

International VIEWPOINT

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Is Black majority rule near?



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Death by embargo

ON January 21, 1992, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution implicitly demanding that the Libyan government surrender to the American and British judicial authorities two of its citizens suspected of being responsible for the explosion which destroyed a PanAm aircraft above the Scottish village of Lockerbie on December 21, 1988¹.

SALAH JABER



THIS resolution — a scarcely veiled extradition order, addressed to a state which has signed no extradition treaty of any kind with the two countries concerned — constitutes a complete innovation from a legal point of view. Specialists in international law, like Ruth Wedgwood, a professor at Yale University quoted in the *Washington Post*², have not failed to comment on this novelty.

The infringement of international legality would, however, not merit attention were it not for the fact that, in the framework of the “new world order”, Security Council resolutions have ceased to be pious wishes. They can now have murderous consequences, as shown by the fashion in which the UN mandate against Iraq was interpreted just one year ago.

It is nonetheless true, paradoxically, that the relation of world forces allows the United States government at present to economize on such devastating military interventions, which create as well as solve problems for it, as is shown by the current debate on the balance-sheet of the Gulf War.

In fact, one of the numerous objectives of “Operation Desert Storm”, present in its most spectacular aspect, was precisely to reinforce by example the United States’ powers of dissuasion towards the rest of the world. Washington now has a more convincing arsenal of coercive measures than ever, and direct military action is only the weapon of last resort, reserved for emergency cases.

The other means, requiring longer to take effect but very much less costly and risky, is the recourse to “sanctions” — which are to military aggression what strangulation is to the use of firearms.

US-imposed embargoes are today sure of being effectively implemented, the case of Cuba being the best example of this.

The three-decade long blockade inflicted on the rebel island by Washington has been reinvigorated and is proving more tragically effective than ever, more so even than in the early days when the Cuban economy was still an adjunct of its larger neighbor. This change is above all due to the collapse of the former “fraternal socialist countries” which doomed largely to failure any strategy of encirclement decreed by the imperialist powers.

Iraq has also been subjected to this method of coercion: an embargo was decreed against Baghdad in August 1990, a little after the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein’s army. Until the end of that year, there was a lively polemic in the camp of the anti-Iraqi coalition between the partisans of “sanctions” and the supporters of military force, the principal, if not the only, argument of the latter being the need to race against time.

The current claims that Baghdad was on the point of acquiring nuclear weapons are intended to justify *a posteriori* the apocalyptic aggression against Iraq, and the subsequent terrible loss of human life.

Sanctions were not, however, as many naive people believed, a “peaceful” substitute for war, and they are still less so today. They are not an alternative to armed force, which they complement as gradual measures belonging to the same arsenal, managed by the same hegemonic imperialism. Seen from a certain angle, the military assault on Iraq could even appear as a way of violently and rapidly improving the embargo’s efficiency, the military devastation of Iraq greatly amplifying the impact of the embargo.

It is children who suffer the most: a survey carried out by a team based at Harvard University has noted that nearly one third of Iraqi infants are now suffering from malnutrition; the number of chil-

dren who have died because of the embargo, combined with the economic and infrastructural effects of the war, has been estimated at between 50,000 and 100,000.³

These children are being killed to bring to heel a Saddam Hussein who, with good reason, rejects the Security Council decisions seeking to put Iraq under economic tutelage and impose compulsory deductions from its oil revenues to pay reparations to the rich state of Kuwait.⁴ “War reparations” thus become a pretext for reducing a recalcitrant state to vassalage, by means of economic strangulation.⁵

The sanctions weapon is still less “humanitarian” than the deluge of steel and fire that was “Desert Storm”. If the “smart” bombs could effectively discriminate between military objectives and the civilian environment, strangulation by embargo affects, first and foremost if not exclusively, civilians, and particularly young children.

After Cuba and Iraq, Libya is today in the imperialist sights. The Security Council resolution is only the prelude to another which will impose measures of economic coercion, if Tripoli does not toe the line. North Korea is also being targeted. Any state, in the south or the east, which places itself outside the “new world order”, is promised the same vigorous treatment. We must react. ★

1. The resolution also called on the government in Tripoli to “cooperate” with the French authorities in the investigation into the explosion of a DC-10 owned by the UTA company over Niger on September 19, 1989.

2. *International Herald Tribune*, January 22, 1992.

3. See, among many others, the *Guardian* (New York) of January 15, 1992 and the *New Statesman & Society* (London) of January 17, 1992.

4. See IV 204. See also André Gunder Frank et al., *Bush Emperor*, éditions La Brèche, Paris, 1991.

5. See the appeal of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, published in IV 221.

The betrayal of the Kurdish rebellion

WHILE US imperialism and its allies claimed and continue to claim to fear the ambitions of Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein, they were and are far more afraid of the effects of any successful movements of revolt by the oppressed masses of Iraq, and in particular by the Kurds. This was shown at the end of Operation Desert Storm, when Saddam Hussein's regime was given a free hand to suppress rebellions in southern Iraq and among the Kurds.

Saman, an Iraqi Kurdish socialist, visited his homeland last summer and on his return described the course of the Kurdish rebellion to *Internationalen*, the paper of the Swedish Socialist Party (Swedish section of the Fourth International).

“IT WAS wonderful to come home”, Saman suddenly says, as we talk about his voyage home to the liberated areas of Iraqi Kurdistan last summer. “Wonderful” — a big contrast with the misery and the Kurdish defeats he had been describing.

But maybe it is not so strange. Apart from the understandable joy that this Iraqi Kurd and socialist felt on returning to the country that he fled 15 years ago, there is also the joy of knowing that at last something has happened in Kurdistan.

At the end of the war with Iran and the peace agreement of August 1988, the Iraqi regime launched a big offensive against the Kurds. Now, for the first time since then, there are Kurdish liberated areas in Iraq. At that time the Iraqi military forces annihilated 4,000 Kurdish villages and 20 medium size towns. On 60 different occasions gas was used against the Kurds. The armed Kurdish movement, as well as many civilian Kurds, was put to flight over the mountains into Iran and Turkey.

Today, the Kurds control about two thirds of Kurdistan, according to Saman. Since he left the region, the cities of Erbil and Sulaimaniya have been recaptured by the Kurds.

“Among those I talked to, there was a feeling that something can be done, that something can be built. Imagine, only a few months earlier, all of Kurdistan was free. Then the Kurds had all the possibilities. But it is not only Kurdistan that has changed.

“People all over Iraq are more courageous than before, the repressive apparatus of the regime has collapsed. Saddam's police and armed forces no longer have control. When people occupied the buildings of the police during

the rebellion, they burned all the old files with data on dissidents. It will take a long time to recreate those files.

“It is a regime built on the repressive system. Just remember what happened to Ceausescu once his security forces collapsed.”

Saman himself knows first hand about the collapse of the security apparatus. During the month he spent in the liberated parts of Kurdistan he was personally in touch with no less than 200 relatives and friends. Many of them travelled all the way from Baghdad northwards to the liberated parts of Kurdistan, passing the frontier without confronting the authorities. Before the war it would have been unthinkable.

The war waged by the US alliance against Iraq last year had less grave direct effects in Kurdistan than in the rest of Iraq.

“There are no strategic targets and the military bases are situated outside the big towns. On one occasion the town of Kirkuk was bombed, however, after the military had moved planes into the streets. Hundreds died, but the attacks were less intensive than in the south.

“Really I had to force people to talk about the war itself. This people has been so severely hit, before and after, that the ‘threshold’ is very high.”

In the first days of March, as it became clear that Saddam Hussein had been defeated, the Kurdish rebellion started.

“It was in the town of Rahnia. I have heard people say that there were a few, maybe tens of demonstrators taking to the streets, as soon as they heard of Saddam's defeat. It was said that a small Communist group took the initiative.

“Within a few hours the whole town was in rebellion and the population had occupied the nearby army barracks; the

revolt spread from town to town. It was a spontaneous rising.”

■ **But were there no groups organizing the rebellion once it got started?**

“At first, small left groups were the most active. Later the “asses” [that is, donkeys, used in a pejorative sense] took over”, Saman answers.

“All regimes have tried to recruit Kurds for their purposes. During the war against Iran many Kurds preferred to desert into the mountains rather than joining the military forces. Saddam offered them an escape, allowing them to join the Kurdish militias, which we call the ‘asses’, instead of the army.

“This meant that before the rebellion there were up to 300,000 men in arms in Kurdistan. Their leadership were followers of Saddam. But the rank-and-file were only boys who wanted to get away from the war.

“Thus when the revolt started many of them turned the regime's own arms against it.

“In the next phase, the leadership of the asses also sided with the people. The explanation is simple: in all Iraq there was the same feeling ‘Saddam does not exist any more.’

“The rebellion developed quickly. Towards the end of March Kirkuk, the biggest city fell. Kurdish armed forces were approaching Kirkuk. At the same time the town rose. The government soldiers threw down their arms and fled.

“In many towns, people formed committees with elected representatives, to lead the street fights and control distribution of food rations.”

Saman stresses that the big established Kurdish organizations had no influence on the rebellion at that stage. The organizations he refers to are the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) led by Mahmoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Front of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani. These organizations have traditionally led the armed struggle. Saman's bitterness about their actions during and after the rebellion is manifest.

“They did not return until more than half of Kurdistan was already liberated.

“First when the people took over Kirkuk, Barzani and Talabani came back and tried to gather people to mass rallies. They had almost nothing left. No armed forces and an even weaker popular base. Their first aim was to regain control over the mass movement.

“They fought the committees, instead of building them to strengthen the rebellion. They saw them as competitors.

“In Sulaimaniya the big organizations even used weapons to attack the committees. The PUK is reported to have closed down committee premises.

“Besides they completely trusted the US alliance to ‘arrange’ a Kurdish state of federation for them.”

Saman is perhaps most critical of the

KDP and PUK leaderships because they did not prepare for Saddam Hussein's counter-offensive, although everyone knew it was coming.

"They did not use the pressure of the mass movement, the strength of the rebellion. It is even more incomprehensible if you consider the degree of dissolution of the Iraqi army. The soldiers asked themselves: who are we fighting for?"

Saddam started the counter-offensive round the end of March/beginning of April, using armed helicopters against Kirkuk.

"They started from the air; that was what they learnt from the Americans. Later on they used land-to-land missiles, like the Scuds, but of shorter range. The destruction in Kirkuk was massive. Some districts were levelled to the ground.

"People escaped in panic. There was a chain reaction. When the people running away reached the towns further north, people fled from there as well. People were screaming: 'Gas, Halabja!' [Halbaja is the Kurdish town attacked with poison gas by the Saddam regime in 1988]. During one of the helicopter attacks the Saddam forces dropped a cloud of lime — very similar to gas. Panic increased."

As many as 2.5 million Kurds escaped to Iran or Turkey.

The Iraqi counter-offensive stopped some tens of kilometres north of Arbi. According to Saman it was due to the reactions of world opinion and to the fact that the Kurdish forces, now reaching the actual mountain areas, started fighting back.

On April 18, the US forces entered and started forming "security zones" for the Kurds in the north of the country.

"They said they came in to protect the Kurds, but they were really only keen to solve the refugee problem, before it threatened Turkey.

"Most Kurds I talked to did not object a lot to the US presence. They saw the US troops as a protection against Saddam. But they had mixed feelings towards the USA, because at the same time they did object to the sanctions against the people of Iraq."

When Saman visited the liberated areas, there were negotiations going on between the Kurdish leaders and Saddam in Baghdad. Saman is critical about the secrecy surrounding these negotiations.

"People knew that Kurdish leaders were hugging Saddam in Baghdad, but they were not told anything about the results of the negotiations. The international support for the Kurds has never been so big, but people in Kurdistan know very little of it."

Saman sees the basic reason for the errors made by the Kurdish organizations in the bureaucratization of their leaderships. They have an old tradition of negotiating with the regimes of the neighbouring countries, following the principle of "my enemy's enemy is my

SYRIA: Crackdown on left and democratic movements

THE striking contrast between the treatment meted out by the imperialist powers, headed by the United States, to the twin Baathist dictatorships of Syria and Iraq expresses the hypocrisy of George Bush and co. more eloquently than any long-drawn out argumentation.

SALAH JABER

FOR having been on the "right side" in the Gulf War Hafez El-Assad's regime is now considered an acceptable or even a very useful partner by the same people who have been boiling with fake indignation over the Iraqi regime's repressive exploits. However, the Syrian Baathist tyranny has no lessons to learn from its "fraternal enemy" in Iraq when it comes to repression.

Martial law has been in force in Syria for 29 years without interruption. It was introduced when the Baathist regime came to power in 1963 and has never been revoked. The Syrian involvement in the Washington orchestrated "peace conference" does not mean an end to the state of war inflicted on the Syrian population.

Human rights are an unknown concept for the Baathist dictatorship. Anybody may find themselves from one day to the next arrested, tortured and imprisoned indefinitely without any trial. Some have been in this situation for over 20 years. The score is impressive. There are nearly 10,000 political prisoners ranging from Islamic fundamentalists to the revolutionary far left, represented by the Communist Action Party, taking in various nationalist and Communist opponents of the regime along the way.

Each year there are new, often completely arbitrary, arrests. Some are released after brutal interrogation; in 1991 four political prisoners died under torture.

Last December, however, the Syrian Interior Ministry announced a big wave of releases, involving more than 3,000 people. This aroused great hopes of an eventual "liberalization" of the regime, inspired by events in Eastern Europe and the USSR and by the desire to gain new respectability in the framework of the new world situation.

In fact, it seems that only 1,000 pris-

oners were released, many of whom had been held for a decade. The expected "liberalization" stopped there, to be followed by a new wave of arrests, as if the regime was only making space in the prisons for newcomers. The majority of those freed, furthermore, are Muslim Brothers, probably released as a concession to Saudi Arabia — the main provider of funds for the Baathist dictatorship — and former supporters of the Iraqi Baath Party of Saddam Hussein, who were probably considered to have abandoned their allegiance.

Hardly had 1992 started when the Syrian regime launched a new and particularly fierce repressive offensive. This time the first to be affected were Syria's Committees for the Defence of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights (CDF). Six CDF militants were arrested and tortured. One of them, Mr. Aktham Nuaissseh, a lawyer, has had to be transferred to hospital where he remains in a serious condition (the French address of the CDF is 27, rue des Quatre Moulins, 27400, Louviers, France).

On February 1 one of Syria's 15 intelligence services (probably a world record) arrested two of the main leaders of the Syrian Party of Communist Action, Abdul Aziz Al-Khayer, a doctor, and Bahjat Shaabu, a former medical student, in the streets of Damascus.

These two militants had been underground for a long time and were being actively sought by the regime's police forces. The companion of the former had recently been released after five years in detention as a hostage. Other CAP militants have also been arrested.

These comrades kept the Party's work going in conditions demanding heroism — internal activities, including the uninterrupted publication of a discussion bulletin and public activities with the (irregular) appearance of the CAP's journal *Al-Raya Al-Hamra* ("The Red Flag"). They are today being subjected to ferocious torture, with the aim of dismantling that part of the party's apparatus still at liberty. Other militants have already taken their place. They are asking for our support.

International Viewpoint is launching an international solidarity campaign with political prisoners from Syria's democratic and leftist movements, and in particular with the comrades of the CAP.★

friend". One example of the results of this approach was seen in the agreement between Iran and Iraq in 1975. At that time, the Kurdish leaders in Iraq completely relied on the support of Iran and their movement was crushed.

"They cannot build on the mass movement, because they are so afraid it will get out of their hands. So all the time since their return they have been trying to keep the mass movement back and instead buy themselves support among the leadership of the asses. That is also why they started negotiating with Saddam, as soon as they discovered that the USA and its allies did not support them.

"You might say that Saddam and the Kurdish leaders are equally weak and therefore have a mutual interest in negotiations. Both parties have an interest in gaining time, in order to rebuild their positions of strength."

Last Spring there would have been big possibilities of uniting the Kurdish rebellion with the rebellion in the south, Saman states.

"Here in the West, you say that the rebellion in the south was made by Shi'ite Muslims. That is not the most important aspect. It was as the army retreated from the defeat in Kuwait that the rebellion started. When the soldiers entered Basra, it is said that an officer drove his tank straight into the statue of Saddam, yelling 'for how long will you stay such cowards? Wake up!'

"During my stay in August, it was said that hundreds of thousands of civilians were still surrounded by Saddam's troops in the south. It was a real massacre. It was said that Saddam's army had killed more civilians as the rebellions were crushed than the Western alliance had killed during the war itself.

"Nor was it made known here that there were rebellions in Baghdad itself. There was an uprising in the proletarian suburb 'Saddam City'. The government responded with artillery in the capital itself."

While Saman was staying in Kurdistan, most of the refugees were returning. There were UN refugee camps lining the roads all the way from the Turkish border. Later this autumn there has been another wave of returners.

At that time there was still enough food in Kurdistan. The borders to Iraq and Turkey were open so as to allow transport of food into the country.

"Everything existed on the black market. But of course there was hyperinflation. The monthly salary of a white collar worker only allowed you to buy ten kilos of meat.

Since that time, the Iraqi government has introduced an economic blockade of Kurdistan and according to the most recent reports there is as much misery in the north as in the rest of Iraq.

