

International VIEWPOINT

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The leaders change, but the army still rules

JUST a few days before his country's 30th independence anniversary celebrations, Algerian president Mohamed Boudiaf, brought to power after the coup of January 11, 1992, was assassinated at Annaba. He was there for a meeting, at which he was campaigning on behalf of his "Patriotic Assembly" at a time when meetings and demonstrations by other political currents are prohibited.

CHAWKI SALHI — June 30, 1992

THE fifty fundamentalists who tried to march in Annaba shouting "we will live and die for the Islamic Republic" failed to attract a crowd. In Oran a small group of young people made a similar attempt. But that was all. Some young people have discreetly expressed satisfaction at the assassination, but it seems that the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) has been smashed and is unable to organization a reaction. This incapacity is an important fact for people. The fundamentalists, meanwhile, are awaiting a crackdown.

The dominant feeling among the population is anxiety. With Boudiaf gone, instability is back. A variety of conspiracy theories are flourishing; some say that the military were behind the assassination, aiming to head off an amnesty for the FIS leaders; others that this was revenge by high ups accused of corruption. Such theories cannot be disproved but they are unlikely. Boudiaf's death in fact presents the army, which has been made to look impotent, with big problems. The police who man the hundreds of road blocks set up throughout the country are certainly shaking in their boots.

Furthermore, the assassination is a moral victory for the fundamentalists, who have so far been unable to respond to mass arrests, the dismantling of their organization or the trial of their leaders by the military tribunal in Blida. Two days previously, one of them, Ali Belhadj, made a courtroom scene and his lawyers withdrew, demanding the presence of foreign observers. Mister Vergès, a lawyer for the National Liberation Front (FLN) during the war of liberation, was refused entry. But there was no popular outcry. On the very morning of the

assassination, the papers were headlining the military prosecutor's hardline press conference. Such was the atmosphere before the assassination.

The Supreme Council of State (SCS) has not yet found a successor. A seven day period of mourning has been announced, and the 30th anniversary demonstrations cancelled. After the killing there was a sort of mood-adjustment campaign; the television was full of films of the attack, Boudiaf's last words and televised messages from leaders of the bourgeois opposition, who trooped in, Ben Bella after Ait Ahmed, to praise a leader who the previous day had been prohibiting their own activities.

A wave of emotion was thus artificially created; at first the news had been greeted with indifference, as another proof of the regime's uselessness, but it became a tragic event. The official theatrics allowed the regime to head off popular anxiety, the reborn fear of civil war and the fear of even more poverty and unemployment. The

whole effort culminated in a grandiose ceremony based on the rites of the patriotic religion, burning appeals to the spirit of the war of liberation and national unity. It was also an ecumenical assembly of all the liberal currents and the government, an encouraging sign for the prime minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali and the SCS, who will be hoping that the state of grace continues and that it is enough to get the next anti-popular measures of the IMF plan accepted.

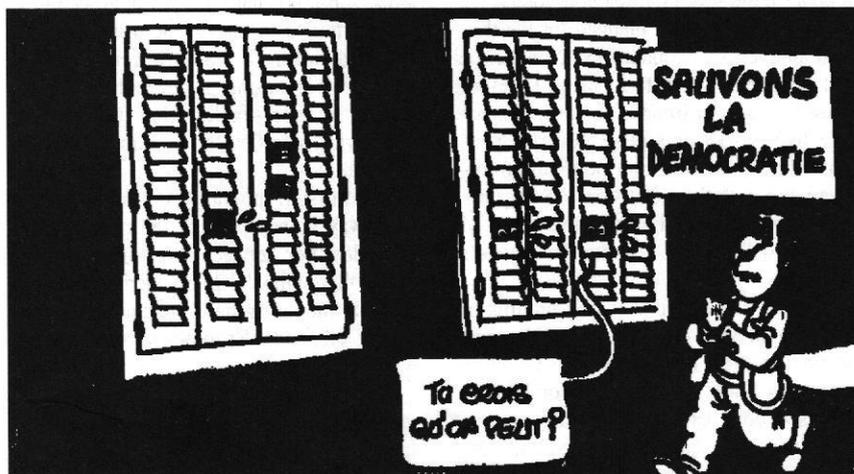
Moment of panic

The military caste appointed Boudiaf as head of state in a moment of total panic. Nothing had prepared him for this sudden return to the Algerian political scene. He recently stated to a Tunisian paper that during his Moroccan exile he did not read the Algerian press. Indeed, six months ago, Boudiaf was completely unknown to the Algerian people. The regime had done its utmost to remove the names of the famous leaders of the national liberation struggle, driven from power in 1962 by Boumediene's coup d'etat, from the school books and public debate.

Furthermore, Boudiaf, who had lent his support to the campaign by the Moroccan regime to suppress the right to self-determination of the Spanish Saharans, stood accused by the regime of complicity with the king of Morocco. He could not have returned to Algeria in the ordinary way. It was thus a total upset to find him at the head of the regime created after the suspension of the elections of December 26, 1991, which promoted him as "father of the nation" until and during his impressive funeral.

Despite this, however, Boudiaf did a useful job for the regime in his national paternal role, as was shown by the emotion generated by his funeral.

The real achievements of his six months in power are, however, not especially note-



"Save democracy!" "Do you think its possible?" (Cartoon from Algerian paper El Watan after the January coup undertaken allegedly to save democracy from fundamentalism).

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worthy. The struggle against corruption came to a halt almost at once, just after the publication in the press of the first list of generals accused of helping themselves to state funds, a list at whose head stood the former president Chadli Benjedid. "Red alert, the country is in danger, the army threatened" headlined one brave patriotic daily, known in its time as a ferocious enemy of the left.

His stature as the coordinator of the group which launched the national liberation struggle in 1954 made Boudiaf an obvious figure to entrust with bringing together various political forces; however his limited political vision, his absence of tact and his harassment of the press and the political parties worked against such efforts. The "consultative council" which was supposed to win party support for the government's actions and which took three months of hard work to assemble, instantly disappeared into oblivion.

Patriotic assembly

Boudiaf's central task was to set up a "patriotic assembly" to prepare for elections in the coming years. This had good chances of success after the FIS' victories last year. However after a few weeks of the Boudiaf regime the FLN, the FIS and the Front of Socialist Forces (FFS) were rejected, accused of "playing the game of France".

The so-called moderate fundamentalists were threatened with the same fate as the FIS and other political groups outlawed. Even those best disposed to the coup, such as former president Ben Bella, were obliged to retire into a dignified silence. Supported by the Berber-liberal Cultural Democratic Assembly (RCD), the Party of the Socialist Vanguard (PAGS, the Communist party) and some wholly insignificant groups who had won a total of 300,000 votes last December, Boudiaf and Ghazali would have had to look for further support to the seven million non-voters.

The big ceremonies planned for the thirtieth anniversary of independence were the last chance for efforts to bring together those who saw in Boudiaf the only alternative to the FIS or simply to civil war. However, in the stagnant political atmosphere and with the restrictions on liberties, failure was likely. Perhaps the death of Boudiaf will breathe life into the regime's schemes.

Boudiaf had stated that two months of internment was nothing. When he was arrested in 1962, he expressed his revolt by writing a book. The League for Human Rights is now demanding that the victims of military rule "are well treated" and the recently appointed human rights observer has expressed his wish for the release of all those who had nothing to do with the pre-

sent crisis. The democrats have given up on democracy and now demand "modernity". On the fundamentalist side, the leaders, defended by Ali Yahia of the League for Human Rights, can put themselves forward as martyrs, all their violence and threats of repression forgotten for the moment.

Attacks on policemen

While the fundamentalist attacks on policemen have aroused universal condemnation, the permanent road-blocks and searches are annoying people as well as serving as a daily reminder of the regime's inability to guarantee security. The restrictions on political activity and the pressure on the press have reduced the regime's stability and its ability to absorb shocks. Meanwhile, while the FIS has disappeared as a concrete alternative and its supporters are dispersed and demoralized, fundamentalism nonetheless retains its legitimacy as an expression of popular protest and the spectre of the FIS hovers over the country in the runup to the Blida trial of its leaders.

Beneath the political fog lies economic regression. Boudiaf, who for 20 years headed the Party of the Socialist Revolution, spent his last months denouncing socialism and promoting the market economy. Indeed, in a situation where two thirds of food is imported and every sector of the economy depends on the import of spare parts and raw materials and where the servicing of the foreign debt amounts to 80% of export earnings, what else is there to do than follow the IMF's instructions?

The devaluation of the dinar, which has fallen from 1.4 to 0.25 French francs in a few years, will continue and will mean higher prices, including for bread and milk, whose prices tripled on June 20, 1992. Nonetheless, the IMF continues to demand the total abolition of subsidies on such products. Social distress is sharpened by the threat of liquidation of state enterprises, which Ghazali has described as "lame ducks". But it is hard to see which sector of our economy can survive the world market. While awaiting a dramatic reduction in workers' purchasing power and their subjection to super-exploitation, the IMF is occupying itself with de-industrializing Algeria.

The most important economic move underway is the return of the cartel to the oil fields. For between three and five billion dollars Ghazali is organizing a shrinkage of incoming hard currency through selling oil fields. Recolonization is underway.

Things have not reached quite this point in agriculture. Before establishing capitalist farms, it is necessary to relax the grip of the existing peasants. The self-managed properties, cut up into mini-cooperatives in 1986, will be distributed in individual lots

and then sold, before they go bankrupt and are resold. Meanwhile the next few years will see a stagnation in harvests and massive grain imports.

This disastrous picture has not prevented near unanimity in support of the economic opening, the only debate being over the need to re-schedule the debt.

It seems that France wants to codify the regime's capitulation and plan its return to Algeria, rather than being content with the current gentleman's agreement, which involves restructuring the debt and offering new loans in exchange for advances towards economic liberalization.

Only a few lonely voices, those of the revolutionary socialists, can be heard demanding the cancellation of the debt and a break with the IMF. Some are calling for a war economy, meaning no more indebtedness; with imports in line with receipts on the basis of the payment of the debt charges.

Illusion of power

The emotion aroused by Boudiaf's death is related to the illusion that it was in fact him who was in power. From this point of view his death must usher in a period of uncertainty. But this is not how things really were.

The military hierarchy has played the decisive role in Algerian politics since independence. The defence minister, Nezzar, was the main architect of the January coup, but he is ill and will not want to play a prominent role. Boudiaf's successor will thus be Ali Haroun or Ali Kafi, the leader of the old Mujaheddin who would tend to revert to a system of alliances with figures from the FLN. All this will not change a great deal.

Boudiaf's assassination has had a psychological impact that can only grow. The regime is expected to show signs of determination. It will be tempted by stepped up repression against the FIS, and will probably give way to the temptation. Now that blood has flowed, the regime will feel able to demand the heads of Abassi Madani and Belhadj. At the first sitting of the trial of the FIS on June 27, the tribunal got into a mess and the press offered an audience to Ali Belhadj's imprecations and to the legitimate protests of his lawyers. The trial, which was postponed until July 12, may, if it is not postponed once more, now be pushed through with global support.

However massive and indiscriminate repression will not occur; the regime does not need it. Life is already under firm control, while if it pushes its luck the regime may provoke an explosion. While the coming layoffs and dramatic fall in purchasing power require an iron hand, the regime is already too fragile to attempt an extreme solution, even if opinion was ready. On the

other hand the likely toughening towards the FIS will work against the relaxation wished for by the more enlightened sectors of the regime.

Back from its anti-fundamentalist crusade, the political class is looking for a reshuffle. Ait Ahmed, Ben Bella and the FLN leader Mehri had been talking about national reconciliation and the pro-Boudiaf press was paying attention, aware of the regime's isolation and its imminent failure. Only a few figures from the RCD were opposed to such a course.

Reconciliation with the FIS, however, is highly unlikely, since the army does not want it. Nonetheless, "reconciliation" may become the buzz word of the moment and some low cost formula could be devised giving the regime the backing of the FFS, Ben Bella's Algerian Democratic Movement, the HAMAS fundamentalists and other small bourgeois opposition groups repelled by Boudiaf. Ghozali's previous efforts to bring fundamentalist and FFS forces into his two governments failed to project the image of a true coalition owing to the lack of public cooperation.

Whatever the formula or level of repression or the appointed successor to Boudiaf, the government's basic programme is clear: do whatever the IMF tells us. Sell the oil fields, close or privatize industry, lay off massively and end price subsidies on basic necessities. Successive governments have tried to resist IMF dictates, using the argument of the fundamentalist danger, but every passing month makes the government's situation more and more difficult and the IMF more and more intransigent.

Worker resistance

The working class has mounted resistance here and there. Recent struggles by teachers and other workers show a willingness to fight. However it is difficult to organize resistance when the economy is collapsing. It is hard for a sacked militant to find another job, hard for unionists to propose an alternative to save a factory when the new rules of the game condemn the whole existing edifice to demolition. Only an across-the-board solution can work.

The General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) is discredited and is working closely with Ghozali. The fundamentalists, who on economic questions are ultra-liberals, can play at populism while they are in opposition. But even if they can use a social revolt for their own ends, they do not intend to organize one, and their current organizational state makes them in any case incapable of such an initiative. If the IMF continues to demand an end to price support then we may be in for a hot autumn. But if struggles are to have any hope of success they need an adequate political leadership. ★

Likud pays for austerity drive

DESPITE the euphoria of the world media, it is clear that the electoral defeat of the Likud and the victory of the Labor Party in the Israeli general elections on June 23, 1992 has not produced any exceptional change in the relation of political forces in Israel. The only significant novelty of these elections is the fact that the Labor Party has succeeded in vanquishing Likud after 15 years of opposition.

MARCELO MEIR — July 1, 1992

EVEN if the Labor Party currently holds a majority of seats in the Knesset — with the left liberal coalition Meretz, the Communist Party and the Arab Democratic List — its leader, Yitzhak Rabin, has already said that to constitute a coalition with the forces of the left alone would represent a grave error.

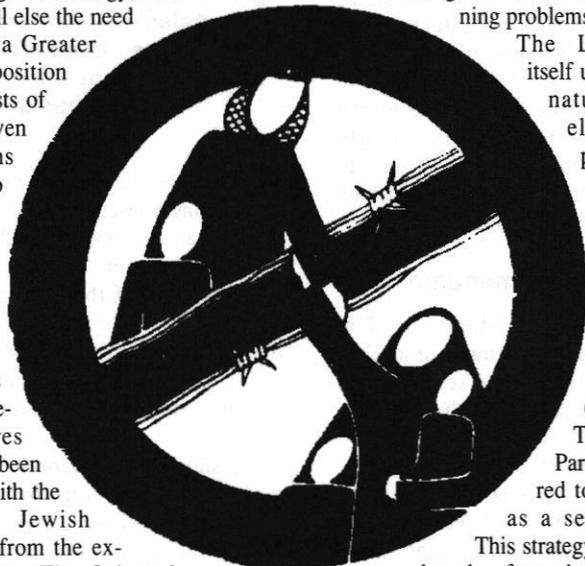
That is why he is trying to convince political forces on the right — especially Tsomet (Crossroads), led by the former Israeli army chief Rafael Eitan and Mafdal, a religious nationalist party — as well as the orthodox religious parties — to participate in the new government.

The Israeli electors voted for Rabin essentially with the aim of punishing Likud. This party has governed for the last 15 years with the support of the poor layers of the population, on the basis of a populist ideology. However, over the last decade, and particularly under the governments led by Shamir, the Likud has reverted to its original ideology, stressing above all else the need to preserve a Greater Israel in opposition to the interests of the Arabs even if this means coming into conflict with Israel's US backers. As regards social policy, the Likud has applied austerity measures which have been reinforced with the arrival of Jewish immigrants from the ex-Soviet Union. The Oriental

Jewish population, the inhabitants of the poor quarters and the unemployed — unemployment now affects 15% of the active population and 40% of the new immigrants — have seen the Likud devote most of its efforts in government to the diplomatic and economic issues concerning the occupied territories, abandoning its natural electors. Faced with this, and then with the emergence of debates inside Likud on this question, it became obvious that a significant part of the electorate were going to transfer their votes to Yitzhak Rabin.

