

International VIEWPOINT

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Miners' strike puts heat on Labour Party

Unholy alliance
against the
Basques

First European
peace activists
meeting since
deployment



International Viewpoint

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The Basque national movement under attack

Mitterrand's first extraditions of Basque political refugees on September 26 set the seal on collusion between the rightward moving Social Democratic governments in Paris and Madrid against the Basque national movement. In fact, they were clearly part of an ambitious and eminently political plan. The escalating moves against Basque refugees in France have gone hand in hand with moves in Spain to outlaw Herri Batasuna, the political organization of the militant nationalist current.

Gerry FOLEY

In May, after many months of parapolice terror against Basque refugees living in the French Basque country and in the midst of a wave of deportations of Basque nationalists from France to Latin America, the Madrid prosecutor, Pedro Claver, filed a formal demand for the illegalization of Herri Batasuna.

What is more, the demand was based on a purely political argument — the refusal of Herri Batasuna to accept the integration of the Basque nation into the Spanish state as something sacred and eternal.

The ruling on the prosecutor's petition was handed down shortly after the extradited nationalists were handed over to the Spanish-state authorities. Contrary to his expectations, apparently, the judge of Madrid's Appeal Court No. 15, Luis Fernando Martinez Ruiz, ruled against the demand.

Before the judgment, Martinez Ruiz let it be known that "this decision is not going to make people happy, but in any case, my career is already made," according to the September 28 *El Pais*.

The Madrid daily went on to report: "In his ruling, the judge stated that he could not accept a petition for outlawing Herri Batasuna 'that does not say what crimes are connected with its notarized declaration and statutes.' He subsequently noted: 'Having read and reread the prosecutor's petition, I find that it does not say what part of the statutes represent a violation of the law nor what crime is related to this.'"

Spain's most authoritative newspaper summed up the prosecutor's arguments as follows:

"The prosecutor stated that political parties are the ideal expression of pluralism but that they must be subject to constitutional principles, one of the outstanding of which is unity of the nation. He added that the statutes presented by HB are very ambiguous and did not help to clarify its real objectives.

"The prosecutor went on to say that on repeated occasions during the process of obtaining legal status initiated in March 1983, HB refused to include a

specific acceptance of the constitution in its statutes.

"In declaring the Spanish nationality of the members of HB, the prosecutor pointed out, rather than saying 'Spanish,' they used the formula 'those who are obliged to claim the civil status of Spanish subjects.'"

On October 3, the prosecutor appealed the judge's ruling, continuing the government's long campaign to outlaw the Basque nationalist organization.

At the same time, the objective of the exercise was pointed up when the governor of the province of Viscaya banned a demonstration against the extraditions called for October 6 in Bilbao by Herri Batasuna. He argued that it did not have the right to organize a demonstration because it was not included on the register of legal parties.

Herri Batasuna

In fact, Herri Batasuna is a coalition of a number of political groups that favor an independent Basque state. But it as such does not advance this demand. It has no program beyond the five points of the "Alternative" of KAS (Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista — Socialist Patriotic Coordinating Committee), to which it belongs. They are the following:

1. General amnesty.
2. Legalization of all political parties. Full political freedom.
3. Measures to improve the living and working conditions of the working class.
4. A statute of national autonomy, the right of self-determination and the power to exercise self-government.
5. Basque as the national language. A public school system in Basque and the defense of ideological pluralism.

This program is formulated in various ways. The above is translated from the Basque of *Jotake*, the magazine of the Abertzale Sozialista Komiteak, the Patriotic Socialist Committees (September 1982). The original Alternativa KAS, made public in September 1977, included more specific points under the above general principles. One of the points left

out called for closer relations between the populations of the Spanish and French Basque country.

In fact, HB has been very cautious about supporting movements for national rights for the Basque people in France. Such demands are expressly banned by French laws on pain of draconian penalties. The Basque nationalist group Enbata was outlawed by the French government in the 1970s simply for stating in a publication that "We Basque are a people." The French government could be expected to react drastically to a movement for national rights for the French Basques.

In any case, Mitterrand's stab in the back of the Basque people in the Spanish state did not fail to provoke an outburst of anger in the French Basque country. In its September 28 issue, *Rouge*, the paper of the section of the Fourth International in France, carried the following report from a correspondent in north Euzkadi (the French Basque country):

"The day after the announcement of the government's decisions on the extraditions an explosion of anger ripped through the Basque country. In Saint-Jean-de-Luz [Donibane Lohiztun], during the traditional festival of the Marmitako, the police violently charged a thousand demonstrators. Barricades were erected and the 'abertzak' [Basque patriotic] councillors elected on the Union of the Left slates resigned."

Protests in south Euzkadi were powerful and bitter. Luis Enrique, a leader of the Liga Komunista Iraultzailea, (LKI), the Fourth Internationalist organization in south Euzkadi, described them in a telephone interview published in the October 5 *Revolucion*.

"At the start, the collection of signatures for the 'Letter to the Peoples' [see back page of IV] was very important. More than 20,000 signatures were collected, including those of 2,000 elected representatives. Numerous demonstrations, ranging from a few hundreds to several thousands developed throughout south Euzkadi.

"The reactions reached their peak as the news of the extraditions came.... On that night, a lot of people went into the streets, especially young people, and stopped traffic, built barricades, confronted the police with stones and Molotov cocktails.

"It was a minority response but a very determined one.... The second stage was the general strike [September 26], which has to be considered a success. It was not a total strike, but it was a very tough action. During it also there were major confrontations with large police forces."

Enrique went on to describe the unevenness of the strike action:

"The strike was total in the Tolosa and Ondarroa regions, and very powerful in Guernica, Marquina, Renteria and Ernani. The participation was weaker in Pamplona and Vitoria. Transport, services and stores were hardest hit, because it was mainly the small and medium enter-

prises that went on strike. Pickets played a decisive role in extending the action."

The strike in fact showed both the strength and the limitations of the radical national current. The strike was called by the radical nationalist trade union organization, the Langile Abertzale Batzordeak (LAB — Patriotic Workers Commissions) on its own, without the support of the other unions and without any apparent campaign to get a united action.

The LAB is very much a minority force in the labor movement, with representation ranging from 5% to 10% in the factory councils. It is strongest in Guipuzcoa, the least hispanicized of the Basque provinces. All the strong points of the strike that Enrique mentioned are in the largely Basque-speaking mountain and coastal areas.

Ondarroa is a large fishing town in the province of Viscaya not far from Bilbao. It is nearly 100% Basque speaking and a historic fortress of Basque nationalism. The LKI has had representatives on the Ondarroa city council and it still has one on the council in Marquina, also a Basque-speaking town not far away.

Nationalism and immigrant workers

In Ondarroa, a well-known revolutionary nationalist leader in ETA, Andoni Arizabala, recently killed in a mountain-climbing accident, joined the Fourth International in the early 1970s. He was sentenced to life in prison under Franco on the charge of planting a bomb under a police car. He became a local hero.

Andoni was also an industrial worker in one of the small plants scattered through the area. He explained to me last summer in Ondarroa how his experience and that of other local ETA activists as workers convinced them of the need for a program that would include workers liberation as well as national liberation.

The LAB, however, has no trade-union program. Although its membership is very radical and includes virtually all the organized young workers, it is essentially a labor front politically subordinated to an underground revolutionary organization, which has only a very limited political strategy. The leaders of Herri Batasuna, its political sister organization, explain that they do not think that anything can be won in immediate struggles before a breakthrough on the national question, "until we achieve real self-government," one after another of them told me last summer.

This position has probably been hardened by the fact that for ten years the major unions have continually capitulated or accepted defeats. In particular, they have offered nothing for youth. Since the onset of the crisis there has been very little hiring, and the average age of workers in industry is now well over thirty. Youth unemployment is almost total.

Even in Alava, a mainly lowland area that is the most hispanicized of the three Basque provinces included in the Basque autonomous region and where the indus-

trial labor force is overwhelmingly made up of immigrants from non-Basque areas, "whatever young workers there are, they invariably belong to LAB," Miguel Vazquez, an LKI leader in the provincial capital of Vitoria (also capital of the Basque autonomous region) told me last summer. The same is true for Pamplona, which also has a mainly immigrant work force. Nonetheless, in such areas, the militant nationalists obviously have a harder time in getting a broad response to their appeals.

Pamplona is in the province of Navarra, which is not included in the Basque autonomous region. In this province, the strike actions were strongest in the mountainous north, according to *El Pais*. This area is still largely Basque speaking. Pamplona lies between the mountains and the vast southern plains of the province, where Basque national consciousness diminishes to the vanishing point. But the city has had a Basque speaking population in living memory and many walls are covered with radical Basque nationalist slogans.

Among the immigrant workers in most Basque areas, the radicals and youth have been attracted to the fighting nationalists. Herri Batasuna has gotten a substantial minority vote in both Alava and Navarra, although considerably less than in Guipuzcoa and Vizcaya. But the mass of immigrant workers in Alava, Juan Ordonana, and LKI leader in Vitoria, told me are "indifferent" to Basque nationalism. The same view was expressed by an LKI metalworkers' leader in Pamplona, himself an immigrant from Castile. He also pointed out that the overwhelming majority of cadres in the big unions are immigrants.

al liberation struggle as of little or no concern to the workers.

The Communist Party, which despite its extreme weakness in the Basque country, controls the other main union, the Workers Commissions, has held a very negative attitude to militant nationalism, especially since the establishment of parliamentary rule. During the September 26 strike, thus, there was a demonstration against the CP.

In fact, in Balbao union militants expelled from the Workers Commissions, including LKI activists, have joined the LAB as an alternative.

The fundamental limitation of the LAB is the same as that of Herri Batasuna itself and all the other members of the KAS. It does not have a real united-front structure or a program for united-front struggles. Herri Batasuna and the KAS present themselves as *the* front, which everyone who supports the principles of the Alternativa KAS should join. But they offer no right of political differences and no means of democratic decision making.

HB in an impasse

The inevitable result is that after a first period of growth, the HB and the KAS became firmly confined to a well-defined minority space. In particular, they excluded themselves from areas where there was a strong sentiment for real united-front work, as in the women's movement, the environmentalist movement and the peace movement, which have been the other main channels through which youth have come into political activity.

At the same time, as the largest fighting organization lost its momentum, and

Statement of the Fourth Internationalist organisations in North and South Euzkadi

Delegations from the signatory parties met in Donostia [San Sebastian] on September 12, 1984. Recognizing the situation faced by the Basque refugees in north Euzkadi, they wished to express the following positions:

1. It is essential that throughout the French and Spanish states and in particular in the Basque country that all working-class and *abertzale* [militant nationalist] organizations and democratic associations mobilize massively and in a united way against the extraditions and for the restoration of the Political Refugee Status supported by Francois Mitterrand when he was a candidate for president in 1981.

2. We believe that regardless of the political differences that we may have with ETA and with its methods of struggle, it is essential to reaffirm the need for defending the democratic rights of the Basque refugees and to oppose all extraditions.

3. In conclusion, from an internationalist position, this fight in defense of the Basque refugees is the best way of struggling against the repressive and chauvinist measures of the governments. Defending the democratic rights of the Basque refugees is defending the rights of the workers and of the peoples.

Signed: Liga Komunista Iraultzailea (Fourth Internationalist organization in south Euzkadi); Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (Fourth Internationalist organization in north Euzkadi).

In Alava, the Union General de Trabajadores (UGT, the SP-dominated confederation) has been controlled by a daughter group of the British Militant tendency. It is more militant than the SP or CP on purely trade-union questions. But it regards the problems of the nation-

under the impact of the crisis, the national enthusiasm of the youth has declined. And rapidly increasing use of drugs has become very worrying to the militant nationalist organizations. They accuse the police of promoting the use of drugs on the sly as a means of demoralizing

Basque young people.

In the elections for the Navarra autonomous parliament in 1983, a coalition that called for a democratic united front against national and social oppression, Auzolan, won a significant vote. It included the LKI and Nueva Izquierda, a group that split from Euzkadiko Ezkerra (Basque Left), a party that grew out of an earlier attempt to develop a militant nationalist political alternative, but which aborted and turned rightward.

The LKI hoped to be able to build such a coalition throughout the Basque country, in part as a means of convincing the HB to accept the idea of a broader and more democratic front. But in the 1984 elections for the Basque parliament, Auzolan got only a modest vote, about 1%.

The LKI drew the conclusion that the radical current had closed ranks behind the BH in the face of a growing assault on militant nationalism from the Basque bourgeois moderates and the SP government.

The HB vote of over 14% in these elections was an impressive result in the circumstances. But it also confirmed the stagnation and relative isolation of the militant nationalist current. It showed that the radical nationalists were still being pushed back and were running out of time.

Fundamentally, the revolutionary nationalists have not been able to develop a political strategy and organization sufficient to meet the challenges of bourgeois democracy. The first result of this was that they allowed the moderate Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) to regain its position as the main Basque party during the period of the transition to parliamentary democracy. The PNV was absent from the struggle against the Franco dictatorship in which revolutionary nationalists played the leading role.

The Basque moderates

The rise to dominance of the PNV was accompanied by a growing marginalization of the fighting national movement on all fronts. The dedicated teachers of Basque were pushed aside in favor of "professionals." The volunteer language and cultural organizations found themselves facing official institutions with vastly greater resources. Popular participation in the neighborhood committees and local governments faded away as bourgeois parliamentary "normalcy" was established. Even the "Unified Basque" that came out of the radical cultural movement, a Basque that could be a means of expression for a whole society, came under attack. The PNV favored recognizing a whole gamut of dialects understood only in very limited local areas.

At the same time, the rise of the SP brought a renewal of the centralist assault on all forms of Basque nationalism that combined the continuing repression of the unreconstructed Francoist police

with more insidious weapons. The SP attempt to divide the immigrant workers from the older Basque population by fostering pseudo-left "antinationalism" and a philistine materialism of a type highly developed by the old British Labour Party.

The LKI councillor in Marquina explained to me that the SP argued that the Basque language and culture were of no interest to working people, only a plaything of intellectuals and lovers of the past. On the other hand, he said, the LKI found that these issues were precisely the most political ones that could be raised in the context of local government. "We argue that culture is a right," he said, "not a luxury."

War of the flags

In the summer of 1983, for the first time, the SP government attacked the right of the Basques to display their national flag as they chose, something that not even the preceding right-wing government had dared to do. It was the beginning of the War of the Flags, which continued this past summer. Madrid attempted to make it illegal to display the Basque flag during the summer fiestas without the Spanish state flag.

In Ondarroa in particular last summer I saw very militant demonstrations against the Spanish flag. They were very popular in composition and quite reminiscent of Republican demonstrations in Belfast.

Similar incidents took place in San Sebastian. Inaki Sarasketa, a former *guderi* (soldier of ETA) sentenced to death in the 1970s and a veteran member of the LKI, had this interpretation:

"The military and the Alianza Popular, the main bourgeois party, are putting more and more pressure on the PSOE. When the bourgeois parties were in power they did not dare do what the PSOE is doing now. So, from the bourgeois standpoint, pressuring is the perfect tactic. They don't have to get their hands dirty, and these Social Democratic idiots are solving their problems for them. And they are digging their own grave as well."

Sarasketa thought, moreover, that a lot of the SP's vote in the Basque country came in fact from the bourgeois right.

"The centralist bourgeoisie has very little political weight in the Basque country. So, since it had no chance of getting a presentable vote, it preferred to back a centralist, Spanish nationalist Socialist Party so that it could play the repressive role, so that it could carry out the same Spanish nationalist policy that they would."

In France, at the start, the revived Socialist Party played to the sentiment for more self-expression among the small nationalities incorporated into the French state. Their votes were among those that put it in power in 1981. But it has now betrayed their hopes, and sealed its compact with the right by offering the blood of the Basques. The rightist *Quotidien de Paris* crowed in a headline "Les

Socialistes jettent le Basque," "The Socialists throw out the Basques," which was a pun on a phrase that means that they "took off the mask."

In both France and Spain, the attempt by the Social Democrats' governments to nail the Basque national movement to the cross in the name of "democracy" is only one aspect of their compact with the right. But it is perhaps the most obviously scandalous. In the Paris daily *Liberation*, for example, the editor, Serge July, pointed out that the crimes with which the extradited nationalists are charged occurred before what Mitterrand's premier, Fabius, calls a "democratic" government came to power, that is, under the direct heirs of Franco. The SPs are, therefore, trying to settle accounts for the right.

The Basque revolutionary nationalist movement, a leading revolutionary force in the world for two decades, is now facing a much more dangerous attack than anything the vicious but fading Franco dictatorship was capable of.

On the other hand, the mass response to this betrayal and unholy alliance is opening up an opportunity for the revolutionary nationalist movement to regain the ground it lost in the late 1970s and make a new advance. By its very nature, this attack has also to be directed against the PNV. In fact, it has been accompanied by statements of government representatives decrying the PNV's "contradictions," since it has been forced by its own base to oppose the extraditions.

The signs of strain in the PNV are reminiscent, in an incipient way, of the cracks in the Catholic moderate party in the North of Ireland that appeared when the movement in support of the H-Block prisoners was on the rise. This mass united front put the revolutionary nationalists in the North of Ireland in a position to contend for the political support of the majority of the oppressed population for the first time.

Moreover, the Basque national movement does not yet face any mass social opposition in its own area. The SP government has offered the powerful Basque working class nothing. And the extent of the support that HB has already won among immigrant workers indicates that there is the possibility for winning these workers to a fighting alternative.