"People were longing for some kind of decisive move. Many said: 'either the negotiations must give some result, or there will be another war'.

"Did those you met support the leaderships of the Kurdish organizations?"

"Quite honestly, yes, most of them did, in the absence of alternatives, though I also met those, especially among the intellectuals, who were critical of the whole leadership."



In the autumn, the negotiations reached a dead-end. Saddam has presented a proposal for limited autonomy. But the most important city, Kirkuk, centre of the oil district, would still remain Iraqi. Also the Kurdish demand for the establishment of their own legal system has not been accepted. The country is to continue to have a common police, armed forces and budget, with certain exceptions.

Barzani's KDP has shown itself more inclined to accept the offer, whereas Talabani has said no. Saman ascribes this among other things to the recent diplomatic contacts between Kurdish leaders and the government of Turkey. Turkey had made some promises of Kurdish autonomy within the framework of the Turkish state. "If Talabani and the PUK believe they can get the support of Turkey, they will consequently be less interested in compromises."

Saman is pessimistic, but does not exclude the Kurds launching a new rebellion.

"The people I met in the liberated areas are prepared. Everyone knows how weak the government army is. There are more than one hundred thousand Kurdish armed men in the mountains and they control some of the most modern military structures in Iraq."

A few days after the interview, just before Christmas, this picture was confirmed by a press interview given by Talabani. He called for the Kurds to prepare themselves for a new war against Saddam.

"Also, my friends from the south told me of growing discontent. A relative in Baghdad died from a simple burn injury, after the family had tried in vain for a week to find a place in any hospital in the city. There is a lack of food and medicine.

"There are reports of continued demonstrations against the regime even in the south of Iraq. Even the generals are discontented with Saddam. In August the fourth coup attempt since the war was made."

In conclusion, Saman sees big discontent all over the country, even if the strongest organized resistance is limited to Kurdistan. At the same time he talks about profound disappointment.

"The USA called for the people to rise. Then they stood watching as the government planes acted like savages in the south. Representatives of the resistance in the south went to the headquarters of the US alliance in southern Iraq, asking for food. They got nothing. That is the real extent of Western concern for human rights.

"I have more and more come to believe that the USA led Saddam into invading Kuwait. Later they stopped the war, just as they saw that Saddam's regime was threatened. They fear even a 'half democratic' Iraq. How would that affect the dictatorship in Saudi Arabia or in Kuwait?"

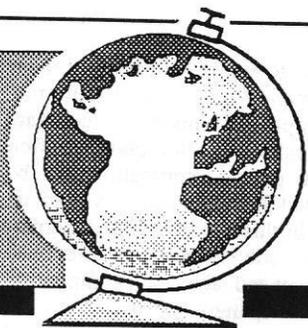
Most Arabs from southern Iraq that Saman talked to said that they did not support Saddam in the war.

"They thought he was an idiot to drag the country to war. they wanted to get rid of him.

"Now they are suffering from the sanctions and at the same time can't help noticing that the USA has decided to keep Saddam."

■ It is sometimes said that the sanctions are driving Iraqi people into the arms of Saddam against outside threats.

"I do not think so. Nobody supports Saddam. He started the war. The country is destroyed. However, sanctions are likely to produce anti-imperialist feelings or a general anti-Western mood. ★

AROUND
THE
WORLD

FRANCE

Hue and cry over Habash

THE orgy of orchestrated rage which greeted the arrival of Palestinian leader George Habash in Paris at the end of January should serve as a warning to anybody prepared to give credence to the occasional "pro-Arab" posturing of France and certain other EC states.

Habash, long-time head of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), arrived in the French capital for medical treatment following a serious cerebral stroke; his visit had been arranged through an agreement between the Palestinian Red Crescent and the French Red Cross. In circumstances that remain unclear, news of the visit was leaked and seized upon by the media and the French right.

These people had not shown a notable concern over "terrorism" or "innocent lives" when the French state bombed the Greenpeace yacht "Rainbow Warrior" in New Zealand, nor when Haiti's dictator, "Baby Doc" Duvalier, was welcomed into his gilded exile in France, nor when the likes of Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir have visited the country; but suddenly the hospitalization of a gravely ill old man was treated as a serious threat to national security, with virtually every "terrorist" incident of the past 20 years being laid at his door.

Although it is at least two decades since the PFLP has had any involvement in armed actions which might come under the imperialist-dictated rubric of "international terrorism", a hysterical French press accused Habash of masterminding outrages universally known to have been organized by others: for example, the string of bombings and shootings in France in autumn 1986 (in fact inspired by Iran, a country which French President Mitterand is soon to visit) and the anti-Jewish attacks in the 1980s in Rome and Antwerp (which were carried out by the Abu Nidal group, then based in Syria: a new book by British Middle East expert Patrick Seale also shows that this renegade outfit, which has no connection with the PFLP or the PLO, has been heavily infiltrated by Israeli intelligence, and its activities have certainly done more to further the cause of Israel than that of Pales-

tine).

In contravention of the solemn agreement between the two humanitarian organizations, Habash was then placed under surveillance in his hospital bed before being expelled from France on February 2.

Georgina Dufoix, the head of the French Red Cross and a presidential adviser, who had been responsible for the agreement, was forced to resign both positions, saying that neither the President nor the prime minister's office had been informed of the arrangement. Four other government officials have had to resign and the Socialist government is facing a censure motion from the opposition.

This strange "affair" has multiple aspects. To a large extent it reflects the chaotic situation within a palsied Socialist government visibly crumbling before an increasingly confident right. The attempt to make Habash a scapegoat for attacks fully known to have been organized under Iranian or Syrian inspiration also ties in nicely with the West's new charm offensive towards these formerly isolated regimes following the Gulf War (as does the sudden transference of guilt

for the Lockerbie bombing from Iran/Syria to Libya — see article page 3).

But more than this, the humiliating treatment meted out to George Habash — who is not just the leader of a current which enjoys substantial support among the Palestinian people, but an individual who is universally respected, indeed venerated, across all currents of Palestinian opinion — provides an eloquent reminder of the deep-lying contempt of Western governments for the most basic aspirations of the Palestinian people, behind all the vague hyperbole about Palestinian rights which is accompanying the current "peace process". ★

GERMANY

Wage confrontations

A LOOMING strike by Germany's 130,000 steel workers appeared to have been averted by a deal between unions leaders and employers reached on Monday February 3. The offer of 5.9% on the basic wage plus an across-the-board bonus of DM175 (\$110) was claimed to amount to an effective rise of 6.35%, against a background of an official inflation rate of 3.5% for 1991 and an estimated 4.5% this year.

The steelworkers had voted massively for strike action in pursuit of a claim for a 10.5% rise and the deal falls far short of that. However, the German and international pro-big business press have seen the proposed settlement as highly problematic; it is above the rate of inflation and it represents an improvement (won by a threat of strike action) on an original offer of 4.5% from the employers.

A series of other big wage claims are in the pipeline, including by 2.7 million pub-

Out Now!
AL-MITRAQA

Number 8, January 1992



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lic servants (demanding 9.5%), 4 million engineering workers (9.5%) and one million building workers (9.8%), and the steel settlement is felt to be sending out the signal that a militant stance may pay. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl has expressed his wish that public servants should not "get the wrong message" on pay.

The current tendency towards confrontation between workers seeking wage rises, on the one hand, and the employers and the state on the other, is rooted in the latter's determination to pass the costs of the unification with the former East Germany onto the West German working class.

Until now, the substitution of West German for East German products in the former GDR has meant that the West German working class has enjoyed conditions of continuing growth when the rest of the industrialized world has been in recession. Furthermore, for political reasons, the impact of the collapse of the East German economy has been cushioned by a variety of costly state measures.

The capitalists' intention now is to

reverse that trend. The creation of mass unemployment in the east will put pressure on employed workers to moderate their demands, while the budget deficit incurred to pay for unification will be compensated for by drastic cuts in social spending. In this way the united Germany will be made ready for the European single market and, above all, competition with US and Japanese industry.

For this programme to be carried through, however, the German working class needs to be defeated or at least demoralized. This is to be achieved through a pro-recession policy, embodied by high interest rates and justified by the "fight against inflation".

However, high German interest rates, as the *Financial Times* of February 5, 1992 observes, hamper "recovery from recession in Britain and France and elsewhere..."

"But pressure from these countries has failed to shift the independent central bank in Frankfurt from its insistence that the squeeze cannot be eased until there are clear signs that inflation is under control, and, preferably, on its way down to 2%." ★

ITALY

Outcome of PRC Congress

THE second part of the founding congress of the Italian Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) (see IV 220 for an account of the first session) took place as planned on January 18/19, 1992. The session discussed two questions: the election of the National Political Committee and the participation in the legislative elections which will almost certainly take place on April 5.

The congress voted unanimously for the presentation of lists of PRC candidates in every constituency in the country both for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. In Italy these two chambers have the same powers and are elected on a proportional basis. The main themes of the electoral platform will be the most urgent social and political problems, from defence of the indexation of wages to the battle against attempts to restrict democratic rights by increasing the powers of the executive and manipulating the electoral system.

On the international level, the PRC will campaign against NATO and any military bloc or intervention as well as against the agreements on the future of the European Economic Community (EEC) reached last December at Maastricht. It will renew its solidarity with the Cuban revolution and demand an end to the US imposed blockade of the island.

The National Political Committee (NPC) is made up of members elected at two different levels. 80% of its members — around 180 — were elected before the second session of the congress at the level of the organization's provincial federations, which have the right to recall them. The other 20% — 45 persons — were to be elected by the national congress.

The congress carried out this task on the basis of a proposal made by its electoral commission which was accepted by a large majority after debate. All the members of the outgoing executive committee were reelected, the best known among them being Sergio Garavini and Armando Cossutta. Parliamentary deputies, including Lucio Magri and senators, including Rino Serri and Ersilia Salvato, were also elected as well as the three Euro-MPs, among them Luciana Castellina. The 45 also included members of the former Democrazia Proletaria organization such as Mariada Bolognesi, Livio Maitan, Giovanni Russo Spena and Luigi Vinci. The NPC went on to elect Sergio Garavini as the party's national secretary and Armando Cossutta as its president. ★

INDIA

Tribal peoples face eviction

(IV has received the following appeal from its correspondents in India)

FACED with continuing construction work in the controversial Sardar Sarovar Dam Project (SSP), the people of the village of Manibeli, the first to be affected by the project in Maharashtra state, are refusing to move from their lands and forests.

The SSP would cause the largest ever population displacement in India, affecting over 1,500,000 people, mostly tribal peoples and peasants, from some 248 villages in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The people and activists stationed in Manibeli are engaged in a war of nerves with the state. At any time armed police can descend on the village. The government made an abortive attempt to evict in the first week of December. The plans were almost finalized to drive the people out with the help of armed police with orders to shoot. However the instant mobilization within and outside the valley, along with an interim order from the Gujarat High Court, deterred the rulers from going ahead with their plans.

However plans are afoot to mask the forcible eviction with legal sanction and eviction notices have been issued to tribal families in Manibeli. The notices can be "implemented" with the help of armed police at any time.

The people of the valley are ready to meet any repressive move by the government.

We appeal to you to oppose these evictions

Send telegrams/letters etc to

The Prime Minister of India, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra (Mantralaya, Bombay, India) and V. C. Shukla, Minister for Water Resources (Shram Shakti Bhavan, Rafi Road, New Delhi-1, India) condemning the step. Ask them to "Immediately stop any action leading to the eviction of Manibeli, forcible or otherwise, and initiate a dialogue on fundamental issues with the Narmada Bachao Andolan".

Send copies of such messages to Rohit Prahapati, c/o "Parivartan" Nimbalkar Chambers, Dandia Bazaar, Baroda, Gujarat, India, phone: 91-265-554979; fax: 91-265-66984. ★

HONG KONG

Return of a political prisoner

LAU SHANCHING touched the ground of Hong Kong. He returned to his home town after ten years in the Huai Jai prison in the province of Guangdong. Two hundred cheering supporters and friends met him at the Hunghom train station. "Long live democracy" was Lau Shanching's first message to the crowd.

At the following press conference he stated: "I am not a counter-revolutionary, I have never taken part in anti-revolutionary activities. I have only taken part in national revolutionary activities."

It was on Christmas Day 1981 that Lau Shanching was arrested during a visit to the south China city of Guangzhou. At the time of his arrest he was a member of the Revolutionary Marxist League, a sympathizing group of the Fourth International.

He was trying to meet the relatives of Wang Xizhe and He Qiu, two famous dissidents who had been arrested for their leading role in China's democracy movement in 1979.

Lau could tell the press that he in fact met Wang Xizhe, as well as other political prisoners, in the Huai Ju prison. Wang, who is serving a sentence of 14 years in prison, had told Lau that he had a serious heart problem, but has been refused parole for medical treatment.

Other political prisoners in the same jail where Lau served his sentence are HK citizens Lai Puising and Li Lunghing. Lau stated that he was determined to work for their release and for all other political prisoners in China. He said that he has "no remorse" and will resume his activity in the HK democracy movement which was interrupted by the Chinese police ten years ago.

Lau was presented in the HK press as "a communist who believes in a classless society" and was asked if he still held to the ideals of ten years ago. His answer was "yes". He said: "China is not practising true communism. It will end up like Eastern Europe and share the fate of other countries that practice Stalinism" (*Sunday Morning Post* December 29, 1991).

On January 1 a big rally was organized by the Democratic Alliance to celebrate the return of Lau Shanching. A crowd of 1,500 gathered outside the China News Agency where they heard Lau call for an end to one-party rule in China, as well as the chairperson of HK Democracy Alliance, who praised Lau for his determination to fight for democracy and not give up his beliefs.

In a comment about the reception of Lau by leading liberal politicians *The Standard* (January 3, 1992) wrote:

"Despite the warm welcome extended by liberal leaders to Mr. Lau on his return last month, major pro-democracy leaders

CIS

Imminent ecological disaster

THE socio-economic crisis of the republics of the former Soviet Union is intertwined with severe ecological problems as a result of the waste, extensive growth model and reckless decision making by the bureaucratic system over decades. Recently the daily *Izvestiya* published excerpts from a document presented to the press by the Russian state secretary for ecology and health A. Yablokov, spelling out the serious state of affairs:

"The official zones of ecological distress are still the areas particularly contaminated by the Chernobyl disaster and also the southern part of the Urals. On top of that, one must include some regions along the Volga, Kusbass, the central part of Yakutia, regions along the Amur (in the Far East), the Krasnoyarsk region and the Kola Peninsula."

It should be added that the situation is the same or even worse in other parts of the CIS, for example, the Donetsk Basin in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Central Asia and the large areas of Belarus (formerly Byelorussia) polluted by Chernobyl.

One major source of pollution is the nuclear industry (both its civil and military branches): "Concerning leakages in areas where the so-called peaceful utilization of nuclear power is taking place: all in all there have been more than 120 incidents, for example, more than 20 along the Volga, 12 in Yakutia and so on. There is only rudimentary information about the serious radioactive pollution of areas caused by the production of nuclear arms in closed cities — Chelyabinsk, six; Arzamas, 16; Krasnoyarsk, 45; Tomsk, 7."

Given the disarray in the nuclear industry, and the severe cutbacks in public spending (also affecting this sector) the situation is likely to deteriorate further. Such a state of the environment obviously has important implications for people's health and lives. "In 1964-65 the average life expectancy was 70.4 years. At the end of the 1980s it started to drop and by 1990 the average age was down to 69.3 years. 40% of the men who died in Russia last year were of working age. In several particularly polluted cities the average life expectancy is below the retirement age."

The breakdown of the infrastructure and the economic crisis deepen the ecological crisis, as is shown by the example of the oil industry: "every year in this country there are as many as 700 major leaks on gas and oil-pipelines. Because of this, according to different estimates, between 7% and 20% of all oil extracted is lost; that is tens of millions of tons."

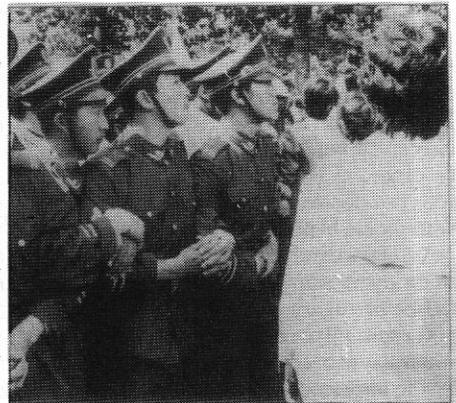
The pollution inflicted on the cities, chiefly by unfiltered smoke from industry and cars, is also turning into a serious economic burden on society: "Already by now the bill for saving the existing buildings in the cities of Russia is on average 10-15,000 roubles a year for every person living there."

It is evident that Western aid and intervention will not profoundly alter this picture, and that a certain part of Western investments (for example, in the oil industry and forestry sector) could only aggravate the situation, through increased exploitation of natural resources.

Only a democratically controlled economy, giving priority to ecological considerations can reverse a situation where, (as *Izvestiya* puts it) "the ecological situation in Russia is close to a national disaster". (All quotes from *Izvestiya*, January 22, 1992.) —Poul Funder Larsen ★

have not extended much support to Mr. Lau during his decade-long incarceration. The liberal leaders, including some of those now elected to Legislative Council, did not join the "Save Lau Shanching" campaign until very recently."

