International VIEWPOINT

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POSTAL DELAYS

Recent copies of *IV* may have been delayed because of the after-effects of the recent postal strike in France. In addition, we are still not receiving our usual subscriptions correspondence — so please be patient!

International VIEWPOINT

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Breakthrough for the Workers' Party

A POLITICAL earthquake — that is the international press's most common description of the results of the municipal elections in Brazil. The final results will only be published in a week or so, but they are already known for the big capitals of the various states. President Sarney's party, the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB) has taken a resounding slap in the face.

DOMINIQUE LEGRAND

ABOVE ALL, the PMDB lost in Latin America's biggest city, São Paulo and its belt of working-class satellite towns, where the Workers' Party (PT) candidate won the mayoralty. She came in ahead of Paulo Maluf of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), a right-wing politician whose name is associated with the military dictatorship and various corruption scandals. Likewise, the PT won Porto Alegre and Vitoria, two state capitals. In Rio de Janeiro, the country's second largest city, the winner was the candidate of the Democratic Workers' Party (PDT), which is led by the populist *caudillo* (chief) Leonel Brizola.

The PT, which was born in 1980 out of the resurgence of the class-struggle trade-union movement under the dictatorship, focused its campaign on working-class demands, for a moratorium on payment of the $120 billion foreign debt and for the reform promised in 1985 when the military ceded power to the New Republic but which today is completely stalled (see *IV* 127).

The PT's victory was not a bolt from the blue. It came in the midst of a wave of social struggles and strikes mainly in the large Brazilian public sector (public administration workers, engineering, oil, and so on).

Inflation will undoubtedly hit 1,000 per cent for 1988 as a whole. On November 4, the government and representatives of the employers and the union — except the United Federation of workers (CUT), which is linked to the PT — signed a social pact designed to limit the rise of inflation (and above all wages!) to 25% a month.

However, the PMDB's failure on the economic front was not the only issue. From another standpoint, the worst was the intervention of the army three days before the election against striking Volta Redonda steelworkers. The military fired on the workers occupying the factory, killing three people and wounding dozens.

Bloody demonstration of armed forces' power

This action was a bloody demonstration of the power of the armed forces as provided for in the constitution just adopted by the New Republic.The granting to the military of the responsibility for "overseeing respect for law and the maintenance of domestic order" was not just words.

Another confrontation today is taking place between the government and 45,000 oil workers who are on strike over wage issues. President Sarney has called on the congress to declare the strike illegal on the grounds that it affects the national interests. If this proposal is adopted, it will enable him — as the constitution again provides — to start firing the strikers and replacing them with other workers who accept the conditions imposed by the state-employer.

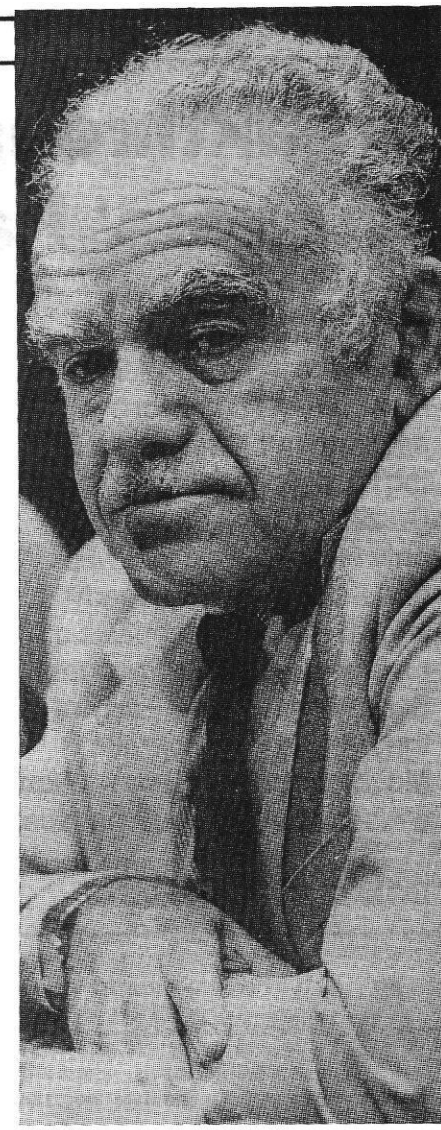
In a year's time, in November 1989, the first presidential elections by universal suffrage since 1960 are to be held. The PT is running Inacio Da Silva, "Lula." ★

Election campaigns dominated by the *intifada*

THE 1984 Israeli elections deadlocked the two major political formations, forcing them to form a national unity government that could only function on the basis of consensus. In other words, a government that could only oversee the status quo.

It is true that under the leadership of Shimon Peres, head of the Labour Party, the government was able to resolve two serious problems that it had inherited from the previous administration. In less than a year the Israeli army at last pulled out of the Lebanese quagmire. And a few months later, thanks to a bold economic plan and active collaboration by Histadrut, the Labour Party-controlled Israeli labour federation, it managed to curb the galloping inflation rate, which had hit 400%, and introduce a certain amount of economic stability.

MICHEL WARSCHAWSKI



Yitzhak Shamir (*DR*)

BUT ONCE he had pulled the Likud's chestnuts out of the fire, Peres had to relinquish the position of chief of state to Yitzhak Shamir. And the rightist leader's political program had always been confined to managing the status quo and rejecting any sort of new initiative, whether political or economic.

The popular uprising in the occupied territories in December 1987 was to radically change the political situation and put the need for finding a solution to the question of the occupied territories back on the agenda. The electoral campaign for the recomposition of the Knesset thus opened against the backdrop of the *intifada*. Labour as well as a substantial part of Israeli public opinion, expected the elections to put an end to governmental paralysis and allow one of the two major parties — Labour or Likud — to carry out a coherent policy towards the Palestinian national struggle.

This time, the interest generated by the Knesset elections went far beyond the boundaries of the state of Israel. Whether in Washington or Moscow, Amman or Cairo, various interested parties hoped for a Labour victory, which in their estimation was the only thing that could defuse the explosive situation in the Middle East.

The Palestinian nationalist movement, whether in the occupied territories or not, was itself not indifferent to the elections, and many of its leaders took stands on the various options on offer, more specifically in favor of the supporters of an international peace conference.

Unlike the preceding elections, the central theme of the campaigns waged by most political formations revolved not around social or community issues but around the Palestinian question and the future of the occupied territories. The *intifada* was the focal point of a debate between the right and the left of major importance not only for its immediate consequences but its long term implications.

The extreme right's "final solution"

On the extreme right, the Tehiya, Somet and Moledet parties outbid themselves to propose radical means of bringing the uprising to an end: mass deportations of supposed ringleaders, destruction of villages, authorization of a shoot-to-kill policy, formal annexation of the territories and so on.

The prize in this contest goes without doubt to the Homeland Party, Moledet, led by General Rehavem Zeevi, whose only platform was "transfer," that is, the expulsion of the Palestinian people as a whole from their land. Its campaign advertisements, in which one sees Israeli children wandering happily in an Arab-free pastoral environment with a slogan in the background proclaiming "At the very most it is a removal in the interests of two peoples," would not have been out of place in Goebbels' propaganda arsenal.

It is true that, because of the vulgar racist appeals of its leader, Rabbi Meir Kahane, which aroused general revulsion, the Kach slate was banned by the Knesset. But on the other hand, Moledet's program sends chills down one's spine precisely because unlike Kahane, Zeevi is no fanatical new immigrant, but comes from the ranks of the country's elite. Moreover, Moledet counts among its supporters a militant working class component. The legitimazation of Zeevi's Nazi propaganda is far more dangerous than the two seats it finally won.

At the other end of the political spectrum, the *intifada's* impact is just as evident. The left Zionist parties, the Mapam — which for the first time in ten years ran on a slate independent of the Labour Party — and Shulamit Aloni and Yossi Sarit's Civil Rights Movement (CRM) decided to break with one of the three taboos in the national consensus. They called for negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This break with Labour Party tradition brought results — the two organizations together went from three deputies to eight.

However it was the Labour Party that took the biggest gamble, choosing to mount a campaign distinguishing itself from the Likud. Under pressure from Shimon Peres and the young guard who will be sitting in the Knesset, the bet was taken...and lost.

The Labour Party's election propaganda concentrated on two things. One was the "demographic danger" represented by the Likud's annexation schemes. The other was the "generals' plan". Labour stopped at nothing to illustrate the nature of the demographic danger. Day after day, they brandished birth certificates and other statistics to prove that public enemy number one of the Jewish state were the Palestinian women's wombs. If the Israeli state did not get rid of the Palestinians, it would soon be a bi-national state. (God save us!) For many voters, it was the Labour Party that convinced them to vote for Rehavem Zeevi's transfer party.

Likud concentrated its fire on the economy

As for the "generals' plan", it was a fairly run-of-the-mill project of withdrawing from the populated regions of the West Bank and Gaza after negotiations between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation (from which the PLO would obviously be excluded), preceded by a brief international conference designed to lend credence to these bi-lateral negotiations. Day after day, reservist generals, topographical maps in hand and chests bedecked with medals, showed how a demilitarized West Bank would be less dangerous than hundreds of thousands of Palestinians under Israeli domination.

The Likud essentially centered its campaign around an attack on Labour positions, not hesitating to present Peres as Yasser Arafat's ally, and Ezer Weizmann as willing to make a coalition with the CP and the Progressive List for Peace (PLP). But sensing that it did not really have much to offer politically, except perhaps an escalation of the repression, and in fact a continuation of the status quo, the Likud concentrated its fire on the economy. It effectively exploited the serious crisis in the Histadrut enterprises and the health services managed by the labor federation.

Shimon Peres' moderate talk had little impact; it seemed to moderate voters to lack coherence as long as the idea of an independent Palestinian state and the PLO were clearly being rejected. His words seemed all the more dishonest coming at a time when the Labour right wing, with Yitzhak Rabin in the lead, were boasting about having done more in repressing the *intifada* than all the Likud governments together. For the voters wavering between Labour and Likud, the generals' plan appeared to be a final surrender to the strength of the uprising in the occupied territories.

Labour Alignment, that is the Labour Party and the centrist groups that are close to it, lost nine seats, going from 50 to 41. Five went to the Zionist left parties, three to the Likud, and one seat went to the Arab Nationalist slate of ex-Labour deputy Abdel Wahab Darousha.

However, while the Labour bloc lost three seats to the right, the latter still did not benefit over all. The right and the extreme right wing together dropped from 49 to 47 deputies. If you take into account the three seats it won from Labour and the fact that the extreme right (Tehiya, Somet and Moledet) went from six to seven deputies, it appears that Likud lost five of its deputies.

In short, the Zionist left was substantially strengthened, the extreme right improved its position slightly, and both Likud and the Labour Party suffered setbacks. But more than anything, what marked the recent Knesset elections was the jump in the vote of the religious parties.

Out of seven religious parties that ran, four received over 1% of the vote, which is the minimum required to elect someone to the Knesset. Together they have 18 deputies, which is 50% more than last time, and got an even greater increase in votes. The religious parties are not only an essential component of any parliamentary majority formed either by Labour or Likud, but a political force that will mark the social life and the political system of Israel for years to come.

Liberal and secular opinion has not yet recovered from the shock of the religious parties' breakthrough. They hastily analyzed it as the expression of a convergence between religious fundamentalism and political fascism. This is cheap impressionism, typical of the secular Zionist liberal left.

Mystical messianic forces

First of all, the religious parties are not all extremist with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The National Religious Party (NRP) is today an extreme right Zionist party, and is very influential in Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faith) circles. However, far from gaining ground, it actually lost a seat. The real winners were thus not the mystical messianic forces that lead the militia forces in the occupied territories but the non-Zionist fundamentalist parties.

There also, a distinction must be made between the parties with an Ashkenaze base (which have seven deputies), whose leaders and electoral base are considered moderate, and the Shas (a 1983 split-off from Agudat Yisrael) led by the ex-High Sephardic Rabbi of Israel which has ten seats and is close to the secular right and extreme right wing. Therefore, the religious parties cannot be considered identical, and it is not out of the question that some of them at least will block with the Labour Party, if promised a large enough appropriation for their social and scholarly institutions.

Contrary to what most commentators have been saying, the growth of the ultra-religious parties does not reflect merely the growth of fundamentalism or the tightening grip of extremely reactionary ideas. Above all it represents a communal vote for, and expression of, one or several social and ethnic identities.

Many votes determined by communal interests

In the 1977 and 1981 elections, the Likud's gains revealed the revolt of the oriental Jewish communities which were casting a protest vote against the parties of the establishment — the Labour Party and the National Religious Party. What began to emerge in the 1984 elections, with the first breakthrough by the Shas, has been confirmed today. A large part of the Sephardi electorate is no longer satisfied with casting a negative vote, but is trying to express itself through parties that claim to represent the oriental tradition, its values and symbols.

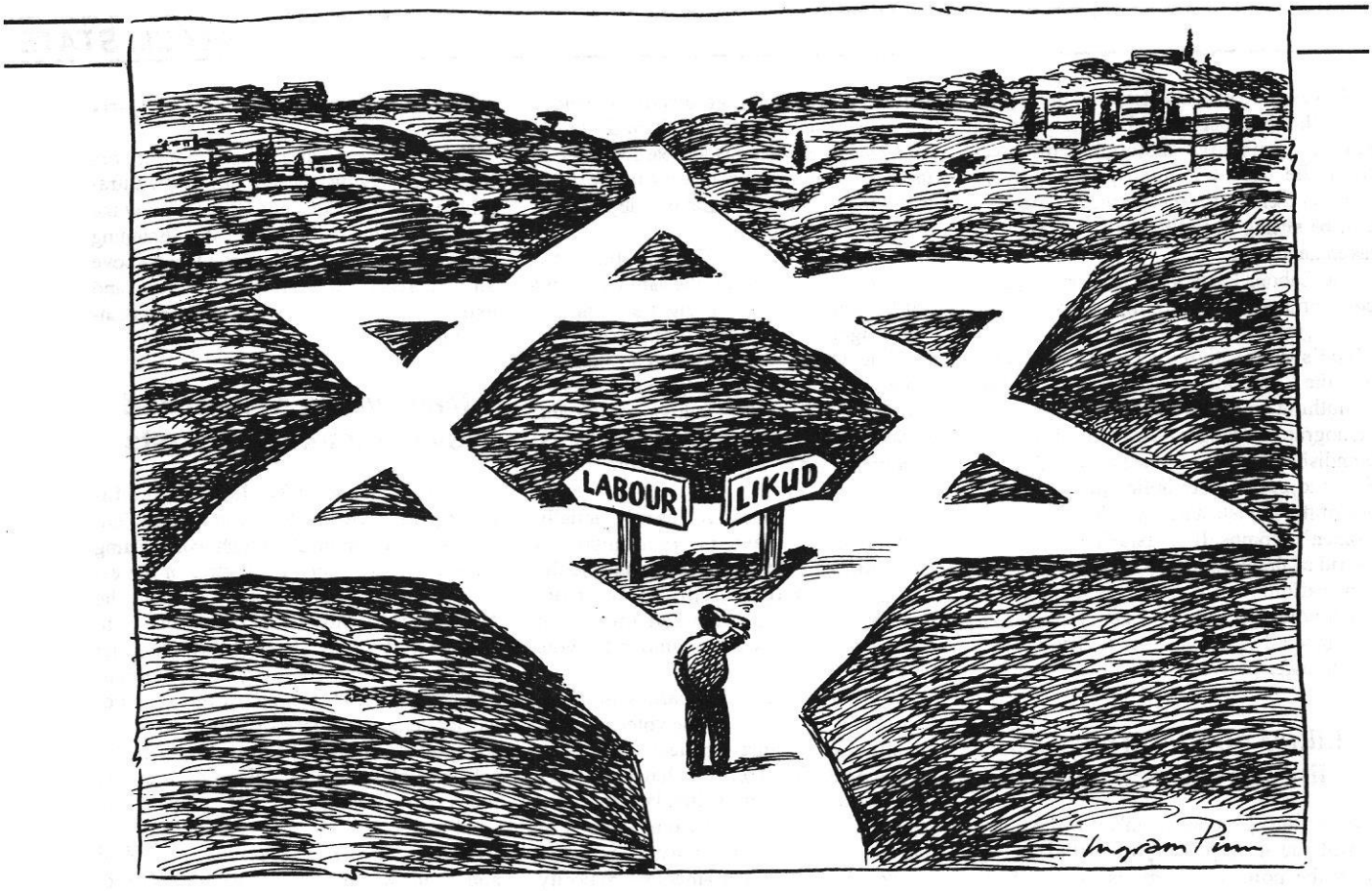
Shas, an orientalized and reformed NRP and even the 'new look' Agudat Yisrael have captured a part of the ethnic and communal sentiments of the Israeli Sephardi population.