The LKI paper *Zutik* has reported that the protests against the extraditions have led to the broadest united front campaign in the Basque country since 1977. The Basque national movement has obviously come to a crossroads. At this point solidarity in the other parts of the Spanish state and internationally is extremely important. A very broad campaign is necessary to expose the "democratic" repression of Mitterrand and Gonzalez and burn the claws off the Social Democratic cat's paws of the chauvinist and bloodthirsty right. ■

Labour Party conference gives massive support to miners

Britain's Labour Party meeting in annual conference in Blackpool on October 1, gave overwhelming support to the miners' strike. Delegates welcomed Arthur Scargill, the left-wing president of the National Union of Mineworkers, with a standing ovation, before going on to pledge solidarity and condemn 'unlawful action by the police' against miners' pickets.

However, at the end of the day's debate dramatic scenes ensued when Scargill was served with a legal writ by a private detective requiring him to appear before a judge who had ruled that the miners' strike was illegal. After an emergency meeting of his union's executive, Scargill declared that he would defy the writ, even if it meant imprisonment.

Steve ROBERTS

The debate on the miners' strike was the major issue on the conference agenda. In the week preceding the conference frantic efforts had been made by the Labour Party's leader, Neil Kinnock, to remove any mention of police violence from the wording of the motion. However, the miners refused to alter the wording of their leader's motion, thus embarrassing Kinnock, who has made frequent attacks on violence 'from all sides' without singling out the responsibility of the police for initiating the violent scenes that have ensued on picket lines throughout the strike.

In his speech to the conference Scargill emphasised this point. 'We have suffered from attacks on the picket lines from a state police force armed with full riot gear,' he said. 'Yes, we have violence. State violence against miners whose only crime is to fight for the right to work!'

He went on to say that the appointment of Ian MacGregor, the American businessman who was appointed by Margaret Thatcher to decimate Britain's steel and mining industry, was 'a blatant political decision designed to provoke the National Union of Mineworkers.'

Scargill went on to confront the main economic argument put forward by the coal board employers and the government in the strike on the necessity to close uneconomic pits:

'There are no uneconomic pits. There are only pits which have been deliberately starved of investment by successive governments.'

Not all those who spoke in the debate supported the miners, however. Eric Hammond, the right-wing general secretary of the electricians' union said that the conference should condemn the violence of hooligans on the picket lines. By this Hammond meant pickets.

Rank and file delegates at the conference representing both unions and local parties loudly heckled Hammond

when he implicitly backed the call for a ballot in the miners' union on the strike action.

A massive round of applause went to Tony Benn, the leader of Labour's left wing, who was supporting the motion on behalf of the party's national executive. Benn attacked Margaret Thatcher for having masterminded the dispute and authorised the harassment of miners by the police.

Kinnock chose not to speak in the debate on the miners. However, the following day he delivered a speech which the whole of the media had bayed for after the conference vote.

Maintaining his equal-handed approach Kinnock said, 'I condemn the violence of the stone throwers and the battering-ram carriers, and I condemn the violence of the cavalry charges and of the truncheon squads.' Kinnock went on to call for the party to respect legality if it was to win the next election.

However, this approach was explicitly rejected by delegates when it came to the debate on local government. Tory government measures aim to cut local expenditure on social services. In order to defend these services Labour councils will have to break the law.

Confronting Thatcher's laws

Noting the contradiction between the stand of conference and Kinnock's position, the leader of the local government manual workers' union, Rodney Bickerstaffe, turned to the Labour leader during the debate saying, 'it is not a question of which laws we break, Neil, but those which we obey'.

The continuing strength of the left inside the party was demonstrated by delegates' decision to reject a measure sponsored by Kinnock which would have taken the question of reselection of the party's sitting MPs out of the hands of the rank and file leadership of the party

and made it subject to a ballot conducted under the full pressure of the media. The rebuff by delegates was a major blow to Kinnock's efforts to roll back the gains made by the party's left wing in the last period.

However, the left wing remains critically confused on a number of decisive issues. In particular, after a muddled debate on the question of defence policy, delegates went on to adopt a policy document which simultaneously seemed to promise unilateral disarmament and re-affirm Labour's commitment to continued British membership in Nato. The document, influenced by the proponents of 'non-nuclear defence', contradicted Labour's usual policy of defence cuts by promising increased spending on conventional armaments.

The issue of violence and respect for the law also remains a critical blind spot for most of the left. Time after time, struggles by trade unionists have run into legal obstacles promoted by the government and the employers.

Just as the Labour conference was gathering, police arrested shipworkers occupying the Cammel Laird shipyard in the northwest of England following a judge's ruling. There was no widespread protest in the labour movement.

Neither was the left of the labour movement strong enough to prevent the betrayal of the printers' union, the NGA, by the trade-union bureaucracy shortly before the miners' dispute started, on the basis that the trade-union movement should not break the law, by supporting them in their fight against the Tory government's anti-trade union legislation.

This issue is likely to become central in the next period of the miners' strike. A number of legal cases brought by scab miners against their own union has resulted in the strike being declared illegal. There is a real possibility that the courts, on the backdoor urging of the government, may seize the assets of the union. Seizure of the miners' union's assets has already taken place in South Wales. Such a move against the national union would present a clear challenge to the paper support offered to the dispute so far by the Trades Union Congress. Such a step could only be adequately met by a general strike called by the whole trade-union movement.

As the winter draws near in Britain, and coal stocks at power stations become run down, the pressure is on the government to end the dispute quickly. This pressure has been increased by the decision of the 17,000-strong miners' supervisors union, NACODS, to strike unless the coal employers pay them during the course of the dispute and find a resolution for the pit closure issue.

But the government, having spent nearly £2 billion on the dispute (more than it spent on the Malvinas War), is determined not to compromise, considering the strike a 'worthwhile investment' if it smashes up the miners' union. For their part, after having made so many sacrifices over the course of their seven

month-old strike, the miners are equally determined not to settle for anything less than complete victory.

Increasingly commentators are drawing parallels with the 1926 general strike in Britain. Then the miners struck and the government provoked the trade-union movement into a nine-day general strike. The strike was called off by the TUC when victory could have been gained. The miners went on for another six months by themselves before the final defeat.

In its political, legal and military preparations, the government is obviously prepared for a similar confrontation today.

What is less clear is the state of preparedness of the labour movement. However, the miners themselves are prepared for such a central confrontation, and have few illusions in the role of the

trade-union and Labour Party leadership. A left wing can be built around the miners which, taking its example from their struggle, can defeat a government that has been greatly discredited by its inability to resolve the dispute.

The victory of the miners at the Labour Party conference and the defeat of Kinnock and the right wing is another sign that such a left wing is taking shape.

Socialist Action, the British revolutionary Marxist weekly paper, has called an international meeting to discuss the miners' dispute. Rank and file miners will be present from all over Britain and international delegations are warmly invited to attend. The meeting will take place on October 20 in St. Helen's, Lancashire, England. Enquiries to Dick Withecombe (44) 061-223-4470.

British miners and Irish rebels — a common struggle

The following article is from the September 27 issue of *Internationen*, the paper of the Swedish section of the Fourth International. All of the quotes have been retranslated from the Swedish.

SHEFFIELD — "On British TV, the Catholics always seem to be trouble-makers. In fact, it is the Catholics who are the oppressed.

"If people at home could have seen what we saw there, there would be a reaction, as there was this spring when people could see on TV how the police beat up unarmed pickets at the 'Battle of Orgreave.'

"We are on the same side as the nationalists there. We have the same enemy — Thatcher."

That was Guy speaking. He is a miner from Armthorpe in South Yorkshire. He and a dozen other British miners were part of a trade-union group that has just visited the civil-war-wracked North of Ireland.

They came back overwhelmed by their impressions. And moved by the support they got.

During the time that they were in Ireland, they met a lot of Irish nationalists and visited their communities. They also participated in the big demonstration on August 12, on the thirteenth anniversary of the British government's decision to introduce internment without trial. It was an impressive experience for them.

The police in the North of Ireland and the British army attacked the demonstration and staged a veritable pogrom. One person was killed and about a dozen badly wounded.

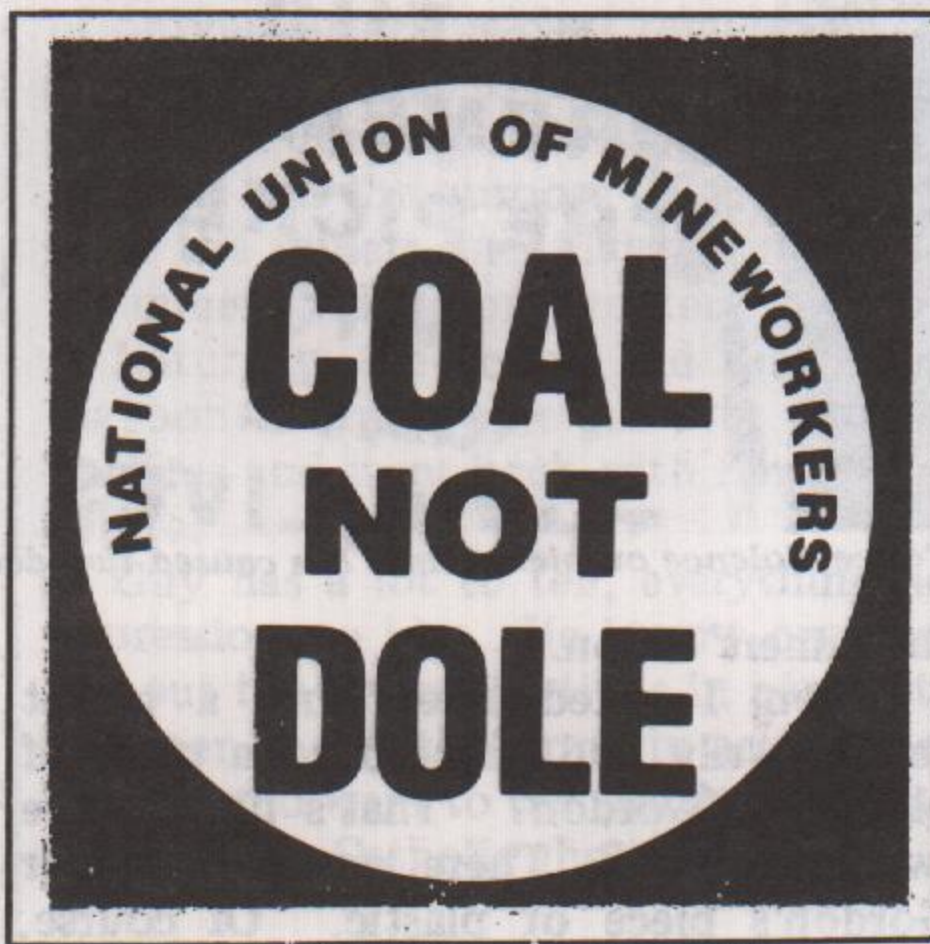
"I felt ashamed to be a British subject after what happened," Wayne said, who is also from South Yorkshire. British soldiers fired rubber bullets right into crowds that were not doing anything. They shot to kill!"

And Steve, from a mining district in Lancashire, added:

"During the demonstration we saw that they were not firing to stop some skirmish or at any place in particular. These devils were not out to solve any problem that might have arisen. They were out after anyone who was in the demonstration. As far as they were concerned, anyone who was there was an enemy.

"It's the same in our own strike. When the police come to some place, there is trouble. Otherwise, it's quiet."

During their time in Belfast, the British workers lived in various Catholic ghettos around the city. The Yorkshire miners were put up in Ardoyne, which is entirely surrounded by Protestant neighborhoods.



A lot of Ardoyne people do not dare leave their houses for fear of being attacked or shot at by snipers. In accordance with its general practice, the British army has built a series of "observation posts" around the ghetto. Every street is under surveillance.

"It's a prison without walls," Arthur said. He is another Yorkshire miner. "The people are besieged."

Wayne broke in:

"Every day people face their enemies eyeball to eyeball. The soldiers and the police break down the doors of the people here again and again. The living standard is very low. When the people throw bricks at the police and the British army, it is to protect themselves against their terror. It is to fight back, and to show that they want a free Ireland."

There is not a shadow of a doubt where the sentiments of these British workers — who have been fighting their own life or death struggle for half a year — lie. They are full of admiration for the work of the nationalist organizations.

"It's fantastic to see how oppressed people can organize their community, how they can build up human relationships despite deprivation.

"We were also struck by how people help the women whose husbands are in prison. It's like the sort of thing that happens in our strike when workers' families get food packages from other groups of workers and other unions."

That was Wayne's comment.

Guy was pondering over what could have happened to make the British soldiers play such a vicious role in this long-drawn-out war against a whole population.

"Before we went to the North of Ireland, I was sitting and chatting with a soldier in a pub. His father was a miner. Now he was a soldier in the British army in the North of Ireland. Before he went into the army he didn't hate anybody. He never wanted to shoot anything. I wondered what they had done to him to make him into a killer, a murderer!"

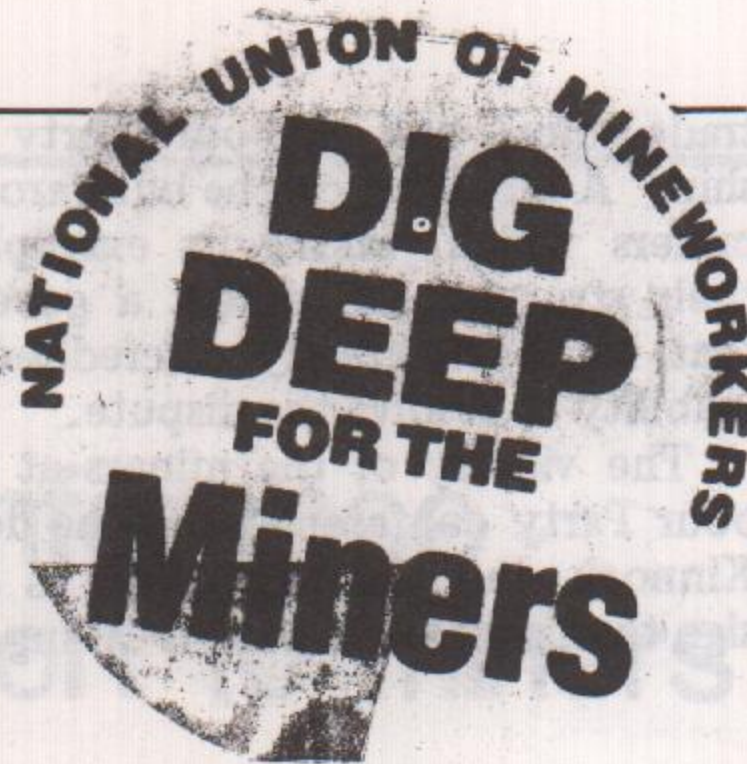
"I was ashamed. These are working-class lads. They are deserting their class. But we can't 'brainwash' them back, the way the army brainwashed them for its purposes. The father of the bloke I talked to is very active in the picketing. But his son is fighting the same sort of people he came from.

"If only soldiers like him could mutiny! Like the Sikhs did in India, when their temple was stormed and they shouted, 'We're not firing on our own people!' That would be class solidarity."

After their visit, the British workers were convinced that the nationalists in Ireland have been subjected to the same sort of slander campaign they have. They are intensely aware that their own future is part of a common struggle for common interests:

"With what is happening in the miners' strike, with the spiraling unemployment, we see our own future happening in the North of Ireland. That's what we want to tell the British workers now."

On the picket line in South Yorkshire



The British miners' strike is a growing issue in Sweden, which has traditionally had close contacts with Britain and where a Social Democratic government is in power. *Internationalen*, the paper of the Swedish section of the Fourth International, has given special coverage to the strike, sending a correspondent to cover the developments on the spot. The following are reports from the heartland of the National Union of Miners.

Tom GUSTAFSSON

ARMTHORPE, SOUTH YORKSHIRE
(1) — It was an extraordinarily raw Thursday morning. It was still a long time before sunrise. But almost all the workers assigned to picket duty outside the Markham Main mine were already there.

It was drizzling. It was cold. There was dense fog. You could only see vague silhouettes at the entrance to the mine.

The cops were also in place, that is the ordinary police. The riot police, thousands of whom are stationed in the region, were being kept in their barracks, at least for the moment.

How many times in the six-month-long strike had this scene been repeated?

Then it occurred to me. This is really a good thing. The colder it is, the better. The foggier, the better. The closer we get to winter, the better it is for the miners. Then the coal stocks will shrink a lot faster. Then the effects of the strike will be felt much more acutely.

There were about a hundred of us on the workers' side, an equal number on the police side. We stood in two lines facing each other without meeting at any point.

They had their helmets on to protect them from the rain. We had sheets of plastic over our heads.

Naturally, there was a more comradely spirit on our side; there was room for three or four people under the sheets of plastic, maybe even for five, but then the rain would run down your back.

What is more, we had control of a covered bus stop. There was room there for ten to fifteen people. Just as the plastic was traded around, we took turns under the roof.

"A pound for my place," one or another person would shout out in the mist as we passed on our way to join the picket. That's what the talk was like. There was a lot of joking and cracks, a lot of rough camaraderie. But there were also serious moments. People told the latest news about the fight against the strikebreakers, about the rally on Wednesday night, about those who were still suffering from injuries after the police ran amuck in Armthorpe last week, about how the strike was spreading among the

dockers in Hull, about the TUC congress and its decision to support the miners.

"Now this resolution has to be translated into action — here and in all the mining towns, power stations, ports, steelworks," said Gordon Morris.

