dec 90
James Brook

Conference launches debt campaign (NS) 196 10 Dec 90

BULGARIA

Elections open period of crisis — *Two interviews* 190 17 Sept 90

Bulgaria lurches into turmoil — *Kathy Lowe* 193 29 Oct 90

Three faces of the Bulgarian opposition 193 29 Oct 90

CAMBODIA

Imperialist diplomacy and the Cambodian civil war — *Pierre Rousset* 183 23 Apr 90

CANADA

Abortion rights threatened (NS) 178 12 Feb 90

Quebec challenges Canadian federation 191 1 Oct 90
Ronald Cameron

Native Americans confront the state 191 1 Oct 90

Michel Lafitte

New openings for left — *Barry Weisleder* 192 15 Oct 90

CENTRAL AMERICA

Gunboat diplomacy in Central America 178 12 Feb 90
Janette Habel

CHAD

Coup d'etat (NS) 197 24 Dec 90

CHILE

Who really won the Chilean elections? 179 26 Feb 90

Orlando Sierra

A Chilean miracle? — *Pedro Vuskovic* 189 16 July 90

CHINA

One year after the Tiananmen massacre 186 4 June 90

Laurent Carasso

Recession in China — *Yang Hai* 187 18 June 90

COLOMBIA

Release Daniel Libreros and other arrested militants! (NS) 181 9 Apr 90

War against drugs — or against the left? 183 23 Apr 90
Libardo Gonzales

Campaign against repression (NS) 183 7 May 90

Interview with *Daniel Libreros* 185 21 May 90

The left and the crisis — Interview with *Carlos Romero* 186 4 June 90

A Constituent Assembly without credibility 197 24 Dec 90

Alfonso Moro

COMMUNISM

The future of communism — *Ernest Mandel* 179 26 Feb 90

International Trotsky symposium 183 23 Apr 90

Ernest Mandel

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

"We must preserve respect for social justice" 177 29 Jan 90
Interview with *Petr Uhl*

