

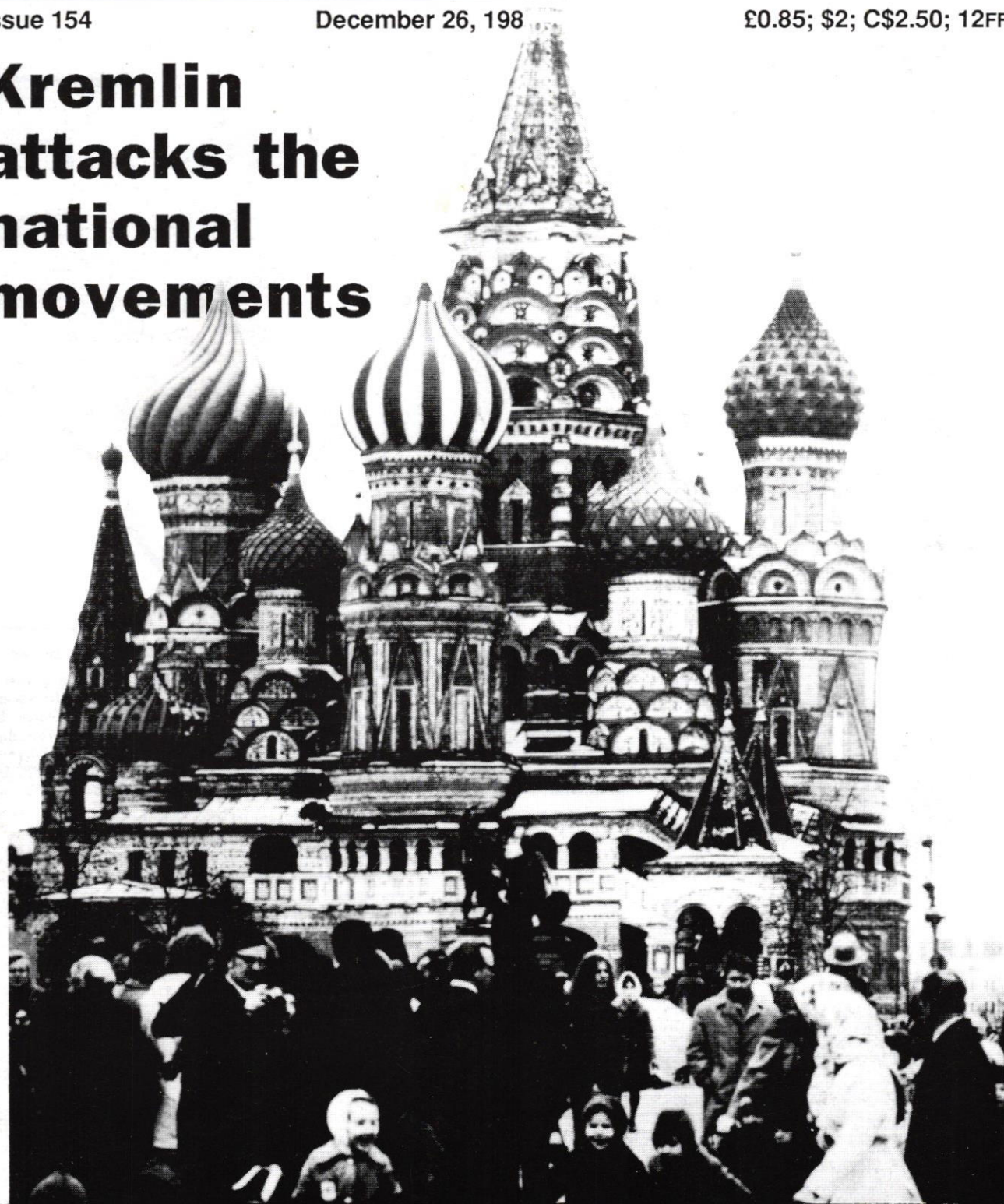
International VIEWPOINT

Issue 154

December 26, 198

£0.85; \$2; C\$2.50; 12FF

Kremlin attacks the national movements



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International VIEWPOINT

A fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in conjunction with the French language *Inprecor*, which appears on alternate fortnights.

All editorial and subscription correspondence should be mailed to: International Viewpoint, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France.

Published by Presse-Edition-Communication (PEC). Directeur de publication: Christian Lamotte. Commission paritaire: 64324. ISSN: 0294-2925. Imprimé par Rotographie.