But it should be stressed that support for Rabin does not mean support for his party's programme. In the eyes of the popular classes, the Laborites bear the historic responsibility for the evils which afflict them. In other words, the vote of June 23 does not translate into programmatic support for the Labor Party, but rather support for Rabin himself, for a leader who is felt to possess enough charisma and strength to "resolve the most burning problems".

The Labor Party itself understood the nature of this electoral support: it centred its campaign on Rabin, while developing a hard line in relation to the Palestinian *intifada* (uprising). The Labor Party thus appeared to most people as a second Likud. This strategy is confirmed by the fact that the Labor



This strategy is confirmed by the fact that the Labor

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Party's left wing deputies were carefully kept out of the way during the month which preceded the ballot.

All this reinforces Rabin's policy, which involves presenting himself first as the leader of the majority of the people, and only then as the standard bearer of Labor's programme and leader of all the forces active inside the party. This position automatically implies the necessity of forming a broad coalition, where the left and the right can counterbalance the strength of the centre, that is Rabin and the deputies around him.

Even so, the elections left the left liberal Meretz in a position to deliver an ultimatum to Rabin, by insisting that it was not ready to take part in a coalition with the right. This has not been the case: the leaders of Meretz have been quick to confirm their readiness to support a broad coalition, even if the parties of the right participate.

Why this turn on the part of Meretz, which has become the third electoral force in the country and whose electors see it as the representative of the peace movement? The answer is simple. From an ideological, programmatic and historic point of view Meretz still adheres to the forces of Zionist national consensus. Meretz prioritizes the interests of the central state — among which, the necessity of creating a broad and stable government — before those of the peace movement.

The leaders of Meretz have justified their willingness to participate in the same government as the rightist but secular Tsomet by saying that the latter had received the votes of an electorate which seeks a response to the pressure and influence of the orthodox parties. In this sense, Meretz sees Rafael Eitan, the leader of Tsomet, as a natural ally.

But this is only partially true: in fact, so far as the future of the occupied territories goes, Tsomet has the same positions as the parties of the far right. The presence of Tsomet in the government could mean the indefinite postponement of essential decisions concerning the future of these territories. In other words, Meretz is ready to fundamentally review its principles to take part in a coalition, even if this leaves a free hand to the Labor Party and Tsomet to decide the government's programme concerning the peace negotiations.

Betrayal of mandate

The policy of the Meretz leaders amounts to an outright betrayal of its electorate and the mandate it has received from them. It is to be hoped that the rank-and-file supporters of this coalition will eventually react, although this will not happen at once given that Meretz' supporters will at first entertain hopes of seeing Meretz ministers in the government changing the relation of forces inside the latter.

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No respite for Palestinians

OUTSIDE Israel, Labor's surprise success in the June 23 elections to the 13th Knesset was widely perceived as a vote for peace or even the "left". The generalized apathy and reduced turnout which characterized these elections are hardly features which usually accompany upsurges of pacifism or left wing victories, but of course Yitzhak Rabin's triumph represented neither of these things..

It is true that the primary elections held to select Labor's leader and parliamentary candidates before the elections revealed a swing to the party's doveish wing, with high placings for those, such as the young M.K. Avram Burg, whose politics do not vastly differ from those of the left Zionist Meretz coalition.

Nonetheless, Labor's election propaganda during the campaign stressed Rabin's authoritarian reputation, summed up in his boasts of having deported more Palestinians in his period as minister of defence than his Likud successors. Labor's television propaganda attacked the Likud's record on "security", employing such slogans as "Get Gaza out of Tel Aviv" (the party supported the two week closure of the Gaza Strip enforced by the Likud government as the reponse to the killing of a 15 year old girl by a Gaza resident on May 25). Election campaigning centred around Rabin or military figures like Avigdor Kahalani, who claimed to be further to the right than the Likud, and Amir Drori, implicated in the Sabra and Chatila massacres of Palestinians during the Lebanon war. Secret services chief and torturer Yossef Ginossar was responsible for party propaganda directed at Soviet Jews (which was undoubtedly very successful — in contrast to predictions that the Soviet newcomers would vote massively for Likud and the right, the majority voted for Labor or Meretz).

At the ideological level, Labor completely abandoned even the vague and hypocritical references to socialism employed in the past, and there was no mention in its campaign of the flagship elite institutions of Labour Zionism despised by the Oriental masses, like the kibbutzim or the Histadrut "trade union federation".

Labor's election proposals advocated the continued Israeli retention of 40% of the occupied territories, combined with a freeze on "political" settlements and a commitment to expanding others. Even this is now being revised in the context of attempts to bring the rightist Tsomet into a new coalition — on June 30 policy guidelines drawn up by Rabin and his aides for the next government dropped the call for a one year settlement freeze and promised to "reinforce settlement along the confrontation lines", Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and the Golan Heights. The policy guidelines made no mention whatsoever of autonomy for the Palestinians or the acceptance of United Nations resolutions as the basis for a negotiated peace — B.G. ★

Finally, these elections have confirmed the changing consciousness of the Israeli people on an important point: the future of the occupied territories. This was reflected in the debacle of the far right Tehiya (Rebirth) party. This organization did not cross the electoral threshold which would allow it to have a deputy in the Knesset — in the preceding parliament, it had three of them.

This shows the electorate's growing maturity in the face of the positions of the extremists, who advocate giving priority to Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and massive repression of the Palesti-

nian population.

The Israeli electorate has shown that it is no longer disposed to believe that these settlements are the magic solution to all the problems of Israeli society. This constitutes a change, small and certainly ambiguous, but nonetheless real, in the consciousness of the electorate.

It is to be hoped that, with the creation of the new governmental coalition, an important political phase will open up in Israel. Both the far right and the militants of the peace movement will be forced to review their strategies as well as their attitudes towards their respective leaderships. ★

The war continues

SARAJEVO, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, remains besieged, while the leaders of the world's seven most powerful imperialist countries, meeting at the G-7 summit in Munich, have warned of a possible military intervention in the ex-Yugoslav republic under United Nations colours. In the following interview Catherine Samary gives her assessment of the current situation and potential future developments. The interview first appeared in the July 2 edition of the French revolutionary Marxist newspaper, *Rouge*.

HOW should we assess what is currently going on in Sarajevo?

Obviously we should welcome anything which allows humanitarian aid to arrive. But the causes of the war and the massacres are still there: the assimilation of the right of self-determination of peoples to the project of "ethnically pure" states. This implies the carving up of Bosnia-Herzegovina between Serb and Croat nationalists, which will inevitably lead to the rise of Muslim fundamentalism.

For several centuries there has been a climate of tolerance between all the religious and ethnic communities in Sarajevo. Today, Serbs, Croats and Muslims are working closely together in a pacifist resistance which is completely obscured by the image of "interethnic" massacres. The Bosnian territorial defence, in which the three peoples are also involved, is very much more numerous than the nationalist paramilitary groups.

The Serb regime and the Yugoslav army have formally withdrawn from the conflict by repatriating those officers and soldiers who are not originally from Bosnia. But most officers are Bosnian and they have kept their army equipment. They provide a powerful logistic support to the Serb paramilitary groups, which are dominated by criminals and far right fanatics.

If the equipment was given to the Bosnian authorities and if the Serb regime and the Yugoslav army disowned the paramilitaries, the latter would be politically and militarily overcome by the Bosnian defence.

Herzegovina is dominated by a Croat paramilitary structure, whose political project is not the maintenance of a multiethnic Bosnia but an "ethnically pure" greater Croatia. In the background, Croatia is pursuing this project.

Only pure blooded Croats have citizenship. This means that Croats from Australia

can participate in the elections in August, whereas citizens of Croatia, who were born and work there, will not have the right to vote.

■ What is the goal of the Serbian dictator Milosevic and how is he going to respond to international pressures?

Milosevic is a pragmatist, capable of brusque turns. His sole concern is to keep power. He was defeated in his initial project of recentralizing all the republics around Serbia.

He is in the process of being defeated today in his desire to reassemble all the Serbs in a greater Serbia.

He has more or less formally abandoned the project by creating a mini-Yugoslavia which federates Serbia and Montenegro. Faced with world disapproval, he has had to disassociate himself, at least verbally, from his Serbian nationalist allies in the non-Serb territories.

The Great Serb nationalist groups are only one part of the Serbian communities. Milosevic has an interest in disassociating himself from their extremism in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for the economic boycott creates very live tensions in Serbia and could weaken his regime.

Beyond this, he wants international recognition and to benefit from the continuity of the old Yugoslavia in the international institutions. But this "low profile" comes up against the pressures of his own opposition, which boycotted the elections.

Maybe he would still have won them, even with the participation of the opposition. This would be the contradictory effect of the blockade, a problem which is widely debated there.

Many Serbs see this blockade as unilateral and unjust, and some could be tempted to make a bloc with the regime. But the big problem resides in the incapacity of the opposition to present an alternative programme to that of Milosevic.

■ Do the opposition demonstrations in Belgrade and the students' strike mark a turning point in the situation?

The recent demonstrations are very important, but they also show the political fragility of this opposition. Most of the latter has not, for example, disassociated itself from the policy of Milosevic in the Albanian majority region of Kosovo, or from the project to reunite all the Serbs in the same state. The opposition rather criticizes Milosevic for losing the wars which he has led. It has no social and economic programme. A good part of this opposition takes as its model the old monarchist Yugoslavia, dominated by the Serbs in the inter war periods. This does not cut that much ice in the Serbia of today.

That said, the impossibility of going backwards and the consciousness of the disastrous character of the Great Serb project has affected a part of this opposition in a progressive way. Among the youth in particular, among the students and the deserters, one sees a profound rejection of the war, which goes beyond political divisions.

Today, in the universities, it is not the nationalist climate which dominates, but rather opposition to a policy which isolates the Serbs from the other communities with which they have to live, and from world opinion.

Even the current led by Vuk Vaskovic (the Movement for Serb Renewal), the biggest opposition group, has gone through a significant evolution. Recently, Vaskovic explicitly said that he was favourable to immediate dialogue with all the minorities on Serbian territory, that is with the Hungarians of Voivodina and the Albanians of Kosovo. The Serb democratic opposition has also presented several federalist projects, which challenge the anti-Albanian apartheid established for several months now in Kosovo.

This question should be linked to the other aspect of Vaskovic's discourse, which evokes the situation of the Serbs in the non-Serb republics. He demands for them the same rights which he proposes to accord to the minorities of Serbia. This marks the recognition, at the same time, of an ethnic plurality in Serbia and the sovereignty of the other states inside which the Serbs live.

There could be a governmental change in Serbia. But there will be no progressive outcome if the reactionary nationalist regimes are not challenged in all the republics, in Serbia first but also in Croatia. In Serbia, the existence of an opposition demonstrating in the streets could favour the beginning of an affirmation of a programme which breaks with the old nationalist policy. ★

Yeltsin and the generals

"MOLDOVA must give up its unrealistic views. I do not understand why Moldova wants at any price to be a unitary state". Thus the Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev in an interview in the French daily *Le Monde* (June 7-8, 1992), commenting on the bloody clashes between Moldovan troops and forces fighting to establish a breakaway "Slav" state in the Eastern region of Moldova.

Kozyrev's support for redrawing Moldova's borders are one among many recent expressions of belligerent intent by Russian leaders such as St. Petersburg's Anatolii Sobchak and vice president Alexander Rutskoi, who raged on June 20 that "everyone must keep in mind that Russia will not tolerate such treatment of Russian-speaking people any longer".

Such remarks highlight the death of the hopes summed up by Moldovan president Mircea Snegur after the failure of the August 1991 coup by hardline conservatives that the new Russian leaders under Boris Yeltsin would "know how to put relations among peoples on a new basis, unequivocally ruling out intrusions into the affairs of other peoples".

COLIN MEADE – July 2, 1992

MOLDOVA, which assumed independence on August 27, 1991, just after the coup, is the successor to the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was formed after the annexation of the Romanian province of Bessarabia under the terms of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1940 — Bessarabia having become part of Romania at the end of the First World War.

Under Soviet rule many Russians settled in Moldavia, mainly as industrial workers in the East of the republic, part of a planned policy of asserting Moscow's control over non-Russian republics. Currently around two thirds of the republic's population of four and a half million people is Moldovan — ethnically and linguistically Romanian — with 14% Ukrainian and 13% Russians. In the disputed Transdnester region, meanwhile, there are around 40% Moldovans, 28% Ukrainians and 25% Russians.

As elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the coming of *perestroika* and *glasnost* saw a revival of Moldovan nationalist demands, with a countervailing centralist mobilization of sections of the Russian-speaking population and also the 150,000 Turkish

speaking Gagauz minority. As elsewhere, many non-Moldovans living in the cities, especially in the capital Chisinau (Kishinev), were prepared to back the independence movement. Thus six of 12 Gagauz deputies voted for the 1991 independence declaration, as did a substantial number of Ukrainians and Russians.

Trusting in the EC, the UN, but above all in Yeltsin, the Moldovan leadership has made efforts to accommodate the Republic's non-Moldovan population: amid protests both from the radical nationalist Moldovan People's Front and the Russian Interfront, a 1989 language law envisaged the retention of Russian "alongside Romanian" for the transaction of official business between nationalities; all residents have been offered citizenship, while Snegur has repeatedly ruled out reunification with Romania — one of the main bugbears for the Russians (although, again, the People's Front is in favour of reunification).

However the pro-centralist forces of the "Dniester Republic (DR)", proclaimed in September 1990 and the "Republic of Gagauzia" have shown no inclination to



conciliation, engaging in a continuous armed campaign to consolidate their hold on the region. These efforts were stepped up after the August 1991 coup. At first the Moldovan leadership advised no armed resistance by Moldovans in the DR region, no doubt hoping that the Russian authorities would help them regain control. However as it has become increasingly clear that the Russian authorities, despite repeated negotiations and agreements, are neither able nor apparently willing to put a stop to the aggression, Moldovan authorities have begun to develop their own armed forces, and may have accepted Romanian aid to this end.

Army involvement alleged

A crucial and revealing part in these events has been played by the (former) Soviet 14th army, based in Tiraspol in the centre of the DR. Troops from this army were widely reported to have been involved in the most recent fighting on the DR side, and of having supplied the DR forces with weapons. Army and Russian political authorities, meanwhile, while occasionally expressing dismay at such insubordination, have done little to stop it and much to make it possible. On December 13, 1991, the 14th army's chief General Gennadii Yakovlev accepted a post as head of the DR's security forces, to which the head of the CIS' armed forces Shaposhnikov mildly replied that "the armed forces must not get involved in conflicts within or among republics".

The following month, as Ukraine took charge of the surrounding military district, the 14th army was placed under direct CIS control, under the supervision of a certain General Gromov, a close associate of former Soviet Interior Minister Boris Pugo,

who committed suicide after the failed coup in which he played a central role. On April 1 Moscow's control over this force, which operated on Moldovan territory, was reaffirmed, and, despite a promise from Yeltsin on May 28 to withdraw it, it remained in place.

While Yeltsin has taken his distance from the extreme nationalist statements of his deputy, Rutskoi, in effect he has assisted in the pursuit of the same programme. Yeltsin likes to present forces such as the 14th army as having a "peace-keeping" role rather than pursuing Russian imperial goals, but he has been firm in his determination to ensure that Russia retains the backbone of the former Red Army and himself stated after the coup that he was prepared to consider border revisions. Thus his occasional "distance" from the army/nationalist camp does not stop the latter from doing what it wants.