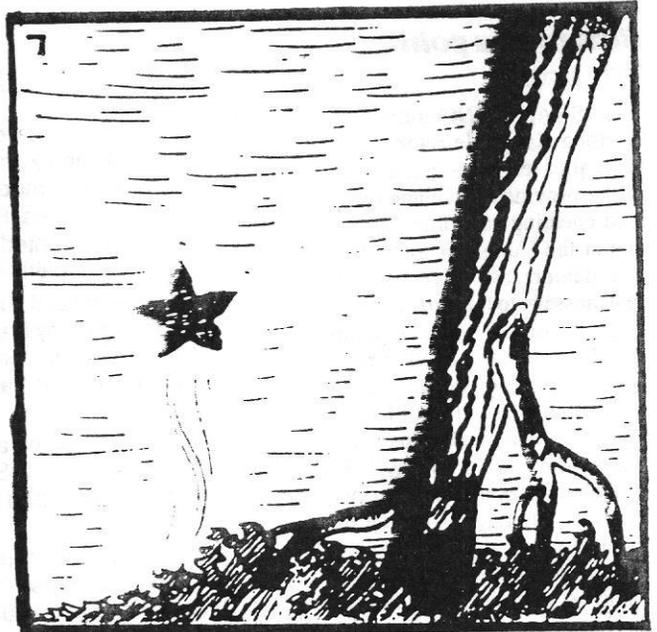
The *Standard* quotes Lau Chilim, spokesperson for the HK April Fifth Forum, who criticized the liberal leaders for their "apathetic attitude". His impression was that they had refrained from joining the campaign because they thought that the "incident had been rather complicated." —Dick Forslund. ★



Privatization and self-management

EVEN before the break-up of Yugoslavia the republic of Slovenia, now independent, had a relatively developed pluralist political culture. Now, as privatization and opening to the world market are pushed forward, new debates on the future of the country's socio-economic system are developing. One sign of this was a demonstration on September 10, 1991, calling for a referendum on a new property law being discussed in parliament.

CATHERINE SAMARY



THE September 10 demonstration against the new property law brought out only 5,000 people — but this is not so few in a country with a population of 2 million. It had the support of all the feminist groups (women from the union of self-management managers have their own organization and there are also women's neighbourhood and antiwar groups). The demonstration was very spectacular, with chains of buses throughout Ljubljana. And it was enough for the vote in parliament to be deferred. The parliamentary debate had not ended by January 1992.

The rightwing parties are divided after the resignation last November of prime minister Jose Mencinger, an economist who disagreed with the draft laws. The arrival in Slovenia of Jeffrey Sachs, who had advised the Bolivian government before raging through Poland, made the strategic divisions reappear: shock therapy or not, rapid privatization or not, and to whose benefit — that of the former managers or new entrepreneurs?

But if the property relations in the ex-Socialist countries (where the bureaucracy was not the legal owner, but ruled "in the name of the workers") are unclear, property in the country of self-management is even more evidently "nobody's because it is everybody's". The last constitution of Tito's time explicitly ruled out any notion of state property or group property. In this situation, who can decide about privatization? And who should benefit?

As elsewhere, proposals for workers' share ownership have been floated as a means of sugaring the pill. But they are not especially attractive at a moment when the economic crisis is exacerbated by the unprecedented shock of the direct

confrontation with the world market. Furthermore this is a regression in Yugoslavia. The workers are to be "sold" rights to management that they had previously possessed for free, regardless of what the real practice may have been. For the workers' self-management was a kind of power of veto and did not have the means within the Yugoslav system to achieve overall coherence. It meant, unequally according to area, a right to oversee or participate in decisions concerning both questions of income and collective consumption and investment.

Connivance between workers and management

It took the form, even more than in other East European countries, of specific relations of unharmonious connivance between workers and managers. Strikes would break out when the tacit bargain was broken or when decisions made on the basis of self-management were not respected. It is thus not surprising that some of these former managers, particularly where the relation of social forces does not permit a more open break, are seeking to use these traditions to consolidate their power.

One of the basic features of the line defended by the former prime minister was that he sought support from the former managerial teams in the enterprises, giving them the preponderance in a "soft" privatization process designed to benefit them, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises, but also in 300 large enterprises. This plan was opposed by that of Jeffrey Sachs who proposed the setting up of financial institutions charged with managing the Common

Sale Funds (share portfolios, a significant proportion of which were to be distributed free to the population, with a hard core controlled by the state until credible purchasers can be found). The logic here was the concentration of effective power in the hands of institutions controlled by leadership groups appointed on clearly capitalist criteria.

This model, which aims at destroying as quickly as possible all ambiguity about property forms that might arise from any sort of retention of self-management rights or relations of connivance between workers and managers, is proposed everywhere by Sachs. It implies for the transition period a sort of state ownership.

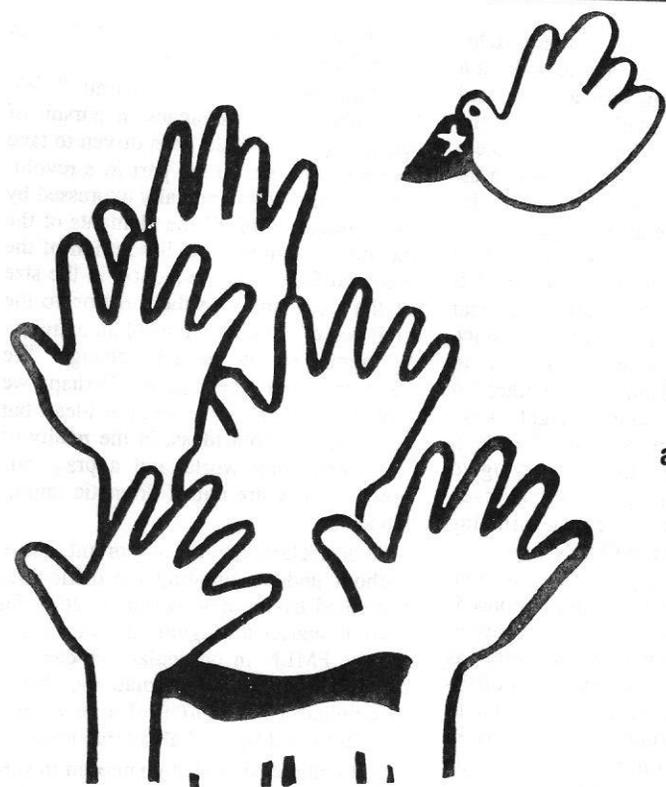
This draft law passed through two of the three chambers of the Slovene parliament, but not the third, that of "associated labour", another inheritance from Tito's time. Here, unlike in the other two chambers, the majority are behind the Mencinger plan, using as their main argument opposition to state control. The right itself is divided over this, trapped by its own liberal arguments.

The left wing organizations meanwhile present a range of positions with more talk of workers' participation than of self-management. They too are more or less critical of the possibilities of entering the capitalist world without economic or social regression. They look towards different forms of regional community. The question of relations with the republics of the ex-Yugoslavia depends on the development of the Serbian regime and of the war. But these organizations are at an early stage of development, and instability, splits and regroupments make it all the more difficult to work out an alternative project. ★

Peace on the razor's edge

THE final signing of the peace accords between the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the Salvadoran government¹ on January 16, 1992 in Mexico are first of all a victory for the Salvadoran people and its vanguard over the warmongering forces who have been opposing peace since the start of the negotiations. However, if the sectors of the army that have enriched themselves from this war against the people have had to give way, they are by no means crushed.

M. VELAZQUEZ and P. PACHECO



THE FMLN has shown itself able to respond to the desire of the population for peace. They have done this from a position of strength, having created a powerful guerrilla army, but also by becoming the political representative of significant sectors of Salvadoran society.

In recent years, the FMLN has attempted to find a negotiated end to the conflict and isolate the most intransigent sectors of the army. The fact that the far right ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance) government was forced to the negotiating table to sign a peace accord amounts to an indisputable gain for the Salvadoran revolutionaries.

However, the most intense phase of the negotiations, in 1991, was marked by a series of external factors which had a determinant effect on the two sides — and on US imperialism — and created a situation in which a peace agreement was possible.

The change in the international situation after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the so-called socialist countries, the election defeat of the left wing Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the US invasion of Panama, the change in the relationship of forces consequent on the Gulf War, the falling apart of the Soviet Union and the offensive against the Cuban revolution, as well as the recession in the US present a complex panorama for revolutionaries everywhere, the FMLN being no exception.

In this context it is necessary to underline the FMLN's ability to avoid the definitive defeat of the revolution wished for by ARENA and imperialism.

While the agreement reached does not

meet all the original objectives of the revolution, it nonetheless opens the discussion on such central themes as demilitarization, respect for human rights, freedom of expression and political participation. The revolution now finds itself in a new phase where the socioeconomic demands of the masses will be at centre stage. The civil war and the armed revolt of the revolutionaries have not been in vain.

Above all, the underlying cause of this war should not be belittled: the dictatorship, the electoral frauds, the massacres of the population, the systematic torture, the misery and colonialism where 14 families control the entire political and economic life of the country.

As FMLN leader Shafik Handal stated at the time of the agreement: "For a very long time, and repeatedly, Salvadorans have tried to change this situation by peaceful means, including electoral means; but all doors have been closed. We had to rise up and take up arms to open them, and we do not regret this. In Salvadoran conditions the revolutionary armed struggle was necessary and legitimate."

Armed revolution: an anachronism?

Obviously the Mexican government and other "friendly" governments, as well as imperialism, want to use the agreement to argue that revolution is impossible and that the taking of power and social transformation by means of arms are "anachronistic"; in exchange they propose working partnership, nego-

tiation, civilian life and conciliation.

The future in El Salvador will not evolve in a straightforward fashion and the agreement should not lead to euphoria. Some complex problems have already appeared. Despite the limited amnesty approved by the legislative assembly, some sectors of the right are demanding "pardon and forgetting" to expunge their crimes, such as the murder of the six Jesuits in 1989², that of Archbishop Romero, those committed by the death squads or the army massacres of the population.

The difficulties confronting the carrying through of a serious land reform are made worse by the fact that the sharing out of land in the conflict zones depends on the will of the big owners to sell "their" lands at market prices. They will assuredly not want to be separated from their property. Furthermore, the legal maximum for properties has been set at 245 hectares.

In addition, there are a host of question marks over the army cutbacks. The Salvadoran government has done no more than make a bilateral pledge to the United Nations on this point; the detailed plan of army reductions is not as such a part of the agreement. In the latter one finds an imprecise formulation according to which the size of the armed forces in peace time will be in line with their constitutionally defined function.

While there has been talk of a 50% reduction in the size of this force, it has

1. See *International Viewpoint* no. 218, December 9, 1991, for details of the agreements.

2. During the FMLN offensive of November 1989 six Jesuits from the Central American University were brutally murdered by the army. In December high-ranking officers were sentenced for this crime.

also become publicly known that the government has presented the inflated figure of 63,000 soldiers and has been leading a campaign of forced recruitment. President Cristiani is thus trying to keep most of his army — estimated by the FMLN and others at 35,000 men — at the ready.

Finally, it is clear that this peace hangs by a thread. The underlying social problems behind this conflict remain unsolved and some have got worse. It will not be easy, above all in the current neo-liberal framework, to move towards a solution. Even if Cristiani has stepped back from his initial attitude and has finally agreed to discuss his economic plan he has little room for manoeuvre to make significant changes in his privatization and job reduction programmes, which are furthermore in fashion throughout Latin America.

Salvadoran and foreign capital has reaped rich rewards from the war and are getting ready to do the same with the peace; destruction was good business, and so will reconstruction be.

Political and social civil war

If "war is the continuation of politics by other means" the civil war that has been gripping Salvador will, if peace is consolidated, be displaced onto the political and social levels. The FMLN has built up a great organizational capital and influence on the mass movements; its first show of force and its mobilizing capacity was massively illustrated on January 16 in the very centre of the capital and elsewhere in the country after the signing of the agreement. This will happen again when the FMLN commanders return.

The FMLN's social support is the main means of pressure to ensure that the peace agreement is applied and to advance towards revolutionary objectives. As Chano Guevara, guerilla chief in the Guazapan zone declared: "We will have peace in this country when the Salvadoran people have food, clothing, shoes, and enough medicines, sanitary assistance, education and freedom of expression. These are the real questions for which we have struggled throughout this long war."

The government is certainly going to try by all means to "win the hearts and minds" of the Salvadoran masses. It will benefit in this from the advantage conferred by a monopoly of state power, eventual credits for reconstruction from diverse countries and also the advice of countries like Mexico on such things as the application of so-called "solidarity programmes" aimed at undermining the FMLN's social base.

The right will obviously be seeking to distort and hold back the application of the those parts of the agreement it dislikes, and which it has only accepted

under the pressure of the military stalemate, the domestic economic situation and imperialist pressure for a negotiated settlement. The orientation towards the US is motivated not only by the recession in Salvador but also and above all with the desire of moving forward the Latin American integration project.

Imperialism's pressures on the Salvadoran right are not disinterested; the US government knows that a negotiated end to the war will work in its favour since the international relation of forces is in favour of capital. In this sense neither the US nor the Salvadoran right have renounced their plans to crush the rebellion; now, however, they are trying to defeat it on the social and political level, believing this to be easier than inflicting a military defeat on the FMLN.

The logic of the negotiated settlement is towards a search for national consensus at all levels and a desire to present even the most extreme contradictions as manageable through elections and collaboration. However, even if it is possible to succeed in organizing free elections in Salvador, these will in no way lessen the intensity of the social struggle.

The consolidation, deepening and extension of people's power are now essential factors in this new phase of the Salvadoran revolution. Just as the FMLN has learned how to successfully combine different types of war, today it must try to bring together the institutional and legal struggle with the struggle for the maintenance and development of self-management of the popular movement; it must keep the political initiative without allowing the mass movement to be subordinated to the hazards of the collaboration underway. This means walking on a razor's edge.

A complex panorama

Furthermore, the panorama is rendered even more complex by remarks such as those made recently by FMLN leader Joaquin Villalobos: "Before, the concept of revolution had a date and a symbol. The assault on power, the taking of the palace and the immediate and mechanical solution of all problems. This led to dictatorships that denied liberty under the pretext of resolving economic problems.

"The basic problem of a revolution is the political problem, the way in which the regime's equilibrium is constructed and in which the permanent rules for governing are set up in society and, starting from that, the definition of the spaces available for [carrying out] the economic and social changes that make up the other part of the revolution... we [the FMLN] will form the point of departure for a new revolutionary era." Later on, he affirms that Salvador has seen: "the first revolution without *contras* [counter-revolutionaries], the first which has not divided but brought together and the first

which can count on the agreement of the US and even on its support."

Villalobos goes on to affirm: "We have obtained the changes in pursuit of which the FMLN had been driven to take up arms. We are taking part in a revolution which is fundamentally expressed by the elimination of all the elements of the dictatorial regime. The dissolution of the National Guard, the reduction in the size of the army and its subordination to the civil power are all features of an extremely significant democratic change. We have not made concessions. Perhaps we have made them at the level of ideas, but concessions about ideas, in the reality of the present-day world and a pragmatic point of view are not of dramatic importance."³

Such declarations are important, since, without under-estimating the difficulties presented by the new world situation for revolutionaries throughout the world, and for the FMLN in particular, we can still question whether the international changes demand a "revolution of a new type" as is proposed by the Salvadoran leaders.

Is it a matter of a change needed to survive in present circumstances or is what is being implied a lasting and comprehensive strategic and theoretical redefinition, according to which classical revolutionary methods (not only socialist) are no longer valid for social transformation?

Revolutionary leaders draw hasty conclusions

The Salvadoran leaders seem to be drawing hasty conclusions, proposing a new model of revolution "from below" (as if all the others were "from above" like mere coups d'etat). However, if the fortress has not been taken by storm it remains intact and the enemies are the same, however hard it is for some to admit.

The Salvadoran revolution, although it has not triumphed, has not been crushed either. The downward revision of its objectives must be understood as the product of a substantial, but not definitive, change at the international level. The Salvadoran revolution is a revolution under siege by the new world order currently being formed. This does not offer much encouragement in the short term, but ideas should not be abandoned.

Solidarity with this revolution must continue. We must be ready to continue international solidarity and fraternal debate with our comrades in the FMLN and the Salvadoran people. They will without doubt be the target of attacks from the right on all fronts, both with traditional arms and with others just as dangerous for the revolution. ★

2. *El Nacional*, January 28-29, 1991.

In the quicksands of negotiation

DIANA TILDEN-DAVIS is happy. Her photo made the front page of the South African press on December 30. She had come second in the Miss World contest. Could there be anything more important for the South African public at the end of 1991? The press moguls clearly didn't think so.

PETER BLUMER

IN A COUNTRY in the throes of the biggest political turning point in its history, when a decisive political and institutional change is being negotiated in the corridors of power, it would be easy enough to make jokes at the traditional frivolity of the South African press. However this time it would be something of a mistake. For Miss Tilden-Davis mounted the podium after a 14-year absence by South Africa from that idiotic competition. A symbolic return to the "world of beauty"!

The same is true of the reappearance of the national team in the cricketing World Cup; the decision to organize the next rugby World Cup in South Africa or the restarting of its Formula One Grand Prix. The message is clear. The country is once again respectable and it is possible to be seen visiting it. This return to "normality" finds its first expression in these media symbols.

