

# International VIEWPOINT

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## Reagan tries to step up war on Nicaragua

A new opposition  
grows in Indonesia

Balance sheet  
of British miners  
strike



# International Viewpoint

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## The people's response to Reagan's threats



The Nicaraguan revolution is increasingly under threat. It is under threat of direct imperialist aggression demonstrated by the increasingly precise statements from US leaders and in the fact of US aid to counterrevolutionary forces spreading terror throughout the country. But the revolution is also in danger of being strangled through the systematic policy of economic and financial blockades operated by imperialism.

Up until the month of November the financial losses to the Nicaraguan revolution in 1984 alone were 255 million dollars incurred by the imperialists' offensive on the Nicaraguan revolution.

According to some sources this sum represents 70% of export returns. Over the last four years these losses represented more than one billion dollars.

In the face of this difficult economic situation, the Nicaraguan government while relentlessly pursuing its efforts to mobilise the people for defence, is at the same time developing an audacious diplomatic strategy aimed at loosening the noose of the imperialist blockade, around their necks.

At the same time within the country the Sandinista

C. GARMENDIA and P. RIVERA

MANAGUA — Seventy thousand Managua militia members and delegations from the border areas rallied here on February 26, the anniversary of the founding of the Sandinista People's Militias, to respond to Reagan's threats.

This year, 1985, "the year of unity against aggression and for peace," will be a crucial year for the survival of the Sandinista People's Revolution and for the struggles of the peoples of Central America.

Everything is in question. The mercenary forces financed by the CIA and the imperialist interventionist army are taking up positions in a context in which the avenues of dialogue have been blocked (i.e. the mediation of the Contadora group, Manzanillo, and the Hague international court). The machine has been set in motion.

In Nicaragua today, more and more weakened economically by aggression but with the masses mobilised, the fate of the revolutionary is being decided.

Seventy thousand Nicaraguans, the defense force's organizations in the battalions of the Managua Territorial Militias, marched the entire day through the city, armed and shouting slogans. Armed peasants from the border areas, from Yali, Jalapa, Somotillo, and so many other villages that have become the symbols today of the peoples resistance to imperialism, massed in the Plaza de la Revolucion.

government has just adopted a series of economic austerity measures withdrawing subsidies on certain basic products.

In effect, the government's policy of subsidies aimed to guarantee better supplies to the masses has been diverted. It had, on the contrary, strengthened speculation. Also in agriculture, the subsidy of basic goods, at great cost to the state, resulted in the reduction of the amount of land being used for growing corn and beans, because it became more economical to buy those products at the subsidised price than to produce them oneself. This in turn brought about a heightened speculation and the growth of a black market.

The restriction on subsidies of basic products is going hand-in-hand with a rise in wages aimed, mainly to attract workers into the productive sector and to maintain the level of consumption of the masses, despite inflation.

We publish below a report from our correspondents in Managua, which pinpoints the difficulties of the economic situation and draws up the tasks posed by the need for international solidarity against imperialist aggression.

There were workers, peasants, women (including both the very young and the very old, mothers and companions of comrades fallen in the fight who have taken up the weapons of their children or their companions). There were young people, young men and women, students and workers. "A gun for every hand," the minister of defense, Comandante Humberto Ortega, said that day. And he added: "We will do everything possible to see that every citizen gets a gun" to defend every inch of Nicaraguan territory.

"The National Leadership of the FSLN has issued an appeal to all its activists and sympathizers, to its political organizations, mass organizations and social organizations. We appeal to the people of Nicaragua to confront the challenge of this year, 1985, to support in a consistent way the military and economic measures that the government of the republic has taken and will continue to take." (From the speech of Comandante Daniel Ortega, president of Nicaragua, in the name of the National Leadership of the FSLN, on February 8, 1985.)

The mobilization of February 26 was only one milestone in the great campaign that is to be waged in 1985. To meet the challenge of this decisive year, exertion and discipline are needed to organize a fighting and producing homefront to face the possibility of imperialist intervention.

A massive campaign of mobilization is being built up by the press, the TV, the radio, in the factories, in the cooperatives,

in the neighbourhoods. Appeals are being made for youth to sign up for Patriotic Military Service (SMP). In recent days, it was the turn of Managua and the surrounding region. Thousands of youth lined up at the recruitment offices. Tomorrow another round of recruiting will open up throughout the country, directed at a younger age group, coming after the call up of the active reserve.

A week ago in Masaya and Managua, practice operations were started by the Territorial Militia Battalions. These units mount a continuous defense of local areas both in the cities and in the countryside. They are backed up by the Sandinista People's Army and the youth of the Patriotic Military Service, as well as civil-defense groups of women, workers and the very young.

Their operations included practice defense against air attacks, against bombing, including the entire community. They involved exercises in returning fire, use of shelters, the handling of anti-aircraft guns, and first aid, as well as fighting in urban and rural conditions. The experience of the people's insurrection of 1978, with all its methods, is reviving in the face of a renewed aggression.

All the cadres of the FSLN and the mass organizations have mobilized to carry out the political and defense tasks. In the National Assembly elected on November 4, the political struggle is continuing. The objective is to take steps commensurate with the gravity of the situation

that the country is experiencing and to force the bourgeois and opposition parties to take a position, to come out against the aggression.

No day goes by without its painful list of victims of the imperialist war being waged against Nicaragua. Ambushes, massacres, kidnappings of peasants that the contras want to impress into their ranks have become a daily drain of blood. The destruction of cooperatives, the spearhead of peasant organization, of crops and schools all tend to foster uneasiness and fear. And, in particular, it represents an enormous economic and human cost for the country.

The Somozista counterrevolution has intensified the tactics it employed back in 1980 — limited operations by small groups that lay ambushes for peasants or political leaders, technicians, and educators. Their objective is to create terror and, above all, to avoid having to confront the People's Army, which has been dealing them heavy losses.

This represents a change of tactics following the failure of the contras' operations in 1983/84. Their hit-and-run operations are clearly directed against the economy and production. The target of the counterrevolutionaries in the first three months of 1985 was to do as much harm as possible to the coffee harvest.

Dozens of ambushes were laid for volunteer coffee pickers, students and urban or agricultural workers. In Jinotega and Matagalpa twenty privately owned coffee plantations have already been totally destroyed by the contras. About 40% of the coffee crop will be lost because of the direct and indirect effects of this war.

Reagan's "crusaders for freedom" have already accumulated a long record of atrocious crimes against humanity.

## Strategy of terror

Up to last year, the strategy of the Somozistas (fitting into the framework of the overall political, diplomatic and military strategy of the imperialists) was to try to "liberate" a section of Nicaraguan territory. They would then have set up a "provisional government" on this territory, which would be immediately recognised by the US's regional allies. This would have been used to legitimize direct intervention by the armies of the neighboring states first (which in fact have been constantly looking for excuses for conflict) and then of the US.

This strategy has totally failed. It is degenerating today into tactics of terror, attacks upon production, with the more or less open support of the CIA and the Reagan Administration, combined with constant US-Honduran joint maneuvers on the border, the mining of ports, spy flights, and so on. But the US administration is determined to get out of this impasse.

In the recent period, while more than 4,500 GIs were being mobilized in the Pino Alto III maneuvers on the Nicaraguan borders (simulating an invasion suppos-

edly in response to one by Nicaragua!), while all the mercenary troops were mustering on the Honduran and Costa Rican frontiers, the US pushed aside all means for a solution through dialogue.

Washington withdrew from the Manzillo bilateral talks under the pretext that the Contadora group already provided a better framework, and then it went on arrogantly to boycott that. Everything was done to demonstrate to the US Congress that dialogue with Nicaragua was out of the question.

Comandante Humberto Ortega declared that there was a threat of a total naval blockade, and that every measure would be taken to prepare for such an eventuality. After thousands of volunteers had mobilized to save the coffee harvest, which had already been delayed by the diversion of the students in November to the defense of Managua, if the coffee crop were blocked in the harbor of Corinto, it would have dramatic consequences for the country's economy!

Behind the proposal to Congress for the first time to openly appropriate 14 million dollars for aid to the contras is a sordid battle that Reagan has been waging against certain opposition sections of the Democratic Party in order to open up the way for intervening in Nicaragua.

Up until now, aid to the contras has gone through the CIA's "discreet" channels, mercenaries' associations and other "good works," as well as armies such as the Israeli one. If this appropriation were voted it would mean that the Reagan Administration had succeeded in getting unanimous support for an intervention on the basis of a policy of declared war rather than "covert war", as the policy has been up till now.

However, it should be clear that an impasse in the debate in Congress or rejection of the proposed appropriation would not mean an end to the aggression, although it would represent a political and "diplomatic" setback that would complicate Reagan's calculations and reduce his margin for openly maneuvering. (The US withdrawal from the International Court at the Hague and its declaration that it did not recognise the court's authority have not failed to cause problems for the US.)

Approval of Reagan's proposed appropriation would in fact be an open declaration of war against Nicaragua and a clear endorsement for counterrevolutionary and interventionist plans in Nicaragua and Central America.

The revolutionary government has just issued an invitation to the US House of Representatives and Senate to set up a joint congressional committee to come and see for themselves, "without any restrictions," that "our country's military buildup is purely defensive and not offensive."

President Daniel Ortega made this proposal during the visit of a delegation from the US Conference of Bishops to Nicaragua. The archbishop of New York has announced that he is ready to serve as intermediary in this new move.

Once again the White House was caught off guard by the boldness of the Sandinistas' diplomatic maneuvers. Reagan's spokesperson, Larry Speaks, said that he was delighted by this proposal. At the same time, Secretary of State, George Schultz, has attempted to discredit it, resorting to anti-Communist hysteria.

## Latin bourgeoisies shy away from Reagan

The policy of the "big stick" which has cost the lives of thousands of people in the Southern-Cone countries looks to these bourgeoisies as a less and less effective means for suppressing people's struggles and insurrectionary processes.

In these semi-industrialised countries of Latin America, the mass movement of solidarity with Nicaragua and against US intervention is reinforcing and reinvigorating the movement of the workers at home for their economic demands. The bourgeoisies, which perceive this danger quite clearly, are being driven to commit themselves more and more to the Contadora operation in order to try and block the threat to themselves.

The Reagan government realizes what is happening. It expressed its disapproval to the Alfonsin government loudly and clearly through its embassy in Buenos Aires when 150 young people from the Communist Youth in Argentina formed a brigade and went to Nicaragua to pick coffee. A massive rally of 30,000 persons gave them a send off from Buenos Aires. It is clear how far the consequences of this could go.

More than 8,000 civilians have been killed in the five years of imperialist aggression against Nicaragua. Some 120,000 peasants have been forced off their land by the pressure of constant attacks. Today, 40% of the national budget in Nicaragua is to go to meet military expenses (as opposed to 25% in 1984). These pressures have obviously made it necessary to mobilize sections of productive workers and move them to the war zones in order to defend the revolution, with the result of dangerously upsetting production.

These problems are compounded by the attacks on economic targets and sabotage. These involve the destruction of cooperatives and productive units, as well as crops; the wrecking of the infrastructure of production; destruction of schools and granaries; the mining of ports; and, most recently, the blocking, by US pressure, of a shipment of oil from Ecuador. The latter will increase the scarcity of transport and energy within the country. Credits have also been frozen.

Since December 1984, when the coffee harvest commenced, twenty private coffee plantations have been totally destroyed by the contras. The objective of this operation is to impede the harvest but also to terrify the volunteer pickers and the coffee growers who continue to produce.

"Of every hundred pairs of shoes made in Nicaragua, forty are soldiers'

boots. Of every hundred pieces of clothing produced, forty go for uniforms. Of every hundred bars of soap, forty go to the fighters. Of every hundred pounds of maize harvested, forty go to the war fronts." That is what Comandante Ortega said on February 8.

The bulk of production, thus, has to be diverted to the fighters, to the workers who have been mobilized and so are not producing any more. And this is giving rise to imbalances, shortages, speculation, and inflation. The effects are hitting the workers in their buying power.

The government is now going to stop subsidies on eleven necessities, which amount to seven million dollars a year. This money will be diverted to the directly productive sector in order to increase the wages, which are going to go up by 46% for urban workers and 100% for agricultural workers.

These raises will go first to productive urban workers and administrative workers and later to be extended to agricultural workers. These increases, which less than make up for the 34% annual rate of real inflation, will be readjusted in two or three months to meet increases in prices. The latter will also go up sharply as the result of the elimination of state subsidies and higher prices for producers.

Crisis and austerity in a situation in which the country's economic life is being disrupted and strangled by imperialism in all areas have not kept the revolutionary government from raising wages, from putting the buying power of the workers and the standard of living of the masses first. The measures in question were discussed and worked out in collaboration with the unions before they were put before the National Assembly. This procedure bears no relation to the IMF imposing its dictates.

Measures are being introduced to establish markets run by MICOIN [the state distribution network] in all the work centers. They will be run by the unions and will sell necessities at fixed prices in order to assure that the wage increases remain real and that the workers will not have to acquire what they need on the speculative free market. Exchanges among enterprises may lengthen the list of price-controlled products. Such operations are to be carried out by the unions as well.

Consumption of necessities has continually risen since 1979, in fact it has nearly doubled. However, production has not increased at a commensurate rate, in particular since 1983. And food imports have been growing. It is necessary, therefore, to provide incentives for production, and, above all, to draw into production the large numbers of working people who have gone over into the informal tertiary sector (for example, street vendors), who have been speculating in state subsidized products, an activity that has been far more lucrative than productive work.

At the start, the increase in consumption will be slowed. This is to make it possible to give a new impetus to produc-

tion (better prices for producers) and to put into operation new ways of organizing production, distribution and the monitoring of these processes.

Meat consumption, for example, dropped by a fourth in one week in Managua and Leon as a result of higher prices. But you do not see the speculators and pedlars lining up early in the morning anymore and emptying the stores. It is ordinary consumers who are coming to buy.

There will also be changes in the exchange rate of the dollar. The official rate of 28 cordobas to the dollar no longer corresponds to the reality. Differential exchange rates will be instituted, depending on where the currency comes from and what it is intended to go for.

### "a new endeavour for international solidarity"

However, the revolutionary government has made it clear that these are temporary measures, which will be reviewed in collaboration with the unions. They are not proposed as definitive solutions to the structural problems of the crisis-wracked dependent economic system inherited from the Somoza regime. The Sandinista People's Revolution does not claim that it can change this situation by raising wages.

The means by which Nicaragua has been struggling since 1979 to transform this dependent capitalist economic system are agrarian reform, total nationalization of internal commerce and transport, socialization of health services and free education, setting up committees of industrial workers and agricultural wage

workers and organizing cooperatives.

The international economic crisis, moreover, is costing Nicaragua dear, as a dependent country historically specialized in the export of agricultural products, devoid of any industrial infrastructure, even one related to its agricultural economy in the framework of the Central American Common Market promoted by the imperialists. And the cost of the crisis is compounded by the imperialist boycott of Nicaragua's products on the world market.

The discussion on the 14 million dollar appropriation for the contras in the US Congress, the positions of some sections the Democratic Party, the positions of the Socialist International, of the Latin American bourgeoisies and even the European bourgeoisies are the result of the working people mobilizing against intervention.

The only way that we can help the people of Nicaragua and the other peoples of Central America effectively to halt imperialist aggression is through united mobilizations. This is also the only way we can effectively support and defend the consolidation and advance of the revolutionary regime in Nicaragua and the extension of the revolution in Central America.

This is where our internationalist tasks are concentrated today, in the unconditional defense of the revolutionary process in Nicaragua within the context of the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle.

As Comandante Bayardo Arce has said, "the new imperial ideology has to be countered with a new endeavor for international solidarity." ■

## Fourth International supports mobilisation against US imperialism

*The following is the statement of support for the April 20 demonstration against US military intervention in Central America, adopted by the Twelfth World Congress of the Fourth International.*

As the US government deepens its aggression against the workers and peasants of Nicaragua, El Salvador and throughout Central America and the Caribbean, a march on Washington D.C. along with protest demonstrations in San Francisco and other cities has been called for April 20, 1985, by a broad array of forces in the United States.

The first demand of these demonstrations is to stop the US military intervention in Central America. Other demands call for a halt to US support for the apartheid regime in South Africa, to the mounting US war budget and nuclear arms build up, and to racism and unemployment.

Sponsors of the call already include trade unions such as the International Association of Machinists and the United Food and Commercial Workers; civil rights organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Operation PUSH and the League of United Latin American Citizens; the Rainbow Coalition; the Committee in Solidarity with the People in El Salvador and other Central American solidarity and anti-war groups; church and religious organisations; and many other social and political organizations. A nationwide coalition has been set up to coordinate plans for the demonstration, as well as local coalitions in many cities.

Along with the many individuals and organizations that will participate in building this action, the April 20 demonstration offers special opportunities to draw the unions and organizations of oppressed nationalities, women and working farmers into the fight against Washington's aggression against the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean. The February 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International hails this initiative in the United States and encourages anti-war forces, Central American solidarity committees, trade unions, workers' organisations and youth organisations in other countries to discuss holding solidarity actions on or around the April 19 - 22 anti-war activities in the United States.

# The strike that changed the face of British politics

Meeting in London on Sunday March 3, a special delegate conference of the National Union of Mineworkers decided to end the longest and bloodiest strike in British labour movement history.