And this is the real paradox of the election: the secular parties' electoral campaign revolved around the *intifada* and various solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian question. But what determined the vote of a large section of the population, and the only significant change in the composition of the Knesset, had very little to do with the central political questions. Orthodox and Sephardic Jews voted above all for those who most authentically represented their own identities, and what they believed to be their social and communal interests.

That said, it is undeniable that the communal identity of hundreds of thousands of Israelis who voted for fundamentalist parties has been expressed through symbols that Zionist disciples had believed buried forevermore.

Every night for a month, the television screens were filled with scenes of a mystical ecstasy worthy of the middle ages, with fanatic preachers who brought to mind the worst anti-semitic propaganda and rabbis calling down the wrath of God on whomever voted for their opponents. We have come a long way since the era when Zionism proclaimed its desire to build a society free from rabbis and religious prejudices. Fundamentalism is more than ever a component of Israeli society, and after these elections, its influence in the state apparatus will be even greater.

Because of demographic factors; the weight of the Israeli Arab population's vote increases at each election, and today represents about fourteen seats. It is easy to see why all of the political parties, including



the extreme-right and fundamentalist Jewish parties go after the Arab electorate. Mapam, the CRM, the Center Movement, and the Labour Party all included Arab candidates high on their slates in the hope of winning some of the Arab electorate.

Against the backdrop of the *intifada*, commentators were unanimous in predicting a nationalist wave in the Israeli Palestinian population. This community's big mobilization together with their compatriots in the occupied territories had made it plain that the Zionist independent left slates stood to gain substantially.

Moreover, the unity developed through the Israeli Arab Representative Committee during the course of the mobilizations had fostered a strong current of opinion in favor of a united nationalist slate. The political platforms of the Israeli Communist Party, the Progressive List for Peace, and of the Palestinian leaders who had earlier been members of Zionist parties were identical — a pull out from the territories occupied in 1967, recognition of the PLO, international conference, division of Palestine into two states and equal rights for Israeli Palestinians. Moreover there were strong pressures for unity. So, it seemed that for the first time, the Israeli Palestinian population was going to express itself by lining up behind an independent political leadership.

For their part, the PLO spokespersons had expressed their firm support for the united slate several times. The Revolutionary Communist League, (RCL) Israeli section of the Fourth International had also fought a serious campaign for the formation of such a slate.

But this was to reckon without the sectarianism of the Israeli Communist Party, which decided one month before the start of the election campaign to run its own slate. It did not even try to negotiate, and stated, in defiance of truth and good sense, that it was the sole defender of an international peace conference.

Consequences of the CP's sectarianism

In order to reassure their members, the CP leaders let it be known that the composition of the slate was to be radically new and of course younger. Instead of younger candidates, the CP members got exactly the same slate as put up in the last four elections, including the Wilner-Touby duo who are the Knesset elder statesmen. For the Israeli CP, *perestroika* is not translateable into Hebrew or Arabic.

With the perspective of unification definitively buried, the other left and nationalist groups called for the three independent slates — the CP, the PLP and the Arab Democratic Party (ADP) led by the ex-Labour deputy Darousha — to sign an accord on the division of the remaining ones. The CP rejected this outright. The consequences of the CP's sectarian line were twofold. One effect was that the united nationalist dynamic was strangled at birth. More than 42% of the Arab population voted for Zionist organizations (which is still a few points better than the results of the last election). Secondly the three independent slates only won six seats (4 CP, 1 PLP, 1 ADP) whereas an accord between them would have netted them eight deputies.

In losing its second deputy, Matti Peled, the Progressive List appears to be becoming openly what it has been for some time in spirit — a Palestinian nationalist grouping that agrees 100% with the Arafat line in the PLO.

The formation of an internationalist Jewish-Arab party able to offer a perspective of common struggle to the hundreds of Arab militants breaking with the CP and the hundreds of young radicalizing Israelis, a party distinct from the Zionist left, remains a goal to be attained.

For a month and a half, the rabbis have had the upper hand over the generals, whether they be champions of the final solution, or tinkerers of territorial compromise. For a few weeks to come, the representatives of the religious parties will stay in the limelight, negotiating over ministerial portfolios, subsidies, and other spoils with the big political formations. Likud may be the best placed to form a new coalition government, but the game is not over yet, and Labour has never had any problem negotiating the troubled waters of talks with the religious parties. But whoever the government turns out to be, it will quickly be obliged to turn to more important things than the appropriation for the ministry of religion and whether cinemas should be open on Friday night in Jerusalem.

The Palestinian National Council in mid-November will give a new lift to the popular mobilizations in the occupied territories, forcing the Israeli political class to make some crucial decisions.

If the *intifada* has little weight in the talks on the formation of the next government, the rebellion will on the contrary be decisive for the political choices this government will have to make. ★

First congress of the Polish Socialist Party

THE DOCUMENTS adopted by the first national conference of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), held last October 22 in Warsaw, are reproduced below. Eight regional organizations were represented by 35 delegates.

The conference marked an important date in the history of this party, which was founded in November 1987 and which during its first few months of existence already underwent a split involving many of its leading members including Jan Jozef Lipski (see *IV* 137, March 21, 1988). Today the political choices made by both sides are clear. While Jan Jozef Lipski took part in Margaret Thatcher's reception, the PPS majority denounced her anti-union policies. While Lipski tried to become part of the round-table negotiating process between the representatives of the opposition and the bureaucracy, the PPS majority rejected such a framework, seeing it as one more attempt to legitimize the post-Stalinist political regime.

This attitude coincides with the political decisions taken by the PPS' majority last spring. These included getting involved in building workers' struggles and setting up and strengthening factory-based independent union structures. To this end, the PPS has offered its human and material resources to factory union activists, helping them to publish and distribute their own press. At the same time, it has continued to work on a union journal called *Praca, Placa, BHP* ("Work, Wages, Health and Safety"), which has six issues out already, and to publish some pamphlets on union training. It also publishes about a dozen papers in different regions. The party, moreover, allows ideological currents to express themselves freely within it, as is shown by the existence of a minority tendency — the Revolutionary Left Current of the PPS (NLR-PPS).

In his article Jozef Pinior, one of the main leaders of the PPS, demonstrates that the existence of a party that does not idealize capitalism — so frequent among oppositionists in the East — merits attention, particularly at a time when the new Minister of the Interior (a member of the Polish Communist Party, PUWP, and a private entrepreneur who was head of a foreign trading firm until his appointment) is trying to close down the "unprofitable" Lenin shipyards in Gdansk. Many opposition leaders are now torn between their desire to defend the workers, who are the victims of this economic market reform championed by the bureaucracy, and their support for an economic project that justifies such choices.

CYRIL SMUGA

The democratic revolution

THE PRESENT CRISIS of ideology reflects the impotence of the traditional political options in the face of an inhuman and irrational model of development. In surmounting a series of barriers to expansion, modern capitalism made economic development an end in itself.

In the course of successive technological changes, human beings have become a dead weight for the process rather than the masters of it. Growing numbers of young people are paying for this in unemployment and poverty. Along with the control of information and culture imposed on the society, these phenomenon are the source of alienation, chauvinism and racism.

In the so-called third world countries, the dependent capitalist countries, the social costs of the development model described above are incommensurably greater. Economic dependence leads to political dependence, where the alternative seems to be either authoritarian dictatorship or Stalinization.

The balance sheet of the Stalinist regimes is crimes against humanity, mass apathy and economic collapse. Post-Stalinist totalitarianism is seeking new forms in order to survive. Free-market processes going along with the maintenance of the power of the *nomenklatura* serve to consolidate and deepen the mechanisms of exploitation and domination. Conflict is growing between the ruling elite and layers that are enriching themselves under its protection on the one hand, and the toiling majority on the other. The omnipresent state, which plays the role of intermediary in all social relations, is trying to keep the initiative in the process of change. Despite the hopes harbored in some opinion-making circles, reforms from above will not alter the social consequences of totalitarianism. The society aspires to carry out reforms independently, not to be reformed.

Socialists throughout the world are fight-

ing for labor to become the liberator from poverty, domination and alienation. The experiences of the workers' movement indicate that taking control of the factories and electing political representatives of the society will lead us toward a multi-sectoral economic system combined with systems of social security based on a redistribution of the national income.

Given the domination of the state sector in Poland, which is run by the Communist *nomenklatura*, it is necessary to depoliticize this sector by getting the PZPR [Polish United Workers' Party, the CP) out of economic and personnel policy. The factories should be run by the workers and professionals responsible to them. The alternative system arising from such a process will open up a new horizon for civilization, establish a new form of self-management and democracy. It will enable a society in the process of emancipating itself to become the master of culture and the information system. It will give it an opportunity to free itself from the control of the military-industrial complex and reestablish the equilibrium between human beings and nature.

The crisis in the socialist movement today can be surmounted by outlining a perspective of a common socio-political system for societies living under different systems of domination and dependence. This requires imagination and political courage.

The Polish workers have broken the state monopoly on information and organization. A turning point has arrived. In occupation strikes, a consciousness develops that the workers are becoming the real masters of their workplaces. Alongside trade-union consciousness, a need for political action arises. The dynamic of this movement runs up against the resistance of post-Stalinist totalitarianism. Because of the unreformability of this system, the only possibility for the workers is to pose a governmental alternative. The purpose of this alternative is socialization of the state, seizure of economic power in the factories by the workforces and the setting up of democratic representation of the society, the community of producers and citizens.

August 1980 [the rise of Solidarnosc], Brasov [the miners' rebellion in Romania], Karabakh and Jastrzebie are all elements of the same phenomenon — a democratic revolution that is unfolding before our eyes, an exit from the totalitarian system leading toward political democracy, socialization of the economy and independence. Totalitarianism can only be abolished from below, by the will of the workers, by an independent movement of workers organized in their workplaces for conscious action.

The Polish Socialist Party is taking an active part in building such a governmental alternative, with the aspiration of emancipating the society. To this end, we believe that it is essential to undertake the following actions:

- To reinforce and build the independent union Solidarnosc at the enterprise, regional and national level.
- For the workers' councils to take the initiative in management and the fight for a new form of self-management.
- To create horizontal and vertical self-management accords.
- To set up national representation of workers' self-management in the form of a Self-Management Chamber of parliament.
- To undertake a campaign for a democratic form of electing the parliament and regional councils.
- To fight to demilitarize the country.

All this is part of the process by which the society will become the master of its history and which will lead to a free and independent Poland. ★

Rebuilding the structures of Solidarnosc

THE PPS considers that in the present crisis situation, when the workers' standard of living is dropping, rebuilding the factory structures of independent trade-unionism must be the principal task.

For this reason, we call on all the members and sympathizers of the PPS to support and join the factory structures of Solidarnosc that are being rebuilt, and in particular to set up Solidarnosc organizing committees in those enterprises in which they have not yet been established.

The PPS considers freezing of the activities of Solidarnosc's trade-union structures awaiting the results of the round-table discussions to be a grave error. We will only get what we win!

The Polish Socialist Party and all its members are unable to take part in the round-table discussions. This flows from the fact that the PPS does not recognize the constitution of the People's Republic of Poland, which is the judicial foundation of the post-Stalinist form of government. ★

The closure of the Gdansk shipyards

WHAT HAS happened in Gdansk? On October 29, the Polish government announced the closure of the Lenin shipyard on the grounds that it was unprofitable. For at least two years, shutting down badly managed enterprises has been talked about in connection with the schemes for reforming the economy. A list was drawn up of factories that were were to be liquidated outright. The Gdansk shipyards were on it, but nowhere near the top.

JOZEF PINIOR

IT SEEMED that there was nothing concrete in this talk, that a decision by the government on such measures was still a long way down the road. Solidarnosc had tended rather to push the government to take a more radical line in this area, and we were endlessly inundated by naive free-enterprise capitalist arguments about the need for liquidating the big enterprises.

Then it happened. Three days before Margaret Thatcher's arrival in Poland, Rakowski did what the British prime minister did in Glasgow a few years ago. Everyone was shocked. Of course, the closure of the shipyard was primarily political — it was a provocation by the authorities against the opposition that had agreed to take part in the round-table talks.

The Solidarnosc leaders decided to discuss with those who bore the political responsibility for the destruction of the union. And, lo and behold, instead of getting the union legalized, they got a blow dealt to the symbol of Solidarnosc, to those workers

who had never abandoned them. The regime had upped the ante.

The price that the union is paying for the round-table gets higher every day. But, at the same time, the center of the opposition does not have an alternative, one that would accept the breaking off of the round-table negotiations, for example. In the National Executive Commission of Solidarnosc there is no alternative policy capable of laying the foundations for a defense of the shipyards.

Polish trade-union leaders forgotten their roots

This is precisely the source of the disarray of the present leaders of Solidarnosc, who for some time have been dazzled by the resources of the capitalism of the 1980s, of which Margaret Thatcher is the most eloquent symbol. In this regard, the Polish trade-union leaders have forgotten their roots — they have been unable to see what the Thatcher period represents for British trade-unionists and in particular for the workers' movement.

Rakowski has given these Solidarnosc leaders a lesson in modernism. In one decision, he has made clear what it means to subordinate labor to capital, and how much humiliation and moral poverty the modernist model of economic development holds out for the workers' movement.

Fascination with the efficiency of this model and a total incomprehension of its costs, above all the abandonment in practice of the self-management alternative that emerged so clearly during the period when Solidarnosc was legal, has led the leaders of the union into a blind alley.

If they respond seriously to the closure of the Gdansk shipyards —and the only choice is breaking off the round-table negotiations and staging strikes in some form — they will have to reject the whole tactic that they have been following in recent months. If they fail to respond seriously, their strategy of compromise with the *nomenklatura* will go beyond the point acceptable to a large part of the society.

The workers who have been thrown on the street in Gdansk will not be prepared to accept such a reform. The movement will have to face problems for which it is in no way prepared.

Unfortunately, the Polish government seems to have a much more determined political leadership and a much clearer strategy than Solidarnosc.

In Wroclaw, the trams on Line No. 0 have been decorated with publicity posters for the Pewex [hard currency] stores — advertisements for quality cigarettes on a cloudy blue background, plus the addresses where all this can be bought in dollars. The technicolor world, the modernity they all dream of.

I happened to take one of these trams from Grundwaldzki Square to the station. I had to catch a train, so I was in a hurry. The fuses blew; the driver had to change them at every stop, which of course slowed everything down. The passengers started to get impatient when the doors got jammed in the first car. They had to go out through the driver's small door. The people waiting at the stops insulted the driver, thinking that the closed doors were a sign of his ill-will. Tempers rose, and the trip became a nightmare.

The Solidarnosc leaders have to ask themselves the question whether they may not be in such a tram. A cloudy-blue tram going nowhere. ★

"Comrade" capitalist

WHO TOOK the responsibility for liquidating the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, cradle of Solidarnosc and bastion of the Polish workers' struggle?

"I own 20 per cent of the capital of the Lavril enterprise, which is currently worth 800 million zlotys and $200,000," the new Polish minister of industry, Mieczyslaw Wilczek, stated in proposing his candidacy for the post. This capitalist "comrade" — because like any successful Polish operator, Wilczek is also a member of the PZPR — symbolizes the aspirations of a number of Polish bureaucrats. The inspiration of his ideology becomes much more a digest of the writings of the Chicago Boys than the Short History of the CPSU.

We might quote a few phrases from his speech to the parliament. "I want to protest against the strangling of the enterprises by the tax office...The weak enterprises should be allowed to die, in fact some of them should be put out of their misery....We have to open up the way for foreign capital....I am going to demand an increase in the salaries of managerial and technical professionals. How can you expect workers to respect engineers who earn 50 per cent less than they?...There is no other initiative but private initiative...No entrepreneur can be happy about having strong unions. Me neither." ★

SOLIDARNOŚĆ

"Nurses don't think that the movement is over"

INDUSTRIAL action has been taking the health sector by storm in Europe, the latest example being the recent nurses' strike in France. The strike, which lasted several weeks, mobilized enormous numbers.

Taking their cue from the rail strike earlier this year and the student struggles of the winter of 1986, nurses further extended the use of the innovative and independent coordinating structure pioneered in those earlier fightbacks.

Problems raised by the nurses' strike include how to relate to the other categories of health workers, the role played by trade unions and negotiations with the government, and what the next stage of struggle will be. The strike concluded with three of the major trade-union federations in France signing accords with the government. Nurses, only five per cent of whom are members of any union, feel bitterly betrayed.

Gaëlle Lucy and Marc Renard interviewed three of the strikers on November 7 in Paris.

Marie-Claude Jeannot is a laboratory technician in the public health service, and a member of the medical-technical Coordinating Committee.

Danièle Abramovici is a nurse in the public health service, and member of the National Bureau of the National Nurses' Coordinating Committee.

Patrick Alloux is a hospital worker at the Evry hospital, member of the Nurses' Aides and Hospital Trainees' Coordinating Committee, and a member of the LCR (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International).