It would be wrong to under-estimate the force of this propaganda, including among some layers of the Black population. Not only the constitutional changes, but also the social openings that are imminent, are going to benefit a number of Black social groups, such as the liberal professions, small entrepreneurs and various notables. A new consensual national myth is being created, of which Miss Tilden-Davis is as much a part as the new "multi-racial" cricket team. The South African flag is certain to be changed and why not the national anthem too?

It is by no means only the better off sections of the Black population that are affected by these events. Aside from symbols, the whole political arena is changing. Systematic and massive repression has stopped and now it is often the inhabitants of the townships who want police intervention to halt local clashes. The ANC has broad access to the media and seems able to talk to the regime on a basis of equality. The prevailing sentiment is "life can change, and life will change."

This was also the point of the solemn opening of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) that took

place December 19 and 20 in Johannesburg. Eighteen delegations attended, from the ruling National Party, the liberal Democratic Party, the African National Congress (ANC), and various organizations claiming to represent their "race" as defined by apartheid — the Coloured Labour Party and the chiefs of the Bantustans. The far right, and particularly the Conservative Party, refused to take part, and among the liberation forces, the Pan-African Congress (PAC), the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) and others turned down the invitation.

At the end of the congress five working groups were set up to reach a consensus on different aspects of the transition. One is in charge of the constitutional project properly speaking. Thus CODESA represented an important step, confirming that the negotiations are multilateral, even if the face to face talks between the ANC and the government remain highly significant.

Buthelezi pulls out

The "Zulu" organization Inkatha took part, waging a spectacular battle for the participation of the King of the Zulus, in order to highlight its party's "national" quality. Faced with an initial refusal, particularly from the chiefs of the other Bantustans, Buthelezi chose not to personally attend the conference, in order, he declared, "to remain with his king."¹

This set the tone. The "races", the homelands and the apartheid parties were all invited on an equal plane with the ANC to negotiate an end to the old system. This means that the liberation movement can no longer pretend to represent all the oppressed. The regime has succeeded, beyond all its hopes, in fragmenting this representation by enforcing acceptance of the representative status of the notables of the system of the "separate development of the races". It is thus banal to say that some of the negotiating parties are loath to saw off the branch they are sitting on. They will find their place in the post-apartheid institutions by

carrying into them a part of the past, its prejudices and its divisions. This is, indeed, the objective.

On the conference's opening day, de Klerk launched a surprising attack on the ANC over the question of its armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). Nelson Mandela replied with equal violence, directly and personally challenging the republic's president. The following day, however, everything was sweetness and light with handshakes and new statements about virtual consensus. Why, then, these episodes?

It is probable that they are partly for the ears of the two parties' rank-and-file. But above all they represent the determination of the regime to bring the ANC to the negotiating table on its knees. The township youth have been forever awaiting the appearance of MK, these fighters of the ANC which are a part of its mystique. Some of these youth are forming a radical fringe that has an influence in some debates. In other words, at a time when it has become clear that the ANC leadership has definitively brought MK to heel, the regime is trying to make it seem important in order more strongly to insist on the change it wants to see in the ANC: from a liberation movement to a party like other parties, and from a militant and popular force to an apparatus of notables.

Agreement on arms likely

It was no accident that in the days following the dispute the likelihood of an agreement between Inkatha and the government was announced on the carrying of traditional arms by the former at its demonstrations. Or that it was suddenly discovered that the Nazi party, the AWB, has a military training camp. This is an amazing "discovery" in a country equipped with a comprehensive state intelligence system. An equals sign was thus put between the ANC's military forces and the fascists by the remarkable coincidence in the timing of the press reports.

In a few months time CODESA is intended to give rise to a political agreement. A commission appointed by the regime has already proposed, with consultative status, a two house system. The first would be elected on a proportional basis; the second, representing nine big regions (which implies the disappearance of the Bantustans and their integration into regions) will effectively ensure over-representation for "white" rural regions and "local communities". The possibilities for racial minorities to exercise a veto and for the maintenance of ethnic fragmentation are thus more or less preserved.

1. According to the *Weekly Mail* of January 3, 1992, the Inkatha delegation at CODESA was advised by a certain Albert Blaustein, "from Rutgers University", presented also as an adviser to Boris Yeltsin and an expert in ethnic conflicts such as that in Yugoslavia. It is worth noting also that the representative of the "government" of the Bophutatswana bantustan was a white ex-Rhodesian, recycled in South Africa!



According to the commission regionalism based on ethnic divisions may be replaced by a regionalism based on socio-economic specificities². There remains the problem of the transition. For the moment, the ANC and the government have put forward widely different proposals. The former wants to see the setting up of an interim government for 18 months which would prepare the calling of a constituent assembly. The latter wants to discuss and approve a constitutional project more or less prepared by CODESA.

Regime abhors a vacuum

On its side, the regime says that it does not want any constitutional vacuum. This means that the existing institutions, even if partly modified, must stay in working order until a new text can be approved by referendum. The regime rejects any notion of a constituent assembly, which, in its view, would imply a constitutional interregnum, at least during its working. In fact, de Klerk is seeking to coopt the ANC before any appeal is made to universal suffrage and to make it responsible for the planned compromises without too much external pressure.

Finally, and while the CODESA's labours are still unfinished, de Klerk wants to advance a step further in his political offensive on the nature of the transition. On January 24, at the opening of the parliamentary session, it was announced that the Black population³ could express its views in a referendum on the introduction of a "transitional government".

In the meantime, de Klerk may also be thinking in terms of an "interim parliament" consisting of a upper house that would be a fusion of the three existing houses (White, Coloured, Indian) and a

lower house based on universal suffrage, including therefore, for the first time, the votes of the "Africans".⁴ Without doubt in preparation for the eventuality of the ANC getting a majority in the lower house, it would be proposed that the two houses have mutual rights of veto. Finally this set up would be put to a referendum with votes counted by community.

The transitional government thus envisaged would thus allow the ANC, as well as other "representatives" of sections of the population that have hitherto been deprived of any rights as citizens, to be coopted. One can see figures such as Inkatha's Gatsha Buthelezi (Kwazulu), Lucas Mangope from Bophuthatswana or General Holomisa from the Transkei ending up in the government. For the ANC to be coopted alongside a panoply of Bantustan leaders would amount to a significant turn in the liberation struggle and the nature of the ANC.

Treacherous ground

Constitutional negotiations are treacherous ground for any liberation force, and all the more when the latter has decided against using the pressure of the masses. In recent months the ANC leadership has given up stimulating or organizing struggles. It has even, it seems, given up efforts to form a militant and structured movement.

Who has given Nelson Mandela the mandate to put an equals sign between the far right and the far left who did not take part in the conference? What leading body has given him permission to declare, in contradiction to everything his movement has said in recent years, that he does not see the possibility of whites having reserved parliamentary seats for a period as an insurmountable problem?⁵ Is this the new doctrine of the ANC, Com-

munist Party and COSATU trade union confederation leaderships, who have created a "strategic alliance", which was supposed to discuss all negotiations in a democratic way from the top to the bottom?

There can be no doubt that the leading group is operating totally on its own behalf in pursuit of an objective that is not understood by the members. Every one of these slippages is another bucket of cold water on the heads of thousands of militants who have been repeating for months that what is really being negotiated is the "transfer of power". The crisis of the ANC has become such that it arouses worries about the very future of the mass movement. Furthermore, signs of decomposition are becoming clearly visible. An incident in the Port Elizabeth region, where MK militants who had not been paid

for months sacked the ANC premises, denouncing the bureaucracy, is an example.

A curious alliance

On the other hand, cases of cooption, bureaucratization and renouncement are legion. There is a curious alliance, for example, between the ANC's Women's League and the National Party's women's structure, which are debating the place of women in a "post-apartheid society".

The ideology of post-apartheid development, that of "national reconstruction", has, furthermore, become the excuse for all kinds of compromises. It has become impossible to keep count of the ANC cadres who have in recent months found themselves propelled into university research structures on the new South Africa or into think tanks supposed to "reflect" upon the future. One example among others is that of Trevor Manuel, a member of the ANC's Central Committee who is at one and the same time working in his movement on socio-economic aspects of the future and doing the same kind of research for Mobil Oil.

The Independent Development Trust (IDT) and its 5 billion rands in funds controlled by the ANC allows the movement to envisage social development projects in partnership with the banks and pension funds.⁶ Beyond the doubts one could have on the social transformations that such projects may permit, we are now seeing the development of a new bureaucracy in the spheres of the regime and the ruling class.

Money from firms, international institutions and states is flowing around. Things have now gone beyond the stage of tactical opportunism to reach the shores of compromise. What must the Dutch anti-apartheid movement, which for years led

a campaign to boycott the Shell oil company with the ANC's blessing, be thinking on suddenly learning that the same multinational has now offered the ANC its building in Johannesburg as its local premises?

Finally, the movement's leadership has recently been shaken by worrying and still murky scandals over police infiltration — for example the rumour that the main youth leader, Peter Mokaba, had been working for the police, or the expulsion of one of the main COSATU and engineering workers leaders, Maxwell Xzulu, accused of having been an agent for several years.

While at the top all is up for negotiation, things are very different back in the townships and Bantustans. The social crisis has not been suspended for the discussions and we are seeing a deepening of the crisis of political representation and a dangerous fragmentation of the communities. Thus, in the Cape region, notably in the Crossroads township, there has been a real civil war between two Black-owned taxi firms who are fighting for the most profitable routes.⁷ The central town council has been exacerbating the conflict by supporting one side against the other. Various clans have been formed and some say that people from the ANC can be found in them. The peace committee set up by all the local progressive forces has been paralyzed by sectarianism.

Results not encouraging

The initial results are not encouraging and only render even more obscure than ever in the eyes of the Black population the real issues of the day. Many have been killed by gun attacks. Gangs are becoming widespread, and it is quite easy to get an AK47 for a few dozen rand, notably owing to the crisis in the lower ranks of the MK.

The situation is hardly better in some Bantustans, starting of course by the near permanent clashes in Kwazulu. In Ciskei clashes have been increasing between ANC supporters and people manipulated by the local powers-that-be. The forthcoming semi-dismantling of the Bantustans will lead to new migrations which will put increased pressure on employment, the urban environment and the education system. The chaotic transition holds out the threat of an exacerbation of ethnic hatreds and competition, further weakening the solidarity among the oppressed that has been built up over the last ten years.

The paradox is that at the moment when CODESA claims to be moving ahead to the building of a new South Africa, the economic crisis is showing no signs of letting up, leading to a deterioration in the situation of millions of Blacks. According to *Business Day* on December 20, inflation for foodstuffs is at an unprecedented level; an annual rate of 43.4% for fruit,

Redemption and pardon

THE CODESA conference was the occasion for many ringing speeches whose real aim was to wipe out the memory of hundreds of thousands of victims of apartheid, that is, of a crime against humanity. Thus the leader of the ruling party, Dawie de Villiers, declared that the policy of racial separation was intended to bring peace to the nation. "That did not produce the anticipated peace, but greater conflict and increasing injustice. It was not the intention to deprive other people of their rights and to contribute to their misery... Insofar as that occurred we deeply regret it" (*The Citizen*, December 21, 1991).

Justice Ismail Mahomed, the vice-president of the conference, may have been echoing this monstrous piece of hypocrisy when he said at the end: "We have emerged stronger because some experiences have to be lived with intensity" (*The Weekly Mail*, January 3, 1992). Apartheid as intensive group therapy for the construction of a new nation...Wow! ★

38.1% for meat and 33.9% for vegetables. The inflation is particularly the result of the recent introduction of VAT for such merchandise. From November 1990 to November 1991 the price of all foodstuffs rose by 26.9%, while overall inflation was 11.5%.

Recession continues

The recession is continuing; the price of gold, one of the country's main exports, continues to fluctuate at a low level. Unemployment and layoffs are mounting. According to *New Nation* (December 20, 1991) 39,000 jobs were lost in the mining sector in July and August 1991 alone. In August, the construction sector lost 4,300 jobs. And according to official statistics from the Central Statistical Office, registered unemployment (that is to say much under-estimated) rose by 47,000 between June and August 1991. In six months, overall employment fell by 2.1% in engineering, by 6% in construction, 3% in trade and 5% in transport. The engineering employers have announced 35,000 job losses.

But what is perhaps most significant, given the wonderful speeches coming out of CO DESA, is the fact that Black workers have seen the initial signs of a reversal of the trend of recent years for their wage rates to close the gap with those of white workers. The difference in average wage between the two "races" has risen from 2,432 to 2,717 rand. Official figures also show that Black workers have had to take bigger real wage cuts — 3.8% in the second quarter of 1991 for Whites, and 6.3% for Blacks.

This has not prevented the delegates at CODESA from proclaiming the end of apartheid. It is however, significant that participation in the conference was refused to COSATU

. Thus, social questions are being deliberately kept out of the current negotiations. However, everything suggests

that the negotiators are already shaping the country's socio-economic structure. While no explicit mention is made of the social dimension it is in fact being dealt with, through plans for a contract between unions and bosses or by proposals to return to the big national and international trusts the burden of "enriching the country".

The ANC's propaganda on the redistribution of wealth is not accompanied by any suggestions on the speed of this process nor the means. The whole constitutional contraption that will come out of the negotiations will, in the long term, shape how the country's social and political affairs will be managed. All the compromises made on the institutional level will also be social compromises.

State not weakened

The main characteristic of the present phase is that the South African state has been in no sense weakened. It is intact, particularly as concerns its administrative structures, its intervention in the economic field and its repressive forces. This is not Zimbabwe in 1980. The ruling party is not surrendering power as Ian Smith had to do in what was then Rhodesia. Here the National Party is happy to coopt others. Still less is this a repeat of the Namibian experience, where, even if by a compromise, the liberation movement finally got its hands on the reins of government. In South Africa the trend is towards a coali-

2. *Business Day*, Johannesburg, December 23, 1991.

3. This refers to the "Africans" who have not, until now, had the right to vote in national elections.

4. In 1984 the constitutional reform created two chambers, representing the separate votes of the "Coloureds" and the "Indians". "Africans" were still refused the right to vote. This segregation of universal suffrage and the exclusion of the Black majority led to a very strong mobilization in all the oppressed communities in favour of a boycott. This latter was massive.

5. *Cape Times*, December 31, 1991.

6. *Business Day*, December 22, 1991.

7. Although the owners may be Black, in certain cases this may be merely a formal cover for white entrepreneurs who wish to intervene on the market in the Black townships.

tion government.

And the former freedom fighters may find themselves running a society where social and racial discrimination are not substantially reduced, since we should not confuse some tens of thousands of privileged Blacks with the great mass of oppressed and disinherited.

Is another outcome still possible? The temptation to make predictions leads optimists and pessimists to follow their subjective predilections. It is thus better, at this stage, simply to point out the main likely protagonists of a sharp turn.

Despite the crisis of their leaderships and the retreats of their basic organizations, the fighting spirit of the masses has not been greatly affected, as is shown by the big strike against the government's VAT plans. We are certainly a long way from the atmosphere of militant readiness of 1984-87 but there is still a significant potential for struggle. Against this background we can approach the question of how the coming crisis of the ANC and above all of the Communist Party may work themselves out.

CP widens influence

The legalized CP has considerably widened its influence. Some of its middle-ranking cadres believed in the leadership's professions of faith about the so-called first step of the "democratic revolution". The inclusion of the CP in the ANC apparatus and its lack of an independent policy can only increase the number of the disappointed. The world crisis of Stalinism has profoundly split the leadership and its apparatus.

The break-up can now only be a matter of months away, with one part looking for wholesale integration into Mandela's project and an abandonment of any specifically Communist identity. Any possibility, even modest or local, of an internal resistance might represent a potential first line of defence against the compromises of the leading bureaucracy.

Then there is the whole problem of the socialist left, and first of all of what is meant by this. If it means coherent political groups leading a conscious fight for a break with the existing system then the only independent and really existing organization is the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA). This is still a small political movement, which cannot directly compete with the big forces like the ANC, the CP or the PAC.

However the socialist left in the larger sense goes beyond WOSA. Without self-deception, one can include here a part of AZAPO, perhaps some sections of the PAC, certainly some trade union militants from COSATU and NACTU and finally dispersed fringes of the ANC and CP, amounting in all to some thousands of militants. This left needs to find themes for activity that allow it to put up a resistance to the present course of events. The

central battle for a constituent assembly could have a very important educational role. Unfortunately there is now a real risk that some weeks from now, when the matter of the referendum will occupy the forefront of the political scene, this slogan will lose its agitational qualities. Furthermore to restrict oneself to this institutional issue could trap the left in a framework which makes it all the more difficult to mobilize at rank-and-file level.

The present challenge is to formulate as rapidly as possible an alternative, transitional and subversive response to the reformist accommodations now being negotiated.

Questions such as: What agricultural and rural reform? What sort of reform of housing, education and health? What alternative to layoffs in the mining industry? What reply to the current military and police system, into which the ANC is only looking to be coopted? What forms of social control and democratic self-organization for the township communities? need to be taken up.