Miners' president, Arthur Scargill, said afterwards: 'The strike is over but the dispute over pit closures and jobs goes on.' The defeat of the strike came as a direct result of the treachery of the leadership of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress (TUC). Only if the lessons of that defeat are learnt will British workers prevent further blows being struck at the miners and the full weight of the government offensive being extended to the rest of the working class. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and youth participated in the miners struggle. It is this current which will be at the centre of the future fightback.

Steve ROBERTS

The motion calling for a return to work without a settlement and for an amnesty to be negotiated locally was moved by the South Wales area of the union and passed by 98 votes to 91 against. A Yorkshire motion, which was defeated by the same margin, said that the strike should continue until the future of the five pits named for closure was safeguarded and a general amnesty granted to the 710 miners sacked. The union executive was divided equally on what recommendation to make to the conference. They advised the delegates that the status quo should be retained and that the strike should continue. After the conference reached its decision Arthur Scargill thanked miners and miners' wives 'from the bottom of my heart'.

He listed the strike's achievements as withdrawal of the threat to close five pits; the National Coal Board's failure to implement its 1984/85 closure programme and the mobilisation of the NUM. 'The workers in this struggle have demonstrated to the working class that if they make a stand they can prevent attempts to butcher their industry,' he said.

The continuing militancy of the miners was expressed two days later when most returned to work. Over 30,000 miners out of 180,000 did not return, mostly in protest against the refusal of the government and the National Coal Board to consider an amnesty. Ian MacGregor, the NCB chairperson, confirmed this stance on March 10 when he said that "people are now discovering the price of insubordination and insurrection — and boy are we going to make it stick."

In the Yorkshire area 50% of the workforce stayed out, in Scotland 56% and the Kent area remained on strike for the rest of the week.

The miners who did return to work made it a day of demonstration, marching behind their union banners shouting their

defiance of the employers and the government.

The demand for the reinstatement of those sacked was prominent throughout the coalfields. The overwhelming majority of the victimised workers were convicted in the courts on minor offences like scavenging for coal or obstruction on picket lines and then sacked by the Coal Board. Scotland and Kent are the areas worst affected. In Scotland NCB managers have refused to contemplate any of those victimised getting their jobs back.

There are also a large number of miners who are in prison for offences related to the dispute (see accompanying article).

A ballot of the NUM membership to be held later this month will propose to establish a levy of £95,000 per week to help the families of the victimised strikers. The ballot will be an important test of the loyalty of the membership to the Scargill leadership.

There is already evidence that loyalty remains intact. Six days after the strike had been called off, Arthur Scargill addressed an audience of 5,000 miners' wives celebrating International Women's Day in Chesterfield.

A MORI opinion poll taken after the strike had finished showed that 68% of the miners interviewed would support the union in taking industrial action to oppose pit closures on economic grounds in their own areas.

The poll also showed 57% of miners in favour of continuing the ban on overtime, despite the fact that the miners would not receive a pay rise until the ban was called off. The significance of the ban is that it keeps coal stocks at the lowest possible level in preparation for further industrial action. (see chronology)

Despite this continued spirit of militancy there is no doubt that the miners' union has suffered a major defeat. Fight-

ing against pit closure area by area has been shown to be ineffective unless backed up by the threat of national action. Given the sacrifices that have already been made in the dispute the likelihood of the national union being able to mobilise even a majority of its members for national strike action in the near future is remote. The union's casualties are heavy including two miners killed on the picket line, over 100 in prison, 710 miners sacked (many of them leading rank and file militants), nearly 10,000 arrested with thousands still awaiting trial.

The NUM itself is weakened. Speaking at a rally in Rugeley, Staffordshire, on March 10, Arthur Scargill explained that even if all the £8½ million seized from the union by court orders were returned it would realise nothing since the money was originally borrowed. British trade unions have launched a fund to reconstruct the NUM's finances. In addition, a whole number of legal actions from the bosses and from scab miners continue to threaten the union.

The National Working Miners Committee, which has funded a whole number of legal actions in the past year against the union, has stated its intention to stay in existence after the strike.

This scabs committee has links not only with the government but with Thatcher herself. When formed, the committee's meetings were attended by David Hart, a former Thatcher press aide, who provided both funds and advice for the committee and acted as a link person between Tory leaders and the committee.

The scabs have now declared their intention to launch a campaign for constitutional change in the union, again with the back-up of the capitalist courts. The number one target in this campaign will be the Scargill leadership of the union.

The union also faces a split by almost one-fifth of its membership. The Nottinghamshire area of the union has distanced itself from the union by changing its local constitution so as not to be bound by the national union's rule 51, which deals with disciplinary matters. The area further broke with the union by recently calling off the overtime ban on the grounds of 'hardship'. Two much smaller areas, Leicester and South Derbyshire are taking a similar course.

Some of the working miners' leaders have openly talked about creating a split-off organisation similar to the so-called 'Spencer union' which split the miners' union after their defeat in the general strike of 1926.

However, the national union leadership will aim to exploit the unease which is felt by many Nottinghamshire miners with the manipulation of their local union by the shadowy figures behind the working miners committees. As matters stand at the moment, however, Nottinghamshire will be expelled from the union if they persist in flouting the constitution and decisions of the national union.

All these factors represent a serious weakening of the NUM and inhibit the

possibilities of future struggle. The defeat of the union means that Thatcher can use the sentiment expressed by many trade unionists after the strike. "If the miners can't take on the government and win, then who can?"

This reticence will be reinforced by the fact that, even during the miners' strike, serious defeats took place, such as the collapse of the Austin-Rover strike after the unions concerned were taken to court under the new anti-trade union laws.

### **Tory government cannot afford to gloat**

However, what must be added to any assessment of the outcome of the strike is the extent to which the government itself has been damaged and internally weakened as a result of the strike.

The official line of the Conservatives has been to refuse to gloat over the calling off of the strike. The reason for this is nothing to do with concern for miners feelings, but because of the considerable unease felt about the government's handling of the dispute.

In an opinion poll taken just before the end of the strike, 60% of those questioned felt that Thatcher had handled the final stages of the strike badly. Only 34% of those questioned felt that she was doing a good job as prime minister, the lowest rating since before the Malvinas war.

Other opinion polls put the Tories only narrowly in front of the Labour Party, with the major part of the Tories' loss of popularity going to the Social Democratic/Liberal Alliance.

These shifts in political opinion are only the first implications of the tremendous changes brought about in British society by the miners' strike.

Halfway through the strike, Thatcher called the miners' union 'the enemy within', comparing Scargill to General Galtieri of Argentina. Finance minister Nigel Lawson said that the cost of the strike would be a justifiable investment in securing the defeat of the NUM.

The cost of that investment has exceeded that of the Malvinas war by over double. Estimates put the cost of the strike in terms of extra fuel and policing at £3 billion, £140 for every working person in the country.

The stockbrokers, Simon and Coates say that knock-on costs in the coal industry could add another £700 million to this total. They estimate the total loss to Gross National Product at 2%.

For many spokespersons of the liberal establishment the activities of the police and courts during the strike represented a move towards a strong state, a shift away from 'government by consent' to increasing 'government by coercion.'

In Britain the police are theoretically responsible to municipal authorities who fund them from local taxes. During the strike this notion of accountability was unceremoniously dumped by the creation of what amounted to a 10,000 strong

mobile national police force, accountable only to a 'National Reporting Centre.' This centre was set up after the 1972 miners' strike and first used against the revolt of the black youth in inner city areas. From its London base, the centre drafted police from all over the country to occupy mining areas, virtually replacing the local police forces. The scale of this policing and the use of riot techniques against miners and their communities gave the police a profile similar to that of an occupying force.

The government chose not to use its newly passed trade union laws to contain the strike, but instead gave the police a free hand to find crimes to fit the circumstances.

Concern over the increasing powers being arrogated by the central state (in stark contrast to the official propaganda of the government on the freedom of individuals from the incursions of the collectivist state) has provoked internal divisions in the Tory Party on another front — that of local government. In a drive to achieve cuts in social expenditure the government has proposed to limit the ability of local councils to raise taxes and raise social services. In addition the large metropolitan authorities, like the Greater London Council face abolition as a result of Tory opposition to the left wing policies promoted by such figures as GLC Labour leader, Ken Livingstone.

The fall in the pound and the resulting rise in British interest rates has further exacerbated the crisis within the Tory party.

Not only has the centre-piece of the government's policy this year — tax cuts — been indefinitely postponed, but harsher credit restrictions threaten to choke off the promised economic recovery.

The revival of the economy and the reduction of the record level of unemployment (now standing at 13% even on official figures) is now vital to Thatcher's prospects of retaining power in the next general election scheduled for 1988.

Despite the fact that the elections are still three years away many Conservative Members of Parliament are becoming increasingly nervous about the prospects of losing their seats and their party losing power. At the most senior level figures like ex-premier Edward Heath, have spoken out, along with many other ex-ministers, calling for a reversal in the economic policies of the government.

It is true that Thatcher planned this defeat of the union for a decade. Following the defeat of Edward Heath's Conservative government in 1974 at the hands of the miners, a secret report was prepared by a Conservative Party policy group which identified coal as 'the most likely battleground' for a future Thatcher government. They recommended a six-point plan which included:

- establishment of a large mobile police force to prevent picketing
- cutting off state benefits to strikers
- building up of coal stocks, particularly in power stations

## **Chronology of the great strike**

1983

*September 1:* Ian MacGregor takes over as chairperson of the National Coal Board, the coal employers.

*September 14:* Strike over closure of Monktonhall pit in Scotland.

*October 21:* The NUM begins an overtime ban against pit closures and a 5.2% pay offer by the Coal Board. The ban aims to run down coal stocks standing at a record 24 million tonnes. NUM says that 300,000 tonnes of production are lost in first week.

1984

*March 5:* Strike in Yorkshire over plans to close Cortonwood pit.

*March 6:* The Coal Board announces plans to cut 4 million tonnes capacity with the loss of 20,000 jobs. All Yorkshire and Scottish miners called out on strike.

*March 8:* The NUM executive sanctions Yorkshire and Scottish strikes and gives sanction in advance to any other area which wants to come out.

*March 12:* Flying pickets from areas already on strike (Yorkshire, Scotland, Kent, Durham) close down other areas.

*March 14:* Coal Board granted court order to stop Yorkshire miners picketing other areas. 8,000 police drafted into Nottingham coal field.

*March 15:* David Jones, 24, dies at Ollerton colliery while picketing miners going into work.

*March 26:* NUM tells the Trades Union Congress to keep out of the dispute.

*March 29:* Leaders of rail, transport and steel unions agree to ban on coal movements.

*April 5:* Nottinghamshire miners decide to work normally

*April 23:* NUM special delegate conference reduces required majority for a national strike from 55% to a simple majority.

*May 12:* First national miners' wives rally in Barnsley. 10,000 attend.

*May 23:* First talks between Coal Board and NUM collapse.

*May 25:* Flying pickets try to stop coke leaving Orgreave works to go to Scunthorpe steelworks.

*May 30:* Arthur Scargill arrested at Orgreave.

*June 8-13:* Coal Board and NUM talks resume then collapse.

- arrangements for importing coal
- recruitment of non-union lorry drivers to move coal
- introduction of dual coal/oil firing in power stations

All these preparations were in place by the start of the strike and were used intensively. But the miners had made their own plans to confront Thatcher's battle plans.

Despite the blanket presence of police around the coalfields, mass picketing remained a permanent feature of the strike with tens of thousands of miners picketing on some occasions. When miners were arrested and subject to orders banning them from the picket lines in many cases their places were taken by their wives. The police action in the coalfield rather than inhibiting the strike increased the militancy and determination of the miners and their communities.

While the reduction of state benefits to miners' families to first £15 and then £14, caused great suffering in the coalfields, a vast network of solidarity in Britain and overseas channelled millions of pounds to the miners' wives movement, who managed to supply families in the mining communities with the basics for survival.

However, the key to the strike was not merely these defensive measures, but, given the record coal stocks held at the beginning of the strike, the ability to implement a complete ban on the movement of coal and to stop the substitution of coal by other fuels. For this the miners were reliant on the support of the rest of the trade union movement.

That support was given on paper at the TUC Congress of September 1984, when the union leaderships were pressured by the strength of the miners' struggle and the feeling at their own base into voting to support the miners' dispute. But it became clear that the TUC leaders had no intention whatsoever of delivering the action by union members in the power stations that was forseen by the TUC resolution. Instead, the TUC leaders pursued a so-called twin-track policy: on the one hand providing the miners with enough financial support to keep the strike going, and on the other using that support to try and exert leverage on the union to settle the dispute through a sell-out of their membership on the crucial question of pit closures.

The turning point in the dispute came at the end of September last year as the government saw that the TUC would not deliver the solidarity it had promised. The Tory cabinet refused to offer any concessions to the union, repeatedly sabotaging the negotiations with the coal board and the government arbitration service.

The final act of betrayal by the TUC was the attempt of Norman Willis, the TUC General Secretary, in February to try and impose an agreement negotiated between himself, Thatcher and the coal employers on the NUM.

This agreement, which concedes the

vital principle that pits can be closed by the Coal Board on economic grounds, is today, the basis on which the government is demanding that the NUM capitulate.

This betrayal engineered by the TUC bureaucrats was ably assisted by Neil Kinnock, the leader of the Labour Party.

From the beginning of the strike, Kinnock made his opposition to the strike evident, comparing Arthur Scargill to Britain's First World War general who led their soldiers into battle without hope of victory. Kinnock not only ignored the fact that the strike was forced on the union by the government and coal board employers (see chronology), but also that the strike could have been won if the trade union leadership had used its authority to secure the vital blockade on the movement of coal. Kinnock, throwing to one side the 'left' credentials which had won him the leadership battle of the Labour Party, instead swung his support behind the argument of the right wing of the miners' union executive for a national ballot as a precondition for strike action against the coal board's programme.

### Labour leader betrays

This demand was being trumpeted from every figure in the establishment including Margaret Thatcher. Its object was to slow down the response of the miners' union to the Coal Board's provocation and allow the media to start a poison campaign against the strike. If the ballot had been held and defeated it would have effectively prevented local areas from striking against closures in their own areas, as it had in the previous year. Instead the NUM leadership chose to try and spread the strike through rank and file picketing throughout the coalfield. The campaign was generally successful. Areas like South Wales, who originally decided not to join the strike, were brought out by pickets from Scotland, Yorkshire and Kent, and remained solid to the end of the strike. Areas like Nottinghamshire, originally joined the strike in the first week. But the right wing leadership in power for decades in the Nottingham area refused to give the order for their membership to join the picket lines. In doing so they created the Frankenstein monster of the 'back to work movement' of the National Working Miners Committee.

Neither was there any guarantee that areas which voted against the strike in a ballot would have accepted a national majority against them and joined the strike. In one pit in North Wales, Bersham, a ballot was held later in the strike, but the branch officials led the men back to work two days later irrespectively.

The decision to hold a ballot in the given circumstances would have merely given the opportunity for the right wing to veto strike action without any guarantee that they would accept a national decision.

Having failed in his campaign to force the NUM into a ballot, Kinnock transfer-

*June 15:* Second Miner, Joe Green, killed on picket line at Ferrybridge power station, by a lorry.

*June 18:* Heavy fighting at Orgreave.

*June 27:* Railworkers stage 24-hour strike in London in support of miners. Steel union leaders say they will accept coal from any source to keep steel production going.

*July 5:* New NUM-NCB talks start.

*July 9:* National docks strike starts over local dispute arising from miners' strike. Talks make real progress.

*July 11:* Special delegate conference of NUM passes rule changes on discipline in defiance of court order. Court subsequently decides rule changes null and void.

*July 18:* NCB-NUM talks collapse with Scargill accusing the government of behind-the-scenes sabotage.

*July 21:* Dockers call off strike.

*July 31:* High Court fines South Wales NUM £50,000 for contempt over over picketing and orders seizure of all the area's funds.

*August 10:* NUM special conference rejects new NCB proposals and changes rules to increase disciplinary powers.

*August 11:* 30,000 miners wives demonstrate in London.

*August 23:* Second national dock strike starts.

*September 3:* TUC Congress votes to support miners, but key unions such as electricians and power workers disagree.

*September 9-15:* New talks between NCB and NUM take place and break down.

*September 18:* Second dock strike ends.

*September 28:* NACODS, the safety supervisors union, without whom no work can be done in the pit, votes by an 82.5% majority to strike. High Court decides Derby NUM strike unlawful and Yorkshire NUM strike unofficial.

*October 1:* Huge support for NUM at Labour Party conference, but Kinnock denounces picket line violence. Contempt order served on Scargill and NUM for declaring that Yorkshire strike official despite court ruling.

*October 10:* NUM fined £200,000 for contempt in the first of a series of legal actions.

*October 15:* Talks held between the NUM and the NCB and the government arbitration service, ACAS, fail.

*October 16:* NACODS calls strike for 25 October meaning that all pits will close.

red his campaign to the question of the violence on the picket line. Presenting the problem as the violence of both sides, he denounced the miners' violence as 'unBritish'. At the Labour Party conference, despite an overwhelming vote by the delegates to condemn police violence as the problem, Kinnock evenhandedly condemned picket violence in the same measure as police violence. He went on to call for the party to respect legality if it was to win the next election.