HOW DID the nurses' strike come into being? Why now?

PA: This is a sector which hasn't gone through major social struggles, and which also did not experience May '68. The current explosion of struggles can therefore be seen as a kind of "delayed May '68" in the health sector. At Evry hospital, we handed out information on the nurses' struggle in Britain, which struck a real chord.

On March 25, the nurses' professional organization, UNASIIF (the National Union of Nurses' Associations), called a rally in front of the Ministry of Health which drew 3,000 people. Some hospitals were represented, and we found it possible to gather together and form a coordinating body. That's how the coordinating committees came into being. The radicalization at Evry hospital was influenced by an earlier dispute at the SNECMA industrial plant. The hospital was nearby this firm, and many nurses either had friends or relatives who worked there. The demand for a 1,500FF (about $250) raise to "catch up" with inflation seemed natural to the nurses. This radicalization at Evry also made a mark on the movement since it was here that the first departmental coordination was set up.

DA: The ideological dimension of this conflict should be highlighted, as it is basically a women's struggle. The social upheaval of nurses is also a revolt against everything represented by the history of the job. The profession was started by nuns doing "good works". This also explains the weight of a particular ideology on this milieu — charity, devotion, a calling, the do-

cile execution of any doctor's orders or whims and so on. So this is a break with what hospitals have been like for decades. That's why you see slogans like *Ni bonnes, ni nonnes, ni connes* ("Neither maids, nuns, nor fools") at demonstrations.

The winter 1986 student movement has also had a lot of influence, even on structural forms and self-organization. The arrival of young people in hospitals was a turning point. Already on March 25 nurses' schools went into action around UNASIIF's call. All these young people, many of whom are not in unions, weren't affected by the weight of tradition in the way that their elders were.

■ Did the May '88 elections, with the triumph of a left government, play any role in this radicalization?

DA: Not really, because the first mobilizations began under a right-wing government. You have to remember that the anesthetists' struggles had been going on for over 18 months, affecting the whole sector. For the other serious reason for the movement, you have to look at the decline in the numbers of health workers in the last five years. We no longer have the time to stop and talk to patients, to catch our breath or rest, to go on vacation even. The catalyst for the movement was the decree that downgraded the nursing profession.

PA: Two things are intertwined. Technological change in the sector, along with the arrival of new work-methods that cause nurses to be more and more technical and to have fewer and fewer personal links with the patients. Today, this role is filled by nurses' aides. In fact, part of nursing training and even one of the motivations for choosing the profession is this aspect of relating to sick people. The second element was the fact that people are fed up with continuing austerity policies.

■ You spoke about changing work methods. What have these changes in the health system been in the last few years, and how have they affected the position of nurses?

DA: In the beginning nurses only cared for the sick, but little by little they began to do things like take blood which formerly only doctors did. So they began to have more technical tasks and need more training. The state diploma for nurses is only twenty years old. Earlier, no qualification or diploma was required for nurses. Those who started off as nurses' aides could become nurses. Today almost everyone has a *baccalaureat* (the diploma awarded after successfully passing one of a set series of in-depth examinations after secondary school) and is becoming more and more technical. The machines have also evolved. They are more complex; you have to know how to use them; and we also need more computer skills now than before.

■ So the status and wages no longer correspond to the qualifications acquired?

DA: Qualifications are higher, but the wages have stayed the same. There has been no reevaluation. The ideology of charitable works is responsible: it is indecent to talk about money when it concerns the health of patients, isn't it...

■ Has the idea that nurses' wages are only "pin money", since 92% of them are women, helped to make it possible to impose such a low wage rate?

DA: That's the only way to explain why the people who did this job did it for only 6,000 francs (about $950) a month. Let's not forget that originally, this was a Catholic milieu conditioned by the weight of religion, the family and so on. Many nurses were married to doctors, and many became nurses in order to marry doctors. But that is no longer the case with the arrival of young women in hospitals. They question everything. Forget about cleaning and "pin money," forget about charity — this is their job. Forget about them accepting low wages because they've studied and they're skilled. It's a new generation that will no longer accept bad working conditions in the name of "dedication".

■ Is it also the product of the women's movement of the 1960s?

M-CJ: Of course, even if explicit references to feminism are not always present. Many young women say "either we win some of our demands, which will improve our working conditions, or we quit doing this job. We love our work, but there is no reason to have to choose between raising kids at home or working in conditions like that." The average age of those who are active in the movement or the leadership is around thirty. So, there are nurses who have worked several years, and some young recent graduates.

DA: The men who are in the leadership, especially those with trade union experience obviously find it easier than us to speak, intervene in discussions, debate and so on. But two of the male nurses in the Coordinating Committee have a certain understanding of what it is like for women, and they have helped us to overcome this. They have pushed us some to make us speak. It's true we're not used to it! Even me, and I'm a union activist, I don't speak a lot.

This is changing, but it's not yet the revolution! We're not really used to constructing a speech, and we tend to leave speaking to the men, especially if they articulate what we're thinking in a more organized way. On the other hand, when there are sexist remarks, we put them in their place.

There is a real awakening of a feminist consciousness in the profession. It is an underground process that we are not in control of but which will have a lot of effects later. Many women are beginning to question their relationships. It's the first time in many relationships that the woman is out fighting while the husband is home taking care of the kids...and there are husbands who've had a hard time accepting this. But now that women have seen that it is possible, they won't go back.

■ How did the Coordinating Committee come together? How is it structured?

PA: About twenty establishments met after the March 25 demonstration, and five people were designated to make up a bureau of what later became the regional coordinating committee for the Ile de France [Paris region]. The June 14 Coordinating Committee meeting brought together 80 hospitals in the Paris region.

DA: It was this group which called the first regional demonstration on September 29, asking those outside of Paris to hold local demonstrations and to build for the September 29 mobilization. Afterwards we continued to work through this structure, with a Paris bureau, and then a national one. The bureau thinks about the forms of actions and proposes them, but everything has always been, and will continue to be, decided by the coordinating committees, first locally, then in the regions with representatives from all the hospitals, and now at the national level via regional delegates.

■ But how do the coordinating committees function at the local level. Are decisions taken by general assemblies?

DA: Yes, there are general assemblies at the hospitals, which in turn elect delegates to regional or national coordinating committees.

■ How do the other categories in the health sector organize?

PA: Nurses' aides are a bit of a special case. Numerically, this is the largest category in the hospital system, because there are about 480,000 nurses' aides and hospital trainees. As with nurses, they are about 92% women. This group entered the struggle following the example of the nurses. Their coordinating committee was formed on September 29 after the first nurses' demonstration. Today there are 220 collectives and a national bureau.

Whatever comes out of the nurses' movement, the struggle will continue among the nurses' aides because nothing has been settled for them. Their place in terms of the restructuring and standardizing occurring at the European level has not been defined at all. No clarification as to the future of the profession; no real national degree, only a certificate of qualification. What's more, this profession is more often confronted on a day-to-day basis with sickness, death, insanity and suffering, because it is this category that most commonly takes care of old people until their death in retirement homes for example.

Nurses' aides will undoubtedly adopt more radical forms of struggle than the nurses. They are more closely linked to the tradition of the workers' movement, and unionization is more common among them than among the nurses. And above all, this

is the category that is the most oppressed and has the longest tradition of struggle.

M-CJ: As concerns the paramedical profession, physical therapists, laboratory and x-ray technicians and so on, their organization is older. There has been a functioning coordinating committee of physiotherapists for two years now. The lab and x-ray technicians have come together and formed a medical-technical coordinating committee which became national a week ago. We also function through general assemblies and a national bureau.

In our category, we've also faced changes in working conditions: much specialization, adaptation to new techniques, new apparatuses, thus higher qualifications which aren't taken into consideration in our wages.

■ The widespread fragmentation is therefore quite important, but what links are there between the coordinating committees of these different categories?

DA: Links are pretty difficult to establish, because the nurses' were sure at the beginning that given the breadth of their movement, they could win all of their demands alone and they didn't see any need to ally themselves with the other categories. So it was rather hard to get across the idea that other coordinating committees had the right to exist, and that we could do things together while retaining an independent profile as nurses. This is changing, but only slowly because some nurses think it would be better to act alone.

PA: This sector is being cut to the bone by capitalist restructuring, and in each category a reappraisal of professional identity is taking place. The fragmentation we're seeing here is somewhat similar to what we saw in the workers' movement at the turn of the century. Each category is also fighting for its professional identity in this restructuring.

The fight around status waged by the nurses and the struggles of the medical-technical corps or medical secretaries is headed in the same direction. One part of the personnel wants to unify the movement. But in the first stages, it is undoubtedly necessary for all of these sectors to go through the experience of this form of struggle, even if this means failure at the beginning, in order to understand the limits of that sort of struggle. But nothing is settled, and the nurses' struggle as well as those of other categories will get going again.

■ The level of union membership is very low throughout this sector. How are union activists received?

DA: Not only is the percentage of unionization tiny — 5% — but anti-union sentiments are widespread among nurses. It is true that unions have hardly displayed their advantages in health. That said; I am in a union and I came onto the Coordinating Committee as a union militant. And the Coordinating Committee quite rightly calls itself "union, non-union — associated, non-associated".

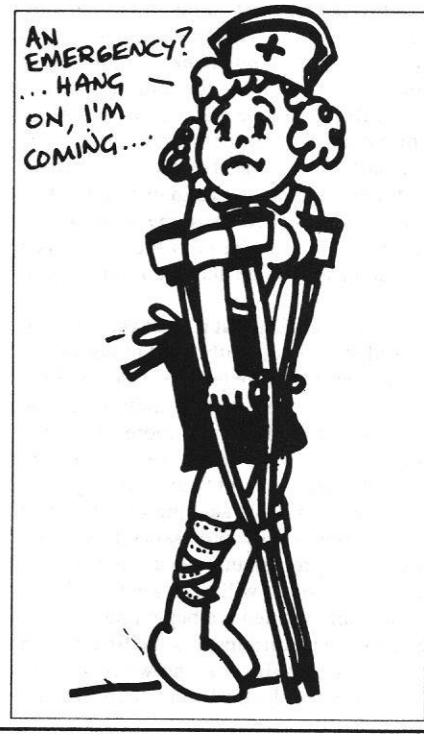
Those among us who are in unions have proved through practice that being in a union brings something to the movement. Especially since we met in the headquarters of a regional union in the CFDT (Democratic Confederation of French Workers) and they lent us their whole infrastructure for putting out leaflets and so on.

People were able to see that unions had their use. But the majority of nurses remained quite skeptical and distant in relation to unions. Fear of manipulation is prevalent.

■ What are the relations like with the major groups of affiliated trade unions?

DA: Not great, that's for sure! Three of the big union organizations, the CFDT, the CFTC (French Confederation of Christian Workers) and FO (Workers' Force) never wanted us to participate in negotiations at the same time as them. Moreover, they signed the accord with the minister of health, Claude Evin, despite the call not to form the Coordinating Committee, which represents the vast majority of nurses.

The CGT (General Workers' Confederation) refused to sign the accord. It must have understood that this is a movement that would go far and could be useful to it. The CGT therefore tried to worm its way into the movement. But I don't think it has really allowed itself to have a real participation. In the general assemblies, the CGT members only tried to get the slogans of their own unions passed at all cost without participating in the real debate. There has also been some sheer clumsiness on their part. For example, on the November 3 demonstration Henri Krasucki (general secretary of the CGT) tried to march at the head of the contingents, although it was the Coordinating Committee that initiated this demonstration. He was therefore called to order by the nurses who forced him back to his place, at the very end of the march!



■ How did negotiations with the government unfold?

M-CJ: At the start of the movement, Evin was very firm. The day of the first demonstration, he declared that there was no question of meeting the Coordinating Committee and recognizing it as the leadership of the movement, refusing to see the breadth of the movement. One week later, he had to retreat and meet with the Coordinating Committee. Otherwise it would have been unacceptable to the nurses that he meet and negotiate with the unions when the Coordinating Committee has led the movement! However the union organizations also did their best, hand in hand with the government, to make sure that the Coordinating Committee was not associated with the negotiations.

DA: No one wanted to recognize us, and the unions, apart from the CGT, were adamant that we not be considered and recognized as speakers and allowed to participate in the negotiations. We decided to send a delegation to go and pick up the government's proposals and come back to the rank and file, as that was where these decisions should be made. This method really bothered the government, undoubtedly it didn't fit in with the way it has worked with the unions.

We got the impression that we were being taken for a ride by the government, which heard us out without taking any account of our demands. The most flagrant example of the government's incomprehension is the attitude of Prime Minister Michel Rocard, who proposed that nurses would have access to the medical profession after twenty years on the job...that's the least of our worries!

PA: There were two phases, at the beginning, the government didn't believe that the movement could continue to grow in strength. Taking its cue from Mitterrand's approach at the beginning when he assured the nurses of his compassion and understanding, the government thought that the whole thing would wind down after the first demonstration.

The government's attitude changed when the rolling strike was called. It realized then that this was a real social conflict to be managed.

M-CJ: October 3 came to mark the real turning point in the dispute. The size of the demonstration gave not only the nurses but also the other categories in the Health Sector a real boost. But from another point of view; I got the impression that until then; the nurses thought they were going to win easily, because the movement was strong, it had the population's support, and it was a "nice" movement. The government, moreover, also displayed a condescending sympathy towards the movement, and believed it could get clear by negotiating with the un-

ions. Rocard was telling us, "You've had your fun, now get back in line." That was yet another underestimation of the movement.

PA: Starting from then, Rocard took the matter in hand and met the Coordinating Committee at 3:00 in the morning. No doubt his idea was to have an overnight negotiating session at Matignon [the seat of executive government in France] and "solve the problem". But he had nothing to offer!

■ Wasn't not extending the struggle to the other categories one of the weaknesses of the movement?

M-CJ: It was really a problem after October 13. If there had been a real willingness on the part of the nurses to extend the movement and to work with the other categories, if there had been a clear call around this, the movement could have taken a different turn after October 13, especially as other categories were all in motion then.

PA: After October 13, the government was also afraid that the movement would spill over into the rest of the public sector. From that point on, it did not hesitate to rely on classic methods, trying to divide the Coordinating Committee and split the movement by sending general information files to the press to expose the "Trotskyist plot", to start a press campaign saying that the LCR was manipulating the nurses.

■ How did nurses react to these accusations?

DA: The great majority of nurses weren't fooled. These theories of "Trotskyist plots" came to light when the government didn't want to give up any ground and people understood that there was a plot...by the government.

M-CJ: I think that when the press says things like that, women get the idea that they're being taken for idiots. They elected a bureau, they are always discussing orientations, they have confidence in the people they elected, they know they are in control of their movement...and then the press tells them that they're being manipulated.

DA: Within the Coordinating Committee, certain people tried to settle scores with members of the LCR [Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire]. Pascal Diaz who is a member of the LCR and one of the spokespersons of the Coordinating Committee made a statement that was quite clear, saying, "I don't care if the Ligue is accused, but in that case everyone must give their political identity." This made even the most recalcitrant shut up, because if the comrades from the LCR have never hidden their political leanings, that's not true of everyone. However, this reopened the debate over the inter-category liaison committee. Those who were against enlarging the struggle to include other categories through such committees attacked members of the LCR, saying, "What do you have up your sleeve? You want to pull off something uniting the categories.

That's not in your mandate," and so on.

PA: A minority in the Coordinating Committee was opposed to this extension and tried to hinder it in any way they could. These are the same people who have been pushing for the acceptance of joint discussion commissions with the ministry, and for us to have almost permanent links with it.

■ How can the movement organize itself for the long term? What will be its structures now? What will become of the coordinating committees?

DA: The National Coordinating Committee that met the day before yesterday, on November 5, was very clear. There were two proposals on the floor, one for creating an independent union, and one for continuing the Coordinating Committee in the form of a legal association. The latter proposal was adopted with 268 for; 22 against, and 97 abstentions. The nurses insist on this structural form. But as to whether the local bodies will stay in place, it's difficult to say.

PA: On the one hand, nurses don't think that the movement is over, and therefore don't want to get rid of the Coordinating Committee as a tool, on the other, there is an understanding that the sector has to arm itself with an instrument other than the traditional union organizations. The latter are seriously discredited by their divisions, their inefficiency, their impasse, and because they signed the accord with the government, in spite of the wishes of the nurses. This is reflected in the vote around setting up an independent union, which received 31 votes in favor, 135 against, and 224 abstentions.

M-CJ: Keeping the Coordinating Committee is doubly justified: the movement isn't finished, not one problem has been solved and the struggle continues. It is undoubtedly the first time that at the end of such an extensive strike, the movement was still able to turn out 40,000 people in the streets, as was the case on November 3! Besides, the Coordinating Committee neither betrayed nor deceived us during the course of the movement. It was tested, showed its strength and its ability to mobilize.

■ This tool must also help get beyond the fragmentation into categories. How are discussions around this developing?