Who benefits from anti-communism? 182 9 Apr 90

Petr Uhl

High hopes and deep suspicions — *Colin Meade* 183 23 Apr 90

A brief inventory of the left — *Document* 186 4 June 90

- Czechoslovak left honours Tiananmen victims 187 18 June 90
 Czechoslovak elections — results and prospects 188 2 July 90
Petr Kuzvat
 After the Civic Forum victory — *Colin Meade* 188 2 July 90
 Petition in defence of trade union rights (NS) 189 16 July 90
 Monopoly capital (NS) 192 15 Oct 90
 The end of consensus — *Colin Meade* 195 26 Nov 90
 The Czech left greets George Bush (NS) 196 10 Dec 90
 A Vietnamese Trotskyist in Prague 197 24 Dec 90
- DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**
 General strikes confront Balaguer 196 10 Dec 90
Andy Brock
 In the misery zone — *Robert Helder* 196 10 Dec 90
- ECONOMICS**
 Is the crisis over? — *Winfried Wolf* 189 16 July 90
 A declining imperialism lashes out
Winfried Wolf 192 15 Oct 90
 Precedent for US crusade 192 15 Oct 90
 War, crash, crisis — *Winfried Wolf* 192 15 Oct 90
 Oil fuels drive for profits — *Winfried Wolf* 192 15 Oct 90
 Bush's financial Vietnam — *Charles-Andre Udry* 194 12 Nov 90
 Europe: A fortress against recession
Charles-Andre Udry 195 26 Nov 90
Free trade zones: Dossier 196 10 Dec 90
 Introduction — *Claude Gabriel*
 Dominican Republic — *Robert Helder*
 Philippines — *Sonia Rupon*
 Mexico — *Maxime Durand*
- ECUADOR**
 Indian uprising (NS) 192 15 Oct 90
- EGYPT**
 Egypt in the Gulf crisis — interview with
Egyptian Marxist 194 12 Nov 90
- EL SALVADOR**
 Peace is still a long way off 188 2 July 90
 Interview with *Ana Guadalupe Martinez*
 The war is not over — *Sergio Rodriguez* 194 12 Nov 90
 A government of terrorists — *Document* 194 12 Nov 90
 A year after the FMLN offensive — Interview
 with *Mario Lopez* 197 24 Dec 90
- ETHIOPIA**
 The Mengistu regime crumbles 195 26 Nov 90
Francis Cazals
- EUROPE**
 Helsinki citizens' assembly (NS) 194 12 Nov 90
- EUROPE (Eastern)**
 The working class and the democratic revolution 181 9 Apr 90
Round table
 The imperialists close in — *Oliver MacDonald* 190 17 Sept 90
 The instruments of control 190 17 Sept 90
Oliver MacDonald
- EUROPE (Western)**
 European railworkers meeting (NS) 179 26 Feb 90
 Kohl and Mitterrand speed up plans for
 European unity — *Claude Gabriel* 184 7 May 90
 Nationalist organizations meet in Barcelona
Alain Nazier 189 16 July 90
 The Schengen Wall 189 16 July 90
Beatrice Rayman
 How united is Europe? — *Claude Gabriel* 194 12 Nov 90
 European monetary union: the stakes
Claude Gabriel 197 24 Dec 90
- FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**