International Viewpoint is catalogued by the *US Alternative Press Index*.

● News closing date:
 December 19, 1988

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Payment: French francs preferred. Cheques to PEC. Postal transfers to PEC, CCP No 2 322 42T Paris. Bank transfers to PEC, BNP Robespierre, Account 230179/90. **IMPORTANT: ALL BANK OR POSTAL TRANSFERS MUST ALSO BE NOTIFIED BY LETTER.**

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International VIEWPOINT

A new year resolution for IV

AN INCREASED EFFORT is necessary to build *IV* circulation in 1989. The French postal strikes have badly set back our fall subscription drive. That means that if the drive is to be a success, our supporters will have to campaign in a determined way to encourage people to subscribe or renew their subscriptions in the normally slow period after the year-end holidays. Since an international magazine is subject to more hazards than local ones — rollercoaster exchange rates, among other things — we need special help from our supporters. We hope that the advantages of an international publication will motivate you.

The times are still difficult for an international revolutionary magazine. But we think there is room for substantial improvement in *IV*'s circulation. The subscription and fund drive we ran two years ago showed that. But the effort was uneven and has flagged since then. It is essential to renew it and extend it.

We are planning some special issues on broadly international problems for the new year. The first is advertised next to this article. Another important theme is the effect of *glasnost* and *perestroika* on the Communist parties around the world. These illustrate the sort of thing that only an international magazine like *IV* can do. The index in this issue also shows the breadth and depth of the international coverage we offer.

The growing crisis of bureaucratic "socialism" and world capitalism points up the need for building an international revolutionary press now. ★



Gorbachev stabs the Armenian people in the back

WITH THE HYPOCRISY and big-lie techniques typical of the Stalinist bureaucracy, the Gorbachev regime is trying to take advantage of the earthquake disaster to crush the independent movement of the Armenian masses.

This onslaught comes in the context of a general counteroffensive against the mass independent movements that have developed around demands for national rights. In the Baltic, the centralist bureaucracy has not hesitated to create unionist movements claiming to defend the rights of Russian-speakers against the local peoples. In the Caucasus, it has been trying to equate the Armenian independent movement with gangs of Azeris that have staged pogroms against Armenians.

Its manipulation and repression go hand in hand with big-lie propaganda that it is defending reason and order against nationalistic passions and "egoism."

GERRY FOLEY

“WHEN the earthquake left 100,000 victims buried in ruins, when the Armenians were plunged into sorrow, and hundreds left the capital to help their fellow citizens, the people were stabbed in the back,” the Karabakh Committee declared in a December 11 communiqué.

“No other country, even the least democratic, would have dared to insult the mourning of our people, who were beaten and wounded by bullets two days after the earthquake. In view of Moscow’s attitude, it is hard to convince the people that the only problem is a natural earthquake.

“This catastrophe has served to show that we were really deprived of sovereignty....Gorbachev sent his army to shut down the Karabakh Committee. Then he came to offer his condolences to our people. He arrested people, he shed blood, and he left. All those who do not condemn that, condemn themselves to slavery.” (*Libération*, December 17.)

Gorbachev’s turn toward massive repression began in fact before the earthquake, with the declaration of a state of siege in Erevan on November 24. “So, on November 25, Yerevan had tanks at eve-

ry crossroads, ‘interior’ troops at strategic places with weapons and shields, a 10:00 pm curfew, a ban on meetings,” Jean-Marie Karagiullian wrote in *Le Monde* of December 17. “In short, an occupied city, At the same time, in Baku, rallies and [anti-Armenian] exactions continued.”

In this period, not only anti-Armenian pogroms took place in Azerbaidzhan, but mass Azeri rallies opposing the Armenian demands and expressing hostility to Armenians. News about the character of these actions remains scanty.

Pan-Turkish and pan-Islamic slogans

According to Briaçon, *Moscow News* in its December 4 issue was the first Soviet publication to report the raising of pan-Turkish and pan-Islamic slogans in the Azeri demonstrations. Demonstrators reportedly carried pictures of Khomeini, called for unity with Turkey and for opening the border dividing Soviet and Iranian Azerbaidzhan.

Despite vague references in the Soviet press to “extremist groups” among the Azeris, there is no evidence of any independent movement comparable to the

Karabakh Committee in Armenia.