PA: It's one thing to have 100,000 in the streets, but another to find yourself, after weeks of dispute having gained nothing. So, there is a reaction of turning toward the other categories. In fact, a section of the nurses has understood now that they cannot achieve anything on their own. Thus, I think the situation is partially beginning to open up...

DA: In any case, a balance sheet of the movement must be drawn up, of its limitations and weaknesses. It would certainly be simplistic to say that if we had broadened the movement to include the other categories, we would have surely won. But many nurses will now ask themselves why we didn't win, although we all came out.

■ But were there demands that could have been called narrowly professional?

DA: No! Everyone always said, "the others can structure themselves too, but outside of us, apart from us." We confined ourselves to taking up nurses' demands and saying that each category should take up their own.

M-CJ: Nurses took the downgrading of their status badly, and were infuriated by the gap between their $950 monthly wage and their qualifications. But if you confine yourself to defending wage demands based only on this injustice, then you leave the other categories out, even though paramedics have the same level of studies and qualifications.

■ Given the unification projects around status in terms of 1992 Single Europe Act, do you think we can look forward to a Europe-wide struggle in defence of health services?

DA: Undoubtedly it's necessary, but very difficult. Nurses are in struggle all over Europe, but demands don't always correspond. Spanish nurses, for example, went on strike because *baccalaureat*-level studies were going to be made a requirement.

In France, the movement also took off because we were afraid that, with the standardization of 1992, we would see our work devalued. So it's difficult to standardize struggles! But we have to talk about it. We received messages of solidarity from everywhere in Europe, and the Coordinating Committee has voted to organize an international May Day event for nurses in 1989. ★

IT IS DIFFICULT to exaggerate the impact of this result. The SNP increased its share of the vote to 48% from 10% in the 1987 general election, while Labour fell to 36% from 65%. At least one-third of Labour voters switched to the SNP, with many more not voting.

Suddenly, Labour feels insecure in its Scottish strongholds. Until last week, Labour held 50 out of 72 seats in Scotland and the SNP only 3. If the Govan swing is repeated elsewhere, all Labour's seats in Scotland would fall to the SNP.

The result also threatens the Labour leadership's strategy for winning the next general election. Labour leader Neil Kinnock has concentrated on winning the so-called yuppie vote in the south of England. To this end, he has moved his policies to the right in search of "new realism". He has particularly opposed any attempt to have Labour back extra-parliamentary or illegal action. He has cynically derided calls for mass action around the miners, local government or the poll tax. The underlying assumption is that Labour's core vote is safe: there is no threat to the left.

The SNP result changed all that. The SNP campaigns for a nuclear-free Scotland, Scotland out of NATO and a campaign for non-payment of the poll tax. On all these issues, it is to the left of Labour. Indeed, the SNP has been taken over by ex-Labour politicians, and generally portrays itself as a "socialist party", at least in central Scotland. Labour can no longer rely on Scottish seats, and without these it cannot form a British government.

Inquiries set up to study Labour's defeat

The response to Govan was immediate. Several Scottish members of parliament (MPs) blamed Labour's leadership for ignoring Scottish issues. They are demanding a more vigorous campaign from Labour in Scotland against the Tories. Neil Kinnock has set up an inquiry into the debacle, and the Scottish executive of the Labour Party has set up its own. It is likely that these two inquiries will reach different conclusions. One thing is clear: the major factor behind the SNP's victory and Labour's dilemma has been the poll tax. Indeed, the SNP's title on the ballot papers was "Scottish National Party, No Poll Tax".

Just before the June 1987 general election, a piece of legislation passed virtually unnoticed through parliament. It was called the "Community charge legislation: Scotland", popularly known as the poll tax. This new tax, which replaces previous local property or rates taxes, was to be introduced in Scotland in April 1989, one year ahead of its introduction into England and Wales. During the election campaign, all the parties in Scotland, except the Tories, opposed this tax. In the last general election, the Tories got only 24% of the vote and 10 out of 72 seats in Scotland (see *IV* 124). Because they hold the overall majority of seats in England, the Tories have persisted in imposing this tax against the wishes of 76% of Scots. This fact led many in the Labour Party to argue that the Tories had no mandate to impose the poll tax, and that Labour should vigorously oppose it.

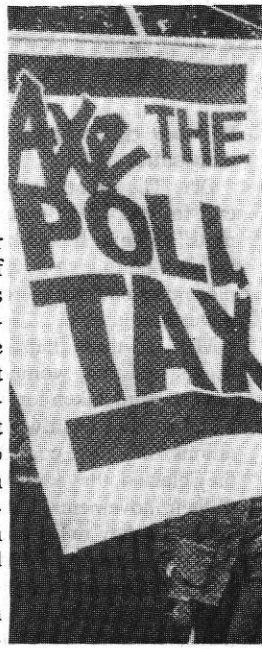
A devastating effect on poor families

The poll tax is a flat-rate tax on all adults irrespective of income. Only the very poorest will receive any rebate, and even they must pay a minimum of 20%, or around £60 (about $110) per head. The tax will have a devastating effect on poor families, who may find their tax bill increased several times. Very wealthy families will gain thousands of pounds. Because each individual is liable for payment, huge data banks have been created containing everybody's name and address. Anyone changing address must from now on notify the government. Evasion from registering could result in fines of thousands of pounds. Each individual will have a unique reference number — in effect a national identity system is being introduced. The registrars can search virtually any existing data banks to look for evasions or falsifications. Such violations of civil liberty are unprecedented in Britain in peacetime.

Poll taxes have an unfortunate history in Britain. It was a poll tax that provoked the English Peasants' Revolt of 1381, several ministers being lynched before the rebellion was suppressed. The tax was subsequently repealed. No such tax has been imposed in Britain in recent centuries. The fact that such a tax is fairly high and not graduated makes it a unique tax in the modern world. The uniquely regressive nature of the tax led church leaders to denounce it as "immoral" and "wicked". The SNP claim it is illegal under the 1707 Treaty of Union with England. The Tories have no mandate to impose it, and up to 85% of Scots oppose the tax. The stage seems set for a major climb-down by the government or a mass campaign against the poll tax.

Given that they control local government in Scotland and have the majority of MPs, the Labour Party was expected to lead this fight. Their immediate reaction was inertia and delay. No guidance was given to local government, and so individual councils set up registration machinery. Eventually, local councils were told by Labour not to break the law, in other words, "please do administer the tax".

Faced with this, local government trade-unions cooperated with the registration machinery. By September 1987, the opportunity to block the tax administratively had been lost. Labour set up a "Stop It" campaign in October 1987, which was backed by the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC), but no tactics for stopping the tax were put forward. Meanwhile, the SNP launched its own campaign, and hinted that they would call for non-payment of the tax. This was immediately denounced by the Labour leaders. It very quickly became clear that Labour hoped to block the English legislation in parliament, and when this failed they had no further tactics.



At the March 1988 Scottish conference of the Labour Party, the key debate was on non-payment of the tax. Labour leaders feared that they would lose the vote if they simply said "pay". Under pressure from the STUC, they produced a package of immediate campaigning and a recall conference in the autumn. Local committees opposed to the poll tax sprang up in many districts. Leaflets and publicity about the tax provoked a ready response, and a non-registration campaign was started. In many localities, two committees existed: one committed to non-payment and another to other forms of action.

The fines for non-registration are crippling in their impact: £50 for initial non-registration; £250 a month thereafter. These

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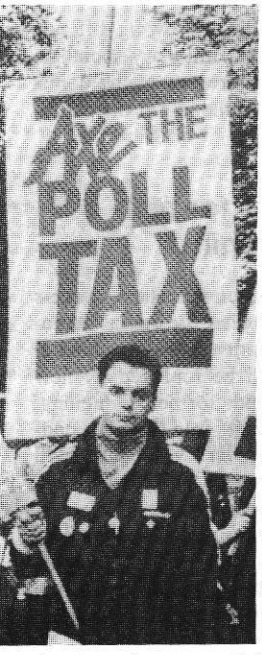


fines may be imposed even if the information has been found elsewhere, and there is no limit to the fines that can eventually be levied. Non-payment of fines can end in prison sentences. But despite all this, 50% of Scottish people had not registered by the set deadline. The leaders of all the campaigns agreed that non-registration was not the real issue, and all bar a token few were then asked to register, but many continued to refuse.

The only way left to oppose the tax was a campaign for non-payment. At its party conference, the SNP endorsed non-payment and called for 100,000 Scots to pledge not to pay. Fourteen Labour MPs also said they would not pay their poll tax, including some confirmed Kinnock supporters such as Robin Cook. The Campaign for a Scottish Assembly called for "Committees of 100" to be set up, each containing prominent Scots who had pledged not to pay.

In fact, the penalties for non-payment are less than for non-registration, this being a civil offence and not a breach of criminal law. The only penalty after being taken to court is a 10% surcharge, plus a handling charge and legal fees. This amounts to around £100 on top of a £300 average tax. Around 20% of the population would be better off by paying the fine than they were under the old rates system.

The SNP and Labour's left-wing called for a "Can Pay — Won't Pay" campaign for people in this 20% to pledge non-payment. The poorest section of the population cannot pay in any case. It is estimated that if 20,000 people refuse to pay, then this could jam up the legal machinery and force the government to respond.

Widespread discontent with Tory rule

At the Labour Party's recall conference in September this year in Govan, a queer split opened up over what to do. Prior to the conference, the Scottish executive voted by only 16-13 against non-payment. A majority of delegates favoured the mass non-payment campaign, but the Labour leaders called for the ending of the campaign, arguing that they could not break the law. The majority of trade unions, dominated by London-based executives, backed the leadership and defeated the non-payment resolution. The message from the Govan conference was clear: the SNP says "don't pay", Labour says "pay". This was understood by the people of Govan, who voted in the SNP two months later.

However, it would be wrong to portray the SNP as winning the by-election purely because of its stance on the poll tax. There is a much wider frustration over the way the Tories rule Scotland. Thatcher has 20% of Scottish support and only 15% of Scottish MPs, and yet unlimited power over Scotland. Government policy on local government, housing and education are altering what were viewed as distinctly Scottish institutions in ways opposed by Scots. The government has shut down the Scottish Grand Committee, a forum for Scottish law, because there are not sufficient Scottish Tory MPs to serve on it. Foreign and English multinationals make arbitrary decisions without Scottish MPs having any control.

Unemployment is significantly higher than in most of England. Support for devolution, a Scottish Assembly in Edinburgh, has been a steady 80% or so for several years. Around 30% of the population want complete separation from England, a figure that has almost doubled since 1987.

The Labour Party in Scotland backed devolution in the mid-1970s, and is formally committee to a Scottish Assembly with strong economic powers. But Neil Kinnock is totally opposed to separation, and is perceived as luke-warm on devolution. Since the June 1987 general election, voters have been looking to Labour's 50 MPs to protect them from Thatcher. Kinnock and his Scottish backers vigorously opposed extra-parliamentary action. In consequence they have failed, and have been seen to have failed, to in any way hinder the Tories. The MPs became popularly known as the "Feeble Fifty". The result has been an increase in SNP support from 14% at the general election to around 25% now over all of Scotland.

Many in the Labour Party and STUC recognize the need for a firmer stance against the Tories in Scotland. They realize that only in this way can they maintain Labour's support. They recognize also that this runs counter to Kinnock's policy for winning English votes, but are willing to accept the consequences of diminished prospects for the Labour majority in London.

Scottish Labour Action, a left nationalist group in the Labour Party, argued for Labour to use its Scottish MPs to set up a Scottish Assembly after the next election even if the Tories win in Britain. They also argue for non-payment of the poll tax and making the Labour Party in Scotland autonomous from London. These moves are widely supported by socialists in the LP.

A Constitutional Convention has been established to draft a constitution for a Scottish parliament, and then to set it up. This Convention may also act as an interim parliament. A referendum is likely, although it will be organized independently of the government. All parties, except the Tories, will participate in the Convention. The national question in Scotland is firmly at the centre of the political agenda. It is perceived as being perhaps the only weapon that could be effective against Thatcherism.

Labour's parliamentary cretinism

The whole question of how independence could be achieved, and the sort of policies that could be adopted by an Assembly, are the subject of debate within the LP. Socialists have a major opening to discuss political strategy. The SNP, meanwhile, is campaigning for an independent Scotland within the European Community. A recent poll gives 54% support for this. This formula will structure the debate unless Labour quickly poses an alternative.

Labour has been thrown into turmoil by these events. It can bury its head, call the Govan result a fluke and watch its supporters turn to the SNP. Alternatively, it can embrace a non-payment campaign and other extra-parliamentary action, and commit itself to setting up a Scottish parliament and wresting economic power from the Tories and their backers.

Labour in Scotland is polarizing around these alternatives. Each of them has major risks: to ignore Govan and the poll tax may doom Labour to permanent opposition and loss of its base; the other course requires open discussion of tactics and a break from parliamentary cretinism. ★

Right-wing parties rebuffed in elections

THE BOURGEOIS parties were rebuffed in the September 18 parliamentary elections, but the social democrats also lost votes. Unexpectedly, the Communist Party topped the 4% threshold and stayed in parliament. The Environment Party broke into parliament, with 20 seats. Overall the bourgeois parties got 152 votes, the social democrats 157, the CP 21. The social democrats lost two seats and the CP gained two.

The following editorial from *Internationalen*, the paper of the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International, assesses these results.

AN OVERWHELMING majority of the Swedish people said a firm no to privatization of the public services, tax reform in favor of high-income strata and to a state of more unregulated capitalism. The wave of right-wing enthusiasm that started to break in the last election has now ebbed.

Some former right-wing voters undoubtedly contributed to the 50,000 new votes for the Center Party [a liberal bourgeois party but with a more social liberal and "green" profile]. This year it has been Center leader Olaf Johansson who has assumed the role of the wet among the bourgeois politicians.

The social democracy lost nearly 200,000 votes. It seems that the tendency in the previous election of decreasing support from workers and those on low-incomes was reinforced. Hundreds of thousands of working-class voters expressed their lack of confidence in the social-democratic policy, simply by staying home. The 900,000 abstentions — every fourth voter in many working-class and immigrant neighborhoods — says something about the scope of this discontent.

The Moderates, People's Party and the social democrats — the parties that more any others represent the old alternatives — together lost more than half a million voters. Half of these abstained, and the other half supported parties that put themselves forward as opposing the establishment's policy. The lion's share of the latter went to the Environment Party, which gained 200,000 votes.

Media campaign against environmentalists

The Environment Party has only a small number of members. The party is not even the backbone of the environmentalist movement. For a long time, the "greens" were ignored or ridiculed by the mass media and the old parties. The party had nowhere near the same possibilities to put forward its views as the established parliamentary parties. The week before the election, a full-scale campaign was unleashed in the mass media to discredit its representatives.

Nonetheless, the Environmental Party overcame the obstacles and wrecked the party system that has predominated in Sweden since the war. The reason was that by making some gains in the municipalities in the 1985 elections, the Environmental Party managed to make its way into the public opinion polls and mass media. This small crack in the facade of the old party system, this small glimpse of something new, was sufficient for hundreds of thousands of people to abandon the established parties.

The encouraging thing about this year's election is that many hundreds of thousands of people have not looked to the right wing for something new. The result of the referendum in the town of Sjöbo [where an anti-immigrant proposition won] on the other hand gives a disturbing picture of other forces that are also trying to channel the discontent.

Instead the disgust over the financial schemes of the right wing and social-democratic policy has given rise to a leftward trend. But this has not taken the form first and foremost of a stronger left political alternative. There is no question of belittling the gains of the VPK [Communist Party]. But everyone knows that a tactical vote, especially when the VPK was in danger of being pushed out of parliament, played a very big role in the result. In day-to-day work, the party has seldom been so weak.

The leftward trend was expressed primarily in a move away from the capitalist profit ideal and in the revival of thinking about solidarity, caring and responsibility for human beings and the environment.

That is a very promising starting point for the future. All the various attempts to put people and lives ahead of profit can be given impetus by this changed mood. That also favors the development of a strong socialist workers' alternative. In this year's election, such an alternative could not make a breakthrough. The social-democratic left wing, above all represented by the alternative around the critical social democrats in Näsjö in Småland, did not manage to attract working-class voters.

The Stalinist parties, the APK [Workers' Communist Party, Moscow loyalists that took a part of the CP's traditional working-class base] and the KPMLr [a formation of ultra-left Maoist origin] were also largely bypassed by the electorate's revolt. They ended up registering many setbacks, along with some gains.

Nor was the Socialist Party able to channel the growing discontent. In fact, it lost part of its former protest voters to the Environment Party. In most cases, the party seems to have held its positions, but in some important areas there were strong gains.

With the perspective of growing difficulties for capitalist, revolutionary socialists in a number of cities represent the dominant political force to the left of the parliamentary parties.