Morris is the representative of the miners at this pit to the coordinating committee for the Yorkshire district of

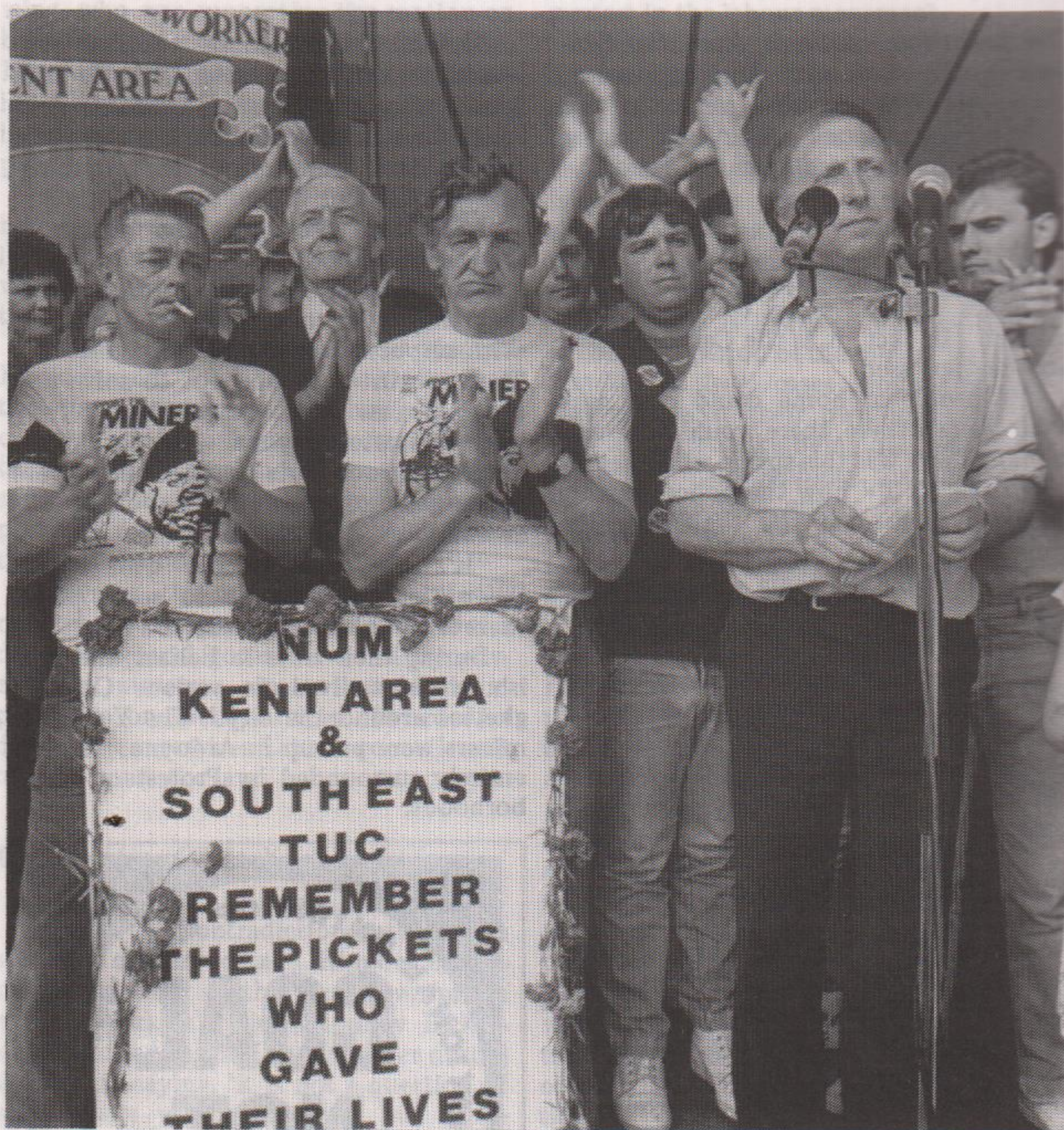
I was the fifth person, and so the rain ran down my back for the next half hour.

One question was enough to start a discussion. Morris told how Margaret Thatcher had been preparing her attack on the miners' union for years. He talked about how she and her reactionary supporters had driven back one group after another in British society, how she had dismantled British industry, broken unions, forced people to the edge of hunger.

"The miners knew that a test of strength was coming. They prepared for it. For two years, people from the miners' union have been going around everywhere among the membership to explain things, to argue, to build up a front of resistance."

It was not so far from here, in Cortonwood, that the strike began.

"So, the miners said, it might as well be now, and they went on strike. The strike built and built, and now it has turned into a counteroffensive by the miners' union. This was the only way out, since it was clear that the government and the National Coal Board had adopted a tactic of shutting down mine after mine and eliminating tens of thou-



Police violence on picket lines has caused two deaths (DR)

the miners' union.

When I asked after him, a picket smiled wryly and pointed to a piece of plastic. "Gordon? That's him in the 'welfare club'." There was room under Gordon's piece of plastic. Of course,

1. Armthorpe has about 10,000 inhabitants. About 1,500 miners work in the Markham Main mine. They are all union members. About 250 of them have been arrested by the police once or several times during pickets or for "disturbing the peace." There are about 53,000 miners in Yorkshire as a whole.

sands of jobs step by step. The miners also knew that they were ready to take up a decisive struggle for their future.

"Now, we have to reach out to other groups," Gordon Morris explained. Our piece of plastic had become a discussion club, where we felt very comfortable despite everything. It was an oasis of comradeship and warmth in the dank morning, two meters away from the police line.

"The outcome of the miners' strike will be decided by the support we can get from other unions, by whether or not we can stop all the scabbing, whether or not we can build a common understanding that what threatens the miners today is aimed in the longer run at breaking the resistance of the workers movement as a whole."

That was the message that Gordon Morris wanted to get out.

But we also had something to tell.

We knew that strikebreakers were coming. On our way to Armthorpe, we passed by several police cars parked along the sides of the road, ready to stop passersby, to report suspicious movements of "flying pickets," and to attack miners. Suddenly we pulled alongside two heavy police cars and an armored bus on their way to pick up strikebreakers.

"There's only one strikebreaker left here," said one of the pickets. "His name is Dave Johnson, and he is not from this town. There were a number of them, but the rewards of strikebreaking were not what they expected. And so they cleared out and took their shame with them."

Yesterday, there were scuffles when the pickets tried to stop the gangs of strikebreakers.

"It's just a quarter to six," someone said in our "discussion club." "Yesterday, they came at 8:00 a.m."

So, we had passed the police when they were bringing strikebreakers in.

Right. A minute later the police convoy swung in in front of us, a good hour earlier than the day before. A small slip at the wheel would have taken it right into the pickets.

"Illegal driving," someone said. "But that's that. The police are here to protect them. Hundreds of police streamed in, all to protect one strikebreaker. But sooner or later, we'll see that he gets a lesson."

Today, they did not try to stop the strikebreaking. But they showed their presence, their readiness and their solidarity.

So, the mood became almost cheerful. The first task of the morning was finished, and a lot of us went down to the Armthorpe Welfare Club to get a cup of coffee and a piece of bread.

This is where the meetings are held. This is where the young people gather. This is where the miners' union has its meager stocks of food. The shelves looked a bit bare. Maybe more provisions would come by midweek.

This is also where posters are put up, as well as clippings, where people play pool and where the miners eat their daily

meals together. The food is prepared in the kitchen here with donated equipment.

The women's committee is already hard at work. Besides taking part in the pickets and strike rallies, the miners' wives also take care of a load of practical tasks, that are quite essential to holding the strike front together.

All of this activity has broken down many of the barriers between men and women in the miners' community. Here nothing will go back to "normal" after the strike. The wind of change has left nothing intact.

Suddenly, the discussion at the table broke off. Derek needed a new chain for his saw — saw?

Another piece in the puzzle of this unusual strike organization fell into place. Some of the miners are responsible for getting firewood from the town common for hard pressed families. That is why Derek needs a new chain for his saw, and that is why the treasurer for the union local has to find the money for it.

Here nothing is left to chance. People have held out for six months and will hold on until they win, even if the strike goes on until next year. So, there has to be perfect order, planning and organization.

To see how all this is being done here in Armthorpe near Doncaster in South Yorkshire in the twenty-sixth week of the strike is the experience of a lifetime. ■

Police on the rampage

Guy Bennet is still just as angry when he talks about what happened on "Bloody Wednesday" a few weeks ago, about how the police besieged the whole town of Armthorpe near Doncaster in South Yorkshire and hunted down everyone who looked like a miner.

Guy speaks with suppressed anger but his fear of being killed or beaten up has faded.

He was on picket duty. The police did not get him. But many of his mates and fellow workers were beaten bloody. Several of them were hospitalized.

If Guy had been caught, he would have gone straight to jail. He had already been arrested twice for doing picket duty. The first time he was released on bail. The second time, he was already a "repeated offender."

There is always some article such as "molestation" or "threatening a policeman" that the cops can use against the strikers.

Hundreds of people collecting money for food for the striking miners have been arrested in the country's streets and squares. They are charged with "disturbing the public order" or violating the 1824 law against vagrancy.

That is what happened on "Bloody Wednesday." And after that the government calls the miners thugs and agitators.

The pickets gathered as usual in the early morning. The police also lined up facing them as usual. The pickets were unusually numerous, and perhaps that is what gave the police second thoughts. In any case, they cleared out.

So, the strikers saw an opening to really stop the hated scabs. With the help of a crane, they blocked the entrance to the mine with a big block of concrete. Tractors and bulldozers also came in handy. Barricades rose all around the entrance. Some of them were set on fire and smoke rose into the sky.

Then heavily equipped riot police moved in. There must have been several thousand of them. They launched a pogrom. Doors were smashed in, windows broken. Every male who looked like a miner and did not jump when the police said to was clobbered.

Guy Bennet was one of those who managed to get away and hid in the wood. But the police also started a manhunt there. Police in full battle gear with raging dogs were everywhere. It was only by a miracle that Guy managed to get away.

The siege lasted for two and a half hours. For two and a half hours many dozens of ordinary working-class families were exposed to pogromist terror. Many homes — despite its drab exterior, the town was kept in spick-and-span order — were turned into an unrecognizable mess.

What was the purpose of all this? To show who was master? To try to intimidate the miners and their town into submission? To take a senseless revenge on the miners and factory workers who dared oppose the authorities?

Naturally, the action had the opposite result, if it was intended to intimidate. As soon as the people got over the shock and wiped the blood off, they relit the bonfires and went back with renewed energy to what they were doing a few hours before.

Guy has a lot to tell, everything he himself experienced. It has made a deep impression on him. He is now organizing a rally to protest these events. And he can put the police's actions in perspective since he has visited the North of Ireland and seen the British army in action there. He was part of the delegation of British miners who went to the North of Ireland to make contact with the oppressed population in the Catholic ghetto. ■

A growing movement of solidarity with the British miners

In the Netherlands ...it is still not good enough. Nonetheless, it is not a bad start. More than 400,000 guilders [approximately £95,000] have been paid into the solidarity account set up by the FNV, the country's biggest confederation of unions. The account has been receiving more than 5,000 guilders a day.

A hundred thousand guilders' worth of foodstuffs, vegetables and meat have been sent to Britain by the Socialist Party's independent campaign. (1)

The British Miners' Support Fund, in which, among others, anarchist groups are working, brought 32 miners' children to the Netherlands for vacations. About a half ton of food has been collected so far by the committee set up by the Verbond van Communisten in the Netherlands. And the Onafhankelijk Verbond van Bedrijfsorganisaties (Independent Confederation of Factory Organizations) has collected fifty thousand guilders.

Twenty members of parliament from the PvdA (Labour Party), the Communist Party, the Pacifist Socialist Party, the Radical Party, Democratie 1966 (a bourgeois liberal party), the Evangelical People's Party (EVP, a Protestant religious party), and the Scholten-Dijkman Fraction (two MPs who broke from the Christian Democratic Party on the nuclear arms question) have called in an advertisement for people to send money to the FNV solidarity account.

The Nijmegen "Platform Against the Lubbers Government of Social Regression" organized an action rally on September 19 in response to the government's budget. A miner spoke there and a collection was held. A list was passed around for people to sign up as supporters of the miners' struggle.

The Enschede district organization of the teachers' union ABOP has sent 500 guilders to the miners. Various shop stewards' groups, including the one at the ADM shipyards in Amsterdam. And at Hoogovens, the big steel plant in IJmuiden near Amsterdam, it has been decided on the basis of petitions to collect money for the miners. So, the solidarity movement is well underway.

The NUM is happy to provide speakers for solidarity rallies. Since two miners' wives were brought to Amsterdam by the FNV women's organization, various other tours have been started or are in preparation.

In Rotterdam, there is a support committee working that includes, among other forces, the CP; the SAP (Dutch section of the Fourth International); the women's group of the ABVA (Algemene Bond van Ambtenaren — General Public Employees Union, the largest union affiliated to the FNV); ABVA-Ret, the transport workers section of ABVA; the VCN; the OVB (a small radical union confederation); Rebel, the youth organization in solidarity with the Fourth International; and the youth organization of the FNV.

Over the week of September 22-29, this committee toured three young mine workers in the Rotterdam area. On September 28, they went to Heerlen, a former coal mining area.

On October 9, a miner and a miner's wife are coming to Brabant. In Eindhoven, an evening is being organized by the ABVA, the Industriebond (the industrial workers union affiliated to the FNV), the FNV women's organization, and by shop stewards in Philips and DAF, among other workplaces.

On October 9, the FNV youth movement is organizing an evening in Helmond. In Deurne, an evening is being organized by the FNV youth organization, among other forces.

The committee that organized the reception for a miner's wife in Heerlen is now considering sending a delegation to Britain to see with their own eyes what is happening and to deliver the money collected by the ongoing campaign.

The SAP is supporting the FNV campaign. SAP members are helping to circulate petitions and other material. They are helping to organize solidarity meetings with miners or miners' wives through support committees, union bodies and shop stewards groups.

In Nicaragua...the gold miners of El Limon in the department of Leon sent a message of solidarity to the NUM, translated and published by the Nicaragua solidarity campaign in Britain. The gold miners are affiliated to the Sandinista Workers Confederation.

Dear Comrades,

A revolutionary Sandinista greeting from the mineworkers of Nicaragua.

Through this letter we, the miners of Nicaragua, would like to assure you of our solidarity with the struggle you are waging in your country to win trade union democracy, to sustain your struggle without your rights being suppressed. Brothers, we would like to tell you not to lose heart. Right and reason will win through when there is the will power as strong as yours.

We know you are confronting reactionary consciousness and right-wingers led by the Iron woman Margaret Thatcher, but your struggle is just and being just will win, as the reactionary structures of capitalism are swept away by the uncontrollable forces of revolutionary and progressive ideas of the organized and conscious working class, guided by the best sons of the proletariat. Forward brother British miners, your brother miners in Nicaragua support your just struggle. A struggle which will be long, cruel and full of sacrifices, but we say to all, 'The struggle continues, victory is certain.' 'Free country or death.'

Enoc Castellion
Union of Mineworkers
El Limon Mine

In West Germany...the two-million-strong metalworkers union IG Metall has opened a fund for the British miners. All members, branches and districts of the unions will be able to contribute. This follows a donation of 1.3 million DM made by the union to the NUM to alleviate hardship. An IG Metall spokesperson was pressed by British journalists as to whether IG Metall had put restrictions on the use of the money. He replied that his union had received donations from British unions during their campaign for the 35-hour week, and nobody had asked them on what it was to be spent. The action of IG Metall is in stark contrast to that of the German miners' union whose leader, Adolph Schmidt, has taken a hostile attitude towards the British miners. ■

The amnesty – a victory for Solidarnosc

Throughout the spring the Jaruzelski dictatorship did all it could to convince the seven Solidarnosc leaders and four KOR (Workers Defence Committee) activists to accept exile. In this campaign the regime used not only the good offices of the Catholic hierarchy but also those of the Nato secretary general. The response of the eleven was to say 'No'. They wanted to either be tried or set free at once, and not to have to leave Poland.

Finally, the eleven won. The trials were not concluded and the accused were not forced to board an aeroplane heading west. They were set free after two-and-a-half years of detention without any judgement being pronounced. Solidarnosc activists in general consider that this great victory was won because of the successful boycott of the June 17 municipal elections, which showed the regime that it still had ten million opponents, by showing that Solidarnosc still had ten million sympathisers.

Cyril SMUGA

The amnesty finally proclaimed on July 22 allowed for the release of the great majority of political prisoners, and all the well-known figures among them except Bogdan Lis. It was preceded by much toing and froing among the Polish bureaucrats. The amnesty's opponents in the corridors of power did not give up until right at the last minute.

In fact, four deputies went so far as to vote against the amnesty in the Diet, and eight others abstained. The fact that the trial of the KOR members opened just one week earlier, and that a trial of Solidarnosc leader Andrzej Slowik opened on July 14, just before the end of his sentence, in which he was accused of 'insulting the prison commander', show that those within the dictatorship

who favour stepped-up repression fought for their position right to the end.

The amnesty law itself was a good illustration of the bureaucracy's juridical methods. It only allowed a 'total' pardon to the former bureaucrats of the Gierek team who had been condemned by the tribunal for the embezzlement and misappropriation of funds that they had carried out over the preceding decade. For the Solidarnosc members, the amnesty was conditional. The benefits of the amnesty will be withdrawn from all those who get involved again in political activity before the end of 1986. In other words, they have been released on probation.