Such a programme would give coherence to all those who do not want to give way. On this basis it would then be possible to better mobilize around more immediate demands, for example against layoffs or the lowering of wages, which are without doubt the battles of most immediate importance for the masses. The campaign for electricity is already underway; in a country where only 20% of the Black population has access to electricity one can imagine the mobilizing capacity of such a campaign as well as its radical content.

Can an organization such as WOSA assume such responsibilities? Will there be a sudden addition of support from the crisis of the CP or the union movement? Today, nobody can give firm answers to these questions. But the day of reckoning is approaching.

In a short while the social battle and the battles over the elections and the referendum will have to be joined. The situation is changing very fast. All militants will find themselves working under conditions that they have never known before and cannot predict. They have known clandestinity, and in the 1980s huge mass mobilizations. Today the parameters have suddenly changed. Reference points need to be rebuilt, and priorities and forms of action redefined.

At a time when the great wave of international anti-apartheid solidarity is slowly fading away owing to the official negotiations, we will continue in these pages to underline the fact that the oppressed masses of South Africa have no less a need for solidarity. And that country's revolutionaries have no less a need for internationalist support. There are battles of resistance that we must try to win, in South Africa as elsewhere, to ensure that the "new world order" is not finally defined by people like de Klerk. ★

THE CPUSA has been among the most monolithic Stalinist parties anywhere in the world. For virtually its entire existence, the party has parroted whatever the Soviet bureaucracy said. It obediently adapted to all the twists and turns of the Kremlin line — defending, justifying and praising that line, no matter what it was.

Following Khrushchev's report to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's 20th Congress and the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, the CPUSA experienced a split. A wing of the party, led by the *Daily World* editor John Gates, became disenchanted with the Soviet "model", and urged the CP to pursue a more independent course.

But Gates and his followers were soundly trounced by the "orthodox" William Z. Foster wing of the party. They left it — for social democracy, for liberal causes, or for private lives devoid of political activity.

The party, much reduced in size, reconstituted itself under the leadership of Gus Hall. For the next three decades it functioned pretty much as it had before, with due allowance made for denouncing the "cult of the individual", the Soviet bureaucracy's explanation for what went wrong during the Stalin period. The "Eurocommunism" phenomenon found little support in the ranks of the CPUSA, although one longtime leader (Gil Green) disagreed with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and said so publicly without getting expelled.

Gorbachev enthusiastically endorsed

When Gorbachev first announced his program of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the CPUSA enthusiastically endorsed it. But as the economic crisis in the Soviet Union deepened and the country was wracked with ethnic and national conflict, the CP's central leadership — led by national chair Gus Hall — became increasingly critical of Gorbachev's policies.

Hall's contention was that Gorbachev had abandoned the Soviet Union's system of centralized control (Hall, of course, does not refer to it as being bureaucratic) without having a system in place to substitute for it.

The predictable result, Hall says, was chaos. In an earlier period, Hall had targeted Yeltsin as leading the drive for capitalist restoration. But now Gorbachev is portrayed as having laid the basis for these policies.

Carl Boice, an African American leader of the party and associate editor of its publication, the *People's Weekly World*, had served during the last few years as the paper's correspondent to the Soviet Union.

Bloice in his weekly articles was an apologist for Gorbachev and his policies, and remained so virtually to the end. But Bloice also began to search for a deeper

CPUSA: towards a split?

A DEEPLY divided Communist Party USA held its 25th convention in Cleveland, Ohio on December 6-8, 1991. Within days after the convention adjourned, the deep fissures tearing the party apart had erupted into a public brawl.

SAMUEL ADAMS*

explanation of the deteriorating situation in the Soviet Union than Hall's simplistic analysis, which attributed it all to poor planning.

Bloice concluded that there was something *systemically* wrong with how the Soviet Union functioned and he began raising questions about the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy itself. At the same time, Bloice and others criticized bureaucratic and undemocratic tendencies within the CPUSA.

Hall argued that while the crisis of the capitalist system was systemic, it was incorrect to say the same about the "socialist" system in the USSR. Its problems, he insisted, simply flowed from "human error". Hall also discounted all talk of undemocratic procedures in the CPUSA.

There the differences lay until the attempted August coup in the Soviet Union. Hall took a position "to neither condemn nor condone" the coup. This provoked an explosion of protests by many in the CP's ranks. A meeting of the CP's National Committee, held on September 8, by a vote of 33-30, passed a resolution condemning the coup. That was a sharp setback for Hall.

Internal debate heats up

Internal debate — conducted with an almost unprecedented freedom of expression for the CP — heated up as the party moved towards its December convention. "An Initiative to Unite and Renew the Party" drafted by 18 leading CPers, was circulated and reportedly signed by over 800 party members, about a third of the entire membership.

The "Initiative" notes the tremors shaking Communist Parties around the world, warns of the CP's "stagnation in theoretical concepts", "isolation from progressive developments in our country" and "attempts to stifle debate [that] threaten our party's very existence". It says participation in mass struggles should be "our primary task and yardstick" and emphasizes the "need to update our concept of socialism" and "make our party much more democratic".

It asserts that "the style of leadership of our party in the past period has appeared

much more concerned with fending off any admission of error than in coming to grips with the challenges of the moment".

This kind of talk gave Hall and his camp the excuse to denounce the Initiative signers as a "right opportunist faction".

Hall appealed to CP trade unionists to rescue the party from those he stamped as reformers and revisionists. By the time of the convention, the Hall grouping had consolidated a sizeable majority.

The minority who signed the Initiative included many of the best-known party figures. Angela Davis was unable to attend the convention but she sent a message which said in part: "I was one of the original signers of the Initiative because I believe that the Communist Party will become ever more rapidly obsolescent — more fossilized evidence of past struggles won and lost, past theoretical stances effective and not, past modes of practice with their limitations as well as strengths — if it is afraid to engage in rigorous self-evaluation, radical restructuring and democratic renewal".

The sharpest discussion at the convention centred around the challenges the party's central leadership had previously made to various state delegations. The minority charged that many of its representatives were denied seats at the convention on technical grounds by a leadership in control of the party apparatus.

Hall deplures setbacks

Gus Hall's report to the convention focused on the need for the CP to involve itself in the survival issues facing the working class and the oppressed.

He deplored the devastating setbacks suffered by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and said: "The socialist world as a coherent world entity, with influence and power, is just about nonexistent".

With regard to the party's internal situation, he said: "Starting about two years ago, the developments in the Soviet Union and the catastrophic developments in the Eastern European countries hit our

party's shores like political and ideological shock waves. The setbacks and defeats in the Eastern European socialist countries and the road to ruin that the Soviet Union has been travelling is having a profound impact on the ideological and political trend towards right opportunism in our party.

"The factional fire has been greatly fueled by the right shift in world socialism. The factional center has used the situation to raise basic ideological questions about the class struggle, Marxism-Leninism, the role of the Communist Party and more".

The convention was structured to preclude genuine debate on the major issues. Minority spokespersons had little opportunity to speak. There were no minority or dissenting reports. Delegates asked for the floor; some got it and some didn't.

One who did was venerable party academic and theoretical leader Herbert Aptheker. Countering Hall's failure to identify the bureaucratic rule of a dictatorial clique — rather than just poor planning — as the Soviet Union's fundamental problem, Aptheker said: "the main source of the collapse that Comrade Hall describes — not only in the USSR but in every part of Eastern Europe — lies not in socialism, but rather in the distortions and vitiation of the essential nature of the party as conceived by Marx and Engels and Lenin into an organization eaten up by bureaucracy, tyranny, authoritarianism, repression and finally human annihilation".

Meeting in Room 211

The CP convention was closed to party members who were not delegates. It was also closed to representatives of the foreign Communist parties and to the media. But 200 rank and file CP members, part of the minority tendency, came to Cleveland anyway and met in a room directly across the street from where the convention was held. Delegates shuffled back and forth between the convention and this "Room 211".

The Hall majority totally dominated the convention and won approval for all of its reports and resolutions. Signers of the Initiative were purged from the new National Committee (they constituted about 40% of the outgoing committee).

Following the convention, the staff of the *People's Weekly World* prepared the next issue of the paper, which contained a section on the convention proceedings. It quoted generously from Gus Hall's report, but it also reflected some of what the minority had to say.

When the issue was printed, however, much of this had been deleted. Without knowledge of the *People's Daily World* staff, the party's central leadership had

*This article is an abridged version of one that first appeared in the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, the journal of the US Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

substituted its statement of what happened at the convention, omitting all reference to the minority viewpoint. Subsequently, the paper's editor and other staff members who were Initiative supporters were removed.

Those supporters of the Initiative who met in Room 211 have decided to launch a "Committee of Correspondence", establish a newsletter, begin to work on the 1992 elections and the mayors' march on Washington next spring, "launch a labor project" and meet again in about six months.

The situation in the CPUSA today can best be described as one both of turmoil and fluidity. Party members, whether supporters of the majority or minority, have been thoroughly disoriented by developments in the USSR and Eastern Europe. They are now locked in a factional battle over differences that have not yet fully crystallized. Anyone searching for clear-cut and definitive programmatic differences will not find them in the CP today. At least not yet.

Profoundly undemocratic

What is clear, though, is that the CPUSA remains a profoundly undemocratic party, with no tolerance for minority views and with a top leadership seemingly incapable of shedding its Stalinist past. But there is no doubt that that very leadership, for the most part, retains the allegiance of the CP's working class and trade union membership.

The opposition is a hodgepodge, heterogeneous grouping which has yet to come up with a clear alternative to the Hall line. What binds them together is more the demand for greater democracy in the CP and a greater openness to new ideas than anything else. But as important as these are, they hardly constitute a program.

For now, revolutionary Marxists may be able to establish dialogue with some CPers who are open to discuss ideas which the party shunned in the past. In addition, every effort should be made to forge united fronts for action in areas of agreement, such as opposition to US intervention in Cuba.

Further developments within the Communist Party together with the deepening of the crisis of capitalism may well lead some CPers towards genuine proletarian internationalism, to democratic instead of bureaucratic centralism, to building workers united fronts instead of reformist multiclass popular fronts, and to help construct an urgently needed mass revolutionary workers' party in the United States. ★



The PT debates socialism

ONE of the fiercest discussions at the First Congress of the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) which took place in Sao Paulo at the end of November 1991¹, concerned the question of socialism; the debate concluded with the defeat of those currents identified as the right of the PT, who had put forward the theses entitled "A project for Brazil"².

This debate allowed the PT to develop clearer positions concerning its socialist objective at its last national meeting. In an article which first appeared in the December edition of the magazine *Em Tempo*, Jose Correia, a member of the Socialist Democracy current of the PT, examines below what is at stake in this discussion.

JOSE CORREIA

THE initial theses proposed by the PT on the attitude of the peoples of Latin America towards the "new international order" contained some ambiguities. An amendment proposed by the left (theses 9 and 10) stipulated that the "emancipation of Latin America and the construction of a new society necessitates going beyond a world order... which assures the domination of those sectors which, both inside and outside the continent, profit from it".

The congress debated the question of Cuba at length: the majority of delegates rejected both the arguments of those who demanded an abstract engagement in the struggle for democracy in Cuba, ignoring the concrete context, and sectarian amendments which called on the Cuban masses to bring down the Castro regime through political revolution. The text adopted stressed that the deepening of democracy is the best way of defending the revolution: it underlined the need to build a broad movement against the imperialist blockade and in support of the gains of the Cuban revolution.

The identification made by the right of the PT, between Stalinism/"actually existing socialism" and the theoretical sources of Marxism and the real movement which was at the origins of the Russian Revolution, was rejected. The initial text adopted states that the process of bureaucratization constitutes a negation of the theoretical and practical sources which inspired October 1917.

Another amendment, which was integrated into the text, explains that: "The Russian revolution was at the heart of the revolutionary upsurge which took place in Europe and Asia at the end of the First World War. However, despite the resistance made to the military pressure of its external adversaries, [the revolution] suf-

fered a mounting series of defeats — international isolation, the result of the defeat of the revolution in countries like Germany, Italy and Hungary and its encirclement by the international bourgeoisie; the massive destruction of the country and its social consequences; the suppression of the conquests of 1917 in the field of political democracy; the growing power, in the new state and in the party, which was intertwined with it, of a bureaucracy autonomous of any control, and so on.

Errors committed

"This process, the product of "objective" circumstances which should not be underestimated, was also the product of errors committed by the revolutionaries who were at the head of the new regime. It led to a veritable counter-revolution, which dispossessed the workers of the exercise of power and which concentrated [the latter] in the hands of a bureaucracy transformed into a new dominant layer of Soviet society.

"Starting from this, conceptions like that of the construction of socialism in a single country, founded on state ownership of the means of production under bureaucratic control, became predominant. This model, as well as the material, political and ideological pressure that it exercised, weighed in a decisive fashion on the course of the subsequent revolutionary processes, like the Chinese, Yugoslav, Vietnamese or even, to a lesser degree, Cuban revolutions".

The discussion on socialism was launched through a prominent Brazilian newspaper, the *Folha de Sao Paulo*, by PT deputies and leaders Jose Genoino and Eduardo Jorge. They took violent exception to certain amendments proposed by the left and adopted at the local PT con-

gress at Sao Paulo, which disavowed the positions of the "social-democratizing" sectors of the party, reaffirming that "the ideas which were at the root of the social and revolutionary movements throughout this century persist: they are a source of inspiration for our party, which is engaged in the struggle for the abolition of capitalism". The amendments clarify the kind of society for which the PT is fighting: "a government of freely associated individuals"; the end of all forms of exploitation and oppression; the end of the use of "labour power as a commodity", and so on. This amendment was finally adopted at the national congress.

Another modification proposed by the left was approved: it dealt with the importance of direct democracy in the objective of the extinction of social classes and the state: "The problem of the links between the direct and representative forms of democracy should take into account the objectives of the destatization of politics.

"Socialist democracy is based on the growing overcoming of alienation and of the political apathy of the majority of the population, on the basis of a greatly superior level of activity, of participation, of consciousness and of organization of the people. It necessitates also different socio-economic conditions from those currently in force, including a significant reduction in work time.

"In this framework, the abolition of the currently existing institutions, responsible for the significant autonomy enjoyed by the rulers in relation to the people (such as is the case with the classic mechanisms of liberal representative democracy) is an objective to be pursued. It amounts to the abolition of the distinction between governing and governed and the beginning of the extinction of class inequalities and of the state as an apparatus of domination".

The PT is, then, making an important clarification of its previous texts; this represents a real defeat for the social democratic positions within the party. However, the discussion on the economy and socialism has been cursory and must be continued.

Victory for right

The only victory scored by the right of the PT came during the debate on the dictatorship of the proletariat — thanks to an agreement made with the majority current of Lula, an amendment was adopted rejecting this concept. According to this text, "For us, democracy is both a means and an end. To say that implies the rejection of any kind of dictatorship, even the dictatorship of the proletariat, which can be nothing other than the dictatorship of the single party over society, and even over the workers... We struggle for a genuinely pluralist society; it is yet another reason to be anti-capitalist, for capitalism, by oppressing and alienating individuals, amounts in fact to a pluralism narrowed

Pluralism and tendency rights

THE question of tendencies dominated a good part of the debate on the functioning of the PT. The position finally adopted assured the effective right of tendency, while trying to resolve some of the practical problems.

The congress discussed two proposals on functioning. One, based on the existing regulation of tendency rights, proposed the broadening of democracy and pluralism, to unfreeze the internal life of the PT.

The other, presented by the Articulation and the right, advocated the suspension of certain prerogatives, which amounted to a restriction of the right of tendency. Such a change would have destroyed or severely damaged the process of synthesis which has constituted the PT, and opened the road to expulsions.

Finally the conception adopted by majority vote envisages that:

- Tendencies can maintain spaces [of expression], but their use to organize activities external to the PT or meetings with non-affiliates is forbidden... It is recommended that the tendencies meet in the offices of the party [their activities should be open to any militant of the PT].
- The different tendencies can produce information bulletins inside the party, or publications on theoretical political debate, with proposals on the conjuncture and the social movement. The publication of any material which seeks to orientate and organize the autonomous political intervention of tendencies in the social movement is forbidden, as is the diffusion of the positions of tendencies outside the PT...
- Tendencies can conserve the mechanisms of collection of resources providing that this does not prejudice the finances of the party...
- International relations are the exclusive domain of the party, through its leadership bodies. The national leadership will pursue the international relations entered into by its tendencies with the perspective of taking them over itself, if they correspond to the policy defined by the party...
- The tendencies of the PT cannot impose on their militants an obligatory centralism. The positions of the tendencies cannot be counterposed to the implementation of the decisions of the party."

From *Em Tempo*, December 1991. ★

by inequality of conditions and opportunities.

"It is also a reason to reject that which is called "pluralism for the workers parties" — that is, "pluralism for those who think like us" — historically, this can only concretize itself as a transitional expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat".

This amendment equates Stalinism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It introduces a theoretical confusion on the question, reducing this concept to its Stalinist interpretation and affirming that the dictatorship of the proletariat can only exist as the dictatorship of a single party.

But, inasmuch as the text adopted does not end the discussion on the theory of the state, its class character, the necessity of destroying the bourgeois state and building a new class regime, this is not a major blow. For revolutionary Marxists, the dictatorship of the proletariat has always been understood as socialist democracy organized in a pluralist framework, capable of integrating all currents which accept the legality established by the regime of the workers, born out of the smashing of the apparatus of bourgeois domination.