Demands for belt-tightening

The coming recession will show workers even more clearly what the social democrats' policy represents. Promises about a "harvest time" will be replaced by new cutbacks and demands for belt-tightening. If the VPK sticks to its role as an appendage of the social democracy, the party will also inevitably be hit by the growing discontent with the government's policy.

Moreover, the Environment Party runs the risk of having to show its hand in its parliamentary work and not being able to capture the growing number of critical workers and youth.

In these conditions, a socialist workers' alternative is able to gain strength in everyday work and step into the growing breaches in the facade, and take a decisive step forward in the coming period. Through a socialist workers' offensive, it can transform these first experiences in day-to-day work into something new. ★

Internationalen

Veckotidning utgiven av Socialistiska Partiet, sektion av Fjärde Internationalen

A united Europe — but not for the bosses!

THE ONSET of austerity in 1985 in Greece has been very much linked to pressures from the EEC. The ruling Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement of Andreas Papandreou was brought to power by a mass radicalization, and the turn to austerity touched off a crisis in its circles, especially among its supporters in the labor movement. This is one reason why the discussion of the meaning of EEC membership is an important part of Greek political life.

Another major factor in PASOK's popularity during its rise to power was its nationalist stance, taking advantage of the anti-US and anti-NATO feeling aroused by Western imperialist support for the dictatorship of the colonels from 1967 to 1974.

The following analysis of the EEC question is from the August-September 1988 issue of *Marxistike Syspeirosi*, the theoretical journal of the Greek section of the Fourth International.

DIMITRIS KATSORIDES

AT THE BEGINNING of the nineteenth century, the productive forces developed by capitalism were already suffocating within national boundaries and in the bonds of individual ownership of the means of production. They were trying to expand the market, to leap over national borders and, ultimately, to achieve economic unification.

However, this contradiction of capitalism cannot be solved today by war, as happened with the first two world wars. An attempt is being made to solve it by means of agreement and negotiation. This is precisely the source of the dynamic of unification of the Common Market.

Especially today, when the international economic crisis is sharpening inter-imperialist competition, this process is forcing the bourgeois forces to step up their efforts to unify the Common Market in order to become more competitive with the United States and Japan.

The efforts at capitalist reconversion, in the conditions of economic decline, by means of such measures as closing unprofitable enterprises, introducing new technology, decreasing production of commodities for which demand is weak, speed-ups and so on are attempts to to restructure the world market, which mean redividing it.

This process is given even greater impetus by the decline of the US's role in the world economy, which is leading the EEC and Japan to challenge the hegemony the United States has enjoyed, and thus to entertain the ambition of becoming the dominant economic formations in a new international division of labor.

However, the unfavorable conjuncture internationally is sharpening inter-imperialist rivalries, bringing a resurgence of the protectionist tariffs that were on the decline in the period of capitalist prosperity. The international capitalist class has be careful. It fears such a return to protectionism, because it narrows the international market — as in the 1930s — and brings catastrophic consequences for the international economy

Nation states obstacles to real unification

The striking fact is that when protectionism expanded in the international market after the 1973 economic crisis, it did not develop very much among the EEC member countries. At least its structures held up. The basic reason for this is the interpenetration of their economies. In fact, a breakup of the EEC would hit the exports of all its member countries hard, as well as, naturally, the world market.

There is a serious obstacle that faces EEC countries with respect to achieving their unification. This obstacle is the role of the state.

In fact, a common market with a real meaning would be a new confederation of states, indeed a supranational federal state. And since, in the age of imperialism, the role of the state is very important for supporting the monopolies, the United States and Japan have an advantage in this respect over the pre-state structures of the EEC. In the world market, in these conditions, the Americans and the Japanese companies, which are based on states and united markets, are much stronger than every individual European imperialist power.

Meeting competition from the US and Japan

Thus, maintaining and strengthening the Common Market is seen by all the European companies as an essential material condition for being able to meet increasing American and Japanese competition. This logic gives rise to the effort being made by the member countries of the Community and the entire bourgeoisie to transform the EEC from a loose confederation of countries into a federal state.

However, although the EEC is not yet a unit, either economic or political, the international capitalist crisis is forcing all the bourgeois forces to step up their efforts for unification. From that flows the goal "for 1992." But it has to be said that this demand for unity is at the same time creating sharp rivalry. The situation, therefore, is a very peculiar one. On the one hand, there is propaganda for unification. On the other, there is a sharp rivalry over who is going to get the biggest slice of the Common Market pie.

European capitalists are sure of only one thing. It is that they are using the same methods to attack the workers' movement — privatizations, freezing wages, cutbacks of social gains, assaults on unions, speed-ups and so on. They know very well that only by attacking the workers' movement, by subjugating it, by defeating it, can they achieve unification. In fact, the only way to make the EEC more competitive with respect to the US and Japan is to get a tractable working-class movement that they can force to work to increase production and productivity.

Why is this happening? What is the reason for this whole bourgeois capitalist offensive? It is happening because in recent years European imperialists have fallen back in their race with American and Japanese imperialism. There has been an important deterioration of the position of European capitalism in the high-tech areas.

Alone, no EEC country can afford more than a second-rate technology. However, all the countries of the Common Market together, with their combined financial, technological and scientific forces — at least the most developed capitalist countries of Europe — can finally change the situation.

This is the source of the EEC educational programs (Erasmus, Comett, Esprit, and so on). Scientific personnel will be needed to carry out research and develop the technology for the Community to compete with the US and Japan, in order to meet the crisis successfully.

An explosion of national antagonisms

All these are the plans of the bourgeoisie, and therefore only one side of the coin. It is all conditional. The good intentions of some governments, some political personalities or entrepreneurs are not enough to unite Europe or, in the longer run, to create a supranational state.

The laws of the capitalist economy — the anarchy of production and the sharp competition that imposes these laws of motion of capitalism — are laying the bases for an explosion of national antagonisms, a return to which the bourgeois forces fear. They are preparing the way for protectionism, the threat of countries going bankrupt. Therefore, for the EEC the long-term economic decline means a long phase of crisis and doubt.

The igniting of national antagonisms on the world scale and in the Common Market by the explosion of an economic crisis such as the 1929 crash would bring catastrophic results to the member countries of the Community. Consequently, the most likely perspective for the Common Market is not breakup and disappearance, but an intermediate stage between a simple free-trade zone and a European bourgeois confederation. The idea of a supranational state appears, at least for the moment, to be a pipedream.

However, economic development is tied up with class struggle, and it is only from this standpoint that we should view the attempts to unify the EEC. The only correct class solution that can really create a united Europe is the establishment of a revolutionary workers' government that would nationalize big capital and establish an economy based on socialist planning, developed by the working people themselves.

Such a process, together with the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the countries of so-called actually existing "socialism," is the only way to open the road for a United Socialist States of Europe. This is the only sound alternative for today's divided Europe, which is facing a parallel crisis of capitalism in the West and of the bureaucracy in the East.

The anarchy and competition of capitalism in the West, like bureaucratic ossification in Eastern Europe, cannot offer the solution of a united Europe. This is something that can be achieved only by working people and socialism, and only from that standpoint can the EEC be correctly analyzed.

However, in the imperialist stage of capitalist development, the national state becomes an obstacle to the development of the productive forces. Therefore, in order for the system to develop and live, it is compelled to constantly widen its markets. The creation of the EEC was the result of this.

However, with the opening up of the economic borders of the EEC countries, sharp competition was unleashed between the companies and monopolies for the lion's share of the united European market. It was precisely this logic that created the terms for the adjustment of the national economies.

For the Greek economy such adjustment means bourgeois modernization, as for the other economies, and the need to become competitive within the EEC. The 1985 measures, the so-called incomes policy imposed by the PASOK government, was inspired by such a perspective of "adjusting" the Greek economy to the "new international conditions of competition."

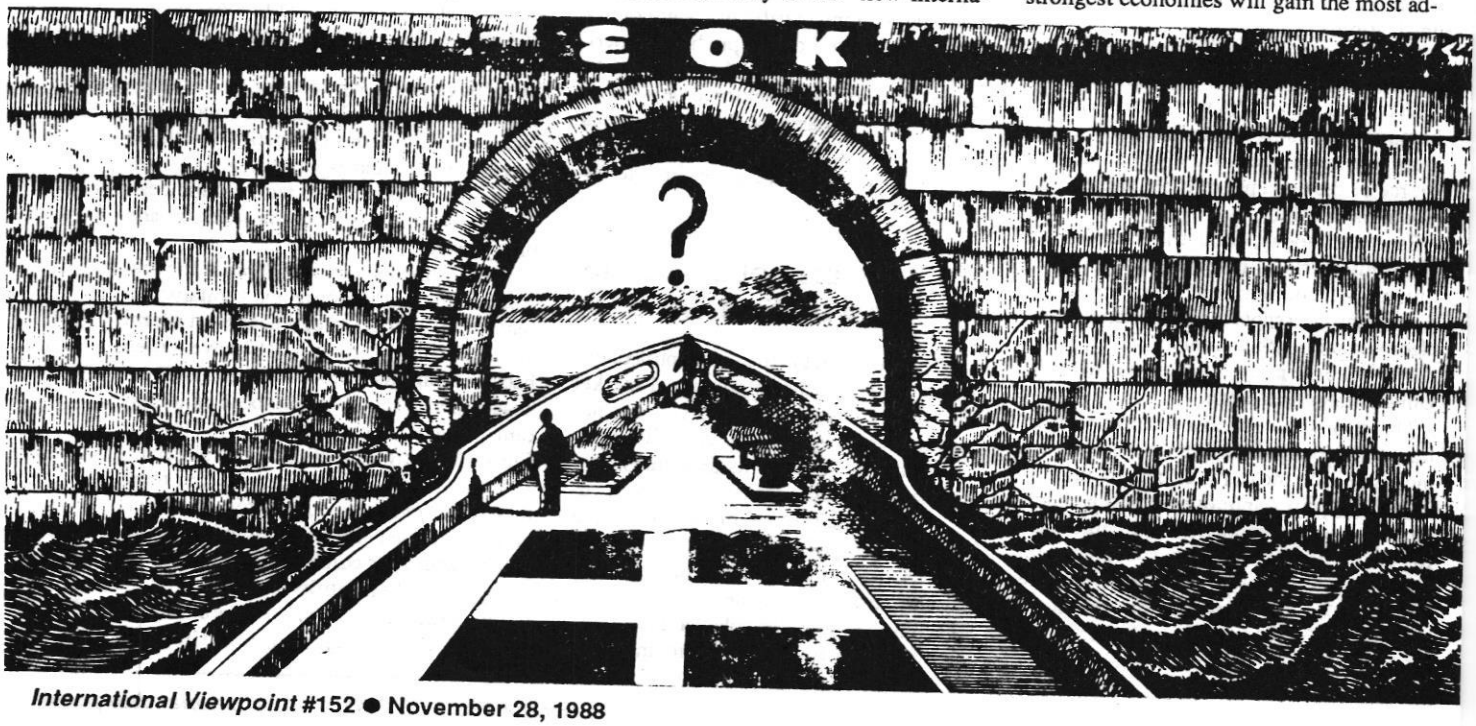
Thus, for Greece, capitalist restructuring means squeezing the incomes of working people, tying wages to productivity, speed-up and an authoritarian organization of work, privatization and the closing of problematic enterprises, new forms of "flexible-partial" employment and fragmentation of the working class, as well as a sharpening of unemployment. It means, moreover, a system of job evaluations for workers and the fragmentation of labor contracts, state intervention in the labor movement and so on.

For all these reasons, in order to increase the competivity of "our economy," Greek capital and the politicians that represent it are using the following arguments to convince workers and young people to work harder: the "national interest," the interest of the economy and industry, an alleged defense of jobs, proposals for "economic development," and so on. The main objective of this is to mount an ideological attack on the workers' movement. Its purpose is simply to strike at workers' gains and to overcome the crisis by imposing sharp austerity on working people.

Sacrifices, austerity and submission

So, this policy of bourgeois modernization will concentrate production in the EEC in the hands of a few monopolies. The strong will win out over the weak, and the means required for this modernization will come from the people. In plain Greek, this means that competition requires sacrifices, austerity and the people's submission to authoritarianism. This is precisely what the so-called capitalist restructuring offers.

However, with the unification of the EEC, we will have an unbalanced and distorted economic development, because the strongest economies will gain the most ad-



vantages from the widening of the European market, since the less-developed economies are also the least competitive.

The success of the European Monetary System (EMS), depends on combating inflation in the weaker member countries in particular, such as Greece. This means wage freezing, a fall in the standard of living and naturally an increase in profits. This is the policy that is being applied primarily with the "stabilization" program and austerity measures of 1985.

At the same time, the EEC has two objectives in trying to open up southern Europe and Greece. One is to create springboards and channels for extending its commercial relations with Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans. The other is to increase its margins for maneuver, so that it can systematically shift the weight of any crisis onto the shoulders of the weaker economies, in particular in southern Europe.

The international division of labor imposes on Greece the role of imperialism's bridge to the countries of Africa and Asia. Greece was a party to the Lome Treaty. Lome is the capital of the African country of Togo, where in 1975 a an economic cooperation treaty was signed between the EEC and 53 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (the ACP Zone). Today, with adherence of other countries has raised the number of signatory states to 66.

The neo-colonial Lome Treaty

This treaty involves the signature of a renewable protocol for funding by the 12 EEC member states of programs for the economies of the 66 other states. It is a treaty of a strictly neo-colonial character, because most of these ACP countries were colonies of England, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and Belgium. Every country that has adhered to the EEC automatically accepts the Lome treaties. This naturally will include Greece, which did not have any colonies but has now acquired 66!

Greece is today a party to the exploitation of those countries. Its "aid" to the countries of ACP Zone comes under three categories: the construction of public works; providing machinery; and technical aid.

This fact alone demolishes all the views about a "peripheral" Greece, a "backward" third world country and so on. In fact, with the Lome Treaty, it becomes a partner — a junior one, to be sure — of the big imperialist countries of the EEC in one of their major imperialist enterprises.

This connection of Greece to the EEC is of course the result of the political course of Greece since the war and the advance of Greek capitalism. Capitalist conditions are being consolidated and extended by the connection. The Greek economy is becoming a part of the imperialist big capital of the EEC, in a subordinate, sub-imperialist role. This role of Greek capitalism needs to be exposed systematically in order to uncover the real physiognomy hidden under the characterization of the country as "peripheral" or "underdeveloped."

In fact, with its ties to the Common Market, Greek capitalism is trying to find the economic means and the capital needed to speed up its development. Its development has necessarily to go through bourgeois modernization, which means its adjustment to the international social division of labor.

Greek capital is also supporting the connection with the EEC for another reason. Facing a sharpening of the international crisis and the threat from working people, it needs to put the management of the Greek economy officially in the hands of the European monopolies. Its objective is to share the profits and the responsibilities with them in order to shore up their domination. Moreover, from the political standpoint, this means putting the problem of dealing with the Greek workers' movement in the hands of a better organized, experienced and collective leadership — the EEC.

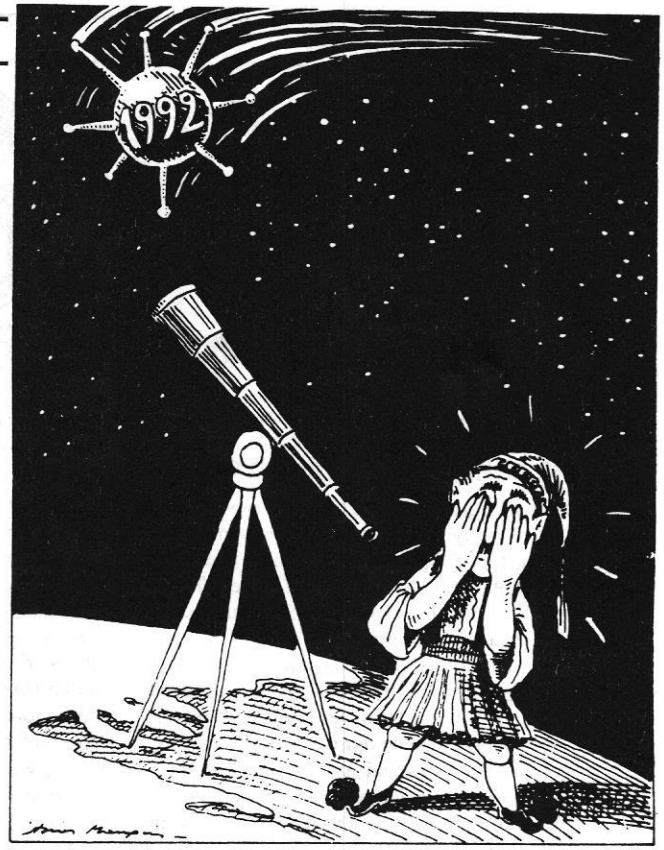
Of course, the EEC does not yet represent either an economic or political unit in the proper sense of the word. The capitalist crisis, however, has forced all the European firms to step up their efforts to achieve this much-talked-about unity.