As if this was not enough, there are a certain number of political offences not covered by the amnesty. These include 'high treason'. This is the pre-

Solidarnosc can still mobilise widely (DR)



text for keeping Bogdan Lis, whom the Solidarnosc leadership put in charge of relations with Western trade unions, along with his deputy Piotr Mierzejewski. Then there is 'terrorism', which is the accusation against seven miners from Lubin who are still imprisoned because they are accused of having prepared retaliatory actions after the killings by the militia there on August 31, 1982. There is also 'using religious ceremonies to attack the state', if the sentence is longer than two years. But the two priests held on this charge have been released as the tribunal admitted that the charges against them did not warrant more than two years in prison.

Limits of the amnesty

Another charge excluded from the amnesty is that of 'using enterprise facilities for material benefit', that is, using workplace facilities to print leaflets. Six steelworkers from the Huta Katowice works are still in prison on this charge. Thus, at least a score of Solidarnosc activists are still behind bars.

For the Solidarnosc militants who went into clandestinity or abroad, they can only benefit from the amnesty if they give themselves up and 'restore the misused property' (machines, union funds, etc.). In addition, the law states that they could be prosecuted later if new (unacknowledged) facts concerning their activity come to light. In other words, the amnesty does not apply to them. In Poland everybody remembers the trials of those members of the resistance who gave themselves up on the basis of a similar amnesty after the Second World War.

'The amnesty is in fact a conditional and collective suspension of trials and sentences,' wrote an underground Solidarnosc weekly newspaper in Warsaw. (1)

'The proclamation of the amnesty was a purely tactical act on the part of the authorities, but it shows that our activity forced the regime to adopt a tactic that weakened its position vis-a-vis its allies,' was the judgement of a bulletin from Silesia. (2)

The Solidarnosc leadership from Lower Silesia stated that 'the determined and persevering attitude of the people forced the rulers to declare the amnesty'. (3)

'The amnesty is only one stage in our struggle,' announced the journal of the Fighting Solidarnosc organisation. (4) This assessment is shared by the vast majority of the underground press. In general they emphasise that, after the slap in the face delivered by some 40 per cent of the electors who boycotted the June 17 elections, General Jaruzelski had no

1. *Wola*, No 24, August 6, 1984.
2. *Wolny Robotnik*, No 20, July 1984.
3. *Z Dnia na Dzień*, No 28/330, August 12, 1984.
4. *Solidarnosc Wlascza*, No 17/84, August 12, 1984.

other choice than to make some concessions.

The demand for the liberation of the political prisoners had become the principal demand not only of the underground union movement but of very wide layers of the population. Thus, this theme, popular even among those who had not been actively involved in the struggle, gave the clandestine union structures a very wide audience.

By moving to the release of the vast majority of political prisoners, the dictatorship wanted to deprive its opponents of this audience. Jaruzelski thus admitted, at least implicitly, the failure of his policy of increased repression.

In fact, despite a noticeable increase in arrests, despite heavier and heavier sentences pronounced on those arrested, the underground structures of Solidarnosc were not weakened in the first six months of the year.

On the contrary, they showed themselves capable, particularly in the campaign for the release of the prisoners and for the boycott of the electoral farce on June 17, of mobilising the mass of activists and, indeed, well beyond.

According to the reports in the clandestine press, some 10,000 people took part in the poll-watching in Warsaw, which enabled the underground leadership to make a rapid announcement of the estimated rate of participation. Similar operations took place in all the big cities and many other constituencies.

The bureaucracy's tactic

There is no doubt that the Jaruzelski government, by conceding partially on a major demand of the movement, hoped to calm things down and pacify those who were particularly sensitive on this question. This 'humanitarian' act as it was called by the official press, also doubtless made it possible to renew attempts to collaborate with the Catholic hierarchy, and demand that it deal more effectively with those priests who come out too openly in favour of Solidarnosc.

No doubt Jaruzelski had in mind the amnesty given by Gierek in 1977 — which led to the release of those sentenced during the 1976 strikes and of KOR militants — which at the time, for at least a year, weakened the impact of the opposition.

'The regime is banking on the idea that, while the active opposition will come out strengthened, that perhaps the amnesty will pacify a section of society. But, there are still all our demands, apart from the amnesty to win,' wrote a clandestine journal in Warsaw. (5) The junta needs such a respite, as it is going into a new attack on the workers' standard of living.

In fact, and the official media do not hide it, the economic results of the last three years are disastrous. Despite a definite drop in consumption, despite successive price rises, the market remains unbalanced and production is still far

from reaching 1980 levels (the year when a more or less general strike gave birth to Solidarnosc).

What is more, despite numerous directives and resolutions at every level, the bureaucracy has shown itself to be incapable of slowing down the rate of investment or of changing its structure. Financing investments takes 3 billion zlotys per year (price fixed in 1982) while it was planned to only devote 1 billion per year to this during the period 1982-85. In addition '90 per cent of investment goes to the development of the means of production' (6), while the plan was to prioritise the consumption sector.

Solidarnosc is still active

Given the government's inability to force the different industrial lobbies to accept a drop in their share of investment in the division of the national income, an inability tacitly admitted in the official press, the bureaucracy is today planning a new reduction in consumption. It needs this to get the support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF, which Poland wants to join) and of the Catholic hierarchy for its austerity plans. The amnesty also has to serve as a token of the regime's stability to these institutions. Their eventual support will help the junta to present this austerity policy as the only possibility.

However, whatever its projects, the regime still only has limited room for manoeuvre. The amnesty is seen by everyone in Poland as a victory for Solidarnosc. The prisoners' return was greeted everywhere by massive gatherings, and the masses that were held then turned into rallies in many towns.

Wladyslaw Frasnyniuk, who had been the leader of the clandestine Solidarnosc organisation in Lower Silesia for ten months after the military crackdown, managed to shake off the police just after his release, and met the underground leader Zbigniew Bujak. Together they signed a declaration calling for the struggle to continue.

On his return to Wroclaw, Frasnyniuk was feted as a national hero by thousands of people gathered to celebrate mass. The police brutally dispersed this assembly. In Warsaw, 7,000 people gathered in the church of St Stanislas to greet the freed activists from KOR and Solidarnosc. The latter addressed the crowd during the mass.

Where demonstrations had been organised by the underground leadership on August 31, as in Wroclaw, to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the Gdansk strike, they were massive and militant. It should be noted that after the August 31 demonstration the authorities in Wroclaw tried to impede the activity in the city by arresting, and sentencing to two months in prison, Wladyslaw Frasnyniuk and Jozef Pinior, another recently amnestied union leader.

In addition, and the clandestine press is unanimous on this point, Solidarnosc

does not want, by means of a concession from the regime, to find itself forced to accept any truce or ceasefire. 'The union's activity in every form must develop, openly or in clandestinity in order to put pressure on the regime and mobilise the people, particularly the workers', wrote the organ of the Workers Inter-Factory Committee of Solidarnosc in the Warsaw region (MRKS). (7)

'Thanks to the amnesty we can more easily fight for trade-union pluralism, more openly and more widely,' one could read in another bulletin of the capital. (8) It is in this framework that several amnestied leaders publicly proposed a meeting of the members of the national leadership of Solidarnosc elected before the introduction of the state of war.

In its declaration of July 23, the underground leadership of Solidarnosc (TKK) wrote, 'We can only gain our rights by imposing them. In the workplaces we need a stronger and stronger union movement, acting as openly as possible but, as it has been up to now, of necessity based on clandestine structures. The TKK considers that the clandestine union commissions in the workplaces must broaden their activity and find new forms of public activity in defence of workers' rights. Such activity, backed up by distribution of the press, discussion and education groups, broadened by inter-factory relations, will make it possible to completely rebuild our union.' (9)

The first steps along this road have already been made. In Wroclaw, the former underground leader of the region, Jozef Pinior, and the leader of the workplace union commission, Wladyslaw Mekarski, made a long visit to the Mostostal factory shortly after they were released. They held general meetings in each workshop, catching both the police and the factory bosses visibly unprepared.

Faced with this orientation on the part of Solidarnosc, the Jaruzelski regime has some difficulties. It cannot, without denying itself what it hoped to gain from the amnesty, proceed to massive widespread repression of the freed activists. But neither can it leave them free to act. It seems to have opted — as the arrests and sentencing of Frasnyniuk and Pinior (although the benefits of the amnesty were not withdrawn from them) testify — for guerrilla warfare against those who act openly: arrests, searches, light sentences. However, this leaves a wide field of action for the union.

While the amnesty has opened a new situation in Poland, it is not, as has been seen, a sign of increasing stability. The evolution of the balance of forces in the year to come will depend in large measure on Solidarnosc's capacity to organise the struggle against the new austerity measures.

5. *Robotnik*, No 68, July 23, 1984.

6. *Zycie Gospodarcze*, No 48, November 27, 1984.

7. *CDN-Glos Wolnego*, No 80, August 20, 1984.

8. *Wola*, No 24, August 6, 1984.

9. *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, No 95, July 26, 1984.

The third international convention on nuclear disarmament – a balance sheet

The deployment of the first Nato missiles in Great Britain, West Germany and Italy in the autumn of 1983 might have seemed to many people to sound the death knell of the peace movement in these countries. This was not in fact the case. It is true that the mobilisations announced for this autumn will undoubtedly be smaller compared to last year. However, this is partly because the peace movements in countries like Belgium and the Netherlands, where the euromissiles have not yet been installed, decided to concentrate their efforts on the months preceding deployment in 1985.

It is also true that the movement went through some difficulties last winter, especially in West Germany and Italy. Here they were trying to redefine their perspectives in a situation where the European capitalist governments totally disregarded the explicit opposition of millions of people to their militaristic policies.

However, the massive mobilisations this spring in the Netherlands, in Spain and in West Germany testify to the continued determination to fight for peace. (1) The third convention of the campaign for European Nuclear Disarmament (END), which took place in Perugia, Italy, at the end of July also showed that, far from being despondent, the forces of the peace movement are very much alive and ready to do battle.

One of the most remarkable features of the international meeting, which was attended by 1,200 people, was the presence of the official peace committees from Eastern Europe, headed up by the Soviet one. Equally notable was the absence of participants from the independent peace groups of these same countries, who were refused visas by the authorities. The main issues on the agenda concerned the perspectives of the movement after the first deployments, the question of Nato's policies in the Mediterranean basin and the dialogue with the movements in the East.

Jacqueline ALLIO

The conference certainly did not satisfy those who were looking for co-ordinated perspectives for action. Nothing of the sort was planned by the organisers. Moreover, the dialogue of the deaf that opened up from day one with the representatives of the Eastern European countries did not help matters.

However, the meeting, did, at least, make it possible to put the most right-wing section of the peace movement clearly in a minority. The reformists, who from last autumn have been advocating the adoption of more 'realistic strategies', were wasting their time here. Conscious of the unpopularity of their proposals for compromise, their representatives kept a low profile in the debates.

In the final rally, Mient-Jan Faber, one of the main spokespersons and leaders of the Netherlands' Interdenominational Council of Peace (IKV) had to take up the proposals for international activity which had been put forward by delegates from several countries.

These included; demonstrations that were to be organised in West Germany at the end of September, at the time of the Nato exercises; the participation of delegates from different countries in the

demonstration planned in Rome for the time of the meeting of Defence ministers of seven countries of the Western European Union (WEU) on October 26 and 27. (2)

Also among the steps proposed were active solidarity with a campaign for a referendum on the missiles in Italy and support activity for the struggle of the peoples of Central America, which, at the request of the Sandinista leadership, will be taken up this autumn by peace movements in a series of European countries.

As in previous END conferences, in Brussels in 1982 and in Berlin in 1983, the one at Perugia gave only a one-sided picture of the reality and activities of the European movements. Having become convinced that such meetings have a bureaucratic character, several of the most combative sections basically refuse to send delegates, and the method of selecting delegations accords a lot of weight to the reformist wing of the movement, which is often over-represented in the leaderships or in the coordination of the national movements.

It is also important to underline the impact of the presence at Perugia of numerous political and trade-union celebrities of different hues, such as Ken Coates, president of the Bertrand Russell

Peace Foundation; Ron Todd of the British Transport and General Workers Union; Luis Echeverria, an ex-president of Mexico; Luciana Castellina and Lucio Margri, Italian PDUP (United Proletarian Party) MPs; Tony Benn, a left leader of the British Labour Party; the writer Alberto Moravia; Jiri Pelikan, Czech dissident, now member of the European Parliament for Italy; Lian Halevi, a representative of the PLO in Paris; Nidle Jotti, president of the chamber of deputies in Italy; Andreas Hegedus, ex-prime minister of Hungary; etc.

This heterogeneity also represents the richness and force of the movement. The fact that Olafur Grimsson, a representative of the 'Parliamentarians for World Order' tried to convince the conference of the importance of negotiations between non-aligned governments and of the highly democratic intentions of Indira Gandhi, or of Miguel de la Madrid (the president of Mexico), is in itself, of minor importance.

Against the rightward drift

What is important is that the representatives of the Madrid Anti-Nato Commission and indeed of the whole Spanish delegation, which represented the most advanced wing of the conference, were able to present their view to all those assembled, that peace would not come about, 'without a world liberated from colonialism, oppression, poverty and sexism.' (3)

Another positive element was the fact that the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which, ten days before the opening of the convention, was asking the Italian national coordinating organisation to abandon the idea of holding any mass mobilisations in the autumn, was forced into a minority by the proposals for action made by the Italian left and supported by delegates from other countries.

'It is necessary to recognise that in the post-deployment period, the peace movement has reached a crossroads. Influential groups see the need to go beyond simple protests against nuclear arms toward a programme which aims for political results. This means moving on from a movement based on protest and fear to one that stresses constructive proposals for peace, such as for a defensive strategy or a non-aggressive foreign policy...' (4)

This sort of statement coming from one of the best-known people in the British END is typical of the views that

1. See IV, No 57, July 16, 1984.

2. The Western European Union is the only European authority empowered to deal with problems of defence. It has representatives from France, Great Britain, Italy, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

3. 'Against militarism. For an ideology of peace'. Document for the anti-Nato Commission of Madrid presented to one of the workshops at the convention.

4. 'Has the movement a transitory character?', by Meg Beresford, a document for the convention.

have been expressed by the reformist leaders of the movement since last autumn.

After the deployment of the first nuclear missiles these reformist leaders eagerly concluded that the mobilisations had failed. They started looking for ways out that would lead to compromise with capitalist governments. Thus, we witnessed M-J Faber proposing the acceptance, this spring, of a limited deployment of missiles in the Netherlands, 'on certain conditions'.

Mary Kaldor, a well-known figure in the British movement, in her determination to define an 'alternative defence policy', even went so far as to propose a 'fight to reorient Nato strategy toward a policy of conventional defence'. (5)

As if the aim of Nato were not to defend the interests of imperialism by any means, even at the cost of supporting bloody regimes, such as the one run by the Turkish generals! As if Thatcher did not see eye to eye with Reagan and as if Nato could transform itself into a club of individuals whose only concern was the welfare of the peoples of Europe!

In their desperate attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable, the Fabers and the Kaldors conjure up the image of neutral Europe pleading to be freed from American influence.

'Europe is an occupied continent', they proclaim. And in order to persuade peace movement activists of the need to change course, they go as far as to assert that, 'in failing [to prevent the deployment of nuclear missiles], have we perhaps become the involuntary agents of a new cold war?' (6)

It is significant that such positions are echoed by people like Claudin, who, while he is an ex-Communist, is nonetheless avowedly hostile to the political objectives of the peace movement in his own country, one of whose chief demands, alongside that of 'US bases out', is 'Spain out of Nato'.

Obsessed with the threat, which, according to him, the USSR poses to the West, Claudin is definitely worried that Nato is under the thumb of the USA. He sees it, nevertheless, 'as a mechanism for defence which Western Europe needs.' He does not shrink from asserting that, 'to work in Nato for peace, for a united and autonomous Europe is not only the most realistic policy for a democracy but is a morally just one.' (7)

The fact that similar positions are expressed within the movements in other countries indicates the scope of the political battles that will have to be fought in the months to come in order to arrive at the correct strategic perspectives for the movement.

Such positions also say a lot about the depths of confusion into which the most right-wing sections of the movement foundered in the wake of the first deployments. For a number of reformists, sincerely committed to the fight against the missiles but incapable of linking their fight to an anti-imperialist and anti-militarist perspective, it is easier, when

faced with a 'fait accompli' of deployment in several countries, to accept defeat and to look for a new way out.

This is where the renewed emphasis on proposals for a freeze, for negotiations and a policy of detente comes from. This is the source of Ken Coates' insistence on the necessity to 'look to a positive outcome' at the third session of the United Nations on disarmament which will take place in Geneva in autumn of 1985.

This turn toward negotiated solutions at the UN also explains the abrupt change in attitude of some of the organisers, who lurched from making virulent attacks on the Soviet government and its allies at Berlin last year, which were coupled with statements of unconditional support to the East European independent peace movements, to a much more moderate approach this year, seeking to establish special relations with the bureaucrats of the official committees. In their opportunism, they even went so far as to condemn those in the conference who dared to take up the repressive policy of the Soviet Union towards the independent movement activists in the East European countries.

Disarray of the official East European movements

The official peace committees, which are transmission belts for the governments of Eastern Europe, sent high-powered delegations to Perugia. They might have been expected to attempt some big manoeuvre. Instead they launched a public relations operation, which fell flat. Perugia must have provided some painful lessons for these plump and well-fed bureaucrats.