On the other hand, ever since the start of the Azeri counter-demonstrations, there have been signs of official encouragement for the Azeri mobilizations not been seen in Armenia. In the Armenian case, support for the movement from the official representative bodies and sections of the bureaucracy has clearly come as a result of prior pressure from a genuine mass movement.

The nationalist slogans raised in the Azeri mass demonstrations certainly could not have been to the liking of the Kremlin rulers. However, when hundreds of thousands of people are mobilized, even on a reactionary basis and for reactionary reasons, it is inevitable that all sorts of suppressed feelings of injustice will be expressed. The mass demonstrations led by the Serbian bureaucratic strongman Slobodan Milosevic, in which Serbian chauvinism was mingled with working-class and anti-bureaucratic slogans, are an example of this.

A cover for attacks on the mass movements

The Soviet bureaucracy, with no apparent distinction between the liberal and conservative wings, has shown itself quite capable of creating chauvinist organizations to counter the movements for national rights in the Baltic countries. This serves at once as a cover for attacks on these movements, a means of pressure against local officials tempted to make concessions to them and offers the central bureaucracy a pretext for putting the lid back on in order to keep the evil genie of “nationalism” bottled up.

The Armenian movement has been distinguished since its inception by its discipline and its opposition to anti-Azeri feeling. It has put the responsibility for the pogroms squarely on the central bureaucracy. In the context of these pogroms and the the Armenian movement’s lack of means for ongoing communication with all of the Armenian people, it seems inevitable that there would be some individual reprisals against Azeris.

But despite the constant attempts of the Soviet press to place an equal blame on Azeri and Armenian “nationalists,” every indication is that attacks on Azeris have been very minor by comparison with the assaults on Armenian communities in Azerbaidzhan.

The escalation of the Kremlin’s attack on the Armenian movement had clearly nothing to do with maintaining “order,” and still less defending Azeris. It was a response to the Karabakh Committee’s attempt to mobilize support for the victims of the earthquake, in the face of paralysis, incompetence and confusion of the bureaucratic institutions.

Supposedly, one of the principal objectives of *perestroika* is to promote rank-

and-file initiative. And who could doubt that an organization that had proved itself capable of organizing demonstrations of up to a third of the population of the Armenian SSR and national general strikes could effectively organize help for the earthquake victims?

Karabakh Committee leaders arrested

"While all the sirens were screaming and the ambulances continued to bring hundreds of wounded to the Yerevan surgical institute, on December 10 the military authorities in the city forcibly dispersed a crowd that had come to offer contributions for the victims," a *Le Monde* correspondent reported on December 13.

Four leaders of the eleven on the Karabakh Committee were arrested and sentenced to 30 days in prison after they refused to call on the people to go home. The following day, Sunday, December 11, troops fired warning shoots to disperse a crowd gathered to protest the arrests. Reports of the number wounded vary from one to three, but there seems no doubt that blood was shed.

In an interview published in *Pravda* on Monday, December 12, after some very general and trite expressions of sympathy for the earthquake victims Gorbachev launched a violent attack on the Armenian movement:

"I have shared the sorrow of the people....And, all of a sudden, someone asked me if we were going to take up a dialogue with the informal organizations, and once again, this Karabakh question was raised. I said everything that I thought, perhaps a bit roughly.

"Above all, I said... 'Stop, look at the grief that has been created both for the Azeris and the Armenians, the road onto which they have been precipitated. Today, the entire country, the entire world is in mourning for what has happened in Armenia....The man who asked me this question must have been totally lacking in moral sense."

On Friday, December 16, *Pravda* opened up a major barrage against the Karabakh Committee, announcing that 22 of its members, including five leaders — A. Akopian, K. Bartanian, S. Gevorkian, V. Manukian and L. Ter-Petrosian — had been arrested on December 10 and sentenced to 30 days "administrative detention." It declared: "These shameless people, demonstratively violating the established order, organized an illegal rally around the Writers' Union. They spoke to the people gathered there, whining about human rights." Nothing was said about the group's collecting aid for the earthquake victims.

Pravda continued: "The second act took place on December 22. On that day a crowd of people gathered near the memo-

rial to the architect Tamanian. A member of the Karabakh Committee, A. Galstian, called for insubordination to the forces of order. A hundred kilometers from Yerevan, people of various nationalities were saving the lives of Armenians, and this Galstian was calling people to rallies. The people realized how shameful these appeals were and dispersed." There was no mention of the "internationalist" education offered by the bullets of the MVD troops.