Despite everything, as a result of the economic crisis, the Greek economy cannot solve its problems — inflation, budget deficit, lack of investment, public debt, dependent industrialization and so on. So, there is no solution other than incorporation into the Common Market. Because of the international crisis, the dependent Greek economy cannot survive "independently" and "with a free hand" in the framework of capitalism.

EEC the only refuge for Greek capitalism

Therefore, either inside or outside of the EEC, the Greek economy will be hit harder than those of the other partners, and the crisis of Greek capitalism is preparing difficulties and calamities for Greek working people. In a nutshell, Greek capitalism in the framework of the EEC knows that it will have the help of big monopoly capital to confront the crisis.

So it is clear that the incorporation of Greek capitalism into the EEC is the only refuge. At the same time, this is the only way it can compete with the newly developing countries of the so-called third world



(Taiwan, South Korea, and so on), which are more developed than Greek capitalism.

The anti-imperialist and anti-American feelings of the Greek people are being skillfully exploited to convince people of the "positive" aspects of incorporation into the Common Market.

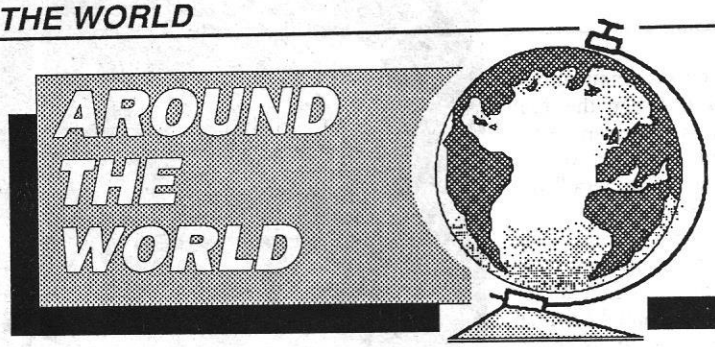
The basis of this argument is the effort that the EEC is making to achieve political independence from the USA in order to become more competitive than it and Japan. In fact, this fundamentally reveals the inter-imperialist character of the conflict between these three poles — the US, the EEC and Japan.

It would be a tragic mistake for working people to fall into this trap — since this policy is designed to repair capitalism, indeed to help it survive — by taking one or the other side in this rivalry. But this is precisely what the reformist parties of the establishment left want to do.

However, the position of "no to the EEC" is also a mistake, when it is used as a sort of stage in the transition to socialism, precisely as it is being used by the KKE [the pro-Moscow CP] and was earlier by the PASOK. It needs to be linked to the struggle against the bourgeoisie of this country (which looks forward to linking up with that of the EEC), and with the perspective of a socialist federation of a United States of all Europe.

If the position "no to the EEC" is not put forward with this perspective, then it remains in the sphere of the bourgeoisie, of "self-propelled economic development," "competitiveness," and so on.

Any consistent analysis and policy for the international and Greek left has to consider these questions in order to include them in its program and to pursue an intransigent struggle to defend workers' gains. ★



SOUTH AFRICA

Weekly Mail *suspended*

THE English-language liberal newspaper, the *Weekly Mail*, has been suspended by Minister of Home Affairs Stoffel Botha for a month until November 28. The *Weekly Mail* is the third newspaper to be suspended under a special emergency decree promulgated in August last year and renewed and strengthened in June. The paper is accused of publishing articles that were a threat to the "safety of the public", and to have "incited hate and hostility" against the army by publishing accounts by conscripts of tortures by South African soldiers in Angola.

The *Weekly Mail* is the best-known of South Africa's alternative newspapers, originally founded in 1985 by unemployed journalists from the *Rand Daily Mail*, which was closed down by employers and big business in April 1985. The *Weekly Mail* has a modest circulation of 24,000, and this suspension is not going to help its financial situation. ★

TURKEY

New revolutionary Marxist journal

AFTER the military coup d'état of September 1980, all left and far-left publications were banned and their editors arrested and given harsh sentences by the military tribunals. The socialist press only survived by means of reviews published by Turkish immigrant groups in Europe. At the end of 1985 and the beginning of 1986, left publications were able to reappear legally in Turkey, taking advantage of a small democratic opening due to the drop-by-drop "liberalization" born out of the government's policy of a rapprochement with the EEC.

Smashed to smithereens by the coup d'état, the far-left has still not recovered from the 1980 defeat. Many militants are still in exile or in prison. All the organizations are in crisis, and new divisions and splits have been added to the previous ones. Important political, programmatic and ideological debates are taking place in the 30 or so legal left journals, but their total circulation is no more than a few thousand copies.

Despite the fact that opportunities for legal work have opened up, mainly during the last year, increasingly selective censorship is still used and the situation of the progressive press remains precarious. Since this summer, a wave of repression has broken over all the socialist press. Over a dozen reviews have been seized and their editors prosecuted and imprisoned. Even the big bourgeois papers have not escaped. The daily *Milliyet*, for example, was forbidden from publishing an article on the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) in June. The police surrounded the paper's offices and the famous liberal journalist, M.A. Birand, who had interviewed the president of the PKK, was prosecuted for "incitement to separatism".

Refusing to be intimidated by this repression, revolutionary Marxists have taken advantage of the limited liberalization to publish a new monthly journal called *Yeniyol* ("New Course"), whose first issue appeared in September. *Yeniyol* aims to be both a militant journal intervening into the workers' struggles that are slowly starting up again, and a discussion tool that can aid the process of left recomposition.

In its first three issues, *Yeniyol* has published interviews and reports on the strikes taking place among printers and paper-mill workers; features on the trade-union movement, the repression and the struggles in the prisons; analysis and positions on the political situation in Turkey and on the repercussions of the Caucasian national movements in the USSR; debates on socialist democracy, the weaknesses of the Third International and the creation of the Fourth International; and articles on international solidarity, including a denunciation of the massacre of Kurds in Iraq, support for the Palestinian uprising and for Solidarnosc in Poland.


Yeniyol

Türk-İş yöneticileri işçilerin başından defedilmelidir!

Subscriptions and individual copies of *Yeniyol* can be obtained by writing to the bookshop La Brèche, 9 rue de Tunis, 75011 Paris. ★

BRITAIN

Thatcher in concrete bunker

THIS YEAR's Tory party conference was held in the south coast seaside resort of Brighton in October. It was the first time the Iron Ladies' troops had met in the town since the 1984 IRA attack on the Grand Hotel, which injured a number of cabinet members, narrowly missing Thatcher herself.

But this time, they were taking no chances. A security operation costing £1.4 million swung into action, involving armed police, bomb disposal squads, a navy minesweeper, Royal Marines in inflatable boats patrolling the shoreline and helicopters with heat-sensitive devices. (Presumably these latter wouldn't detect cold-hearted Tories but would be able to pinpoint any socialist-minded hot-heads in the vicinity!)

Around the conference centre itself, a three-mile air exclusion zone was announced and the conference complex was ringed with 270 tons of reinforced concrete slabs. All of which goes to demonstrate very clearly the popularity of the Tory government today! ★

FRANCE

Referendum on Kanaky

ON NOVEMBER 6, French voters ratified by four to one the government's "transition to independence" plan for Kanaky (New Caledonia), the French territory in the Pacific. There was an 80% "yes" vote for what was essentially a 10-year postponement of independence, replete with a variety of intermediate stages. But the true tale is told by the abstention rate: two-thirds of eligible voters stayed away from the Rocard government's initiative, despite a last minute media blitz and support from most major political parties. It was the lowest turnout for any referendum since the second world war.

In Kanaky itself, the vote was closer, with 57.3% for and 42.97% against. Voting was geographically split in the territory; unlike the homogeneity of France, support increased as one moved from the urban area to the rural districts. In Noumea, the capital of the archipelago, the "no" votes carried the day with 60%. This clearly reflects the distribution of the population between white colonial settlers of French origin and the indigenous Kanaks, in their vast majority relegated to the underdeveloped hinterlands.

The Matignon Accords were conceived by Prime Minister Michel Rocard and signed in June by the government, Jean-

Marie Tjibaou, the leader of the Kanaky National Liberation Front (FLNKS), and Jacques Lafleur, the white colonial settler leader of RPCR, a party closely related to the French Rally for the Republic (RPR), in an effort to negotiate a settlement to the increasingly violent conflict. Lafleur's supporters did not share even his lukewarm agreement with the plan, as the vote shows, and Tjibaou warned that "the accord were signed by all three parties, and will be enforced by all three. If one group opts out, there will be no accord."

The Rocard plan envisages a 10-year "holding operation" before rediscussing independence, with direct rule from Paris during the first year, and then the creation of four regional assemblies over the subsequent period. Even now it is clear that a disproportionate influence will be wielded by the regional council around Noumea, sure to be dominated by the white settlers. After these 10 years of "practice", the question of independence will voted on by all inhabitants, white settlers and Kanaks alike. Rocard has already stated his "personal" desire for Kanaky to remain within the Fifth Republic.

And it was Rocard who chose to place this plan before the French people in a referendum as a test of political strength and support for his government, elected in May. It is a test he resoundingly failed.

In France, positions on Rocard's plan spanned the spectrum, dividing right and left. The Communist Party (CP) and the Socialist Party (SP) called for a "yes" vote, the former in favor of independence, and the latter not. The centrist UDF, led by Raymond Barre, campaigned with the SP in favour of the referendum proposals. The neo-Gaullist RPR was split both ways, and only Le Pen's neo-fascist National Front was unanimously opposed.

Nonetheless, mobilization around the vote was lethargic, and the hastily set-up New Caledonian Friendship Alliance (organized by the SP) drew a pathetic 200 to its first and last Paris meeting.

Given the fact that the FLNKS, a revolutionary nationalist coalition of parties, was divided tactically over the accords and the referendum, the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League, French section of the Fourth International) called for a boycott of the referendum, arguing that it would resolve nothing and that only real independence could lay any sort of basis for the emancipation of the Kanak people. ★

U S S R

Stalin's victims

ON OCTOBER 9 *Moscow News* published an article under the title "Kuropaty: a national tragedy that all must be aware of," about fifty mass graves near Minsk. The journalist estimated that more than 100,000 corpses had been buried in this sinister place, called Kuropaty. The victims were all struck down by the NKVD, the political police under Stalin. "This death factory operated every single day from 1937 until June 1941," he said. "The first mass grave must have been filled in winter, we found in it many warm peasant garments...In the course of our digging, one of the things that struck me the most was the large number of women buried".

The author concludes: "First, no one can ever hide the truth about Kuropaty. Second — and this is the essential — each honest individual must struggle against Stalinism, this vile, lying, cruel phenomenon that was used against the people".

One remarkable thing demonstrating that there is a serious struggle to prevent any repetition of these crimes is the fact that at the end of October 1988 more than 20,000 people demonstrated at Minsk, the capital of the Byelorussian SSR.

They demonstrated to condemn the Kuropaty crimes, to decry the local and regional CP's hesitations over bringing the entire story to light, and to demand a radical democratization of the party, putting it under the control of the workers' and peasants' rank-and-file.

They demonstrated to stop all-powerful leaders from acting only from the point of view of their own concerns (we would say, in their own interests), and not in the interests of the democratically-decided will of the people. ★

U S S R

Trotsky to be published

ACCORDING to a Reuter's release dated October 26, Victoria Cheremich, representative for the State Committee on Publications, declared on Radio Moscow the same day that students at the Institute for the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union are preparing some of Trotsky's works for publication. Recently, permission was also granted for access to archival documentary footage which often features Trotsky. Until 1987, all of these things were taboo in the USSR.

Elsewhere, in the October edition of the review *Sovietskaya Istoriya* ("Soviet History"), an article by Dr. Stuartsev states that during the debates that shook up the Russian CP after 1923, it was Trotsky who was the closest to Lenin's thoughts. The author reminds his readers that in his testament Lenin marked Trotsky out as the most capable member of the party leadership, and that he had proposed to him a political bloc in order to avoid a split in the party.

This is the first time such an opinion has ever been expressed in a legal journal in the USSR. It differs considerably from the historic deformations and myths about Trotsky which are still put about by the CPSU. ★

From *perestroika* to the People's Front — II

INTERVIEW WITH BORIS KAGARLITSKI

THIS IS the second part of an interview with Boris Kagarlitski, which was begun in our last issue. Kagarlitski was one of the founders of the grouping of informal associations that gave rise to the Federation of Socialist Clubs. In the first part of the interview, held in Moscow in September, he spoke to Sasha Petrov about the debates in the Marxist left on *perestroika* and *glasnost*, and about the complex national questions in the USSR.

Here, Kagarlitski gives his point of view on the new political situation opened up for grass-roots initiatives after the June congress of the Communist Party (CPSU). Things are moving very quickly in the USSR, but at the same time some developments are marking time. For example, the People's Fronts in the Baltic republics held their first congresses since the summer and have, *de facto*, been legalized by the Soviet authorities. But things are very different in Russia. There, the People's Front that Kagarlitski talks about is a very different animal from its Baltic namesakes, an organization whose outlines are less clearly defined. It still only acts as a regroupment of clubs and informal associations, which has conflictual relations with the authorities.

The Russian People's Front has mass support, particularly in Moscow, and its fluid organization largely explains the numerous conflicts inside the clubs themselves, on tactics and on the form and content of the People's Front in Russia, which, Kagarlitski tells us, wants to be socialist.

Paradoxically, it is more difficult for us to appreciate the problems for this left regroupment as regards *perestroika*, as much on an ideological level as in its relations with the regime. But we are learning as we go. ***(Catherine Verla)***

IN AUGUST 1987 a conference of informal associations was held and the Federation of Socialist Clubs (FSC) was set up. Can you briefly describe developments in this federation since then, and also the present situation?

The conference was held barely one year ago, but the landscape has changed so much since then that it seems like years. The most important result of the August 1987 conference was the creation of the FSC. At that time, this sort of federation had been criticized as too centralist, a bit too socialist and not democratic enough. They were criticized, for example, for not allowing people with anti-socialist views to become members of the organization, although it was, in principal, a non-sectarian and anti-dogmatic organization. Now, there seems to be a consensus that the Federation, as it was created, belongs to the past.

Indeed, the Federation of Socialist Clubs was a loose organization with no clear structure and practically no documents regulating its internal functioning. Its programme was also very diffuse, comprising simply on some very general democratic and socialist principles, with almost no economic programme — only a few general ideas about defending social guarantees in the process of economic transformation, and around the democratization of planning and so on. There were only three pages of demands and 32 pages of text in total about the constitution of the Federation. The whole movement was quite chaotic, but despite this, the Federation was considered too centralist by a number of the clubs who wanted to preserve their autonomy.

In the FSC, Marxist groups were in a kind of minority because there were different groups of anarchists, populists, environmentalists and so on. So, it seemed that the movement was very unstructured, not only because people didn't want it too structured, but also because of the internal differences. It was almost impossible for us to organize any kind of systematic work across the Federation. However, we managed to establish information links between the clubs all over the country, to establish better relations between the Moscow and the provincial groups — a kind of information network.

The provincial groups are more or less homogeneous, almost always with a Marxist orientation. But two important tendencies exist, Marxists and environmentalists, who have few differences and who are quite used to working together. In any case, the Federation will continue for a time as an information network.

■ It seems the preparation of the June conference of the Communist Party (CPSU) and the conference itself changed the conditions for the development of initiatives coming from the grass-roots?

Yes. In August 1987, there were a number of diverse groups in Moscow, and next to nothing in the provincial towns. Moscow led the movement, along with Leningrad, where there had also been certain results and real progress for the movement.

Before the party's conference, there was a real explosion of grass-roots activism across the whole country. In Yaroslavl and Kuibyshev, as well as in Astrakhan, there were rallies against party secretaries, calling for them to be thrown out of the conference. The demonstrators won and the whole affair was taken up by the press. In Zagorsk and Kalinsk, the party secretaries were sacked following a strike in the workplaces. People thought that the movement could deliver the goods, could achieve concrete results. There was a growing movement of thousands of people who wanted to organize and go out into the streets, who were organized by very tiny groups of Marxist activists acting as organizers for the people's protest.

■ What do you mean by Marxist activists?

I mean by that activists of small independent Marxist groups. For example at Kuibyshev, one of the organizers of the popular protests there is also one of the founding

members of the FSC. In the Federation, he represented a group of around 20 people, called the Farabundo Marti Brigade.

■ Do you think that the period of the conference was a period of broad radicalization?

Yes. People were very discontented with the composition of their delegations, they knew their bureaucrats well and there was a lot of popular protest. It was not a class conscious protest against the bureaucracy, but against their own bureaucrats. But through these protests and these experiences people suddenly realized their own strength, and that was a kind of turning point.

