

International VIEWPOINT

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Europe: the old order hangs on



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☆

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Reform without change?

HOW, when the world is changing, can we ensure that our power and privileges stay the same? This was the question placed at the centre of the recent crop of elections in Western Europe by the political and economic establishments there.

In all four countries where elections took place — legislative elections in Britain and Italy and regional elections in France and Germany — the votes took place against a background of talk about, on the one hand, constitutional and electoral reform, and on the other about strong government, realignment around a new centre or coalitions, all conceived as means of ensuring that any reforms leave the existing power structures intact.

At the same time there was a striking absence of any discussion of the big questions, such as the collapse of the economies of Eastern Europe, chronic long-term unemployment in the West, the continuing economic and social disaster in much of the Third World, or the menace to long term economic prospects posed by growing trade frictions between the US, Europe and Japan.

Unfortunately the parties based on the labour movement, mesmerized by the prospect of entry into, or the hope of holding onto government office, have opted to present themselves as a reliable partner in "preserving stability" thus becoming complicit in the stifling of fundamental debate. Part of the price paid for the left's dereliction of duty has been the alarming rise of far right forces offering xenophobic anti-establishment rhetoric.

In this and subsequent issues of *International Viewpoint* we will be publishing articles looking at the crisis of Europe's existing institutions and raising the debate on possible strategies for the left. ★

The debacle of new realism

NINE years of right-wing reform of the British Labour Party under the leadership of Neil Kinnock ended in spectacular defeat in the elections of April 9, 1992. An election which Labour could clearly have won ended with the Tories retaining an absolute majority of 21 seats. This result was a shock to everyone — the Tories themselves had thought they were staring defeat in the face. During the pre-election period the stock market fell dramatically; after the result the speculators literally danced for joy.

ALAN THORNETT — April 15, 1992

AS before, the Tories did not win a majority of the votes, although their share of the vote held up. As before, 58% of the electorate voted against them, but, as before, the unjust first-past-the-post electoral system gave the Tories power.

This result is a disaster for the working class and has implications for the left throughout Europe. The Tory government which had smashed up the unions, increased social divisions, introduced massive privatizations, reduced education and the health service to a shambles, deepened the economic crisis and put millions out of work, has been returned to office. They will claim they have a new mandate to continue their policies.

For millions of people, the election result is not just a matter of political interest; it will have an immediate effect on their job prospects. More schools and hospitals will opt out of the state system and become businesses while rail and coal mining face privatization.

This was an absolutely crucial election. Strike struggles in Britain are at a 100 year low and the loss of confidence has made the Tory anti-union laws extremely effective. This has been reinforced by the depth of the recession and the sharp rise in unemployment. Under these conditions, even the election of a right-wing Labour government, or put the other way round, the defeat of the Tories, would have raised morale and combativity.

However, it was precisely the right wing policies of Kinnockism that deprived Labour of victory. Everything they have done to the labour movement over the past nine years, from witch-hunting militants to supporting the employers and the government, was done in the name of winning this election. The last election in 1987, they clai-

med, was just a stepping stone to victory in this one. They have failed.

The reason for the result that confounded the opinion polls must be sought in the last few days of the campaign. There was a late swing to the Tories and a polarization between the two main parties that squeezed the Liberal Democrats and produced a huge turnout of voters. With the help of the right-wing press, the Tories succeeded in bringing about an anti-Labour mobilization by sections of the middle class and better off workers.

But this is only part of the answer. Why were they able to get this last minute swing? Why was Labour's vote so brittle? And why was the right-wing press so effective?

Labour's policy contradictions

The answer to such questions lies in the programme on which Labour stood. After years of adapting to the Tories they had no distinct policies on which to fight the election. In many areas of policy it was hard to tell the difference and where there were differences they were very small.

Worse than that, their policies were shot through with contradictions. They proposed some minimal development of public services in health and education but could not explain where the money would come from since they were neither prepared to significantly increase taxation of the rich nor cut arms expenditure — the obvious sources of the money.

They were equally incoherent on the economy. They claimed they could get Britain out of recession but could not say how. They claimed there would be no increase in interest rates, but proclaimed their loyalty to the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), which would, precisely, force them

to raise interest rates to maintain the level of sterling. They claimed they would promote investment in industry out of growth in the economy, but could not explain how or when such growth would come about.

They were in confusion about electoral reform — they brought the issue up late in the campaign to attract votes from the Liberal Democrats, but when Kinnock was asked to explain his own views on the subject on television he refused to answer. In another TV interview, Kinnock could not explain why he supported unilateral nuclear disarmament when the USSR still existed and was in favour of keeping nuclear arms now that the "Soviet threat" had collapsed.

It was inconsistencies such as these that in the end gave credibility to the anti-Labour campaign of the rightwing press. They were not the result merely of faulty campaign presentation but were built into the fabric of Kinnockism and "new realism", which had swept the labour movement for the past ten years.

Sharp decline in activism

The role of the Labour and trade union leaders in helping defeat a series of major strikes in the 1980s, most importantly the miners' strike of 1984/85, led to a catastrophic weakening of the whole movement and allowed the introduction of far-reaching and effective anti-union laws.

Strikes were presented by the new realists as an electoral liability, although in fact Labour's support was at its strongest in the 80s during strike waves. The net result has been a loss of four million members by the unions and a sharp decline in activism. Tens of thousands of activists have left the Labour Party.

Despite all this, the working class has remained capable of struggle, as was shown by the anti-poll tax movement which brought down Thatcher. However even here the Labour leaders opposed the non-payment movement. Now there are millions of young people, and the poorest and most oppressed, who have never been in a union and do not see them as relevant to their problems.

All this is not to say that Labour cannot win. They could have won this election. But for this it would have been necessary to go on the offensive with a programme which was coherent, inspired their supporters and ripped the Tories apart.

The swing to Labour was biggest in areas which have most felt the impact of the recession and specific Tory attacks. Tory marginals fell to Labour in the North West, the Midlands and London, all areas hard hit by recession, unemployment, poverty and cutbacks in services.

Labour victories in Birmingham Northfields and Selly Oak showed Longbridge car workers faced with the destruction of their

Nationalist loses in West Belfast

BITTER disappointment hung over the Falls Road in the heart of nationalist West Belfast as the election results were announced. Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, lost the Westminster parliamentary seat he had held since 1983 as result of tactical voting by pro-Unionists in the Shankill district of the constituency. The seat was taken by Joe Hendron of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) on his third attempt.

Sinn Fein were fighting the election in difficult circumstances. Candidates were presented in 14 of the 17 constituencies in the North of Ireland. Richard McAuley, Sinn Fein press officer, explained that they were not standing in the other three not because they lacked members but because it was too dangerous to be known as a Sinn Fein supporter — at least one Sinn Fein election worker was killed during the campaign.

The refusal by the British and Irish governments and the other political parties to involve Sinn Fein in the talks taking place under the Anglo-Irish agreement — and the desire to see an end to the war which has gone on for over twenty years — mean that there is pressure among nationalists to vote SDLP because it is involved in the "peace process". This was reflected in the results throughout the Six Counties where a 30,000 rise in total votes for the SDLP pushed Sinn Fein into third place, bringing down its overall percentage from 11.7% to 10%. The only change in the overall result was the SDLP increase from 3 to 4 MPs with the Unionists holding the remaining 13.

The Sinn Fein campaign focused on the demand for "an inclusive dialogue leading to peace" and the record of Gerry Adams and the Sinn Fein councillors throughout the North as good community representatives. But without a mobilization of the nationalist community such as we saw during the hunger strikes the likelihood is that the defeat suffered by the loss of Adams' seat, despite the maintaining of the vote in absolute terms, will not be easy to reverse. — **Philomena O'Malley**★

industry turning back to Labour. In the mining areas of Nottingham, the savaging of the local coal industry enabled Labour to make gains.

In most areas where there were strong left wing campaigns, Labour candidates did better. Leading left-wingers Jeremy Corbyn, Dennis Skinner and Bernie Grant all did much better than average.

At the same time, Terry Fields and Dave Nellist, former Labour MPs expelled from the party for their association with the left-wing Militant Tendency got respectable votes — 5,952 for the former and 10,551 for the latter. Scottish Militant Labour candidate Tommy Sheridan got over 6,000 votes in a constituency in Glasgow, pushing the Tory into third place.

As everyone said, the Tories conducted a poor campaign. They were defending an appalling record in the middle of a recession. But they were able nonetheless to attack Labour, exploiting the contradictions in their platform. They raised their own policies starkly and polarized the vote. They even did this on the issue of Scotland where they stridently denounced both independence or devolution. The result was a polarized vote, a mobilization of loyalists and a slight swing to the Tories, despite the massive anti-Tory feeling sweeping Scotland in recent months, which still exists.

Now they are back in office with a far worse economic situation than that which

confronted Thatcher in 1987, a crisis which they intend to resolve at the expense of the working class.

Inside the Labour movement as a whole, and especially in the new realist dominated trade unions, the immediate reaction is likely to be one of scepticism and demoralization. Workers under attack will most likely feel that the balance of forces in society has moved against them once more.

How things will develop in the long-term is less clear. The employers' offensive at the level of the workplace has been gathering pace over the past two years. Participatory techniques linked to de-unionization, loss of bargaining rights and the introduction of individual contracts are spreading rapidly throughout industry. Working conditions are deteriorating, the pace of work speeded up and union rights lost.

The reaction to this will come, but with the Tories re-elected it will come under the most difficult conditions. There is now, however, no other way. The argument of waiting for a Labour government is no longer credible; those under immediate attack will have to fight or go under.

Crunch approaching in Scotland

The most immediate repercussions of the election, however, will be in Scotland, where the political situation is completely different from in England and Wales. In Scotland the mass of the working class

voted Labour hoping for a devolved Scottish parliament as Labour had promised, as a move towards independence.

Now there is bitter resentment as they see they are going to be ruled by a London-based Tory government which few in Scotland support. The likely result will be increased support for independence and for the Scottish National Party. A massive demonstration in Edinburgh within 48 hours of the declaration of the results showed that the struggle of the Scottish people for self-determination will now be at the centre of British political life.

Leaders turn towards coalition

The defeat has thrown the Labour leadership into profound crisis. Three days after the election Neil Kinnock resigned as leader. Both contenders for the post, John Smith and Brian Gould, are at least as right-wing as Kinnock. Indeed, John Smith, the likely winner, is even further to the right. The conclusion he will draw is that Kinnock's rightward move did not go far enough. Support may be given to electoral reform, but as a move towards coalition politics rather than in order to make the system fairer.

It is already being argued that sociological changes make it impossible for Labour ever to win again, and that the working class is too small a base to build a popular majority. This argument will undoubtedly find its echoes on the left; it should be resisted.

From a purely factual point of view it is untrue. Britain remains an overwhelmingly working class country; more than that, recent surveys show that at least 80% regard themselves as working class. In some inner-city constituencies there has been an influx of "yupified" middle class voters and high house prices have pushed out the traditional working class. But such local changes had only a marginal effect on the overall outcome of the election.

The left will have to reject such arguments and the pro-coalition orientation they underpin and set their own agenda. It is not yet clear whether the left-wing Campaign Group of MPs will stand candidates for the leadership.

Such a challenge could play a very important role in rallying the movement and putting leftwing arguments at the centre of the debate on the defeat.

However any candidate has to have the endorsement of 55 MPs which would be very difficult for the Campaign Group to achieve. While the issue of electoral reform has to be addressed, this should be as part of a radical programme of demands for a future election which includes opposition to coalition politics. ★

Postwar regime begins to crumble

INTRODUCTION

THE results of the Italian elections of April 5, 1992, reveal tendencies like those in the other countries of Western Europe. The left lost ground, whereas the right visibly progressed, to the detriment of some of the traditional centre parties.

Even more than elsewhere, the picture is one of growing fragmentation: if the old governmental majority has been defeated, no alternative solution is apparent for the moment.

In contrast with the 30.8% of votes that it won in the 1987 administrative elections to the Chamber of Deputies, the left only obtained 26.4% this time, while its internal divisions sharpened. In comparison with the regional elections, the setback is still more evident. The balance sheet in both cases is still more negative if one excludes from the left total the *Rete* (the Network), a new and fairly heterogeneous formation, whose most well-known leaders are the former Christian Democrat mayor of Palermo, Gianluca Orlando, and the former Communist mayor of Turin, Diego Novelli.

The PDS (Party of the Democratic Left), born out of the former PCI (Communist Party of Italy), lost 10.5% of its vote in relation to 1987 and 7% in relation to 1990. The Greens also suffered a defeat to the extent that, even if they slightly increased their score over 1987, they have palpably lost ground since 1990.

The most positive aspect for the left was the result obtained by the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) which, with 5.6% in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies and 6.5% in the elections to the Senate, not only gained a part of the votes of the old PCI and most of those of the former *Democrazia Proletaria* (DP), but also gained support from left electors who had previously abstained.

On the night after the count, everybody asked the question: who will govern now? The situation is all the more delicate in that, in July, the two chambers will meet to elect the new President of the Republic. The significance of this election has increased since the recent experience of Francesco Cossiga's presidency, which was marked by a slide towards a presidential regime.

Speculation is useless: big manoeuvres are under way and nobody knows what the final result will be. But one scenario appears fairly plausible for the moment: a majority favourable to a change in the electoral system will be formed and new elections held quickly in the hope that a new, non-proportional, system would allow the formation of a more stable government.

But such a project cannot be carried through without conflicts and ruptures at different levels. Given that the social situation is far from stable, the conclusion must be that Italy is about to experience, at the very least, growing political instability. ★



Towards a grand coalition?

THE underlying factor beneath the most striking aspects of the elections of April 5, in particular the fragmentation of votes, the loss of Christian Democratic hegemony and the rise of the Leagues, is a national and international economic scene marked by mounting contradictions and a significant decline in dynamism.

FRANCO TURIGLIATTO

IN particular, a number of big Italian enterprises have suffered setbacks in their attempts to assert themselves on a European scale. At the same time, the intrinsic weakness of small and medium industry has been revealed.

Some of the core sectors of the bourgeoisie, disposing of more limited margins of manoeuvre, now consider that the old Italian political system, with all its clientelism, constitutes too heavy an economic burden. They want to replace it by less costly and more flexible instruments, more suitable for satisfying their current needs and imposing new sacrifices on the popular masses.

The parties which have now governed over a very long period are worn out and profoundly discredited. The centrifugal tendencies are multiplying and it is becoming more and more difficult to form coalition governments. There is a curious situation: on the one hand, the big bourgeoisie is at the summit of its ideological hegemony, on the other, it is increasingly less able to realize this hegemony in the political sphere, impose a homogeneous orientation and maintain the necessary social consensus by means of its traditional parties.

The crisis of the Christian Democratic Party (DC) and the management of bourgeois power has taken a particularly retrograde form, with the rise of reactionary and racist forces. These have developed in the context of the defeats and the social, political and ideological regression suffered by the working class in the 1980s. The workers' movement is a significantly weaker social and political force which is not capable of creating a political polarization around itself or presenting a credible alternative.

6 Thus, the discontent and the indignation

provoked by all the injustices, the swindles and the corruption of the system are exploited by the vulgar and xenophobic demagogy of the Leagues. There is a danger of still graver regressions of Italian society, of new and more serious defeats for the working class.