What it wants was explained by one of Yeltsin's allies among the army brass, General Dmitri Volkogonov; out of the current army of four million a more streamlined force of 1.5 million will be created, its goal being to concentrate on defending Russia's borders and domestic order (*International Herald Tribune*, June 22, 1992), while a military leader of the DR, Vladimir Ryliakov, saw the aim of the current actions as being the "preservation of a single army and a single economic space across the territory of the Soviet Union".

Pretext for intervention

Indeed a Moscow dominated enclave in Transdnester would provide succour for attempts to create "independent" areas based on the Russian population in neighbouring Ukraine, in their turn providing pretexts for direct intervention "to protect Russian lives" by Russian forces.

This has always been the plan of the Great Russian chauvinist currents, led by the likes of Viktor Alksnis or Aleksandr Nevzorov, who have been regular visitors to the DR. On one occasion a number of officers of the former USSR MVD Special Purpose Police Detachment (OMON), wanted for crimes by the Latvian government, arrived in the DR (two were captured by Moldovan police and handed over to Latvia, prompting protests by pro-imperial groups in Moscow and elsewhere).

The increasing assertiveness of Great Russian chauvinist forces both in the non-Russian republics and at the centre, where a pan-Russian mood seems almost universal amongst new and old political elites, sheds some retrospective light on the facility with which the "democrats" gained power after the August coup attempt. The continuing influence of a figure such as General Gromov says it all; the army brass

"A market poses cruel conditions"

WE publish below the second part of our interview with Nikolai Belanovskii, vice president of the Union of Auto and Agricultural Machine Workers of Belarus (the first part appeared in IV 232 of July 6, 1992). The interview was given to David Mandel on May 23, 1992 in the course of a visit to Canada.

D ID the coalminers' strike have anything to do with the Byelorussian movement?¹

I don't really think so. Incidentally, our union supported the miners. We were the only large union to do so openly and to condemn Gorbachev's behaviour. But the miners' situation was more complicated than ours. All the media were reporting on the "excessive" demands of the miners, blaming them for stopping production at other factories and warning of a heating fuel shortage. This was a psychological campaign to get people to oppose the miners. At the plenary session of our union's central council, we evaluated what was happening as an attempt by the government to smash the labour movement. We didn't pass judgement on the miners' demands, but we put all the blame on the government for refusing to negotiate.

Our central council voted to give the striking miners 10,000 roubles, which we sent to Donetsk. But none of the major papers

decided that, faced with actual and potential mass resistance to the coup, they must and could work with Yeltsin, Sobchak and the rest to pursue their plans — and the "democrats" accepted the deal.

This means that, while in August it looked as if the non-Russian republics had achieved independence with the support of the Russian leadership, in fact the latter have not accepted the existence of independent states; on the contrary, they reserve the right and are paving the way for intervention and are ready to use all forms of economic and military pressure to ensure continued dominance from Moscow. In

or electronic media reported this, only our own union press and some republican papers. I personally gave the resolution to the Byelorussian correspondent of *Trud*² but they didn't publish it, which shows how far it can be considered a real union paper. The official union confederation, the VKP,³ simply betrayed the labour movement at that time; if the miners had been crushed no union would have been able to raise itself up after that.

■ **What were you doing when the workers began to move on April 4?**

I was at the other end of town when I got a call from a person I had worked with earlier in our factory: "Nikolai, the factory is moving, and we don't know what to do. There's no one here." When I arrived, they were within 500 metres of Government House. I talked with workers I knew and asked what their demands were. I asked them to ensure order and to watch out for provocations. There were special forces police waiting on the square. The government was in session.

We organized a group to stop the column when it reached the square. But instead of stopping, people began to move towards Government House. It was a very dangerous moment. I managed to climb up on a

1. An essentially economic strike by a part of the coalminers at the start of March became increasingly politicized as the strike expanded. It was not until May that all the miners returned to work. On the miners' and Byelorussian strikes, see chapter seven of David Mandel's *Perestroika and the Soviet Union*, Black Rose Press, Montreal 1991.

2. The central trade union paper, the largest circulation daily in the former Soviet Union, with upwards of 18 million readers.

3. The All-Union Confederation of Trade Unions, the central trade-union federation, the former All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions.

the Moldovan case this might involve a division of this republic between Ukraine and Romania — an idea already floated by Romanian leaders.

An especially worrying development has been the offer of land in the DR to Cossacks (joined by all manner of adventurers and freebooters) in return for their involvement in fighting "to defend the Slavs". This suggests the possibility of an attempt to drive out the Moldovan population to make way for Slav settlers.

The shadow of Yugoslavia is spreading across the territory of the former Soviet Union.★

lamp post and shout for them to stop. I yelled that it was a provocation and that they would destroy the cause they had come for. Luckily there were some of our foundry workers that knew me, and they stopped, also halting the crowd behind them some 20 metres from Government House. The police would never have allowed its seizure.

There were about 5,000 people in all in the square. A spontaneous meeting began. Parliamentary deputies from the opposition People's Front came out. The workers' demands were purely economic, but these people, along with people from the Workers' Union, wanted to exclude any leaders from the official unions, saying that they were phoney, and the like. They wanted to let only their own people get to the microphone. I was on the tribune all the time but I avoided a confrontation with them. I merely asked the workers to send up their own people. The speakers from the People's Front and the Union of Workers made the mistake of telling the workers that their demands were wrong, that they wouldn't achieve anything, that they had to change the political system. What they were saying might make sense, but you have to take into account where people are. And the crowd grew wary at once. They were being insulted, told that theirs were "sausage demands". It ended with the crowd electing delegates who went to hand the government the demands after which people went home.

■ How did the government react?

That evening, the negotiations between the government and unions, that had begun before the strike, resumed. Earlier that day, the authorities had convened all the directors in the city and all the union presidents and discussed and discussed, but nothing was decided. I asked to speak and demanded an immediate decision from the government. I warned that if they didn't inform the people of measures adopted on wages and social guarantees, they would come out to the square again. And that's what happened. When they finally published a decision, the strike wave had already spread to the smaller cities and isolated plants.

When I spoke to the crowd on the fourth, I told the workers to take the strike seriously and avoid provocations. I told them they should entrust the leadership of the movement to their union committees, and if those committees refused or were unable to lead them, then to elect strike committees. I advised the workers to maintain order and guard their plants. The workers began to elect strike committees. It was all quite spontaneous, including the formation of the city strike committee. The lack of experience of struggle was quite evident.

And so on the fifth, the Minsk workers

again came to the square, but in a rather more organized manner, groups of workers from different factories. Throughout the republic, the movement was quite peaceful, except for Orsha, where the workers blocked the railway line. The factory administrations adopted a neutral position, and there were no open persecutions, though, as usual, there were threats that people would lose pay for being absent.

The city strike committee included people from among the leaders of the People's Front, and I consider that they needlessly heated up the situation. For example, our Avtozavod struck on the first day, April 3, and then didn't come out any more. The administration there had raised wages and introduced compensation for the price rises in the canteens. Most workers were satisfied with that, which shows that their demands were really economic. But these Popular Front people drove up to the factory and shouted: "Strikebreakers!" and the like. They were demanding that the party committees be put out of the enterprises, that the government and parliament resign, that the parliament hold a special session. Many workers didn't accept this politicization at the level of the city strike committee.

After that, there was a pause for negotiations, but they broke down. On the tenth, there was a big demonstration on the square with about 50,000 people. But really, how could the government resign? And since the enterprise administrations were meeting the economic demands, the strike committee was forced to suspend the strike. But it was resumed on the 24th when the strike committee announced that the government was dragging out the talks, that it would not agree to an early special session of the parliament not to evict the party committees from the factories. But only the Tractor Factory and one other plant came out that day. The rest sent only representatives to the square. And the meeting decided they would not come any more.

But on the morning of the 25th, people gathered in the yard of the Tractor Factory and a mass meeting took place; it was the anniversary of the Chernobyl accident. When I arrived the workers weren't listening to anyone, not to the administration nor to the union committees, insisting on going to the square again. When I spoke, I told them that they couldn't act like that, that they had to trust the people they had elected. But since the government had refused to make the day a day of mourning, it was decided to go to the square. I proposed that we go in an organized manner, to first return to the shops, organize the columns, prepare black armbands, slogans.

At the same time, Bukhovstov, our union's president, had gone to Gomel', where a mass meeting was organized on the union's initiative. In Minsk, more than

50,000 people marched. The columns included the unions, strike committees, factory administrations. The People's Front joined in with its banners. The demonstration had the colouring of a protest against the consequences of Chernobyl, and this time it was organized. The demonstrators were mainly from the Tractor Factory, the others sending only small groups. Avtozavod, our other large plant in Minsk, didn't go. The Tractor Factory is more militant. The divisions among the strike committees could already be felt. The city strike committee insisted on political demands, to which not all of the enterprise strike committees could agree and so decided to send only some groups of representatives to the demonstration.

■ How did the movement end?

On April 24 and 25 the workers in the town of Orsha shut down the railroad line. This movement was led by a certain Razumov from the Tool Factory. He was very radical and spoke about the need to change the government and political system. This winter their regional trade union council joined our Association of Industrial Unions and he is now saying we should not have strikes since they lead to instability and only make things worse.

How did it end? Well, the government refused to carry out the political demands: meanwhile economic demands were being met in the plants; people stopped coming out, though many unions and strike committees did express no confidence in their administrations. The only ones to kick out their party committee were the Motor Factory. The positions of the city strike committee didn't correspond to how the workers were thinking. That is the main reason why the strike committee failed to win majorities for its political demands, such as evicting the party committees. It's true that in the heat of the events many workers did vote for these demands, but afterwards this support disappeared.

I think that a fundamental error of the leaders in the strike committee, which may have been due to People's Front influence, was their desire to keep members of the union committees and Communists out of the strike committees. But these were precisely the people with experience in organization and collective working. Things might have been different if at that time the People's Front and Workers' Union hadn't put forward such radical political demands and especially if they hadn't tried to keep the unions away. In fact, they wanted to destroy the existing union structures. But one can't say that everything in those unions was bad and that they enjoyed no support among the workers.

■ Besides the economic gains, what would you say was the most positive

consequence of the strikes?

The experience pushed consciousness forward and allowed the emergence of new potential leaders. Many of the people in the strike committees were people with loud voices who came and went. But there were also sober people. I should also mention that the strike committees often also included representatives of the union committees and many strike committees, especially in the Minsk area, were in fact led by the presidents of factory committees.

At the Ball Bearing Factory, the members of the strike committees were elected as the new trade union committee. We're working closely with them, teaching them the ropes. It's a pleasure to work with these new people, since our views coincide. You see, after we created our new republican council, there was a gap between the republican structure and the plant committees. We wanted to pose things in a radical way and to speed up the changes but we had to deal with the existing plant committees, who often don't understand our approach and try to smooth over problems with the administration. But things are changing. In several factories, there are already people who don't share the old outlook. The workers have confidence in them and we can work with them easily.

But it's a complex issue. For example, at the Tractor Factory, the plant committee got mad because the shop committee was inviting us directly and not going through them. You see, on the one hand, our constitution affirmed the priority of the primary organizations, but, on the other, there is an urgent need to change things. We can't just walk into the plants and order the committees around. But we do say openly — I say this at all union conferences — that it makes no sense for there to be both union and strike committees in the factories. In my view, the strike committees have only one task: to win the confidence of the majority of the work collective and to come to power in the union committees, to reform them. If there are two organs, they split and weaken the workers.

It happens at conferences that the strike committees express their lack of confidence in the union committee and administration and all sorts of fights break out. I say that the union committees should be in charge, and if the strike committees feel they are not up to the job, they should force new elections and run. But I can't work openly with a strike committee to help it overthrow an existing union committee. However, we do invite their representatives to our plenums, something that makes the

union committees angry.

■ **Many of the union leaders who came here with you from the former Soviet Union seem to have nothing but scorn or even hatred for the new worker organizations that have appeared in the factories. They say they are power hungry, not serious and infringe on union jurisdictions.**

My attitude to these organizations is positive. Their emergence is healthy and forces the union committees to be on their toes. Much of their criticism of the union committees is well-founded. But they often criticize in a way that fails to win worker



support. For example, they say: The union committee doesn't defend you; management earns more than you; they are always going abroad.

So the director merely explains: Do you want us to be totally out of step with the market situation? And he justifies each trip. After the strike many factory committees adopted a position of criticism and rejection of everything that repelled workers. In many plants the committees have already fallen apart.

The same is true of the Workers' Union. They were politicized people, and at the time of the strikes, there might have been an opening to form a strong workers' party. But they too adopted a stance of criticizing everything, including the unions, which they merely wanted to destroy. Sure, many factory committees are conciliationist and bad, but words aren't enough.

■ What about the Republican strike committee?

The Minsk committee doubles as the Republican committee, but we've hardly heard anything from it in half a year and it is the same in other towns. In Minsk we tried to find a common language with the strike committee but then representatives of the International Committee of Free Trade Unions came to Minsk. They met us and the strike committee. The strike committee was trying to establish new trade unions and they told the ICFTU not to trust us, that all our reforms had been merely cosmetic. They followed a two-faced, disloyal policy, especially after we had done a lot to help them. So we took our distance from them.

As I said, I support the existence of any worker organizations. But the Republican strike committee hadn't yet even got on its feet, when it already called a press conference to announce the creation of free trade unions. This caused some of our members to leave them. It is really a crude power struggle by leaders of an organization that has not even got near power.

■ What about the Workers' Union?

It doesn't really exist any more. It has become the Confederation of Labour, which is very fragile. It allows dual membership in the old and new unions, which, in my view, is not normal. They reject the idea of strikes and have taken up exclusively the idea of privatization, demanding that the workers get property in some form or other. That's their only activity. Naturally, the government likes their position on strikes. The Byelorussian president

spent two hours discussing with them, though they represent only 600 people, while we are several million. After the talks he pointed out that the Confederation had a different approach to the old unions. I know what he means; they don't give the government any trouble.

But there are also the small free trade unions promoted by the Minsk strike committee. They are closer to us and to the industrial workers. At Avtozavod, the factory committee refused to hold new elections, and the strike committee formed a free trade union with about 150 members.

■ **Does your union support the struggle of the so-called "budget" employees, medical personnel, teachers and so on, who are striking for wages and increased state financing for their institutions?**

Yes, we fully support them. In March,

we demanded that the government review the subsistence minimum for the entire population, though the minimum for our branch is well above that. The budget workers movement is led by the official trade unions, which have been undergoing a renewal.

■ **What is the political weight of the People's Front?**

It has a presence in the republic, but it isn't a mass movement. And that, in large part is due to its too radical positions — extremist positions on the national question, extreme attitudes towards the former Communists, whom they see as criminals, not distinguishing ordinary members from those in power. We have quite a large number of ethnic minorities in the Republic and the People's Front's attitude pushed them away from it.

■ **Did Gorbachev's referendum on the preservation of the Soviet Union really reflect public opinion?**⁴

At the time, yes. The question asked was whether to preserve the union in renewed form. The People's Front called for a "no" vote. Even today, a majority feels that sovereignty is stupid. Those of us who are more politicized, who are closer to the political and economic processes in the republic and who saw more clearly the character of relations in the union, might not think so, but ordinary people see that they used to be able to travel, to take vacations without any problems anywhere in this vast land, and now things only get worse, while the television shows people killing one another.

■ **But do you feel there should be some sort of political structure above the republic?**

No, I don't. I don't see at present the kind of attitudes upon which it would be possible to set up a structure that would reflect the interests of all the republics.