The article went on to blame corrupt local bureaucrats for the movement: "Let's look behind the scenes of the present events. The Karabakh leaders are doing the work, the plums are being collected by various sorts of corrupt operators, the godfathers of the local mafia. They are quite comfortable hiding behind political demagogues. The local prosecutors and police can scarcely lay a hand on these scoundrels....Once you are with the Karabakh Committee, it means that you are a patriot. And nobody cares whether you are a bribe-taker or a plunderer of the people's property."

By a contradiction inherent in Gorbachev's *glasnost* strategy, these classical big-lie denunciations were issued at the same time that the official press (*Pravda*, December 12) admitted facts that showed that while the earthquake was a natural occurrence, the disaster was in fact caused by the economic mismanagement of the bureaucracy. "Everything that was built in the years of stagnation collapsed. How could it be otherwise, since seismologists warned the builders several times....Nonetheless, buildings of five, eight floors rose up stubbornly." The mortar used was said to contain "more sand than cement."

The attempt to blame shoddy construction on Brezhnev is not likely to convince the Armenian masses. This sort of construction is typical of the bureaucracy's economic management everywhere and at all times since the bureaucratic caste usurped political power and freed itself from democratic control.

"We were deprived of sovereignty"

The reaction of the Armenian people is probably reflected in the statement of the Karabakh Committee that the disaster "served to show that we were really deprived of sovereignty," which means democracy as well as national rights.

This is not the first time that rulers have looked to a natural disaster to crush a people that they could not. The English imperialists and landlords hoped that the great Irish famine would eliminate the problem of Irish restiveness. The Irish response was expressed in the proverb, "God sent the potato blight, the English brought the famine."

The famine also was the result of a sys-

tem of social oppression — in the Irish case, colonialist landlordism. It gave impetus to the development of a revolutionary movement out of the moderate mass movement that preceded it.

The Armenian movement has likewise grown massive. It has been radicalizing. It has now been driven underground but seems to be maintaining itself and deepening.

"Restricting their movements, being careful about who they talk to...the leaders of these [Armenian] organizations are trying to regroup their forces. Everyone distributes the monthly journals of other movements. There is *Hairinkh* [Homeland], a journal of history and politics; and *Anakhoutioun* ['Independence'], a more ideological weekly."

The slogan of independence had been appearing more and more in the demonstrations, apparently reflecting the radicalization of the movement, like the reference to "sovereignty" in the Karabakh Committee statement of December 11. While that is a natural response to disillusion with the Soviet CP reformers, there is no visible way the Armenian people can achieve sovereignty by their own strength alone. They need alliances with other forces prepared to fight the bureaucracy throughout the USSR. They have already sought alliances with the other peoples fighting for national rights.

Revival of independent mass activity

The Armenians have played the vanguard role in these struggles, and that is undoubtedly why the Kremlin is taking the gamble of trying to crush them now. The bureaucracy's crackdown in Armenia poses a life-or-death challenge to the movements of other oppressed peoples, but not only to them.

The movements for national rights are the first form of the revival of independent mass activity since the establishment of the bureaucratic dictatorship. They have been opening the road for democratic action for the Great Russian workers and workers themselves.

The democratic aspirations of all the Soviet masses explain why the bureaucracy could not crush the movements for national rights at their birth. Therefore, the attacks being made on them today, in particular on the Armenian movement, represent a turnabout by the Gorbachev leadership that threatens the entire movement for democratic and social rights of every kind in the USSR.

No socialist or democrat should be confused about the terms of this confrontation by the bureaucracy's claims about the dangers of "nationalism," "communal conflict" or "local mafia." What is at stake is the right of the masses to solve their problems through mobilization, open debate and democracy. ★

Benazir Bhutto inherits a poisoned legacy

ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO, the only elected prime minister in Pakistan's history, was overthrown by General Zia ul-Haq in July 1977. Eleven years later his daughter Benazir Bhutto, leader of the Pakistan People's Party, won the November 16 elections and has just formed a government (see IV 147).

After many years of exile following the execution of her father in 1979, Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan in April 1986, just after the March general strike, the first since the coup d'état. She was met at the airport by nearly a million people. In the weeks that followed, she was surrounded by immense crowds, notably in Karachi, the industrial center of Pakistan, where two million people gathered. But these popular mobilizations were not enough to topple the dictatorship.