 Defend the Nicaraguan revolution! 180 12 Mar 90
 Resolutions on the German question 181 26 Mar 90
 International Youth Summer Camp (NS) 187 18 June 90
 US Socialist Workers Party leaves Fourth
 International — *L. Maitan and B. Chavez* 189 16 July 90
 Imperialist troops out of the Gulf! 190 17 Sept 90
 Youth summer camp (NS) 194 12 Nov 90
 In the Soviet press (NS) 195 26 Nov 90
 Seventh congress of PSR (Portugal) (NS) 195 26 Nov 90
- FRANCE**
 Turmoil in the French Communist Party 179 26 Feb 90
Jean Versailles
 East wind in the sails (NS) 183 23 Apr 90
 The deconcentration of capital? (NS) 188 2 July 90
 Antiwar demonstration (NS) 192 15 Oct 90
 School students rebel against
 education cuts (NS) 195 26 Nov 90
- GERMANY**
 New threat to abortion rights — *Angela Klein* 189 16 July 90
 The new McCarthyism — *Ernest Mandel* 189 16 July 90
 The mounting cost of German unification
Manuel Kellner and Türk Hansen 190 17 Sept 90
 German left faces elections — *Manuel Kellner* 192 15 Oct 90
 Germany — still a divided country — *Document* 192 15 Oct 90
 Abortion mobilizations challenge right offensive
Angela Klein 193 29 Oct 90
 Violence against squatters (NS) 196 10 Dec 90
 Berlin — open city (NS) 196 10 Dec 90
 A black and yellow day — *Manuel Kellner* 197 24 Dec 90
 The consequences of unification
Winfried Wolf 197 24 Dec 90
- GERMANY (East)**
 Stalinism in the bankruptcy court 179 26 Feb 90
Manuel Kellner
 Interview with *Ina Merkel* 180 12 Mar 90
 Birth of independent women's movement in
 the GDR — *Document* 180 12 Mar 90
 The new *Anschluss* — *Angela Klein* 181 26 Mar 90
 The high tide of the right — *Hans-Jürgen Schulz* 182 9 Apr 90
 Against the annexation of East Germany
Document 182 9 Apr 90
 Anti-semitism and the GDR elections (NS) 183 23 Apr 90
 Changes in East Germany's former ruling party
Manuel Kellner 184 7 May 90
 East and West unite to cover up for the Stasi
Michel Thévenaz 184 7 May 90
 The end is nigh — *Winfried Wolf* 186 4 June 90
 The failure of the East German economy
Wolfgang Wolf 186 4 June 90
 Debate on future of socialism (NS) 187 18 June 90
 Big rise in abstentions — *Manuel Kellner* 194 12 Nov 90
- GERMANY (West)**
 Is the crisis over? — *Winfried Wolf* 189 16 July 90
 Iraqi gas made in Germany (NS) 192 15 Oct 90
- GREECE**
 Resignation of Communist Euro-MP
Document 179 26 Feb 90
 New far-left organization is formed
Andreas Sartzekis 182 9 Apr 90
 Authoritarianism and austerity — *Nicos*
Simeonidis 197 24 Dec 90
- HAITI**
 A democratic transition? — *Arthur Mahon* 181 26 Mar 90
 A candidate of the people (NS) 195 26 Nov 90
 A mortal sin — *Arthur Mahon* 196 10 Dec 90