An amendment proposed by the right currents defending non-violence was rejected by the congress. Moreover, another modification proposed by the left was adopted: it stated that "political power is built everyday in the struggles, in the

trade union, in the factory organization, in the enterprise committee, in the neighbourhood association, in the school or in the countryside... This popular power, meanwhile, has a character limited by the dominant institutions in capitalist society and by the relation of social forces — in particular political situations, it could take on a new character, extending and generalizing itself".

Finally, amendments presented by the PT commissions for intervention in the mass movement were adopted, concerning women, the racial question, and so on.³ The discussion on socialism has, then, been a positive one. At this level the PT has made some clear progress towards revolutionary and socialist positions. ★

1. See IV 219, December 23, 1991.

2. Several draft theses were presented to the PT congress: thesis 5, proposed by Socialist Convergence, a Trotskyist grouping linked to the international Marxist current (6 to 7% of the delegates); thesis 7, put forward by the *O Trabalho* current, linked to Pierre Lambert's international tendency (4%); thesis 8, *A Project for Brazil*, proposed by various currents from the right of the PT (12%); thesis 9, *A Revolutionary Road for the PT*, presented by Socialist Democracy (Brazilian section of the Fourth International) and other sectors (12%); and thesis 10, associated with different left sectors (10-12%). Finally, thesis 11, proposed by the Articulation, the majority tendency, had the support of 47% of the delegates. Its draft was finally adopted as the basic text for discussion on socialism and strategy, and amended.

3. A proposal emerging from the commission of women delegated to the congress, seeking to establish a minimum quota of 30% women in the leading bodies of the PT, was adopted.

From the plan to the clan

HOW would you define the main features of the new situation in the Soviet Union?

At the moment one cannot say that "positive" features are in the ascendant; on the contrary the dominant element is disintegration and this may last a long time.

In this situation, the governments do not all have the same approach. Furthermore, the existence of different political forces must also be taken into account. There are those that, while they could not be called "reformists" of the old system, nonetheless are seeking to avoid a total break with it. What is presently happening in Serbia may provide a reference point for some republics in the former USSR. Here we have a regime supported by a part of the former Stalinist apparatus. Its programme is hard to define but it favours the restoration of capitalism and its ideology mixes nationalist elements, a strong dose of chauvinism, and forms of populism, and in some cases workerism.

A syndrome of the Yugoslav type is quite possible, even including some of its military aspects, involving political forces that combine Stalinism and reactionary nationalism, which are no longer able to base themselves on projects for the reform of the system, but which can, on the other hand, exploit territorial conflicts and control of natural resources, and out of which military forces can emerge caught up in an unstoppable dynamic towards conflict.

■ **The most serious problems are the economic problems. Is there already hyper-inflation in the CIS, as many Western observers insist?**

Above all there is an economic war going on which is disorganizing not only production but all economic relations between the republics. In practice, the rouble no longer functions as a currency throughout the CIS. There is no common economic space, while a strong interdependence remains which, if it is not equally significant for every republic, affects them all.

The recent decision of the government of Ukraine to suppress the circulation of the rouble and replace it provisionally by coupons (which are in fact becoming a new currency; there is even an illicit exchange market) is a symptom of the internal distrust and conflict between Russia and the other republics in the CIS. An autarchic development of these republics could work, but only up to a certain point and for a certain time, and only in republics

THE dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are events of an as yet unmeasured historic importance. But even now some of the main economic tendencies can be analyzed.

The following interview with Marxist economist Catherine Verla first appeared in the Spanish review *Viento Sur* no. 1, January-February 1992. It was conducted by Miguel Romero.*

lics that produce consumer goods or goods for export to the international market.

However, the republics with economies based on industrial production, the only market for which has been the other CIS countries, and which are, furthermore, usually the poorest, are in a dramatic situation and will be the hardest hit by the disruption of economic circuits. In such cases violent explosions cannot be ruled out.

■ **The authorities claimed that the big price rises of January 1992 would immediately produce a substantial improvement in the supply of basic products. But this has not apparently been the case; severe shortages remain, for example of foodstuffs in the big cities.**

We have to wait a bit before drawing the balance sheet on this, but it is true that until now there has been no significant improvement in supplies. This is easy enough to understand. The partisans of the January measures insisted that these steep price rises would result in the arrival in the shops of products stocked for speculative reasons or because existing prices were considered too low. They hoped, furthermore, that the measures would stimulate production — in 1991 the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the USSR fell by 15%.

It is true that to a large extent the shortages are the result of speculation, but nobody can foresee when the speculators will cease their activities, that is to say when they will consider prices sufficiently profitable to release their stocks onto the market rather than continue to wait for prices to rise further.

Furthermore, the holding back of agricultural products is not only due to prices but also to the demand by peasants and agricultural organizations for payment in hard currency. Yeltsin personally has made promises in this area, but has been

unable to keep them.

There are, moreover, production monopolies which are continuing to work according to the traditional norms of the bureaucratic system: for them the price rises do not constitute in any way a stimulus to production; the new prices may even appear to them as a means of obtaining more income from producing the same. Finally, even if a will to step up production existed, the catastrophic state of transport and industrial supply networks make it difficult to achieve positive results.

In any case, it will take time for prices to fall, while there is an enormous mass of money in circulation and colossal public deficits. There is a considerable possibility that hyper-inflation will be provoked without an improvement in supply.

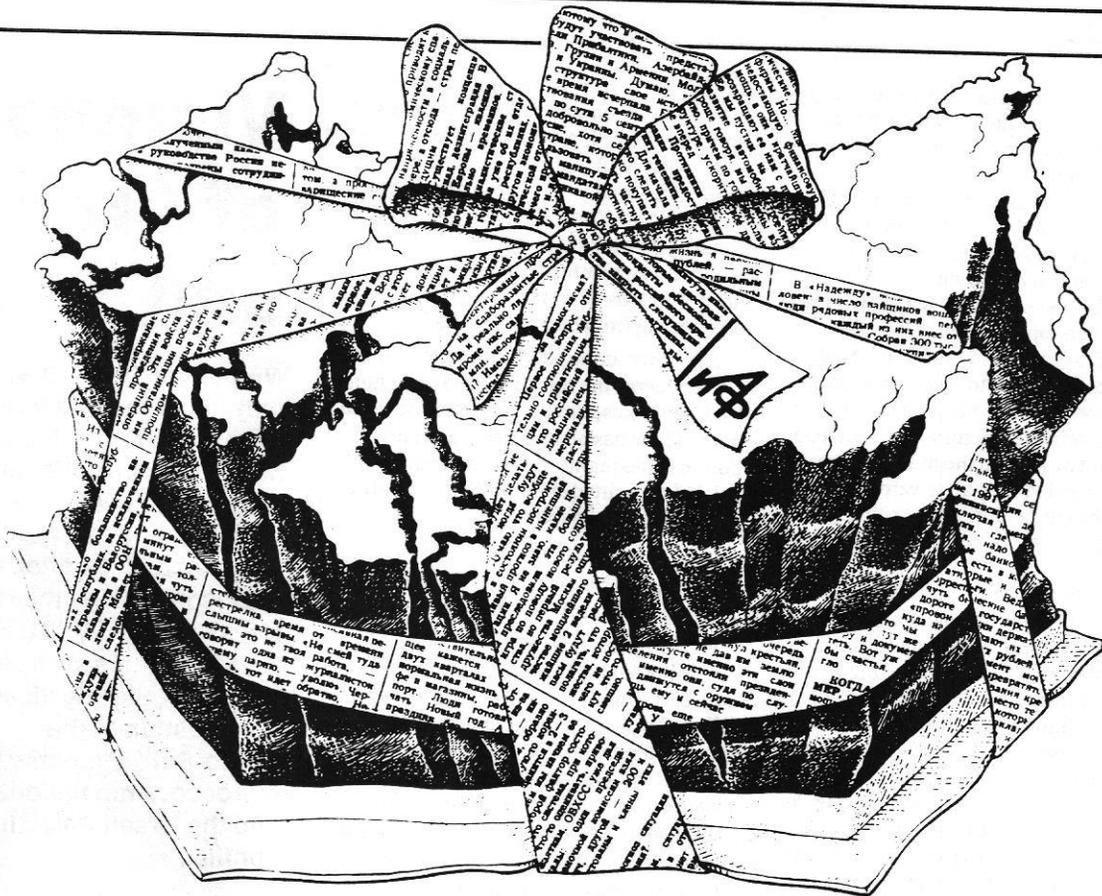
To understand what is going on, we can look at the experience of economic "shock therapy" in Poland, without denying the many differences that exist between that country and the countries of the CIS.

In Poland inflation remains at two or three digits, but has already begun to descend below the threshold of hyperinflation. Supplies have improved in terms of the quantity of products arriving in the shops — many of them imported — but the ability of most of the population to buy them has hardly improved at all. Poland has seen an enormous increase in its debt without any accompanying restructuring of its economy. Finally, we should not forget that Polish governments could at the outset base themselves on the capital of trust inherited from Solidarnosc; this is one of the reasons why until now there have not been social explosions.

In the case of the CIS, the authorities do not, in my view, have such political capital at their disposal. In particular, Yeltsin has already had serious conflicts with his own team (see IVs 220 and 221) and in the first place with Vice President Rutskoy. But, above all, in this case the "shock therapy" takes place against the background of the inter-republican economic war. Thus it is hard to see how the situation can be stabilized.

■ **All these phenomena are often presented as the first steps on the road to capitalism, in which an "economic break" with the preceding system is being accomplished. Would you say that capitalism has already been restored in the CIS?**

It is interesting in this respect to consider the views of experts from the international financial organisms. A little while ago,



these would have replied to your question in the affirmative. But today they admit that they do not know what to do or where things are heading.

The clearest approach to this problem is to analyze the most important features of the privatization process. International and above all German capital is flowing into certain particularly profitable sectors in the countries considered the most stable, for example, Czechoslovakia.

In many cases, the multinationals' involvement amounts to no more than the transfer of production from their Western factories to take advantage of the cheaper labour in the East. In others, consortiums are aiming to get hold of the natural resources of this or that region. This is what Japanese and Korean capitalists are doing in the CIS' Asian republics.

Furthermore transport, supply, training of managers, financial services and so on are very bad in relation to the needs of the big investments that are hoped for from foreign capital. These investments, furthermore, will take the lion's share in the privatizations. It is calculated that, in the best of cases, internal disposable capital only amounts to 10 to 30% of the price of the goods to be privatized.

The situation can thus be summed up by saying that what could be called "capitalist markets" have been created — a sort of "free trade zone" in which investments are concentrated. But there has been no transformation of the system as a whole. And I do not think that there is a perspective of forming a different economic system.

■ There is then a contradiction

between economics and politics: the governments are, in most cases, firm partisans of the restoration of capitalism and are trying to apply measures to that end as fast as possible.

This is true, but the first conclusion that one can draw from this contradiction is the instability of the governments, as is shown by experience. The second conclusion that can be drawn, and which can also be verified in practice, is the appearance of different strategies by the different political sectors which share the general objective of a capitalist restoration.

During the last Polish elections, most of the parties criticized the privatizations that had been carried out as "wild capitalism" and defended the need for a strong public sector. In Hungary there are currents that are strongly opposed to what they call the "cosmopolitan capitalism" promoted by other ultra-liberal sectors in the economic domain. These latter, however, can be defined as progressive at other levels, such as in the attitude to minority nationalities. Those promoting a "national" and more "social" capitalism on the other hand often espouse a strongly reactionary nationalism, when they are not explicitly anti-semitic.

In my opinion, one should not rule out a return to power by anti-liberal currents, probably marked by populism; a sort of combination of neo-Stalinism and chauvinism.

■ Lots of questions remain on the different strategies for capitalist

restoration. For example, the main instrument for constructing a bourgeoisie seems today to be the state. At the moment this nascent bourgeoisie contains very diverse elements — the traditional mafia, the new businessmen from the nomenklatura and others. To take a concrete example, do you think that Yeltsin has a coherent project in this respect?

In Russia, as well as in other countries, and above all in Hungary, there have been interesting debates on these problems. For example, Janos Kornai, a very influential Hungarian economist, has criticized what he calls a "Bolshevik" approach to capitalist restoration, by which he means an attempt to jump ahead of the process of an organic development of a national bourgeoisie.

The idea that this is a viable option today seems questionable to me, but in any case Kornai says that restoration must take place very slowly, resting on the support of new intermediate layers coming out of the underground economy. The corresponding state economic policy should encourage young "healthy" and "dynamic" entrepreneurs, while fighting against the former system and above all blocking the route to privatizations that benefit the old nomenklatura. According to Kornai, it is also necessary to take the legal steps and develop the material infrastructure that would allow this process to go ahead.

There is another debate going on in Hungary, where in my opinion, such discussions are most advanced and clearcut. According to this hypothesis it is neces-

sary to go as fast as possible towards capitalism, otherwise that aim will never be reached. The former economic system has to be economically and politically smashed, even if to do this it is necessary to lean on a section of the former nomenclatura. Privatization must be done as fast as possible and at any price.

This is the line of Jeffrey Sachs, who has been an economic adviser in Bolivia, Poland, Slovenia and now in Russia. Sachs goes so far as to say that even if a privatization is not very efficient and favours unreliable sectors from an economic point of view in the medium term, it should be carried out; afterwards one can see what has to be done. He criticizes the Polish experience from this angle as too soft.

Yeltsin has moved a long way in recent months. First of all he was a supporter of the Shatalin Plan [for passing to the market economy in "500 days"] which is in the Sachs mould; for him people had to buy the maximum of shares and housing as fast as possible. Now, Yeltsin seems more influenced by the plan that previously was opposed to Shatalin's. He is inclined towards shock therapy on prices, and a more rapid progress towards the commercialization of goods, even when they are produced by state enterprises, rather than a transformation in the form of ownership of the enterprises.

"Commercialize" has become his buzz word, in which relations between enterprises without state subsidies and on the basis of market criteria will be established.

Thus to return to your question, I am not sure if there is a coherent project for the formation of a new bourgeoisie — there is a desire for this, but different people are working at cross purposes.

■ **The ability of the CIS to continue as a framework for stable co-existence between different republics seems to be wilting even faster than imagined.**

In my view this project was from the beginning marked with strong ambiguities. At the moment of the first meeting of the Slav republics most articles in the Kiev press defined it as a knife in the back of Ukrainian independence, which at the very least showed that there were problems in interpreting the nature of the CIS and sense of independence.

A significant part of the Ukrainian population considers "independence" to be compatible with confederal links with the other republics, while others believe that independence means a complete breaking of the links of the past and the search for a rapid insertion into Western Europe.

Such differences exist both inside the political currents and within the workers' movement and are exacerbated by the current conflicts between Russia and Ukraine. Furthermore, the Yeltsin government's increasingly overt Great Russian

attitude is sharpening the inter-republican conflicts, which are suspicious of a CIS dominated by "big brother". The conflict over what will happen to the strategic arms illustrates the problems. Some members of Yeltsin's team go further: Ruskoy has talked about the "Malvinas" to illustrate the attitude that Russia should have towards the territories that it is demanding from other republics.¹

The other ambiguity in the birth of the CIS concerns the role of the Slav and non-Slav republics, the ties between rich and poor. There has always been, and still is, a political inequality between them which has led to a situation of potential conflict in the Muslim republics.

■ **What is the pressure of Iran and Turkey on these republics?**

As is logical, this pressure exists, but it is manifested unequally. The situations in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are very specific. The Azeri population is culturally homogeneous; it is Turkish-speaking and Shiite. Relations with Turkey are strained because the Turkish government maintains privileged ties to Armenia, while being prudent about it.

In Kazakhstan two alternatives confront each other. One is that of an alliance with the European republics, particularly Russia, which would permit the preservation of the unity of the republic by integrating the minorities of European origin. The other, which seems to be gaining ground, is that of a break, which could lead to the division of this republic. Some Slav currents, for example, are looking to a split to get rid of the Muslims and integrate into the pan-Slav community led by Russia. This is Solzhenitsyn's position.

Finally there is the Central Asian bloc, which is Turkish-speaking with the exception of Persian-speaking Tadzhikistan, which could become the first Islamic republic of the former USSR.

If the CIS collapses, Turkey and Iran may constitute poles of attraction, but for the moment it is the centrifugal tendencies that are prevailing. Coherent Islamic fundamentalist currents are weak. The Party of the Islamic Renaissance, for example, is small.

Very different decisions have been taken over the question of the alphabet. Azerbaijan has adopted the Latin alphabet and Uzbekistan the Arabic.² ★

* *Viento Sur* is published by the Left Alternative organization, which was recently formed by the fusion of the Revolutionary Communist League (Spanish section of the Fourth International) and the Spanish Communist Movement (MC).

1. In 1982 the Argentine dictatorship launched a military attack to regain the Malvinas islands, situated in the South Atlantic, which were, and remain, under colonial British control.

2. In Stalinist times all the languages of the Soviet Union were written in the Cyrillic script used by Russian and other East and South Slav languages.