Zia's sudden exit last August in a mysterious plane crash, while accompanied by half of his chiefs of staff and the American ambassador, cleared the road to power for Benazir.

But she has inherited a poisoned legacy: economic disaster, a total dependence on the United States, ethnic and religious divisions, and, lest it be forgotten, the Afghan problem. As for the general public, they expect a lot from the new prime minister.

Tariq Ali, author of several books on the Indian sub-continent, spoke to Marc Renard about the situation.

HOW DID the electoral campaign unfold? What was the government's attitude, the level of participation and the general atmosphere?

The electoral campaign was rather low key. The situation was as follows. One week before the election campaign, the Supreme Court of Pakistan, very clearly under the directive of the military, insisted that all of the people that went out to vote had to show their identity cards. This meant that in a country where a majority of people still live in the countryside, large parts of the electorate, especially the rural poor and women, would be disenfranchised.

Now this meant that the turn out for the election was very low for Pakistan, it was 40%. In the previous two elections over the last thirty years turn outs have been very high, between eighty and ninety percent. So the turn out was low.

6 The second point to be made about the campaign is that the People's Party, the populist party which was the main opposi-

tion to the army, in fact moderated many of its demands and, in terms of social and economic content, there was very little to choose from. There was no real class mobilization in that sense, except that the poor, by and large, voted for the Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

The third point that has to be made about the election campaign is that the People's Party emerged as the only single political party with support in all four provinces of the country. In the province of Sindh in the southern part of Pakistan, they literally did not allow a single representative of the reactionary fundamentalist parties to win even a single seat. All the traditional landlords of Sindh were voted out of office. So in Sindh, I would say that the mobilization had a nationalist as well as a populist content. This was the Sindh population voting to put Bhutto's daughter back in power.

■ What was precisely the content of the electoral campaign of PPP. What were Bhutto's promises?

Look, the campaign was basically de-

mocracy or dictatorship. That was the simple issue. And on that issue the people decided very clearly. General Zia's supporters were essentially wiped out. Eight federal cabinet ministers lost their seats. I think the population of the country was voting against the legacy of the last eleven years — it was voting against fundamentalism, it was voting against Islamic punishment, it was voting to be allowed to breathe once again. I would say that that was the main political content of the campaign, that people wanted a return to democracy. And the PPP did not offer them too much in terms of social content. It is true that one of the planks in the People's Party manifesto was very radical and drastic land reform. But we will see if that is implemented.

■ Just after the election there were provincial elections. The Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) seems to have had better results in these elections?

No, only in the Punjab did it have a better result. In Sindh it didn't win a single seat, in Baluchistan it won some seats, and in the frontier it won some seats. But in the north-west frontier province, the PPP together with the ANP, the Awami National Party, have a majority and form a government. In Punjab, the situation was more indeterminate. The IDA got more seats as a grouping than the PPP and there they form a government, and that was a big blow for the PPP. But the People's Party claim the reason for this was that there was a lot of chicanery, and corruption and intimidation, or they would have got a majority there. Well, we don't know. We shall see.

■ Before, Zia and the right were against this kind of multi-party election. What pushed them to change?

Well, what pushed them to change their minds was the fact that the entire leadership of the army was blown up. They had no serious option. They face the danger that in a country where there are very strong national tensions, if they didn't allow a proper election the province of Sindh certainly could fall apart.

■ After Bhutto's victory, were there negotiations between her and the chief of state and the army to get the prime ministership?

Well, yes, there were intense negotiations, and in these negotiations the army chief played a very major part, as did the United States ambassador, Robin Oakley. In fact if you look at the way Pakistani politics have developed over the last twelve to

fifteen years, Pakistan emerges very clearly as a neo-colony of the United States in Asia. It is probably one of the few countries in Asia which has that particular relationship with the United States. It is a relationship which the Filipino strong man Marcos had, that sort of relationship.

So the United States ambassador is almost like a senior politician in the country, and they operate like that quite openly now. There is no attempt to conceal this fact. In fact my own feeling is that Pakistan would probably have a better chance if it was formerly integrated into the United States as a distant republic, but anyway that is a separate point. So, the negotiations were on Afghanistan and the IMF loan, both of which the previous regime has already been involved in negotiating.

I think that part of the price that Benazir has to pay for being prime minister is that the old foreign minister of General Zia, Yaqub Khan, remains her foreign minister. She was forced to concede to that and I think she was told that she could not change the conditions of the IMF loan. Now, the conditions of the IMF loan to Pakistan are such that if she attempts to push through the demands of the IMF, I think she will face a very rapid rebellion from the people.