■ **Are you referring to the Russian leaders?**

To a large degree they forced the process of sovereignty, since the representatives of the other republics couldn't obtain a just solution to their problems. They harmed themselves and others by trying to resolve things from positions of force. The result is that conflicts don't get resolved, there is squabbling over division of the army and so on. They put economic pressure on other republics by limiting exports to them, so the others reacted in kind. They exploit the fact that they possess the greater part of the raw materials. They took a lot of steps that undermined mutual confidence. They did everything without consulting others. Some of this was intoxication with power. You remember how Yeltsin behaved towards

Gorbachev at the Russian congress after the coup? Gorbachev was speaking to the congress about the party's responsibility in the coup, its lack of vigilance and so on, when Yeltsin walks over to him and hands him a document ready for him to sign suspending the party. A lot of people didn't like that and I was one of them.

■ **You mentioned that the new trade unions in the Confederation of Labour are concerned exclusively about the issue of property. But we've talked about your union without mentioning that question at all. Surely the way that is resolved is going to be decisive for you.**

That's a very complex issue. Parliament has yet to adopt a law on privatization. There is a law now on private property of land, but the peasants aren't exactly rushing to make use of it. There are, however, collective farms that are transforming themselves into genuine cooperatives where each person has a share of the property, the land is worked in common and at the end of the year the profits are divided up. If a person decides to leave, he receives either his part of the land or monetary compensation.

In the factories, on the other hand, the administration is trying to force the process and to completely remove the enterprises from state control. For example, some have become leased enterprises. But, in practice, the old managerial structures remain intact; it's the director who unilaterally decides what to do with profits. In our general collective agreement with the government, as well as in the enterprise agreements, our union has insisted that all decisions on changing the form of property of the enterprise must have the agreement of the work collective. That's the most basic issue. And we have intervened to stop the machinations of the administration in this area.

Our second position is that, in face of the chaos that reigns in the area of privatization, the state must adopt laws to regulate it. One possibility is the allocation to each inhabitant of a share in the national property. In some enterprises the workers are saying: "It's all ours, you should give it to us". In reality it was the whole nation who built the factories. The part that was built from profits is a different question — that part, one could argue, does belong to the work collective. But what of the pensioners who put fifty years of work into the enterprise?

■ **In our discussions here, the Canadian unionists tried to explain that the issue of property is a question of power, of control over investment, jobs and the rest. That's why it seems somewhat strange to me that you and your colleagues hardly raised the**

issue of property and when you did, didn't seem to have a clear position on it.

We're trying to understand this issue. There are many hidden shoals here. The tendency in the republic now is towards leasing arrangements and the creation of joint-stock companies from the state enterprises. We are trying to analyze the consequences of each variant.

■ **In Canada a major reason the labour movement fought against the Free Trade Agreement with the United States was that it effectively deprived the state of power to conduct an economic policy. This is part of the general tendency to "de-regulate", to give business a completely free hand. Is there any understanding in your movement that the struggle for the "complete autonomy of the enterprises" and for privatization can be a trap for workers?**

We see the tendency for the government to pull out of the economy. They say: we've given you full autonomy, so your fate depends on what you yourselves can earn. But we want the government to resolve the problems of exchange between enterprises in the different republics, because that is threatening production.

As far as the free market is concerned, I'll tell you in all seriousness that in our union we understand that this race to the market that we see in the government as well as in other structures will only bring harm to the workers and to society. A market poses cruel conditions. We are aware of what has happened in East Germany and Poland. They are striking examples of what not to do. The Polish reform was a terrible mistake. They opened their borders and flooded their market with imports, thus, in practice, exporting jobs to other countries and depriving their own workers of the possibility to work and earn the money to buy those goods. Production there has declined by over 20%.

Reconstruction requires huge investments. Our enterprises are now nearing the edge. During the first half of this year, the government still supported them. But now there is a shortage of money — the workers can't even get paid. Before coming here, we sat down and analyzed the economic situation, the state of relations between the republics, the issue of conversion of military production — we now have many plants producing for the warehouse. In our view,

4. In March 1991, the Union government conducted a referendum asking the population if it supported maintaining the Union in renewed, democratic form. Four of the republics, with about 10 million inhabitants, refused to participate. Of the other 178 million eligible voters, about 59% participated and over three quarters of them voted for the union. *New York Times*, March 20, 1991.



the July-September period will be critical.

■ **Should workers in your country demand direct power in managing the economy and their enterprises or should they aspire to be simple wage labourers, who try to influence things through their unions "from outside?" If they accept private ownership, then they will have no legal say in how their bosses use that property. You have got some idea here of how hard it is in those circumstances for Canadian workers to exercise any real influence on national economic policy or in the enterprises.**

I don't consider that our old system was as black as many people like to paint it today. There were also positive aspects. And I am opposed to rolling everything back, so that we find ourselves forced to fight all over again to recreate the good things we had. Such a danger does exist.

Our union is discussing the appropriate forms of worker influence in the economy. I think that this form has to be the struggle for political power. Nothing else, except the law, will force the entrepreneurs to invest where we want them to. The other option is open confrontation directly in the economic arena. But can we afford to constantly organize protests, strikes and occupations? Each protest is a great responsibility. If only one person is killed this is a great responsibility to bear.

■ **What has your union done in the political arena?**

We've written a programmatic document for the creation of a party. There are many small parties in the republic, but none of them suit us in their views and functioning. There's a Social Democratic Party whose deputies form part of the opposition in parliament. Their social base is mainly intellectuals and highly skilled workers and it is quite small. But they are the closest to our views and we cooperate. They help us to promote certain laws in parliament. We know, of course, that they have their own agenda and that they are mainly interested in appropriating the enormous base the union movement can provide.

But we see that the workers really have no political representation.

They are an undefined political force today, and no one can say who they will follow tomorrow. We're seriously discussing forming a workers' party, one that workers would really support. In effect, it would be the Swedish variant.

■ **One of the big problems in our system is how the base can control its political representatives once they are elected since there is always the tendency for them to forget their programmes and electoral promises.**

In Belarus, our union took part in the collection of signatures for a referendum that will force new parliamentary elections. We slept through the last ones, and, as a result, directors and party bureaucrats got themselves elected. About 40% of the deputies are people with absolutely no principles, weathervanes who shift with the political winds. I've proposed for example to start work in the enterprises to draw up a list of candidates for the new elections, to do it methodically, take a good look at prospective candidates and give workers a chance to know who they are voting for, so there will be fewer mistakes.

But to be objective, I have to say that, although we are trying to force elections, the present government and parliament have moved ahead quite a bit over the months. They were pushed forward by the labour movement and by the more radical positions we have adopted. I'm not saying that things are good, but there has been some progress.

However, if the economic crisis continues to deepen and the plants shut, then all movement will come to a stop. And that can happen especially because of the economic conflicts between the republican governments.

■ **One of the things that emerged from our discussions here was that your unions generally have "softer" relations with management than, for example, the Canadian Auto Workers. Can you explain that?**

In our country, we can't adopt a classic stance of unions against employers. In fact, we are pushing our directors to form a union of employers. They aren't yet prepared to unite, and it is very hard to deal with each of them separately.

One of the areas of cooperation is our efforts to get the government to change its tax policy, which places the entire burden on the state enterprises. But the most important problem is the supply of raw materials and parts of other republics. It's a frightening experience. We see production coming apart and we can't stop it. In the large factories, where the directors have been there for a long time and have access to all government offices, they work out their own solutions and try to deal directly with the government. But the majority of enterprises, especially those outside Minsk, are waiting for our proposals at least during this transitional period. We call the directors to meetings and they ask us to help them resolve the problems.

Our problem is that we can't let production collapse. Of course, if I were just an economist and not a trade unionist, I would have to say that we have plants that just aren't up to the mark and really aren't needed in our republic. But I know we have to find work for people in other places or else convert those plants to useful production. Unfortunately the crunch will surely come. The question is how to make the change in the interests of people. How to ensure that the losses are kept to a minimum.

■ **How much have your workers lost in real earnings since the start of "shock therapy" in January?**

Up until April, the average decline was about 23%. But we have some factories where workers lost nothing. Those in real misery are people on fixed incomes and "budget" workers.

■ **Our newspapers have been writing that the expected "social explosion" in reaction to "shock therapy" hasn't occurred. How do you see things?**

I say: Wait for the period July to September. That will be the test of stability of the existing structures. The situation is totally undefined. ★

U.S. feminists challenge court abortion decision

THE United States Supreme Court's June 29 ruling on Pennsylvania state's 1989 Abortion Control Act has added new fuel to the battle over women's right to choose in the United States. The decision upheld the power of a state to restrict abortion rights by requiring unmarried teenage females to get the consent of their parents or a judge, establishing a 24-hour waiting period for adult women and mandating doctors to keep detailed records of each abortion — information which will be subject to public disclosure.

In addition, the Court approved the requirement that, before the waiting period, women must be given state-produced anti-abortion information which includes pictures of fetuses taken at two week gestational intervals and a description of alternatives to abortion. The only substantial provision rejected by the court was the requirement that a women must notify her husband of an intention to obtain an abortion.

EVELYN SELL

BY a 5-4 majority, the justices utilized the approach that states can impose regulations which do not constitute an "undue burden" on a woman's right to end an early pregnancy. In fact, each of the approved provisions do inflict such a burden — resulting in a gutting of the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision which established legal abortions.

The US mass media emphasized the fact that the legal right to abortion was affirmed by the Supreme Court. In fact, the court majority transformed the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision into a hollow shell by limiting women's right to choose during the period before foetal viability, and by deepening and expanding a state's power to regulate abortions at any point during the pregnancy.

In 1989, the Supreme Court opened the door to a state's authority to impose restrictions on women's abortion rights in the case of *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, a Missouri state law.

Exactly what states could or could not restrict was not defined but in 1990 the court ruled that states can require minors to notify one or more parents or receive a judge's permission before obtaining an

abortion. Over the past two years, more than 800 bills limiting abortion rights have been introduced in 40 different state legislatures.

With this latest decision, the Supreme Court has added new measures to the approved list of restrictions. The present bare majority of five who did not completely overturn *Roe v. Wade* can be suddenly turned into a minority.

Four justices wrote a dissenting statement declaring themselves ready to strike down *Roe v. Wade* and to permit states to outlaw abortion. This leaves women teetering on the brink of total disaster.

Wishful thinking of anti-choice lobby

Anti-choice politicians quickly asserted that the court's decision removed the abortion question as a hot issue during the current election campaign. That is wishful thinking on the part of opponents of abortion rights.

The majority of the US population continues to support basic abortion rights, and the feminist movement has engaged in a persistent struggle to safeguard and expand women's right to

choose. The issue has proven to be so powerful that it has driven a wedge in the major capitalist party with the strongest official anti-abortion position.

The National Republican Coalition for Choice has lined up state delegations for a floor fight over abortion at the National Convention in August, and has sent out a strongly worded letter across the country to organize pro-choice activities within that party and to "fight for a national party platform that reflects the pro-choice views of the majority of Republicans".

Feminist activists have been heavily involved in lobbying state legislators and members of the US Congress, and are currently campaigning for pro-choice candidates. In very important respects, this dependency on major capitalist party politicians will be strengthened by the court's ruling on the Pennsylvania law.

There are currently more women candidates running for public office at the state and national levels than before — and it appears that there is a good chance to elect more pro-choice women than in previous years.

Countervailing trends at work

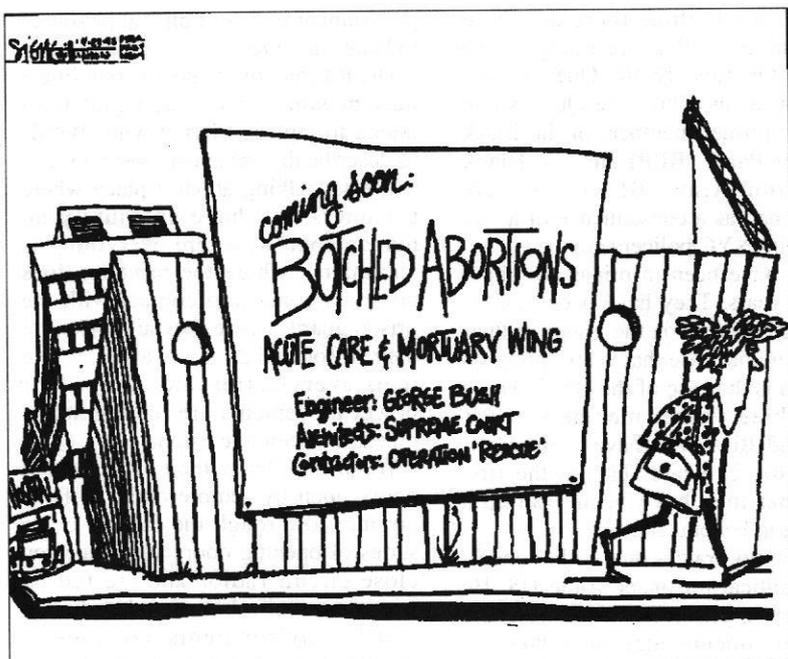
Electoralist activities on behalf of pro-choice Democrats and Republicans are being pushed by all major feminist organizations. At the same time, there are two countervailing trends: the success of mass mobilizations and the development of independent political action.

The entire nation was impressed by the largest-ever mobilization which involved 750,000 abortion rights demonstrators in Washington DC on April 5 of this year (see IV 226).

In addition the pro-choice movement has consistently outnumbered Operation Rescue (called 'Operation Oppress You' by feminists) in highly successful, well-organized actions at women's clinics. These public expressions by abortion rights advocates created and perpetuates a pro-choice climate — and may have helped persuade the Supreme Court justices to go out of their way to uphold *Roe v. Wade*.

The already mobilized pro-choice movement responded to the Supreme Court's June 29 decision with immediate street demonstrations. In many cities, feminist groups had organized beforehand to hold street actions the day the Supreme Court decision was announced.

In other places, "day after" actions took place. For example, the Los Angeles, California, branch of the National Organization for Women (NOW) telephoned members and supporters in mid-June to alert them to demonstrate in front of the downtown Federal Building



the evening of the decision. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 700 marched to the Federal Building and held a rally on the day after the ruling.

Women's rights groups, prepared for the abolition of legal abortions or the weakening of *Roe v. Wade*, had already organized protests to make sure women could obtain abortions, and had already planned to intensify their efforts to fight for abortion rights in a variety of ways.

For example, one group provides transportation for poor women who need to travel to states where legal abortions can be obtained. This group calls itself the Aboveground Railroad, a reference to the Underground Railroad which helped Black slaves escape to the North and to Canada during the 19th century. The parallel is appropriate: compulsory pregnancy is, indeed, a form of involuntary servitude.

The independent organization of women expressed through clinic defence actions, demonstrations, marches and rallies is a significant form of political action. The electoral aspect of political action is, also, taking on an increasingly independent character.

Feminists' disgust with the betrayals by their supposed friends in the Democratic Party surfaced at the 1989 National NOW Conference and resulted in the adoption of a resolution on independent political action, and an "Expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century".

Formation of new party projected

NOW created the Commission for Responsive Democracy which conducted hearings in 1990-91 and projected the formation of a new party based on a

broad programme to meet the needs of women, workers, people of colour and other oppressed and disenfranchised groups in US society. The 1992 National NOW Conference overwhelmingly voted to support a new party formation called the 21st Century Party — The Nation's Equality Party.

This expression of political independence by feminists is inter-related with two other significant developments: Labour Party Advocates and the independent presidential campaign of Ron Daniels, a longtime African American activist.

Independent political action — in the streets and in the electoral arena — is becoming the preferred strategy among growing numbers of those fighting to win back and extend abortion rights.

Membership in feminist organizations has swollen since the Supreme Court's 1989 decision established a state's power to limit abortion rights. Student feminist groups have sprung up on campuses across the country.