However, the facts of the dispute disprove Kinnock's contention that the strike was an electoral liability for Labour. In the EEC election in June 1984, during the height of the bloody battles at the Orgreave coking plant, Labour made sweeping gains. These gains were most marked in those areas led by the left wing who had openly identified with the miners' struggle.

Kinnock's failure to support the miners was not, of course, merely a miscalculation, he recognised and feared the forces that were coalescing around the miners' strike.

As Arthur Scargill explained at the last great demonstration of the dispute on 23 February in London: 'In this struggle we've seen the emergence of whole new dimensions in British politics. We've got literally hundreds of thousands of people involved both directly and indirectly in helping the National Union of Mineworkers. We've got support groups not only in this country, but throughout the world. A new phenomenon, the emergence of the women's support groups, has inspired workers not only here but in every part of Europe. What the establishment have not yet grasped is that we've created our own resistance movement comparable to those that operated throughout the Second World War...'

The idea of a new alliance of resistance in British society, led by industrial workers, is one that the NUM has tried to popularise throughout the dispute.

In the trade unions, the miners were the driving force behind the Triple Alliance, the bloc of rail, steel and coal unions formed against the rundown of their industries. While the alliance dissolved during the strike, due to the failure of the right wing leadership of the steel unions to place a blockade on coal, the alliance of the rail workers and the miners held firm, and became the foundation of a new alliance of the NUM and the transport unions. In the next period this alliance will again be crucial as Thatcher moves to take on the rail workers.

Outside the labour movement, the miners have linked up with the anti-nuclear movement against the building of nuclear power stations and for unilateral disarmament. The miners' wives have opened their meetings to other women activists and have established a strong alliance with the Greenham Common Peace women.

The NUM has also increased its activity in the Labour Party, with miners and miners' wives joining and consolidating contacts made in the strike where the rank and file of the Labour Party moved to initiate the majority of 400 plus strike support committees around the country.

Within the Labour Party itself, the NUM pursued a course within the left, being the only major union to support the self-organisation of black people in the Labour Party, voting for the entirety of the platform of the women's rights caucus, and supporting the demands of gays and lesbians.

The alliance of forces constructed by the NUM in the course of its struggle, with its political expression inside the Labour Party, is the first approximation to a class struggle left wing in the British labour movement for 60 years, since the early British Communist Party established the National Minority Movement and the National Left Wing Movement inside the Labour Party.

However, one of the major problems is the lack of consistent organisation of this current into a force which can do battle with the Tories, overcoming the obstruction of the Labour right wing.

The absence of such an organised current fighting for industrial action in the unions, before the start of the miners' strike, weakened the fight against the sabotage of the right wing and centre trade union leaders. Other less powerful sectors who do battle with the Tories in the next period will find that absence even more critical than did the miners.

Such a current also has to fight for leaderships of the Scargill type in the unions, in other words, leaderships that reject class collaboration and fight for mass action of the working class against the Tories.

Such a struggle will also find its expression in the Labour Party. While Kinnock's left credentials have been all but destroyed by his actions in the strike, the impulse towards unifying the Labour Party to fight the next election probably renders his position as leader unassailable. Nevertheless, at every other level of the Labour Party there will be battles around the new line of divide created by the miners' strike.

Such moves towards organising the left of the Labour Party and the trade unions are already under way. But while supporting such developments, Scargill has kept his distance from them as has Tony Benn. A strong unitary lead is needed if the huge left current movement built around the miners' strike is to be consolidated and not frittered away.

Such a move towards organising the left will not resolve the problems of leadership so graphically exposed by the British miners' strike. But it is the next step towards the building of a real 'party of labour' which, unlike traitors such as Kinnock and Willis, champions each and every struggle of the working class as the route towards socialism. ■

*October 19:* Power workers in electricians union vote by 84% not to take action in support of the miners.

*October 24:* NACODS call off strike in return for Coal Board formula which the NUM rejects.

*October 25:* High Court orders the seizure of all NUM assets after the refusal of the union to pay its £200,000 fine.

*November 5:* NCB offers Christmas bonus to miners who return to work. For some this means over £1,000.

*November 13:* Employers claim that 5,000 return to work.

*November 28:* TUC seeks talks with the government.

*November 30:* Tory councillor appointed as receiver for the NUM's funds.

*December 3:* NUM special delegate conference decides to boycott receiver.

*December 12:* Nottinghamshire area votes a rule change as first step towards breaking away from the National union.

## 1985

*January 7:* NCB claims that 1,200 miners return to work.

*January 10:* NUM leadership votes to suspend Nottinghamshire area if it continues to defy National decisions.

*January 21:* After preliminary talks between the union and the employers the government vetoes further talks.

*January 27:* Widespread industrial action by rail workers in defence of their colleagues victimised for refusing to move coal.

*January 29:* NCB demands written assurance from the NUM that they will accept closure of uneconomic pits — the crux of the dispute. NUM refuses.

*February 19:* TUC meets Thatcher, then negotiates deal with NCB.

*February 22:* NUM special delegate conference unanimously rejects TUC-NCB deal.

*February 24:* 80,000 march in London in support of the miners.

*March 3:* NUM national delegate conference votes 98-91 to return to work without a settlement. The dispute will continue. The minority, which is led by Scargill favours a continuation of the strike to secure an amnesty for miners sacked in the strike.

*March 5:* Most areas return to work, but Scotland and Kent stay out to fight for amnesty, other pits join them. Both vote to return within the week.

*March 8:* Thousands of miners' wives celebrate International Women's Day in Chesterfield.

## "We've still got the union and we'll stick together"

Shortly after the miners' strike had been called off two miners' wives from Lancashire, undaunted by their twelve months of hard struggle, arrived in France to celebrate International Women's Day and to campaign on behalf of miners sacked or imprisoned during the dispute. Miners wives have been generally recognised as the backbone of the strike and now they have been the first to show their willingness to carry on the fight. On March 9, over 5,000 wives marched in Chesterfield to celebrate International Women's Day. Many declared their intention to continue meeting in the communities and at a national level.

Judith Baker spoke to Lorraine Johnson, the secretary of Bold miners' wives group and Jean Murrie, the chairperson of the Skelmersdale wives group about the prospects for the future and their balance sheet of the strike.

*Question. Do you think the outcome of the strike was a victory for Margaret Thatcher and the government?*

*Lorraine Johnson.* It is neither a defeat nor a victory. If the miners had gone back without a union, that would have been a victory for Thatcher. But we still have the union and it will stick together. For example, I don't think Nottingham really want to split off and it's important that we all stay together.

*Jean Murrie.* Before they had the Spencer union (1), and that was forced to come back into the national union. The point is the struggle is not over yet. There's more to come from McGregor yet. Some men weren't happy with the way they had to go back. But I think in the end we had to go in order to stop Thatcher getting an all-out victory.

*L.J.* Yes, but on the first day they went back at Bold, they were only there for an hour and a half, and they came out again. They all marched in together. They refused to go on the Coal Board buses. They said, 'if it takes us all day to get there we're going in together.' They went in about 10 am. We went home and were 'phoning each other up because we really didn't know what to do with ourselves. At 12.30 my husband 'phoned up to say that one lad had been suspended for picking coal and they had all walked out.

Also apparently women canteen staff who had scabbed during the strike had locked themselves in the toilets. The girls who had been on strike had got rather angry. I heard stories of cups and plates flying around.

I think the men were out to prove that they've still got some fight left in them.

*Q. Who do you blame for the outcome of the strike? How do you think you could've won in other words?*

*J.M.* What we needed was leadership from the TUC. Instead of giving it us, they seemed to be afraid of the government. The rank and file supported us. Thatcher really did not calculate on the support we were getting from the general public. But with the dockers the support was there, they were just bribed back to work.

*L.J.* Yes, if the leadership had been strong enough we could've had a general strike.

*Q. But what are the prospects then for the future? How can you change the leadership?*

*L.J.* People have become more active in their unions. In our union, we've got the leadership we want, and the rank and

file in other unions should fight for the same. It's the same with the Labour Party. I intend to join the Labour Party when I go back.

*Q. Why?*

*L.J.* Because that party should be working for us, and during the strike I've realised that it isn't, and something ought to be done about it. It's no good just criticising from the outside.

*J.M.* Yes, a lot of us are going to join the Labour Party. Me and four of my friends are all going to join together.

*L.J.* A lot of people are going to join — miners, miners' wives, supporters — so we won't be on our own. That is the thing about the strike — so many people have got involved in politics who never were before, especially young people and the women.

*Q. What do you intend to do now to keep the miners' wives groups going?*

*L.J.* We will be involved in the campaigns of the NUM, but also we want to get involved in other women's struggles. At the moment we've got the teachers on strike nationally and the hospital workers in our area. They're mainly women so we will want to support them.

*J.M.* I think we should be allowed to join the NUM myself, after what we've done.

During the strike we linked up with Greenham Common women. I went down there for a weekend to stay, and after Easter I'm going to stay for a week. We are going to build for the international day at Greenham called for September 5.

*Q. Would you call yourselves feminists? What in your view is a feminist?*

*L.J.* After all this I would call myself a feminist because I don't like being told what to do.

*J.M.* I am, because I want to control my own body. I had eight children, and my husband didn't believe in sterilisation. Why shouldn't I decide what I do with my own body? Why should you have to explain to men, to doctors or to anyone else, why you want to do something?

*L.J.* There was a strike in the social services in St Helens [a town in Lancashire] because one bloke leaked information about one of his clients, who was trying to get an abortion, to one of the pro-life groups. We supported the strike. I think there should be free abortion. There should be more nurseries for under-fives so that women can go out to work.

This strike has taught me a lot. It's made me more responsible — it's taught me not to rely on men.

*J.M.* This strike has let the government know that miners will fight and that people won't just lie down and let the government walk all over them.

Bold miners' wives with (right) Lorraine Johnson (D.R.)



1. After the 1926 strike the Nottingham area of the union led a break-away to form the so-called Spencer union.

## Miners' defence campaign launched

During the course of the miners' strike over ten thousand miners have been arrested, along with fifty women supporters; 5,000 miners have been injured on picket lines and four have died. Miners and their families have not only had to endure the physical hardship of the strike, they have also found themselves in the dock for offences ranging from assault on police officers to that of 'unlawful assembly'. The miners and their families have committed no crime except to fight for their jobs and communities and to have kept on fighting even when the TUC and other trade union leaders had failed them. The full armoury of the state has been unleashed to punish the miners for their resistance. They are political prisoners.

A campaign is being launched in Britain to raise money and solidarity for those in prison and to support their families. Many of them have also been sacked by the National Coal Board and will, therefore, face added hardship when they are released. Rank and file activists internationally have shown massive support for the strike and it is vital that this kind of support continues in defence of the prisoners and their families.

Dick WITHECOMBE

During the 11½ months of the miners' strike out of the 10,000 miners arrested more than 150 have been imprisoned. Many more are being held on remand — for instance over 100 in Armley in Leeds, Yorkshire, alone. Towards the end of the strike, the courts began to take full advantage by hearing many cases that have been pending for weeks, some up to six months.

The first woman, Brenda Greenwood, was jailed in Risley for defying bail conditions that instructed her to keep away from the picket at Ollerton in Nottinghamshire, when she attempted to prevent her husband from returning to work!

In South Wales, 103 miners are still waiting for the courts to hear their cases. They are accused of causing criminal damage during an occupation of the cranes at Llanwern Steel Works. In Kent, miners leader Terry French, has been sentenced to five years imprisonment.

In Pontefract, Yorkshire, a major campaign has been established in defence of nine miners arrested (one of whom has been sentenced to six months imprisonment) in the small mining village of Fitzwilliam, in connection with incidents on July 9, when police invaded the village late at night wreaking havoc in their wake — leaving three people in hospital. In Lancashire, Bold NUM spokesperson, Dennis Pennington, has been jailed for three months.

Many miners who have been arrested have had stringent bail conditions imposed on them, even before their case has been heard in court. Peter Smith, Branch Secretary of Fryston colliery in Yorkshire was banned from the county and forced to live in Southport, separated from his wife and family. When eventually his case was heard, he was found to be innocent of all charges.

The courts were being used to break up the determination of striking miners.

Police were concentrating on arresting miners who they identify as the main strike organisers and spokespeople, who also seem to be incurring the most severe sentences.

In the majority of the coalfields, defence campaigns are being established. Several have existed for months, raising money for the families of miners in prison, organising messages of support, and major rallies, meetings and publicity. Recently a national campaign was established with striking miners and miners' wives attending from all the coalfields with the exception of Durham and Lancashire represented.

Below is a list of miners who are in prison — overall there are over 150. Messages of support are especially welcome:

In H.M. Prison Armley, Leeds, LS12 2TJ:

Garry Millward; S. Neath; Terence Capstick; Clive Thompson; Robert Latham; Ian Black; Paul Truman; Michael Eyrebo-who; M. Hobson; Steve Wakefield; Neil Marshall.

In H.M. Prison, Lincoln, Greetwell Road, Lincoln LN2 4BD:  
Steven Wakefield; Steven Gregory; Victor Gregory; A. Edwards; S. Meeth; Jimmy Lees.

In H.M. Prison Featherston, New Road, Wolverhampton, WV10 7PU;  
John Ellis; Mark Glore; Peter Newbold; Billy Taylor; Mark Grove.

In H.M. Prison, Ranby, Retford, Nottinghamshire DN22 8EU:  
Robert Andrews; M. Wyville; Peter Cooper; Ron Staniland; Paul Brothwell.

In North Sea DC, Frieston, Boston, Lancashire PE22 0QX:  
Todd Booth; Chris Hyman; John Wallace.

In H.M. Prison, Strangeways, Southall Street, Manchester M60:  
Chris Thomas;

In H.M. Prison, Wandsworth, PO Box 757, Heathfield Road, London SW18:  
Terry French B (five years)

In H.M. Prison, Haverigg, Millam, Cumbria:  
Peter Hurst G78282

In H.M. Prison, Cardiff, Knox Road, Cardiff CF2:  
Russel Shankland 883752; Dean Hancock 899410;

In H.M. Prison, Sudbury, Derby DE6 5H:  
Andre Bradley; Kevin Neal.

In Sudbury Open Prison, Derby DE6 5HW:  
David James; Peter Pearson. Michael Southwell.

For more information about the Yorkshire campaign, write to: South Yorkshire Defence Campaign, 73 West Street, Sheffield. Tel: Sheffield 701384.

A national campaign for the prisoners is about to be launched and information about this can be obtained from Martin Walker, 01 854 8888. ■

### Dennis PENNINGTON

*On February 19, Dennis Pennington was condemned to three months in prison for offences on the picket line. Dennis is a supporter of Socialist Action, a British revolutionary socialist paper and during the strike he was closely involved in the solidarity work of the sections of the Fourth International.*

*He and two others were accused of acts of violence and damage to private property. In fact, they tried to turn back a car full of scabs. The two other miners arrested with Dennis were eventually released but Dennis was charged, obviously because of the leading role he has played in the strike.*

*Dennis might be lucky and get out of jail by April 19 on good behaviour. Perhaps the most serious thing is that Dennis stands to lose his job as a result of his imprisonment. On February 20 he received a letter from the National Coal Board saying that he was to be sacked. As he himself said in a letter to the PSO, the Belgian section of the Fourth International, 'The judge is not only denying me my liberty, he has also condemned me to unemployment.'*

*Dennis is a member of the Bold, Lancashire branch of the NUM which is campaigning for him to get his job back. Meanwhile, messages and letters of solidarity are of vital importance. All messages should be sent care of the NUM Branch, Bold Miners' Welfare Institute, Fleet Lane, Parr, St Helens, Merseyside. The NUM will forward all letters to Dennis.*

## A historic defeat for Zionism

The Israeli retreat from Lebanon looks more and more like a political rout for Zionism, an unprecedented disaster for the historic project of Zionist colonization of the Middle East. It has exposed the Achilles Heel of Israeli power and profoundly shaken up the Israeli Jewish masses.

"The Tsahal [Israeli army] can chop whole armies to pieces, but it can do nothing against an entire country that has gone mad," Eytan Haber, *Yediot Aharonot's* military correspondent wrote in his paper, which is one of the biggest-circulation dailies. (Between them *Yediot Aharonot* and its competitor for the newspaper "down market" *Maariv*, claim a readership of 70% of the Jewish population.)

Eytan went on to say, "We must get out and let Lebanon drown in its own blood. Honor? That's for the kind of patrioteers whose sons do their fighting on the San Fransisco beaches. The families who are burying their dead have no use for honor. We have to get out and get out as fast as we can."

Gerry FOLEY

In what had been one of the most jingoistic papers in Israel, Eytan exposed the fundamental weakness of the Israeli state, while scorning what has been seen traditionally by Israeli Jews as its only reliable support in the world, the Zionism of the Jewish diaspora in general and American Jews in particular.

The basic weakness of the Zionist colony in its conflict with the Arab people of the region, in fact, is its relatively small numbers and the attachment of its population to a relatively secure and comfortable style of life. Such a population will not make the same sort of sacrifices as desperate and dispossessed oppressed masses. That is precisely the contradiction that has wrecked previous colonization projects in Ireland and Algeria. (1)

It is not any special religious fanaticism on the part of the Shiite masses of Lebanon that creates this problem. It comes from the material conditions of the oppressed community.