Following this there appeared organizing committees of the People's Front (PF) in nearly all the towns where a real popular protest movement existed. In Russia, this included Kuibyshev, Omsk, Krasnozavodsk, Zagorsk, Kalinsk, Astrakhan, Sverdlovsk, Kazan and, of course, Leningrad and Moscow. And Moscow was far behind in relation to the situation in the provinces. In the provincial cities, there was always the same type of movement, not the whole range of groups as in Moscow, but one or two small groups that were able to hegemonize quite a broad movement. This changed the situation, and finally the provinces sort of imposed their terms on the Moscovites.

The real base of the People's Front, even in Moscow, was outside of Moscow, because it is not a town where it is easy to organize a radical, left-wing movement — many people who live being there are bureaucrats or immigrant workers. People realized that a real movement was growing in the provincial cities whilst the Moscovites were involved in intrigues against each other, having petty squabbles or discussing vague projects. And suddenly, the real movement appeared.

For example, the anarchist group, Obchina, left the organizing committee, as did some other groups, like Citizens for Dignity. They wanted the word "socialist" dropped from the statutes of the People's Front, which the great majority voted against. The provincial groups declared that if the word was withdrawn from the declaration of the Moscow People's Front, they wouldn't work with the Moscow organizing committee. There had been some problems also about the words "democratic centralism" appearing the draft programme, but that didn't change the situation, because all the groups who voted against it have remained in the Front.

Now people are building local sections of the PF — even workplace sections. Today the main problem is not to bring together as many groups as possible but rather to organize the social base, the people.

■ And what is the attitude of the FSC towards the People's Front?

Some groups in the FSC are in the People's Front and some are not. The majority want to join it and perhaps create their own sections of the PF. But, in any case people do not want to split the Federation because, as an information network, it is quite influential and efficient. So the FSC will remain as an information network and a bridge between the majority of the People's Front groups and the minority of left groups who have not joined the Front, but who are part of the left. Besides, we want to work with them.

Drawing by Danziger.

■ Can you give an overall estimation of what the People's Front represents today in Russia?

In Russia I don't know. I can give some precise figures for Moscow, but the situation there is not very typical of the rest of the country. In Moscow we have more activists than many of the provincial organizing committees, but less popular support.

On July 1, we held a meeting, which was legally permitted by the officials, with about a thousand people attending according to *Izvestia*. Nearly all of them were activists, because it was held in a very isolated place, with practically no passers-by, and there was almost no information distributed by the usual channels on the whereabouts of the meeting place. Even among the activists, many of them were out of town, because after the party conference and all the confrontations people were tired and took their holidays. The meeting was held on a Sunday lunchtime, and even so there were a thousand people.

In Moscow, it seems that we can count on the support of 1,500 activists, no more, no less. That can change day by day, but before it was always very difficult to organize something, because there was always a lack of people. Now when we organize something, there are always people to do this or that. For the first time, we are not absolutely poor — I don't say that we are rich, but if we desperately need money for an action we can always find it, because we also have a system for collecting money. Activists in the Front went to different parts of the Soviet Union to establish links with various organizations or organizing committees, and they were subsidized by the Front.

There are many people willing to donate money to the People's Front. There are some cooperatives who want to produce badges and t-shirts, and that's also a very important sign because a year ago this was unthinkable. The FSC could not even organize its own budget, it had no money at all, not even for its general projects or to produce *samizdat* publications. But in the provincial cities it seems that the activists are much more effective, and probably better organized.

■ Have you tried to link up with the People's Fronts in the Baltic republics?

As the Estonians say, without support in all the republics, we could not survive as a serious organization. Of course, they each have their specific demands, which are rather national democratic than socialist democratic. But they themselves want to develop in the whole of the country.

In Estonia, 1,000 copies were produced of the first edition of the People's Front's journal in Russian. For the second edition, they printed 3,000. Yet there is almost no demand for Russian-language texts in Estonia itself, because they have their own language. There are some Russians, of course, but the majority of them are unskilled workers, politically apathetic and not interested in national democratic demands and the demands of the Estonians. So these 3,000 journals were distributed to Russians in Russia. They try to produce propaganda for the whole of the country, more or less successfully. According to one of the main

Estonian leaders, one of the most important things for a national People's Front is to win support in the whole country.

It seems that the Estonians, the Lithuanians and the movement in Karabakh, although they are not the same political animal as the People's Front in Russia, are interested in supporting the Russian socialist movement. That gives us a lot of hope. We don't want to create an all-Union structure for the People's Front, but rather a confederation of the different Fronts existing at the level of the republics. But the Moscow committee is not simply trying to collect together all the demands, but to produce a summary document expressing a sort of democratic socialist alternative to the Stalinist system and the technocratic conception of elitist reforms.

■ Do you think that a broad People's Front's opposition to technocratic reforms is an obvious fact? I have the impression that the question of socialism, of the type of reforms and the problem of relations with the institutions are three main difficulties for the initiators of the Russian People's Front.

No, I think it's a bit different. Many people are very unhappy with the technocratic reform proposals. Most of those in the PF are more populist than Marxist. They are socialists in the sense that they don't want private property, for example. They adopt socialist ideas while at the same time adapting them in a populist sense, using populist language such as social justice, freedom for the people and so on. Of course, some groups are somewhat influenced by technocratic thinking.

It seems that, first of all, the critical part of that technocratic analysis is very important and very progressive. On the other hand, the most extreme forms of the technocratic proposals — like price rises, increasing social differentiations, unemployment, private share-holding, creating more and more enterprises as joint ventures or privatizing some industries — these have absolutely no popular support. People in the cities are very hostile to these proposals, particularly because joint ventures, for example, are often anti-ecological and people are very concerned about ecology.

We have won the confidence of populists, socialists, Marxists and environmentalists in the People's Front, who have come together on the basis of mutual discontent with both Stalinism and technocrats — sometimes not for political but for cultural or moral reasons. Because the technocracy is often hostile to Russian culture and tradition., so the populists are very often hostile to the technocracy, and the ecologists are sometimes very suspicious of technocratic ideas.

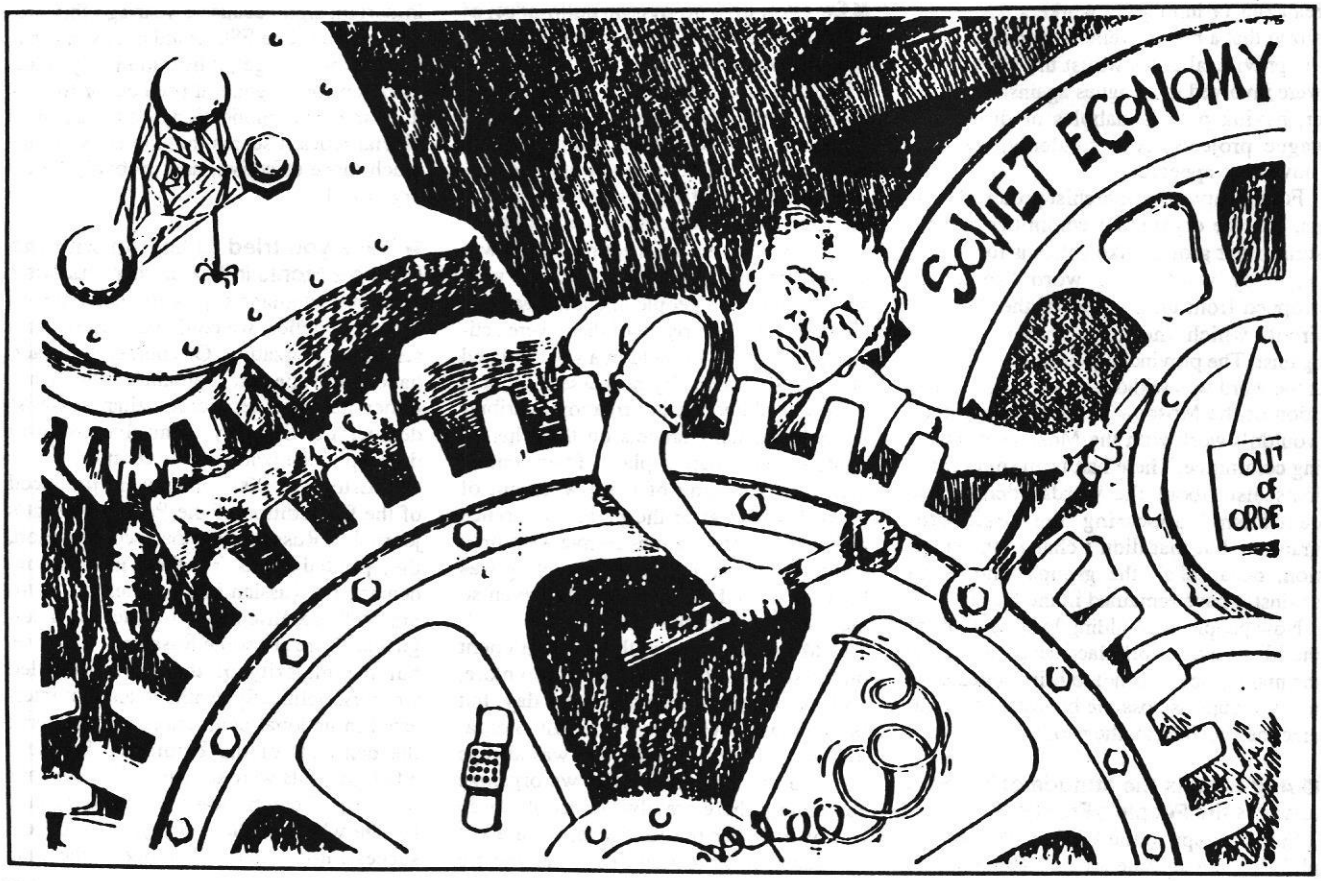
If we want to build a broad front, the major thing is to find some kind of mutual understanding on the important questions of today and around general ideas concerning strategic perspectives for tomorrow. I don't want to imply that there won't be any problems in the future, quite likely we'll have difficulties tomorrow, more discussions and disagreements in the PF cannot be excluded. But we have reached some kind of real understanding among the three currents, and we have been able to establish a common language for the discussions. A failure, as in the case of the FSC, will be the result of collective sectarianism.

The PF is not a monolithic organization in the Stalinist tradition, but people who join must be agree on the basic principles, including democratic socialism as a central political objective, free elections to the soviets and all the freedoms that make up an integral part of the democratic socialist project, self-management of workers' collectives and ecological priorities, which must be put above the priorities of the market. The needs of the market cannot remain the top priority in a strict sense, because there are cultural, spiritual and ecological priorities as well. All that is getting tremendous support from the people.

■ It is a question of starting from needs and not from the mechanisms?

Yes. But it is difficult for the broad movement. We are creating a broad consensus based on the needs of the people and fundamental political changes. Of course, there will be divergences on the question of what mechanisms to use, but if we are agreed about the needs, the differences on the mechanisms can be discussed seriously and compromises can be reached. In contrast, the other type of sectarian collectivism is that everyone agrees on some tactical solutions, some tactical mechanisms, without being agreed on the basic principles.

■ In your opinion, what are the current



priority needs that the Front has to defend?

The main priority for investments must be the modernization of the social sphere, without its commercialization. In other words, investments, plus reorganization, plus modernization of the structures, but less commercialization. We need both investment and restructuring. The bureaucrats, like the technocrats, for different reasons prefer to have more paid services instead of modernizing and restructuring the social sector of the state.

We want to modernize in the sense of more investments and more soviet democracy to control where the money is put and how it is used. But at the same time we say, "no development of paid services without an adequate development of social services". That is one of our slogans. Others are, "no reduction of the workforce without reconversion schemes prepared in advance"; "no investment decisions without ecological discussions"; and, in principle, "no investment decisions without a discussion on the general strategy of development at a national level". These are our key priorities.

We don't want a centralized planning system but a national development programmes for technology, the social sphere, education, ecology and so on. To be useful, this national programme must be seriously elaborated because it is not possible to modernize everything at the same pace. We think that today we are underdeveloped in some areas, but we can't modernize everything — we don't have the resources to do it. So it's necessary to find the key priorities for modernization. Undoubtedly this is one of the major differences between the PF's understanding of modernization and that of the technocrats. In principle, we are not hostile to modernization. Neither are we in principle against the use of markets.

■ When you say "we", are you not mainly giving your own point of view?

No, that's not the case. I think that the provincial groups would accept the Moscow project, which is close to their thinking. We have more problems in Leningrad, because the situation there is half-way between that in Moscow and that in the provinces. On the one hand, they are more practical and better organized, they have more activists, the movement is bigger and so on. On the other, I think that the ideological level in Leningrad is lower, and they are less interested in theory or strategy of any kind. They are more practical. Our main problem in Leningrad won't be to reply to some criticisms of the programme, but rather to the various proposals along the lines of: "let's not have a programme at all".

■ This is an ambiguity of the term "people's front". It is not a party, but defines itself as a broad social movement that has, in fact, political bases. It is a difficult situation?

Yes. It is a movement/coalitions that has some elements of a party-like structure without functioning as a party. One particularity is that there are members of the Communist Party inside the People's Front. We say this is a political expression of a grass-roots union between the progressive elements in the party and the broader popular movement. By definition, this cannot be a political party unless the CPSU itself splits into different factions.

■ What conception is there of democracy inside the Front? What are the main struggles for democracy?

This is precisely the discussion that is on the agenda. The first things we want is free elections to the soviets at all levels and of judges, respect for the law, a free press, general freedoms and human rights. This means that we are very enthusiastic about glasnost and pleased about all the changes that have taken place here during the last two years. At the same time, we are very critical about the proposals to have indirect elections to the Supreme Soviet and to the Council of Soviet Deputies, because we think that people have the right to directly elect their deputies.

Secondly, we are against the proposal to send delegates from organizations selected by the plenums to the Supreme Soviet, because they are not people's deputies but delegates, bureaucratic pawns. We are therefore critical of these proposals and we are already campaigning against them.

We are also campaigning against the *ukazes*, the decrees, which limit the right to demonstrate. We want to transform *glasnost* into a regular freedom of speech and of the press, which necessarily means giving citizens the right to organize cooperatives, publishing houses, and to give to different social groups the right to produce their own publications and to open the state system of mass media to these groupings.

We also think that without workplace democracy there won't be any stable political democracy. We don't want workplace committees to be limited to internal problems inside the enterprise, but to create inter-enterprise committees, branch committees and local committees linked to those in the workplaces. These, along with democratically elected soviets, could create a network of functioning socialist democracy and decision-making.

Of course, we don't have any practical experiences to go on, so we can't judge how realistic our proposals are. But what is also extremely important is that we want the slogan, "All power to the soviets" to become a reality through a system of free elections, guaranteed by a good electoral law.

■ Is this slogan very popular today in the Soviet Union?

Yes, very popular. It doesn't necessarily mean that people are against the party, but they are tired of its direct rule, and even party members don't want direct party rule any more.

■ Let's talk about two questions, the soviets and the party. What's surprising for us is that two, or maybe three, years ago, it was thought that the Soviet people were so disenchanted with soviets that the path of democratization and the expression of demands would go around them, and that something new would be built. Is the impact of this slogan just tactical?

No, it's not tactical because the slogan, "All power to the soviets" was not invented by radical intellectuals in Moscow. It came from the provincial cities and it is a kind of political resurrection. It comes out of popular culture, because people reproduce, somewhat unconsciously, slogans and models of the last democracy ever tried in the Soviet Union, and they discuss it. The last model that was tried was that of the soviets. This is something that people know about. There are, to say the least, some romantic ideas about what happened when the workers' soviets were really in power. But even if these ideas are inadequate, they exist. And when people say, "All power to the soviets", they are not thinking about the existing soviets but of soviets that were really elected. When we say all power to the soviets it means free elections to the soviets.

■ And the question of parties?

In principle, we are nearly all agreed that a multi-party system is necessary for democracy. That democracy means more than one party. But there are two things we shouldn't forget.

First of all, democracy does not simply mean a multi-party system, it means having all the basic rules of democracy such as *habeas corpus*, electoral laws and free speech. Without all these elements setting up a multi-party system will change nothing. In some under-developed countries, the multi-party system failed dramatically. It became corrupt, inefficient and dictatorial because there was practically no organized network in civil society — the conditions didn't exist to create it — and so there was no common basis for establishing a multi-party system with a real democratic content. The problem today is to create the conditions for a real democracy, to build this network in civil society. Most people today are not interested in establishing a multi-party system, but in changing things locally and nationally by free elections and actions — they are not thinking in terms of a Western-style multi-party system.

The second point is that, without real parties, we can't talk about a multi-party system. In Spain, for example, when it came to the point of legalizing the Communist Party, it had already existed for a number of years, as had the Socialist Party. So when the time comes to establish a system with several parties, they must already exist, at least in an embryonic, elementary form.

■ That means in the present situation here, bigger forces are needed acting

in a political way...