From the opening of the Convention they were given a carpeting. At the very mention of the seats that were left empty in memory of the 59 activists from Eastern Europe and Turkey who were not allowed to leave their countries, a group of militants with gags on and carrying banners demanding freedom of expression and organisation in both East and West and the release of all peace campaigners in prison, stormed the platform. The chair of that session, Ken Coates, tried in vain to drive them back, disclaiming any responsibility on the part of the organisers for such a display.

The Soviet Union delegation responded to this initiative, launched by German Greens' supporters, members of DP (Democrazia Proletaria) and of the Fourth International, and spontaneously supported by many other delegates, with a press statement threatening to quit the convention.

The next day, in the workshops, they were systematically grilled about their government's military policy...but they did not leave.

The day after that, the press conference, which the East European representatives had decided to call, became the occasion of a torrent of speeches and questions demanding an explanation as to



Women play a decisive role in British peace movement (DE)

why such and such a peace activist was in prison in Estonia or another in Moscow. In fact, members of the Fourth International had distributed a press release listing dozens of names. These East European spokespersons were asked what the troops were doing in Afghanistan, how they could justify their government's military spending and whether they had information on the exact positioning of

5. 'Banishing the fear factor', an article by Mary Kaldor which appeared in *New Socialist*, published January-February 1984, in London.

6. 'The only way to save detente', document for the convention signed by M-J. Faber and M. Kaldor.

7. 'Nato: the reasons for not pulling out', an article by Fernando Claudin and Ludolfo Paramio which appeared in *El Pais*, in Madrid, June 16, 1984.



Soviet missiles in the USSR and the other countries of Eastern Europe.

Brandishing of placards and a stream of abuse greeted the bureaucrats' replies, in which they called East European peace campaigners hooligans. But this did not discourage them. The next day they were still there....

The East European official representatives did end up leaving in the final rally when a young woman from East Germany grabbed the microphone to explain that she had just been expelled from the GDR (German Democratic Republic) after several months imprisonment for her pacifist activities. But they sneaked out, without even being able to put their names to a joint statement with the various delegations from committees affiliated to the World Council for Peace

(a pacifist organisation dominated by Moscow). The Communist parties of Italy, Spain and France in particular had stalled on this.

At last the Soviet delegation had to face up to the truth. Their attempts to woo the delegates had failed miserably in the face of the determination of peace activists present to maintain their independence both from their own governments and from the Soviet bureaucracy.

This unbending approach was taken right through the conference by delegates, who did not represent so much the emergence of a left current, but more the combative sections of their own national movements. This applied particularly to the women who from day one had decided to organise themselves to protest against the macho-style organisation of the conference and assert their wish that the conference be accessible to all the participants, and not only the property of small numbers of experts and high and mighty leaders.

The jointly prepared speech that was read out by one of them from the platform on the last day — after forcing the hand of the organisers who were only allowing 'special guests' to speak — was one of the most radical of the conference. Its radicalism was not so much in the analysis of political objectives but in the definition of the tasks of the movement on an international level.

These combative sections came forward on a series of issues. They supported the independent peace campaigners of Eastern Europe and the struggle of the peoples of Central America. They rejected the policies of Nato and insisted on the need to take the path of mass action in order to create a favourable balance of forces vis-a-vis the military policies of the various governments.

An appeal taking up these points and synthesising the most advanced positions expressed in the conference (see box) received a very favourable response. In one day, more than a hundred delegates, representing their respective campaigns had signed, including representatives from most of the Western European countries (most notably the Spanish state), exiles from the Eastern European countries and the president of the Peace Committee of Nicaragua.

This initiative, in which supporters of the Fourth International were fully involved, could not, however, overcome the diffuse nature of the discussions over action perspectives. Nevertheless, some important steps forward were made in the right direction.

An initiative taken by German activists the day after the Berlin conference to establish contacts with the independent peace movements in the East was reflected concretely in Perugia by the distribution of a paper written by the left and jointly signed by activists from East and West. It stressed the need for direct collaboration between the two movements. A plan of meetings on specific topics and the setting up of a secretariat

composed mainly of exiles from the East should help to develop the contacts that have been initiated.

Only a short time on the agenda was allocated to the question of the Mediterranean. The organisers were little inclined to confront a problem which would only expose the contradictions of the reformist currents on the question of Nato.

Nevertheless, the contacts established between Spanish activists and some of the delegates from Greece and Italy offer the possibility of joint activity in the coming months. The participation of some sections in the demonstration in Rome at the end of October will be the first test of this.

Finally, the contacts made between the different delegations and the representatives of the peace committees of Central America gave the most radical sections of the peace movement the opportunity to set up initiatives in their own countries that could express more concretely active support for those peoples fighting imperialism and experiencing war every day of their lives.

The coinciding elections in the USA and Nicaragua in November, and the approach made by the Sandinista leaders to the European peace movements, seeking support for their struggle, give scope for those who place their own struggle within a clearly anti-imperialist framework to show their solidarity with the peoples of Central America.

Some negative aspects

The standing ovations that greeted the speech by Mariano Miranda, president of the Peace Committee of Nicaragua, in the final rally, are evidence of the spirit in which delegates responded to the appeals addressed to them.

In the end, the women decided to hold a special conference in the two days leading up to next year's convention in Amsterdam so as to pool their experiences and ensure that their point of view will be listened to.

Among the weaknesses of the Perugia conference was, firstly, the small weight attached to the links between the peace movement and the workers movement. In Berlin, in 1983, there were a series of forums — some of the most interesting of the convention — that brought together trade unionists to debate possible initiatives in the unions and the workplaces and discuss how to approach the question of employment and reconversion in the arms industry. Despite their limitations, the symbolic strikes which have taken place in West Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark have been important for propagating the aims of the peace movement among workers.

However, despite the awareness of the issue shown by some delegates, especially the Spanish and Italians, the questions of involving the workers did not figure in many debates at Perugia. Danish activists had come there to put forward the

idea of a strike at a European level, and although they were able to make individual contacts with other interested delegates, they did not get the response they had been counting on.

The theme of austerity was there in the background — in speeches denouncing military budgets and the modernisation programmes for conventional weapons adopted by parliaments at the cost of huge cuts in programmes. But a concern with linking these issues and developing forms of action to alert workers to fight for peace never came to the forefront in discussions. The very positive examples of the strike called by the main union federation in the Netherlands, the FNV, in May, on the theme of 'No to the bomb, no to the July package!' (measures which threatened unemployment benefits) and the joint marches organised by the women of Greenham Common and the miners' wives in Great Britain were not sufficient to bring this decisive aspect of the movement to the centre of the debates.

Revolutionaries will have a decisive role to play in the coming year. They have to encourage the most combative sections to oppose the defeatist perspectives of the right and to unite their divided forces so that they can influence the direction of the movement at an international level and intervene forcefully in the debates at the next convention in Amsterdam in 1985.

The combative sections must ensure that, in all countries, the movement re-



October 1983 peace demonstration in West Germany (DR)

mains on a course of mass demonstrations, strikes and referendums which will draw together large numbers of people, whether it be against deployment or for withdrawal of those missiles already installed, against Nato bases, or against the national strike force — as in Great Britain, for example, where the next series of demonstrations will be centred on the British trident missiles.

Statement on campaigning for peace

The undermentioned delegates to the third European convention for nuclear disarmament, held at Perugia, judge the following issues to be a central priority in the mobilisations to come.

1. *Freedom of expression, organisation and distribution is indispensable in the fight for peace both in the East and in the West.* We have demonstrated our rejection of repression against the Turkish peace movement, just as we have protested to the Soviet representatives in the convention against the repression which independent peace activists in the East have been subjected to. We will not let them be sacrificed in the interests of diplomatic approaches to the official peace committees.

2. *The rejection of the missiles, of Nato and of all the (new) attempts towards creating a Western European nuclear and conventional defence force.* We reject the presence of foreign, especially American, bases in Europe. We reject the idea of a Nato based only on conventional weapons, as we do the illusion of national or international nuclear deterrence. The peoples of Europe must be able to give their verdict on Nato, on the foreign bases and on nuclear weapons through referendums. The people of Europe must reject the notion that an autonomous, European defence force would guarantee more security and well-being. On the contrary, such a perspective would only increase the danger of war and encourage further waves of militarisation in Europe. It would, in turn, lead to increases in military spending and further austerity measures.

3. *Solidarity with the people of Nicaragua and with all the peoples of Central America.* Those in struggle in Nicaragua and Central America face a terrible threat. They are fighting for peace, justice and self-determination. Just as we reject the 'Pax Americana' in Western Europe — especially the repression by the generals of Nato against the Turkish people — so we also reject the US intervention in Central America.

4. *The peace movement is as lively and active as ever.* The fight against the missiles is now, more than ever, necessary. 1985 will pose a decisive challenge for the European peace movement to prevent the deployment of missiles in the Netherlands and Belgium and to demand the dismantling of those missiles already deployed. This is not the time for retreat and hesitation.

We pledge ourselves to prepare for, in the autumn of 1984, a new wave of mass resistance to militarism, against conventional and nuclear rearmament, against Nato, for a European nuclear-free zone, and for peace, liberty and disarmament in the East and in the West.

Everywhere, the major concern must be to develop an anti-capitalist consciousness within the movement by highlighting the economic policy of capitalist governments and opposing all threatened cuts in social spending, demanding the reduction of arms spending and putting forward forms of actions which will draw in large layers of the working class.

Everywhere we have to take advantage of concrete opportunities to help develop an anti-imperialist consciousness amongst those mobilising against the threat of nuclear war, by exposing the aggressive policies of the Ronald Reagan government in Central America, by contrasting the objectives of the Nicaraguan revolution with the destructive aims of imperialism.

Everywhere, we have to strive to develop an anti-bureaucratic consciousness by solidarising with the independent peace movements in Eastern Europe and actively supporting the victims of repression, by denouncing the bureaucracy's acceptance of the arms race. At the same time, we need to seek support from activists in the East European independent peace movements for unilateral disarmament moves in the West in order to combat the illusions which exist in the Eastern European countries about the nature and real aims of imperialist policy.

One thing is for certain, the capacity of the peace movement to create a favourable balance of forces and to achieve certain, even partial, victories over the capitalist governments they are confronting, will depend on two things:

One is mass mobilisations against nuclear armament and the policies of Nato. The second is strengthening of a left wing within the movement aware of the political stakes involved in the fight for peace and of the necessity to link this with the struggles of the working class as a whole. ■

A revolutionary elected to the leadership of the workers commissions

Interview with Joaquin Nieto

The third congress of the Confederation of Workers Commissions (CCOO) took place in Madrid at the end of June this year. It ratified a strategy of dialogue and open collaboration (called 'national solidarity') in any sort of social contract with the bosses and the government. But the trade-union right wing was split in the elections for the commission executive between the slate headed by the outgoing general secretary, Marcelino Camacho, on the one hand, and Julian Ariza on the other. The battle followed the lines of divisions within the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) itself. (1) At the same time, the right as a whole also had to face a strong challenge from the left.

Furthermore, the outgoing leadership was obliged to resort to a scandalous manoeuvre in order to prevent the discussions on what strategy for the trade-union movement from being reflected in the vote for the commission executive. They did this by holding the elections before the discussion and vote on the resolution on union strategy. This provoked a feeling of dissatisfaction amongst the delegates, and only half of them actually participated in the vote on the resolution.

The trade-union left, which gained a total of nine out of the fifty seats on the commission executive, also acted in a divided way in the congress. On one side was a slate headed by Alfredo Clemente, which represented the positions of the pro-Soviet Communist Party (PC) of Ignacio Gallego. It took a stand against social contracts and in favour of organising workers' resistance. Eight people from this slate got elected. On the other side was the slate led by Joaquin Nieto, supported by members and sympathisers of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (LCR, the section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state) and by the Communist Movement of Spain (MCE), which gained 27 votes and one seat. The intervention of the LCR was based around four major amendments to the

official documents, criticising the orientation of the outgoing leadership and proposing alternatives along the following lines: for an alternative of resistance and class solidarity and defence of living standards; for nationalisation of the banks to solve the problem of industrial redeployment; and against Spanish entry into the EEC.

An agreement was reached between the PC, the LCR and the MCE to jointly defend a series of amendments, each one of which, as a result, achieved 20 to 30 per cent of the votes. But joint discussions nevertheless failed to bring about the presentation of a united left slate for the commission executive elections because of the refusal of the PC to put a second LCR comrade in a high enough position on the slate to stand a chance of being elected. In fact, the PC are trying to achieve dominance over the trade-union left within the CCOO, and to that end they often employ unacceptable methods. This makes it difficult for the LCR to operate a united-front policy. In fact, at the congress of the engineering-workers section of the CCOO, an organisational manoeuvre by the PC prevented the election of an LCR comrade to the leadership of the union federation.

Joaquin Nieto is a native of the Basque country. He headed the slate supported by the LCR and the MCE, which only missed, by one vote, getting a second person elected. Nieto was a member of ETA VI and then of the unified LCR and ETA VI and, under Franco, he was the leader of the CCOO in the construction industry in Catalonia. He has been a member of the Central Committee of the LCR since 1976. In 1984 he was elected to the executive leadership of the CCOO in Catalonia. Below we publish an interview which he gave to *Combate*, the weekly paper of the LCR, on a balance sheet of the CCOO congress. It was first published on July 10.

Question. Let's start with the balance sheet that you would make of the third congress of the CCOO.

Answer. Essentially, the results of the third congress were negative. A policy of 'national solidarity', which is very different from class solidarity, was ratified. The congress also confirmed a policy of social contracts, institutionalising inter-confederal agreements [between the CCOO and the Social Democratic UGT], as the basis for collective bargaining. These are the most negative aspects of the congress. It doesn't seem to us that these decisions will help the confederation to rebuild its support or organise itself as it could have done if another set of policies had been adopted.

Nevertheless, the congress did have a series of positive aspects of which the most important was to demonstrate how much the policy of 'national solidarity' is gradually losing support within the union. There are more and more sections within the union which are

either questioning this policy overall or are rejecting particular inter-confederation agreements. The policy has been a failure and has weakened the union. Union militants are therefore reluctant to support it with quite the same enthusiasm as that displayed by Marcelino Camacho in his report to the congress.

The other positive aspect of the congress was the strength of the union left and within that the significance of our current which, up till now, has been totally absent from any confederation bodies [i.e. at the Spanish-state level].

1. The slate headed by Marcelino Camacho, which gained the absolute majority — five hundred votes and 26 elected — represents the official positions of the current leadership of the PCE, that of Gerardo Iglesias. They defend a strict continuity of the unions' strategy since the Moncloa pact (October 25, 1977) in the name of a 'policy of national solidarity'. In this sense they represent the right wing of the CCOO.

The list headed by Julian Ariza, which included supporters of a minority faction in the PCE led by the ex-general secretary Santiago Carrillo, got 266 votes and 14 elected

Q. The presentation of separate slates for the confederation executive and the differences between what we might call the Camacho wing and the Ariza wing was a salient feature of the conference. Do you think that the latter current is trying to become an alternative within the CCOO?

A. The congress reflected accurately the existing situation. Basically, Julian Ariza's current agrees with the policy of 'national solidarity'. But there are other problems. These two currents reflect what is going on in the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), that is ob-

to the executive commission. This current controls the Engineering Federation, the largest in the Confederation, the organisation in the Basque country and other important sections of the CCOO. It argues, for tactical reasons, against a union strategy based on social pacts. In fact, in practice this current has taken decisions very close to the approach of Camacho, like, for example, the signing of the agreement which ended the long strike at Sagunto (see IV, No 55, June 18, 1984). In fact this sector is the most undemocratic and repressive in the whole confederation.

vious. There is a battle for control of the union, and it was around this problem that the separate slates appeared. To say it was only a battle for the apparatus, however, would be to oversimplify the issue. We must look a little more deeply at things.

Political issues underly the battle for control of the apparatus. The policy of 'national solidarity' has been a failure. The consequence of this failure is that all sides are thinking again about the policies of the union. Whilst some think it is necessary to settle into this strategy of social pacts, others doubtless believe that at the moment it would be better to try to regain some forces, or that with the PSOE (Socialist Workers Party of Spain) in government, social pacts are not the most appropriate policy. There are others who are just more sensitive to the pressures which exist in the more important sections of the union against this orientation and who want to maintain their links with these sections. Julian Ariza is aware that there exists within the union a desire to see the growth of a left opposition.

If the supporters of the Ariza current were really to the left, if they would seriously challenge the policy of 'national solidarity', we would be delighted, and we would work with them. But the problem is that this is not the case. Their criticism of the inter-confederation agreement is very weak. For example, they recognise the dire consequences of the AI (inter-confederation agreements), but they don't take into account the fact that the results of the ANE (national work agreements) were worse or, at any rate, as bad. (2)

In conclusion, therefore, this current reflects some things that are going on in the union but they remain faithful to the traditional policies and it is unlikely that they will lead a leftward shift of the CCOO.

Q. Nevertheless, there was no united left candidate either. Why not?

A. It would have been logical for the left to have presented a joint slate for the congress because this opposition has worked together in the union and should continue to do so. Also it would have been good for the mass of trade unionists to see a strong and united opposition. But that is only one aspect of the problem. There are many other things....

Everyone is included in this left opposition. For some time we, that is the LCR, have constituted a relatively large left opposition. We contributed a great deal to the discussion and debate that eventually led to the presentation of the Alfredo Clemente slate. We, therefore, have a rightful place within the opposition. Now, I won't say this place was refused us, but some people wanted us to appear as just supporters of a left opposition organised around Alfredo Clemente and his current. Of course we support this current, but we are not just an auxiliary force.