So the army and the Americans insisted on these things, but, on the other side, you have the following things: the release of all political prisoners has been ordered, capital punishment has been barred for any political offense, all Pakistani exiles have been given passports to return to the country whenever they choose. The national press trust, which was a government controlled press body that oversaw the majority of the press, is going to be dissolved.

So, on that level some interesting things are happening and the mood of the country is far more relaxed. But I think no one underestimates the scale of the problem. The thing is, people are desperate for her to succeed, because there is no alternative. They know that if she fails it will be back to the uniforms, and that will be very disastrous. So people are just desperate for her to do something, and we shall see...

■ **In general terms, what are the economic problems she has to face?**

The economic problems are that the country has got no money. It is living on debt, it is totally in debt, and is mortgaged to the World Bank and the United States. I think that in about two months time, unless the United States gives them a massive loan, they will not even have the money to pay the civil servants. Fifty percent of the country's budget is taken up by the army, so the only way to generate some wealth is to cut the military budget. But that she will not do for fear that it unleashes a military coup. So it is a very difficult situation.

The PPP has pledged, as I said, a drastic land reform in its manifesto. If implement-

ed, this would bring great joy to the peasants throughout the country. It would bring Benazir enormous popularity among the common soldiery, which is overwhelmingly rural in origin. But will some of the powerful landlords who sit happily inside her party agree to such reforms? It is hard enough to be a social democrat in the heartlands of capitalism in Western Europe to-



day, but it is virtually impossible to be a social democrat in the conditions of the third world.

■ **She has to form her government with the independents, the MQM movement?**

...She doesn't have to, she has a majority of her own because of the twenty seats reserved for women, she won eleven...

■ **But it has been said in the international press that the MQM will probably support her party. Who and what are they?**

The MQM — or the Mojahin National Movement — are the children of Muslim refugees who fled from India in 1947 at the time the sub-continent was divided. This particular group has lived mainly in Karachi and they still do not feel that they have been treated well, there have been lots of clashes between them and the local people, so they formed their own organization.

Once they formed their own organization, with very regionalist demands, the net result was that one of the fundamentalist Muslim parties, the Jamaat-e-Islami party, totally lost its influence in Karachi, the biggest city in the country. The MQM won

most of the seats there, and they are an influential force in Karachi city, but I think they have already said that they are going to collaborate with the new regime and work with it and not against it. That is quite important.

■ **You mentioned at one time that when Benazir came back she threw the old left out. Now that she has gotten rid of the Punjabi protesters, what are the problems in the PPP?**

I think that at the moment there are no problems. She has won the election, so the party is united. Some of the old left is outside of the party, for example, as I described in my *Guardian* article, the leadership of the PPP made a serious tactical error. Benazir decided not to give backing to a local PPP veteran, Ghulam Hussein, who was on the left of the party. Hussein had publicly disagreed with the softening of the party line vis-à-vis Washington. He was punished by being denied a seat. He stood as an independent in two different constituencies and drew over 80,000 votes in both cases. This was more than enough to let in the right-wing candidate.

Another mistake was that in the capital of the country Benazir had depended on the former general Tikka Khan, who is not universally popular, to choose the candidates. His choices provoked a virtual insurrection amongst PPP voters. The result was predictable. There was only one successful PPP candidate in Islamabad, and it was not General Tikka.

But at the moment the party is very euphoric and happy. The person she has appointed as minister of the interior and of justice is Etezaz Assan, a very highly respected human rights lawyer who was himself arrested eleven times by the previous government. He is a man of principle and it is very significant that he has been put in charge of the interior. It means that he is in charge of the police force, he is in charge of re-writing the constitution, he is in charge of cleaning up the judiciary. So he has got three important positions, and a lot is expected of him.

■ **What can she do against the Islamic laws? And what other initiatives has she taken?**

She has already said that all these laws will be repealed, and in her first broadcast declared that all of the rights taken away from women will be restored. There will also be freedom for all trade unions, but given the economic conditions of the country, although they will grow, they will have to be careful. When her father was in power he nationalized any industry that sacked workers at one period, but she could not do that now.