A new generation of young women and men have joined with veteran feminists to fight for reproductive rights. Each national mobilization has been larger than the preceding one. Previously inactive allies have been drawn into public demonstrations, clinic defence actions and support activities. The movement has combined a nationally coordinated strategy with intensive efforts at the state and local level.

Women and their allies are prepared to march and rally and take political action to gain safe, fully legal, accessible and affordable abortions regardless of residence, age and financial condition. ★

Panther fights for justice

FORMER Black Panther leader Dhoruba Bin Wahad, a victim of the US government's counterintelligence program, (COINTELPRO) in the 1970s, was released from prison in New York state on March 22, 1990 after having spent 19 years in maximum security prisons on trumped-up attempted murder charges. However, the courts have recently reinstated his conviction. Dhoruba spoke on June 4, 1992 at a meeting in Paris organized by the Committee in Support of US Political Prisoners as part of a European tour to build support for his case and those of other US political prisoners.

COULD you update us on developments in your case since you were last here in Paris?

The last time I was here was in December of 1991. It was a very difficult time for me politically. At that time, I was waiting for a decision in my case which would determine whether I would remain free or go back to prison.

In December of last year, the courts in the United States reinstated my conviction and I went to Africa in order to await the outcome. I had to make a political decision whether I would go back to the United States or become exiled as a consequence of the

court's actions.

I spent 19 years in prison so it is difficult for me to even envision going back to prison voluntarily. But, it was very important to me and to our movement that the victory that my case represented should not be snatched away from Black people. So I decided to go back to the United States and face whatever awaited me there. When I arrived in the United States in February and walked into the courtroom there were over 400 people present.

The people who came to court represented a broad spectrum of progressive people in New York City. There were Black people, there were Latin Americans, there were white progressive people, there were people from the gay and lesbian movement, there were representatives of various Black political figures.

I believe that it was their presence in court that prevented me from being sent back to prison. People came to court from Washington D.C., Boston, Vermont, and from New Jersey. They rented cars and vans to come to court. These were Black students, Black activists and in some cases just ordinary families.

This shocked the DA and the judge. Indeed when I walked into the courtroom the DA turned white as a sheet! He fully expected me to stay in Africa and never return to the US. He wanted to declare me a fugitive, dismiss my claims, and say to the press and to the public that I was a common criminal who fled justice.

My return thwarted that strategy. As for the judge, he wanted to get rid of the whole matter, and the easiest way of course was for me not to come back. This made it all the more important for me to continue.

Now when I go to court on June 23, I do not know whether I will go back to prison or whether the judge will dismiss the case.¹ In many ways I am in the same position I was in February. But I believe that as a consequence of our efforts we have the upper hand, in spite of the fact that my conviction was reinstated.

So when I go to court on June 23 it would be with the expectation that perhaps this ordeal would come to an end. If it does not we expect to have a date set for the hearings.

■ **Your case is one of several important cases concerning Black political prisoners that is currently pending. Could you tell us a bit about some of these other cases?**

This month alone there are three political cases that are going to the courts. On June 15 the Queens Two will appear in court. The Queens two are two former members of the Black Panther Party (BPP) and the Black Liberation Army (BLA) who were imprisoned as a consequence of a gun fight with NYC policemen.

They have been in prison for about twelve years. They have been granted a limited hearing on the issues of their case. Another case that is appearing on June 26 is the case of the NY 3. These were three former members of the BPP and BLA who have been imprisoned for 21 years. This is the first time that they have been granted a hearing in Federal court².

Geronimo Pratt is one of the longest held political prisoners in the US. He has been in prison for 22 years. There is ample documentation in Geronimo's case that he was framed by the FBI and the California police authorities. Senators and movie stars have come forward and called for the freedom of Geronimo Pratt. Amnesty International has recognized Geronimo Pratt as a political prisoner.

We need to get the word out to progressive people in Europe that Black people in the US are an oppressed nation. And that there are political prisoners and prisoners of war from this oppressed nation in the US. I think that this is so important at this juncture that I cannot overemphasize it. In the case of Mumia Abu Jamal, it's a matter of life and death³. In the cases of some of the political prisoners coming up for parole it's a matter of freedom or continuing imprisonment. And in the cases of the political prisoners who have cases pending, it's a matter of whether they will get a fair hearing or whether their cases will be pushed aside once more.

Therefore we intend to mobilize as many people as possible to support these cases. In my case I appear in court on June 23. So as you can see June promises to be a particularly significant month for Black political prisoners.

We have also a situation in the US that I would like to bring to your attention. As you well know, there are a number of political prisoners, Puerto Rican, Black and white in the US who are in the federal penitentiary at Marion Illinois.

Marion federal penitentiary is one of the most notorious prisons in the world. Amnesty International has qualified it as inhuman. We would like people to demand that the federal

government transfer political prisoners to better facilities.

The federal government is building a new prison in Colorado that they intend to replace Marion with. Words to describe this prison are lost on me.

We are talking about a place where prisoners will have absolutely no human contact, where everything is automated, where the prisoner does not even come into contact with the prison guard, where they are locked in their prison cell 23 hours a day, where their every action including their bowel movements are photographed on close circuit television.

When they leave their cell, the cell doors open by remote control. They are moved through the facility by a series of opening doors and voices on close circuit radio. They are fed by remote control robots and they live in sterile environments completely devoid of any humanity or any sensitivity.

This prison is almost complete. You can believe that federal political prisoners and prisoners of war will be sent to this prison. We must raise our voices in protest over the construction of this prison. We must demand that political prisoners are not sent to this prison.

This prison will be a model for the maximum, maximum security prison. We can expect that every major nation will send their prison officials to the US to study this prison. It will represent the state of the art in prison technology. I urge you to write to the federal bureau of prisons and protest the construction of this prison and demand that political prisoners not be sent there.

We cannot wait for the prison to come on line and wait for the political prisoners to be transferred there. There are things that you can do. The committee here in France for instance, sent a letter to the ambassador of the US and to the governor of the state of Pennsylvania demanding that Mumia Abu Jamal be released from death row. This must be done again and again and the letters must be compiled and sent to the UN commission on human rights which should be requested to look into this matter and that of other political prisoners.

■ **In what ways will the current political situation in the U.S. as you see it affect these cases?**

The riots in LA subsequent to the Rodney King case have created a climate which will affect the outcome of these hearings. Whether it effects the outcome positively or negatively is up

to us. By that I mean it is up to us to mobilize people.

I emphasize this because I want you to understand that the work you do here in France and elsewhere is very important and is going to be increasingly important over the next period. Given the events in LA, it would be very difficult for the judge to send me back to prison, especially given the fact that I have become more or less a spokesperson around a number of issues for young Black people.

The US government intends to carry out a comprehensive reconstruction of its criminal code. The bill that would permit this has already worked its way through the US Senate. It permits the death penalty for certain terrorist attacks. It sanctions preventive detention on a much more intensive scale than already exists. We too have to begin to focus in on this type of repressive activity on the part of the US government.

The US Supreme court has struck down almost every progressive law that has been passed over the last twenty years. In regards to prisoners' rights and the rights of the accused in criminal proceedings. They have struck down the rights of common citizens to be safe and secure in their own homes. They have increased police surveillance powers, they have endorsed preventive detention.

All these things mean that even given our ability to mobilize people, there is a likelihood that the forces that control the state judiciary are arrogant enough to believe that they are impervious to the people's response to their racism. So we have our work cut out for us.

■ How would you characterize the state of the Black liberation movement in the wake of the Los Angeles events?

The Rodney King verdict has awakened a number of Black youth to the idea of anti-racist struggle. We believe that an entire generation of Black activists is being developed right now in the United States. In the ghettos of America there is an increasing call for the establishment of a new Black Panther Party. Young Black people who are the victims of these attacks want to fight back. So they have rediscovered Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party and the philosophy of Black nationalism.

The state, in order to counteract this, is promoting certain Black leaders and Black cultural figures as Black leaders. Black activists and Black people in general are beginning to realize that

there are Black enemies of Black people.

They are beginning to realize that Clarence Thomas and Colin Powell and Jesse Jackson can be enemies of Black people, and that the reason why they can be enemies of Black people is because they identify with the system of oppression that oppresses their people, and they refuse to lead their people out of that system.

You know perhaps about Jesse Jackson in regards to the LA riots. Of course he flew to LA to cool out everything and nobody listened to him. That is because the Black youth in the streets of LA don't relate to Jesse Jackson. So if we build a strong movement in the US it will push people such as Jesse Jackson further and further to the left.

David Dinkins will run again for mayor of New York city next year and he will expect to get the Black vote but Mayor Dinkins has not paid any attention to the Black community in the three years he has been in office. The next city election in NY promises to be an arena of class struggle.

When Black people ask why there is no unity in the Black community, it is the issue of class that comes up. When Black people ask where is the movement that will liberate us, it is the issue of class that comes up.

This is increasingly becoming an issue across the US, the issue of class. This issue of class in the Black community is important because until it is tackled head on, Black people will be unable to tackle militant leadership and project that militant leadership into the political arena.

My trip to Africa was both personal and political. It was personal because as an African in diaspora it is very important for us to establish a link with our brothers and sisters in the Motherland and build an international pan-African movement that is revolutionary and anti-imperialist. ★

1. The Judge presiding over this case cancelled the June 23 court date and rescheduled Dhoruba's hearing for next September 3.

2. No definitive ruling on the New York 3 or the Queens 2 came out of the June hearings. New trial dates for the defendants in these two case were set for next October and August 3, respectively.

3. Mumia Abu Jamal, an outspoken Black journalist, has spent ten years on death row.

Colombia: Is peace possible?

TWO far away villages, Dabeiba in Colombia, and Tlaxcala in Mexico, have been the site of stalled peace negotiations between the Colombian government and insurgent popular forces.

The Tlaxcala talks involved a search for peace between the Simon Bolivar Guerilla Coordination (CGSB)¹ and the Colombian government. At the same time, the armed forces in Dabeiba launched an attack against the civilian population under the pretext of a drive against the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC).

ALICIA PONCES

THE quest for peace in Colombia has been elusive to say the least. The abrupt breaking off of the recent negotiations at Tlaxcala has an antecedent. The first meeting between the government and the guerilla forces took place in Caracas in 1991.

At that time, the government did not insist on a pre-negotiation cease-fire, but it did demand that the guerillas concentrate their forces in certain places in order to verify the truce.

This condition, which would have led to the dismantling of the guerilla forces, was rejected by them. The Caracas meeting only succeeded in drawing up an agenda.

These included the cease-fire, the national political situation, kidnappings, and so on. But it soon became clear that the continuation of these talks was more complicated than anticipated.

The government continuously tries to



place the blame for the stalled talks on the guerillas by claiming that they have violated the accords. The guerillas respond that it is the government which has violated the accords and is therefore responsible for the breaking off of the negotiations.

From the beginning, the Tlaxcala meeting was tense and one could feel the possibility of a breakdown of the talks in the air. At the beginning, it was announced that former minister Argelino Duran who had been held by the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), had died.

President Gaviria then demanded that the representatives of this group in Mexico leave the meeting. The CGSB answered that this had been an "error by one of the EPL fronts but that it had nothing to do with the CGSB as a whole." The government eventually withdrew its demand and the negotiations continued.

It was later learned that an anonymous judge had demanded the arrest of 31 members of the M-19 guerilla group because of the attack on the Palace of Justice². However, by handing over their arms in 1989, the M-19 had benefitted from an amnesty law.

It therefore became clear that the government did not respect the accords it made with the M-19. Besides these arrest orders, many of the leaders of this organization who had been in public political life have been assassinated.

Another serious incident involved an order handed down by a judge against the president of the FARC for supposedly having committed a "terrorist homicide". The police and the army declared that they would carry out this order.

Among those sought are FARC leaders such as Manuel Marulanda, Guillermo Leon, Alfonso Cano and William Manjarrez. If the Mexican government had given in, Cano could have been arrested in Mexico where he was taking part in the negotiations. However, in line with former agreements he has the right to return to the Colombian mountains.

The other detention orders have been passed on to the Colombian police and army who in turn have given copies to Interpol and the FBI. In addition to this, 50 people were arrested in 150 raids of houses sheltering guerillas in Santa Fe, Colombia.

The two sides were supposed to work out a cease-fire in Tlaxcala. The governmental negotiator and president of the Senate introduced a proposal along the lines of Gaviria's policies.

He demanded that other sectors such as leaders of social movements, political figures, economic administrators participate in the negotiations. He also proposed that the armed conflict be settled by negotiated political methods. The question of the kidnappings, a key point in the negotiations, must be a priority.

Like the government, the Senate commission declared "the explicit objective of the negotiation process must be the demobilization of the guerillas and their integration into legal political life as part of the construction of a new Colombian democracy."

The idea of including the courts in the negotiations arose due to the problems that the M-19 has faced since it was legalized. Clearly, all the powers must be included in the peace process.

Guerilla spokespersons have sent a proposal to the Senate to organize a national round table which would be charged with exploring and defining mechanisms which would lead to a national peace compromise.

This body would include representatives of the three branches of public power, parties and movements, organized social and economic forces and representatives of the insurgents. For the guerillas, this compromise must "focus on a plan for the restructuring, planning and social and economic development of the country" if the causes of the conflict are to be tackled.

The proposal involves the holding of regional talks aimed at allowing Colombians to voice their concerns and suggestions. This question has become a subject of controversy because the government fears that these local mee-

tings could help to expand the guerilla's base, which they hold is responsible for the prolongation of the armed conflict.

But for the CGSB the idea is to promote democracy and lighten the burden on the regions that have been the hardest hit by violence.

In its two years in office, the policies of the Gaviria government and its party have belied its pacifist claims. Social discontent has increased. Over the last three months the country has been in the dark due to an energy crisis. The rationing of electricity and time changes instituted in order to save money have increased discontent even among businessmen who have also been affected by these measures.

The energy crisis is the result of wasteful practices and the poor utilization of hydro-electrical resources, as well as the poor installation of an energy network. In the face of all this, the sole government response has been to fire employees.

Gaviria has also had to confront opposition to the opening of the dialogue by members of the Liberal Party who have termed it a "cruel farce". In these negotiations, the government's representatives have been guided by the same dogmatic approach and methods they used in dealing with the M-19 and the EPL.

In October 1992, the representatives of the government and the guerillas are to meet again to try to hammer out additional agreements. But will the government respect these agreements?

The electricity blackouts, the rationing, and the daily violent clashes have placed the Colombian population in a permanent state of alert similar to a civil war.

The army's attacks against civilians in zones where the guerillas are active have made the population increasingly sceptical of the will of the government to engage in dialogue. ★

1. The Simon Bolivar National Coordination (CGSB), created in September 1987, is made up of the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ENL) and sectors of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL). The M-19 gave up its arms in March 1990, and created the Democratic Action Movement. Some sectors of the EPL also demobilized, as well as other small organizations like Quintin Lame and the Revolutionary Workers Party.

2. The M-19 which was formed out of a split in the FARC, handed over its arms on March 9, 1990. After having participated in a "dialogue" with the government in 1984, and with a part of its leadership decimated, it participated in the 1990 elections. Its presidential candidate was assassinated during the election campaign. The M-19 then participated in the government with its leader, Antonio Navarro Wolf becoming health minister. The organization won the largest number of seats of any party in the elections for the Constitutional Assembly.

Sandinistas confront fundamental decisions

THE Sandinista Assembly, the highest body of the Nicaraguan Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) between congresses, met on March 28 and 29 to discuss two main issues: the FSLN's response to the appalling economic situation in Nicaragua and its application to become a full member of the Socialist International.

SERGIO RODRIGUEZ

THE assembly was preceded by a series of discussions among the Sandinistas which saw the emergence of important and sharp differences.