This was the main problem, which then came out on the organisational level in the disagreements we had [on putting together a common slate]. We have had many union conferences where unity was achieved, where everything went well and where we gained excellent results. We have had others where, unfortunately, unity was not possible. In other conferences where we appeared united, this unity was based on our renunciation of any real role in the opposition, when we limited ourselves to supporting other currents. This was the case in the engineering conference of the CCOO. We cannot continue in this vein. For there to be a real basis for unity among the trade-union left, it must be clear that we are all an integral part of it.

Within this trade-union left there is a lot of convergence but also disagreements, with different ways of looking at things. For example, on the question of social pacts, there are always different points of view. Whilst we believe that in the current situation the bourgeoisie and the bosses will seek to re-introduce pacts like the Moncloa pact in order to prevent the workers fighting back, others in the trade-union left are open to the possibility of making such agreements. On other issues, like democracy in the unions or on the organisational level, we have always had different opinions. This is only natural. A trade-union opposition cannot be monolithic. It is heterogeneous, not only because different political currents exist within it but also because the union opposition we need to build cannot be monopolised by one particular section.

Q. What could be the future repercussions for the opposition of the lack of unity at this congress?

A. It is obvious that if we had been united, our cooperation would have got a stage further forward. We did not achieve that unity, but that does not rule it out for the future. It would be an error if comrades thought that. Because now the organisational frictions are over. What remains are the questions of union activity and here we have a lot of agreement. We must get agreement in this area and I'm sure we will manage it. Because they need it, the union needs it and any strong left opposition needs unity.

We are on favourable terrain. In places where there are problems constructing slates, or if we cannot agree on general issues, but have some agreement on how to lead the struggle in the factories or within the union, it would be very negative to take a sectarian attitude, and for our part, we will not do that.

Q. And what about the unity with the MCE? What do you think about that?

A. We have made a lot of headway in the last period toward unity with the comrades of the MCE, starting from the Catalonia conference of the CCOO

and beyond. This unity could grow. It is obvious that our points of agreement are more solid and that we share some experiences, some problems and a similar orientation within the CCOO. But it is not the same where the MCE is not in the union. Here we must look for unity of a different sort, which is not as easy or as natural to achieve as in the Workers Commissions.

Q. It is clear that in trade-union activity and in day-to-day trade-union life the LCR is not without some influence. Now we are present in the leadership of the CCOO. How can revolutionaries use this position to advantage?

A. First of all, the fact that we have gained a position on the executive of the CCOO shows that our strength within the union is certainly not declining. If we compare the number of delegates we had in the previous congress to what we had in this one, we can say that we are stronger. That is important because the last few years have not been easy for revolutionaries working in the CCOO. In fact, they have been very difficult, firstly because the situation was rough for the Workers Commissions themselves, and secondly because the weakening of the policies of the union coincided with a decline in union democracy.

During these years, people could have decided that it wasn't worth working in the CCOO and that it was too much effort for poor results. What we have proved is that even in difficult times, if you intervene with a clear goal for the future, you can end up by widening your audience. People are more receptive to our ideas now and we have gained a certain respect because of how long we've been active.

It's important to understand that people don't just judge us according to the number of delegates we have at the congress but because of the work we have done in the factories. Here our co-thinkers lead sections of the union and the shopfloor committees with the full confidence of the workers. In the end, I think that our gaining a seat on the executive means that we are not just a minority current, but a force that can grow and carry more weight within the union.

Anyway, we must not let our imagination run away with us. At the end of the day, executive committees are a bit like parliament, and the body which really decides the daily direction of

2. The union organisations make annual wage agreements with the employers, which have different names each time; the Management Inter-confederation Agreement (AMI) of 1979 and 1980, signed by the General Workers Union (UGT) and the CCOO; the National Employment Agreement (ANE) of June 1981, signed by the UGT and the CCOO and the Inter-confederal agreement (AI), signed in January 1983 by the UGT and the CCOO. Although inflation was estimated at 14 per cent this agreement only envisaged a wage increase margin of between 9.5 per cent and 11.5 per cent.

the union is the secretariat. Moreover, you can't really do a great deal on an executive where you only have one member representing you.

Q. What will your presence on the confederation executive mean in practice?

A. Firstly, we are part of the union, like any other current. And in this sense to be on the body where the line of march of the union will be decided is important. Not only to put our point of view — and we will see later on what effect that has — but also to have more relations with and more understanding of what is going on in the union where there are many people working through different positions, as we explained earlier.

From another point of view, all the comrades who are intervening in the different federations and regions will be able to rely on more support for their activity. This is important. I said earlier that the intervention is difficult and trying. It is good if the comrades can be backed up as much as possible, just as it is right and good that they should feel represented within the leadership of the union. This is what is important — not what one person out of fifty members of an executive committee can do.

Another important thing is what can be done in unity with the supporters of the Clemente slate on the executive and on the Federal Council and in all the other bodies. This must be done, because together we form a significant minority, even if, as I have emphasised, we should not exaggerate the importance of our presence on the executive.

Q. One of the most positive aspects of the congress was the degree of democracy and openness in the CCOO. However, this reflects some contradictory things within the union doesn't it?

A. The CCOO has some very democratic features which represent the gains of the union and its history, with the traditional strength of the left, and the broad united movement, and the need felt for democracy. This was the basis on which the Workers Commissions were built up. Added to this has been the fact that, fortunately, from the beginning, they had a system which was well-adapted to represent different positions, that is, proportional representation. If today we were faced with building a new union, I don't know how it would work out, but it would not be the same thing at all.

However, although these democratic gains have been preserved — and we must not underestimate the importance of that — we must also recognise the backward steps which have been taken in the union, even on the question of proportional representation. In Euskadi, for example, you have to get 20 per cent of the votes to get anyone elected and it is the same in the Engi-

neering Federation. Luckily, the confederal congress did not adopt an amendment that aimed to make the limit even higher. This proportional representation is an arrangement which makes it possible for different currents within the union machinery to express themselves when there are important differences but does not allow the expression of positions that might come from outside the apparatus.

This deterioration of the internal situation corresponds to the shift in policy of the union. Or to put it this way, when a union is mobilising people it needs to draw together the maximum effort, goodwill and proposals on what to do. Such a union will be forced to be open and democratic. That is what it was like before. But a union which is becoming more moderate, that says that wages will have to be reduced, that refuses to participate in mobilisations which it doesn't control and holds back the combativity of the workers, will automatically reduce democracy at the same time, because the participation of the rank and file doesn't interest the leaders any more. So democracy takes a beating. And a union where the participation of the workers is reduced rapidly ends up with only the leading bodies functioning, whereas before it had a very rich internal life.

In the Workers Commissions, apart from the business of these democratic gains which everyone attaches a lot of importance to, publicly, there are a number of other disturbing signs which are just as, if not more, important. Individual sanctions and expulsions have been handed down frequently in the last few years. Bureaucratic measures, such as the dissolution of certain structures or group expulsions, are threatening the democratic character of the union. This last example touches on something even more important than proportional representation because it is an attempt to prevent combined minority positions held throughout the confederation from gaining a majority in important sections of the union and being able to operate autonomously, with the support of the workers and the rank and file of the section, and thus justify their line in practice.

Q. In your manifesto for the candidature in the congress you said, among other things, that the union must learn how to win young people, women, the unemployed, etc. (3) Do you think that the Workers Commissions are attractive to these sections?

A. Whenever you discuss why young people, women or the unemployed won't join the union you usually commit two types of errors. The first consists in believing that the situation is due to objective conditions because there are few young people in work, and still less women, or that the unemployed are atomised, etc. The second would be to

see it as only an organisational problem, if you like. But the real problem is a combination of the two plus the question of political strategy.

Of course, it is true that not many young people are in work and this makes it difficult to unionise them; it is true that the unemployed are very dispersed and that the situation of women in the current crisis is very tragic, etc. But it is equally true that a union that wants to be a socio-political force must have the will to work hard around a series of issues and must have a style of intervention which does not alienate sections of the union.

If the Workers Commissions take seriously the fight for peace and against Nato and the foreign bases, not just to win young people over, but because the contribution of workers to this movement is important and the CCOO have a big responsibility in drawing workers into this mobilisation; if the union took that seriously, it would be an attractive organisation for young people who are fighting for peace, for those wondering where they will get a job and, if they are already working, how they can take on the boss.

In the same way, if the CCOO were not so male-dominated and were to solidarise more with the struggles of women workers and the demands of feminists, the union would be able to take up the tragedy of women's lives with much more force. They are the first to be slung out of work and find it the most difficult to get jobs. But because the unions are so male-dominated and because they only play the 'female angle' to the 'gallery' or take it up because it would be too difficult to say they were not for women, the CCOO, in practice, do very little for or with women.

It is the same for the unemployed. It is natural that unemployed people will engage in very radical struggles and the leadership of the CCOO is panic-struck when threatened with these types of struggles. If, instead of this, the CCOO were to put themselves on the side of the unemployed in their struggle and were to defend their demands, they would draw more unemployed people into their ranks.

Furthermore, the CCOO must create the necessary organisational structures for an intervention into these sectors; they should create youth secretariats, youth groups in all the areas; they should give more resources to the women's secretariat; they should not just be content to unionise the unemployed, but to help in their self-organisation.

The Workers Commissions could become attractive to these sections of society. And, anyway, the union also needs them. ■

3. Joaquin Nieto also devoted some time in his speech to Central America and solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution. It was this which brought him the approval of the delegate from the Cuban Workers Central, who was invited to the congress.

Night work for women – No thank you !

On August 27, after eight months of procrastination, the Swiss Federal Office for Industry, Arts, Trades and Labour (OFIAMT) refused to lift the ban on night work for women workers in the Granges plant of the watch firm ETA Ebauches, using as its justification convention 89 of the International Labour Organisation.

Management had requested this for a 'trial period'. A letter from Thomke, the head of Ebauches, on January 10 explained that they wanted to introduce night work for women because 'they are intelligent but unqualified and thus are better suited to support monotonous work than men. They are also more patient, more conscientious, and less attracted by the possibility of promotion...'

At a tripartite meeting in January between management, the OFIAMT and the union FTMH (Federation of Watch and Metalworkers) the union left open all possibilities.

The PSO (Socialist Workers Party, Swiss section of the Fourth International) took the initiative to contact the workers and launch a campaign, widely distributing an interview with the workers entitled 'Our health is our only asset'. At the beginning of February the united committee of the left for the defence of jobs in the watch industry decided to clearly oppose night

work. After the PSO distributed further information in the factory, the local FTMH in Granges also decided to clearly oppose night work for women.

The campaign continued to gather support, forcing the OFIAMT to postpone its decision until the autumn. The women's conference of the FTMH, despite its leadership, and a day school organised by the USS (majority union confederation) on night work, added their weight to the forthright opposition to impose these worsened working conditions on women workers.

Through the summer the campaign continued its activity, with demonstrations and public meetings. The debate appeared regularly in the press and, finally, Federal councillor Furgler was forced to deliver his refusal.

La Breche, newspaper of the PSO was the only newspaper to cover the campaign from the beginning to end. Its articles are now collected and published as a pamphlet under the title *Robots Day and Night, No Thank You!* The September 8 issue of *La Breche* published the following interview with Ariane and Eveline of the national committee against night work for women, and Marie-Therese Sautebin of the PSO, on the outcome of the campaign.

Question. Why did you begin the campaign against night work for women at ETA Ebauches SA?

Ariane. Night work is an attempt to apply equal rights by the lowest common denominator. The Ebauches proposal was quite the contrary to equality, it was based on many discriminatory ideas.

Eveline. When the proposal became known, the unions only reacted in a lukewarm fashion. They said no, but they were already thinking about how it would be introduced. They never informed the public of Ebauches' real plans or of the consequences of night work in general. We were alone when we began the fight.

Q. What arguments did you use?

Marie-Therese. The debate had to become public. So we began to systematically publish detailed information on Ebauches' request. We called on doctors to make known adverse effects of such working hours on one's health. The PSO started the public criticism, it also worked with the united left committee, and helped to alert the OFRA (Organisation for the Cause of Women).

A. The Neuchatel branch of the PSO contacted and informed the women workers concerned. When they learnt what was in store for them – particularly the hours – the majority of the women were opposed to night work. Of the 60 women originally prepared to do this work only 15 remained so. The FTMH had not thought it necessary to inform or organise them.

Q. What were the first results of this information campaign?

E. The left organisations didn't react very much. The POCH [a centrist organisation] and the Socialist Party participated in the united committee that the PSO called, without actually making a campaign. For example, we are still waiting for the POCH to take a position in their press.

You know the position of the socialist Dubois from Neuchatel [a councillor of state who was in favour of authorising night work]; the SP is not opposed in any consistent fashion.

A. On the other hand, the OFRA took an active part, its members began to discuss the question of equality and how it related to protective labour legislation.

M-T. There was too little discussion in the unions. It was really only individual members who were active. The SSP (public service union) and FTCP (Textiles, Chemicals and Paper Federation) did, however, take part in the united committee, as did the Christian unions. Given the slow pace of action in the unions, the thinking should continue, particularly in the public services, health, communications, where night work exists: what are the working conditions, health protection measures, working hours?

There were lively reactions in the general public. The petitions of doctors and women, and the mass postcard sending organised by the action committee were an enormous success. Lots of people came to the meetings in different towns.

Q. What part did all this play in the Federal Council's decision?

A. The relationship of forces that was created in this way bore fruit little

by little. It's no accident that the OFIAMT hesitated for eight months before giving its decision! The USS had to take a very firm position during the consultation procedure, even though beforehand, and still today, it has not come out against night work in industry. It should be noted that the press is giving it the credit for the success, but in fact it always adopted a 'wait and see' policy.

Q. How do you explain the fact that Furgler [who gave the decision] hid behind juridical arguments?

M.T. Convention 89 of the ILO is a real barrier [to the introduction of night work]. However, it became a lifebelt for Furgler because he had to say no, but as a bourgeois politician, a Christian Democrat at that, he could not decently use a feminist argument linked to equal rights or defence of the workers. He appeared as an impartial judge in the affair, but it shouldn't be forgotten that he was forced to say no, and that he explicitly promised the employers that he would do everything possible to get rid of this ban during the revision of the labour laws.

Q. What will happen now?

E. Ebauches are saying it's a scandal and are going to make use of the occasion to force the workers to accept its conditions. The socialist Dubois is regretting the decision of the Federal Council and predicting a bleak future for the watch industry, in doing this he is walking hand in hand with the bosses. Thus, there is going to be a strong pressure to change the labour laws during the revision in 1985. We have to keep up activity by organisations and the general public. ■

Mitterrand's 'new deal'

The forecast that 1984 would be the 'difficult year' for President Mitterrand turned out to be correct. The regime has discouraged a good number of workers through austerity and unemployment, and the left again found itself in a clear minority in the European elections on June 17.

One week later an enormous demonstration took place in Paris, under the banner of the defence of private education. This was a demonstration of strength by the opposition, capable of destabilising the government. In this situation the right could consider that it was in a position to discuss how long a respite the left parties (Socialist Party, SP, and Communist Party, CP) would be given to manage the government. But this was to reckon without the skilful politicking of Francois Mitterrand and to underestimate the room for manoeuvre allowed him by the undemocratic institutions of the Fifth Republic.



Fabius, the new young herald of 'Mitterrandism' (DR)

Francis SITEL

Prime ministers have usually lasted a long time under the Fifth Republic. Not only did Pierre Mauroy prove no exception to the rule, but he did so to excess. The reason for this is simple: Mauroy, called on to lead the government at Mitterrand's victory in 1981, had become a symbol of the 'continuity' of presidential policy. A representative of the people, carefully handled by the CP, he seemed the best placed to preserve the myth that the left and Mitterrand would keep their promises. In short, for three years, and during the course of three governments, he was charged with ensuring that the workers and his own majority swallowed many lies and affronts.

In fact, behind all the song and dance about a 'new course' and ringing appeals to the 'people of the left', the actual policy of the governments led by Mauroy has been: austerity since the adoption of the first Delors plan, the so-called 'rigorous' plan, in June 1982; imperialist expeditions to Chad and Lebanon; attempts to compromise with the Catholic

hierarchy on the questions of private schools; etc.

Such policies are a clear rejection of the deep aspirations of the workers that had been expressed in the election of Mitterrand and of a Socialist and Communist majority to the National Assembly in 1981. The electoral answer to these policies was quickly given by the municipal elections in 1983 and the European elections in 1984, which saw the left defeated and put into a minority. (1) The European election results for the governmental parties were a cutting rejection of their policies.

The electoral weakening of the left is in great measure due to a deepgoing political phenomenon, the growth of abstentionism among working-class voters. (2) This abstentionism is an expression of the refusal by many workers and young people to approve policies that go against their interests, as well as of a real confusion.

The Communist Party is most affected by this phenomenon. It suddenly suffered a crushing defeat. While its aim was to stabilise the 15.35 per cent of

votes received by Georges Marchais as its presidential candidate in 1981, it dropped to 11.28 per cent, scraping in just above the fascist list headed by Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front.

Such a rout once more provoked talk, with increased credibility, of the 'historic decline' of the French CP. From that point, the question of the party's leaving the government became an increasingly live issue. Such a catastrophic result in the elections could only strengthen the hand of those within the CP leadership who had argued for a long time that the CP should get out of the stifling stranglehold that the governmental alliance with the SP meant for them.