The occupation of southern Lebanon had turned into a death trap for the Israeli army. According to the Zionist military authorities themselves, the Tsahal was the target of a minimum of three attacks a day by the Lebanese resistance. Recently, the Israeli army paper, *Bama'hane*, reported that 17% of young recruits supported those soldiers refusing to serve in Lebanon. Among the older reservists, who make up the bulk of Israeli military forces, the proportion was a multiple of that.

Of the first phase of the retreat, the February issue of *The Other Israel*, the newsletter of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, wrote: "There can be little doubt that the withdrawal is popular in Israel. One proof of this was

the open joy of soldiers in Lebanon at leaving and their zeal in dismantling the army installations (according to *Yediot Aharonot*, one unit, by working in night shifts, managed in eight days a dismantling job which the army planners calculated would require a whole month.)"

Furthermore, the right-wing Zionists failed even to arouse a reaction from the people of the most vulnerable Jewish settlement on the Lebanese border.

"Another indication is the response of the inhabitants of Kiriat Shmona, the northern border town for whose sake the whole 'Operation Peace in Galilee' [that is the invasion of Lebanon, the northern part of Israel is called "Galilee"] was supposed to have been fought. When a demonstration and general strike against the withdrawal were called by the Likud-controlled Kiriat Shmona municipality, the inhabitants (most of whom are Likud [Zionist hawk] voters) had 'voted with their feet' and the right-wing action ended in a dismal failure."

Occupation duty far from Jewish settlements had to be particularly demoralizing for an army like the Israeli one, which has depended more on moral and patriotic incentives (the need to defend and "redeem" the Jewish people) than traditional military discipline.

Last August in Israel, I talked to Adam Keller, editor of *The Other Israel* about the effect of the Lebanon war experience on the religious Jews who have represented a sort of second wave of Zionist enthusiasm, trying to make up for the past opposition of orthodox Jews to the Zionist project and the exemptions of religious Jews from military service. These are people educated in the special religious schools, the *Yeshivot Ha-Seder*.

Keller said. "The Yeshivot Ha-Seder

were the hardcore of the Gush Emumim [the Block of the Faithful, a leading force in the movement to establish fortified Jewish settlements on the West Bank]. "They were more than a little bit shocked during the Lebanon war. Because they were in combat units and they suffered very heavy lessons. I think that about 10% of the casualties in the Lebanon were in these units because they are elite units.

"I think that this shocked them, because it is one thing to be for the supremacy of the Jewish people in your own quiet home, and another thing to see your best friends dying around you. And also some of them were shocked by Sabra and Shatila. Even though they were right wing people and in the forefront of the occupation, they are not monsters. They are educated people who believe strongly in the morality of their own actions. Some, not all, and not even most, were shocked by Sabra and Shatila. They came face to face with what their ideology means."

Keller went on to explain that this phenomenon was at the root of the development of Netivot Shalom (Paths of Peace), an orthodox Jewish peace group that played a key role in broadening the antiwar movement among Israeli Jews.

### Counter productive terror

It was the experience of serving in the occupation forces in East Jerusalem after the 1967 war that started him moving toward the peace movement, Gideon Spiro told me. He is one of the leaders of Yesh Gvul, the organisation of reserve soldiers who refuse to serve in Lebanon.

"Suddenly I saw what tremendous power I had in my hands as an occupier, how civilians are so frightened, how you can actually do whatever you want. This situation where I controlled other people was something alarming in my eyes. This can deteriorate very easily, lead to moral degeneration. There are so many possibilities of misusing it, this total power that you have in your hands ... in dealing with other human beings as enemies ... I still remember of the eyes of the people, how frightened they were."

The disaster the Zionist rulers are suffering, in which they have been forced to retreat from an occupied territory for the first time in a combination of the pressure of mass resistance and the disillusion of the Jewish people, can only be magnified by the reprisal tactics they are resorting to now.

It is generally a pretty good indication that a ruling class is losing its grip when it forgets the elementary political principle that for terror to work you have to have the power to make it total and prolonged.

1. Starting in the seventeenth century, the English state tried to finalize the conquest of Ireland by settling the country with Protestants from England and Scotland. Taken as a whole, the project failed, although it established a strong garrison colony in the northeast corner.

It obviously cannot be total or seem likely to last in the context of a retreat. The Israelis' quisling forces in southern Lebanon have already drawn this conclusion, deserting en masse.

In the circumstances of a retreat, what the Israeli authorities call their "iron-hand" operations can only rouse the Lebanese people to more united and more violent opposition to the Zionist forces. This is exactly what has been happening, and it is quite clear to the critical foreign correspondents.

For example, P.J. Franceschini wrote March 10 on the front page of *Le Monde*: "Despite their 'operation iron hand,' the grapes of wrath are ripening rapidly in southern Lebanon, and the Israelis are apt to find the wine bitter. On Friday, March 8, alone, they were the target of seven attacks."

On Sunday, March 10, 12 Israeli soldiers were killed and 14 wounded in a suicide bombing of a convoy near the Israeli frontier.

The following day, Israeli forces launched a full-scale attack on the village of Zrarier, a half a mile north of the part of Lebanon they still occupy. This town is actually a pocket of left-wing strength in southern Lebanon, not specifically of Shiite "fundamentalism". (2)

The Zionist military authorities announced that they had killed 24 "terrorists". Lebanese civil defense said that 58 civilians had died in the attack. Official Lebanese radio said that the local population had joined with Lebanese government soldiers in defense of the town. In a previous clash in the area, three Lebanese army soldiers were killed.

Since February 16, Lebanese army forces have been involved in battles with the Israeli forces four times, according to a report by Selim Nassib in the March 12 issue of the Paris daily *Liberation*.

While the international press has generally looked at the Lebanese opposition to the Israeli occupiers only in terms of guerilla attacks, it has been marked in fact by very powerful mass mobilizations. There was a very strong community response to the bombing of a Shiite mosque

in the southern Lebanon town of Maarake on March 4, in which leaders of the Amal organization were killed, and to the car-bomb explosion in a Shiite suburb on March 8.

These bombings were attributed not only by Shiite leaders but by the Lebanese government to the Israeli secret services.

The Zionist government's denial that it would use such methods is belied by a long history of terrorist actions organized by the Israeli secret service, Mossad, in particular against PLO leaders, even in West European countries. In both these recent bombings, no Lebanese force had anything to gain, and the March 8 bombing in particular seemed to be aimed against the community as a whole.

In fact, the list of car bombings since January 28, 1983, given in *Le Monde* on March 10, shows that the majority of them have been against targets that the Israelis would not be sorry to see hit.

The Zionist government has also tried to suggest that what lies behind these bombings, as well as the attacks on its retreating troops, is rivalry between the various Lebanese community-based groups. In fact, this obvious falsehood only highlights still more the fact that the Zionists' occupation of southern Lebanon has united all the Lebanese communities against them.

To all intents and purposes, Israel seems to have lost all its former communalist pawns in Lebanon, finding itself now in conflict with the Shiites and the Druses and, apparently, more and more even with the Christians.

Indeed, Jean-Pierre Langellier wrote in a dispatch from Jerusalem in the March 12 *Le Monde*: "What is causing particular worry here is that the attack on Sunday March 10, near the 'good border', that is, in a region where the large majority of the population are Christian and where there has been no guerilla activity up till now. On February 10, already, two soldiers touched of a land mine almost in front of one of the cabins at the Metullah border post."

The Zionist disaster in Lebanon, more-

over, can hardly fail to have an effect on the Arab population under Israeli military rule in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For example, the February issue of *The Other Israel*: "The same Lebanese precedent is also, of course, affecting the Palestinians. Some attacks carried out recently were definitively Lebanese style: such as the killing of an Israeli soldier in Ramallah's (3) main street, in broad daylight, and a few paces from the city's main police station — a kind of act which became all too common in Lebanon but which is almost unprecedented in the West Bank."

Now that the Zionists' Lebanese adventure has ended in disaster, and the majority of the Israeli population has turned against it, the ball is in the court of the anti-Zionists and peace forces.

The Israeli defeat in Lebanon puts in question the basis and the perspectives of the Israeli state up till now. So, there should be an unprecedented opportunity to put forward new alternatives to the Israeli Jewish population and the Arab people under Israeli rule.

The Israeli authorities are trying to reconsolidate Zionist patriotism now by playing on the fears of an Arab terrorist campaign against Jews in Israel and of military attacks from without on the Jewish communities. What political line the Palestinian organizations take in this situation toward the problem of the Jewish population and what they do to mobilize the oppressed people take on a new importance.

The new situation is also a crucial test for the peace movement in the Israeli Jewish community. It has been on the decline for some time for a number of reasons. Two are particularly important. The government's announcement of the withdrawal convinced many activists that the problems were being solved. Secondly, the majority still look to the Labour Party, which has been back in the government since the formation of the National Unity cabinet last fall.

In an article in the January issue of *Matzpen*, the paper of the Israeli Fourth Internationalists, Moshe Halevy wrote in an article entitled "Whither the Peace Movement?": "Most of the activists and a significant minority among the leadership were not prepared for confrontation with a government including leaders of the Labor Party."

Halevy also pointed out that, in fact, the mass peace movement had its origins in the contradiction between the aggressive policy of the Likud government under Begin and the hopes aroused by the peace treaty with Egypt for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Now, in order to survive and meet the challenge of the new situation, the peace movement will have to face the deeper problems involved in the basic role of the Israeli state in the region and the relations of the Jewish colony with the Arab people.

Lebanese border post (D.R.)



2. Cf. Selim Nassib in *Liberation*, Paris March 13.  
3. A large Arab town close to east Jerusalem.

## A new opposition emerges

A June, 1984 meeting of the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia congratulated General Suharto's government on its performance in 1982 and 1983. The IGGI groups the 13 countries with the largest investments in Indonesia, and it meets annually to review these investments. The 1984 meeting, held at The Hague, pledged some 2.5 billion US Dollars in loans and grants for the 1984/85 financial year. This exceeded the recommendations of the World Bank. (1)

The 13 member countries of the IGGI are: Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, West Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, Britain and the USA. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Program are also members.

Indonesia's largest foreign investor is Japan, followed by the USA.

But all is not well with the country's economy. Like other Third World countries, it has suffered severely from the effects of the capitalist world recession.

Indonesia recorded 10 per cent annual economic growth in the late 1970s as a consequence of a flood of international investment following the consolidation of General Suharto's "New Order" regime which came to power after the bloody suppression of workers' and peasants' organisations in 1965-66. (2)

However, most of this investment went into the oil

industry and related services and infrastructure. Oil and gas revenue accounts for 60% of government income and 65-70% of foreign earnings. But the decline of oil prices in recent years has hit hard. Real Gross Domestic Product growth fell to 2.25% by 1982 and has declined even further since then.

What aroused the IGGI's admiration last June was the Suharto regime's response to this "difficult" situation. In the eyes of the imperialists, Suharto set an example to other Third World countries by adopting an austerity budget, slashing subsidies for domestic oil products, devaluing the rupiah and rationalising taxation and laws and regulations on finance and investment.

The brunt of these measures fell on the workers and poor farmers who make up the great majority of Indonesia's population of 160 million. These people had not shared in the 1970s investment boom. By 1982 some 40% of the population shared less than 10% of the national income, and fell below the official poverty line. This marked a sharp decline from the late 1970s. (3)

Sixty per cent of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood while agriculture accounts for 30%, or less, of national income. Additionally, much of this income does not go to the people on the land.

Driven by poverty, growing landlessness and under-employment, millions of people have taken to the already overflowing cities in the vain hope of finding work.

Michael PETERSON

The new austerity measures were introduced in March 1983, shortly after General Suharto was "re-elected" president by the largely appointed People's Consultative Assembly (MPR).

The rupiah was devalued to increase paper earnings from oil exports, to discourage imports and to make Indonesian exports more competitive. But the ultimate effect was to increase living costs for the vast majority of Indonesians.

The April 1983 budget cut the domestic oil subsidy, sending petrol and kerosene prices skyrocketing. Prices for lower grade fuel rose by up to 70%, while the increase for higher grades was around 11%. Following this, bus fares rose by 20%. (4)

The cut in oil subsidy hit large numbers of people who rely on kerosene for cooking and lighting. Fertiliser costs increased, putting more pressure on millions of subsistence farmers.

Government workers' salaries were frozen for the second year in a row, and no new government housing was to be built. So, even before the full effects of the revaluation were felt, millions of people's living costs had increased dramatically.

The 1984/85 budget maintained the general austerity measures, but granted government employees a 15% pay rise. It further reduced domestic fuel oil subsidies. The World Bank wants the government to end all subsidies for fuel, fertilisers and public enterprises. (5)

One result of these measures was higher inflation up from 10% in 1982 to around 15% in 1984. Suharto also re-scheduled 48 major projects involving foreign investment worth some 20 billion US dollars.

The austerity measures, together with a slight upturn in commodities prices in the second half of 1984, helped the government reduce the current account deficit by 2.9 billion US dollars. The deficit had been around 4.2 billion US dollars in mid-1984.

The government was hoping to further

offset the deficit with inflows of foreign capital.

However, offsetting the deficits of recent years with more borrowing has left its mark. According to the World Bank, Indonesia's foreign debt was a third of all outstanding external debt in East Asia and the Pacific at the end of 1981. The Suharto regime has a total public debt of 27 billion US dollars (nearly 36 billion dollars if undisbursed loans are included). To this must be added a private sector debt of 6-8 billion US dollars.

The World Bank does not consider this a problem because the loans are mostly medium-to-long-term and at relatively low interest rates. However, in 1983 the bank estimated the ratio of debt-service payments to export income at 19%, approaching what is considered

1. Indonesian Embassy press release (Australia) June 8, 1984.

2. Between 500,000 and one million people were slaughtered because they were suspected members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) or the mass organisations which the party led or influenced. Thousands were arrested and detained without trial for over a decade. Suharto and other right-wing generals launched the bloodbath using the pretext of an abortive revolt by a group of pro-Sukarno army officers on October 1, 1965. After the army and its supporters thoroughly destroyed the existing

workers' and farmers' organisations, the Sukarno government was effectively replaced by military rule, although this was not formally consolidated until later.

3. According to Mubyarto, a lecturer in economics at Gajah Mada University, Jogjakarta, quoted in the *Australian Financial Review*, February 8, 1985.

4. *Far Eastern Economic Review Asia Yearbook*, 1984, p. 183.

5. "Born Again New Order," a regional report on Indonesia in the London-based magazine, *South*, January 1985, p. 11.

the critical level of 20%.

According to an editorial in *Merdeka*, a nationalist newspaper, Indonesia's Minister for Finance, Professor Ali Warhana admitted late in 1983 that debt repayments had reached 24% of export earnings. (6)

Last April's budget also marked the start of the government's fourth five-year development plan, Repelita IV. The plan optimistically projects a growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by an average of 5% over the next five years. It also promises economic restructuring to develop the manufacturing sector. Agriculture still accounts for 20-30% of GDP while manufacturing accounts for 15%.

### Frustration among unemployed youth

Indonesia's problem is characteristic of most Third World countries. Foreign capital tends to invest in the raw materials area and adopt capital-intensive techniques. The entire national economy rises or falls with the prices of these raw materials. The foreign investments do little to develop the local economy and create very few jobs.

On the other hand, there are considerable negative effects in localities where major foreign investments are situated.

One major project is a large scale industrial complex at Lhokseumawe, built around a natural gas field in Aceh, northern Sumatra. Most of the employees are foreign, living and working in high income enclaves in the midst of poor local populations.

As a result, the local population is subjected to land speculation, price-rises and a drain on the existing services network. The government is worried about the security of such enclaves due to growing local resentment.

Repelita IV seeks to resolve such problems by greater use of domestic capital to develop secondary industry around the foreign investment projects. But to date, most big local capitalists have preferred to invest their money overseas or in areas like property development. The Suharto regime's promise of looser regulations and tax reorganisation did have some effect on local capital. There were reports of a boom in office block development in the capital Jakarta, last year! That's unlikely to last for long without new investment in more productive industry.

Another dampener on development of a manufacturing industry is poor local demand, a product of the sheer poverty of the majority of Indonesians. In times of recession, this demand declines even further.

The recent decision by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), of which Indonesia is a member, to cut the price of Minas crude oil by 1 US dollar per barrel will cost the Indonesian government 280 million US dollars this year.

This places even more pressure on the Indonesian economy and has caused the Australian Financial Review to comment

on fears of a worsening of "recent social and political tensions" in the country.'

The reference is to bombings of Chinese-owned businesses and riots in Central Java late last year. These were the most overt signs of the growing mass reaction to the economic situation, but must also be viewed together with the rise in labour disputes and organisation among the urban poor.

Frustrations among the growing ranks of unemployed youth can only grow. Even before the OPEC price cut was announced, the regime's planners forecast that by 1990 there would only be 6.1 million jobs for a workforce of 9.3 million people. This optimistic figure accepts an unemployment rate of 34.4%. Current official figures put the unemployment rate at 26%.

Indonesia's deepening economic crisis is giving rise to growing dissent. And the crisis is being worsened by imperialism's demands for rationalisation of Suharto's "New Order" regime itself. The character of the new opposition in Indonesia today is being shaped by these two related processes.

While the ability of the Suharto regime to restructure the economy is dubious, some real restructuring is taking place in the ruling regime.