On January 16, the Nicaraguan people learned that General Humberto Ortega had handed the Camilo Ortega medal to a US adviser, Lieutenant Colonel David Quinn. Two days later, FSLN leader comandante Luis Carrion stated in the Sandinista paper *Barricada* that the award was a "political error". "I think this was an error because the medal was a historical symbol for a generation of Sandinistas who were ready to make sacrifices, including that of their own lives, to defend the revolution... the expressions of indignation and shock from broad popular sectors are proof that a mistake has been made". At the same time, Carrion called on the militants outraged by the award not to hand back their own medals.

Nevertheless, the following day, January 19, in a public statement about the award of the medal, which was aimed at playing down the event's significance on the grounds that it had been given to military advisers from other countries, General Ortega chose to concentrate his reply on a condemnation of a supposed ultra-leftism in the Sandinista ranks:

"I am making an appeal to you not to be misled by the radical talk of ultraleft minorities who are hoping to manipulate sacred patriotic feelings and national dignity to bring about a fanatical and adventurist confrontation among Nicaraguans and between Nicaragua and the USA. This radical minority maintains the futile hope that it can

attract the poor, who are suffering serious socio-economic difficulties, with unrealistic and destabilizing promises, when all they can really achieve is to make the terrible situation of the humble people worse...

"Finally, I want to say that I consider the pressures and declarations of the member of the national leadership of the FSLN, Luis Carrion, to be a political error. He has given way to the understandable emotional reactions of some rank-and-file militants and some Sandinista middle-ranking cadres, when what is needed are firm and cool leaders who can explain and direct events" (*Barricada*, January 19, 1992).

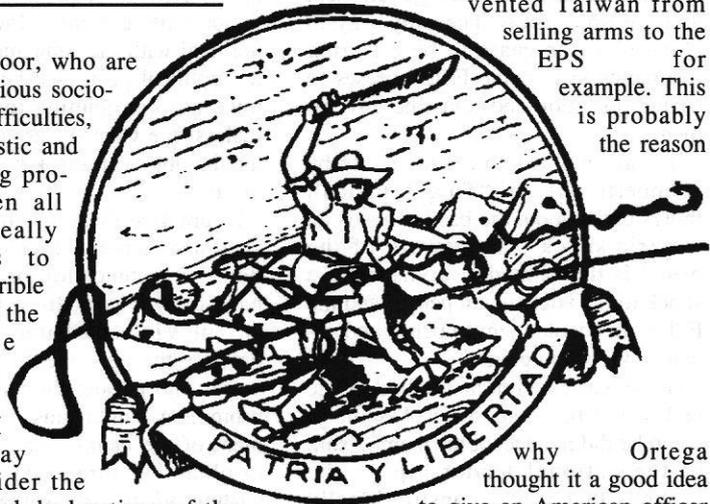
A respectable voice

A highly respectable voice, that of Carlos Fernando Chamorro, son of Nicaraguan president Violeta Chamorro and a long time Sandinista and director of *Barricada*, entered the debate: "From the point of view of the government, to which the army is subordinate, the explanation provided by Humberto Ortega is logical and coherent, even if it will not necessarily convince the people who feel aggrieved. However the really serious aspect of his reply is that the whole apparent coherence of his institutional discourse falls apart when the general involves

himself in the internal affairs of the Sandinista Front. The head of the army is not called upon to decide on what the FSLN leaders should do and far less pass summary and disrespectful judgement on them" (*Barricada*, January 22, 1992).

Behind the scandal over the medal we can see at least two problems. Firstly there are the difficulties faced by the Sandinista People's Army (EPS) in this period. Since the change of government the EPS has passed through a series of crises. That of the missiles given to the Salvadoran rebels; the impossibility of solving the elementary problems of retired soldiers, which led to the *recampos* uprising¹; the difficulty in finding countries willing to sell military equipment in the face of what is in effect a continuing US blockade on such sales — the US has prevented Taiwan from

selling arms to the EPS for example. This is probably the reason



why Ortega thought it a good idea to give an American officer

the medal.

David Quinn is more than just any military adviser at the US Embassy in Managua. It was he who directed all the investigations into Sandinista military assistance to the Salvadoran FMLN, it was he who discovered the delivery of the missiles and it was he who exerted maximum pressure for the

1. The *recampos* crisis: groups of former anti-Sandinista *contras* took up arms again to attack cooperatives and known Sandinista militants, thus *recontras*. A short time later some 2,000 former Sandinista fighters began to organize guerilla groups, the *recampos*. These two groups came together at the start of 1992 to form the *revueltos*. They have been demanding that the government keep its promises regarding land and credits. The *revueltos* have a wide sphere of activity, organizing occupations of towns and cutting roads while demanding the opening of negotiations.

Various social organizations, in particular the National Union of Workers and Farmers (UNAG) and the National Workers Front (FNT), have supported these demands. The FSLN leadership has also supported the movement in the name of popular unity. Also noteworthy is the appearance of armed women's groups, former *recontras* or *recampos*, who have formed the Nora Astorga Front in the north of Nicaragua.

jailing of the Sandinista officials the Salvadoran fighters involved in the deal. He was also instrumental in blocking the Taiwan deal.

The medal thus had the objective of establishing a place for the EPS in the new international context. This objective can be the subject of much debate, nonetheless, it clearly merits serious consideration. At the same time, however, when we come to the second problem the question becomes more complicated.

The general's dual role

By the award of the medal and above all by his reply to Carrion, General Ortega wants to place emphasis on the dual role that he would like to play — at once a member of the government of Mrs. Chamorro and a strategist of the FSLN, that is: of both the government and the opposition. The only way in which this can cease to be a glaring contradiction is if the FSLN ceases to be in opposition and joins the government.

It is all summed up in one phrase by Humberto Ortega: "To get difficult things understood, the best means is an electric shock". The award of the medal is thus aimed at giving such a shock to the Nicaraguan people and the FSLN, to enable them to better understand what is going on.

He pursued a similar method at the end of the first Sandinista Assembly, when he did not accept his membership of the national leadership on the grounds that it was constitutionally impossible. Rather than simply withdrawing, he gave a speech which amounted to a lecture on what the FSLN should do in the new world situation, after losing governmental power in a situation of total instability.

In fact he offered a revised version of the Tercerista vision of the revolution of 1979.² Even if this meant he made an impressive exit, this was not the Tercerism of 12 years previously. He said that Chamorro and Lacayo were not Somoza, Bush was not Carter, the Nicaraguan people was no longer simply anti-dictatorial but has been educated in socialism and class politics. He attacked the workers for going on strike and called for all to sacrifice themselves for the national interest.

On that occasion, the reply was provided by Daniel Ortega, who stated that 99% of strikes in Nicaragua were motivated by the same reasons as in any other country, that is in pursuit of specific needs of workers. They were thus justified. However, what stands out here is Humberto Ortega's idea of

how to approach the present situation in practice.

Towards a grand alliance?

Immediately afterwards there appeared in the Nicaraguan press a paid insertion from a self-styled "Centre Current" formed by some second-rank Sandinista figures, some of them, however, known to be close to Humberto Ortega. This current's main concern was the need for a redefinition of Sandinista politics based on the idea that the priority was the creation of a grand "national accord", above all with the president and her secretary. In practise, they spoke up for the need for coalition.

The reaction of the Sandinista leadership was virulent, at least in form. Daniel Ortega's criticism was centred on the error of presenting the FSLN as divided into currents. However, he did not deal with the fundamental issue of the political positions these Sandinista militants were putting forward. Nonetheless, the Centre Current soon became the object of attack by many Sandinistas.

In practice these militants had touched a sore point. Elements of coalition — independently of the name — have been present from the very first day of Violeta Chamorro's rule. In practice the agreements on the armed forces and police; the participation of prominent Sandinistas in the management of the banks; and Sandinista aid in obtaining foreign credits and the writing off of parts of the foreign debt have all expressed this. In this sense, the Centre Current did nothing more than add things up. And, as we will see later, the agreement of the Sandinista Assembly to a call for a "national accord" confirms this.

A social democratic fever has gripped much of the Latin American left. The Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) and the French Socialist Party (PSF) have been the main proponents of the entry into the Socialist International (SI) of what Salvadoran FMLN leader Joaquin Villalobos has insisted on calling the "new left". At issue is the acceptance of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Mexico, the M-19 in Colombia, the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador, the Broad Front (FA) of Uruguay, the Brazilian Workers Party and the FSLN as full members of the SI.

The Sandinista case is the most surprising, not only in that it is the first to put itself forward as a candidate but also because of the forceful and correct

criticisms made of the SI by Daniel Ortega immediately after the Gulf War. At that time, he explained that in practise the Liberal International, the Christian democracies and the SI all represented the North and imperialism, and that the peoples of the Third World would not find there an international that would represent them.

Suddenly the analysis has changed; not only has there been a return to the old authoritarian and anti-democratic methods but the national leadership took the decision to make the application for full membership of the SI without consulting the Sandinista Assembly. It is true that after sharp criticism of this, even from those who support the application and the presentation of a petition, the decision was discussed by the Assembly.

Changing arguments

The arguments used to defend this act have changed radically. Suddenly, the SI is presented as "friendly", with no mention of the criminal role played by Mitterrand and Gonzalez in the Gulf War or the terrible record of the social democratic governments of Latin America such as that of Rodrigo Borja in Ecuador or Carlos Andres Perez in Venezuela. Worse still, in an interview in *Barricada*, Daniel Ortega said that he had taken the decision on the basis that nobody had been against it at the Sandinista congress. Everything here is back to front. In fact, nobody proposed it at the congress and in his introductory speech at the congress Daniel Ortega talked of the cowardly and criminal behaviour of the SI during the war against Iraq.

Of course, it is possible to find tactical arguments to justify this decision but even these are pretty shaky. The SI is not passing through happy days, having lost elections in Germany, Bri-

2. In 1974, the FSLN divided into three tendencies. The strongest was the Prolonged People's War (GPP) tendency around Tomas Borge and Henry Ruiz. They supported a strategy prioritizing rural guerilla warfare and the reinforcement of the organization's military apparatus. The second tendency, the Proletarian Tendency, led notably by Jaime Wheelock, put the emphasis on the political struggle and saw the working class as the leading force in the revolutionary movement.

Faced with this split, a third tendency, the "Terceristas", emerged around the Ortega brothers, who fought for the reunification of the FSLN but also for a new strategy. They explained that the dictatorship was much weakened and the bourgeoisie divided. They believed that the moment had come for the final offensive and that for this end tactical alliances with the anti-dictatorship bourgeoisie should not be shunned. In their view, the force of the popular movement would allow the FSLN to retain hegemony.

The three tendencies reunited in 1978.

tain and Sweden. If there were elections in France now, the PS would lose. In Latin America SI parties have lost power in Peru and Ecuador and would certainly lose Venezuela as well if there were elections.

In Europe, the Social Democratic government par excellence is in the Spanish state. Here there is 25% unemployment, the introduction of racist laws and a grovelling attitude to the USA. Thus entry into the SI will do more for the latter institution than for the new members, even on the strictly tactical level.

The limits of Social Democracy

One of the most forceful voices raised against the proposal was that of Carlos Fonseca Terin, in an article in *Nueva Diario*: "The social democratic model — called by its supporters 'democratic socialism' — is incapable of resolving the fundamental problems of humanity: social and individual frustration, alienation and the corresponding contradiction between our social nature and our individualist scale of values, all of which are the product of a mode of production in which capital and the market act as the absolute regulators of relations between individuals in the production process..."

"Now, supposing that the FSLN is accepted without being social democratic, reality tells us two things: one, that Sandinism will cease to be the alternative for the social majority of Nicaragua, since, having no alternative economic model, the FSLN will be absorbed by the social democratic options; secondly, the world revolutionary movement — now in crisis as part of its growth — will take stock of the assimilation of the FSLN by the SI as an ideological betrayal of the Nicaraguan revolution and the sign of the weakness of a sector of the left..."

This was the background to the Sandinista Assembly, whose resolutions confirm the mood in favour of an agreement with the Chamorro government. The weakness of the government also pushes in this direction. The forces brought together in the National Opposition Union (UNO), which won the 1991 elections, are very sharply divided.

The seizure of control of the UNO's parliamentary fraction by the most rightwing elements has plunged the government further into crisis. In this sense, the government's main force lies in the EPS, the FSLN's parliamentary group and even, to a certain extent, the

FSLN itself.

When the Sandinista Assembly discussed the possibility of launching an appeal for a "national accord" (although still formally ruling out "co-government") it accepted also the formation of commissions which, in practice, would resolve most problems with the aim of allowing the government to regain its ability to act.

According to the FSLN this proposal is above all aimed at "working out an alternative proposal which would change some aspects of government plans so that they exact a lower cost from the country". That is to say, the FSLN hopes to use the government's weakness and isolation and its own mass strength to blunt the anti-popular edge of the regime's economic and social plans.

When the results of the Sandinista Assembly were made public the president's right-hand man Antonio Lacayo stated "the FSLN's position is positive, constructive and correct. The FSLN is taking its place in a great national project for moving the country forward".

Economic considerations

Behind the FSLN's attitude lie two considerations. On the one hand the Nicaraguan economy is in a worse state than ever. If it is true that the government has been able to bring inflation and the state budget under control, this has been at a very high social cost.

Some 55% of the economically active population are unemployed; on the Atlantic Coast this figure goes as high as 90%. 300,000 peasants have no income, and the rural crisis has been aggravated by the crisis of coffee and cotton. US aid has been frozen by Congress on advice from Alfredo Cesar about alleged misappropriation of funds by the FSLN and EPS. All this has led the country to the edge of a social abyss and exerts a powerful pressure on those Sandinistas inclined to an agreement with the government.

On the other hand, there is a strong sense of failure at work. The idea is constantly spreading in the FSLN that "we were lucky to have lost the elections". Behind this lies not only the war and the US intervention but also the economic disaster.

The whole economic project — which was not about introducing a socialist economy, but of developing a market economy with a social vision — did not succeed in creating social improvement for the population or in developing Nicaraguan capitalism. And behind this lies a belief which

weighs ever more heavily on the thinking of the Latin American left — the idea that there is no alternative to capitalism in countries like ours.

The most to which one can aspire is to humanize capitalism or modify its most savage aspects. And if this is the only alternative, then it is best not to be in government, or at least not to govern alone, or to be in government without controlling the executive, which appears to be the conclusion that some Sandinistas have drawn regarding the 1995 presidential elections.

The double discourse

This leads, as Aldo Diaz Lacayo has said, to a double discourse, which "works in the same direction as the government and at the same time makes oppositional noises. Opposes neo-liberalism and takes a line which fits in with the government's neo-liberal policies. Proclaims revolutionary principles and emphasizes the changes in the world. Reaffirms collective leadership but has an individualist practice. Proclaims unity but also explicitly excludes ideas which are felt to be out of line" (*Barricada Internacional*, March 1992).

This situation holds out great dangers that can be simply stated: the FSLN has used its social strength to implement its new vision. But it is by no means obvious that it can do this for ever. The workers in the cities and the countryside, the thousands of unemployed or the thousands of sacked EPS soldiers have little reason to support a collaborationist line that does nothing for their living standards.

Until now it has proved possible to control some very explosive situations, as was shown in the Aeronica anti-privatization strike or in the *recompas* crisis, but it is becoming more difficult each time.

The Sandinista's popular support is beginning to losing hope insofar as they had been sold the idea that the loss of government in the last elections would result in an improvement in their living situation. While the war is over, the social conflict that led to the July 1979 revolution persists and is biting harder than ever. The notion of "governing from below" has not proved possible. The FSLN is increasingly participating in government while at the same time trying to channel popular mobilizations into limits, which it is increasingly hard to get accepted.

The FSLN is twisting and turning in the coils of its own contradictions — in the same way as most of the Latin American left. ★

The mirage of the Social Europe

THE debate on abolishing restrictions on nightwork for women in France opened just a few weeks before the beginning of the process of ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union.