The Christian Democrats lost above all in the north, as much among the petty and middle bourgeois layers as among the popular sectors who went to the Leagues. Their maintenance of their position in the south does not compensate for its loss of hegemony in the sectors which are fundamental for the political management of the country.

But it is difficult to replace the DC in its leading role. The Italian Republican Party (PRI), which, above all after its exit from government, has been forced to express the interests of the big bourgeoisie more clearly and more openly than the DC, and which has been supported by a series of important newspapers, was not able to substantially change the relationship of forces in its favour, registering only a minimal advance (0.7%). It has paid the price of its prolonged presence in government.

As to the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), affected by, among other things, the scandals in which some of its members have been implicated, it has regressed or marked position and has not attained its "historic" objective of becoming the biggest force on the left.

Growing support for far right

It is, then, the right, indeed the extreme right, which has profited from the decline of the DC — it now enjoys the support of around 15% of the electorate. The electoral score of the MSI, the avowed heir of fascism, which sent Mussolini's grand-daughter to the Chamber of Deputies with a large number of votes, is not only the result of the maintenance of traditional support. The MSI has tried to relaunch itself through a violently racist campaign inspired by authoritarian principles (it applauds unreservedly the reactionary attacks made against the first republic by President Cossiga).

The existence of a fairly well structured fascist organization, which the bourgeoisie can use in the social confrontations to come, constitutes a danger which should not be underestimated.

A still more important question is: what

is the nature of the Leagues, above all of the strongest of them, the Lombard League (baptized the League of the North for electoral purposes)?

It does not amount to a movement with typically fascist traits nor even to a fascist movement like Le Pen's in France. But its plebeian and populist nature has some very clear reactionary and xenophobic connotations. It is a force which acts, and is going to act, increasingly openly against the workers' movement in its entirety. Its protests are undoubtedly an instrument for the division of the working class: its target, very much more than Rome, the despised capital, is the immigrants.

Its social centre of gravity resides in the layers of small and middle entrepreneurs and traders. Beyond the rhetoric about federalism and the creation of a republic of the north, what is really at stake for these layers in their conflict with Rome is the defence of their economic privileges endangered by the crisis, and the will to obtain a new share-out of the cake.

They do not have the courage to seek to obtain this at the expense of the big bosses, but they wish to determine the allocation of state resources, the geographical repartition of the tax burden, and a solution to the problem of the budget deficit. In any eventual negotiations with the DC, the League would not concentrate on the issue of institutional reform, which it uses as a cover, but rather on the redivision of the spoils, the distribution of the costs of European unification and the cleaning up of the state budget.

The culmination of the League's dynamic — either its integration into the political system as a moderated force, or its evolution in an openly reactionary-fascist sense — is not given in advance: everything depends on the evolution of the economic and social situation and the political confrontations to come.

Serious problem for left

The more serious problem for the left, and notably the PRC, resides in the fact that the League has succeeded in exerting an influence on layers of workers. Thus, it is also with winning back those layers currently attracted to the League and its caudillo Umberto Bossi in mind that it is necessary to recommence the construction of a mass movement.

The game is not yet over: but on the condition that all the forces of social resistance and of political opposition, and all the potential components of an anti-capitalist front, can be won to the struggle of the workers' movement. The continuing ferment in Italian society, partly reflected in the electoral success of the PRC, indicate that forces capable of counteracting the current tendencies still exist. ★

Italian election results (Main parties only)

Party	Percentage			Seats		
	1992	1987	Diff	1992	1987	Diff
DC	29.7	34.3	-4.6	206	234	-28
PSI	13.6	14.3	-0.7	92	94	-2
PDS+	16.1			107		
PRC =(ex-PCI)	5.6	(26.6)	(-4.9)	35	(177)	(-35)
DP		1.7	-1.7		8	-8
PRI	4.4	3.7	+0.7	27	21	+6
PSDI	2.7	3.0	-0.3	16	17	-1
PLI	2.8	2.1	+0.7	17	11	+6
MSI	5.4	5.9	-0.5	34	35	-1
Lega Lomb/Lega Nord	8.7	0.5	+8.2	55	1	+54
Altre Lehge	1.2	0.8	+0.4	1		+1
Sole che Ride-Verdi	2.8	2.5	+0.3	16	13	+3
La Rete	1.9		+1.9	12		+12

What kind of left unity?

WE publish below substantial extracts from an interview with Sergio Garavini, national secretary of the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC), which was published in *Il Manifesto* on April 9, 1991.

WHAT scenario do you envisage for the near future?

The four parties of the outgoing government are pushing to enlarge the majority to include the PDS. The response of the leadership of this party is not convincing: it says yes, but on condition that it is a completely new government. On the one hand, very general expressions are used, which could suit anybody, while on the other, a new electoral law is proposed. It is a fraud. An electoral reform, based on the first-past-the-post system or a bonus to the majority, would seek to marginalize the minorities which express with the most vigour the wave of protest which is sweeping the

country.

■ You are against electoral reform then?

The situation is the following: the social question is being ignored, the entry into Europe continues to be considered as a form of discipline to be imposed on Italian society, there is no autonomy in the field of international policy, despite the dangers of war which exist on the shores of the Mediterranean.

On the other hand, an electoral law is projected whose goal is to strengthen the government. The project seems clear to me: an authoritarian turn in which a part of the left would be complicit and which carries a high price from the social point of view and for the security of the country itself.

■ What would be your position on the idea of a "socialist unity" with the Italian Socialist Party of former prime minister Craxi on the basis of positions very different from those of the past, or indeed with a PSI without Craxi?

I do not believe that the real tendency, in the framework of a challenge to the right, is towards a left alternative. The real project is that of forming a centre with a government and a majority stretching from the DC to the PDS and the adoption of an electoral reform which will assure that the centre controls the situation... Certainly, if there was unity in opposition of a broad left front, going from the PCR to the PSI, then the rapprochement between the PSI and the PDS would have an interesting aspect. But it seems to me that the context

of such a rapprochement will be other than this.

■ You speak of a left united in opposition. The difficulty resides in the fact that the entire opposition only seems to adopt, for the moment, a defensive attitude...

At the end of our party congress, I called for a "counter-attack of the left", a democratic counter-attack. I used those terms exactly to signal that the elements of defence, while remaining essential, could not be exclusive. We are against the freeze on the sliding scale of wages, against the adaptation of wages to the constricting framework of the programmed rate of inflation. Given that the trade unions do not do it, we are going to advance a proposition for the reorganization of the structure of wages, which starts from the

defence of the sliding scale and implies the freedom to bargain that the workers must reconquer...

■ Do you think that a social opposition such as you describe could be led by the trade unions?

The loss of influence of the trade unions over the workers is one of the elements — although not the only one — which is politically pushing protest towards the right. Beyond this, the trade unions today represent an enormous bureaucratic structure which is legitimated by its relations with the institutions and with the employers. In short, they hold back the entire left.

In such a situation, we wish to lead an open political battle in the trade union movement and not only inside the confederations. This does not mean that we are for the formation of a new trade union. We are going to lead a battle in the existing structures, linking up with what exists at the level of the workplaces, with the goal of opening a new phase of activity.

■ What do you think of the success of the Lombard League?

It is necessary to look at this from two angles. The League undoubtedly expresses a protest which has not been expressed by a united left opposition. It is on this terrain that it is necessary to intervene immediately, by relaunching the perspective of a left united in opposition. But there is another aspect. The leagues reflect the radical and frankly reactionary tendencies of certain layers of the middle classes in the richest regions of the country. This could represent a major threat to democracy. It is

necessary to take account of it: it is a threat of a profoundly rightwing nature.

■ Your electoral campaign was centred around an image of Communist continuity. Has the ambition of renewal been cast aside?

Not at all. We represent at the same time two positions, two orientations. On the one side, we will try to establish a link with the Communist tradition of ideas and of political and social struggles. During the electoral campaign, we have been led to stress this element partly because, paradoxically, the PDS took up this theme even more than we did.

The PDS' attitude represented a success for us in the sense that it confirms that we

were right to defend the Communist identity, even at the price of losing votes.

But we are also something else. We come from different critical experiences, inside and outside the PCI. There, in my view, is the most important fact that we should translate into concrete initiatives of cultural and political elaboration. To develop this, it is necessary to have a radical approach towards the social question. The PCI had already renounced such an approach in the middle of the 1960s, at the time of a workers' symposium in Genoa: it reappeared, partially, between 1968 and 1970 and later, with Berlinguer, in 1984 (at the time of the struggle for the defence of the sliding scale). I do not deny that this is an extremely difficult task... ★



WE publish below an interview with Livio Maitan, a member of the national political committee of the Italian Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC). The interview took place on April 10, 1992.

MANY commentators have used the term "earthquake" to describe the effect of the elections of April 5. Do you think this is accurate?

It is certainly a major event in Italian political life, which has surprised many people, even if it was predictable that some tremors were likely to take place. The spectacular decline of the Christian Democrats should be particularly stressed. This party has played an absolutely dominant role for almost half a century and has now fallen below 30% of the votes. This poses some fairly serious problems for quite a few people: not only what is called in Italy "the political class", but also for different bourgeois layers, the Catholic Church, and, of course, Italy's allies in NATO and the EEC.

8 ■ What are the causes of the Christian Democrat reversal?

There are many factors, but I will deal with some of the most important. First, it should be recalled that the DC underwent other crises — it is true less serious ones — with splits within its ranks and loss of political influence, including on the electoral terrain, in the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s. But, in the international context of the time and given that the PCI [the Communist Party] was not yet considered an acceptable governmental party, the Italian bourgeoisie continued to rely on the DC as essential instrument for the maintenance and the functioning of the system.

Now, very many things have changed. The DC, which remains the largest party, will not be cast aside. But, throughout the election campaign, some representatives of the employers did not hide their discontent, increasingly openly and severely criticizing the Andreotti government and the party system, which, according to them, had shown themselves incapable of resolving the country's economic and financial problems and thus possibly compromising Italy's entry into Maastricht Europe.

They have supported alternatives to the DC, for example the Italian Republican Party (PRI), which, after having participated for a very long time in the government, passed to the opposition. Some layers of small and medium entrepreneurs have not hesitated to support the Lombard League.

■ Is the bourgeoisie making overtures to the main left-wing party, the PDS?

Absolutely. That is why, moreover, beyond the PSI [the Socialist party], even the DC declared itself favourable to an enlargement of the government after the results of the elections were known. It is possible that this amounts to a purely tactical operation and that they are awaiting the right moment to return to the governmental bloc of four, which remains possible from

the point of view of seats in parliament.

Still it remains true that there is no longer a categorical rejection of governmental collaboration with Occhetto and the PDS. On the occasion of the recent visit of President Cossiga to the United States, Bush himself gave the green light for an eventual operation of this kind.

■ What do you think of the results obtained by the PDS and its current orientation?

The PDS advances the argument that, because it is a new party, any comparison is arbitrary and that, in any case, the decline, in relation to the results of the old PCI, is sensibly less marked, if one takes into consideration not the legislative elections of 1987, but the regional elections of 1990. This second argument is not without foundation.

Nonetheless, the goal of the operation which Occhetto launched in November 1989 was to enlarge the influence of the old PCI, particularly through winning what was called at the time "the subterranean left". From this point of view, the setback is obvious. Beyond this, the PDS' strongholds are still in the regions where the former PCI has been particularly strong since the end of the war.

It is very debatable as to whether its margins of manoeuvre are very much greater. There are some openings that we have already mentioned, but it would be extremely risky to go into the government or to support a new coalition from outside, given that austerity measures are inevitable and that the competition from the PRC is very much stronger than Occhetto had expected.

■ What is your assessment of the electoral score of the PRC?

I think that we can be satisfied, above all if one takes account of the national and international context, which is certainly not favourable to the growth of a party which characterizes itself as anti-capitalist and Communist. This is all the more true in that the percentage of votes is higher in certain significant regions in the centre of the country (between 6.7% and 10.1%) and in some big cities, like Genoa (7.7%), Turin (7.3%), Florence (7.5%) and Livorno (11.1%). The party has a certain popular influence and a not insignificant weight in some working class layers.

■ What is the orientation of the PRC following the elections?

Decisions will be taken at the next meeting of the national political committee. For the moment, the basic orientation can be found in the interview with Sergio Garavini which also appears in this issue of *International Viewpoint*. For my part, I think that it is absolutely correct to put the

The crisis of representation

THE French regional and cantonal elections of March 22 and 29, 1992, registered a shake-up in the country's political landscape. The big defeat of the ruling Socialist Party (PS) of President François Mitterrand — which got a mere 18% — led to a change of Prime Minister, with finance minister Pierre Bérégovoy replacing Edith Cresson.

FRANCIS SITEL

THE PS was doomed to fail. As Patrick Jarreau wrote in *Le Monde* (May 31, 1992): "Eleven years of rule, and nine in government, have worn away the roots of the Socialist left. The deterioration has speeded up recently". Not only its electorate but even the PS' activists are turning away.

Knowing what was going to happen, Mitterrand employed schemes which would allow him to remain in power by taking his distance from his former party. His idea is that of a presidential majority in which the PS would be but one component, and which would rest on personalities not identified as being on either side of the left/right divide, such as Bernard Tapie (a flamboyant and shady millionaire entrepreneur), on small breakaway pieces

accent on the social and economic demands of the workers and in the first place on the intransigent defence of the indexation of wages to prices. The problem of the strategy and functioning of the trade unions is obviously central.

It goes without saying that we must fight against any reactionary electoral reform and against all restrictions on democratic rights. But I wish to add immediately that we must not adopt a purely defensive approach. It would be an error in my view to centre our orientation on the defence of the 1948 constitution.

At a time when there is a rejection of the political system among very broad popular layers, it would be wrong to appear as a force which is attached to the status quo and thus facilitate the populist mystifications of the right and the far right, who present themselves as innovators. Is it necessary to recall that the workers' movement has always paid a very high price when it has fallen into such traps, for example, at the beginning of the 1930s in Germany, or in 1958 in France, faced with

of the right and on an ecological movement whose way has been prepared by the "Génération ecologie" operation of government minister Brice Lalonde.

The regional elections are conducted on a proportional basis, unlike most elections in France which are conducted on a majority vote system. This means that these elections were especially effective in revealing new realities. On the right this means the emergence of the Front National (FN), a potential, but currently unacceptable partner for the established right parties, the RPR and UDF, to form a new right majority. On the left we saw the ecologists become a significant national force, offering the president new room for manoeuvre.

All predictions for this election counted on a high rate of abstention. In fact howe-

Gaullism?

■ What, in your view, are the tasks of the party from the specifically organizational point of view?

The principal organizational problem is that of our youth work. The youth implantation of the PRC is very weak. The elections confirmed it: we had only around 40,000 more votes in the vote for the Chamber of Deputies in relation to the vote for the Senate, whereas there are around 4 million more electors.

Secondly, it is necessary to transform the popular and working class influence of the party into a structure with roots, which condition the activity of the party at all these levels. Finally, it is imperative to overcome the provisional nature of our organizational functioning. We need to be more efficient, more systematic and more democratic.

These are the problems that I intend to raise at the next meeting of the national political committee. ★

ver there was a turnout of 68.7%, a record for this level of elections. And this means that the prepared attempts to explain the results, and especially the PS' catastrophe, by a low turnout, were rendered inoperable. Its 18.3% in the regional elections, a loss of 11 points compared to the previous regional contest in 1986, and five points down on the European elections of 1989, leave it in control of only one region (three before), losing a number of historic bastions in the process.