30 1990 Index

HOLLAND			
Antiwar demonstration (NS)	192	15 Oct 90	
HUNGARY			
Votes against Stalinism — <i>Laszlo Anders</i>	184	7 May 90	
Hungarian left faces identity crisis <i>Tamas Krausz</i>	193	29 Oct 90	
INDIA			
The fall of Rajiv Gandhi — <i>S. Sen</i>	178	12 Feb 90	
The Kashmir question — <i>Document</i>	192	15 Oct 90	
INDONESIA			
Free union formed (NS)	195	26 Nov 90	
IRELAND			
Hunger strike against extradition (NS)	193	29 Oct 90	
Police raids (NS)	193	29 Oct 90	
Save Dessie Ellis! (NS)	195	26 Nov 90	
A bad result for the big bourgeois parties <i>John Meehan</i>	196	10 Dec 90	
ISRAELI STATE			
Coalition breaks up under blows of Intifada <i>Michel Warshawsky</i>	183	23 Apr 90	
New attack on Palestinians (NS)	185	21 May 90	
The Intifada spreads and revives <i>Salah Jaber</i>	186	4 June 90	
Appeal for international solidarity (NS)	187	18 June 90	
The War cabinet — <i>Michel Warshawsky</i>	188	2 July 90	
New anxieties for Zionist leaders (NS)	190	17 Sept 90	
Mass Palestinian support for Iraq (NS)	192	15 Oct 90	
Massacre in Jerusalem — <i>Salah Jaber</i>	193	29 Oct 90	
Warshawsky freed (NS)	196	10 Dec 90	
ITALY			
New alignments at Democrazia Proletaria congress	178	12 Feb 90	
Italian students challenge elitist reform of higher education — <i>Isaac Parodi</i>	180	12 Mar 90	
PCI congress paves way for new transformations — <i>Livio Maitan</i>	183	23 Apr 90	
Gulf crisis splits Italian CP — <i>Enzo Traverso</i>	190	17 Sept 90	
The name of the thing — <i>Livio Maitan</i>	194	12 Nov 90	
JAPAN			
The left in a changing landscape — interview with <i>Osamu Hino</i>	183	23 Apr 90	
Emperors and constitutions — <i>Bernard Gibbons</i>	195	26 Nov 90	
Trotsky symposium (NS)	197	24 Dec 90	
JORDAN			
Gulf reactions (NS)	192	15 Oct 90	
A new face for the king — <i>Luiza Maria</i>	195	26 Nov 90	
LATIN AMERICA			
Latin American Marxism — the relaunch <i>Sergio Rodriguez</i>	190	17 Sept 90	
A Continent for sale — <i>Alfonso Moro</i>	191	1 Oct 90	
Latin American CPs: The impact of <i>perestroika</i> <i>Document</i>	193	29 Oct 90	
LEBANON			
Exit Aoun... — <i>Salah Jaber</i>	193	29 Oct 90	
MEXICO			
Solidarity with Mexican Ford workers (NS)	177	29 Jan 90	
Advances for Ford workers (NS)	179	26 Feb 90	
Defend Mexican Trotskyists — and free elections (NS)	190	17 Sept 90	
Maquila madness in Mexico <i>Maxime Durand</i>	196	10 Dec 90	
MIDDLE EAST			
A balance-sheet of the Intifada Interview with <i>George Habash</i>	177	29 Jan 90	
A contribution to the discussion <i>Salah Jaber</i>	177	29 Jan 90	
The new imperialist crusade — <i>Salah Jaber</i>	190	17 Sept 90	
Imperialist troops out of the Gulf! <i>USEC bureau statement</i>	190	17 Sept 90	
Chronicle of a war foretold — <i>Salah Jaber</i>	191	1 Oct 90	
Palestinian leaders play musical chairs (NS)	191	1 Oct 90	
Kurdistan and the Gulf crisis	193	29 Oct 90	
Between compromise and war — <i>Salah Jaber</i>	194	12 Nov 90	
George Habash on war and peace in the Middle East — <i>Document</i>	195	26 Nov 90	
The Gulf and the Intifada — <i>Document</i>	195	26 Nov 90	
Talking peace and preparing for war <i>Salah Jaber</i>	197	24 Dec 90	
MOROCCO			
Hunger strikes (NS)	180	12 Mar 90	
NEW ZEALAND			
Poverty and repression behind royal charade Interview with <i>Karim Maghrebi</i>	186	4 June 90	
All over for hard labour down under <i>Geoff Pearce</i>	194	12 Nov 90	
NICARAGUA			
Nicaraguan leader defends signing of San Isidro accords — <i>Document</i>	178	12 Feb 90	
The choices facing Nicaragua — <i>Eric Toussaint</i>	179	26 Feb 90	
Defend the Nicaraguan revolution!	180	12 Mar 90	
After the Sandinista election defeat <i>Sergio Rodriguez</i>	181	26 Mar 90	
The Contras reawaken — <i>Cecilia Garmendia</i>	184	7 May 90	
No honeymoon for Chamorro <i>Cecilia Garmendia</i>	187	18 June 90	
Towards a "social democratic capitalism?" <i>Pedro Antonio Rodriguez</i>	187	18 June 90	
NORTH KOREA			
The growing isolation of the "great leader" <i>Enzo Traverso</i>	195	26 Nov 90	
OBITUARIES			
Oskar Hippe	183	23 Apr 90	
Louis Sinclair	191	1 Oct 90	
Reba Hansen	191	1 Oct 90	
I. B. Tabata	194	12 Nov 90	
PAKISTAN			
Did she fall or was she pushed? — <i>Ahmad Shuja</i>	196	10 Dec 90	
PALESTINE			
Mass support for Iraq (NS)	192	15 Oct 90	
PANAMA			
Unjust cause — <i>Alfonso Moro</i>	177	29 Jan 90	
The invasion of Panama and its consequences <i>PRT of Panama</i>	180	12 Mar 90	
Talking of annexations (NS)	191	1 Oct 90	
PERU			
Free enterprise didn't sell — <i>Hugo Blanco</i>	184	7 May 90	
Hugo Blanco elected senator (NS)	192	15 Oct 90	
PHILIPPINES			
Working for labour unity Interview with <i>Ernesto Arellano</i>	185	21 May 90	
National Federation of Labour statement on China (NS)	185	21 May 90	
KMU statement on Tiananmen massacre (NS)	185	21 May 90	