Visions of Arab unity

WE publish below the second part of our interview with Abraham Serfaty, leader of the Moroccan revolutionary organization Ila Al-Amam, who was released from jail in September 1991 after 17 years imprisonment by the regime of Hassan II (see /V 221, February 3, 1992). In this section of the interview, Serfaty discusses the question of the Arabo-Berber identity in Morocco, Arab nationalism, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

■ IN THE first part of our interview (see /V 221), you talked about the progress made by Ila Al-Amam on some aspects of the questions of nationality or identity in Morocco, and in particular its appreciation of the question of Berber identity. In recent writings you have even characterized Morocco as an Arabo-Berber nation. Can you explain more precisely what you mean by that? How should the relationship between the Arab and Berber identities be defined? And, finally, what do you mean by "nation"? I am referring here to the old debate on the Arab nation. As you know, in Arabic, different terms are used for the communities formed within the existing states (often *watan*) and for the national identity of all Arabs (*umma*).

This is a fundamental question. I think that all of us Arab Marxists must make an effort on this question. Up until now, the dominant optic on the Arab national question in the Arab liberation movement has been petty bourgeois, leading to the kind of disasters seen in Syria and Iraq.

Unfortunately, we have not worked out a coherent alternative. The Arab Communist Parties have a tendency to underestimate the problem, while, generally, the independent Arab Marxist or Marxist-Leninist movements which were inspired by the Palestinian or South Yemeni revolutions, have remained more or less within the petty bourgeois framework.

In Morocco we have thought about the

Berber problem, but we are only at the beginning of thinking through the national question.

This thinking, furthermore, cannot be done by one person, nor by one movement in one Arab country. All the Marxists of the Arab world have to apply themselves to it: this is an urgent and important task.

As far as Morocco is concerned, we believe that over the millenia an Arabo-Berber nation has been formed which amounts to more than just the straightforward juxtaposition of two identities; there has been an integration of the Berber substratum of the Moroccan nation, which began to develop 4,000 years ago, and the Arab contribution.

In this latter we include the contribution of Islam — its popular element, not the *sunna* or *sharia* but the Arab culture and the cultural and economic progress that marked the rise of the Arab world in the first centuries of Islam. The Arab-Berber symbiosis was realized in the Maghreb (North Africa west of Egypt) at the level of the region's people, rather than through the central states.

Besides, it is necessary to start from the concept of the nation, which is not a simple one and which has not been sufficiently developed. The dominant concept of the nation is based on the European model — I am not even talking about the nation-state but the implicit reference to fully formed nations. But, in fact, history does not develop like that. Personally, I think that a nation is a dynamic thing. At the beginning there are the first forms of transcendence of tribal structures — which does not necessarily mean the negation of these structures. In the Arab world this process is very different from that seen in Europe where the nations were formed out of the destruction of pre-capitalist forms. Here the nations form by the growing together of tribes, not by their destruction. When this process of growing together begins, I think we can start to talk about a national dynamic.

In the Arab world this process takes place at two levels; a level that we can call the *watan*, as in the case of Morocco, or at the global level that is known as the *umma*. The problem is that the Arab nationalist movement has tended to idealize the notion of *umma*, presenting it as if it has always existed in the modern sense of the term (or at least since the advent of Islam), and basing it on idealist foundations — religion and language. Movements with non-confessional tendencies, such as the Baathists, have stressed the language, without dispensing with Islam, but things have stayed at that point.

In my view, we must start with the roots of the nation, first of all in the formation of human communities and their lands — this is in fact the tribe. Such communities are created at a higher level by the development of trade links, then of urban centres and a town/countryside relationship which gradually creates the substratum of the nation, in a form which, although not structured politically, is structured economically and culturally and has the underpinning of a common language. I think that in the very long term the national dynamic is to be found here.

Before Islam, this national dynamic had



"Know your country" — cartoon from *Al Hayat* (Algeria)

begun to give rise to what one could call *watan* nations (this is very clear in the case of the Egyptian nation which existed in a very personalized form). In the Maghreb the process was still at an earlier stage for the developing Berber nation; here the town/countryside networks were not sufficiently structured, and culture, especially writing, was not yet sufficiently developed.

It is incontestable that the Arabo-Islamic graft, with its contradictions, antagonisms and struggles, gave a new dynamic to this development. In the long term, a symbiosis of peoples — and not of the empires, whether Moroccan or Ottoman, that sought to dominate them — was created in the Maghreb, from which have arisen the two Arabo-Berber nations of Algeria and Morocco.

However the Arab graft was not local; it was tied to other developments elsewhere throughout the Arab world and this has attached the formation of these Arabo-Berber nations to an Arab national dynamic. For five or six centuries this was on a rising path, but then it regressed; it was not able to structure itself any more. About a century ago it resumed its course within intellectual and activist circles as a platform for anti-imperialist action, marked by the idealist conceptions I have mentioned.

This is why we, Arab revolutionary militants, Marxists in particular, need to

construct another frame of reference in the light of the impasse into which the idealist approach has led. There is an Arab national dynamic (*qumya*) rather than a formed Arab *umma*. All Arab internationalists agree that we should talk about the Arab nationalist movement, a term which corresponds to present realities.

We must, at the same time, work for revolution in our different nations — where nations exist, which is not evident in some artificial states — and, at the same time, participate in the Arab nationalist movement from a historic, anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist and of course anti-Arab reaction perspective. This should be in the historic perspective of creating an Arab nation in the future, through the victory of revolutions in various countries and also through solidarity between our different revolutionary movements — which will have to be stronger, tighter and more deeply rooted than the solidarity between the revolutionary movements of the whole world.

■ The distinction that you draw between a national movement and a nation does not seem very clear to me.

You talk of the dynamic towards national unification and come out in favour of that unification in state form. But if, as you said at the beginning, the nation should not be confused with the nation-state, and if there exists a will to create a common state framework and realize unification, this will be aimed at unifying a human totality tied by a common sense of belonging to a single nation.

In any case, I think that the unification process at the level of states can only result from states that, to simplify matters, one could call revolutionary, free from any imperialist, feudal or reactionary grip. On this point we agree. Even if there are differences of social and political structuring from one country to another, from the moment when the people conquer such revolutionary states, they can engage in a process of unification.

In my opinion, in the historical medium term, this may become possible for the Maghreb which might enter on a road to state unification. At the same time, such a perspective, since it meets popular aspirations, is a factor of mobilization for the revolutionary struggle. When I say that we must make the revolution in each of our countries, this does not mean that we should forever close off such a perspective for them, both because it is not just and also because we are talking about a dynamic revolutionary ferment. This is a



deep aspiration of the Arab and Arabo-Berber peoples, on the condition that every specific personality is respected and is not dissolved in a mythical unity.

At the level of the Arab world as a whole the process may be much more protracted than for the Maghreb, given all the divisions that exist in the Mashreq and the very great difficulty in liberating the whole of Palestine (meaning the suppression of the Zionist state, not "throwing the Jews into the sea!").

But we must also take into account the enormous strategic importance that Gulf oil has for imperialism. The battle here will thus be a long term one. The Gulf must be encircled by revolutionary states — something that we are obviously far from — before we can weigh more directly, not by classical war, but through revolutionary movements and revolutionary solidarity with the militant forces of that region. We also need a parallel action in the direction of international public opinion, particularly in the Western countries, to isolate the most aggressive and warlike forces.

■ **The aim of Arab unification, the Arab national dynamic that you talk of, is not accepted in some Berber regions, such as the Kabylia in Algeria. How do you see the relation between the possible rejection of this orientation in certain regions and an eventual voluntary unification?**

To put it another way, how do you pose the problem of self-determination for regions with ethnic specificities? On the other hand, do you see the Berber question as a "pan-Berber" question, or are there rather regional characteristics that will crystallize in different forms in this or that region?

First of all, one must see the problem of all the marginal units in the Arab world, who are politically included in it, but are not part of the Arab nation. We agree that

the Black African regions of southern Mauritania and Sudan, or, of course, the Kurds, have the right to self-determination, including separation and the formation of their own nation on their territory, if that is what they wish.

On the other hand, when one looks at the history of Morocco one sees that there is a real mingling, forming an Arabo-Berber mosaic. It is very difficult to speak of a territorial distinction between an Arab and a Berber region, as one could for example speak of the Kurdish region of Iraq. This does not mean that separatist ideas do not exist, they exist for example in the Rif where there are currents in

favour independence for that region.

A response to such currents can only be found in the common struggle. If the Moroccan revolutionary movement has a correct platform on the Arab-Berber question in their country, I am convinced we could win Rifian pro-independence militants to a non-separatist view of their struggle.

But the essential thing is that the question must be resolved democratically. In Algeria, even if the Berber problem is less widespread than in Morocco, in Kabylia it has taken on a more crystallized form for historical reasons — particularly the very old immigration from that region to France.

There is among the Kabylies a much more widespread sense of their specific personality and a rejection of the Arab connection. It is, furthermore, not easy for Moroccan Berber militants to admit that we are Arabo-Berbers and an integral part of the Arab national dynamic. This is impossible, in any case, if you start from the petty bourgeois idealist vision of the Arab nation; it can only be achieved if one opposes to this vision a historical and dynamic materialist vision of the construction of the Arab nation, and of Morocco as an Arabo-Berber nation.

In this sense, if it is not correct to talk about "pan-Berberism", it is nonetheless correct to talk about a Berber language, the *tamazigh*, for all the Berber speaking population of the entire Maghreb. Presently there are several Berber dialects which could come together to form a written Berber language. My only difference with certain Berber militants and linguists is that I would prefer this language to be written in Arab characters, purely and simply for pedagogic reasons and not in order to uphold some form of Arab domination. This would make it easier for Berber speaking children to learn their language and pass without difficulty to the study of Arabic. Morocco, like Belgium, should have two national languages, but one should not make writ-

ing harder for children.

The problem is more complicated in Algeria: it is only if an Algerian revolutionary and democratic movement can develop an adequate perspective that militants could help Kabylie militants to move towards a perspective such as I have just described. But this would be on one major condition: the problem of the Arab nation has to be seen from the viewpoint of the dynamic towards national unification, and not in opposition to the nations which already exist in Algeria or Morocco.

This dynamic must not involve a dissolution of the national personalities of each country, such as Algeria or Morocco or the Maghreb as a whole: the future Arab nation will not mean uniformity. Within the greater Arab nation, the Maghreb as a whole will retain its Arabo-Berber specificity. And even in our conception of a free Morocco as an Arabo-Berber nation, there is a place for regional autonomy.

■ **Do you see regional autonomy as a possible solution to the Kabylie question?**

Yes, regional autonomy at the level of the political management of the Kabylie and equality for the Berber language, developed as a language of high culture for all the Berbers of the Maghreb, along with the Arab language.

■ **What would be the place of Israeli Jews of Arab origin in relation to the Arab nation? You have often raised this issue, but, seen from Israel, the way in which you underline the Arab identity of Israeli Jews who have come from Arab countries, and especially the large number of them who have come from Morocco, seems to have been rendered largely irrelevant by the integrating force of Zionism.**

Today, what was once Arab Judaism is in its great majority concentrated in what are known as the Oriental Jews of Israel. The Moroccan Jewish community, in particular, is also significant in other countries, including in France and Canada, and indeed in a small way in Morocco itself.

I myself devoted a lot of attention to this problem at the start of the 1980s, and the information I have received makes me think that my analysis remains valid. Potentially, if not in terms of immediate political reality, there is a contradiction between the defence by Oriental, and more precisely Arab, Jews of their identity as Arab Jews and the Zionist structure of the Israeli state.

This is not only because of the inherent nature of Zionism, but because it is essentially the ideology of the rule of the Zionist establishment, dominated by big capital attached to Ashkenazi — in fact Euro/American — international capital, set up in Israel, into which the Sephardic bourgeoisie has been integrated. This is

especially clear for the leaders of the Moroccan Jewish community who are in fact international business people, at the same time as being courtiers of Hassan II.

The Oriental Jews are second class citizens in the state of Israel, both from an economic point of view and from the point of view of their cultural identity and their religious specificity, which is not the same, for example, as that of Jews from Poland.

They suffer not only economic exploitation but also cultural oppression. There are many contradictions between the mass of Arab Jews in Israel, and more particularly the Moroccan Jews who form a coherent community, and the Zionist structure of the Israeli state.

We must identify what is responsible for the fact that, nevertheless, Israel's Arab Jews support the state. First of all, of course, there is the integrating force of Zionism; but there is also the fact that any project for peace which involves recognition of Israel as a Zionist state blocks any perspective for Israel's Oriental Jews. The latter are trapped by such a project; the expression of their identity can only come through the revolutionary struggle against the Zionist structure of the state of Israel.

There are some small militant groups working among the Oriental Jewish masses of Israel towards this goal. But they are constantly stifled by the recuperative system of the Israeli political apparatus, as well as being politically confined by what appears at the moment as the only peace project.

The Oriental Jews have no perspective; their natural allies, who would be the Palestinian revolutionaries, are abandoning them. This is another reason why the Madrid Conference and the illusions about it lead inevitably into a blind alley. The Palestinian revolution must work out a strategy that integrates this objective contradiction in the state of Israel. It will not be possible to overcome Zionism without an explosion of its inner contradictions. And the major contradiction is that lying at the very heart of the Zionist entity: between Oriental Judaism and the Zionist state structure.

Exploding this contradiction is the task of the Israeli revolutionaries, but also of all Arab revolutionaries, and particularly the Palestinians, as well as of the revolutionaries of the whole world. It is only on this condition that there will be a renaissance of Arab Judaism, something to which a real revolution in an Arab country could also contribute.

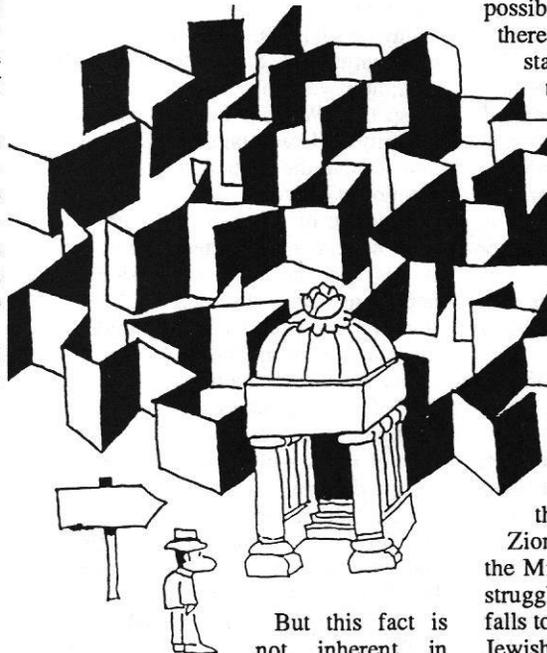
Personally, in June 1967, one of the reasons why I became aware of the need to take up a new revolutionary path was first of all the discovery that all my former comrades in arms, with hardly any exception, were racist. They had fallen into the most racist, anti-Jewish and not merely anti-Zionist, Arab nationalism, on the basis of which nothing can be achieved.

Now, the only way to revive Moroccan Judaism is to have a revolutionary Morocco.

Only in the dynamic of a Moroccan revolutionary movement could one create a pole of attraction for Moroccan Jews oppressed in Israel, both in terms of stimulating their struggle there and winning them to the anti-Zionist struggle, but also for them to one day return to Morocco.

■ How can the contradiction that you consider fundamental between Oriental and Ashkenazi Judaism in the state of Israel be related to the "classical" contradiction between the proletariat, of all ethnic origins, and the bourgeois state?

The contradiction does not lie between Oriental and Ashkenazi Judaism but between Oriental Judaism and the Zionist structures of the state of Israel, which draw on the historic sources of what happened in Eastern Europe during the Second World war and the Nazi genocide.



But this fact is not inherent in Ashkenazi Judaism — many Ashkenazi Jews are revolutionary militants or anti-Zionists. Within Israel's racial structure Ashkenazi Judaism is privileged, for example in the Histadrut and in such structures as the Kibbutzim. It is thus harder to make the anti-Zionist struggle understood to the Ashkenazi Jewish workers in Israel.

It is necessary to take the question of identity into account without opposing one identity to another. In the last analysis the Zionist establishment is the enemy

of both the Oriental Jews and the Ashkenazi Jewish working class.

■ What is your approach to the question of the future status of the Israeli Jewish population, and all the groups within it, in a programmatic perspective of the dismantling of the Zionist state by the revolutionary movement?

For a long time I have believed in a democratic Palestinian state without an intermediate stage. It was only in the 1980s and in the rethinking I went through in 1982 before the war in Lebanon that I realized that this objective could not be grasped by the Israeli Jews as a whole. There needs to be a democratic process moving in this direction; if we want to arrive at a democratic state, it cannot be imposed by war. Unfortunately the issue has not always been presented in this way.

It is necessary that the majority of Israeli Jews make the concept of a democratic Palestinian state their own. But this is not possible at the moment, and that is why there will have to be an intermediary stage. I believe that this stage means two states — Israeli and Palestinian — with international guarantees (the Fez Plan of September 1982 corresponds to this idea) with it being impossible for a war to take place on the basis of the institutions of these two states.¹

Insofar as the Israeli state remains Zionist it cannot accept such a solution; it is necessary therefore that peace activists in Israel get rid of the Zionist institutions. This is why international public opinion needs to be made aware of the fact that while the state of Israel remains Zionist, peace will not be possible in the Middle East. The major share of the struggle for the de-Zionization of Israel falls to the revolutionary militants and the Jewish masses of the Israeli state.