PS goes back to 1968

The PS, which for a decade has put itself forward as the possible centre point for a recomposition of the whole workers' movement and beyond that of the progressive forces in their entirety, finds itself back in the situation of 1968, when Mitterrand picked up a small party and making it into his vehicle. Now it can no longer seriously pretend to have the right to exercise power. It has thus exhausted its potential, and its role must be downplayed. This is the meaning of the selection of Laurent Fabius as its new leader; this "renewer" has the task of ridding the party of some of its references to the workers' movement and make it an acceptable partner in a centre realignment cemented by fear of the Front National — a project that is by no means guaranteed of success.

The traditional right, which one might have expected to benefit from the crumbling of the Socialist Party, was disappointed. The RPR-UDF alliance got 33% of the vote, a fall of eight points compared to 1986. The number of regional councils where it has an absolute majority fell from eight to three. Its presidencies rest on unstable foundations, often under pressure from the FN.

The French Communist Party (PCF) meanwhile put itself forward as the "only opposition on the left" to the regime. With 8%, the party stemmed its electoral decline but no more; this means that its internal crisis will continue.

Le Pen's neo-fascist FN did not get all it hoped for; in particular it did not get over the 15% level. It is clear that there was something of an anti-Le Pen electoral mobilization, reflected in the high turnout, and stimulated by the energetic anti-Le Pen mobilizations during the campaign.

Nonetheless, one should not rejoice too soon. In these elections the vote was for a party, not simply for Le Pen himself; the NF now has 239 regional councillors compared to 137 after 1986. Furthermore, in the earlier election Le Pen had tried to hide behind respectable but not wholly reliable personalities, many of whom later defected elsewhere; this time the FN's candidates were solid party members. The FN is now the second largest right wing party, behind



the RPR but ahead of the UDF. It has become the second political force overall in three key regions, including the Ile de France around Paris, and the first in a not inconsiderable number of towns and neighbourhoods.

Within the newly elected regional councils it has cast its support widely, in some cases voting for the right, in others for centre candidates, in yet others for members of the government — for example Soisson in Bourgogne and Rausch in Lorraine.¹ The idea here is both to embarrass the Socialists and remind the mainstream right of the cost of refusing an alliance with the NF. The NF must believe, that, given the chronic confusion among its adversaries, time is on its side.

Green vote split

Knowing that this election would see a rise in the green vote, Brice Lalonde, Cresson's environment minister, formed his Génération ecologie (GE) lists, aimed at drawing a part of the green vote away from the existing Green Party, which has taken the line of "neither left nor right". This operation was a success; 7.1% voted for the GE and 6.8% for the Greens. Now installed in force in the regional councils, the often inexperienced eco-deputies are subject to multiple and contradictory pressures. Some in Languedoc-Roussillon voted for a UDF leader, Blanc, who had managed the region in alliance with the NF, while in the North a Green was elected president. The national leadership hesitated before refusing offers to enter the government. This new force will rapidly undergo a crisis.

The green vote mainly represents a double desire of a large part of the left electorate to both oppose the FN and punish the PS government. Together with the FN vote it shows a growing tendency to

vote for parties critical of the existing institutions. Another sign of this, even if less significant, is the success of some dissident PS and PCF lists in places where they could count on a local implantation.

The breakaway current from the

PCF known as the Refounders set up the Alternative démocratie socialisme (ADS) lists. In some places where they were able to put forward well-known candidates they beat the official party representatives and got regional councillors elected. The dissident Socialist lists are a somewhat different story. They originated in the national leadership over-riding local organizations' choice of candidates to exclude particular currents and were politically diverse. In general they obtained honourable scores and election.

Also worth mentioning are the scores for the twenty or so lists put forward by the Trotskyist Lutte Ouvrière ("Workers Struggle") organization, which maintained its traditional 1 to 2 percent, and a number of lists supported by the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR — French section of the Fourth International), which got reasonable scores, both defending a Communist perspective in opposition to the abandonment of traditional references by the big workers' parties.

After the elections, the crisis will deepen — the change of government being a sign of this. Unable to bring in European Commission President Jacques Delors to replace the deeply unpopular Edith Cresson, Mitterrand has tried to patch things up. Behind the man of the strong franc Pierre Bérégovoy, are assembled a group of the faithful — combined with the removal of some rivals of PS leader Fabius and the much trumpeted entry of Tapie.

Meanwhile, in the approach to the legislative elections of 1993, everyone is agreed that we are in a period of overall decomposition and recomposition of the political landscape. ★

¹ Soisson, called on to either resign as regional president or leave the government, left the government. Rausch, on the other hand resigned from the regional presidency, and remains in the Bérégovoy government.

"Workers fortress" falls

THE huge Renault auto plant in the industrial suburb of Billancourt just outside of Paris closed its gates for good on March 27. For decades Billancourt was laden with symbolism for the most varied audiences.

Admirers of capitalist rationality and efficiency once hailed Renault's vast assembly-line manufacturing system as the wave of the future. For militant workers and sympathetic labor historians the "Workers' Fortress" was a prime example of the degrading and de-humanizing conditions of the modern factory regime as well as a model of worker militancy. As early as the 1950s, some industrial sociologists pointed to the decline of factories like Renault as indicative of what they saw as the diminishing power and relevance of the industrial working class.

KEITH MANN

BILLANCOURT saw a million men and women pass through its gates on the small island in the Seine called the Ile Seguin since it opened in 1929. At its height in 1939, the plant employed 37,000 employees making it one of the largest factories in the world (though signifi-

cantly smaller than Ford's River Rouge plant which employed 106,000 workers at its height).

Modern and audacious industrial techniques

The mechanical-minded Louis Renault, who along with his older brothers Marcel and Fernand launched their auto company in 1898, was an early proponent of the most modern and audacious industrial techniques. Renault returned from a trip to the United States where he met Frederick Winslow Taylor and Henry Ford deeply impressed by the possibilities for increased production and lower labor costs that assembly line techniques offered.

As elsewhere, the influence of American industrial techniques was great in France where the terms "Fordism" and "Taylorism" entered into everyday usage. With the installation of the assembly line in 1930, annual auto production at Billancourt reached 53,000. By 1969 advanced technological methods and debilitating methods of speed-up allowed the Billancourt plants to produce up to 1,100 cars a day.

The Renault plants were a prime example of "vertical integration"; Renault produced nearly everything needed to construct its cars. It had its own foundry and forge and produced its own tires following a dispute over prices with Michelin in the 1930's.

The introduction of these techniques on a grand scale made Renault's Billancourt factories a prime example of the second industrial revolution. This specific phase of industrial capitalism, which arose in all industrialized countries around the turn of the century, was founded on the steel, chemical and electrical industries, as opposed to the coal, textile and iron industries which formed the basis of the first industrial revolution a century earlier.

The second industrial revolution was characterized by large-scale capital concentration and the introduction of mechanized machinery that led to increased division of labor. These technological innovations were designed to strip skilled workers of the control they exerted over the labor process through their knowledge of skills acquired through long years of apprenticeship. The introduction of mechanized machinery allowed employers to dispense with skilled labor in favor of easily replaced factory hands.

Employers like Renault were to learn however, that the sociological changes that flowed from mechanization and increased division of labor were a double edged sword; while these inno-

vations permitted boosted production and a labor market weighted more in their favor, they also broke down many of the craft prejudices and divisions that had cut across class solidarities. It was no accident therefore, that the most stunning examples of mass, unified working class militancy in this century occurred precisely in the steel mills and auto plants of North America and Europe in the 1930's.

The strike wave of the spring of 1936 that saw nearly two and a half million workers throughout France down their tools and four million join unions, marked the entry onto the scene of the semi-skilled worker — the famous "O.S." — French equivalent of the unskilled "men from nowhere" who built the Congress of Industrial Unions (CIO) in the US.

A citadel of workers' resistance

Louis Renault was an innovator in matters of repression as well. In the 1930's there were as many as 1,500 paid informers among the employees. Management's efforts to undermine union representation included the setting up of a company union in 1929.

But Billancourt was as much a citadel of worker resistance and militancy as it was a model for admirers of capitalist efficiency and rationality.

In spite of the repression, workers at Renault were among the most combative in France. Between 1915 and 1935 over 1% of all strikers in France were workers from Billancourt. It was precisely Renault's efforts at rationalization that provoked many of the most bitter conflicts. As early as 1912 strikes against the introduction of the chronometer took place. From the 1920's on, the local workers' press was full of reports complaining about four particularly pernicious aspects of rationalization: de-skilling, speed-up, lack of hygiene in the plants, and a disturbingly high rate of accidents.

The French Communist Party (PCF) which represented the majority of the Socialist Party (SFIO) that had split at the congress of Tours in December 1920 paid particular attention to the Renault plant. Well known party leaders gave impromptu soap-box speeches at the entrances and exits of the plant at shift changes.

Shop floor organizing

As early as 1921 PCF militants organized in plant factory cells were circulating petitions and collecting funds in



As Billancourt closed, Euro-Disneyland opened in the outskirts of Paris...

favor of the Soviet Union and PCF election campaigns. The Renault cell even had its own newspaper *The Renault Bolshevik*.

Two more cells including one for young workers were set up following the fifth congress of the Communist International in 1924 which instructed Communist Parties throughout the world to orient to the most exploited layers of the working class. In an industrialized country like France this meant orienting to the semi-skilled assembly-line workers who increasingly took the place of the skilled artisan.

PCF presence in the plant fluctuated widely throughout the 1920's as layoffs and company repression often reduced the number of PCF militants to a handful. The PCF rode the crest of the strike wave of 1936 which began at Billancourt, enrolling 7,000 Renault workers from the Billancourt plants (out of a workforce of 30,000!) into the party in the spring of that year.

Union implantation at the plant followed a similar rhythm. But building durable trade union structures in the years of depression, repression and layoffs at Renault in the late 1920's and early 1930's were complicated by the split in the French trade union movement that followed the split of the SFIO and the founding of the PCF. Two unions — the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and the PCF-inspired United General Confederation of Labor (CGTU) vied for the loyalty of Renault's workers. The CGT was reunited on the eve of the Popular Front in 1934. During the sit-down strike of 1936 CGT membership jumped from

700-25,000 members!

The importance of Billancourt in the constellation of Renault's works declined sharply in the years that followed. In 1951 the company opened a plant in the west Paris suburb of Flins which soon employed 68% of the Renault workforce. Another plant at Cléon was opened in 1958 where motors were built. By 1975 the Billancourt workforce was down to 17,000 and only 5,800 workers were punching in at Billancourt by 1987.

Over the last 25 years the composition of the workforce at the Renault plants reflected the changing character of the working class in advanced industrialized countries. Beginning in 1966 the company began to massively recruit immigrant labor. Soon after, fully three quarters of the unskilled workers were immigrants. In the years that followed, 59 different nationalities were represented at Billancourt.

Ideological campaign

Ruling class ideologists will no doubt point to the demise of the Billancourt plants as emblematic not only of the decline of large scale manufacturing in advanced industrialized countries like France, but of the disappearance of the industrial working class itself as well.

Such arguments coincide with the ideological triumphalism that holds that Marxism has been refuted and that history itself has ended with the failure of "communism" and the "victory" of capitalism. They are aided by more than a few of the radical labor historians and industrial sociologists who built academic careers around problems of labor history in the 1970s and 1980s but who are today questioning the very concept of class and its corollary class struggle as relevant social categories and concepts.

However, while the closing of factories like Renault at Billancourt is perhaps symbolic of the passing of a specific phase of industrial production, the current transformations of production and of the working class itself — which in many respects are only newer forms of Taylorism — will only result in an even more exploited and alienated working class and societies with more, rather than less, social contradictions.

In the long run, there is no reason to believe that the current transformations underway will ultimately reduce workers' capacity for struggle any more than the innovations of Henry Ford, Louis Renault and the other "captains of industry" of the second industrial revolution did in their day. ★

A new referendum on abortion

THE abortion issue continues to be the lead story in the Irish media. The political storm that erupted when a fourteen year old pregnant rape victim seeking an abortion in Britain was forbidden to leave the country by a High Court ruling — subsequently overturned by the Supreme Court — continues unabated. (See IV No 224, March 16, 1992)

Anne Conway of Peoples Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International, tells us the latest developments.

ANNE CONWAY

THE ongoing political crisis on abortion is centred around how to implement the Supreme Court ruling that abortion is allowable where there is substantial risk to the life of the mother. The first proposal was to amend the protocol to the Maastricht Treaty which prevents any attempt to challenge the anti-abortion clause in the Irish constitution on the basis of European Community law to allow the right to information on abortion and for Irish women to have the right to travel. The government hoped this would avoid a separate referendum on abortion. However, after lengthy toings and froings on the exact wording within the governmental parties (Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats) and with the opposition (Fine Gael and Labour), a majority of the other European Community member states refused to allow any amendment for fear that this would open a Pandora's box and that other countries would move to seek derogations or protocols on a variety of national issues.

Once the proposed amendment to the protocol was turned down in Europe, the government decided immediately to go ahead with the Maastricht Treaty constitutional referendum on June 18, leaving the protocol in place, with the promise of a referendum on information and travel to take place later in the year.

The decision to leave the protocol in the Treaty and proceed with the referendum on Maastricht has provoked widespread opposition. The Repeal the Eighth Amendment Campaign recently publicly launched the campaign and received extensive coverage in the national media. The Campaign has sponsorship from some 30 organizations and groups — the National Union of Students in Ireland has affiliated as has the Dublin Council of Trade Unions. A coalition is developing of various organizations — the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, voluntary organizations, women's organi-

zations and others. The campaign is involved in organizing a number of major public activities that should put the campaign firmly on the map.

This has also put the "left" parties under pressure — the new Democratic Left (a split from the old Stalinist Workers Party), the Labour Party and the new state-sponsored Council for the Status of Women. All have either called for the protocol to be dropped or a referendum on information and travel to be held before the Maastricht treaty vote.

The main opposition party, Fine Gael, pays lip-service to women's rights but their main anxiety is that Maastricht might not be passed because of the abortion controversy. Opposition to Maastricht from this coalition of the left parties — who are under increasing pressure on the issue — together with the huge numbers of alienated people in the communities and among youth could jeopardize the passing of the Treaty. This is a possibility that the ruling class cannot risk.

Statement by Roman Catholic bishops

It is against this background that the Roman Catholic bishops have made a major statement affirming the right to life of the unborn without any reference to the right to life of their mother. They have called for a new referendum on the right to life of the unborn and are in the process of briefing priests on the issues involved. Another round of pulpit bashing is to be expected as occurred in 1983 in their campaign to have Article 40.3.3 passed. Their statement is a warning to the campaign that if Maastricht is passed it will be business as usual — a witch-hunt against women's rights.

The campaign has been lobbying all progressive organizations in Europe and European parliamentarians to ask the Irish

government to drop the Maastricht protocol. Irish women do not consider this as interference by other EC countries in Irish affairs. EC member states have already refused to allow the protocol to be amended, thus endorsing our anti-abortion constitution, a constitution which denies women information on abortion services in other EC countries. All European countries that ratify the Treaty in their parliament are thus in effect endorsing a denial of the

most basic civil rights to Irish women. If European governments think that this is good enough for Irish women the same view could spread across Europe.