- The Philippines, East Europe, Socialism and Democracy — Interview with *Joel Rocamora* 186 4 June 90
- Dimming prospects for democracy — *Document* 186 4 June 90
- Right to asylum for Jose Maria Sison — *Paul Petitjean* 193 29 Oct 90
- Debate in the Philippines — *Sonia Rupon* 196 10 Dec 90
- PHILOSOPHY**
- The end of Althusser's long march — *Daniel Bensaid* 195 26 Nov 90
- POLAND**
- The time-bomb — *Cyril Smuga* 178 12 Feb 90
- Church, state and women's right to abortion — *Jaqueline Heinen* 180 12 Mar 90
- Fourth International thanked for solidarity effort (NS) 181 26 Mar 90
- Solidarnosc: searching for a second wind — *Cyril Smuga* 185 21 May 90
- Railway workers challenge Mazowiecki — *Cyril Smuga* 187 18 June 90
- Elites and counter-elites — *Cyril Smuga* 191 1 Oct 90
- Towards a new identity for Solidarnosc — *Document* 195 26 Oct 90
- Walesa's hollow victory — *Cyril Smuga* 197 24 Dec 90
- PORTUGAL**
- A Trotskyist on Lisbon city council (NS) 183 23 Apr 90
- Seventh congress of PSR (NS) 195 26 Nov 90
- ROMANIA**
- After Ceausescu's overthrow — hope, fear and distrust — *Gerry Foley* 177 29 Jan 90
- Free trade unions begin to emerge — *Documents* 177 29 Jan 90
- Front runs away from "victory" in the streets — *Gerry Foley* 178 12 Feb 90
- Interview with Brasov tractor factory workers 178 12 Feb 90
- Lifting of ban on abortion (NS) 178 12 Feb 90
- After the elections — *Livio Maitan* 187 18 June 90
- Towards new political struggles — *Livio Maitan* 188 2 July 90
- Strike wave and privatization plans (NS) 189 16 July 90
- Ion Iliescu on pluralism (NS) 189 16 July 90
- Sweeping privatizations planned — *Gerry Foley* 195 26 Nov 90
- SENEGAL**
- New moves to far left unity (NS) 186 4 June 90
- The empty shop window of African democracy — Interview with *Amadou Guiro* 196 10 Dec 90
- Rising tension (NS) 197 24 Dec 90
- SOUTH AFRICA**
- Mandela free but apartheid remains — *Peter Blumer* 179 26 Feb 90
- Challenging sexual exploitation — *Work in Progress* 180 12 Mar 90
- Socialist organization formed (NS) 184 7 May 90
- Negotiations and reorientations — *Peter Blumer* 188 2 July 90
- South Africa and socialism — *document* 190 17 Sept 90
- The township war and the negotiations (NS) 190 17 Sept 90
- The reef war — *Sophie Hawes* 191 1 Oct 90
- Who is behind the violence? 191 1 Oct 90
- A first step towards defeat — *Peter Blumer* 193 29 Oct 90
- SOUTH KOREA**
- Repression stepped up (NS) 180 12 Mar 90
- "We are not machines" — *Enzo Traverso* 184 7 May 90
- Support Korean workers! (NS) 184 7 May 90
- The latest strike wave (NS) 185 21 May 90
- Union activists speak — *Interviews* 195 26 Nov 90
- SOVIET UNION**
- Insurrection in Azerbaijan — *Gerry Foley* 177 29 Jan 90
- Soviet journal interviews Trotskyist economist — *Document* 177 29 Jan 90
- Why is the Soviet army in Azerbaijan? — *Salah Jaber* 178 12 Feb 90