The Suharto military regime took shape under the popular nationalist Sukarno government, which ruled Indonesia from independence in 1949 to the 1965 military coup.

Sukarno's rule was based on an uneasy truce between a right-wing dominated military and a militant independence movement. In this movement, the world's third largest Communist Party (PKI) operated openly alongside more moderate nationalists.

Under the leadership of Abdul Haris Nasution, the head of the Supreme War Administration (Peperti), army officers were appointed as managers of confiscated Dutch estates and enterprises. The army took over the Sumatran assets of Royal Dutch Shell. In 1957, the army was given control of the state oil company, Pertamina (now Pertamina).

During the 1950s, and later, there were several further important nationalisations of foreign businesses. Sometimes these began when militant workers seized plants, but in every case the military moved in, evicted the workers, and took over administration of the nationalised businesses.

So, when the military seized full power in 1965/66, it represented not just the interests of imperialism (the great majority of senior officers were trained in the US), but an important economic agency through which all foreign investors had to deal. (8)

The bread and butter of Suharto and the other generals around him were the bribes and "kickbacks" that had become standard in the country's business operations. The "New Order", as the Suharto regime named itself after the coup, resulted in a partial rationalisation of this corruption.

Under the New Order, all foreign investors have to work through a local agent or partner, who commands a 2-7% commission on large contracts (above 50 million US dollars). For smaller contracts, commissions can reach 10% or more. (9)

On top of that, there are bribes that must be paid to secure various licences. General Suharto's wife, Madame Tien Suharto, became commonly known as "Madam Ten Per Cent".

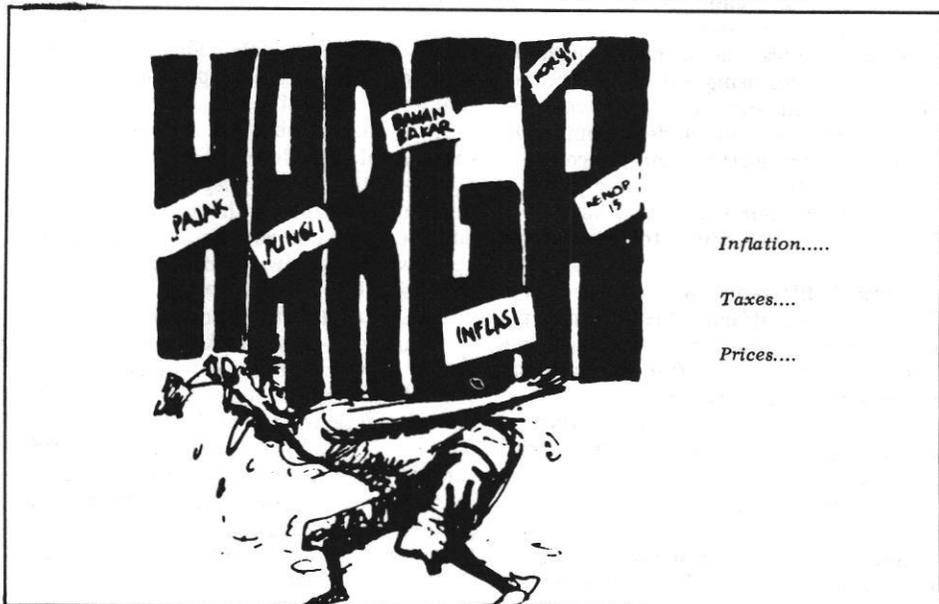
The system's total corruption shows up clearly in taxation. A complicated system of taxes provides officials with the means to extract enormous bribes. But very little tax is collected. In 1982 there were only about 600,000 taxpayers in the entire population. Now, the government says it plans to simplify the taxation system and actually start collecting tax.

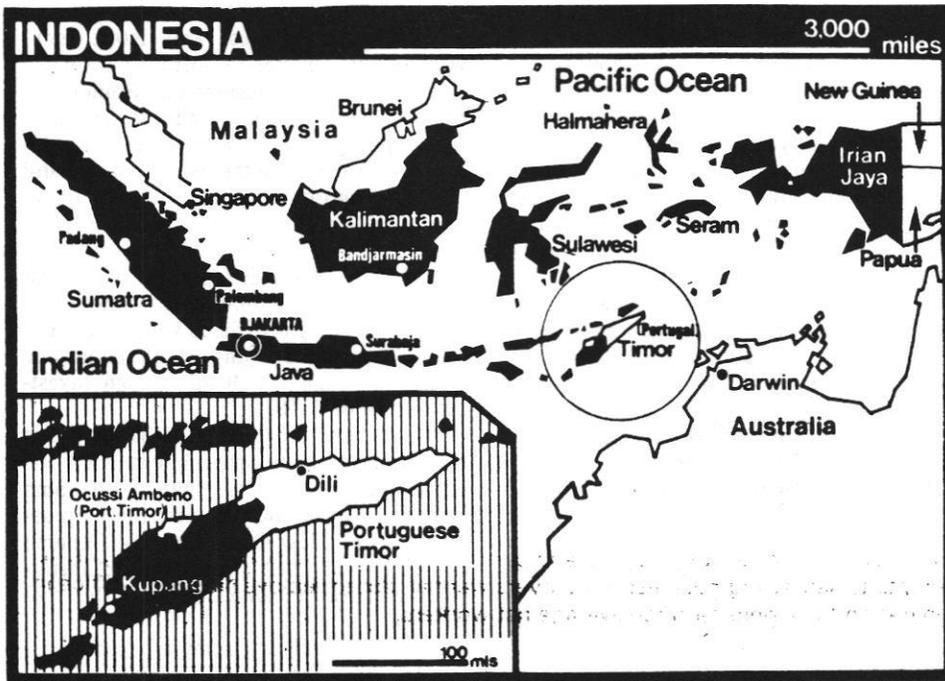
6. *Merdeka*, November 3, 1983, translated and reprinted in *Inside Indonesia*, No. 2, May 1984. Published in Canberra, Australia, p. 19.

7. *Australian Financial Review*, February 8, 1985.

8. Many commentators have pointed to evidence that the CIA cultivated Indonesian military officers from the 1950s on. Some even suggest that the events of 1965/66 were planned and carried out under Washington's direction. cf. Southwood & Flanagan, *Indonesia: Law, Propaganda and Terror*, Zed Press, 1983.

9. *South*, January 1985, p. 12.





This has been welcomed by the IGGI.

The history of the state oil company, Pertamina, provides several more illuminating examples of the regime's methods. Pertamina commands millions of dollars, but does little work itself. It operates by contracting foreign oil companies. Seventy-five foreign oil contractors work for Pertamina.

When the military regime first came to power it was an alliance of a number of generals, each of whom maintained an "empire" based on a government department or wing of the military. These "empires" were held together with bribery and patronage.

After the 1965/66 coup, two such generals emerged as possible military leaders, Nasution and Suharto. Suharto's control of combat units and the strategic command enabled him and his supporters to prevail. General Nasution lost his important positions and his supporters found themselves transferred to positions which left them little real power.

Since then, Suharto and a small group of his supporters have worked consistently to isolate and eliminate competition, even within the military.

Suharto consolidated his position in 1969 by reorganising the armed forces (Abri) under his operational control. He became supreme commander. Commanders of the navy, airforce and police wings lost much of their autonomy and power.

Behind this purge seems to have been Suharto's determination to protect his position from any possible challenge. But a political difference was also involved. The group around General Nasution, while anticommunist, wanted a return to some form of civilian rule after the left was destroyed. Suharto disagreed.

He defined a new role for the military, summed up in the concept of "*dwifungsi*" (dual function). The military, besides its usual function, was to lead the nation in all fields.

But not even the armed forces were to be without control. The command for

the restoration of Security and Order (Kopkamtib) was a "temporary" extra-constitutional martial law body set up in 1965. It had the power to override police and even the defence department. It has become a permanent feature of the New Order.

When elections were reintroduced in 1971, the most undemocratic aspects of Sukarno's "Guided Democracy" were retained. But only anticommunist parties were allowed to participate.

1983 saw the beginning of a new reorganisation of Abri under pressure from the changed economic situation, and once again in order to eliminate any challengers to Suharto. Dubbed "*regenerasi*" (rejuvenation), it heralded a general restructuring and rationalisation of the entire New Order regime.

During the oil boom, there was a lot of money around to support widescale corruption. And in those days foreign investors felt that this was a small price to pay for Suharto's services in destroying the militant workers' and peasants' movements.

But with the recession things have changed. The regime has been forced to trim some excess fat. The demand for greater efficiency in production also requires streamlining and centralisation of corruption. Unbridled corruption can breed intolerable levels of inefficiency.

The latest purge disposed of all the remaining factions in the army apart from Suharto's. It was consummated in March 1983 when the new cabinet was "elected" by the MPR. Three longstanding New Order leaders lost their positions.

Lieutenant-General Ali Murtopo was one of the casualties. A former minister for information, whose faction was built around the secret police (BAKIN) and the top-secret intelligence agency, OSPUS (Special Operations), he played a key role in secret negotiations with the Malaysian government during the "confrontation" between the two countries in 1963. In the lead up to the cabinet selection there

was pressure to elect Murtopo vice-president, a position that entails no power but would have made him the successor should Suharto die or resign.

Murtopo was a former Suharto protege who became too powerful. Control of the secret police gave Murtopo's faction access to massive extortion rackets run through the secret police. These may be marked for trimming in the present economic situation.

General Amir Machmud was another whose fortunes declined. A former long-time minister for home affairs who left his portfolio to become speaker of the MPR, his ministerial powers enabled him to appoint provincial governors and sub-district heads. This enabled him to build up a massive patronage network.

Also demoted was General Mohammed Yusuf, former defence minister and armed forces commander-in-chief. He did not have a developed faction, but was a powerful military figure. He was also a suggested candidate for the vice-presidency.

In the end, a Sudanese general, Umar Wirahadikusuma, a Suharto crony from 1965/66, became vice-president.

Also displaced was former vice-president, Adam Malik, one of the few civilian leaders who remained in power after the overthrow of the Sukarno government. He died not long after the purge.

### Suharto attempts to ensure his survival

Suharto is now the only survivor in power of the "generation of 1945", the leaders of the struggle for independence from the Netherlands.

Having displaced the major factions leaders, Suharto set about further centralising his control of the military. A number of organisational changes were introduced, chief of which was appointment of General Benny Murdani as commander of the armed forces and of Kopkamtib. Formerly these two positions were not held by one individual. However, it must be noted that Murdani remains under direct control of Suharto, the supreme commander of the armed forces.

Being a Christian, Murdani is unlikely to make common cause with the powerful Muslim and Javanese factions against Suharto.

Murdani's background is mostly in the intelligence services. He also has a reputation for heading some of the most brutal campaigns in Indonesian-occupied West Papua (Irian Jaya).

Murdani is one of a batch of younger army officers who were promoted (some over the heads of older officers) in the latest "*regenerasi*" of Abri. The word "*regenerasi*" refers to the process of bringing in a new generation of leaders, and this provides the rationale for Suharto's moves against the other factions.

But rather than grooming successors, Suharto is trying to ensure his own survival. Promotion of Murdani, a Murtopo protege, was a way of undermining Murtopo's faction.

Suharto also claims that the reorganisation is a means of reducing waste and fighting corruption. In a sense, it is, but after the latest purge, the only corruption left to fight is that of his own faction. That, of course, is out of the question. So as the economic crisis continues, the regime will have to launch further attacks on the living standards of workers and farmers.

As in 1969, Suharto retained the support of key military units, but perhaps more important was the powerful economic base that the president has built for himself over the years.

This base depends on close ties with a small group of ethnic Chinese businessmen who dominate local capital in Indonesia. These people have been awarded the building, supply and service contracts for most major foreign-funded and state-funded projects. Suharto and his group have set up a string of partnerships with these local capitalists and have, in fact, become part of the local capitalist class.

Repelita IV is the most open promotion of these interests. The role of local capital has been exalted.

The main way this has been done is through removal of privileges previously extended to "primubi" (native) capitalists. These privileges were introduced by the Suharto regime to cool down the situation during widespread anti-Chinese-capitalist riots in the 1970s. All along it was the poorer Chinese who suffered most. The billionaires retained Suharto's protection.

While this alliance has been to Suharto's advantage in the latest purge, it has for some time provoked much of the opposition to his rule.

Anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist sentiment in Indonesia is often confused and mixed in with anti-Chinese chauvinism. This has its roots in the suppression of the left, occasional active promotion of chauvinism by the New Order regime, and the political origins and present consciousness of many of the leaders of Indonesia's new opposition.

There are two important factors shaping the new opposition. Firstly the left which grew in the struggle for independence was effectively smashed in 1965/66. Hence the present opposition traces its roots to elements that once supported the New Order regime or which emerged after the coup. Secondly, there has been a massive upsurge in workers' struggles in recent years. To a lesser extent, poor farmers have also begun to revolt.

Those left wingers not massacred in 1965/66, were either demoralised or imprisoned. Some 30,000 of these "Tapols" (detainees) were released in the 25 months up to December 1979. According to the regime, only a few remain in detention, though just how few is disputed by human rights organisations. But the present lot of the former detainees does not allow them to become politically active. They are watched closely, banned from public life and often struggle to earn a living.

Great writers among them, such as

Pramoedya Ananta Toer, have their works banned. They only appear legally outside the country.

The terms "class struggle" and "imperialism" have been banned for years. And now it is even forbidden to refer to the "rich-poor gap". (10)

A few individuals have begun to discuss socialist ideas, though in guarded language. But, in general, the opposition movements frame their criticism in terms of immediate demands and/or the state ideology, "Pancasila".

### Birth of the "new order"

Pancasila was first formulated by Sukarno. Its five tenets are belief in god, humanitarianism, national unity, justice and democracy based on consensus and representation.

The New Order regime uses Pancasila to legitimise its rule by identifying it with the independence struggle.

The New Order regime claims that its mission is to defend Pancasila and the 1945 constitution. One group which joined the army in its purge of the left was called the Pancasila students. Suspected communists were attacked as being "godless".

In recent years, Pancasila has been pushed like never before. There is Pancasila industrial relations (which means no strikes), Pancasila as the sole political ideology for all political organisations, and even a Pancasila economic system, of which Indonesia is the model!

The fundamental thrust in all these cases is denial of class conflict and total depoliticisation of the masses.

Suharto reserves the right to interpret Pancasila, and in the last few years this has proved a problem. In 1980, for instance, Suharto declared: "Before the New Order was born, we saw and sensed that our national ideology was submerged by various existing ideologies, whether it was Marxism, Leninism, communism, socialism, Marhaenism (11), nationalism or religion."

Many Pancasila supporters saw this as a contradiction. The last three ideologies were an effective definition of Pancasila. Among the opponents of this interpretation was a group of former elite politicians around General Nasution. Fifty of them submitted a protest petition to the MPR.

Admiral Sudomo, then head of Kopkamtib, branded the Petition of 50 (as it is commonly called) a "constitutional coup" and placed the signatories under 24-hour surveillance.

The following year, this group submitted another petition, this time with 360 signatures. While their actions were those of a political elite, they helped set the framework for mass opposition around the 1982 general elections.

Today the Petition of 50 group is relatively quiet. But its numbers may swell with the "regeneration" of the military. One step the Suharto regime has taken in an attempt to diffuse the

political potential of the growing numbers of "retired" officers is to increase their pensions. This might satisfy some of the lower echelons, but it is of little value to former generals who have lived off lucrative corruption networks for many years.

Basic class conflicts have tended to break out among workers and the unemployed in the cities rather than in the countryside in recent years. The exceptions to this are the independence struggles in East Timor and West Papua.

Indonesian rural society is not subject to dramatic class differentiations. There are few big landlords, and agribusiness is not an important part of the economy.

Nevertheless, landlessness is a growing problem due to division of land with each generation and some concentration of ownership which accompanied the New Order's implementation of the Green Revolution.

This World Bank and IMF-sponsored campaign to introduce fertiliser and some farm machinery created a broad layer of middle-level farmers who employed a few field workers on a seasonal basis.

This slightly better-off peasant layer received some government-disbursed funding and became an important political base for the New Order. Areas where this layer was prominent witnessed some of the worst massacres of suspected communists, even up to 1968.

Displaced peasants have tended to move to the cities in search of work and it is here that their grievances have tended to develop and be expressed.

The huge populations of the cities helps keep Indonesian workers' wages the lowest in South-East Asia. Yet, as

10. *Inside Indonesia*, No. 3, October 1984.  
11. Marhaenism was Sukarno's own theory for social change, in it he sought to replace class struggle with the struggle of all the poor, suffering and righteous.

Indonesian farmer (D.R.)



already pointed out, this alone is not always a sufficient factor to attract foreign investment into labour-intensive industries.

Most existing labour-intensive industry has developed through government-sponsored attempts at import substitution. Car assembly, building material manufacturing, food processing, cigarette manufacturing and some electronics and clothing manufacturing are about the only major employers other than the public service.

The economic recession has given rise to a dramatic rise in labour disputes. The government admits there were 600 "worker cases" in 1982. The full significance of this figure is only realised when it is revealed that there are near-spontaneous strikes and protests. All unions are "yellow" — compulsory affiliates to the government-controlled union federation, the National Federation of Labor Organisations (FBSI). (12)

These struggles are continuing despite brutal suppression by the armed forces.