**The campaign can be contacted at:
Repeal the 8th Amendment Campaign, P.O. Box 3441, Dublin 8.**

Messages of support are welcome also to a public meeting in the Mansion House, Dublin on April 29th. ★

750,000 attend pro-choice march

HISTORY was made in Washington D.C. on April 5, 1992. Hundreds of thousands from around the country converged on the capital to take part in a march in defence of abortion rights, forming one of the largest rallies ever in US history. The event was sponsored by the National Organization for Women (NOW) and was co-sponsored by more than 150 organizations.

SARAH M. SPRINGER

IN THE days leading up to the march the media had reported that both pro-choice demonstrators and "pro-life" counter-demonstrators would be present in Washington. But any representatives of the rightwing, anti-abortion crowd were few and far between, and they were clearly overwhelmed.

The rally featured dozens of speakers, including Patricia Ireland, NOW president. Present at the march, but specifically not invited to speak at the rally were Democratic Party presidential candidates Bill Clinton, Jerry Brown and Paul Tsongas.

The immense turnout for this action is an indication of the outrage felt by millions of women. The attempt to roll back gains women won in the 1960s and 70s is not limited to reproductive freedom, but includes such questions as the lack of pay equity for women workers, access to education and jobs, sexual harassment, abuse and discrimination in all walks of life, and access to affordable health and child

care.

Currently the women's movement is facing several specific threats to abortion rights, the greatest one being the possibility that the Supreme Court will overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision which legalized abortion. Already, safe and affordable access to abortion has been severely restricted and in many cases it is impossible for women receiving medical care sponsored by the government to find. This includes women in the military, Native American women who live on the reservations and poor women who depend on the federal Medicaid program. Restrictions have also been implemented in some states requiring that young women notify their parents before having an abortion, that married women notify their spouses and that clinics provide "counselling" — designed to discourage a choice for abortion — to prospective patients prior to the procedure.

Clinics prevented from giving advice

In one of the most outrageous acts, federally funded family-planning clinics have been "gagged", with staff under legal compulsion not to inform women that abortion is available as one of their options. The Supreme Court recently upheld the constitutionality of this federal regulation. Speaking at the rally, Patricia Ireland said that "44 million women in the US have already effectively lost the right to choose".

Belief that reproductive choice is a fundamental right for all women, not just for a privileged few, remains strong in the US women's movement. This theme was reiterated by many speakers at the rally.

Young women who grew up after the

Roe v. Wade decision are especially vulnerable to the government-sponsored campaign of restricting abortion. The president of Planned Parenthood pointed out that before *Roe* over one million abortions were performed in the US each year, and the result was that women died. "Most often the victims were women of color and poor women", he said.

Others also reiterated the pre-*Roe* horrors of backalley abortions, the tremendous toll on women's lives before abortion was legalized. Still others spoke of what *Roe* represented in terms of the culmination of years of organizing and mobilizing efforts by women to demand the right to a legal, safe and affordable abortion — and the need to keep the momentum going in order to safeguard those reproductive rights still intact and to win back those that have been taken away.

Many speakers urged rally participants to view this march as a stepping-off point in terms of organizing outreach across the country to protect abortion rights. Some urged support for the the "Freedom of Choice Act" presently before the US Congress. And there was, of course, widespread talk about electing pro-choice candidates to Congress and Senate in the November elections.

Unfortunately there was little clarity about what it means to really be a pro-choice candidate. Patricia Ireland felt constrained to point out that the current Congress is allegedly already pro-choice. But in fact Congress has been complicit in the Reagan-Bush campaign to undermine abortion rights over the last ten years. It helped confirm Bush's last two nominations of anti-women's rights and anti-abortion candidates to the Supreme Court, while failing to pass the Freedom of Choice Act — although it was introduced in 1989 — and making no concerted effort to stand up to Bush's threatened veto of pro-choice legislation.

Clearly, the women's movement does not need any more friends like those it supposedly has in government right now. Rather it needs to push ahead with independent political action.

Feminism in the mainstream

This march and rally clearly showed that the government's attempts at restricting abortion and not going to be met quietly or without a challenge. The outpouring of women and men, young and old, of all religious racial and ethnic backgrounds on April 5 directly contradicts the media's portrayal of the marginalization of the women's movement. It shows how false are the assertions that the goals of feminism are out of touch with "mainstream" America. ★

The Spring syndrome

“FOR Turkey to recognize the Kurdish reality — and this is what it has done — is the most important event of the year”, declared Turkey’s prime minister Suliman Demirel to the *Milliyet* newspaper on December 9, 1991.

Despite such declarations and the promises made by the Turkish government, which had authorized the celebration of the Kurdish New Year (“Newroz”), on condition “that the law be respected” and despite Demirel’s instructions to the forces of law and order to “not intervene unless public order is threatened”, the army fired on demonstrators. The Newroz was drowned in a bloodbath, with a hundred killed, hundreds of arrests and a curfew in several Kurdish towns in Turkey.

This outcome was predictable. Earlier this year the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) announced an uprising for the Spring (see the interview with its leader Abdullah Öcalan on p. 16), while the state had threatened a “Spring operation” to wipe that organization out.

FUAT ORÇUN

AFTER the repression, 14 of the 20 Kurdish deputies from the Popular Social Democratic Party (SHP — a member of the coalition government and of the Socialist International) resigned from the party, putting an end to the entryism they had been engaged in since the October 1991 elections (see box on p. 15)

The clashes and the demonstration of force by both sides at Newroz proved that neither the state nor the PKK are yet able to definitively defeat the other. After eight years of guerilla war, the PKK has not succeeded in significantly increasing its sphere of action beyond the South-Eastern region, apart from occasional raids. Furthermore it has been losing strength on its home ground.

The PKK has been able to build up a certain strength by armed propaganda, but this has also hidden the need to find new forms of political action. The Kurdish national movement cannot be reduced to the PKK alone, even if this is an unavoidable part of it.

Thanks to the coalition between the Party of the Just Way (DYP, led by Demirel) and the SHP after the elections, Kurdish deputies and supporters of a negotiated solution to the Kurdish question from the People’s Labour Party (HEP) indirectly found themselves in government as SHP members.¹

However the DYP hawks could not accept this. Incidents took place at the very opening

of the parliamentary session when two Kurdish deputies, Leyla Zama and Hapit Dicle, spoke in Kurdish about the friendship of Turks and Kurds. The press and the DYP were outraged, while the SHP considered that this act meant that the two had effectively resigned from the party.

Another Kurdish SHP deputy was thrown off the parliamentary rostrum by DYP deputies — his coalition partners — for raising the Kurdish question. Thus at the very moment when the PKK leader was declaring that it was “necessary to give the government a chance”² conciliation was being ruled out inside the ruling coalition.

Despite soothing declarations from Demirel, who had “recognized the Kurdish reality” and permitted the publication of Kurdish language newspapers, the assassination of Kurdish militants by death squads continued. A few weeks later the tension went up a notch. Five PKK militants were killed and the army’s “special brigade” fired on the funeral crowd leaving eight dead.

Attack on working class neighbourhood

The next day a group of young Kurdish militants threw molotov cocktails into a big shop in a working class neighbourhood of Istanbul — 11 people were killed, including children, in the fire that followed. This event

caused great public indignation, all the more so in that the PKK leader, “Apo” had threatened such actions as reprisals. Certainly the fire and the deaths went beyond what the militants intended, but Kurdish nationalist circles seemed inclined to defend these kinds of action as a reply to state terrorism in Kurdistan.

The stepping up of state terrorism and the counter-terrorist response have reinforced a climate of nationalism among both Turks and Kurds. The government had promised reforms but has in fact made no concessions. This was the climate at the time of the Newroz.

The tension reached its height with warlike declarations: president Özal announced that the army would carry out a huge “Spring operation” to clean the PKK out of the country if that organization did not “lay down its arms”, while the PKK envisaged a big uprising for the spring along with a “war government and a Kurdish parliament”. The whole country was awaiting the foretold bloodletting, described by journalists as the “Spring syndrome”.

No political control of armed forces

Neither Demirel nor the SHP leader İnönü were in favour of using the methods preferred by the previous prime minister Özal. But the civilian government has long ago lost control of the police, the army and the special brigade, who are the real masters on the ground, not to mention the death squads. Furthermore, insofar as the government knows that it cannot rule in the Kurdish regions without repression, it has chosen the military option, even if it is not happy with all the consequences of this decision. They have made their choice: “first military control, then reforms”, according to İnönü.

Since 1984, when it launched its guerilla campaign, the PKK has grown from a rather isolated group of 500 people to an organization of some 10,000 militants which carries out mass propaganda and organization both in Turkey and abroad.

The PKK’s legitimacy is essentially a product of state repression in Kurdistan, which has been ruled by “exceptional” military

1. The HEP was founded by the Kurdish deputies of the SHP, expelled from their party for having participated at a conference on the Kurdish question in Paris in October 1989, and by deputies originating from the DISK trade union federation. The HEP was not able to participate in the legislative elections of 1991, having not yet fulfilled the legal conditions. Finally, the HEP made an electoral alliance with the SHP. The SHP, supported by the HEP, won an overwhelming majority of the votes in the south-east and 22 Kurd deputies were elected on its lists. The former president of the HEP and former general secretary of DISK, Fehmi Isiklar, was vice-president of the parliament. Thus, for the first time in the history of the republic, a Kurdish party appeared in the Turkish parliament, even if through indirect means.

2. See *Cumhuriyet*, December 7, 1991.

From the mountains to the parliament

THE PKK launched its guerilla war in 1984.

● In Spring 1990 huge demonstrations took place at Kurdish funerals at Cizre, Nusaybin, Silopi, Idil, Sirt and Batman. This was the start of what has been called the Kurdish intifada. This rebellion went beyond the limits of the PKK's activities, even if it remained confined in a narrow geographical area, and sounded the death knell of the traditional political parties in the Kurdish South East of Turkey (except for the Islamic RP).

● The legislative elections of October 1991 and the election — with nearly 70% of the votes — of the HEP candidates on the SHP lists led to the formation of a coalition government which gave rise to hopes of a softening of Turkish policy towards the Kurds.

● The recent confrontations during Newroz have represented a test of the balance of political and military forces between the state and the PKK, and have led to the resignation from the SHP of the Kurdish deputies.

However, the entry into parliament, for the first time, of a Kurdish party is of major significance. ★

regimes for more than 14 years. As Demirel himself has pointed out, someone who was five years old in 1978 will have reached adulthood — and an age to join the guerillas — without ever having known a "normal" regime. The Kurdish identity and any kind of cultural rights have been denied for years, the Kurdish language and Kurdish names being prohibited. The army has insulted, imprisoned, tortured and killed; a police brigade even forced the people of one Kurdish village to eat their own excrement. These acts give a "justification" to the violence of the PKK.

The denial of the Kurdish identity, poverty, and state violence and repression have produced a counter-violence which seems justified in the eyes of the Kurds subjected to such treatment.

The PKK thus has mass influence; other political currents have not yet been able to present themselves in these regions and those who have dared to do so have been wiped out by the PKK, which has declared itself the sole representative of the Kurds and will accept no competition in this field. Nor does

it permit opposition in its own ranks, not hesitating to do away with internal critics. Thus, the PKK's "democratic revolution" is pursued with methods that have little to do with democracy.

Ideologically it is under Stalinist influence. It has justified its suppression of its opponents in the Kurdish movement by reference to the Moscow Trials. However in more recent times its propaganda has been dominated by integral nationalist and even religious themes.

All other currents in the Kurdish national movement find themselves squeezed between the state and the PKK, as does the Turkish left. The latter is regretting at leisure its failure to take the Kurdish issue seriously and is morally crushed by the PKK, all the more so in that the latter, unlike the Turkish left, represents a real force. Furthermore the slightest criticism of the PKK is considered to amount for support to the Turkish state. In this Manichean world, the Turkish left is tending to turn into an appendage of the PKK.

Kurdish issue dominates political life

The political situation in Turkey has become dominated by the Kurdish question, pushing other democratic issues into the background. On March 8, 1992 — International Women's Day — slogans relating to the Kurdish question became the main theme of a demonstration (not organized by the independent women's movement) of 300 women in Istanbul.

It is the same in the union movement. Every struggle becomes reduced to a single question: the proclamation of the Kurdish identity. That identity itself is presented in a narrow nationalist way, without any definite social project. The PKK leader Apo recently talked about a federation, specifying that this would be a society of a "Western type".

In the recent elections, the PKK hesitated over which party to support. At first Apo declared that the SHP leader İnönü was even more the creature of the Turkish state than Özal.³ After the elections, he confirmed that the PKK would have been able to support Özal's Party of the Motherland (ANAP), the successor to the military regime.⁴

Subsequently, the president of the HEP in his turn confirmed that negotiations for an electoral alliance had taken place with the Islamist Party (RP) but that the alliance had failed owing "to a disagreement on the regions and the dividing up of the lists".⁵

After the failure of its negotiations with the HEP, the RP sought an agreement with the Turkish fascists and the HPE made an alliance with İnönü's SHP. That is to say, to get as many Kurdish deputies into parliament as possible, the Kurdish nationalists were ready to make alliances with even their worst enemies.

Even after the Newroz massacres Apo has continued to make overtures to Özal. "In fact, of all of them it is Özal who understands us the best... I am sure that he even has some sympathy for us. It is clear that he thinks about us a lot. Perhaps he is even thinking about telephoning me. If anyone is going to find a solution to our problem, it will be Özal. He says he is a Kurd and talks of a federation. It is Özal who is most in touch with the situation".⁶

A series of terrorist attacks in the big cities has provoked a nationalist and even racist anti-Kurdish mood in the Turkish population. Certainly, the PKK cannot be held solely responsible since there were already plenty of nationalist chauvinists, racists and fascists in the Turkish population, before the PKK even existed, but that does not justify such actions.

The Turkish population has no real interest in opposing the right to self-determination of the Kurdish people and the PKK has a duty not to alienate the working class and the oppressed of Turkish society. In reality the indignation of Turkish workers in response to terrorist attacks works to the benefit of the state, while the social layers who would be the natural allies of the Kurdish movement are rendered increasingly passive. Furthermore, the real level of support for the PKK among the Kurds in Istanbul is doubtful.

Rather than appeal to the Turkish masses, the PKK has decided to engage in a duel with the state. Faced with the near impossibility of winning a military victory over the Turkish army, it seems to have opted to search for methods of bringing internal and international pressure to bear on the Turkish government.

After the Newroz, the Kurdish deputies called for a referendum under United Nations auspices. They hope to get the question onto the international agenda to force the government to negotiate on the question of the rights of the Kurdish minority.

It is indeed true that international agreements signed by Turkey give the Kurdish movement some room for manoeuvre as far as cultural rights and some local administrative arrangements are concerned. Furthermore, the HEP, which has a strong electoral base — and which has decided to ask for admission to the Socialist International — will be represented in parliament.