- The Caucasian powder-keg — *Gerry Foley* 178 12 Feb 90
- What are Soviet workers thinking? — *David Seppo* 178 12 Feb 90
- Debates erupt at Soviet CP plenum — *Gerry Foley* 179 26 Feb 90
- Lithuania: perestroika faces test of free elections — *Colin Meade* 179 26 Feb 90
- Gorbachev redefines perestroika — *Livio Maitan* 179 26 Feb 90
- Elections strengthen Baltic push for independence — *Gerry Foley* 180 12 Mar 90
- Careers for women — *N. Zakharova and N. Rimashevskaya* 180 12 Mar 90
- Interview with *Boris Kagarlitsky* 181 26 Mar 90
- Debate on the national question — *Catherine Verla and Erdal Tun* 181 26 Mar 90
- The Lviv strike committee — *Zbigniew Kowalewski* 181 26 Mar 90
- A Bonapartist presidency to save the bureaucracy — *Gerry Foley* 181 26 Mar 90
- West gives tacit support to Moscow's attack on Lithuania — *Gerry Foley* 182 9 Apr 90
- What lies behind the new presidential powers? — *David Seppo* 182 9 Apr 90
- Lithuanian independence and the future of the Soviet Union — *Salah Jaber* 183 23 Apr 90
- Interview with *Mikhail Malyutin* 183 23 Apr 90
- Lithuania: front line of the fight for democracy — *Gerry Foley* 184 7 May 90
- "Lithuania cannot shift the Kremlin alone" — *Gerry Foley* 185 21 May 90
- Oil and gas workers threaten strike (NS) 185 21 May 90
- "We need an ideology" — *Gerry Foley* 186 4 June 90
- Workers back Lithuania (NS) 186 4 June 90
- Growing support for independence movement — *Gerry Foley* 187 18 June 90
- Interview with *Alexander Buzhgalin* 187 18 June 90
- Towards capitalism or socialism? — *Document* 187 18 June 90
- Workers of the USSR: Unite! — *Poul Funder Larsen* 187 18 June 90
- The politics of Baltic independence — *Gerry Foley* 188 2 July 90
- A crisis programme — *Document* 188 2 July 90
- Supporters of the "Chilean model" (NS) 188 2 July 90
- Perestroika in crisis — *David Seppo* 189 16 July 90
- Ukrainian: a language in danger — *Document* 189 16 July 90
- Ukrainian solidarity with Lithuania — Interview with *Vsevolod Is'kiv* 189 16 July 90
- Jewish flight from the USSR — *Antonio Moscato* 189 16 July 90
- Last call for the CPSU — *Poul Funder Larsen* 190 17 Sept 90
- Monument for women prisoners (NS) 191 1 Oct 90
- Politburo appeals to Lithuanian people (NS) 191 1 Oct 90
- Deserters (NS) 191 1 Oct 90
- The dictatorship of the pro-marketeters — *Catherine Verla* 192 15 Oct 90
- Views from Leningrad — *Interviews* 192 15 Oct 90
- Interview with *Nikolai Preobrazhensky* 192 15 Oct 90
- Towards market Stalinism — *David Seppo* 192 15 Oct 90
- Each to their own market — *Gerry Foley* 194 12 Nov 90
- Against bureaucratic-capitalist chaos — *Document* 194 12 Nov 90
- Political footwork in a system in crisis (NS) 195 29 Nov 90
- The Ukraine against Gorbachev — *Document* 196 10 Dec 90
- Georgia moves towards independence — *Gerry Foley* 196 10 Dec 90
- Who gets the enterprises? — *David Seppo* 197 24 Dec 90