For its part, the Socialist Party undoubtedly holds the majority in the National Assembly, which would allow it to govern alone. But, as the right wing would be sure to continually point out, the SP now represents only 21 per cent of the electorate.

In addition, there was a minor list presented by the United Socialist Party (PSU) and the United Democratic Communists. This minicoalition wanted to present itself as the 'honest left', while giving undisguised support to the government (in which the PSU has members). It was totally marginalised, getting only .72 per cent of the vote. Moreover, the centre-left operation remote-controlled by Mitterrand, that is the campaign of the radical and ecologist coalition ERE, was a miserable failure. (3)

Thus, it was a much-weakened left that had to face a right wing that had not only become the majority but was also affected by a right-wing radicalisation, which was illustrated by the spectacular election breakthrough of Le Pen in the European elections.

Such results could only be interpreted as the death knell for the Mauroy government, which had lasted too long and was, in everybody's opinion, incapable of preparing for the decisive occasion of the 1986 legislative elections. The last mission left to Mauroy to accomplish was to act on the education question.

Faithful to the secular tradition of the socialist left, the candidate Mitterrand in 1981 had promised that 'a great public, unified and secular national education system' would be set in place. (4) This meant adopting the traditional position of the National Secular Action Committee (CNAL) and launching a counter-offensive for the left by repealing the anti-

1. The SP and CP lists taken together won 6,421,000 votes (32.04%) against 8,591,000 votes (42.88%) for the RPR/UDR list, and if the votes of the extreme-right National Front are added a total of more than 10 million votes (53.88%).

2. The rate of abstention in the European elections was 43.3% (15,860,000 voters) against 39% in 1979.

3. The ERE list won 3.31% of the votes although it had been given the status of a 'major party' and equal time on radio and television.

4. This was the 7th of the '110 Proposals' made by Mitterrand at Evry on March 15, 1981 during his election campaign.

secular laws passed by the right during its long reign. (5)

However, in office President Mitterrand wanted to use this burning issue to give a demonstration of his policy of compromise. So, education minister Savary was charged to negotiate with the Catholic hierarchy on the introduction of new links between private schools and the national public education service.

Under the pressure of more and more massive mobilisations on the part of the supporters of private education, Savary ended up proposing a law which gave total satisfaction to the Catholic hierarchy. But a few last-minute secondary amendments conceded to the Socialist deputies threw the private-school camp into a fury.

The leaders of this camp then played their ace by organising a gigantic demonstration, a million-strong, in Paris in defence of private education. Such a mobilisation to defend 'threatened educational freedom' was tantamount to accusing Mitterrand and the left of wanting to suppress democratic freedoms. It was a harsh blow for the government at the point when the right-wing majority in the Senate was engaged in constitutional guerrilla warfare to block the Savary law already adopted by the National Assembly.

What was supposed to be the jewel in the crown of Mitterrand's policy of compromise turned out to be a real hornets nest. The success of the demonstration on June 24, just after the European elections, was a terrible slap in the face for Mitterrand and an inglorious ending for the Mauroy government.

Mitterrand's manoeuvres

It was at this point that Mitterrand decided to himself move to the front line in this political confrontation, and carry out a disengagement operation, using the excessive powers that the constitution of the Fifth Republic grants the head of state.

The first manoeuvre was to seize on the proposal put forward by the right to submit the question to a referendum. Arguing that this was not possible under the constitution, Mitterrand announced that a referendum would be organised on an amendment to the constitution that would make it possible to use the referendum procedure for questions affecting 'public freedoms'. In other words, a referendum on the referendum! It was a tortuous but effective move to put the opposition in a difficult situation.

The debate then shifted from the education question to that of the referendum, while Mitterrand cleansed himself of the accusation of wanting to attack democratic freedoms. (6) In this way he even returned the ball to the other camp. The opposition thus found itself forced either to accept the principle of the referendum and vote 'yes' to enlarging the scope of the referendum procedure, or to reject the principle and



Philippe Herzog, Communist Party economist (DR)

make it impossible to have a referendum in the future on democratic freedoms, particularly in education, such as it itself had proposed as a challenge to the Mitterrand government.

Finally, after a period of intense soul-searching and internal strife, the right opted for an obstructionist tactic whereby the Senate, in which the right holds the majority, would block the referendum procedure asked for by Mitterrand.

At the same time Mitterrand decided to abandon the Savary law, which amounted to putting an end to the education debate that had inflamed passions for three years, at the price of a spectacular retreat.

The price of this double presidential manoeuvre was costly: the referendum has come to nothing and the Savary law has been consigned to the rubbish bin, as has any perspective of a unification of the education system. But Mitterrand was also able to open the way to his main aim: the formation of an — almost — new government.

All of a sudden — for such are the subtleties of French political life — Mauroy was able to present himself as 'of the left' while Fabius took his first steps as the young herald of the president's 'new policy'.

The government's 'new look', with Fabius, is supposed to introduce a new political balance and a new orientation.

The CP leadership made no mistake in taking this occasion to quietly withdraw from the government. No matter that the economic policy of the new Fabius-Beregovoy government followed in a direct course that of Mauroy-Delors. (7) This government reshuffle was just the opportunity they had dreamt of to announce that, as the government's policies were not in the workers' interests, the CP would no longer participate.

You can think what you like about the sincerity of all these speeches, the most important for many CP members was the relief that they would no longer have to

take responsibility for such policies, whether they were signed Mauroy or Fabius. And, given the situation of the CP, it was vital for the leadership that the activists and the fulltimers got a little 'relief' before the XXV Congress.

Whatever the discretion first displayed by the CP and its desire to downplay its withdrawal from the government, there is nevertheless an importance in the change. Not because the government's policies will be substantially changed, but because it testifies to the fact that the political equilibrium has already changed and that the field is open for other, deeper, changes. And because, although the CP first talked of 'support without participation' to the government, the conditions now exist for another policy: not unity but attacks on the Socialist Party, the only result of which would be to divide and demoralise the workers a little more.

We can be certain that, for its part, the Fabius government will not be slow in giving the workers reasons for dissatisfaction with the government and the Socialist Party that supports it. Fabius has two key words, 'modernisation' and 'uniting'.

The first means purely and simply to align with the needs of capitalism. In the guise of 'modernisation' it means to force the workers to accept the imperatives of capitalist competition, that is redundancies, deterioration of working conditions, flexible working hours, questioning of social gains, and a drop in buying power. No more, no less!

This policy, already put into practice by Delors and Fabius when the latter was

5. The CNAL, founded in 1953, is a coalition of trade-union and workers' organisations that campaigns against the laws encouraging private education introduced by the right and for the defence of public education.

6. But this was at the price of worsening the anti-democratic character of the Constitution and strengthening presidential powers, if his proposal should be put into practice. Only the president can initiate the call for a referendum.

7. Beregovoy is minister for economy in the new government, replacing Jacques Delors.

industry minister, meant tens of thousands of redundancies in the steel, ship-building and car industries. With Fabius as prime minister this will continue and worsen. This is announced openly and proudly. For Fabius it is not a case of renouncing the promises of May 10, 1981, as it was for Mauroy, but not even mentioning them...

The second key word of Fabius, that of 'uniting' bears witness to the fact that the function of the Fabius government in Mitterrand's project is to find an opening to the right, that is to express the current policies in terms of new political alliances. This is what is hidden behind the buzz word for this autumn: 'detente', a relaxation of political tensions.

It is true that, as many opinion polls have shown, Fabius is very popular. With the bosses and the right wing above all! His invitations to the parliamentary representatives of the opposition to participate in this or that governmental commission are, today, being politely refused. Yesterday they would have been greeted only with sniggers and sarcastic remarks, but there is no doubt that tomorrow they will be accepted.

The 'detente' game is at the moment only attractive to individuals on the right. The official leaders are careful not to step into this trap. At a time when Le Pen is harnessing the radicalisation of their base they would not consider lowering their guard or sweetening their tone. Thus, Jacques Chirac, leader of Rally for the Republic (RPR), is demanding the dissolution of the National Assembly at the top of his voice. The objective is still to overturn the left majority.

Nevertheless, behind their arrogance, the right's weaknesses are obvious, as is shown by the divisions within it, and the fight over leadership which, with eyes turning to the future presidential elections, is not cooling off. In fact, the right is confronting problems that it can not easily resolve at present, and to which it cannot find common answers.

Problems for the right

The first of these problems is the 'Le Pen affair'. The right is the majority today, if the National Front's votes are counted. In these conditions, if it made an agreement with a formation that campaigns on racist and fascist themes, it would open itself up to denunciations of an alliance made with totalitarians, and see a fraction of the opposition disengage itself and look for an alliance with social democracy. On the other hand, if it broke all ties with the National Front, it would run the risk of finding itself the minority, and seeing the contagion of fascism spread even within the ranks of the traditional right parties. In short, a dilemma that the big bourgeois parties will have a lot of difficulty in overcoming.

The other problem for the right is to determine what should be the attitude of a possible right-wing majority after 1986



Mitterrand and his new government (DR)

to President Mitterrand, whose term of office only ends in 1988. A problem that is that much more difficult because, beyond the inherent difficulties, there is the fact that the president has two possibilities for complicating the situation.

The first that is sometimes brought up, is that of a referendum on reducing the presidential term to five years, which would make it possible to have the legislative and presidential elections at the same time; that is, to bring forward the latter. The second, which is already being prepared, would be to modify the electoral law to introduce a certain measure of proportionality into the national representation.

Such a step would modify the polarisation of political life engendered by the two-round system of voting that has shaped parliamentary life under the Fifth Republic. This would encourage the development of intermediate 'centre left' layers, which could be the means of an opening to the right, if desired.

If Mitterrand's think tank is so rich in producing possible ideas for changing the rules of the game, it is because the match is far from over. The three years of a class-collaborationist governmental policy are weighing heavily in their demoralisation and weakening of the workers. But, 'detente' or not, the relationship of forces between the classes that was expressed electorally in 1981 has not been radically reversed, and it would be going too far to conclude that

the situation now exists for redealing the political cards.

This, in the last analysis, explains the right-wing leaders' suspicion of Mitterrand's manoeuvres. But it would indicate also the government's proposals will not pass without provoking some reaction and running up against some major obstacles among the workers and, therefore, within the workers' parties.

The alert commentators of the Paris daily *Le Monde*, a journal that gives unqualified support to the left government and finds the president's projects quite attractive, nevertheless do not hesitate to underline the risks. Jean-Marie Colombani wrote recently, 'The additional difficulty is that the new triptych: new government, new policy, new majority; is incomplete, the new majority is missing.' (8) And the day after Laurent Fabius' first major television appearance another commentator, Francois Renard, remarked, 'But one thought immediately comes to mind, in this 'new deal' what has become of the great hopes raised by the emergence of a new majority at the polls in 1981?' (9)

In short, there is a long way from thinking up a project to putting it into practice. Behind the politicians' calculations and manoeuvres, deep social and political changes are at work, expressed on the one hand by abstentionism, the electoral collapse of the CP, and the general crisis of the workers' organisations and, on the other, by the rise of the National Front and racism. The big unknown, and the decisive question, is if and how the working class is going to intervene in the political arena, and whether it will use its own methods, those of class struggle. ■

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"We call for support for the FSLN"

Interview with Silvio Prado,
responsible to the FSLN for international relations

A representative of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) was invited to a recent meeting of the political bureaux of the European sections of the Fourth International to explain the situation in his country and the dangers of an American intervention.

Silvio Prado was in Europe, for which he is responsible to the Department of International Relations (DRI) of the FSLN. He accepted the invitation because, as he himself explained, his host organisation 'is a component part of the solidarity movement'.

At the end of a day of discussions, during which the Sandinista leader put forward the FSLN's analysis of the situation in his country and replied to questions about the Nicaraguan revolution and the political positions of the FSLN on various subjects, Silvio Prado granted an exclusive interview to *International Viewpoint* which we publish below.

Question. What are the stakes in the November 4 elections and what significance do the FSLN attach to them?

Answer. In general, we have always placed elections in a secondary role. The FSLN has always said that they were not the most important thing. Today the most important thing for the people of Nicaragua is the defence of the revolution.

It was in this framework that we began the preparation for the November 4 elections, knowing that the right would not be interested in participating. We had decided, however, to give them the greatest possible facilities for taking part.

Nonetheless, from the outset, we perceived that specific instructions had been given that the Coordinadora should not participate. (1) Because, from their standpoint, if they did take part, that would legitimise the defeat of the right in the elections, and thereby accord the FSLN a fully legal victory.

Who is interested in these elections? Not the right, obviously. The elections would only interest the right insofar as they gave them an opportunity to pretend that the FSLN was totalitarian and was trying to stop them from participating.

However, we are going ahead with the elections because we have been promising this to the people since the triumph of July 1979. Even in 1969, when the first programme of the FSLN was adopted, we had promised the people that when we won we would hold elections.

It is not, therefore, true to say that we decided to call these elections under pressure from the Socialist International. This is false. We took everyone's advice into consideration — from all countries and from all friendly forces. But if we are holding elections, it is to suit ourselves.

Q. In the Council of State, the mass organisations influence their representatives directly. They have also been able



Silvio Prado. (DR)

to play a certain role in the debates on issues concerning them. Will the new system of representation in the future Assembly mean a change in all that?

A. The doubt you express in that question comes from the fact that you don't fully understand the history of the FSLN and the real and concrete links that it has with the mass organisations.

First of all, the representatives of the mass organisations that have been on the Council of State up until now, that is, the delegates of the mass organisations, are all Sandinistas, all members of the FSLN. This is not by chance, this is because the leaders of the people were Sandinistas, and that is true in all sectors.

In the future National Assembly, there will be FSLN deputies who will be members of the mass organisations. So it's the same thing. What will change a bit is the character of the representation. Before, the delegates represented their mass organisation, and now, they will

represent the Party. But the social sector that they represent in the National Assembly will remain the most important thing.

In this way, if elected representatives shift from one social sector to another, they will also have to change their mandate in the Assembly, because they should represent the social sector they belong to.

Q. While an important section of the economy remains in private hands, we are seeing a political shift by those sections of the bourgeoisie who supported the revolution towards the armed counter-revolution. This is creating a rather contradictory and transitional situation. In this framework, how do you see the future of the mixed economy?

A. The mixed economy has a basis in our country. Once again, it is history that teaches us. This history shows us that the middle layer of peasants and the rich peasants have had an anti-Somoza, even revolutionary position and we want to keep them on our side. Their roots and origins make them different, and we must win them to the revolution.

Many of them were latifundistas and landowners, and they gave their land to the revolution at the time of the victory. In some cases we set up military schools on their land. There were guerrillas on their land, and some of them gave their land to the revolution, even before the victory of July 1979. They knew what they were risking.

What is happening amongst other sectors, the non-patriotic sectors? Some of them were anti-Somoza up to a point, because Somoza represented a rival, not just a political adversary but an economic one. As he accumulated more and more wealth, gained a monopolistic grip on economic life, Somoza became an enemy to some sections of the bourgeoisie. That is why they opposed Somoza, not because they were profoundly anti-Somoza.

It is this process which explains the appearance of the Independent Liberal Party (PLI), the Democratic Conservative Party (PCD) and other opposition parties, Alfonso Robelo, etc. Their tactical interests demanded overthrow of Somoza in order to improve their position and increase their profits. They thought, wrongly, that the revolution would allow them this. They were mistaken. They were completely mistaken, because the revolution did not leave them one single inch for enriching themselves. And when Robelo realised that the revolution was a serious business, that it was a deep-going, social revolution that would not

1. The Democratic Coordination 'Ramiro Sacasa', which has refused to participate in the elections, has regrouped certain bourgeois opposition forces including the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC), the Social Democrat Party (PSD), the Social Christian Party (PSC), the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), the Workers' Central of Nicaragua (CNT) and Central Unified Trade Unions (CUS).

take the reformist road, he got frightened and he fled, as Eden Pastora did and as the others have....They thought that the revolution was going to stop on July 19, 1979. They were deluding themselves.

The PLI, for example, were people who were anti-Somoza in order to defend their own interests. They have very little weight in major mass sectors. The FSLN had to take the leadership of these sectors and play a leading role in the fight against the dictatorship.

It was us and not bourgeois parliamentarians who drew up a military strategy to overthrow Somozism. What has happened is that the PLI are taking part in the elections because they were forced to by outside pressures. Everyone knows that the PLI is being financed by the Liberal International. Their aim is to get seats in parliament that can provide a forum for attacking those in power. They know that liberal ideas belong to the last century and that they ceased to be revolutionary a long time ago. Since the formulation of ideas of scientific socialism and Marxist-Leninism, liberalism has become obsolete, finished.

Q. How do you define the patriotic sectors of the bourgeoisie who still support the revolution?

A. Those we call the patriotic sectors are those parties who are interested in the political and, above all, the economic development of the country. Some think that the revolution serves their interests, that it can give them a framework for expansion, or at least allow them to maintain their investments. We are not interested, at the moment, in declaring that everything must become state property in all areas. This is a process which will take time. Certain pre-conditions have to come together. We must let them ripen.

For us, these layers represent a limited base of support. Some have joined us, they are with the FSLN. Others are with the Conservative Party or the Popular Social Christian Party (PPSC). Others are not in any political party, but they support the revolution. This is what we call the patriotic section of the bourgeoisie, those who invest in the country. Unfortunately, there are not many of them. On the whole, the bourgeoisie is anti-patriotic.