In March 1983, the former head of Kopkamtib, Admiral Sudomo took over the Ministry of Manpower. He immediately announced that his policy was to maintain a "peaceful" working climate.

To enforce this climate, Sudomo employs techniques he learned from Kopkamtib. One month after taking office he set up a Manpower Crisis Management Centre. It makes policy and runs Action Force Groups whose duty is to "prevent a dispute from spreading and to cope with the dispute on the spot."

Committees for the Settlement of Labor Disputes, a reform won by workers in the 1950s are being replaced by industrial courts, and Sudomo has announced that Collective Labor Agreements are to be phased out. "This philosophy," he said, "places workers and employers in two conflicting camps, whereas Pancasila democracy necessitates workers and employers to solve their problems through consultations rather than demonstrations."

Sudomo went on to urge workers not to think of themselves as workers! The Indonesian term "*buruh*" (worker) is to be replaced with the term "*katyawan*" (employee) or "*tenaga kerja*" (man power)! In February 1984, Sudomo made an agreement with the FBSI to ban all slowdowns and strikes.

by some workers. In June 1984, for instance, 395 workers at the PT Beta Sarana Steel plant in Tanjung Priok struck for two days over the company's refusal to respond to a wage demand. The same month another 700 workers went on strike at an East Jakarta vehicle assembly plant over the company's refusal to pay the annual bonus. (13)

The absence of real unions forces workers to turn to legal aid bodies and

12. For a detailed account of workers' struggles over the last five years see *Indonesian Workers and Their Right to Organise*, a publication of the Indonesian Documentation and Information Centre, Leiden, The Netherlands. 1981 with annual supplements since then.

13. *Inside Indonesia* No. 3, October 1984.

## EAST TIMOR and WEST PAPUA Indonesia's wars of occupation

*While economic recession and growing political unrest face the Suharto regime at home, some 20,000 of its troops are involved in suppressing two national liberation struggles in territories forcibly incorporated into Indonesia.*

West Papua, officially the province of Irian Java was a part of the Dutch East Indies not relinquished at the time of Indonesia's independence. Sukarno's military campaign to "liberate" the mineral-rich territory, together with United States pressure, ended in a UN-backed transfer to Indonesia in 1963. The "act of self-determination" required under the terms of the takeover was carried out in 1969, but is widely regarded as having been farcical.

Since then, the Free Papua Movement (OPM) has waged a political and military struggle for independence. The OPM estimates that up to 150,000 Papuans have died in the struggle. The entire Papuan population is only about one million.

The Papuans are Melanesians and identify with the wave of nationalism now sweeping the South Pacific, particularly Kanaky (New Caledonia) and Vanuatu. A mass exodus of some 10,000 Papuan refugees to neighbouring Papua New Guinea followed an abortive uprising by the OPM last February.

The refugee situation has created an important political opening for the OPM. Leaders of the organisation are concentrating on building international solidarity and working for unity of what has previously been a factionalised movement.

The OPM claims the support of close to 90% of Papuans. This is reinforced by the overtly chauvinist attitudes of the occupation forces, which consider Papuans to be "savages".

Guerilla attacks on Indonesian military outposts have taken place as recently as last October. Indonesia has some 6,000 troops in West Papua, including some 450 members of Kopassandha, crack "Red Beret" para-commandos.

An important issue is the Suharto regime's policy of "transmigration". This is a World Bank-funded program to resettle Indonesian peasants from highly populated islands like Java and Bali, in less-populated islands. West Papua has received some 250,000 settlers from Indonesia, mostly under this policy. Papuans fear that they will become a minority in their own land if the program continues.

Although transmigration is usually explained as an attempt to reduce population pressures, this flies in the face of the actual results of this program, which has cost millions of rupiahs in foreign aid. In the latest Indonesian development plan, *Repelita IV*, it is described as a "vehicle to promote national stability and integration".

Most of the West Papuan transmigration camps have been set up in areas of strategic importance militarily. Their role is analogous to the Zionist soldier-settler kibbutzim in occupied Palestine.

So far, in all Indonesia, some 500,000 families have been transmigrated. Authorities plan to resettle 750-800,000 families over the next five years. There has also been talk of extending transmigration to East Timor, the other war zone.

Ten years after some 30,000 Indonesian troops invaded newly independent East Timor, a war is still raging in this former Portuguese colony.

Fretilin, the movement that led the independence struggle, is now fighting a guerilla war, particularly in the eastern and central regions. It ties down 16-18,000 Indonesian troops at present.

From 1977 to 1980, Fretilin suffered several major setbacks, as it was defeated in a number of set-piece battles forced on it as it sought to defend liberated zones with large civilian populations. Additionally, a number of Fretilin leaders defected to the occupation forces.

Fretilin gradually abandoned most of the populated liberated zones and adopted guerilla tactics. This change in direction was consolidated at a 1981 congress. Since then Fretilin has succeeded in strengthening its armed units and has built an extensive network of sympathisers and clandestine members. The organisation is said to have people in the very top ranks of the pro-Indonesian administration in East Timor.

Reports from the Catholic Church in the capital, Dili, indicate that the fighting continues and thousands of suspected Fretilin supporters are in concentration camps. There are many reports of army atrocities, including torture, and a massacre of up to 200 villagers in one recent case.

A 1983 ceasefire was abrogated by the Indonesian regime, which has pledged to wipe out Fretilin to the last man and woman. Support for Fretilin is still very strong all around the country.

The United Nations does not recognise Indonesia's claim to East Timor, and accepts Portugal as the legitimate administering power, but there are indications that the Portuguese government is seeking to change this situation, clearing the way for UN recognition of Indonesia's annexation of the territory.



non-governmental development associations. Planned anti-strike laws will extend to the private sector the already existing ban on strikes in part-owned or fully owned government enterprises.

While labour struggles are a dynamic part of the opposition in Indonesia, repression prevents them from being an open forum for full political discussion and protest.

This contributes to the fact that political opposition tends to focus on workers' immediate bosses, the government and Chinese businesses. To many workers, imperialism's role in their country is not immediately discernable. This political problem is exacerbated by the lack of political forums open to workers.

Another important part of the opposition traces its roots to several post 1965/66 waves of student and youth protests.

It wasn't long before some of the student movements which joined the army in purging the left fell foul of the New Order regime.

As early as October 1966, the military was suppressing its former student allies with bayonets and rifle butts. There were allegations that students and some young officers were plotting to bolster Sukarno's position. (While many students were anticommunist, they supported Sukarno, who they were told was being manipulated by the communists. This supposedly led to the repression and economic crisis of the early 1960s.)

The following year some students took up the issue of "corruption", targeting a number of generals close to Suharto. In 1969 the anti-corruption movement gained momentum with publication of the writer Mochtar Lubis' series of articles entitled "We want to know!" The articles highlighted shady deals between several generals and Japanese companies.

In 1970 the attacks centred on General Suryo and the evidence was more than sufficient to go to court. Suharto refused

to act, and the matter was settled out of court.

Some students attacked Suharto directly, exposing his links with Chinese businesses (*cukong*). These allegations were reflected within the military itself.

The next year a 100% rise in the price of kerosene and a 49% rise in the price of petrol sparked off another student-led protest movement. Demonstrations were banned as the country went through its first elections since the military takeover.

### Anti-Tanaka protests

The elections were a farce. The de facto government party was Golkar, formally a "functional group" which "united" all occupational groups (including unions) and commanded the enforced support of all government employees, military and civilian. The opposition was a collection of small conservative parties. Intimidation and fraud were widespread.

In 1973, the government forcibly rationalised the opposition into two parties. The United Development Party (PPP), a forced amalgamation of Islamic Parties; and the Democratic Party of Indonesia (PDI), including all the rest. The only effective opposition took the form of more student-led riots against Chinese business and Japanese investments.

Various factions in the New Order regime began organising rival student groups in the leadup to a January 1974 visit by Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka. Among those involved were supporters of Kopkamtib head, General Sumitro, and Ali Murtopo's agents, who acted as provocateurs. Chinese business interests sought to encourage the students to turn their frustration against Japanese, rather than local Chinese, interests.

On the day of the visit, thousands of protesters marched through the streets,

protesting against Japanese investment and demanding price reductions, an end to corruption and the ousting of Suharto's group of advisers (ASPRI). Riots continued for the next two days, until the army moved in with tanks and troops, killing 11 protesters and injuring many more. General Sumitro fell after this.

The anti-Tanaka protests clearly revealed the twin dynamics of the students' protests of the period. Students were motivated by basic demands for justice but were manipulated by factions in the ruling group.

Three prominent student leaders were tried and convicted on subversion charges, but received fairly short terms of imprisonment. There followed a lull in student activity.

### The Islamic character of the opposition

In 1977, when the next elections were held, Golkar won overwhelmingly once again. But student unrest followed the elections and continued into 1978. Once again the protests were against corruption and repression. The actions centred around the trial of Sawito Kartowibowo, a government employee who exposed corrupt Suharto family deals around imposition of a levy on all air cargo movements in and out of the country. Proceeds from the levy went towards setting up a cargo airline, Bayu Air, partly owned by the Suharto family. Sawito got eight years' prison for "subversion"

Students again attacked the Suharto regime in the approach to the 1978 presidential election. On January 28, 1978, the regime struck. All student bodies were frozen, some 600 students were arrested and some were tortured. Thirty-four students were selected for trial the following year.

Since then, most campuses have been relatively quiet. But many of the veterans of the various waves of student revolt are now working in different sectors, organising workers, poor farmers or agitating in the mosques.

The most recent unrest in Java has sparked speculation about a revival of Islamic militancy in Indonesia. Last November's riots began when security officials forced their way into a mosque and tore down posters criticising the government.

Several people were killed and more were wounded in riots that swept through Jakarta's depressed port district of Tanjung Priok. In the following weeks bombs were exploded in a number of Chinese owned banks and businesses. At present a number of people are on trial for these bombings.

The "Islamic" nature of the recent protests has also derived from recent changes forced on the two opposition parties, the PPP and the PDI.

These were prompted by militant demonstrations led by the Islamic alliance (PPP) supporters, in the leadup to the 1982 general elections (which predictably were won by Golkar). Apart from the economic recession, these demon-

strations were inspired by the worldwide wave of Islamic radicalism which began with the Iranian revolution in 1979. Unlike the Iranian Shiites, Indonesian Muslims are mostly Sunnis.

With about 90% of the population at least nominally Muslim, it is not surprising that Islamic values and ideals have a major influence on all the mass movements. The first-ever mass independence movement against Dutch rule was the pre-World War I Serikak Islam. (14)

After the 1982 elections Suharto announced that violence arose because "not all parties had accepted Pancasila as their sole political philosophy."

He also attacked the rise of violent crime in the cities. This was a natural consequence of the recession and the government's austerity drive. But his solution to both "problems" shocked many.

In 1983, hundreds of suspected criminals would be rounded up nightly by killer squads, dubbed "mysterious gunmen." The next day their mutilated bodies would be discovered in rivers or by roads. While the government did not admit responsibility, in rural areas the death squads did not trouble to disguise themselves — they were members of the police and armed forces.

The obvious intention was to terrorise the population and dissidents in particular, many of whom were threatened and assaulted. Even members of the elite Petition of 50 group were assaulted.

The main effect of this death squad activity was to rally support for the government from the sizeable small-trader and petty-capitalist sectors. These people had suffered most from the crime wave.

However, the government's plans to further "reorganise" the opposition parties probably offset any benefit it might have gained from the death squad activity.

The reorganisation forced both the PDI and the PPP to adopt Pancasila as their sole philosophy. Thus Indonesia acquired three parties with the same platform. Their only formal differences are in their emblems. The PPP retains an image of the Ka'abah, the Islamic shrine in Mecca, while the PDI has the wild buffalo (a symbol with Sukarnoist origins).

At the same time, one of Suharto's trusted followers was made head of Golkar, which in turn adopted a more party-like structure. It may now become a training ground for New Order cadres.

The end result of these changes has been to close off the limited legitimate avenues of political activity. This may have contributed to the growing importance of mosques as centres for political activity.

The mosques are effectively the only places where people can and do gather and hear speeches. The army has tried to control this, without much success. Incidents such as Tanjung Priok only arouse more protest.

Working class and poor peasant congregations are led by local preachers. In

addition, there are the muballigh, a corps of itinerant lay preachers. The chairperson of this corps is Syafruddin Prawiranegara, a well-known older-generation Islamic politician who is known to favour restoration of democratic rights.

The "pesantren", Islamic education centres which operate independently of the government, have also been centres of some ferment.

Indonesia may be approaching an important turning point. The pressure of the international capitalist recession has forced the military regime to rationalise itself to the limit. From here on, any further "savings" and cost cutting will have to be solely at the expense of workers and peasants who are already the poorest in the region.

But in the process of rationalising itself, the New Order regime has alienated many of its former supporters. The system built by Suharto and his financial and military supporters increasingly resembles the "crony capitalism" of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines.

A new generation of militants has emerged since the total destruction of workers' and peasants' organisations in 1965/66. These militants, together with disaffected sectors of the ruling class are now challenging the stability of the regime. To date no group has emerged as the clear political leadership of this opposition, and its politics remain in flux.

14. "Indonesia's Islamic Unrest" by Carmel Budiardjo, *Inside Asia*, November/December 1984.

Indonesian riot police (D.R.)



## Farmers reap a bitter harvest

All across the United States the lights of family farms are going out, and the streets of the little country towns are deserted. In 1950 there were 5.4 million farms; in 1970 there were less than 3 million. Farmers are leaving the land at the rate of 270,000 a year, and no end to the exodus is in sight.

Hayden PERRY

The farmers are being forced off their land by staggering debts that they cannot pay. Today American farmers owe 214 billion dollars to banks and other credit institutions. With falling farm prices the average family farmers do not earn enough to even pay the interest on their debts.

Small country banks cannot collect on their loans and are closing their doors. Even bigger banks are caught in the wave of farm bankruptcies. The giant Bank of America has lent 2 billion dollars to farmers. They expect to write off at least 15% of this as uncollectable.

The family farmer is caught in the contradiction between advancing technology and the anarchy of capitalist economics. Farming is not like factory production, where you shut down an assembly line when sales drop. When sales and prices fall, the farmers are inclined to plant more to maintain their income.

While the farmers can increase their production, they cannot increase their domestic sales beyond a certain point.

Meanwhile, production on the farm has risen year by year as new seeds and new machines are developed. In 1900 a farmer could raise enough to feed ten people. In 1963 the average farm produced enough for thirty people; and productivity has increased at an even faster rate in the last twenty years.

But increased production without a larger market spells disaster for the farmer. In the Great Depression farm prices fell far below the cost of production, and farmers lost their land through foreclosures just as they are doing today.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt came to the rescue of the farmers by guaranteeing them a minimum price for their crops. He did this either by lending the farmers money for their crops, or by buying them outright and putting them in storage. Price-support programs have been extended by all administrations for the last fifty years.

When oil prices shot up in 1973, the United States decided to push for more farm sales overseas. Bankers recycled OPEC dollars into loans to Third World

countries so they could buy more from the US. This strategy succeeded as farm exports rose from 8 billion dollars in 1970 to 43.8 billion dollars in 1981. Farm prices rose, and there were promises of big profits to be made in farming.

With rising farm prices the cost of farmland also rose, but this did not stop the farmers buying more. The government urged them to expand production to fill foreign orders. Bankers, flush with OPEC deposits, were eager to lend farmers money at 12% interest. Almost a decade of seeming prosperity hit the farm belt.

### The growth of agribusiness

Then in 1982 the bubble burst. Many debtor countries became insolvent. They had to cut their imports just to pay the interest on their foreign debts. At the same time the dollar rose in value, making American products more expensive on the foreign market. As a result farm exports fell from 43.3 billion dollars in 1981 to 36.1 billion dollars in 1983.

Down on the farm the effect was devastating. Crop prices fell and the farmers' income slid from 186 billion dollars in 1979 to 139 billion dollars in 1983. Land values dropped, reflecting the drop in farm prices. The farmers' net worth has dropped but their debts have soared. Aggregate farm debt was 50 billion dollars in 1970. Today it is 214 billion dollars. The yearly interest on this debt amounts to 20 billion dollars.

Farmers' debts are high for two reasons: high-priced land and high-priced machinery. Farming today is as capital intensive as many factories. A 400-acre farm may be valued at 500,000 dollars, but the farmer may clear as little as 10,000 dollars when all the expenses are paid. At today's prices many farmers are operating at a loss.

This is where the crunch is coming at the country banks. Even the most warm-hearted banker will turn down a farmer if they see no chance of repayment. When farmers owe sums equal to 40% of the value of their farms, they have to pay more in interest than they get from sell-

ing their crops. This is the problem of about 300,000 farmers. They are the middle-sized operators who expanded in the boom years. Unless they get help, most of them will be out of business this year or next.

The help they have been getting from the Reagan administration is obviously not helping the family farmer. One reason is that the bulk of the benefits go to the few big agribusinesses that farm thousands of acres and produce crops worth millions of dollars. Fifteen giant super-farms got 23 million dollars in farm benefits in 1983. The family farmers, who diversify their crops, get only a small payment on part of their production.

There is a conflict between the family farmer and agribusiness. The family farmers want high prices for their products and are willing to limit their production to get it. The agribusiness farmer is more interested in the world market, and sees the need for a competitive price. They are less willing to cut production to keep prices up.