Extreme nationalism and religious themes

Starting out in the Stalinist camp, the PKK has been carried further towards extreme integral nationalism,⁷ while the strength of

3. See *Nokta*, August 8, 1991.

4. See *Cumhuriyet*, December 7, 1991.

5. See *Cumhuriyet*, December 20, 1991.

6. See *Milliyet*, March 25, 1992.

7. The PKK has also attempted to prove the "superiority" of the Kurds by reference to ancient history, going as far back as the Medes of 2,600 years ago!

religious fundamentalism has led it to make alliances with these forces and more and more openly employ religious tones in its propaganda.⁸

Furthermore, the PKK has a de facto alliance with Iran, which it considers as an anti-imperialist regime, omitting to say that this regime too has massacred Kurds on its own territory. The PKK is also known to have close links with the Baathist dictatorship in Syria.

We are thus, for the time being, in a dead end. The weakness of the workers' movement in the west of Turkey leaves the state a free hand to pursue repression in the Kurdish east, strengthening the PKK. The latter in its turn blocks off any possibility of the emer-

gence of alternatives amongst the Kurdish people capable of building an alliance with the population of Western Turkey. And so it goes on.

Any escape from this vicious circle depends on the outcome of political struggles and differentiations amongst the Kurdish people. Whatever the judgements that could be made of the PKK and its acts, it undoubtedly represents a legitimate component of the Kurdish movement — the most important on the ground. It is necessary to support the struggle of the Kurdish nationalist movement. ★

8. During a symbolic hunger strike in protests against the massacres of Newroz, a Kurdish nationalist mufti characterized Demirel as an "infidel".

Kurdish guerilla leader speaks

The recent Kurdish rebellion in Turkey was led by the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Below we publish extracts from an interview with the PKK's leader, Abdullah Öcalan, which first appeared in 2000's *Dogru*, the journal of the Socialist Party, a Turkish group of Maoist origin.

DOCUMENT

HAVE you planned an uprising for this spring?

I must first of all make it clear that the PKK had not specially planned attacks which would plunge Turkey into turmoil in 1992. In reality our activities, which we have pursued in a systematic fashion for 20 years, have gained a new and specific acceleration in 1992 with the transition to a national army, the national awakening, and a firmer affirmation of the national will. All this could certainly be called an uprising or attack, but, and I am speaking in the broadest sense, there is an opportunity that one can seize in 1992.

This movement is led by the PKK and we arrive at Newroz (the Kurdish New Year) in spring in a strong position, without having suffered any blows despite a very hard winter. I

must emphasize that 1992 should be considered an important year not only for the national liberation of the Kurdish people, but for the democratic liberation and independence of Turkey.

Our struggle had an impact, albeit indirect, on the coming to power of the Demirel government. If he is really intelligent, if he is a real politician, he would correctly analyze his *raison d'être* and why he came to power and would find a way to resolve the problems with us. We said this via the media before he formed his government. We even said that we would not step up our actions but await the opening of channels for a political solution.

But I saw that even if the government wanted this, the forces in the shadows would not allow it. Demirel did not have the capacity to enter into a dialogue [with us]. It was the shadowy forces who called the tune. Their advice, presented by their representatives on the National Security Council (MGK), is accepted by parliament and this is how business is conducted. Demirel is trying to get along with the military and is making a charm offensive towards them. He is even taking Özal as a model.

We have seen that this government does not pursue a different goal to its predecessor. We have of course used our right to resistance. There is also an attempt to whip up chauvinism in Turkey. To combat this we have said

that we will give our support and solidarity at all levels to the democratic and revolutionary forces of Turkey.

■ An uprising, as we all know, is an attempt to take power. Either it succeeds or you are conquered. It is more than a simple stepping-up of the struggle. Did the PKK have such a project this spring or is it a question of the government attempting to provoke a showdown?

That is not our concept of an uprising. A study of our history and of provocations until this day shows that this conception has existed in history. They have wanted to impose this on the people's movement that we lead and to draw us into an uprising that would end in failure. Our tactical approach is not to get a final result by a sudden uprising but to put popular struggle in the forefront.

The peasant is tempted by jacqueries. His character leads him to want a final result in two or three days, by an uprising. We know what this has cost the people. We have said to our insurgent peasants: "You will get nowhere with this mentality."

The results of such cut-price uprisings are clear. Crushing defeat and capitulation. And, of course, such moods have also developed in our party. Those who want a jacquerie today will be ready to capitulate tomorrow. They are unable to accept the need for planned and organized work.

Our party follows a long-term policy. It aims to better organize the people under guerilla protection. It is not a matter of aiming at an immediate result but to change into a growing army that organizes itself and does not leave room for provocations; it aims to spread throughout the country the permanent people's uprising — or action or demonstration — the terminology doesn't matter — without limiting it to one or two places.

There could be a big movement arising out of Newroz, but in my view there will not be an uprising aiming at a seizure of power. They [the forces of order] can still mount provocations and attempt a massacre. But our reply will take place in the limits I have just described.

It is necessary that what happens is not just a demonstration by the people of Kurdistan alone; it must also [find an echo] in Turkey. It is necessary that a demonstration that

starts in Istanbul is pursued as far afield as Bolan or Cizre. Such is the meaning of the symbolic slogan: "Solidarity between Zonguldak [the miners] and Botan [the Kurds]".

The guerillas are certainly going to step up their activities. This is essential because they are calling for our total capitulation. And we will not unilaterally lay down our arms. We are not opposed to a ceasefire. We are indeed inclined to this so that the problems can be resolved politically.

The Turkish people must understand that the PKK does not want violence at any price. It says: there is a serious national question, there is a democratic question. This cannot be resolved by unilateral acts by the government, the parliament or the army, but by starting out from dialogue between the organizations that represent our peoples, the legitimacy of these organizations and their official character.

To put an end to the violence it is not enough to recognize the [Kurdish] reality; the parties have to find the courage to sit down around the negotiating table. This would be a very civilized and reasonable solution.

■ **What do you think of the government's attitude, in particular concerning the state of emergency?**

The government, and especially the SHP as a member of the coalition, has had an incoherent attitude on the

question of the state of emergency. Its abrogation was initially included in the [government's] protocol and in the SHP election manifesto as well as in the protocol signed between the SHP and candidates originally from the HEP. Demirel raised a lot of hopes. But at the same time as he was speaking his fine words, the very same day the bombings were stepped up and the shadow forces multiplied their anonymous assassinations.

I thus say that either these people [SHP-DYP] have not succeeded in becoming the real government of the country or they are playing a double game. In fact, instead of waiting for gestures of goodwill from our side, it is for the stronger party, the party that in practice dominates, that is the government, to make the necessary moves.

It is 13 years now that I have been here with my comrades. We have come through the worst winter of the century, and known hunger and thirst. After all, we too are human beings. If we did not have elevated objectives to achieve, objectives that we cannot renounce, we would not have come through these conditions. The government does not want to understand this. They think we are fanatics addicted to terrorism, bloodthirsty monsters who take pleasure in



shedding it. This is not true.

Furthermore, who in fact are the bloodthirsty monsters if not the exploiters? How have people been able to become rich in Turkey? I ask people to reflect on this and compare how we live.

It is not the PKK who commits daily anonymous assassinations. Perhaps there have accidentally been some murders, which fall outside our political line. Those who commit undisciplined acts in our ranks are known. They are expelled or called to account for their actions. But we always find a solution, despite our limited capacity to control what goes on.

But opposite us is a government which has a great capacity for control and good information. Why has it not been able to catch the murderers of journalists? How can one have confidence in such a government?

It is necessary to put an end to army terrorism. One does not need to use air power against a handful of terrorists, nor amass such a concentration of troops in the region. This is not aimed at a handful of terrorists. Tanks have taken up position everywhere in Cizre. Is the [town of] Cizre wholly terrorist? And what then is the definition of terrorism?

■ **What have you to say to those SHP deputies who were previously in the HEP, if the emergency law is voted through parliament?**

A party [like the SHP] which shows so little coherence, so few principles, and so many contradictions is doomed to disappearance. As for the HEP deputies, if the PKK had not supported them, nobody would ever have heard of them. They cannot renounce their Kurdish identity;

Who backs the PKK?

IN an interview in the Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* early this year PKK leader Abdullah Örcalan made the following remarks: "the people will be more active... and take part in the war. I have armed the country's people. The only way in which [the state] can admit the Kurds' identity is by agreeing to talk to us..."

"The constitution should be amended...A unitary state cannot be democratic. The Turkish republic must become a federation...We will be setting up a national parliament this year... Each town will choose its delegates...We are preparing a meeting for next July or August... The article in the constitution on the integrity and indivisibility of the people and the territory is a calamity..."

Henceforth we will react against Demirel...The person we best understand is Özal... he says he is a Kurd and talks of a federation... The members of the HPE have been ineffective in parliament... I have sent them their instructions... it is useless for them to remain inside the SHP.

The PKK's present budget is \$100m and our annual income in Europe is about 50m Deutschmarks... The Germans support us now... France and Greece have softened their position. Syria gives us neither money nor arms. Iran is not an enemy of the PKK, since it fears Turkish ambitions in the Middle East... Saddam does not make any difficulties for the PKK. ★

if they do they will not be able to take the least step in Kurdistan, among the Kurdish people.

Inönü wants to assimilate them into the SHP [without even respecting the protocol]. This is a chauvinist attitude. The SHP is a party that maintains Kemalist traditions, which are in favour of crushing and assimilating the Kurds. This would be a unilateral, imposed assimilation. And this is what can be expected from these deputies.

Either these deputies are arch traitors and will accept that or they will defend a minimum of their self-respect and will reject that policy. They would then not accept the emergency law. Honest deputies from the HEP must in our view leave the SHP.

It is Özal who, in a certain way, contributed to the founding of the HEP, in order to weaken his rival the SHP; he introduced a law which led to the HEP getting financial support.

We said to the HEP: "If it is necessary you will make an alliance with the RP to get above the 10% limit. Or with the SP if it has the chance to get over 10%. Or even with the SHP". The aim was to give mass support to a parliamentary group which would undertake a democratic struggle — not to get PKK members into parliament but some democratic elements.

Certainly the HEP can be criticized from many angles. But it took steps forward at its last congress.

A democratic regroupment in Turkey?

As for us, we are going to act in such a way that our sympathizers and rank-and-file change into a base that can support a democratic regroupment in Turkey. We are going to give a lot of importance to making the mass of Kurds in the West, where we have many sympathizers whose number is growing daily, into a solid basis of support for the democratic struggle in Turkey.

We have to create a very broad pluralist democratic alliance. There have been examples of this in Latin America, in El Salvador and in some Asian countries, including that of the PLO.

We say to the democratic forces in Turkey, and to the Turkish left: "Come, let us organize together. Take your place in a regrouped front. Ask for our support. If you want we can build this together. Let us create a common centre". ★

Where the Yugoslav crisis began

THE decisive blow to the unity of the Yugoslav state came not with the declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia in 1990, but with the campaign by Serb nationalists to undermine the national rights of the Albanian majority in Kosovo, culminating in the abolition of Kosovo's status as an autonomous province in September 1990.

Since then, Kosovo has lived under a regime of severe repression and systematic discrimination against the Albanian population.

Catherine Samary spoke to Kullashi Muhaludin, formerly from Kosovo's University of Pristina, now in exile in France, about the grave situation in his homeland.

THE constitution of the Yugoslav ("South Slav") federation did not deal with the national question posed by the non-Slav Albanians of Kosovo. At the start of the revolution the notion of a broader Balkan federation — which would have more adequately met Albanian aspirations — was discussed, but it came to nothing. The split between Tito and Stalin and the tensions between Yugoslavia and neighbouring Albania subjected the majority of Kosovo's inhabitants to decades of oppression. But, contrary to what has been said in the Western press, Yugoslavia was not the USSR; it changed over time. What in your view, brought about the present dramatic situation?

The Yugoslav crisis started in Kosovo. To understand it we have to look at the tensions that existed at the start of the 1980s. After the death of Tito in 1980 the Yugoslav regime began to disintegrate, and this coincided with the movements of workers and students in Kosovo. That province then became, whether by choice or coincidence, the point of departure for the events that unfolded throughout the country.

The system introduced by the 1974 constitution, transforming the country into a confederation, allowed a certain balance between the interests of the different republics and provinces. Inter-ethnic tensions existed but they did not reach a critical level.

The 1970s were a time of significant economic prosperity in Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia's relations with other countries, including those of Western Europe, developed significantly. Tito played an important role on the international scene with the non-aligned Third World countries. Even the less developed regions benefited from this progress, which was accompanied by cultural advance and a growth in internal exchanges.

This was the period when mutual tolerance was at its height. The frontiers, now at the centre of war, were far less important. On the other hand, in the 1980s, apart from a short respite in 1988-89, before the descent into war, Yugoslavia experienced a serious economic crisis.

■ What about the frontiers between Albania and Kosovo?

For a long period, Albania was reluctant about relations with its neighbours. It was Tito who pushed for an opening up of the frontiers between the two countries, but contacts were never extensive.

However cultural exchanges did take place, to be condemned later as a plot by Tito and by the Albanians on both sides of the frontier.

■ Can one compare the 1970s and 1980s at the level of the school, the language, the professions and the power structure in the province?

There are very big differences. First-



ly, in the 1970s, Kosovo saw strong economic development and a significant cultural advance in such areas as cultural institutions, mass media, Albanian-language television and so on; this was to the benefit not only of Albanians, but also of others. This, in my view, was the period when relations between the communities were at their best, compared both to the past and what was to come in the 1980s. Both in the enterprises and in education there were functioning mixed groups.

Throughout the institutions, from the lowest communal level to the highest instances of state and party, the leading functions were always shared between the two nationalities. If a school director, for example, was of one nationality, his deputy would have to be from the other. Furthermore, there existed a system of rotation which, each time a mandate changed, assured that the replacement would be from the other nationality.

Constitutionally, the rights of the Serbs were always guaranteed. Indeed the rotation principle favoured the Serbs, who were always in the minority in the province. Even if Kosovo had formal autonomy, the real centre of power was in the Serbian capital Belgrade.

■ **How do you explain the victory of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia on a programme that boiled down to anti-Albanian racism and recentralization of Serbia to the detriment of the two provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina?**

There are several reasons for the rise of Serb populist nationalism and there are historical reasons why it chose Kosovo as the terrain on which to forge its political programme, going beyond the issue of the Albanians there.

After Tito's death the Serb leaders pursued policies which upset the delicate balance of interests in Yugoslavia. When the students and workers'

demonstrations arose in Kosovo they were often portrayed as being centred on the demand for Kosovo to be granted full republican status.

In fact, this was not the movement's only demand; other economic and social issues were raised. The raising of these latter type of demands, however, was cut short by the brutal intervention of the army and police, and the regime's propaganda sought to present the demand for a republic as the sole issue, in order to demonize the movement.

Afterwards, in their desire to under-

Declaration of the coordinating council

THE national problem of the Albanians of Yugoslavia arises from the dismemberment of Albanian territory at the time of the creation of the State of Albania in 1913, which left areas of compact Albanian habitation comprising more than a half of the Albanian population outside of the new state. These have never had national rights, neither under the Yugoslav monarchy of 1941 nor in socialist Yugoslavia after 1945.

By suppressing in 1989 the autonomy of Kosovo and all its rights of sovereignty, in driving Albanians out of all state institutions and suspending the parliament and government of Kosovo along with all the province's municipal and communal councils, by forbidding public education and all Albanian-language media, by imposing the Serb language and the Cyrillic alphabet for all official dealings, and by sacking more than 80,000 Albanians, Serbia gravely violated the Yugoslav constitution.