**Workers of all lands...
Travailleurs de tous les pays...
Proletarios de todos los paises...**

SINCE July 1990 a video film has been available on the history and struggle of the Fourth International and its sections. The film is available in English, French and Spanish. The film provides a good overview of the activities of the Fourth International and is an ideal introduction for those new to the organization. It is available in PAL/SECAM for \$40 or 200FF plus \$4 or 20FF for postage, or \$60/300FF plus \$4/20FF postage for institutions, from PEC, 2 Rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. Cheques should be made payable to PEC. Postal transfers to PEC, CCP No 2 322 42T Paris. Price details of NTSC version are not yet decided — please write to the same address. For public use also please write for details to the same address.

Mark Curtis refused parole

THERE have been some new developments in the case of Mark Curtis, the trade unionist and political activist from Des Moines, Iowa, who was framed by police on rape and burglary charges in September 1988 and is currently serving a 25 year sentence in the John Bennett state prison in Fort Madison, Iowa (see IV 181).

At a November 20 hearing held at the prison, the state Board of Parole denied Curtis his release, stating that he had not served enough time. The board heard a statement from Curtis urging that he be released on the basis of the time he had already served in prison, his exemplary record as a prisoner, and the wide support he had received.

A week before the hearing, a delegation of 30 supporters of Curtis' release met two members of the parole board, and presented them with more than 173 letters of support for Curtis from around the world. Shortly before this, the campaign for Curtis' release won an important victory when the Des Moines district court rejected an effort by the parents of the woman he was falsely accused of assaulting to gain access to the financial files and lists of contributors of the Mark Curtis Defence Committee, in an attempt to make the committee's funds available as part of a financial award from Curtis to his clients. District Judge Arthur Gamble said there was no evidence that the assets of the committee "are assets for Mark Curtis available for recovery in damages".

(information compiled from US Militant) ★

Kremlin tightens the screws — <i>Gerry Foley</i>	197	24 Dec 90	Two, three, many intifadas — <i>Fuat Orçun</i>	184	7 May 90
SPANISH STATE			A faithful ally of Washington — <i>Fuat Orçun</i>	192	15 Oct 90
A left alternative in the Workers Commissions Interview with <i>Joaquin Nieto</i>	185	21 May 90	URUGUAY		
SRI LANKA			Tupamaros consider changes in Soviet bloc <i>Document</i>	183	23 Apr 90
Terror against the left (NS)	179	26 Feb 90	USA		
Towards a revival of working class activity? Interview with <i>Bala Tampoe</i>	185	21 May 90	New hope for US labor in the 1990s <i>Bill Onasch</i>	178	12 Feb 90
Left back on the coalition path <i>Niel Wijetilaka and S. Kandasamy</i>	188	2 July 90	New moves in Mark Curtis campaign (NS)	181	26 Mar 90
SWEDEN			Bush's financial Vietnam — <i>Charles-Andre Udry</i>	194	12 Nov 90
Crisis of the "Swedish model" — <i>Maria Sundvall</i>	179	26 Feb 90	WOMEN		
The end of the social democratic "miracle" <i>Maria Sundvall</i>	188	2 July 90	East Germany: Interview with Ina Merkel	180	12 Mar 90
The end of Swedish neutrality	191	1 Oct 90	Independent women's movement founded	180	12 Mar 90
SWITZERLAND			Poland: Church, state and women's right to abortion — <i>Jaqueline Heinen</i>	180	12 Mar 90
Abolish the snooper state — <i>Sophie Massouri</i>	186	4 June 90	South Africa: Challenging sexual exploitation	180	12 Mar 90
Immigrant workers demonstration (NS)	194	12 Nov 90	Soviet Union: Careers for Women <i>N. Zakharova and N. Rimashevskaya</i>	180	12 Mar 90
SYRIA			Yugoslavia: A Women's movement in an embattled nation — <i>Vlasta Jalusic</i>	180	12 Mar 90
Assad regime increasingly isolated <i>Samir Ladkani</i>	184	7 May 90	International women's day:		
International appeal (NS)	188	2 July 90	Needed more than ever — an independent women's movement — <i>Sophie Massouri</i>	180	12 Mar 90
THIRD WORLD			YUGOSLAVIA		
Berlin, Paris, Houston....(NS)	182	9 Apr 90	Will Yugoslavia disintegrate? — <i>Nina Jerkic</i> <i>and Jean Zindel</i>	180	12 Mar 90
TROTSKY			A women's movement in an embattled nation <i>Vlasta Jalusic</i>	180	12 Mar 90
Murder in Mexico — <i>Document</i>	191	1 Oct 90	Nationalists win in two republics	185	21 May 90
Trotsky commemorated in Mexico (NS)	191	1 Oct 90	<i>Gerry Foley</i>		
Commemoration in Beirut (NS)	193	15 Oct 90	The slide towards civil war — <i>Michelle Lee</i>	191	1 Oct 90
Commemorations: East Germany, France, Brazil	194	12 Nov 90	Kosovo workers fight back — <i>Document</i>	192	15 Oct 90
Tokyo conference (NS)	197	24 Dec 90	ZAMBIA		
TUNISIA			Anti-price rise riots (NS)	189	16 July 90
Popular support for Iraq	191	1 Oct 90	ZIMBABWE		
TURKEY			"Role-model" or "complete turmoil"? <i>Sophie Hawes</i>	177	29 Jan 90
Violence against prostitutes legalized	178	12 Feb 90			