Farm interests who definitely do not want to see cutbacks in production are the farm equipment salespeople, the fertilizer interests, and the dealers in grain and other crops like the giant Cargill Corporation.

Legislators with urban constituencies question the wisdom of spending 10-20 billion dollars a year to keep farm prices up. Reagan, who listens to big-business, has come down on the side of agribusiness and its industrial associates.

The new Reagan budget proposes to gradually lower and eliminate price-support payments and let market forces operate freely. This is like throwing the drowning farmer a rock.

Farm prices will drop, but it may not guarantee increased sales abroad. The highly protective European Common Market will resist further competition, and the less developed countries are trying to build up their own farms. Meanwhile more American farmers will be forced into bankruptcy.

The distressed farmers are reacting in the way their parents did in the Great Depression. They are taking to the country roads with their tractors and driving to state capitals and to Washington. Their most immediate demand is a halt to foreclosures.

In Minnesota they are asking for a 120-day moratorium to be renewed every three months until prices give the farmer the cost of production plus 15%. They also want an emergency loan program to buy seed for spring planting and a one-year moratorium on debts to equipment dealers and other creditors. At other farm rallies there are calls for raising price supports and halting the spread of corporate farming.

Some people question the wisdom of trying to save these distressed farmers. The family farm is going the way of the horse-drawn plow, they say. But the American farmer is the most efficient

producer of food in the world.

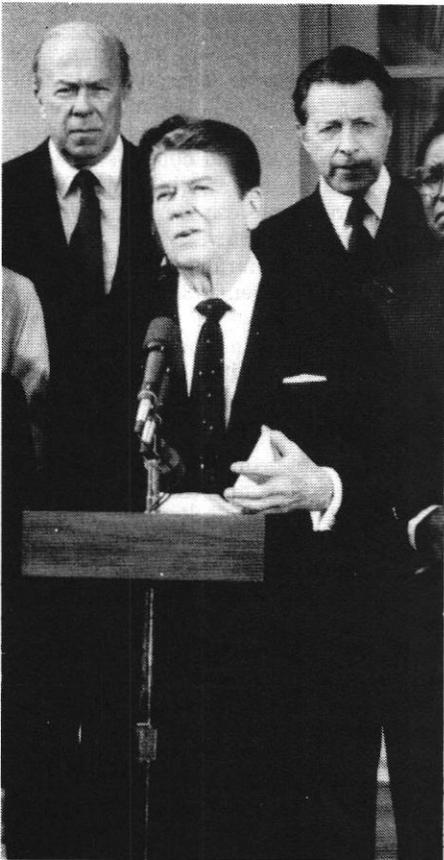
The best of them farm with the long view in mind, conserving the soil and maintaining its fertility for seasons to come. Agribusiness exploits the soil for short-term profits, leaving it less productive or eroded, then moving on to exploit more cropland, often overseas.

The family farmers' immediate financial plight must be relieved by halting foreclosures, by guaranteeing them at least the cost of production. Government aid must be concentrated on the small farmer and the truly impoverished part-time farmers who number nearly two million. No more million-dollar payoffs to agribusiness. Farm production must be planned to match market demand at home and the needs of hungry people overseas.

The small farmer's natural ally in the struggle for an effective farm program is the American worker. Both are exploited by the food conglomerates who squeeze the farmer at one end and the consumer at the other. The wheat farmer gets only 11% out of a one dollar loaf of bread. Consumers suffer far more from profiteering by grocery chains than by a rise in the prices paid to the farmer.

Farmers should get their message to organized labor and to consumer groups. Already many unions have joined the farmers in rallies and protest actions across the country. Together with millions of allies in the cities, the embattled farmers can hammer out a program that will benefit the real producers in the mines, mills and on the farms — the working people and the working farmers.

Ronald Reagan (D.R.)



## NEW ZEALAND

### Visit of US warship blocked

A naval training exercise between the ANZUS powers — Australia, New Zealand, and the United States — has been cancelled following the withdrawal of the United States. The exercise, Sea Eagle 1985, had been scheduled to take place off the southeast coast of Australia in March.

Neil JARDEN

The Pentagon has also announced that it will conduct its next Pacific region tests of the MX missile without using bases in Australia. The move followed the announcement by Australia's Labor Party premier Robert Hawke that antinuclear sentiment in the party would force him to reverse a prior agreement to allow use of the bases.

The US government's withdrawal from the ANZUS naval training exercise followed the refusal of the Labour government in New Zealand to allow a port visit by a US warship the *USS Buchanan*. The Labour government which is based on New Zealand's union and was elected last July, has said it will no longer allow nuclear-armed vessels to visit New Zealand ports.

The government's stand has wide popular support among working people in New Zealand. There has been an ever deepening opposition to visits by US nuclear-armed warships since they were resumed in the mid-1970s under the previous National Party government of Robert Muldoon. The National Party is New Zealand's main capitalist party.

Opposition to the entry of nuclear-armed vessels has been expressed in protests by waterfront unions and other workers against such visits, and by street demonstrations involving tens of thousands of people. The main union federation, many individual unions, and successive Labour Party conferences have adopted policies opposing the visits and calling for New Zealand's withdrawal from the Anzus alliance.

In addition, throughout the Pacific the past decade has seen a growing movement of the indigenous people of the region for the Pacific to be nuclear-free. It is in this region that are found most of the world's victims of nuclear weapons — from those who had atomic bombs dropped on them at Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the people of the various Pacific islands and the aboriginal people of Australia, who have suffered the effects of US, French, and British nuclear weapons testing.

The stand taken by the New Zealand Labour government reflects the pressure of this sentiment. For example, in 1983, when Labour was in opposition, party leader David Lange, now New Zealand's

prime minister, attempted to have Labour's antinuclear policy overturned. This move was forcibly blocked by opposition from the party's ranks and by the unions.

Since Labour came to office, peace organizations in New Zealand have mounted an extensive campaign to pressure the new government to maintain an antinuclear stand. While seeking to accommodate this pressure, Labour's officials have repeatedly stressed their continuing political and military commitment to the "Western Alliance" and to the ANZUS pact.

### No fundamental change in imperialism's policy

ANZUS is a military alliance, signed in 1951, that was sought with the United States by New Zealand's and Australia's imperialist rulers as a result of the replacement of Britain's world military predominance by that of the United States following World War Two.

From the beginning ANZUS has been an imperialist pact, aimed primarily against the Soviet Union (plus China, Vietnam, and other emerging workers' states) and against the national liberation struggles of colonised peoples in the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

It is one of more than 100 military and intelligence treaties that link New Zealand, Australia and the United States (as well as Britain and Canada), and reflects the common interests that unite the capitalist ruling classes of these countries economically, politically and militarily.

New Zealand's special role under ANZUS is policing the colonial island nations of the South Pacific. In return, New Zealand imperialism receives a range of special privileges from Washington — from favoritism in trade to military equipment and assistance.

This is an arrangement that New Zealand's rulers do not want to give away lightly — especially as policing the South Pacific, for them, is not a burden, but something that enables them to secure their own economic domination over the region.

From the time of its preparation in the 1940s (under a previous Labour govern-



ment) till today, ANZUS has received full support from both the National Party and the reformist leadership of the Labour Party.

The Labour government's refusal to allow the *USS Buchanan* to visit New Zealand represents no fundamental change in this imperialist foreign policy. Prior to declining the proposed visit of the *USS Buchanan*, David Lange had requested the US government to send an alternative vessel, a frigate, that Lange claimed had not yet been fitted with nuclear weapons. Such a visit, he said, would allow his government to demonstrate its "continuing and deeply felt commitment to the ANZUS alliance and their desire to work in the closest cooperation with their treaty partners.

Lange described the subsequent cancellation of the *Sea Eagle* naval maneuvers as "regrettable". New Zealand's warships have been conducting such training exercises in the Pacific and elsewhere for over twenty years with the US and other nuclear-armed vessels.

In 1985 alone, New Zealand's armed forces are scheduled to take part in 22 army, air and naval training exercises with the Pentagon, many of them involving nuclear weapons.

It is this close military partnership, and the integrated character of the ANZUS forces in the Pacific region, that makes New Zealand itself a de facto nuclear power.

This was illustrated by recent revelations surrounding the sinking of the Argentine warship *General Belgrano* during the British war to hold on to its colony of the Malvinas. The British navy, itself nuclear armed, relied on signals

from New Zealand's military radio systems for much of its south Atlantic navigation during the war.

The past decade has seen a major increase in the US military presence in the Pacific. This has been justified by propaganda claiming an "expanding Soviet presence" in the region. In actual fact, the Soviet Union has no military bases in the Pacific outside its own territory. In contrast, Washington is reported to have 517 military bases and installations of various kinds in the region outside its own mainland.

The imperialist military build-up in the Pacific has been fully supported by both the National and Labour governments in New Zealand. New Zealand itself has established a rapid deployment force in Pacific Island "trouble spots."

In fact, the whole New Zealand military is structured, equipped and trained to participate in Vietnam-style counter-revolutionary wars abroad, and it has been used in this role in successive wars in Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

New Zealand's forces today serve with the UN multinational force currently stationed in the Sinai desert. The New Zealand government provides aid to the right-wing guerillas attacking Kampuchea from Thailand. It is increasing its military ties with the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines. And it maintains its own 1,000-strong military base in Singapore.

In its first budget, last November, the Labour Party government increased military spending by 15%, while cutting spending in social welfare and almost all other areas.

During the recent upsurge in New Caledonia, Lange has said not a word in support of the Kanak people, but instead has backed the French government. And his government has refused to oppose the escalating US-led war against the workers and farmers of Nicaragua.

The cancellation of *Sea Eagle* 1985 has focused much media attention on the New Zealand government and its foreign policy. David Lange's refusal of port entry to the *USS Buchanan* has been hailed by leaders of the peace movement in New Zealand and internationally as a "courageous blow for world peace."

An editorial published in the February 15 issue of the New Zealand newspaper *Socialist Action*, which reflects the views of the Socialist Action League, puts forward a different view. It says: "The only way working people can achieve peace is to fight against imperialist war policy, which means, first and foremost, the imperialist war policies of their own government.

"It means demanding New Zealand troops out of Singapore; support for the Kanak people's struggle in New Caledonia; no support for the US government's war against the people of Central America; no support for the British in the Malvinas; freedom for East Timor and West Papua; real aid without strings attached to Vanuata, Fiji, Samoa and other Pacific and Third World nations; and so on."

For people here, this means "demanding an end to New Zealand's participation in ANZUS and all other imperialist military alliances, including all secret military and intelligence treaties." ■

## South African women resist apartheid's triple oppression

The recent wave of arrests in South Africa, beginning on February 16, are clearly aimed at dismantling the leadership apparatus of the United Democratic Front (UDF) which is growing in strength and influence. Among the 18 leading members arrested, six will be charged with high treason (an offence punishable by the death penalty). One of the six is Ms Albertina Sisulu, one of three chairpersons of the UDF. Ms Sisulu's husband is a leader of the African National Congress (ANC) currently serving life imprisonment. The role of Ms Sisulu and other women like her shows the growing participation of women within the fight against apartheid and the especially difficult conditions under which, for them as women, this is conducted.

Nancy GRUBER

Thandi Modise has been in prison in South Africa since October 1979. The 21-year-old guerilla fighter was accused of propagating the aims of a banned organization, the African National Congress (ANC); of possessing a machine gun and explosives; and of conspiring to commit arson and sabotage. She was sentenced to an eight year term under the Terrorism Act.

Thandi was five months pregnant when she was arrested. During detention she was repeatedly beaten, denied prenatal care, and kept in solitary confinement. At the time of her sentencing in November 1980, her baby daughter was eight months old.

Mamphela Ramphele was placed under a banning order in April 1977, after having been arrested and detained for 139 days under the Internal Security Act. Dr Ramphele, at the age of 27, was a leader in the development of medical facilities alternative to those available under apartheid. At the time of her arrest she was superintendent of the Zanempilo Health Centre near King Williams Town. The center had been established to provide essential health services to rural areas of the Ciskei bantusan.

Mamphela worked with the Zimele Trust to aid released political prisoners and collaborated with Steve Biko, the young Black nationalist who was killed in detention in September 1977. This, in addition to her humanitarian work in the clinic itself, brought down the wrath of the South African government.

In April 1977 she was banished to Lenyenye township, a remote village over 600 miles from King Williams Town. Under her banning order she may not leave it even to visit two medical out-stations in the countryside or to take patients to the hospital in nearby Tzaneen.

Yet she continues with her medical work among the most oppressed of the African population — those who have been forcibly transported to the bantustans, the so-called "homelands" for 21 million Blacks.

Under the pernicious apartheid plan, the huge majority of South Africans must live in these areas that comprise only 13% of the land surface of the country, while the remaining 87% is controlled by the 4.6 million whites.

Apartheid has been constructed on a series of laws enacted by the Nationalist government since 1950. First came the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, followed by the Immorality Act, which made any sexual contact between two people of different races a felony. The Bantu Education Act ended Black access to white universities. The Population Registration Act required the registration of all South Africans by race.

Finally, the Group Areas Act and the Urban Areas Act, by eliminating the right of any but whites to own property, by dictating that people of each racial group must live in separate communities, and by prohibiting most Blacks from living in urban areas, created the vicious and inhuman circle in which Black South Africans are trapped today.

In this dehumanizing system, all suffer. But the women undergo a triple oppression. Beyond the subjection to savage white racism and to exploitation as workers (one out of every three Black workers in South Africa is a woman), women suffer special discrimination.

They are denied even the limited legal rights of South African men. The South African Bantu Administration Act No 38, of 1927, as amended, reads: "...a Bantu (South African Black) woman who is a partner in a customary union and who is living with a husband, shall be deemed to be a minor and her husband shall be deemed to be her guardian."

Under the Urban Areas Act, the only people permitted to live in the urban areas are those who can prove either that they were born there, that they have lived there for 15 years, or that they have worked for the same employer for ten years. The cruelest effect of this act has been the near-total destruction of family life in South Africa.

Most women cannot live or work in the urban areas where their husbands are employed. Either they are exiled in the "homelands", where they bear the complete responsibility for bringing up the children and see their husbands only once a year. Or, since families cannot survive on the wages paid to male workers, the women must go to work in the most menial and worst-paying jobs. With no childcare available, children must be sent to live with friends or relatives in the bantustans. And the separation of the family is complete.

Most Black women can find jobs only in domestic service or agriculture, although the number of women in industry has grown in recent years as they are being used to replace men at lower wages. Of the 175,000 (1981 statistics) female members of the Trade Union Congress of South Africa, the vast majority work in the garment industry, where in 1979, they were paid one-fifth less than the minimum wage.

The Garment Workers' Union, however, which is female dominated and led,

*Life in Soweto (D.R.)*



## Latin American women meet in Havana

has long been in the forefront of the struggle for racial equality within the union. As long ago as 1944, the union won a Supreme Court ruling that meant that Black women were entitled to the same wages and conditions as whites working in the industry.

The Trade Union Congress has also been working to improve the lot of women workers, calling for an end to discriminatory wage rates, for maternity leaves, and for childcare centers.

Although Thandi Modise and Mamphela Ramphele are representative of a new strain of activism among the women of South Africa, they have inherited a struggle which began more than seventy years ago. In 1913 a group of women launched a massive anti-apartheid demonstration that served as the model for later demonstrations.

Five years later with the help of the African National Congress, the Bantu Women's League was founded and then replaced in 1936 by the National Council for African Women. In 1943 the ANC Women's League was established with the goal of educating and mobilizing women of all racial groups into the struggle.

The Federation of South African Women was created in 1954 out of the Women's League and other smaller organizations, with the stated aim of "struggling for removal of all laws, regulations, conventions and customs that discriminate against us as women."

Then on August 9, 1956, the spirit of resistance among Black South African women erupted in a demonstration — 20,000 strong — of women from all over South Africa. The national march was organized to protest the extension to women of the hated pass laws. These laws require all African men to carry an identification document at all times and to produce it on demand, on pain of arrest.

The women converged on the government buildings in Pretoria, demanding to see the prime minister. Hundreds of thousands of signatures on petitions were left in his office. After a silent vigil of thirty minutes, the women's voices resounded through the city in an old Zulu refrain: "Now you have touched the women, you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed."

The valiant resistance of the South African women has grown since that August 9 (the day now celebrated as South African Women's Day), despite continuing imprisonments and bannings. In 1981 at least 15 women political prisoners were known to be serving sentences. They are subjected to harsh treatment, solitary confinement, censorship of all reading materials — complete isolation from the outside world and each other.

In the face of such ruthless repression, however, the raised clenched fists of the women and their cry of "Amandla" (Power) is changing the South African political landscape. ■

Over 350 women representing 101 women's organisations met in Havana last November to assess the progress toward equality during the United Nations (UN) decade of women. The women came from 39 different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. They made an analysis of the obstacles for women which still remain and drew up plans for the future in the region. This meeting came in advance of a regional meeting of governments to prepare the worldwide Nairobi conference, taking place in July.