Since Yugoslavia has shown itself incapable of resolving the national question in the Balkans, on July 2, 1990, the deputies of the parliament of Kosovo issued a declaration of independence and on September 7, 1990 proclaimed the Republic of Kosovo.

The Albanian political parties in Yugoslavia, the legitimate political expression of the will of the Albanian people, employing peaceful and democratic means for resolving their problem in line with the right of self-determination of peoples... offer three variants for solving the problems of Yugoslavia's Albanians:

1. If the internal and external frontiers of Yugoslavia do not change, then the Republic of Kosovo must exist as a sovereign and independent state, with the right to associate with the other sovereign states of Yugoslavia. Those Albanians who continue to live in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia must be legally recognized as a nation with all the constitutional rights that this implies.

2. If the external frontiers of Yugoslavia remain the same, but the internal frontiers stay the same, then our demand is: for the creation of a republic of all the Albanians of Yugoslavia, based on ethnic principles and whatever other principles are applied to Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and others.

3. If both the external and internal frontiers of Yugoslavia change, a referendum should be held amongst the Albanians living in Yugoslavia to decide the issue of unification with Albania and the creation of a state of all the Albanians of the Balkans.

The crisis of Yugoslavia began in Kosovo, with the discontent of the Albanian people, with the discrimination it suffers; and that crisis cannot thus be solved without the participation of the more than three million Albanians of Yugoslavia.

October 11, 1991

Source: Centre d'information de la République du Kosovo, C. P. 84, CH-1211 Geneva, 8, Switzerland ★

mine the old regime, the Serb nationalists affirmed that this "counter-revolutionary" and "obscurantist" demand was already present in the 1974 constitution which, they said, reflected an epoch of Serb self-hatred and self-denial on the one hand, and on the other, a plot cooked up by the Croat Tito and other hostile foreign forces, whether the Vatican, Iran or the United States.

■ **What do you make of this presentation of the role of "the Croat Tito"?**

Tito was above all interested in pur-

suing the interests of Yugoslavia as a whole. He was far more "Yugoslav" than others who were to appear on the scene later. Whatever his authoritarian sins, Tito tried to maintain the cohabitation of the country's peoples and he succeeded for almost a half century. After his death he was accused by those who wanted to destroy Yugoslavia of having fomented an anti-Serb plot, as shown by his attitude to Kosovo.

The affirmation of Albanian rights in the 1970s — not only in Kosovo — the access to education, their presence in institutions both in the republic and at federal level — was taken as a proof of treason.

The presence of another people, language and culture in Kosovo, seen as the cradle of the Serbs, although Albanians had lived there for centuries, was seen as unacceptable. Kosovo became seen as the symbol of Serb revival.

To justify repression, the official ideology claimed that in the mid-80s the rights of the Serb minority were not respected. It is necessary to underline the role of intellectuals in this, in particular those grouped around the Academy of Serbia; it was they who, starting in 1985, launched the notion of a "genocide of the Serbs" taking place in Kosovo.

Some of these intellectuals had been dissidents under the former regime and there was something really horrible in this regression. They called openly for war for years, affirming that the Serbs had always been the losers from peace and won in war, seen as a way in which the Serbs could make up for past injustice.

■ **How can this kind of regression amongst the intellectuals, which has been seen not only in Belgrade but in Zagreb and Sarajevo, be explained?**

Two classic propaganda techniques were used: on the one hand a big lie was constructed made out of supposed truths and half-truths, fed by ordinary legal conflicts and crimes which were transformed in the propaganda into ethnic conflicts. On the other, the lie was repeated incessantly. This made a section of Serb public opinion really believe that the genocide of Serbs in Kosovo was actually taking place.

In fact, since the start of the 1980s the only thing which exists and can be proved is that thousands of young Albanians have been sentenced, not for demanding a republic in Kosovo but for taking part in demonstrations and strikes.

They have been accused of fomen-

ting plots against the state, the system and the party. Between 1981 and 1988, 1,000 Albanian teachers were sacked on the pretext that they were not sufficiently committed to the fight against nationalism. Having a member of one's family in jail means that the children are deprived of the right to study and so on.

Over the years, the Albanian population has suffered incessant repression for crimes of opinion, but the propaganda thunders on about the terror against the Serbs.

The International Federation for Human Rights, the Helsinki Federation and Amnesty International, who researched the situation on the ground in the late 1980s, have never been able to find the slightest proof of the supposed genocide or even of acts of violence against the Serbs. One wonders why Yugoslav public opinion so easily

believed lies spread by official circles, by the Serb regime, and followed it through to its ultimate consequences, war and the hatred of all for all.

■ **There have been some who resisted. The Slovene journal *Mladina*, for example, offered a platform to the Albanians in the 1980s. Some courageous positions were taken by people such as Branko Horvat, who published a text combatting the propaganda. At this time an Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI) was founded which supported the democratic content of the Albanian demonstrations in Kosovo, calling for a democratic solution to the break-up of Yugoslavia.**

Branko Horvat is one of the first and rare intellectuals to have dared to think

General strike in Slovenia

ON MARCH 18, 1992 half of Slovenia woke up in darkness, while the other half passed its evening in the dark. This was the most revealing sign of the success of the "general warning strike".

Access to most of the cities was blocked by trailers and public works' vehicles, shops and services were closed, lessons were abandoned at the end of the day, and even soldiers and customs officers expressed their solidarity. The strike, called by the Association of Free Unions of Slovenia, rallied all the unions apart from a pro-government shop window with the misleading name of Confederation of Independent Unions.

The conflict between the unions and the government, obscured for a long time by the national question, has at its roots the wage freeze and infringements of collective contracts. The effect of these two measures has been a fall in workers' purchasing power beyond any that the contemporary workforce has ever experienced.

The average hourly wage in Slovene engineering is 3 DM (Deutschmarks) compared to 38 DM in West Germany and 30 DM in Italy. The government fixed monthly minimum is supposed to be 260 DM but in enterprises in the sectors in crisis salaries of 160DM are commonplace. It is estimated that it takes 730 DM a month to meet the most elementary needs of a family of four. Thus, only a small fringe group of workers in industry live above the poverty line.

After the total success of their "general warning strike" the wage freeze was immediately abandoned. However, low wages and high living costs make for a volatile social climate. There will be new tests of strength in the near future.

These are inevitable given the strong encouragement provided by this first general strike, organized by unions independent of the government. For the first time in 40 years the workers have felt their strength.

The independent Belgrade weekly, *Vreme*, summed up the effects of the strike: "With this victorious strike, the Slovene workers have ceased to be atomized individuals, powerless tools in the hands of bureaucrats or nationalist demagogues and have become — through the vehicle of independent class unions — a social subject capable of delivering a knock-out blow to their main opponent, the state". — Slavko Mihaljcek, March 30, 1992. ★

Signs of opposition to nationalist tide

IN THE recent referendum in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 63% of registered electors voted for cohabitation and respect for the existing frontiers of the state. It is in Bosnia, which has for centuries been ethnically mixed, inhabited by Muslims, Serbs, Croats and other nationalities, that the peace movement has been the strongest. Dozens of mass demonstrations have taken place in all the country's towns and the pacifists have become an important political force.

On Monday April 6, 30,000 answered the call of the movement's Inspiration and Coordination Collective and assembled in front of and inside the parliament building in Sarajevo. In the afternoon this unarmed and peaceful crowd was fired on by Serb militia.

On Tuesday morning, Radio Sarajevo reported bitter fighting between the Bosnian police and the Serb militia for control of the city's strategic points including the capital's TV transmitter. The headquarters of the UN troops was attacked and the UN officers moved out of their hotels into a fortified building.

On Wednesday April 7 the bombing of Croat-inhabited villages in Herzegovina by Serb/federal airplanes was reported. The Serb militia, who showed the crimes they are capable of in the battle of Vukovar, occupied and looted several Muslim villages close to the Serbian frontier. The Bosnian president called for international intervention.

Nonetheless, there are signs that nationalism is starting to lose ground. The Serb/federal army, which has been protecting the Serb nationalists, has withdrawn from several regions in Bosnia. Undermined by desertions, discredited by its crimes in Croatia, with conscripts refusing to undertake new operations against the civilian population, the army is no longer operational in Bosnia. In the absence of their protector, the various Serb militias have quickly shown their true nature as bands of killers and looters with a racist and fascist ideology.

The Bosnian anti-war movement is perceived, henceforth, as a political alternative to the nationalist formations which have plunged the country into barbarism.

Finally, in occupied Kraïna (in Croatia, a multinational region before the war) there have been several demonstrations of Serbs demanding the return of the Croats expelled from their homes. One of the objectives of the nationalists in this war is the displacement — by terror — of the minority populations with the goal of creating ethnically "homogeneous" areas. This monstrous solution was implemented in Kraïna and in Slavonia under the pretext of assuring "the security of the threatened Serb people".

But, instead of assuring the security of the Serbs, the expulsion of the Croat inhabitants could provoke reprisals. Emptied of their Croatian population, the mountains of Kraïna and the plains of Slavonia could serve as immense firing fields for the Croat army. This awareness, belated but very real, of the danger represented by the process of ethnic homogenization is weakening, in the short term, the ideological influence of every brand of nationalism. ★

differently from the official ideology. With exemplary courage he challenged both the formula of a "counter-revolution" and the use of the term "genocide". He tried to demystify the demand for a Kosovo republic, denying its diabolic character. He tried to explain that, on the contrary, this demand did not threaten the interests of anyone in Yugoslavia.

Mladina and some other Slovene publications tried to challenge the official version of events in Kosovo and sought rational explanations for what

was happening. At the same time it was deputies from Slovenia who were the only ones to get the federal parliament to employ legal and rational criteria.

■ **Democratic currents throughout the federation were concerned by the struggle against the Great Serb danger in the 1980s. One got the impression, on the other hand, that the leaders who came to power in the first free elections made the serious miscalculation of allowing**

the recentralization of power in Serbia in the belief that they could limit that state's expansionist drive to Kosovo.

This belief was at work both before and after the elections. The oligarchies in Slovenia and Croatia thought that the Serbian government would be content with Kosovo, the "cradle of the Serb nation". But they were mistaken. Indeed, Milosevic had already told them this, after the constitutional changes which ended the autonomy of Kosovo in March 1989.

The governments of Franjo Tudjman in Croatia and of Milan Kucan in Slovenia openly declared that the Kosovo issue was an internal Serbian problem, hoping that this would satisfy the Serbian appetite. The events which have followed, and the terrible war in Croatia, have shown that the populist and nationalist movements would go further in pursuit of their Great Serbia policy after getting their way in Kosovo.

■ Do you place any hopes in the Serb opposition to Milosevic?

The attitude of the Serb opposition over Kosovo has not been much different to that of Milosevic. Often, unfortunately, it has offered Milosevic its support, or even proposed yet more radical measures. The Democratic Party, for example, has declared that "if the Albanians raise the political demand for independence, all necessary means must be employed against them". All the deputies in the Serbian parliament, including those of the Democratic Party, have voted for discriminatory measures against Albanians. This was also true of Draskovic's Party of Serb Renewal, which has developed somewhat since.

Recently Milosevic issued a statement raising the responsibility of the local Serb regime in the events in Kosovo, but all the discriminatory measures remain. People are being killed every day; peasants have recently been executed because they facilitated the holding of lessons in private houses.

But, a part of the Serb opposition has evolved and is now proposing a Serb federation to solve the Kosovo problem.

■ Would this be a structure in which the provinces would be the basic unit?

This is not clear. In the Serbian constitution, there still exist two provinces with autonomy, even if this is not the reality according to recent parliamentary laws. According to these,

Kosovo will no longer have its own constitution decreed by the Serb Republic, which can over-ride decisions by the provincial assembly.

The Albanian population rejects any solution that would mean a regime imposed from Belgrade or even one to any extent under the latter's control. This is the feeling of the majority and not just of political groups who have succeeded in getting acceptance for the demand for a Kosovo republic. The main Kosovo Albanian opposition party, Rugova's Kosovo Democratic League, was satisfied barely two years ago with the status of an autonomous province as defined in the 1974 constitution. The popular feeling now is formed in reaction to the repression. The people believe that relations with the other peoples of Yugoslavia can only be worked out on the basis of equality, something that, for the moment, Serbia is not ready to accept.

■ **Have there been contacts between the Kosovo Albanian opposition parties and parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Macedonia who face threats from the Serbian regime?**

There have been contacts at political party level with Macedonia and also with opposition parties in Serbia. The Albanian parties even expressed their readiness to talk to the Serbian regime in October and November 1991, notably on the schools question; some teachers have not been paid for a year, while colleagues have been receiving double salaries as a result of the infamous law on discrimination according to nationality. The Albanian parties affirmed that they wanted the right to work, respect for international conventions and guarantees for minority rights.

In July 1991, intellectuals from the Helsinki committee and the peace movement wrote a text in which they violently criticized the installation in Kosovo of apartheid in education. Albanians took part in this meeting in Belgrade. This has been the most important step by Belgrade intellectuals so far. It should be stressed that the UDJI, often for tactical and pragmatic reasons, has been very cautious in its statements about the real problems in Kosovo.

■ **The question of the Serbs of Croatia raises the question of the different possible visions of the future of what was once Yugoslavia. The Serbs have demanded certain rights and to be recognized as a people that has**

lived in these territories for centuries. The Albanians have at least the same rights vis-à-vis Serbia.

Currently, the Albanians have been sacrificed not only by Yugoslavia but also by Europe. The emergence of the problem of the Serbs in Croatia has not changed the point of view of the Serbian opposition towards the Albanians. Milosevic considers the Albanians as a minority, whilst the Serbs are a people and a nation. From this flows their right to self-determination.

■ **Do you feel that defence of the interests of the Kosovo Albanians should be conducted by means of an insurrection or by other means of struggle?**

It should be emphasized that throughout the 11 years of repression in Kosovo the response of the Albanians has been solely and consistently political. The miners' strike was symbolic from this point of view and illustrated the Albanian approach — nobody was threatened by the miners staying underground. Their demands were modest — they did not call for a Kosovo republic — but by risking their lives they succeeded in attracting international attentions.

We have faced police repression and a propaganda onslaught. There have been on the one hand imprisonments, sackings and deaths, on the other propaganda presenting Albanians as barbarians. We have responded with petitions, demonstrations and strikes, despite many police provocations such as encircling villages and daily repression. Any attempt at insurrection would be used as an excuse for a generalized massacre.

Croatia has been able to organize an army, hospitals and civil defence; the situation is of course different in Kosovo. Tudjman and other leaders called on the Albanians to rise up when the war started. But they know full well that the Albanian population is without arms and that a desperate uprising would only make easy what obsesses the Serbian regime: to put an end to the massive presence of Albanians on this "sacred soil"; the mass extermination of Albanians has already been put forward by Seselj [a Serb nationalist leader claiming the heritage of the Chetniks] as a solution to the Kosovo problem. Political struggle and organization will continue to be at the centre in Kosovo.

■ **What support can that policy find on the trade union or political level?**

There are independent unions which are in a very difficult situation since very few Albanians still have jobs. They send protests to international associations but they do not get much of a response. Given the mass sackings they cannot do a lot. There is also an organization for providing assistance to the most desperate and above all for the unemployed. It suffers from severe police harassment — activists get from 30 to 60 days in jail and the aid supplies are confiscated.