Q. At what stage is the imperialist military offensive now?

A. The military situation is characterised by the stagnation of the mercenaries' offensives on the different war fronts. This flows from the imperialists' tactic, which is not to go for a showdown with the Nicaraguan revolution but to hold back its progress and to contain the revolution within our borders. It is, if you like, a policy of eating away at the revolution. Thus, they need a large number of forces and substantial technical resources; aeroplanes, sophisticated weapons to halt the forward march of the revolutionary forces....



The political formations in Nicaragua (DR)

Moreover, the USA also has to step up their aggression so that they can negotiate with us from a position of strength. That's why they pressurised the mercenaries to dig in on national territory and to remain inside the country. The aim of the offensive is, therefore, to implant a mercenary force in the country, right inside, but at the same time they want to retain some flexibility.

Our tactic lies precisely in preventing these mercenaries from establishing themselves, from gaining a foothold. We pursue them so that they cannot develop any permanent bases. We try to tire them out and push them out of the country, to get rid of them altogether. At this moment we are about to proceed with the encirclement and obliteration of several of these forces which had penetrated into the centre of the country.

For the time being the only sign of outside aggression is the concentration of enemy forces on the border with Costa Rica, where several thousand counter-revolutionaries of the Democratic Force of Nicaragua (FDN) and the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE) are being concentrated. Their objective is to reinforce their southern front, which was weakened, and to try to relieve the North by forcing us to relax the pressure that we have been putting on their troops there.

Q. In relation to the political deadlines posed by the Nicaraguan and the American presidential elections and the dangers of imperialist intervention, what are, in your opinion, the tasks of international solidarity?

A. The North American intervention is a threat both before and after the elections. The question is how fully the Americans have assessed the difficulties posed by such an intervention. They

have the means to intervene directly whenever they want. They have the forces in Honduras, Panama, in the Atlantic and the Pacific.

Everything depends on a decision by their National Security Council. When this body decides, they will intervene. If they estimate that the cost of keeping up the present offensive is as much as a direct intervention would be, they will take the plunge. Is the level of aggression high enough to bring about this kind of intervention? In any case, we think that, little by little, the North American forces are becoming more and more involved in the war and that is leading them to make as much of an investment in it as if they were intervening directly in Nicaragua.

When the North Americans do their accounts and come to the conclusion that it costs as much to finance the counter-revolution as it would to intervene directly, then they will intervene. The threat of intervention is the same before and after the Nicaraguan elections.

Q. Don't you think that, nevertheless, the period of the elections could be used to step up international solidarity action?

A. Undoubtedly. Because imperialist propaganda is trying to present the elections as illegitimate or rigged. Yankee propaganda wants to make out that the Sandinistas are manipulating the elections. That is why solidarity actions are necessary. The Sandinista revolution and the FSLN need actions of recognition and support by progressive forces world-wide. We want party-to-party support. We call on all progressive political parties to come out in support of the FSLN as the leadership of the Nicaraguan revolution. ■



AROUND THE WORLD



The letter of Commandante Marcial

Before putting an end to his life (see International Viewpoint, No 30, May 16, 1983), Commandante Marcial, chief commander of the People's Liberation Forces (FPL) Farabundo Marti, a member organisation of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) wrote a letter addressed to 'The heroic people of El Salvador, my dearly-loved working class, and the glorious FPL-Farabundo Marti'. This letter, dated April 12, 1983, whose authenticity is unchallenged, has only reached us recently. It has not, to our knowledge, been published in English, and it is for this reason that we publish it here. The translation is by IV.

In all the difficult moments of my life, in the struggle against the internal reactionary and exploiting classes and against Yankee imperialism, the people and the working class that I belong to have been and are the major sources of my inspiration, and my main objective has been the fight for their interests.

I have been attacked, persecuted, calumniated, hurt and repressed a thousand times by these brutal enemies of the people. But I have willingly suffered and overcome all this for the sake of the workers, the peasants and the people. Everything that I have done has been and is within this framework, in the framework of these fundamental concerns, particularly in the last years of struggle, of stepping up of the people's struggle for liberation, this phase of intensification of the military and insurrectionary offensives towards taking power, based on an alliance of the workers and peasants and their interests.

As the people's war has intensified, so has the activity of the imperialists on all fronts, their conspiracies, their plots and plans. I am ready to fight against all these evil plans until final victory.

However, it is one thing to fight against the imperialists and their intrigues. It is another to face injustice, calumny and infamy from one's own brothers. A black conspiracy to stain my life as a revolutionary and do much harm to the FPL is developing and reaching its culmination. I do not know whence these defamatory plots come, this conspiracy against my revolutionary life. The only thing I can say is that, as the taking of power approaches, the national and international bourgeoisie will do all that they can to weaken the hegemony of the

proletariat and peasants in the revolution, and to thus eliminate politically or physically the organisations that represent a real guarantee for proletarian interests.

But what hurts, and cannot be borne, is that revolutionary brothers are being fooled and accept as true these calumnies and perfidious inventions against a revolutionary who has been tested a thousand times in the people's struggle. By accepting them, not only do they contribute to damaging my reputation as a tried and tested revolutionary, but they also attack the ranks of my beloved organisation by considering all its members and contacts as potential enemy infiltrators.

I cannot stand by powerless while my beloved organisation, the underpinning of the revolutionary people's struggle and the unity that flows from that, is treated in this way, nor accept that its bodies, its contacts, its members and its collaborators are submitted to a hasty and prejudged enquiry. I cannot let my name be dragged through the mud, not let pass the infamous, though indirect, suggestion or implication that my name is associated in the sad case of the terrible loss of our comrade Ana Maria.

I reject this infamous slander even if my brothers are repeating it. But the injustice is even greater when it comes from

brothers than when it comes from enemies. The truth will inevitably come out one day. For the time being, the whole responsibility for the personal decision I am now taking falls on those who, while brothers, have acted in this way, attempting to unjustly soil my revolutionary conduct.

I know that my people will win soon, that the working class will be able to defend its right to lead the revolutionary process in my country, that while suffering these violent blows, the FPL will be able to come forward as the authentic expression of the proletariat and the people. I know that it will be able to have a positive effect on the necessary unity of the people and, together with our beloved FAPL [People's Armed Liberation Forces, military wing of the FPL], will play a decisive role in final victory and in the stages that will bring them to create the conditions for passing to socialism.

I am encouraged by the idea that my modest contribution to this success — guided at every moment, in every act, of my life by the interests of the proletariat and the people — has promoted and will promote, to a certain extent, the real interests of the people in their happy future.

Revolution or death! The armed people will win! ■

Marcial, first leader of
the FPL-Farabundo Marti
and commander of the FAPL,
member of the general command
of the FMLN
April 12, 1983

Solidarity with Syrian Communist Action Party

The Ba'athist party dictatorship in Syria has launched a major repressive operation against our comrades of the Communist Action Party during the last few months. Several dozen comrades have been arrested, in Damascus in particular; taking the number of imprisoned members to around 170 (see *International Viewpoint*, No 33, June 27, 1983). This blow is that much more severe in that the dictatorship has been able to put its hands on the majority of the leading members of the party, and particularly on most of the delegates to the founding conference of the CAP, which took place in Lebanon in 1981.

As is customary for the Syrian regime, the arrested comrades have been submitted to various tortures. In fact, it

seems, according to reliable sources, that the new wave of arrests directed at the CAP are in response to directives from the head of the dictatorship, Hafez El-Assad himself, who wants to eliminate the only revolutionary organisation in Syria. And for very good reason: the CAP is the only expression of radical opposition to the Ba'athist regime, in Syria, since the regime succeeded in eliminating the far-right Muslim Brotherhood.

Despite the repression that has harassed it for three years, the CAP has continued to be consistently active. It is continuing to produce and clandestinely distribute its entire system of press: the *People's Appeal*, an agitational periodical distributed in several thousand copies; the *Red Flag*, the bi-monthly

political journal of the party; *The Communist*, theoretical review; and *The Proletarian*, an internal discussion bulletin, open to contributions from all party members.

The CAP, which has fraternal relations with the Fourth International through the Lebanese section which aids it with all the means at its disposal, is not a 'Trotskyist' organisation. It is the product of a fusion between several Marxist groupings that existed in Syria at the beginning of the 1970s. The fusion took place in 1976, following three years of extensive discussions. The new organisation was named the Communist Action Alliance, a name that was changed at the 1981 conference to mark the political and organisational maturation that followed five years of existence and struggle.

The CAP defines itself as a revolutionary Marxist organisation. It categorically rejects the Stalinist theory of 'revolu-

tion in stages' and emphasises the need to build a mass revolutionary international, in which it thinks the Fourth International will be one component. There is a continuing discussion within the organisation on different programmatic questions, to which our Lebanese comrades are contributing, at the request of the CAP leadership.

As today the Syrian regime has decided to suppress this organisation, it is the duty of all revolutionary Marxists in the imperialist countries as well as the dependent capitalist countries, to undertake solidarity activity with the comrades of the CAP. Public expressions of solidarity (petitions in newspapers, etc.) are particularly necessary. It should be noted that Amnesty International has recently launched a campaign for the release of the CAP prisoners.

Our campaign can only be the more useful. ■

Meeting of leaderships of European sections of Fourth International

As in preceding years, the political bureaus of the European sections of the Fourth International held a working meeting during the last week of August. Delegations were present from Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, the Spanish state, Sweden, Switzerland and West Germany. Representatives of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States and Lutte Ouvrière from France were invited as observers.

The meeting concentrated on three questions:

- the question of activity and orientation in the anti-war and anti-nuclear weapons movement;
- workers' resistance to austerity policies in Europe and political developments within the workers movement;
- the situation in Central America and the organisation of solidarity campaigns with the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutions.

The discussions and workshop meetings also took up the questions relating to the growth and implantation of the organisations, particularly building youth organisations, implantation in industry and proletarianisation, and radicalisation and work among women.

A whole day was given over to reports and discussion on the situation in Central America and the Caribbean, led off by reports from Silvio Prado, a member of the commission for international relations (DRI) of the FSLN in Nicaragua, and a comrade from the Dominican Republic, representing the Bloque Socialista. A second day concentrated on the evolution of the situation in El Salvador and the debates within the revolutionary movement there, and the preparation of solidarity activities planned for this autumn.

The main reports on workers' resistance to austerity concerned a balance sheet of the struggles that have taken place in Belgium, a balance sheet of the campaign for the 35-hour week in West Germany, the situation in France after three years of the left government, and, in particular, the British miners' strike. Proposals and plans were made to ensure that active solidarity with the miners' strike would be a main feature of the activity of the European sections during the autumn.

Discussions on the anti-war movement covered the theoretical and strategical questions posed by the arms race as well as perspectives for the peace movements in the years ahead. These discussions will form the basis of articles to appear in the press of the International. ■

PST-U fights for legalisation

Following its recent conference the Socialist Workers Party of Uruguay (PST-U) decided to act openly in trade-union struggles and popular and democratic actions, and attempt to regain legal status. And the end of July the military regime agreed to legalise the Frente Amplio by repealing the ban on two of its components, the Christian Democracy and the Socialist Party, as well as on other smaller forces. But the Communist Party, the PST and other parties remain illegal.

The restrictions on democratic rights, only a few months before the elections set for November 25, are still very wide-ranging. General Liber Seregni, for example, the Frente Amplio presidential candidate in 1971, cannot stand in the next elections. In addition, the military judiciary is demanding from him, as from all political prisoners because of 'expenditure made by the state' during their imprisonment, the sum of 1,200 US dollars.

On the basis of an analysis of the national situation which emphasises the workers' movement's own initiatives against the restrictions on democratic rights still in force, the PST decided to begin to challenge the other legalised political forces for the new possibilities of public activity. During the big demonstrations for the amnesty which took place in recent months, the PST organised its own contingents with its own banners. But the main initiative in this field was the participation by a leader of the organisation, a political prisoner recently released after serving a sentence of three years, in a hunger strike in solidarity with Adolfo Wosen.

Wosen, who has been in prison for twelve years, is one of the nine leaders of the Tupamaros imprisoned without trial as a hostage of the military regime. Suffering from cancer, and with only a few months to live, Wosen decided to go on hunger strike on July 30, for the demand for a total amnesty. Representatives of the National Party, the Frente Amplio, the PST and other human rights organisations decided to undertake a 10-day hungerstrike in solidarity with his action. This action was commented on daily by the press, and the participation of a still illegal party in this public action was widely noted.

The effect of this action was very positive, indicating that it is both possible and necessary to push back the frontiers of the legal system, which are presently being discussed by the military and bourgeois leaders. ■



Broad Basque front appeals for world solidarity

The appeal below was published in the September 17 issue of Zutik, the newspaper of the Liga Komunista Iraultzailea (Revolutionary Communist League), the Fourth International organization in the part of the Basque country that is in the Spanish state. Zutik's introduction follows.

The "Letter to the Peoples and Countries of the World" reprinted below appeared in various publications in the Basque Country in the middle of August. It was initiated by various cultural associations, religious groups, and groups linked to social movements — Christian Base Communities, the Instituto de Promocion de Estudios Sociales, the Colectivo Herria-2000, Eliza, the Priests Coordinating Committee, the cultural association Euskal-Garra, SALHAKETA (Association to Aid Social Prisoners), the Committee for a Nuclear-Free Coast and the Anti-Militarist Group of Bilbao.

A large number of intellectuals and prominent personalities have publicly expressed their support for this statement. And now a big campaign of collecting signatures is going on in the Basque Country with tables set up in the neighborhoods and in the annual fiestas. Recently this campaign has been extended to the factories and other workplaces, in particular the Bilbao docks. It is estimated, although this is already an old figure, that 50,000 signatures have been collected. It is hoped that this can be multiplied by ten times.

Although this letter is not backed explicitly by political organizations, in practice it represents collaboration among diverse Basque political forces, from the radical left to the Basque Nationalist Party. Thus, among the first endorsers was the mayor of San Sebastian, Ramon Labayen.

It should be remembered that the Basque government has come out clearly against the extraditions. The significance of this is clear. For the first time since the 1977 amnesty, now far in the past, the possibility has appeared for a very broad front, much broader than the sector that has traditionally mobilized in recent years, against certain aspects of the repression to which we are being subjected, such as the extraditions or torture.

In Euskadi, we are involved in this work. Outside Euskadi it is necessary to disseminate this letter and build support. To contact the sponsors of this letter, call 94-424-60-07 or 94-469-43-98 in Bilbao.

The signatory associations and organizations wish to make the following statement for the information of public opinion and all people of good will:

1. We express our appreciation to all individuals and nations, especially those in Central and South America and throughout Europe for the welcome they have provided, the interest they have shown, and the asylum they have offered for thousands upon thousands of Basque nationals who have gone into exile for strictly political reasons, in particular since the Spanish civil war.

2. From all our various points of view in analyzing Basque society, independent of all political tendencies, and standing on the UN Declaration of Human Rights, we wish to make it absolutely clear that the so-called Basque Question remains a real political problem today in the summer of 1984.

To demonstrate this, we offer the following evidence:

a) Some 60% of the Basque population voted against or abstained on the present [Spanish-state] constitution.

b) All the political parties that operate exclusively in a Basque framework, which represent 70% of the Basque population, are either opposed to the Autonomy Statute or to the way it is being applied by the central government.

c) More than 700 persons from the Basque country are presently confined in prisons in the Spanish state.

d) Thousands of Basque citizens remain in exile in various countries throughout the world.

e) The educational systems imposed by successive Spanish governments have consigned the Basque language to extreme marginalization.

3. Unfortunately, we have to point out that the Spanish police continue to wage a severe and discriminatory repression against the Basque people. At this time, there is one policeman for every 125 inhabitants of the Basque country.

In just the first six months of 1984, at least 743 persons were arrested for political reasons, of whom no less than 70 have been imprisoned.

4. We note with sorrow that torture continues to be standard practice in the police facilities. There were more than 3,500 cases of torture and ill-treatment in Euskadi between January 1, 1981 and July 30, 1984. This situation has been repeatedly exposed by the following organizations and personalities:

- Amnesty International
- The Asociacion Pro Derechos Humanos (Human Rights Association)
- The Basque deputies in the Spanish parliament.
- Many municipal governments throughout Euskadi.
- The Young Lawyers Committee of Madrid.
- The Lawyers Committees of Bilbao and San Sebastian.
- The Coordinadora de Curas de Euskal-Herria (Coordinating Committee of Priests of the Basque People).

5. We express our solidarity with the representatives of our people who have again and again stressed the need for a sincere dialogue and for real negotiations, which implies recognition of the inalienable rights of the Basque people, as the essential means and conditions for solving the political problem.

Such statements have been made, for example, by the president of the Basque government, the members of the National Executive of Herri Batasuna [the People United, the principal militant nationalist political organization, which offers support to ETA], the chairperson and members of the Executive of the Basque Nationalist Party, and the general secretary of Euskadiko Eskerra [Basque Left, a moderate party of militant nationalist origin].

In this spirit of interest in a genuine peace for the Spanish people and the Spanish state, with justice and liberty, we appeal urgently to the French people and government and to all the countries affected to accept the following principles:

1) Our neighbor France must remain, as it has been up till now, the traditional land of asylum. As such it has held the affection of the entire Basque community and all freedom-loving people throughout history.

2) Never should the mistake be made of comparing Basque militants, whether we agree with their strategy or not, with those who commit other types of social offenses. Such a false comparison would be a grave affront to the cultural and national minorities in Europe that are struggling for liberation.

3) The various countries in Europe and throughout the world must understand how to apply, with all their implications, basic human rights to the Basque political exiles.

"In the event of persecution, any person has the right to seek and to enjoy asylum in any country." (Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.)