This was no coincidence; the Maastricht Europe is not about social progress.

The following article explores in more detail what the so-called European space implies for working conditions, starting with the most serious problem, which shapes all the others — unemployment.

MAXIME DURAND*



Table 1: Length of working week

	1983	1983*	1989	1989*
Germany	33.9	41.6	39.1	40.9
Belgium	40.2	41.2	38.5	39.9
Denmark	37.2	40.3	35.7	38.8
Spain	—	—	41.2	41.9
France	40.1	41.5	39.2	40.8
Italy	39.9	40.6	39.8	40.6
Holland	37.7	41.1	33.3	37.4
Portugal	—	—	43.8	44.7
Britain	38.5	41.1	38.9	41.9
EEC	39.7**	41.3**	39.0	40.8

Source: Eurostat
 * Corrected to take account of part-time working
 ** Without Spain and Portugal

RECENTLY, French president Mitterrand has been at pains to stress the millions of new jobs that European unification would create. This took a certain amount of nerve; in fact, at the end of 1991, according to official figures, there were 13.5 million unemployed in the EEC — more than 9% of the active population.

The number fell between 1985 and 1990 but rose again last year by 880,000, of which 770,000 were in Britain — proof of the inability of ultra-liberal policies to provide a lasting solution to the problem of unemployment.

Failure of market

This Euro-unemployment is to a large extent the result of the dynamic of European construction, which tends to restrict the possibilities of expansion in each country. However, the more fundamental reason is the crisis of the market economy, which cannot spread the benefits of the inexorable overall fall in working hours to everybody. This is why the organization of working time is one of the central social issues in Europe.

Table 1 shows us that since the mid-80s the average working week has been falling very slowly — from 39.7 hours in 1983 to 39 in 1989. However, these figures do not take into account part-time work, which is less secure and involves less rights than full time work: in Britain, the apparent average is 30 hours for women and 45 for men. If one makes the

reasonable assumption that on average a part-time job involves two thirds of the working time of a full-time post, the results look very different.

Looked at in this way, the full-time working week has hardly fallen in recent years and remains over 40 hours. That is to say, the Europe of the Single Act has shown itself unable to translate the fall in working time into a reduction in unemployment and the reduction in working time is taking place through an increase in part time (and less secure) jobs.

Throughout the EEC, the number of part time jobs rose to 17 million as against 12 million ten years earlier; today one in seven European workers are in part-time jobs. Such jobs are 80% the preserve of women. However, as table 2 shows, there are sharp differences between countries. Denmark, the Netherlands and Britain have seen an especially sharp rise in part time work, which has become practically the norm for women's employment. Thus, in Britain nearly half of working women are in such jobs. The southern European countries (Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal) are distinguished by less part time jobs and a smaller proportion of women in such jobs (about two thirds). France is striving to catch up with the leaders, although the level of part time work here is still less than in Germany.

The status of part time work relates to national cultural models. In France it is clearly seen as second best; here 89% of

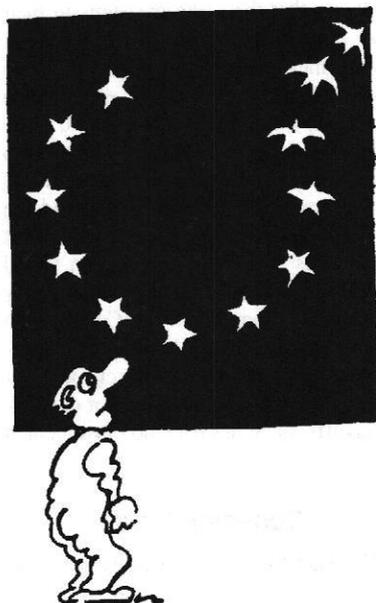
part time workers state that they would prefer a full time post, while the proportion in Britain is exactly the reverse (11%).

Generally speaking, one can draw a very clear connection between the proportion of women in the labour force and the number of part time jobs. Thus, women's employment only progresses insofar as part time work spreads. Certainly, women's involvement in the work force has not served as a cushioning variable for the jobs crisis; there has been no mass movement to "return to the home". In fact women's participation in the labour force has risen. However this is largely a matter of the growth in part time jobs; of the five million jobs created in the EEC between 1979 and 1989 more than three quarters are part time jobs done by women.

This does not mean that part time work is going to solve the unemployment crisis; in general it is in the countries where employment has grown most slowly that part time work has caught on. Such jobs thus appear as essentially a substitute for real job creation resulting from growth or an overall reduction in working time. Part time work for women is ultimately a way of sharing unemployment.

The choice of part time jobs tells us a lot about the conflicts of interest between the workers' aspirations for a shorter working week and the attempts of the bosses to get more flexible working conditions. The employers' side has won big successes in this respect and much water has passed under the bridge since the 1979 Munich conference of the European Confederation of Unions, which put forward demands for a 35 hour week without loss of pay, a fifth week of paid holiday and retirement at 60.

Significant struggles have since taken place in pursuit of these demands, with the high points being the successes of Bri-



tish and German engineering workers in 1989 and 1984 respectively. However the balance of forces has shifted slowly but surely in favour of the employers, one sign of which is the increase in working hours.

This tendency to a change in the organization of working time to the benefit of the employers is common to all the countries but is relatively independent of European construction — the offensive has taken place country by country, taking different forms. The impact of European construction should be viewed in terms of this bosses' initiative.

Social democratic model

One can imagine two ways in which the Social Europe could be set up; firstly that of harmonization of a somewhat social democratic kind, and secondly that of firmly liberal deregulation. The first conception rests on the idea that there already exists a "European model" based on three points which all European countries have in common: significant public intervention in worker protection, the existence of institutionalized systems for employee representation and the weight of collective negotiation.

But this is not in fact the way things

have developed, and the notion of the Social Europe put forward by Jacques Delors during the negotiation of the Single Act has been ruled out. In fact the philosophy of Maastricht has been better summed up in Margaret Thatcher's clear words: "The aim of a Europe open for business is the motor force behind the creation of the single European market between now and 1992... Our aim must not be to have the centre issuing increasing numbers of ever more detailed rules; it must be to deregulate, eliminate restrictions on trade and open up".

At about the same time, the European Round Table, which is connected to the European employers' organization UNICE, produced a document entitled *Making Europe Work*. This is a kind of anthology in which one learns for example that "Europe suffers from the problem of having too much work and too few workers". The remedies for such a situation are well known: "to raise the value of the young people coming on the jobs market through education and training while lowering the relative price of employing them" and attack the sources of rigidity "from the laws on job security to the high levels of social contributions and tax" without of course forgetting

Table 2: Part-time working in Europe

	Part-time		Women		Prof.*
	1979	1990	1979	1990	1989
Germany	11.4	13.2	91.6	90.5	8
Belgium	6.0	10.2	88.9	89.6	19
Denmark	22.7	23.7	86.9	79.4	6
Spain	—	4.8	—	77.2	63
France	8.2	12.0	82.2	83.1	89
Greece	—	5.5	—	65.7	78
Italy	5.3	5.7	61.4	64.7	49
Holland	16.6	33.2	76.4	70.4	18
Portugal	7.8	5.9	80.4	69.8	40
Britain	16.4	21.8	92.8	87.0	11
EEC	9.6	13.2	86.3	82.9	37

Source: OCDE, *Enquete*
 * Part-time: percentage of workers in part-time jobs
 * Women: percentage of women in part-time jobs
 * Pref: percentage who would prefer a full-time job

"national wage norms". There are appetising ideas on sub-contracting and even illegal working to enhance flexibility.

We should not count on jobs as a way of fighting unemployment since "machines and robots are more profitable, more flexible and more productive than human beings and offer a higher quality for direct tasks in production". In another report it is insinuated that the adoption of new technologies will be hindered by social protection measures. To those who think that we are heading straight towards a two-tier society, these experts respond with some embarrassment: "the threat of the emergence of a dual labour market... is exaggerated, but it is nonetheless near enough to the truth to arouse legitimate apprehension." This "legitimate apprehension" can only be reinforced by a look at the main points of what is, in effect, the European bosses' own "anti-social" charter, which demands:

- The ending of any form of discrimination against part-time workers and those with several jobs;
- The revision of labour protection legislation to further expand the range of legally permitted limited duration work contracts;
- The adaptation of social legislation to local realities;
- Greater flexibility in the organization of working hours without additional costs;
- An increase in wage differentials, especially for the young.

In this logic, the European bosses, whose outlook is well expressed by the British positions, have for a long time supported an ultra-restrictive notion of European construction, and oppose any community wide decision making — "even in the form of a recommendation". Social dialogue is to be limited to an

exchange of information.

There is no natural convergence, and the Social Europe should be limited to a few minimal protective norms. This approach explains the popularity of the principle of subsidiarity, according to which "the adequate level of government is the lowest level at which the given function can be efficiently carried out".

The present phase of European construction is essentially conceived as a means of reinforcing the offensive carried out by each bourgeoisie in each individual member state. In a book which came out four years ago,¹ Albert and Boissonnat insist vehemently on this. They sharply oppose harmonization and the "competition between national regulations": "This principle means delegating to civil society powers previously exercised by the states. The same principle means giving preference inside the EEC to the least restrictive national regulations, which amounts in effect to deregulation".

Social dumping

There exists a clear danger of "social dumping", in which countries with poor social provisions engage in "unfair competition" which in its turn traps them in the position of being providers of cheap labour. However, cheap labour is not the only factor for capitalists; competitiveness cannot be reduced to low wages, which are guaranteed ultimately by a relative shortage of skilled labour. If there is to be dualism, it will tend to express itself inside national entities which, over the past 15 years, have experienced the same drive towards increasing flexibility and segmentation of the labour market.

We are thus on the way towards "a model of capitalist economy where the industrial firms on the cutting edge and the big 'neo-industrial' service firms draw their labour force from two very distinct markets, subject to different rules and where labour costs vary widely".

This process will tend to increase social inequality and sharpen the polarization between rich and poor regions, without any great respect for national boundaries, since it is also a matter of challenging national cohesion.

European deregulation can only speed up this process, but its scope needs to be measured. It is true that one can point to the significant differences that exist between countries in terms of social security systems or simply at prosaic details such as limitations on the working week, which do not exist at all in Britain and Italy. On the other hand one can also point to the relative proximity of European countries in terms of social traditions and average living standards, compared to the gulf that exists for example

between the United States and Mexico. The European bourgeoisie do not want to see an uncontrolled deregulation that would undermine their instruments of social control.

This is why we should not underestimate the nuances in the different approaches to the Social Europe. From this point of view the Social Charter can be conceived as a very low common denominator or as the start of a new juridical form destined to structure the social dimension in Europe.

In a speech at the 1988 congress of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), Delors proposed the introduction of the right for all workers to be covered by a collective agreement. It was precisely on this point that Delors succeeded in getting underway the Val-Duchesse meetings between the UNICE and the ETUC, which gave rise to the "common views" in which the ETUC demonstrated its willingness to compromise even beyond its mandate. On October 31, the unions and employers thus arrived at an agreement to ask for a change to article 118 of the Treaty of Rome to open the way to European collective agreements.

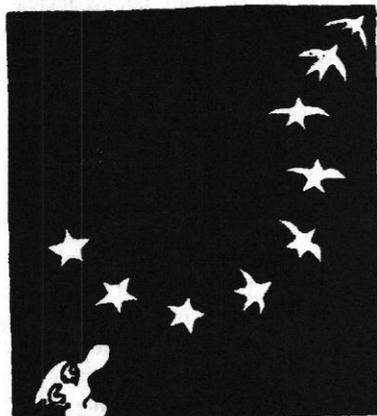
But Delors' biggest success was to persuade the European summit in Strasbourg in December 1989 to adopt the "Community Charter on the Basic Social Rights of Workers", which was accepted by all the governments present apart from Britain. This document is meant to form the social chapter of the Single Act, but does not in fact form part of the Maastricht Treaty. The text itself remains true to the sacred principle of subsidiarity, when it recalls that the guarantee of the basic rights it contains remains the responsibility of "the member states in conformity with national practices".

The Social Charter must thus take shape in the form of directives binding the member states in terms of the aims and implying that they take measures in their own chosen form and using their own chosen means. On this front things are to proceed in a rather more relaxed way than where monetary union is concerned!

Furthermore, most directives relate to matters which would anyway have had to be dealt with at European level, and the fact is that, two years later, only the most innocuous directives have been voted through. Of the 47 propositions, only those which come from the Commission have been applied while, on such essential matters as youth protection, sub-contracting, or the procedures for collective layoffs, there has been no movement at all.

Cohesion funds

The Maastricht treaty, strictly speaking,



Norway and Europe

does not add anything much in the social field. It will make possible the creation of "cohesion funds" for disadvantaged regions and social groups and extend the range of decisions that do not require unanimous agreement among the member states. The majority required will be 54 out of 66 votes, which means that Britain's 10 votes will not be enough to exercise a right of veto.

This qualified majority, which currently applies only to workplace health and safety, may be extended to cover information for and consultation of workers, gender equality and anti-discrimination measures.

However unanimity remains the rule for immigration matters, social protection, laws relating to losing one's job and workers' representation. Four subjects, furthermore, will remain outside the Community's sphere of competence: wages, union rights, the right to strike and lockouts. This gap is revealing; the bourgeoisies mean to keep their national sovereignty over matters essential for conducting the class struggle. This also implies that a European minimum wage is contrary to the spirit of the Maastricht Treaty.

The discussion on the Maastricht Treaty marks a turning point in that it presents a challenge to the social movements — the workers, women's and ecological movements — which can no longer be avoided or postponed. The time has come to put forward alternative proposals to that of the liberal Europe which is being prepared. The time has come for the European union movement to abandon its super-reformist policy, which amounts to jumping on the tiniest compromise with the aim of avoiding the worst. Such a policy is incapable of reversing the balance of forces; what are needed are ambitious Europe-wide demands and campaigns.

While the effects of the neo-liberal offensive should not be belittled, it

THE victory of the "no" vote in the Danish referendum on European Union on June 2 gave a strong and swift impetus to the resistance to the European Community and its single market in all the Nordic countries. It showed the people in Finland, Sweden and Norway that mass mobilizations can stop the apparently unstoppable plans of the power holders — at least in the short term.

EINAR BRAATHEN AND GUNNAR GUDDAL MICHELSEN*

BETWEEN January and the end of June this year, support in Norway for EC membership had dropped from 48% of the population to 36% and opposition had climbed from 41 to 51% (MMI, *Dagbladet*, June 6). In this article we will try to illuminate why resistance to the EC is stronger in Norway than anywhere else in Europe. Then we wish to show that resistance to the EC in Norway in the 1990s moves in a clearcut progressive and left-oriented direction, and that the EC represents a social rather than a national question and as such a core class struggle issue. Thirdly we consider some possible consequences for Norway and challenges for revolutionary internationalists.

At the time of the 1972 referendum, there was a 46.5% vote for EC membership and 53.5% against. Taking into account the large proportion of the Norwegian people who have not made up their minds, the majority opposing the EC is even stronger now than in 1972. In order to explain this, we have to understand the history of Norway. The political scientist, Stein Rokkan, has emphasized two cleavages which give the political landscape in Norway its special character.¹ The first is centre/periphery, the second is social class.

remains the case that the potential remains for turning the situation around. The start of the 1990s have seen the manifest failure of the liberal policies of Thatcher and Bérégovoy, which have left unemployment untouched.