The political parties are trying to keep contact with European and international institutions and they send reports to international associations. Thus the latter know perfectly well what is going on in Kosovo. But nothing has been done to halt the repression in Kosovo apart from seven resolutions from the European parliament condemning the Serbian regime's actions in Kosovo and calling for the restoration of constitutional rights, which are important from the symbolic point of view.

The situation in Kosovo, like that in the rest of Yugoslavia, is a test for the European institutions' will to build a "common European home".

At the Hague conference concessions were made to the Serbian regime on the issue of the Serbs in Croatia, but, although the seventh resolution of the European parliament affirms that the provinces should have the same status and the same right to self-determination, a standpoint taken under pressure from Belgrade in practice is not applied to peoples other than the Serbs. Thus the question is, does a people with an army have more rights than one without, in the EEC's view?

■ **As far as possible appeals can be made to non-state organizations such as unions and human rights organizations to take a stand in defence of Albanian rights in Kosovo.**

This is all the more important in that for months most of the European media have not talked about us. While everyone is informed about the end of apartheid in South Africa, they fail to mention that a kind of apartheid is being installed in the very heart of Europe. Hundreds of doctors have been forced to leave hospitals because of their nationality, while half a million school age children cannot pursue their education, 80,000 people have been sacked, and wage differentials have been introduced for the same reason — on the basis of nationality. If Europe remains deaf to this then its credibility is in question. ★

Is Zionism racism?

WHEN the United Nations General Assembly "resolved" in 1975 that Zionism was a form of racism, I was reminded of the "councils" of the mediaeval Christian Church and their bizarre pronouncements regarding the workings of the universe.

The bishops were wrong in every case, but nevertheless, these councils did not have the power to determine, by majority vote, the real situation; even if 90% of the church fathers asserted that the sun revolved around the earth, the fact remained that the opposite was the case.

The fact of whether or not Zionism is racist will not be determined by the balance of power within the UN General Assembly, or by pressure from the oil states or Washington, but by the deeds of the Zionists themselves.

All the UN can do is to give Zionism a bad name, or, alternatively, a clean bill of health.

MICHAEL WARSCHAWSKI*

THE equation of Zionism with racism requires, first of all, that the terms be defined.

Zionism: is a political movement working for the solution of the Jewish problem by bringing the Jews of the world to the Land of Israel and the establishment there of a sovereign Jewish society.

Racism: According to Even Shoshan's authoritative dictionary of the Hebrew language, racism is "The point of view that the nations of the world are divided into superior and inferior races".

On the face of it, then, Zionism has no racist dimension at all; at most it is a utopia, more suited to the 19th century than to present-day reality. Zionism does not state that the Jewish people is a superior race or that the Arab nation is inferior. And indeed this definition provided the basis for the claims of all those who denied the validity of the UN resolution: the Jewish people is not a race, and Zionism does not speak about superior or inferior races. Therefore, Zionism is not racist.¹

Yet there is another definition of racism, less etymologically narrow, but undoubtedly closer to its meaning in colloquial usage. Racism is discrimination against human beings on the basis of their national, racial, religious or ethnic origin. According to this common-sense definition, the concept of racism does not have to do with values, intentions, goals or objectives, but with how a person, movement, or institution behaves towards other human beings. This was the definition

adopted by the international "Covenant for the abolition of all forms of racial discrimination", which the Israeli government signed after much hesitation in 1979.

The covenant states that "racial discrimination is any differentiation, exclusion from the collectivity, restriction or preference for reason of race, colour, lineage, national or ethnic origin — with the intent or result of eliminating or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise — on an equal basis — of human rights and basic freedoms in political, economic, social and cultural life, or in any other realm of public life". In this sense, Zionism as an ideology is not racist, but the Zionist enterprise and the Zionist State of Israel — as it is defined — is very, very racist.

"Racist? Us?"

In article published in *Ha'aretz* under the title, "Racist? Us?" several respected Israeli intellectuals, for the most part liberals, attempt to refute the definition of Israel as a racist state. They make two fundamental claims: Firstly, that the ideology which brought about the establishment of the state was not racist, and therefore the most one can do is speak of a governmental policy of racial discrimination. Secondly, that the intentions of those who fashioned the policy was not racist. Prof. Yosef Gorney combines the two claims in an effort to deny the racist character of the Zionist state. "There is no racism in Zionist ideology. Indeed, Zionist policy has discriminated against Arabs more than

once, but not for racist reasons..."

Zionism is not a racist ideology. It is a classic colonialist ideology, whose purpose was to alleviate the hardship of the Jews by bringing them to the land of Israel, without giving any consideration to the fate of the "natives". Zionism is not anti-Arab, it simply does not take them into account and in the process of building the state relates to them as a solely "ecological" problem, like the swamps, like malaria, like its vector, the anopheles mosquito.

However, between a movement with a racist ideology and what Aryeh Na'or defines, in the same article, as "morally reprehensible, and even revolting, devices for discriminating against Arabs", there is another category, which Attorney Avigdor Feldman calls "a regime which is a form of racism", that is, a regime of racial discrimination (in the words of the above-mentioned International Covenant...) which is both institutionalized and intentional. This is perhaps less frightening than a regime which advocates the position of the existence of an inferior and superior races, but far more serious than just a "set of devices" or a "policy which includes some elements of racism".

Discrimination between Jews and Arabs is inscribed on the identity card and in the genetic code of the State of Israel and has had a vital part in defining the nature of the existing regime and its laws, its national priorities and the dominant culture.

UN decisions leave bitter legacy

First an aside: The United Nations, which in 1975 condemned Zionism as a form of racism, bears no small responsibility for the existence of the racist regime in the State of Israel. One may recall that, according to the UN resolution of 1947, the partition of mandatory Palestine was to result in the establishment of two states: one Arab, with 97% Arab inhabitants and one Jewish, with 53% Jews and 47% Arabs. A Jewish state, almost half of whose inhabitants are Arabs — does not this give institutionalized racism a green light from the very start? Or did the UN delegates, who voted for partition, know that all 47% would never remain within the boundaries of the Jewish state? One way or another, by defining the Jewish character of the state, the UN granted international legitimacy to the State of

* This article first appeared in the March-April 1992 issue of *News From Within*, published by the Alternative Information Centre, Jerusalem.

1. See, among others, Yosef Gorney, *The Arab question and the Jewish problem*, Tel Aviv University Press.

2. Aryeh Dayan, "Racist? Us?", *Ha'aretz*, December 27, 1991.

Israel's racist character, and perhaps also to the expulsion of her Arab population.

The statement in the Declaration of Independence, proclaiming Israel to be the state of the entire Jewish people, expresses the essence of the character of the existing regime, and the High Court has repeatedly emphasized — most recently when it debated whether the Progressive List for Peace was qualified to run in Knesset elections — that this statement has not only symbolic and formal significance, but real implications for all state institutions and in the setting of policy for all government authorities.

The term "Jewish state" defines the collectivity which the State of Israel is supposed to serve and protect. This collectivity is not of all the state's citizens, but the entire Jewish nation, over and above Jews who are citizens of the state, and excluding citizens of the state who were neither born to a Jewish mother nor converted to Judaism according to Jewish law.

In other words, not only does a Jewish Mafioso from Paris have the right and the ability (via Zionist institutions) to determine the state's priorities, but the few Palestinians who managed to obtain citizenship have neither the right nor the ability to be part of the sovereign collectivity. The Palestinian citizens of the State of Israel do, indeed, enjoy civil rights and vote for representatives to the legislative body, but this fact alone does not make them equal citizens or full partners in the collectivity which the state is supposed to serve.

Arabs forbidden to own land

A blatant example of this can be found in the Land Laws and the agreements between the State of Israel and the Jewish National Fund, which forbid Arab citizens of the State of Israel to own "national land" or even to buy or lease state land. In this context, the State of Israel made a significant innovation to the doctrine of racial discrimination — by replacing the concept of "state land" with "land of the nationality", the dominant nationality of course.

In addition to the Land Laws, which exclude Arab citizens from the sovereign collectivity, particular attention should be given to the laws which define the right of residency in the State of Israel (the Law of Return, the Citizenship Law) and the racist philosophy hidden in their clauses. Avigdor Feldman is making a very old claim, when he states³ that the Law of Return, which automatically grants citizenship to anyone born to a Jewish mother or converted according to Jewish law, is not a racist law, but a legitimate expression of affirmative action.

We would have no difficulty agreeing with the learned counsellor, if the Law of

Return stood on its own, unconnected with the Citizenship Law and the systematic policy of refusing residency to members of the Palestinian people. But the Law of Return is but one link in a policy according to which only Jews have the right of residency in the Land of Israel, except if a non-Jew proves, according to the Laws and regulations of the Jewish state, that he has not lost his right to residency. In other words, a Jew who is not a citizen of Israel is always a potential resident; whereas by contrast the status of an Arab citizen or resident is always provisional.

Independence declaration permits discrimination

Denied a part in the collective ownership of the land and bearing provisional residence status, the Arab citizen of the Jewish state lacks even the rights of the "stranger dwelling in the land" recognized by the Jewish Torah. And indeed, it is not mere chance that, in the Declaration of Independence — which functions in lieu of a constitution — it was "forgotten" to state that there would not be discrimination on grounds of nationality in the state of Israel. Such a statement, had it been made, could have been used to repeal laws and regulations which favour members of the Jewish people and to establish equality between members of the two peoples.

The wording of the Declaration of Independence was chosen precisely to exclude such equality, and in order to avoid its creation, the Israeli Knesset stubbornly refuses to legislate a democratic constitution. The lack of a democratic constitutional framework, upon whose basis any expression of nationally-based discrimination would be rejected, has allowed the legislature and the administrative authority to create a complete and all-encompassing infrastructure of racial discrimination between Jews and Arabs.

The pretentious liberalism of the State's founders — and the need to keep the United Nations quiet — made it hard for them to legislate openly apartheid laws, as in South Africa. But since the existing regime was based on an apartheid system, they were compelled to search for sophisticated ways to institute this racial discrimination. The primary form this has taken is security and the state of war; the Law of Present Absentees, the Military Government of the Arab areas of the state until 1966, and the non-repeal of the mandatory Emergency Regulations — are just a few examples of the way in which a system of double standards was created for Jews and Arabs, under the pretext of a state of emergency.

By virtue of the Absentee Property Law, for example, the Jewish state was able to transfer a tremendous amount of property,

mainly land, from Arab citizens to Jewish citizens. Of this, Attorney Avigdor Feldman says: "In those days, the High Court heard dozens of appeals by Arab residents against land expropriation. The lawyers attempted to present the overall picture to the court: expropriations are always from the Arabs, the land is always handed over to Jews, "public needs" are always the needs of the Jewish public.

"The court was totally consistent. It always refused to see the overall picture. It was never willing to go beyond examination of the legality of a specific expropriation order. It simply made itself the partner in discrimination".

Should anyone claim that these were just the not-so-pleasant birth pangs of the state, we shall remind him that the lands of the village of Ramayah were expropriated in 1976 and earmarked for transfer to use as a new immigrant neighbourhood in 1991 (case still not concluded) and of the houses in Silwan, in East Jerusalem, which have recently been transferred, thanks to the Absentee Property Law, to Jewish settlers.

The pretext of public interest

The claim of "public interest" is just one of the methods for transferring resources from one part of the population to another. Another is by the use of non-racial categorization of sections of the population in ways which legitimize real racial discrimination. Writes Aryeh Dayan⁴: "In the not-so-few instances when the policy of discrimination succeeded in entering the law books despite everything, it was always in disguise, as if the legislator was ashamed...

"If one examines the entire body of law, s/he will find that there is no law, except for the Law of Return, which reserves privileges for Jews only. In all other discriminatory laws and regulations, instead of "Jews" what is written is "former servicemen/women" or 'one to whom the Law of Return would apply were s/he not an Israeli citizen'.

"And should anyone claim that someone who serves three years in the army deserve more privileges than someone who doesn't serve, we will be quick to point out that former serviceman/woman" does not only mean someone who was actually a soldier in uniform for a specific period, but even someone whose distant relative served — that is, every Jew. The High Court has given its legal seal of approval to this display of sophistication, as Avigdor Feldman explains: "Even when it became clear that a Jew could be considered to be a "former serviceman", even if he had not served in the army, the court continued to lend a hand to the maintenance of this deceitful practice. The law beca-

me a device for attaining racist objectives”.

The use of para-governmental institutions (the “national institutions”, that is, the Jewish National Fund, the Jewish Agency) for the carrying out of the policy of discriminating in favour of the Jews, provides a convenient out, even for quintessential liberals like Asa Kasher: “An Israeli government which talks about the Judaization of Galilee is like an American government talking about the Christianization of New York. To the Jewish Agency, the body elected by the Jewish people (sic), it is permissible to encourage Jews to move to the Galilee. To the government of Israel which is supposed to represent all the citizens of the state it is forbidden. The problem is that there is total confusion between the areas of activity of the Jewish agency and those of the government. It is an intentional confusion, in the service of a policy of ethnic and national discrimination”.⁵

With all due respect, the confusion to which Asa Kasher is referring is unavoidable and, as he himself points out, intentional. And, therefore, it is totally out of place and without justification, from a liberal point of view, to speak of the Jewish Agency’s “right” to encourage the Judaization of the Galilee, while knowing that the Jewish agency exists for the purpose of providing a cover for official discrimination.

We said at the beginning, that there is no need for premeditation or for a conscious and declared desire to discriminate or oppress, for a given regime to be characterized as racist. When it is a matter of a regime, racism is an objective situation, which does not require hatred or deliberate malice. However, alongside the institutional and legal structures which ensure discrimination against the Arab population in Israel (and it makes no difference if we call this “additional privileges for Jews”), an entire racist culture has developed in Israel or, more precisely, a number of racist approaches have come to characterize the relationship of the Jewish population towards the Arab.

We have already described the Zionist movement’s initial racist approach to the country’s Arab inhabitants. We defined it as “ecological racism”, the absence of relating to them in terms of human categories (including hatred), but the use instead of ecological categories: the Arabs are part of the landscape, sometimes an inter-

esting bit of folklore, but mostly a nuisance.⁶

This way of relating continued after the establishment of the state as well: the Arabs “disappeared”. Including from memory. The minority who remained were placed in “reserves” in the hope that they too would disappear (the Kafr Qsem massacre, and the plan of which this was a part, took place only five years after the end of the mass expulsion of Arabs, which went on, as is well known, until 1951), and along with the vote, they were accorded the status of provisional citizens.

Forgetting about the defeated

That the Arabs would be third class citizens went without saying; the state of war with the Arab World, and the relatively small size of the remnant left after the

the addition of one and a half million more Palestinians to the area under Israeli rule after the Six-Day War in 1967; and the development of a Palestinian national movement following the founding of Fatah and its successes after 1967.

These three factors taken together prevented the continuation of a policy of ignoring the non-Jew within Jewish society, exposed the racist character of the current regime and granted social legitimacy to various forms of racist behaviour and openly racist ideologies. Hatred became legitimate, because there was someone to be afraid of, someone to hate. In 1967, the Palestinians became a “problem” and that “problem” activated the potential racism inherent in the existence of an exclusivist Jewish society.