Socorro RAMIREZ

The representative from CEPAL (the Latin American economic studies unit), Vivian Motta, stressed that the decade of women was winding up in the context of an economic crisis that has also affected the Third World. She stated that the crisis has hit women more than any other section of the population, producing a deterioration in the living conditions of a major proportion. She pointed to the gains already made in the last ten years in which a thorough analysis of women's position had been made and which witnessed an increase in the participation of women in social, political and alternative movements, such as the women's movement. Awareness and solidarity had also been strengthened. And certain legal advances had been obtained, as well as an increase in the activity of non-governmental organisations.

The meeting agreed to make Reagan's inauguration day, a day of mourning and of Latin American unity, with women marching in black against the continuing policy of imperialist aggression. It also agreed to mark International Women's Day on March 8 with the creation of the 'International Women's Front' against US intervention and 'to build a wall of strength and love through sisters weeping together to try to create a barrier of women to stop the threat to peace in Central America.'

Progress towards women's equality has now become unstoppable. In 1978, only 14 countries had ratified the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. (1) By 1984, only Paraguay and a few Caribbean countries had failed to ratify. However, this has not necessarily resulted, in the majority of countries, in the adoption of the necessary measures.

The annual report of the International Development Bank (IDB) in 1982 shows that the Gross National Product of 25 countries in the region has declined by more than 3%. Per capita income had gone down by 10% in countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guyana and Uruguay. The

external debt of the region has surpassed the 350 million dollar mark. More than two thirds of new loans have to be given over solely to the payment of this debt which increases because of arbitrary rises in interest rates.

A further obstacle in the way of positive gains in the last ten years is the existence of dictatorial regimes which have systematically violated human rights. Arms' spending accounted for 600 million dollars in 1982.

Women are only 20% of the economically active population, except in Cuba where they are 38.9% (in Havana 44.9% of women are looking for work for the first time). In the region, women are still largely concentrated in the textile and light industries, in the service industries and in the home work sector and as street vendors.

In the countryside women represent 17% of the workforce, and 24% in Cuba. Of course, unpaid work done by women on the family plot is not included in these figures. In Chile and Uruguay unemployment is more than 30%, in Jamaica it is 27% and in Panama, 14.2%.

Convention No 100 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on equal pay has now been ratified by 15 countries, but in the majority of them huge wage differentials still exist, aggravated by the lesser trained skills of the female workforce. The World Health Organisation says that in the Caribbean, 40% of women are heads of households, in Paraguay, 37%, and Uruguay 20.9%, a situation resulting either from actual separation, from husband's emigration or from desertion. Both the multi-nationals and the *maquiladoras* (2) operate a system of super-exploitation of women and the family. The policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also have

1. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination was launched by the United Nations in 1979. See *International Viewpoint*, No. 70, February 25, 1984.

2. *Maquiladoras* are factories which function as subsidiaries of US based corporations. They deal in one small part of the production process which gives them greater flexibility. Most of the workers in these factories are women and because of the method of production they are super-exploited.

unfavourable consequences on the employment of women in the public and private sectors and for the living conditions of people in these countries.

In relation to trade union activity, there has been no greater involvement of women because of a lack of means of overcoming the contradictions in their situation as mothers and as workers; because of poor maternity and childcare provision and the increasingly difficult conditions under which women have to manage the household. Through deductions from their wages, women workers pay for maternity leave, but they are obliged to officially hand in their resignation at the start of the leave which the employers can always accept at their convenience. Women workers are also obliged to undergo urine tests in order to ascertain whether they are pregnant.

We must work for the establishment of health programmes for women at all stages of their lives and in all circumstances. It is also necessary to raise demands around sexuality which is vital to the physical, psychological and social well-being of all women and men, in the framework of equality of the sexes. We are for a sexuality free from the ideology of women as sexual objects open to exploitation, submission and violence. We are for women's control over their own bodies, over how many children they have and when, as well as for more liberal laws for terminating a pregnancy when it is unwanted.

### Women's work not recognised

Because of the traditional division of labour and because of the mobility of the male workforce, part of the agricultural work falls on women who usually take part in every stage of the production cycle, including planting, harvest and tending the animals. They carry the major responsibility for work on the family plots and for care of the domestic animals, raising pigs, tending cattle, and milk production. But this work is not recognised or remunerated because the middling peasants are the sole owners of the land and as heads of the family the men are responsible for all transactions. So however much peasant women may need loans or training they cannot get them because the title-holders are men, even in the situation where a woman is the de facto head of a household.

On the large latifundias, women's temporary work is given the minimum remuneration without any kind of social provision. It is vital to guarantee to women as well as men, the redistribution of the productive resources under their control, along with the establishment of special training programmes for women.

Forty-four million Latin American and Caribbean people, 25 million of them women, are illiterate. The insufficient

resourcing by the state of education and social training, combined with the dispersal of the population and the early inclusion of women in agricultural work, mean that women find themselves outside of the educational process.

Although the trend is toward equal numbers of boys and girls entering primary school, it is also true that women tend to leave school before reaching the higher grades.

The number of women in higher education has slowly gone up, with a concentration on careers in the arts, letters and teaching. Because of poor scheduling and poor materials only 35 out of every hundred taking part in adult education are women.

On all levels, education must be oriented in accordance with professional criteria and not sex stereotypes. It will be necessary to revise educational methods in order to present a more positive image of women that will make it easier to change attitudes. The women's organisations should promote informal educational activities aimed to inform women about their rights and make them aware of what opportunities exist to become fully integrated into society.

They should also conduct study plans and programmes involving sex education.

Other problems facing women are the lack of adequate housing, poor sanitary conditions, hunger, the inadequate medical and hospital facilities available to 100 million Latin Americans, poor diet, and the anaemia related to dietary deficiencies.

Every year more than a million children under the age of five die in Latin America and the Caribbean, and more than 40 million suffer damage. According to UNICEF, most of these deaths stem from avoidable causes, such as ignorance of the elementary notions of hygiene, nutrition, or the lack of safe drinking water. The deterioration in living conditions have led to alcoholism, drug abuse, and vagrancy, as well as to crimes such as child prostitution. There are 30 million abandoned children.

The media are being used to reinforce ideas of white supremacy to the detriment of Blacks, Indians and mestizos, who are shown in "quaint" folk settings. Women are portrayed as passive consumers with no thought of looking for alternative solutions.

Attitudes, prejudices and conceptions that reflect a decadent image of women, which isolate women from society, perpetuate the tradition of female submissiveness and inferiority, and block possibilities for personal and collective development are being reinforced.

In their programmes, the media should maintain a respectful image of women, put a rein on wasteful consumerism, violence and pornography, and stimuli to egotistic individualism. They should support efforts to advance a new approach in mass communication and alternative forms according to the majority of participants in the meeting.

## EGYPT Defend Egyptian socialists

On January 21, the Egyptian police staged a series of arrests. Thirty persons were taken in. Eleven were accused of belonging to the Egyptian Communist Party-Congress Faction (a left split from the Egyptian CP) and 19 of membership in a "Trotskyist Communist Organisation."

According to reports by Associated Press and Agence France-Presse, as well as by the Egyptian daily *Al Ahram* of January 22 - 28, the persons arrested, including one woman, were a doctor, a journalist, a pharmacist, a teacher, a translator, two lawyers, three engineers, six government employees and seven students.

These thirty persons jailed were charged with "belonging to secret armed Communist organisations." And were to be tried in the State Security Court. The prosecution was demanding sentences of 15 years in prison at hard labor on the basis of charges such as possession of pamphlets that "incited people to rebel and demonstrate against the regime, and criticised religion."

The persons arrested have just been released, but it is not yet clear whether the government intends to go ahead with the prosecution. Indeed, this case seems to illustrate well both the systematic repression against the revolutionary left by the Egyptian regime and its present need to try to maintain a democratic face. In these conditions, international protests against instances of political repression can be very important. ■

## SYRIA FI supports Syrian socialists

The Twelfth World Congress of the Fourth International affirms its fraternal solidarity with the struggles of the comrades of the Communist Action Party in Syria against the brutal dictatorship of Hafez El-Assoud. The congress particularly affirms its solidarity with the 170 comrades held in the dictatorship's prisons on accusation of belonging to the CAP. The Fourth International undertakes to continue and step up its struggle for the release of these comrades. ■



## Japanese section of the Fourth International holds congress

Y. SAKAI

Facing the threat of physical attacks from the degenerated far-left Chukaku (1), the Revolutionary Communist League, Japanese section of the Fourth International, held its Twelfth Congress in September. More than forty delegates, elected by the local units, members of the out-going Central Committee and Control Commission, and representatives of the Communist Youth League attend-

ed. The congress took place when the Japanese working-class movement was passing a historic turning point. In 1983-84, the left reformist leaderships that dominated the workers' movement in the 1950s and 1960s, represented by the union confederation Sohyo and the left Social Democratic Socialist Party, finally reached a dead end. An outright pro-imperialist and procapitalist right-wing current, entrenched in the big factories and enterprises of the private sector got a clear upper hand in the trade-union movement as a whole, compelling the parliamentary SP to make a major right turn toward pro-imperialist coalitionist politics. The situation of the left independent currents and groups in the trade-union movement has become extremely difficult.

This shift in the situation in the working class movement obliged the Japanese section to make a deepgoing reevaluation of the nature and special features of the Japanese working-class movement of the 1950s and 1960s. This discussion developed in the Central Committee and in the section as a whole over 1983-1984. By necessity, it went hand in hand with an assessment of the orientations and activities of the section in the 1970s and early 1980s. The national congress marked the culmination of these discussions. In addition, in the pre-congress period, the Central Committee introduced a discussion on the international situation and the problems of the world revolution today.

The congress adopted a resolution on the international situation, characterizing the present crisis of international capitalism as a long-term, historic, structural crisis. The resolution also characterized the current situation in the workers'

states as marking a historic impasse of the whole postwar development of the Soviet Union and of Sino-Soviet relations. It pointed out that the crises of international imperialism and of the workers' states are more and more combined on the world scale.

At the same time, despite the advance of the Central American revolution and the new rise of the Latin-American workers' and peasants' struggles, the postwar structures of the mass workers' movements in the imperialist countries and the postwar colonial revolution have also reached a historic impasse. The mass workers' movement in the imperialist countries and the colonial revolution have entered a qualitatively new stage of a process of decomposition-recomposition.

The balance-sheet report was composed of two parts. The first was a balance sheet of the evolution of the workers' states, the mass workers' movements in the imperialist countries and of the colonial revolution since the Second World War. The second part was a balance sheet of our assessments of the Japanese mass workers' movement and our political orientations throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. The report concluded that the Japanese section had been profoundly and consistently spontaneist in its evaluation of the situation in the working class and in its political orientations throughout that period and the section had failed from the end of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s to build itself as a genuinely independent communist proletarian organization, despite the fact that after the mid-1970s a large majority of its membership was in the trade unions.

Facing the impasse of the postwar left reformist structure of the Japanese workers' movement and a general right turn of the entire reformist apparatus, the congress focused on the tasks of building the section in the new situation. Central to this is a return to the first four congresses of the Third International, including its red trade-unionism, and to the principles and lessons of the struggle for the Fourth International in the 1930s.

In the immediate future, the section will have to struggle against the current. It has also to be recomposed politically and organizationally. The organizational resolution described the Japanese section

as it was built throughout the 1970s as a "spontaneist, Trotskyist political organization." It set the task now as "building the section as a communist nucleus and to anchor this nucleus in the proletarian masses." The basic orientation is to struggle to build a revolutionary, anti-imperialist workers' current both inside of and outside of the existing trade-union structures.

Along with the organizational tasks, the congress set immediate political objectives relating to the resistance struggle against the general right-wing recomposition of the trade-union movement; the fight against the new Tokyo International Airport; and campaigns against Japanese imperialist militarism and in solidarity with the Korean, Philippine and Central American struggles.

The congress also set specific tasks for combating Chukaku's terrorist campaign against the Japanese section and the majority of the Farmers League Against the Narita Airport.

Finally, the congress adopted the resolutions submitted by the outgoing leadership by a large majority and elected a new Central Committee and Control Commission. ■

1. These attacks have included raids on the homes of members of the Japanese section in the predawn hours and the deliberate crippling of one in such a raid. See "The tragedy of the far left," in *International Viewpoint*, No 68, January 28, 1985.

### Statement

*The Twelfth World Congress of the Fourth International condemns the Chukaku's terrorist attacks and intimidation campaign against the Revolutionary Communist League, Japanese section of the Fourth International, and expresses its solidarity with the Japanese section.*

*The World Congress also expresses its solidarity with the imprisoned militants of the section.* ■

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# Coronation in Moscow

The general secretary is dead, long live the general secretary! The third changing of the guard in the Kremlin in as many years highlights still more the absolutism of the rule of the Soviet bureaucracy, and how grotesquely it conflicts with the basic principles of socialism.

"Neither czar, nor god, nor hero will bring us salvation", the Russian translation of the "International," the anthem of the world socialist movement says.

Gerry FOLEY

But the death of the head of the Soviet bureaucracy is surrounded by the sort of rituals that throughout the centuries have accompanied the attempts of despotic systems to elevate their leaders to superhuman status.

The objective of socialists is to replace the rule over people by the administration of things, the rule of persons by objective scientific rules, determined and applied through the broadest democracy in the interest of all by those who live by their work.

In the last week, the ability of the Soviet state, made possible by the abolition of capitalism, to concentrate the forces of the peoples of the Soviet Union has been exercised to create the impression that a god emperor has passed. The sun has darkened, leaving the good people of the Soviet Union and the entire earth in grief and apprehension, to be dispelled only by the rising of a new sun.

"The world mourns," *Pravda* said on March 12, following the announcement of Chernenko's death and Gorbachev's accession.

During the eclipse of the sun god, people have to huddle together in the darkness. "Unbreakable unity," was the headline over the article on the second page of *Izvestia*, under a picture of Chernenko lying in state in a huge, dimly lighted hall, surrounded by military guards and dignitaries. The article went on to say: "The Soviet people are rallying still more closely around the Leninist Communist Party in these days of profound grief through which the country is passing."

In his speech on assuming the post of general secretary, after the ritual formulas, Gorbachev began by saying:

"Like the apple of his eye, Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko guarded the unity of the Communist Party, the collective character of the Central Committee and its Politburo.... It was on the unity in thought and action of the Communist Party that he placed his hopes for overcoming the deficiencies."

This theme of reassurance that the "unity of the party" was safe was also in the forefront at the time of Andropov's death. It expresses, among other things, the principle of despotism that the guar-

antee of unity and authority is the placing of power in the hands of a single individual, who is superhuman by definition.

Since without democracy, power is arbitrary, it cannot be stable unless it is concentrated in the hands of one person. It is for this reason that the ruling group places absolute power in the hands of an individual. In such a system, the moments of succession at the top are indeed perilous ones.

The dangers of succession explain the Kremlin machine's grotesque attempts to disguise the fact that Chernenko was a dying man. At the start of March, the Soviet press showed pictures of him looking as bright as a peppermint Santa Claus and about as lifelike. Less than two weeks later, it was showing his waxen face surrounded by piles of flowers in a high hall, lit by flickering light, rather like a Greek Orthodox cathedral.

The setting of Chernenko's wake was appropriate. It was, the chronicles say, Princess Olga's awe at the great nave of Constantinople's Agia Sophia cathedral lit by thousands of candles, that led to the Russian lords adopting Christianity, and with it the principles and paraphen-

alia of Byzantine absolutism. Ever since, it seems, Russian despots have sought to match the glory of the Byzantine "throne of god on earth."

The supreme bureaucrats now try to do the same thing, on a vaster scale but with little taste or conviction. All of this is a fitting symbol of everything that came with the rise of the bureaucracy and its destruction of the leadership of the revolution. But it also symbolizes the shallowness and lack of perspectives of a despotism that claims to rule in the name of socialism.

The basis for industrialization and the massive growth of the working class that the revolution created stands in fundamental contradiction to such barbaric forms of rule. And by its nature this contradiction grows more and more acute.

Already in this succession, Gorbachev was obliged to give a speech at his predecessor's funeral that introduced some incongruous note into the despotic display.

"We will support, encourage and advance those who show not by words but by deed and practical results their honest and conscientious attitude to accomplishing social obligations.

"We will combat all expressions of pompous display, empty rhetoric, boasting and irresponsibility."

The official statement published in the March 13 *Pravda* repeated Gorbachev's accession speech almost word for word, adding a few points such as:

"Deepening socialist democracy is inseparably bound up with raising the level of social consciousness, with increasing the openness of the work of the party, state and social organization. The practical experience of the CPSU has fully confirmed Lenin's conclusion that the state is as strong as the consciousness of the people. The better informed the people are, the more consciously they will act."

Such statements seem clearly to be promises of liberalization, combined with a crackdown on bureaucratic incompetence and corruption. It is the first time a new general secretary has offered promises for reform on his accession itself.

With the long stagnation of the country's economy and the growing threat that it may fall decisively behind in the new technologies, the pressure for change must be mounting inexorably, even in the bureaucracy itself. Gorbachev's problem is how to open the way for the critical thinking and shake up needed to deal with these problems without letting the now rather well educated masses of workers think about the contradiction between despotic rule and building a socialist society and how to eliminate it.

Solving that one will be quite a trick. Despite the intelligence of the new general secretary, which so impresses the capitalist rulers (themselves easy enough to outshine these days), it is not very likely that he can pull it off. But it is probable that he will have to try, and that means that some big developments may be shaping up.

Gorbachev (D.R.)