When international public opinion and the internal progressive movement among Israeli Jews become strong enough to bring down the Zionist structures of the Israeli state — not that state itself — the conditions for peace will exist for two states — the state of Israel in its pre-June 1967 frontiers and the Palestinian state on the the totality of Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, including Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The Fez Plan leaves the way open for the future. It does not envisage mutual

1. The Fez plan is an eight-point plan adopted by the Arab summit held in the Moroccan town of the same name in October 1982. It followed the evacuation of Palestinian combatants from Beirut and the announcement by the President Reagan of his plan to settle the Israeli-Arab conflict — to which the Fez plan was a response. The Fez plan is also known as the Fahd Plan, the Saudi king having formulated its essential

points — Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 in return for a UN Security Council guarantee of the rights of all states in the region to live in peace — in August 1981. An initial attempt to have this plan adopted by an Arab summit was defeated by the PLO, Syria and Libya, who boycotted the meeting. The second attempt succeeded in a context marked by the new Palestinian defeat in Lebanon.

recognition, which I do not agree with. If the utopia of the democratic Palestinian state proves viable for all the inhabitants of the land of Palestine — and I consider this a higher form in a moral sense of the term than two states on that land — it is the historic duty of the populations to define it democratically.

■ You have talked about the bad consequences, particularly for developments in Israel itself, of the perspective of peace with the Zionist state. But the Fez Plan involves exactly that. I think that you give the Fez Plan a value that it does not in reality have, above all when we see who thought this plan up.

The Fez Plan says nothing one way or the other about the Zionist nature of the state of Israel. But until that time, and even until the eve of the meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers in 1988, the PLO talked of a non-Zionist state. In my view it should have continued to say — even on the basis that it was not for it to demand that the Israeli state should not be Zionist — that so long as it was, no peace would be possible. The PLO should have maintained the political and ideological struggle against Zionism. But at this point it is necessary to distinguish the diplomatic level: it is not for states or even a national liberation organization such as the PLO to demand in advance that the opponent state has this or that character; it is for the revolutionary militants of that state to fight against its Zionist character, and for the militants throughout the world to explain that there can be no peace while that state remains Zionist.

■ But there is a further problem which still remains even if you have a non-Zionist Israel within its pre-1967 frontiers. That is, what is to become of the right of return of the Palestinians most of whom originate from the territories on which the state of Israel was established in 1948. They have the right to continue their struggle in all its forms, and the struggle remains legitimate until the right to return is won.

Plans such as the Fez Plan, including international guarantees for the frontiers of the Israeli state, contradict this right.

Another right which is left out of account is that of the Arab Palestinians who remain under Israeli jurisdiction within the 1949 frontiers; if one accepts these frontiers then one rules out in advance their right to self-determination in the regions where they are the majority, such as the Galilee, and even in their towns and villages.

The Fez Plan does not involve recognition of the state of Israel. It aims for the establishment of what has been called a

“state of non-belligerence” between the Israeli state and its neighbours. Furthermore I have always written that the Fez Plan was valid apart from its preamble which accepts the 1947 UN resolution on the partition of Palestine.

In this regard, it is self-evident that the right to return is an integral part of the Palestinian struggle. It remains inscribed in some UN resolutions, in contradiction with others. But the PLO and all Arab revolutionaries must be consistent here; we must not make any concession to UN resolutions which ratify the state of Israel in one form or another. We can accept the Fez Plan as our objective, but on condition that we do not accept the preamble or anything that ratifies the state of Israel as a Zionist or even as a non-Zionist state.

We say that the sovereign Palestinian state must be set up on the territories occupied in 1967 because the international situation allows us to only pose this question, because we must communicate with international public opinion and win it over, in order to win the battle with the governments.

Having said this, the 1967 frontiers are quite unjust, as are those of the 1947 plan; however, public opinion cannot yet grasp that. We also have to win over a majority of Israeli public opinion taking into account the contradictions within it I mentioned above.

The right of return of the Palestinians must be recognized in the state of Israel. If this is to be a non-confessional and non-Zionist state, this means full citizenship for all, with all the contradictions that may flow from that.

The Fez Plan is the bearer, in my opinion, of a future unification of Palestine through political struggles within the state of Israel itself which will lead on to a united state, including the right of return, full citizenship for Palestinians and big contradictions between Zionists and anti-Zionists. To carry through the Fez Plan I think that a political struggle inside the Israeli state is needed which could provoke a civil war and an acceleration of history.

The Fez Plan, without concessions on principle of the sort that the PLO are making today, can lead immediately to a growing over in the dynamic of the struggles.

■ But the regions of Arab Palestinian population within the 1967 frontiers must have the right to leave Israeli jurisdiction, even if that state is non-Zionist, and join the larger Arab Palestinian entity.

This demand is just and should be raised at the negotiating table when a change in the relationship of forces creates healthy conditions — not what we see in the Madrid conference.

■ We cannot exhaust these debates in one interview! They must be con-

tinued. A final question; how has the collapse of the Soviet Union affected your thinking, as a long-standing communist militant?

As you know I broke with the Soviet dogma and model at the start of the 1960s. But even then, until August 1991 I thought that there was some potential, especially in Russia and Ukraine, given the history of the working classes of these republics, which were won to the ideas of Marxism more than a century ago and had a revolutionary party. I did not think that things would have decayed to such a point.

Unfortunately, the collapse of the former USSR is painful; I had hoped that the proletariat would show more potential than appears today. I have not given up hope that such potential may reappear, particularly in Russia and Ukraine, but this will be a long and difficult road.

In the immediate term we are seeing the triumph on the world scale not only of American imperialism, of *Bush Emperor*, but also of the idea that the triumph is that of liberalism, capitalism and the market economy and that they provide the only road for the peoples.

We, the peoples of the Third World, must take into account the lessons of the failures of bureaucratic planning — without for all that falling into an idealization of the market — for the problems of national liberation, including on the economic level.

As for the rest of the former USSR, besides Russia or the Ukraine, for example Azerbaijan and the four Central Asian Republics, which are closer to us in many respects, I am not able to say how they are going to evolve.

The fact that they have broken free from the Russian grip, whatever the risks this may present in the present situation, may in the medium and long term be a positive thing: they may rejoin the broad movement for the liberation of the region's peoples; but this will be difficult.

All consistent Marxists had begun to go beyond the old ideological sectarianisms some time ago. Now we must together and fraternally begin to reflect on the lessons of the dramatic experience that began with the October revolution. The criticisms contributed by the Fourth International have certainly something to say in this process, as have those of Marxist-Leninist militants such as myself who have broken with Stalinism, Khrushchevism and with the idealism of Maoism, and who also know how to go beyond their former sectarianisms.

It is also necessary to take account of the Chinese experience, as a revolutionary experience but also as an experience of the construction of socialism with its limits and positive contributions. These latter must feed out joint thinking, which is now necessary to map out the perspectives for the revolutionary militants of the whole world. ★

Britain: Anti-refugee laws

ON JANUARY 19, 1992 5-10,000 people demonstrated in London against the British government's new Asylum Bill. On the same day several hundred demonstrated in Edinburgh in Scotland. The two demonstrations reflect widespread opposition to the bill even among traditional Conservative supporters. Nevertheless, the bill went through its final reading in Parliament and has now gone to the House of Lords for final approval.

FINN JENSEN

AT THE London demonstration, left Labour MP Tony Benn condemned the Asylum Bill as being about "building a wealthy Fortress Europe, surrounded by barbed wire, to keep out the poor and oppressed of the Third World". All the speakers warned against the rising tide of racist and fascist attacks and called for unity among anti-racist forces. The government accepted various amendments to the bill during its final reading to accommodate criticisms made by immigrant welfare organizations, human rights groups, lawyers and the churches. However, the substance of the Bill has not changed. The main points are:

1. Appeal procedure: The government claims the bill will, for the first time, give a right of appeal to those refused asylum on entering the United Kingdom (UK). However, there will be no automatic right of appeal. Permission will have to be given. Moreover, the existing right to an automatic appeal for asylum seekers already in the country is going to be taken away. Everyone has to seek leave to appeal, within 48 hours in the case of asylum seekers held in detention and within 10 days for those already legally in the country (as visitors, students, and so on).

2. Curtailment of existing leave: If someone is already legally in the UK, for instance as a student or a visitor, and decides to apply for asylum, that person will be liable to have their existing leave curtailed if the asylum application is refused. And if an asylum seeker has made other appeals regarding their stay in the UK all

those outstanding appeals will be heard by a special adjudicator at the same time as the asylum appeal. So someone who has already got a visa to stay in the UK will have to think twice about applying for asylum.

3. Withdrawal of Legal Aid: The gov-

ernment intends to withdraw legal aid for advice on asylum *and all other immigration matters*. In a lot of cases this will leave immigrants and asylum seekers with no other alternative but to go to the government sponsored UKIAS for help. This shows that the proposals are directed against all black

France and Italy: 200,000 march against racism

UP TO 100,000 people marched against racism in Paris on January 25, 1992, in a demonstration called by a collective of 70 organizations. All the major anti-racist associations, trade unions, left and far left organizations, and anti-fascist associations were represented on the march.

This success followed a series of powerful mobilizations in the provinces against Jean-Marie Le Pen, president of the National Front (FN), who has been touring the country as part of his party's current electoral campaign. The massive presence of youth on the Paris demonstration shows an increasing awareness of the danger represented by a National Front.

Popular demands on the march were the right to vote for immigrants, respect for the right of asylum and the suppression of the "double penalty" (by which immigrants who have served a sentence for a crime are then expelled from France).

The Socialist Minister of the Interior, Philippe Marchand, author of a pernicious law allowing the arbitrary incarceration, for a period of 30 days, of foreigners wishing to enter France — a measure reminiscent of one of the proposals on immigration put forward by the National Front — was roundly barracked by the crowd.

The depth of the unpopularity of the governing Socialist Party (PS) was evident on the march. Having supported the rally on the basis of the single theme of the struggle against the National Front, it did not sign the appeal of the 70 initiating organizations, but intended to join the demonstration and participate in strength. However it was so isolated, at the very back of the demonstration, that its contingent ultimately gave up the idea of marching.

The success of January 25 and the local anti-Le Pen mobilizations should serve as a trampoline for initiatives of still broader scope. Already, the anti-racist associations have set up a permanent unitary collective. Everybody is aware that, on the basis of the electoral collapse of the Socialist Party, the regional and cantonal elections for March 1992 will see a new and significant increase in the NF vote — the far right could emerge ahead of the PS in some departments.

In these conditions, the First of May is the next important date for anti-racists and anti-fascists. For several years, the NF has attempted to hijack this symbolic date with its own march. A large scale mobilization will be necessary to reappropriate this day of struggle and take the street back from the advocates of segregation and hate.

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ON Saturday January 25, 1992, a very important demonstration against racism brought 100,000 people onto the streets of Milan. The idea of a second national anti-racist demonstration (the first took place in autumn 1989 in Rome) was launched at the beginning of September 1991, by the Senegalese Association of Lombardy, following the murder of a Senegalese worker by fascists.

This call received the immediate support of numerous solidarity associations and, on October 28, 1991, a first national assembly began to prepare the demonstration: the choice of January 25 was motivated by a desire to build links with the French anti-racist movement. The platform of demands adopted takes up the multiple implications of immigration.

Numerous forces participated in the preparations for this event, including the Italian Cultural and Recreational Association (ARCI) — created in 1948 at the initiative of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), but now independent — many anti-racist associations and 300 immigrant community organizations. The demonstration was supported by the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC), the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and the Greens, as well as the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL).

The breadth of this demonstration augurs well for the Italian anti-racist movement to re-take the initiative. ★

people and not just asylum seekers.

4. Fingerprinting: In line with other European countries asylum seekers will be treated as criminals by being subjected to fingerprinting. There are no safeguards in the bill as to who the manual records can be passed on to. One of the reasons behind the introduction of fingerprinting of asylum seekers is the Dublin Convention signed by all EC countries. This says that a refusal of an asylum seeker in one EC country gives all other EC countries the right to refuse that person.

5. Housing: Asylum seekers will also be denied their full right to rehousing. Local authorities will only be able to offer temporary accommodation, and then only if the asylum seeker has "no reasonable accommodation" to go to. However, at the same time, the government has announced that it will provide 300 detention places for asylum seekers "considered likely to abscond... and to enable those refused asylum to be detained while awaiting removal".

6. Carriers Liability Act: In order to stop asylum seekers coming to the UK the government has already introduced visa requirements for nationals whose countries "produce" refugees, such as the Kurds from Turkey. In order to stop people fleeing to the UK the Carriers Liability Act 1987 allows the government to fine airlines if they bring passengers to the UK without "valid" documents. The government has increased the fines to £2000 per passenger by mid-1991 they had earned £30 million through such fines! The Asylum Bill extends airline liability to include passengers in transit.

7. The asylum seekers credibility: The draft immigration rules contain a list of criteria for refusing an asylum seeker — for instance an application will be treated as doubtful if the applicant has "made false representations... destroyed, damaged or disposed of a passport". The UN Commission on Refugees has indicated its opposition to this paragraph. It should not be held against asylum seekers if they arrive with false documents or none at all, as is stated in the UN convention (Article 31).

8. Guilt by association: The draft rules state that actions by a person "acting on behalf of the asylum applicant", whether or not with the applicant's express approval, "may be taken into account". An asylum case can therefore be prejudiced by so-called "agents" in the country of origin or incompetent advisers in Britain.

9. Travelling as part of a group: The rules also state that if an asylum seeker "is a part of a group" their case is not to be considered individually. This is a denial of natural justice and a violation of the 1951 convention, which specifically provides that each applicant must have his/her case individually assessed.

10. The Asylum Act will become retrospective: Asylum decisions which have already been held up for several years within the Home Office bureaucracy will now

SWEDEN — strike against racist violence !

IN THE course of the last two months Sweden, and Stockholm in particular, has been shaken by an unprecedented wave of racist violence. In November shoot-to-kill attacks injured 5 immigrants and led to the death of an Iranian student. In late December/early January there was a campaign of bombings and bomb threats in connection with the trial of two members of VAM (White Aryan Resistance).

In late January a series of 5 attacks within 5 days shocked Uppsala and Stockholm. The attacks, random in nature, seriously injured two Turks and a Palestinian: three other immigrants were also shot. Meanwhile, around Sweden, there have been arson attacks and physical assaults on shopkeepers and shopworkers.

This racist campaign of violence is now dominating the political debate and atmosphere in Sweden. Stockholm is in a state of shock, and immigrants are in fear of their lives. Throughout the country, demonstrations have been organized in support of the immigrants. On the initiative of the Kurdish National League, 15 immigrant organizations have called for a one hour strike between 10 and 11 am on Friday February 21. A committee has just been formed to organize the strike, with the support of *Riksförbundet Stoppa Rasismen* (the National League to Stop Racism).

The strike is being called a "manifestation of mourning". One of its declared aims is to show what happens to the Swedish economy if immigrants do not work. The first appeal of the strike committee, however, leaves the door open for any Swedish organization or individual to "give their support in the manner they find suitable".

An indicator of the gravity of the situation is that the Minister of Social Affairs (a member of the liberal People's Party in the four-party bourgeois coalition) has publicly supported the strike, while King Carl Gustav XIV has condemned the violence and said that, "It is necessary for us all to come together and fight the injustice of our society". Trade union leaders are divided, some in support and some against.

The Swedish employers federation (SAF) has described the strike as "unmodern" but has not openly condemned it. The Conservative Prime Minister, Carl Bildt, is under much pressure. He also has not openly opposed the strike, but has said that it is "perhaps not a good idea". Restricting his condemnation of the attacks to saying, "We are of course against all types of criminality", he has said that racism is a "peripheral problem" of society, and suggested that the gun attacks might be connected with underworld rivalry.

In the Stockholm area, the Socialist Party (SP — Swedish section of the Fourth International) is pushing for the formation of "Guards Against Racism" standing outside shops where immigrants work alone. The initiative has already been taken in one suburb (Orminge), and has involved the SP, the Left Party and the Social Democrats. It has already been taken up by *Stoppa Rasismen* and has spread to another suburb.

There is currently a debate on whether immigrants should individually arm themselves in self-defence, given the inability/unwillingness of the police to protect them. While not condemning this, the SP is advocating collective defence as a better method at this time.

The "21 February Committee" is calling for European-wide support for their initiative, with broad demonstrations outside Swedish embassies on the evening of Friday February 21. The Committee can be contacted at:

tel: 46-8-6528585 fax: 6502120. The person responsible for press contacts and information is Kurdo Bahksi. ★

be considered under the proposed new laws.

So why is the government attacking asylum seekers? It is part of the creation of a Fortress Europe. The government wants to be seen as doing something to stop black people coming to Britain. In the imagination of the Tory popular press "illegal" immigrants and asylum seekers are lumped together as costing the British taxpayer millions of pounds.

In the public debate about asylum rights all the political parties try to separate "economic" refugees from "political" refugees.

Labour's spokesperson on domestic affairs, Roy Hattersley, said in Parliament on November 5, 1991: "I have made it clear that I would not allow in the bogus asylum seeker... No one I know wants the open door policy on immigration".

But in the real world it is not possible to separate "economic" from "political" refugees. This is particularly so inasmuch as the economic and political devastation of those parts of the world producing refugees and immigrants was caused by the same countries now implementing immigration controls. ★