The legitimacy bestowed on the openly racist “transfer” philosophy of far-right groups such as Molechet, Kach, T’hiya and the Yesha rabbis in the 1980s was not the consequence of the “corruption of Israeli society by the occupation” as the faithful adherents of the “lost purity of Zionism” claim, but of the impossibility of continuing to ignore the reality of the conflict between the Zionist settlement movement and the national liberation struggle of the Arab Palestinian people.

It had been possible to erase the transfer of 1948-51, the mini-transfer of 1967 and the attempted transfer of 1956 from the collective memory because the victims were no longer before our eyes, and those who remained were too stunned to give voice to an outcry that could arouse us; one could repress

the awareness of the discrimination of the 50s and 60s, because the victim was not much more than a little piece of the “minority” mosaic, without a unifying identity or any real ability to protest. Thus it was possible to carry out transfer and to feel progressive, to exercise discrimination and feel justified.

This luxury was taken from Israeli society on June 7, 1967. And the closing of eyes and stopping of ears gave way to a true relationship with the other, in this case, a relationship of hatred and open racism. “Death to the Arabs!” is the 1990 version of the slogan “Brotherhood of peoples” of the Mapam [“socialist”] Zio-



mass expulsion, made their exclusion from the collectivity easier, even for the most liberal Israeli Jews. The state and society were Jewish not only in theory but, almost, in practice; and at the time the contradiction between a Jewish state and a democratic state was not obvious. It was therefore possible to put in place a policy of discrimination without hatred, without problems of conscience, without moral anguish; Israeli society in the 1950s and 60s could easily free itself of any association with any openly racist ideologies.

In the late 1960s a combination of factors brought about a revolution in the relation of Israeli society towards the Palestinians in the state: the internal needs (economic and political) of Israeli society, which led to the end of the period of military government, and to greater integration of the Palestinian minority in society;

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Interview with Tikva Honig-Parnass in *Matzpen*, March 1988.

nist] kibbutzim which were established on stolen lands, on erased villages, on plunder and killing. It is much more blunt and much less hypocritical.

Israeli society of the 1990s is more racist in its outspoken statements, be they ideological, or in the guise of laws, governmental regulations or Knesset decisions. But in the last analysis, it acts, breathes and operates exactly as in the first two decades of the state, but with a lesser degree of hypocrisy and denial.

For peoples as for individuals, dealing with reality as it is, including its past, is an essential condition for being able to overcome existential problems. Denial of reality is a much shrewder enemy than open hatred. The existence of the Palestinians is indeed a problem for the advocates of a Jewish state, and especially for those Zionists who honestly champion democratic and humanistic values.

The beginning of wisdom

Wisdom begins with the recognition of the existence of the Palestinians and of the problem. The problem is not that there are Palestinian Arabs who claim to belong here and demand their rights over the land, but in the contradiction between a democratic approach and one which claims exclusivism in a place where there are other human beings.

In days gone by, Mapam was able to advocate Zionism and the brotherhood of peoples at one and the same time, because it was able to deny the existence of another people; Ratz Youth [the youth organization connected to Mapam] of today are not able to deny the existence of Arabs under Israeli rule, without fundamental rights, without equality; many of them are not interested in denying this fact and shutting their eyes, as did their pioneer parents, because they know that it won't help, and because they understand that shutting one's eyes paves the way for racist demagogues like Rechav'am Ze'evi and Rabbi Dov Lior.

And these same Ratz Youth and others who see themselves as progressive Zionists are today called upon to contend with the dilemma placed before them by Rabbi Kahane: A Jewish state or a democratic state. Up to this point, all the Zionist parties have answered "a Jewish state" at the price of the distortion of democracy. The new generation understands better and better that the price of Israel's being an exclusivist state at all costs is no longer just these distortions, but her turning into a mixture of South Africa, Northern Ireland and the Wild West. In simpler terms, the choice today is either a democratic state or Massada. ★

A model of instability

THE two coup attempts in Venezuela in December 1991 and February 1992 came as a surprise to all those who considered that its 30 years of democracy made it a model of stability in Latin America. The Socialist International — of which Venezuelan president Carlos Andres Perez is a prominent figure — fears a return of the "old ways" in Latin America.

RAUL ZIBECCHI

THE common explanation for the coup attempt of the early morning of February 4, 1992, when a group of army and air force officers tried to put president Carlos Andres Perez to flight, was administrative corruption and the growing social crisis brought about by the different economic adjustments inflicted on the country. The government's appeal to the people to rise up and defend democracy failed to move the population, who were, if anything, rather pleased by the thought of the fall of the president. Venezuelans do not feel obliged to mobilize to defend a "democracy" under which 85% of the population is considered poor.

The deeper causes of the putsch attempt should not be sought in the amorphous ideology of its protagonists, who proclaimed themselves to be "Bolivarists" and who some consider to be nationalists. The real reason is the spiralling social crisis and the violence of the economic policies promoted by the president.¹

To explain the present events we need to go back three years, to the start of Perez' second term of office. As soon as his coronation ceremony was over, Perez' new government announced an economic package tripling the price of oil and other basic products. The epoch when high oil prices had given Venezuela a certain prosperity were over. The income had been wasted on projects of no benefit to the majority of the population, but at least strong economic growth rates meant political stability and social peace.

On February 27, 1989 the *caracazo* [from the name of the capital Caracas] erupted, a *poblada*, as a popular uprising is known in Venezuela, by which the country expressed its refusal to pay for the wrenching economic turn pushed through under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets, burning and pillaging thousands of shops, shattering into pieces the democratic shop window that had left them on its margins. The street plan of Caracas meant that in a few hours, the demonstrators had completely stopped traffic circulation, overwhelmed the police and encircled the rich neighbourhoods. Carlos Andres Perez called on the army to re-establish order, but "calm" was only restored after a terrible week in which more than 1,000 people died, according to Amnesty International.

A few weeks later it seemed that the situation was under control. But a gulf had opened between the ruling Social Democratic party and the majority of the population and it has never been filled in. In 1989 social protest erupted onto the political scene with a force not seen since the 1960s. The poor neighbourhoods have become no-go areas for the police. If they want to go in they carry out a military occupation and do not withdraw before having carried out various repressive operations.

The *caracazo* marked both the end of popular apathy and the formal declaration of economic, legal and military war against the country's poor. Three years later, the victims' families are still looking for dozens of missing persons — it seems that the armed forces tried to hide hundreds of bodies to cover up for the extent of the massacre. At the time Perez claimed that there were "only" 275 deaths, but the families talk of 3,000.

Grim harvest of austerity policies

In these three years the Social Democratic president has succeeded in depressing living standards to the level of the dark days of the dictatorship of Perez Jimenez in the 1950s. Here are a few facts:

- The number of households living below the poverty line rose from 19% in 1981 to 40% in 1990.

- The number of malnourished children was 10% in 1989 and is about 18% now.

- School-rolls have fallen from 4.9 million in 1981 to 3.7 million in 1990.

- The rate of unemployment is 20%. 35% of those who work are in the informal sector.³

Alongside growing hunger, corruption is endemic in both government and private enterprise. The population is showing less and less interest in politics, with a 40% abstention rate in the last elections. To hold back popular protest, the government has militarized the popular neighbourhoods with guard posts being set up at key points and the army going in to show who is boss when they feel like it.

Human rights organizations have noted a deterioration in the past three years. The report from the Venezuelan Programme for Education

and Action for Human Rights (PROVEA) records 135 people killed by the security forces and dozens of disappearances after the *caracazo*. It also reports that the armed forces have carried out simulated "counter-insurgency" exercises in various parts of the country (there has been no guerilla movement in Venezuela since the 1960s).

From the time of the suppression of the guerilla movement to the *caracazo*, social conflicts were few and far between. Now, however, there intense social agitation in the towns. The *SIC* review, which is connected to Christian groups, recently claimed that the police should be counted among the organized criminal classes, systematically collecting bribes to improve their meagre salaries. According to this magazine "the evil is so deep in the system that it will need the sacrifice of an entire generation — as in Colombia — to even reach the beginning of a solution".

Perez denies corruption

No sooner had the putsch been defeated than Carlos Andres Perez flaunted all his cynicism. After denying the existence of any "sickness in civil society" he stated "there is no corruption in my government". He also declared that he would pursue his economic policy, which, he claimed, was beginning to bear fruit. In Caracas and other towns, the mood of the people found its expression on the walls: "CAP: crook and oppressor"; "CAP, you will go to the stake".

The man they call CAP

WITH his characteristic self-importance, Carlos Andres Perez, known as CAP, said in December 1991 that a coup d'etat was impossible in Venezuela. Two months later the tanks were in the street. CAP had clearly not been paying attention to the army brass' talk about a great national crusade against corruption.

For the past 40 years CAP has carved out his career in the framework of the Democratic Action (AD) party. He started out as personal secretary to president Romulo Betancourt. In the 1960s, he drew attention at the head of the interior ministry, where he applied a version of the "dirty war" against Douglas Bravo's Venezuelan guerillas. In his 1974 presidential campaign he put himself forward as the candidate of the multinationals to put into action an "energetic democracy", as his electoral slogan put it. He achieved the feat of wasting the oil income without any benefit for the state or leaving any works that might remain as witnesses of those happy years.

The Third Worldist rhetoric of this darling of the Socialist International is known world-wide. In flight from his domestic failures, CAP sought refuge in international forums, where he strove to forge a nationalist image, lambasting the multinationals and talking about the development of the poor countries. In fact however he has obediently followed IMF and US orders.

His whole personality was summed up at the ceremony which took place when he assumed the presidential office for the second time in 1989. For his coronation, CAP brought together dozens of top flight politicians ranging from US Vice President Dan Quayle, his close friend Spanish president Felipe Gonzalez to Cuba's Fidel Castro and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega. Meanwhile in the corridors he was busy negotiating an agreement with the IMF, with the consequences described elsewhere. ★

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Here the army mutineers were applauded as heroes.

However it is clear that the turmoil is only beginning. On November 7, 1991 there was an impressive general strike throughout the country called by the various union confederations. The authorities replied with dozens of killings and arrests. There were violent clashes and buses were burnt. The Perez' government's hard line neo-liberalism has weakened the traditional role of the Venezuelan state. Fewer and fewer people continue to believe that the institutions can be the mediators of conflict. The different social classes are arming themselves to defend their interests. ★

1. Carlos Andres Perez was re-elected president at the head of the Democratic Action (AD) party with 54.5% of the vote on December 4, 1988. He had previously been president from 1974 to 1979. He has for a long time been the most prominent Social Democratic leader in Latin America, involved in various diplomatic initiatives relating to the Central American conflict.

2. The poor of Caracas are confined to the slopes on the sides of the motorways which surround the capital. From these shanty towns the whole city can be seen; as a result their people can easily control the means of communication and encircle the middle class neighbourhoods.

3. See *Alai*, no. 142.

4. Since 1989 there have been several mini-*caracazos* in some up country towns and villages such as Merida.

5. Owing to the economic crisis, many armed gangs of youth have been formed in some neighbourhoods, involved in robberies and drug trafficking.

From the Fujishock to the Fujicoup

"WE are already seeing the first fruits of the government formed by such men. The country has regressed to governmental individualism. The authority of the Congress has been subordinated to the whims of the President of the Republic. A little bureaucratic organism has been created to fabricate representatives. The most tranquil and most effective of electoral coups realized in the Republic has been accomplished".¹

This phrase of the historic founder of Peruvian Marxism José Carlos Mariátegui aptly sums up the coup d'état carried out on April 6, 1992 by the Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori and the high command of the armed forces.

ALFONSO MORO

HISTORY has unveiled the true interests of an individual who, after having promised democracy and growth, now seeks the support of jackboots and rifles to implement an economic programme of unrestrained capitalism and a political programme of outright authoritarianism.

Twenty months after his accession to government, Fujimori has not succeeded in overcoming the power vacuum affecting all the economic, political and social structures of the country, which has existed for several years now. The aggravation of the crisis is demonstrated by, amongst other things, the incessant procession of prime ministers and the extension of the internal war against the Sendero Luminoso guerrillas. For the single year of 1991, there were more than 3,000 civilian deaths.

The country's lack of stability is a big problem for the government's neo-liberal economic programme which involves trying to attract foreign investment at all costs by the sale of the nation's wealth and cut-price labour.

All this has led to a collapse of the structure of the Peruvian state and stripped all popular legitimacy from the president: this is the tendency which the coup is intended to reverse.

When he came to power in July 1990, Fujimori adopted a programme of economic adjustment of a rigor unprecedented in Latin America, with bitter results: the eco-



nomy is still plunged in the morass of recession without any short term perspective of escape, while millions of Peruvians are in the street after losing their jobs and without any aid or benefits from the state. More than half of the industrial establishments are informal; the informal sector represented 46% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1990.

The social costs of this policy are reflected both by the millions of workers forced to survive in the informal sector who daily flood the streets of Peru, as by the uncontrollable spread of cholera and the generalization of violence throughout the country. On the other hand, the government has, after endless bargaining, obtained some concessions from the international banks and other creditors on its debt servicing payments.

Build-up of militarization

This economic policy is carried out in the shadow of the military and the presidential decrees, which are far removed from the official speeches about democratic aspirations or modernizing political life.

Before the April coup, 40% of Peruvian territory was already under military control or administration. The armed forces bear the principal responsibility for the infernal cycle of human rights violations from which the population suffers: they are also responsible for assuring the flow and the networks of a substantial part of the drugs

traffic. The first decree put out by the so-called "emergency government of national reconstruction", nominated after the coup, grotesquely claims that its objectives are to "punish drastically all cases of immorality and of corruption in public administration".

The power granted to the military — in exchange for which the latter allow Fujimori to remain in government — is not translated by any greater efficiency in the struggle against the Sendero Luminoso or the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement armed groups. In practice, Sendero has extended its influence to the town of Lima itself, thus attaining what might be called a "strategic equilibrium", the threshold of what is characterized as the "strategic offensive for the taking of power".

On the other hand, the demoralization of the police and the military is increasing — between October 1991 and March 1992 more than 2,500 police have deserted.

Aim is to destroy all opposition

In this context, it is obvious that behind the state of emergency decreed on the very day of the putsch, we are witnessing a growth of military and police operations aimed at decapitating the leadership of the social movements, the trade unions and the political parties opposed to Fujimori. While the Peruvian mass movement has, for several years now, suffered from a crisis of leadership, the exhaustion of its forms of organization and a demobilization of its base because of the mistakes of its leaders, and even if it finds itself on the defensive, it has never ceased to mobilize against the decrees and policies of the government.

Finally, it is necessary to see what will be the real response of imperialism, the Latin American governments and the regime's international financial backers. Until now, with the exception of the Japanese, the other governments have, at least in words, condemned the putsch.

The events of April 6 in Peru, coming after those in Haiti or Venezuela (see article p. 26), discredit the talk about the "defence of democracy" from the United States government, which was surely aware of these coups before they happened. With this putsch, Fujimori is risking everything. Either he is capable of immediately regaining control of the situation, rebuilding a consensus and recovering his social legitimacy, or he will have signed his own political death warrant, thus opening the door to a complete power vacuum in Peru. ★

1. From "Patria Nueva" (1919), in *Invitación a la Vida Heroica*, by José Carlos Mariátegui, Institute of Agrarian Support, Lima, 1989.