The ETUC should now centre its discussions on a few central principles which could provide the backbone for a new European union charter. These would include:

- A reduction in the working week harmonized throughout Europe; this is the sole real solution to unemployment;
- Europe is a zone of high wages and social protection; it cannot base its econo-

mic success on social regression and the growth of inequality;

● There should be a minimum wage throughout Europe to counteract the effects of neo-liberal flexibility; the European labour market must function according to harmonized norms which reverse the present tendencies to making jobs less secure;

● A real harmonization of the European economic and social space would mean planning aimed particularly at reducing regional inequalities. ★

* Members of the Workers Power Group (AMG) in Bergen. AMG is a small group formed in 1981 by ex-members of the left reformist party SV. It has cooperated with the Fourth International and its Swedish section on several occasions, but without formal connection to the FI. For more information, write to AMG, Box 6577, Rodelokka, 0501 Oslo. Henrikke Fosshaug helped with the translating and editing of the article.

1. Stein Rokkan: "Norway: Numerical Democracy and corporate pluralism" in R. A. Dahl: *Political oppositions in Western democracies*, Yale University Press, 1968.



1. Michel Albert and Jean Boissonat, *Crise, Krach, Boom*, Le Seuil, 1988.

tionists (opposed to alcohol), against permissive liberals and conservatives.

The opposition alliance organized in the first political party in Norway, "Venstre" (Liberals), won a decisive victory in 1884. On the alcohol question the working class was partly in alliance with the farmers. This alliance was mostly clearly shown in the prohibition referenda of 1919 and 1926.

Strong labour movement

Historically, Norway has had a relatively weak bourgeoisie compared to Sweden. On the other hand, the working class has from the start of this century organized a strong Social Democratic trade union (LO) and Labour Party (DNA); The DNA was affiliated to the Communist International, the only Social Democratic mass party in such a position, from 1918 to 1923. Since the 1930s there was an alliance between the workers' movement, the farmers and intellectuals in the towns based on anti-capitalist and national-democratic ideology.

After World War II, the leadership of the DNA has become increasingly close to the bourgeoisie and the senior civil servants. This has produced conflicts between the leadership of the DNA and the traditional alliance on which it is based, particularly when the EC question is on the agenda.

During the EC struggle in 1972, the counter cultural forces gave the farmers' movement the dominant position within the anti-EC movement. The traditional conflict between centre and periphery was once again central: farmers, fishermen and people in general in the periphery were unanimously against. In parts of the country, and particularly in the north, these groups belonged to DNA, even if the farmers' organizations assured the financing and controlled the "Popular Movement against the EEC".

However, gaining the industrial working class was decisive to the outcome of the 1972 referendum. For the first time in history, a marked split occurred between the Social Democratic leadership and its traditional electorate. The leadership of the DNA and LO presented its electorate and members with an ultimatum: the DNA government would resign if it did not win the referendum. Nevertheless, almost half the trade unionists and the DNA electorate voted no. One reason why the opposition inside the Social Democracy was so strong was that an open faction, the Workers Information Committee, was organized for the first time.

Even if the actors remain the same today, the balance between them has changed. The social and economic development in the last 20 years has weakened the posi-

The far left in Norway

UNLIKE in most other European countries, the radical anti-imperialist movements of youth and students in the 1960s were dominated by Maoists. The only revolutionary organizations to have survived the 1980s are the RV and the AKP.

RV (Red Electoral Alliance) was formed in 1973 by the AKP (Workers Communist Party). Both organizations represented the Maoist variant of Stalinism until the Tiananmen massacre of 1989 when the party at once broke all its ties with the Chinese Communist Party. General frustration and wide-ranging rethinking followed. The AKP, which until 1980 had about 1,000 activists and in addition about 2,000 sympathizers in youth, student and women's organizations, has withered and has today 300 members at most.

An opposition inside the AKP formed its own leadership in 1989 and this spring broke away in order to develop RV, an electoral front with about 50 representatives in municipal and regional councils, into an independent and democratic party free from Stalinist ideas and practices.

This project for the RV has now been accepted by the AKP itself and the majority of the RV's municipal councillors. The revolutionary Marxists of the AMG (Workers Power Group) are actively involved in the RV project and have been warmly welcomed by the ex-AKP opposition. RV now has 1,200 members and will have its first independent and democratic congress in January 1993, where the Norwegian revolutionary left will take its most important decisions on programme and action since 1973.

AMG has urged other small groupings such as IS (International Socialists) and the remains of the Norwegian Communist Party to join the RV project, but so far without positive response.

In addition there are some neo-Stalinist party projects based on splinters from the AKP. They will definitely never take part in RV, but are quite active in the No to EC organization on a rather sectarian platform of "national liberation" and class struggle rhetoric. ★

tion of the farmers and the counter cultures. Whilst employment in primary activities has dropped, employment in the public sector has more than doubled. Most of the new employees in this sector are women, and they fear the consequences of drawing closer to the EC. This could explain why twice as many women as men are opposed to Norwegian association with the EC. It has made it easier to stress the social arguments, rather than national and constitutional arguments in the struggle against the EC.

A quasi-alternative to full membership called the EES has set the agenda for discussions about Norway's connection to the European Community during recent years. EES (European Economic Space) is a treaty for the EFTA countries to become fully integrated parts of the single market, and as such enjoy full economic membership in the European Community.

Three aspects of the EES have been emphasised in the Norwegian debate:

- The people are deprived of institutional powers to steer national resources and capital movements;
- The trade union movement loses its control of wage and work conditions;

- The EES will remove environmental restrictions.

The anti-EC organization therefore currently gives priority to the fight against EES, rather than building a broader movement against membership of the EC.

Three-way division

Against this background, the EC struggle is being fought between the defenders of three different solutions: the "neo-Liberalist" supporters of both EC membership and the EES (yes/yes); in the middle we have those who oppose becoming members of the EC (no/yes); finally we have the "Popular-radical" side who oppose both the EC and an EES agreement (no/no). According to recent polls the three blocs are about the same size.

The "yes/yes" bloc consists of the Labour Party leadership, the Conservative party and the Progress Party — the new "big coalition" in Norwegian politics. But the most vigorous supporter is the Employers Association (NHO), which has initiated several reports and recruits leaders. The press is dominated by owners, editors and journalists who have a distinct

yes/yes attitude.

Ridiculous amateurs

The Social Democrats in the government have had to take the leadership of this bloc because (a) for the moment the Conservatives and Progress Party lack organizational strength and credibility; and (b) the pro-movement is being led by business leaders and young career politicians who even the pro-press accuse of being ridiculous amateurs who lack popular appeal; the Norwegian people has been shocked by several exposures of golden handshakes involving the NHO. Despite the DNA leadership's winning the support of 65% of county conference delegates for its pro-EC policy in spring 1992, the party has a substantial internal opposition on this question.

The no/yes block regard the EES as a lasting national compromise. It consists of the Christian Party (Krf), as well as most of the EC sceptics in the DNA including the youth. About 35% of the delegates at the DNA county conferences supported this opinion — this is a bigger opposition than in 1972. Tactical political arguments lie behind the no/yes position. In spite of a considerable no/no opposition within their own party, Krf has used a no/yes standpoint to exploit their pivotal position in parliament. In the DNA it has not been legitimate to oppose EC involvement entirely, particularly because the Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland is the "mother" of the EES agreement.

Finally, the no/no bloc is dominated by one organization: No to EC, which was

	Local elections Sept 1991 (%)	Poll June 1992 (%)
Labour Party (DNA)	30.4	25.7
Conservatives (H)	21.9	23.3
Centre Party (Farmers — SP)	12.0	13.8
Socialist Left Party (SV)	12.2	15.5
Progress Party (Frp)	7.0	8.4
Christian Party (Krf)	8.1	7.0
Liberals (V)	3.5	3.2
Red Election Alliance (RV)	1.5	0.9

founded in August 1990. The no/no bloc mainly defends the possibilities to influence capitalist development that parliamentary democracy today offers. Secondly this bloc defends the so-called "Scandinavian welfare model".

The double no

Politically we can identify three groups within the no/no bloc.

1. The Centre Party (SP) is the most important political party in the movement, owing to its exceptionally able leader, Anne Enger Lahnstein. Since 1990 this party has moved to the left from a European point of view. The Centre Party is a leftist party that defends the social and national rights of the people against market liberalism and capitalist forces.

2. The second group comprises the leadership of the Socialist Left Party (SV), the main environmentalist organizations, a small hardcore opposition in DNA with a base in the north of Norway, parts of the trade unions, above all where women are strongly represented, and the urban petty

bourgeoisie. The SV has some problems with its no/no position, firstly because some members are opposed to it and secondly because the leaders want to join the government. But because the SV has stressed arguments concerning social welfare, economy, democracy and the environment in their anti-EC campaign and opposed nationalist arguments, SP and the no/no campaign has kept to the left.

3. Leftist activists: Members of SV and RV are often anti-EC. This category also contains local branches of anti-racist organizations, environmental organizations, trade unionists and the women's movement.

Unlike in France or Ireland, the far right is of minor importance in the anti-EC movement. Firstly because they are in any case weak and secondly because they have been effectively denied membership in No to EC. There are about 1,000 leftist activists involved in No to EC — about 1% of its membership. Nonetheless they play a big role in the movement and have legitimacy; so far the Yes movement have not used this fact in their campaign.

Changing times

In 1972 the anti-EC movement was mainly an emotional blowout whose arguments were mostly symbolic. The holders of power were not challenged and overall developments in Norway thereafter were similar to those in the EC countries. This has changed now. The political weakening of the Norwegian ruling circles opens the way for a series of victories in the struggle against the details of EC adjustment, which may deepen the political crisis and open class conflict. Furthermore the orientation of the No to EC, which has opposed racists and pro-life forces and calls for progressive alliances in Europe, can bring the Norwegian left out of isolation into a European movement. There has already been cooperation with the anti-EC campaigns in Denmark and Ireland.

Certainly, the oil producing far north has an important role to play in the creation of any alternative, truly democratic Europe.

Obituary — Celia Stodola Wald

CELIA Stodola Wald, an activist in the US Trotskyist movement for nearly 25 years, died recently after a long battle with scleroderma, in Torrance, California, where she had gone to receive medical treatment. She was 45 years old and is survived by her husband, Alan Wald, cultural editor of the socialist journal *Against the Current*, and their daughters Sarah, 12 and Hannah, 9.

Celia was born August 27, 1946 in East Orange, New Jersey, and graduated from high school in Fargo, North Dakota in 1964. She received a B.A. degree in psychology from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, in 1969. On the Antioch campus she was a well known activist in SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. In winter 1966 she was a member of SDS's Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) in Cleveland, Ohio. In March 1968 she joined the Young Socialist Alliance.

A year later, in Los Angeles, California, she joined the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). In 1971 she was a full time staff member for the National Peace Coalition (NPAC) in San Francisco. Until mid-1975, she was an activist in the Oakland-Berkeley branch of the SWP. She then moved to Ann Arbor where she attended the University of Michigan School of Nursing and was a founder of the Ann Arbor Committee for Human Rights in Latin America. She graduated in 1979 and was elected to Sigma Theta Tau, the national nursing honorary society. From then until the fall of 1982, she practiced nursing in the antepartum unit, Women's Hospital, University of Michigan Medical Center. In 1986 she was a founder of Solidarity, a socialist organization based in Detroit, and of its Fourth International Caucus, of which she remained a member until her death. Later in the year, a gathering will be held in Ann Arbor to commemorate her life. ★

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Youth protest against G-7 summit

A BIG mobilization of mainly young people from throughout Germany greeted the arrival of the leaders of the world's seven richest countries for the G-7 summit that opened in Munich on July 6.

RAPHAEL DUFFLEAUX

FROM Thursday, July 2, Munich was under siege. On top of the mobilization of most of the Bavarian police, the German government had brought in thousands of frontier guards from other provinces, these being the only repressive forces directly under Federal control. Much of the population was fed up with the massive police presence, which was aimed not only at protecting the G-7 meeting, but also at intimidating the thousands of demonstrators who came out in response to an appeal from the organizers of the Congress Against the Dominant World Order.

At first this congress was organized by the Munich students' association and was to last for three days, from Friday until Sunday. On the Saturday afternoon a demonstration against the summit was called by a collective of fifty organizations, including most of the country's anti-imperialist organizations, the far left groups, many Catholic and Protestant organizations, sections of the Young Socialists and local groups of the Greens.

There were about 20,000 on this march from throughout Germany, including the former East Germany. Almost all the demonstrators were young and took up the most radical anti-imperialist slogans. The biggest contingent was that of the autonomists [anarchists]. The far left was split into a myriad of groups, none of them with more than a few hundred supporters.

The Greens, who were represented through local groups, mobilized less than the Christian youth groups. However one of the Green's founders, Jutta Ditfurth, who has left the Greens to form a small leftwing ecological organization, was there.

The demonstration was accompanied by some 6,000 police who were waiting for their opportunity to break it up. The arrival of about 100 autonomists wearing scarves over their faces — which is forbidden by law — gave them the pretext to attack several times;

Reasons to read IV

REPORTING on an interview given by ex-Israeli premier Yitzhak Shamir after his recent election defeat, the *International Herald Tribune* told its astounded readers that "Mr. Shamir's remarks suggested that he never intended to make progress towards Palestinian self-rule". Mr. Shamir, the *IHT* reports, "would have tried to drag out talks on Palestinian self-rule for 10 years while attempting to settle hundreds of thousands of Jews in the occupied territories" (*IHT*, June 27-28, 1992). Such revelations, coming in a newspaper which — like every other mainstream newspaper in the world — has presented the Middle East "peace process" initiated by the Madrid conference last October as a significant political breakthrough, might well leave *IHT* readers scratching their heads in bemusement.

However, no such bewilderment would have afflicted regular readers of *International Viewpoint*. In our pages, Salah Jaber reported last November that: "In any case, for the Israeli government of Yitzhak Shamir this is all a bluff... Shamir's aim is to give away nothing essential while giving the impression of being ready to do so... The aim ... is to play for time... To sum up, Shamir is going to the conference to get the money he intends to use to carry through his rampant annexation of the West Bank and Gaza" (*IV* 216, November 11, 1991).

It's accurate and perceptive reporting like this — not just on the Middle East but on Eastern Europe, Latin America, the class struggles in the imperialist countries and all the major upheavals in world politics — that makes *IV* indispensable reading for anybody who is interested in the processes which will shape the world we will live in in the 21st century.

But, needless to say, telling the truth about the machinations of the crooks who rule our planet is not a money-spinning activity. In the autumn, we at *International Viewpoint* will be forced to review the price and frequency of our magazine. That is why we are appealing to you, our readers, to assist us in ensuring the survival of a magazine which consistently approaches the world from the point of view of the oppressed and those in struggle.

You can help us in two ways:

- Firstly, by taking an active part in our drive to increase circulation — if each current subscriber could find another, our objective of financial stability could easily be met. Also, for those who are new to *IV*, we are offering a special three month subscription for only \$11/£6/60FF.

- Secondly, by supporting the fund drive that we are setting up to safeguard the future of our press. Send cheques to *International Viewpoint*, 2 Rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. As usual, payments should be made out to PEC, but please indicate that your contribution is intended to go towards the fund drive. For postal and bank transfers please see details on page 2. ★

nonetheless, the march was able to reach its destination.

Meanwhile, the mantle of repression passed on from the Bavarian Interior Ministry to the president of the university, Ludwig Maximilien. The latter withdrew permission for the use of the room booked for the Congress, claiming that "order is in danger" owing to the proximity of the demonstration. The seven round tables planned had to take place in seven different places.

On Monday, July 6, over 2,000 young people tried to take part in the official ceremony of greeting for the seven heads of state

and government. This brave but somewhat foolhardy initiative gave the units of frontier guards their opportunity. Dozens of people were wounded and there were 170 arrests. The police brutality was such that the next day's Munich press carried headlines such as "Munich's shame" and "the Brutal Summit".

This anti-imperialist demonstration came a few weeks after a solidarity congress with Cuba which brought together more than 1,000 activists. Along with the recent strike wave we are beginning to see the militant groups in Germany getting a new wind in their sails. ★