This is the third point that is equally important for us. We don't think that the Communist Party itself is homogeneous — there are contradictory forces inside it. In the last analysis, some sort of political differentiation will appear that will lead, in the long term, to the appearance of competing political parties. Political pluralism will come not from a challenge to the CPSU, but from inside the party itself. This seems highly improbable today to many people, but some party members inside the People's Front are agreed in thinking that this will be the main route towards party pluralism.

■ Can you give us an idea how many party members there are in the People's Front, and explain generally the problems of the PF's relationship to the official institutions?

I must confess that there are not so many CPSU members in the People's Front. They are present in all the initiative groups and they are influential, but their numbers remain limited. If party members are not careerists — and those joining the People's Front are not — they are older, more experienced and have more political culture. People are selected to join the Party for formal reasons, but they are trained. So in spite of their small numbers, they are influential.

We have an inter-club party group, in the organizing committee, which is very influential when decisions are being taken or concepts elaborated. This group exists only in Moscow. But in Krasnozavodsk, for example, party members also dominate the local committee. In Leningrad, they are probably not dominant, but influential. There is a democratic tendency in the party.

■ Perhaps it is also an attempt to control the People's Front?

No, no. It is difficult to imagine thousands of party members ordered by the bureaucracy to join the PF just to blow it up from the inside. In fact, it is not the case, because the functionaries never came to the PF. The people who come to the Front have to join concrete groups, concrete actions, and so people would know if they were trying to sabotage things.

■ Do you think that a sort of regroupment could develop inside the CPSU?

In a year or two, yes. We are waiting for the next electoral campaign in the party. We don't think that the results will be sensational, but in any event the situation inside the party will change. The most important battles will come during the next year. In October 1989, local elections and party elections are scheduled. Nearly one year after the development of the popular movement, that could produce some very serious struggles.

■ What is the situation in the unions?

I don't want to be over-pessimistic, but until now we haven't seen any sign of movement, almost nothing. Some workers talk about creating a movement among the workers, but not in the sense of a free trade-union. Rather they want to form a kind of workers' lobby inside the PF and the organizing committees, raising workers' demands and ensuring that working-class interests are reflected in the People's Front's actions. On the other hand they want to mobilize workers in support of the Front inside the workplaces.

Without being workerist or hostile to intellectuals, some people want to organize specifically working-class groups that can discuss their own problems, for example like the Union of Communist Workers. This is a group bringing together workers from six Moscow workplaces and from other enterprises in different cities. But there are not very many of them, I think less than a hundred people. They are also involved in the activists of the Socialist Initiative group, which I am also involved in. But they have have their separate group.

■ Do they define themselves as socialists, as communists?

As their name implies, the Union of Communist Workers. That's to say that they are in favour of communist ideas, but are not party members. But it is very interesting. In Sverdlovsk, there is a workerist tendency that is trying to consolidate itself outside of the PF's Initiative Group. These are young intellectuals belonging to a sort of workers' party, separate from all the other movements. The result is that no group of workers has joined them.

■ Do you have any idea about the impact of recent events in Poland, insofar as they are known, on Soviet workers and on the bureaucracy?

It is difficult to reply seriously, because neither the people nor the bureaucracy have any serious analytical material available on the situation in Poland. Some people are working on it now, for example studying Solidarnosc's structures in order to avoid its mistakes.

This is why we were interested in establishing a real programme and ideology for the PF from the very beginning. Because if a populist tendency with no well-defined ideological base were to win — which is not very likely, but not totally excluded — the result would be a politically ineffective movement, unable to really change things, simply acting on the basis of instinct, tactically and strategically impotent and incapable of taking serious initiatives. Solidarnosc has no ideological basis, either of the right or the left.

Being neither a party nor a trade union, it was not capable of taking strategic initiatives. It had no strategy, and so finally it failed.

I think we have a better chance, because we have the advantage of time. Solidarnosc grew into a mass movement in just a few weeks. It was a tremendous explosion. We don't expect the same thing here.

■ You think you will have more time, and that there won't be a social explosion or a reaction?

I think we will have at least a year, let us say, of normal development. We don't want to destabilize the situation ourselves. We want to be loyal to the Gorbachev experience insofar as it remains progressive and brings more democratization. And even if it doesn't deliver the goods, it is much better than the reaction. There are technocratic or bureaucratic alternatives to Gorbachev today, but they would end up in a sort of dictatorship, either neo-Stalinist or neo-technocratic, of the Chilean or Stalinist type.

For us, the survival of the Gorbachev leadership is necessary. Without it, the movements coming from the grass-roots could create an alternative of its own, and could even become the motor-force of change. But if Gorbachev was to be removed, by a dictatorial group, a kind of police regime, it would no longer be possible for movements coming from the grass-roots to be really influential.

■ In the present situation, you are confronted with a traditional, conservative bureaucracy that faces a socialist left and some technocratic currents. Of course, there are bigger differentiations, but many people certainly think in terms of an alliance with the technocratic currents, as is the case in Yugoslavia, Poland and so on.

Yes, I agree. To a certain extent we are ready to ally with the technocrats, but everything depends on how far we are prepared to go in supporting them. Of course, on the question of history, on Stalinism, we strongly support the liberal journals and the liberal technocratic intellectuals when they criticize the Stalinist system politically and economically. But if the technocrats ally with the Stalinists to "bring back order", to implement their own unpopular projects, we won't support them.

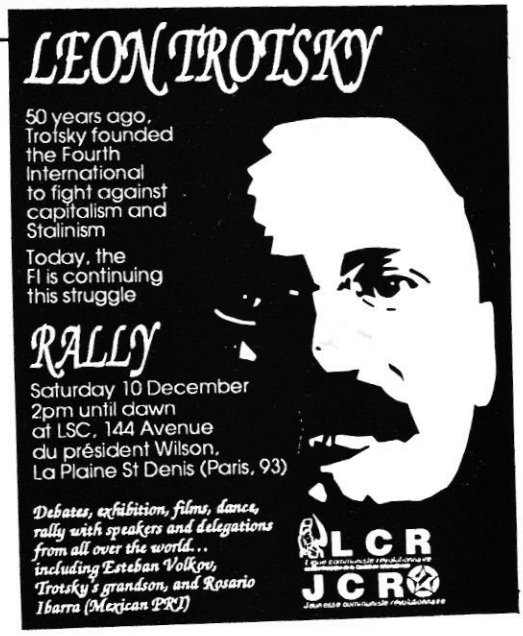
■ Is this to say that, given the situation, you define the possibility of development and expression of the People's Front in the framework of a compromise with the existing structures?

Well, we are realistic and we don't demand the impossible. We make radical, but realizable, demands. When results are minimal, the movement becomes more radical. So the less we get from the authorities, the more the movement radicalizes.

There are two elements to this radicalization. One is that the organic radicalization of the movement itself, produced by its internal dynamic, means that people understand that to win something, they must demand more.

The second is a negative radicalization, where people radicalize because of the absence of concrete results. ★

4 NEWS FROM THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL



WESTERN EUROPE

Anti-racist coordination

AROUND 20 people from European sections of the Fourth International met in Brussels on the weekend of November 5/6 to discuss and coordinate anti-racist work and activities. The meeting brought together comrades from Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Holland, Luxemburg and Sweden.

An extremely useful and interesting general discussion first of all covered the development of the anti-racist movement over the past few years, and the specific problems faced by immigrant workers in Western Europe confronted with increasingly harsh immigration laws and growing racism. The development of fascist and neo-fascist groupings was discussed, as well as the mounting attacks against the acceptance of political refugees from all over the world who are trying to escape torture, repression and poverty.

An important aspect of the exchange of information and ideas focused on the central role of young people in the fight against racism, and the situation of second and third generation immigrants. Campaigns in a number of countries are concentrating centrally on the right to vote of immigrants and the fight against restrictive and racist nationality laws. In France, SOS-racisme has just launched a petition-campaign for immigrants' right to vote in the 1989 municipal elections.

The meeting also discussed detailed reports from Sweden, Britain and France, which raised the whole plethora of problems faced by revolutionary socialists active in the anti-racist and anti-fascist movements. At a European-wide level, everyone was agreed on the importance of preparing for 1992, when the Single European Act will mean an opening of frontiers inside Western Europe (for EEC nationals only, of course), but the closing of borders to the outside. A further meeting was planned for March 1989 to discuss concretely what initiatives can be taken at a European level in the run up to 1992 around the themes of "open the frontiers" and "no immigration controls". ★

BRITAIN

Rally celebrates 50 years of internationalism

OVER 400 people met in London's Conway Hall on November 11 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International. The meeting was the largest ever organized by *Socialist Outlook*, a British revolutionary Marxist journal.

Among the audience were many veterans of the movement, some of whom spoke from the floor. Charlie van Gelderen, an active supporter of *Socialist Outlook*, was the first platform speaker. He was present at the founding conference of the FI held in Paris in 1938. Charlie was elected to the International Executive Committee of the movement in his capacity as a youth delegate. He recalled the bravery of the earliest Trotskyist militants, who frequently suffered physical attacks both from fascists and Stalinists. What was happening in the USSR today was a vindication of those comrades.

Catherine Samary spoke on the Gorbachev phenomenon, a theme that ran through practically all the contributions. She underlined the importance of the call made by Czech dissidents for a "popular Helsinki", and the need to discuss a European-wide charter of basic democratic rights. Such a charter, which should include as a major demand the right to a job, could unite workers of East and West against the efforts of those, like Thatcher, who sought to divide Polish workers from their British sisters and brothers.

As chairperson Alan Thornett explained, the platform of speakers was chosen to demonstrate the unity of all three sectors of the world revoluton, for which the FI fights. Accordingly the next speaker, Heather Dashner, a central leader of the Mexican PRT, spoke on the struggle of Latin American women for basic rights and the way in which this had enriched and been informed by the experience of other women in the Fourth International. She explained that while the experience of the Latin American women's movement was very different to that of their European sisters, both had been able to learn from the discussion. The International remained indispensable as a forum for discussion and the formulation of action, Heather concluded.

Other supporters of *Socialist Outlook*, who had been active in the movement for half a century, then took the floor. Eileen Gersh explained the conditions under which she had joined the movement in Britain in the 1930s, and Alex Acheson, now 79, spoke of the lessons he had drawn from his time in the movement. Harry Wicks, one of the founders of the Trotskyist movement in Britain, sent greetings to the rally that noted the profound developments in the USSR and looked towards "a new layer of young Soviet workers joining the ranks of Trotskyism". John Archer, a Trotskyist since the early 1930s, spoke of the need to build an International with Trotskyists as factions within emerging class struggle forces.

The last speaker was Ernest Mandel from the United Secretariat of the FI, and a leading spokesperson for the movement during most of its existence. He recalled that many had accused the International of being established on the basis of a conjunctural assessment. In fact, the International has based itself on a long-term revolutionary strategy. As with previous Internationals, the FI is based on a programme and activities that express the needs of the proletariat. Replying to John Archer's contribution, Mandel agreed with the need for revolutionaries to ally themselves with those class struggle forces that have emerged in the past period, such as the Workers' Party in Brazil, the new South African trade-union movement and the Sandinistas. But, he argued, while these forces were excellent fighters against their own oppression, they were very often not able to see their identity of interest. Thus, Polish trade-unionists, used to the lies of the Stalinist press, discounted reports of Thatcher's vicious attacks on British workers as exaggeration by the regime; while many Central American revolutionaries saw Solidarnosc as being counter-revolutionaries manipulated by the CIA.

Only the Fourth International, Mandel said in a rousing conclusion, clearly explained that the interests of one section of the world proletariat could not be subordinated to another. The political reawakening of the Soviet working class would provide a massive vindication of the decision to found the FI 50 years ago.

The rally marked a strengthening of the FI in Britain, as well as of *Socialist Outlook*. A collection raised £3,200, successfully concluding an appeal for £31,000 as a down-payment on the journal's new editorial offices. ★ *(Steve Roberts)*

Confrontation over national rights sharpens

IN THE RUN-UP to the November 29 Soviet CP Central Committee meeting that is to consider constitutional amendments restricting the rights of the national republics, Moscow confronts new flare-ups among a whole series of non-Russian peoples.

By mid-November, more than half of the populations of Estonia and Lithuania had reportedly signed petitions opposing Gorbachev's amendments. On November 16, the Estonian parliament almost unanimously adopted a resolution declaring "sovereignty." On November 18, at the urging of the new "reformer" first secretary of the Lithuanian CP, Algiras Brauzaskas, the Lithuanian parliament refused to follow this example. But that decision prompted a walkout by representatives of the independent organization, Sajudis, which is already a mass organization. The decision was also followed immediately by a protest demonstration of 10,000 people in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius. Also, on November 18, Armenia was paralyzed by a general strike and 600,000 people rallied in its capital of Erevan.

GERRY FOLEY

THE PROPOSED amendments to the Soviet constitution would give the Soviet central legislature the right to overrule the republican legislatures and to impose "special forms of administration" on the now formally sovereign republics. In neither case would these constitutional changes introduce real changes. But they represent reductions of the formal rights of the republics at a time when Gorbachev's *perestroika* has aroused hopes of concessions to aspirations that have long been mocked and trampled upon.

In particular, the clause about the right to impose "special forms of administration" has a sinister ring, coming as it does in the wake of the events in the Armenian SSR and in Nagorno-Karabakh. It seems obviously intended to strengthen the Kremlin's hand for intervening directly in republics where people start to take their formal or promised national rights too seriously.

In the Armenian SSR, the revival of the national movement focused on regaining Nagorno-Karabakh began with great hopes in *perestroika* and the Gorbachev leadership. In the first demonstrations, pictures of the Soviet leader were carried. The initial leadership were moderate intellectuals well integrated into the local bureaucracy. The truth was exactly the opposite of the Kremlin's claims that anti-*perestroika* forces were behind the protests.

However, the movement in the Armenian SSR has clearly gone beyond the program of *perestroika* and its previous moderate leaders (see *IV* 148). On November 16, a rally of 500,000 people in Erevan proclaimed the hard-line nationalist Parouir Airikian the representative of the movement abroad. Airikian was portrayed by the Kremlin press as the evil genius behind the movement. Before *perestroika* he served 17 years in prison for his nationalist views. He was jailed in the first wave of mass protests and later expelled from the USSR.

Soviet leaders try to head off radicalization

In Lithuania, the Soviet leadership apparently tried to head off a radicalization of the reviving national movement. On October 19, Ringaudas Songaila resigned as first secretary of the local CP. He had been a focus of hatred since the forcible dispersion of a demonstration in Gedimas square in the Lithuanian capital on September 28.

The next day Algirdas Brazauskas was elected to succeed him. The new secretary had been the highest party official on the platform at the Sajudis rallies on June 24 and July 9. At those assemblies, he stressed his support for economic sovereignty for Lithuania and dealing with industrial pollution. A desire on the part of the Kremlin to conciliate the Lithuanian movement seemed also to be reflected by the publication of an article in *Pravda* on October 26 that expressed a favorable attitude to many of its positions. It even made a very negative reference to the Russian immigrants in the republic (see *IV* 151).

Brazauskas seems to have played the decisive role in getting the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet to reject the proposed resolutions on sovereignty. Arunas Zabriunas, a Lithuanian film-maker and member of Sajudis, was quoted in the November 19 *International Herald Tribune* as saying "He [Brazauskas] exerted a lot of pressure....He was very clever in how he spoke and it worked."

Solidarity among the Baltic movements

Whether this was a pyrrhic victory, however, remains to be seen. The protest demonstration in Vilnius that followed indicates that it could mark the break between the bureaucratic reformers and the mass national movement in Lithuania that was consummated in the Armenian case by the resurgence of the mass demonstrations in the Armenian SSR and Nagorno-Karabakh after the Soviet central authorities' rejection of the Karabakh Committee's demands.

According to the *International Herald Tribune*, the Lithuanian demonstrators raised the cry of "betrayal." In walking out of the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet, according to *Libération* of November 19, the representatives of Sajudis declared their intention of "appealing to the people."

The Lithuanian protesters were reported to be particularly bitter because the attitude of their Supreme Soviet was seen as a stab in the back of the Estonians. In this connection, it is worth noting that Boris Kagarlinski in his interview published in the last two issues of *IV* pointed out that the Estonian independent movement was seeking support throughout the Soviet Union. It seems reasonable to expect that there would be a strong sense of solidarity among the Baltic movements in particular.

According to *Le Monde*'s correspondent Bernard Guetta, the Estonian Supreme Soviet's movement was intended in fact to head off a radicalization toward the demand of outright independence. The picture on the cover of the November 18 *Libération* in fact showed an Estonian demonstrator with a sign saying in Estonian, "A free, Estonian Estonia" ("*Vaba Eesti Eesti!*")

The Soviet authorities have scheduled a CC plenum to consider inter-nation relations in the USSR for mid-1989. But it seems more than likely that the movements for national rights will spread further and radicalize before then. ★