One example is at the root of IDA head Nawaz Sharif's current hostility to the PPP. In the 70s, he was the proprietor of a large

steel foundry. His workers went on strike. He used goons to try and end the strike. The workers appealed to the then prime minister of the country, Bhutto, who nationalized the factory. During Zia's rule, it was privatized once again and Sharif became eternally grateful. Pakistani politics can often be as simple and straightforward as that.

I think that the trade unions will find that once they have set themselves up, they will face people who will say if you go on strike, we will close down the factory and go elsewhere. Thus it is the same as elsewhere in Europe, but worse. I don't expect too much in the first year, on that level.

■ Is there a nucleus yet for a big union?

No, there is no possibility for anything remotely like the PT in Brazil right now.

■ In one of your previous articles you spoke of the heroin mafia situation...

This is still in place, but I think that they must be very nervous, because I think that this new government will try very hard to get them out. But this is a very difficult problem. Over the past ten years this has totally corroded the country's institutions. Will the heroin mafias and those on their payroll inside the army and the civil service, the police and the political parties simply sit back and allow this lucrative trade to be suppressed?

■ As far as Afghanistan goes, what has Benazir said?

She has said that she will stand by the Geneva accords. The Geneva accords call for a coalition government in Afghanistan. They call for non-interference first, and second of all to resolve the problem peacefully. Given Gorbachev's latest speech in New York, I think she will be very hard put to follow Zia's policy on Afghanistan. Zia's policy was to put the most recalcitrant wing of Afghan fundamentalism, that is the wing led by Gulpindar Hekmatyar, into power in Kabul. I don't think the new government in Pakistan will do that, I think they will try and put pressure for a coalition government, but probably a coalition government excluding the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDP).

■ And the aid from Pakistan will probably be diverted from the most reactionary groups?

Yes, I think that is possible. I think there is very little time now left for a Soviet withdrawal, so I think that will happen.

■ And what is the attitude of the States about that?

Change is possible now. I don't think too much will change in Washington after Reagan's departure, but it could.

■ And as far as India goes?

There, again, I think that all indications show that she will try to reach some accommodation with India. If you look at the

Indian reaction to her election, if you read the Indian press, it has been very very positive. The Indian government has always said that it would rather do business with an elected government than with the Pakistani army. So I think on both sides there is a desire for conciliation and to reach some kind of lasting agreement.

■ What do you see happening in the next presidential elections?

Well, earlier you asked about concessions. One concession was to keep on the foreign minister, the second concession was not to do anything about the IMF loan that had already been signed and negotiated, and the third concession was that this veteran bureaucrat, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, would be kept on as president.

The position of the Pakistani People's Party is that they are going to back Ishaq. In my opinion, it is an unfortunate concession, to put it mildly. Ishaq was a member of the old government, and even when he was a member of Bhutto's cabinet, he was the member of Bhutto's cabinet who was widely reputed to be an agent of Inter-Services Intelligence. Everything that Bhutto's cabinet discussed was reported to the army. He sat in the cabinet that ordered the execution of Bhutto. To have this guy, who has no support or backing in the country, as president is a very major concession to the United States and to the army. But there will be other candidates.

The most serious candidate who is stand-

ing against Ishaq is a man called Nasrullah Khan, who is a bourgeois democrat, one of the leaders of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). He has said that he is standing against Ishaq, he knows that Ishaq will win, but representatives of democracy have to stand against him. And some of the independents in parliament are backing him, so Ishaq will not be elected unopposed. But the fact that the PPP is forced to support Ishaq is an indication of how weak it is at the moment.

■ How can we understand Benazir Bhutto's evolution since she returned to the country? First she thought that, with massive support, she could bring down the government, but this proved impossible. How has she changed?

I think the evolution was that she realized that the Americans were running the country totally, and that nothing could be done in Pakistan without the Americans, unless you went for a revolution. She is in any case not a revolutionary, neither ideologically, by temperament, nor politically. So that option was excluded right at the beginning. So for her, the only option was to do a deal with the United States, which she has done.

■ But will that tactic cause her to lose some of her massive support?

Well, that we will see over the next year. The first year is going to be crucial for what will happen to this country. ★

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Ten years after the founding of Herri Batasuna

NO-ONE DISPUTES the importance of Herri Batasuna (HB), whether in the Basque country itself or within the Spanish state. For supporters of the status quo the problem is one of either coopting HB or forcing it to capitulate.

In order to accomplish this, they use a number of tactics, ranging from harsh condemnations demanding repressive actions, to inviting Herri Batasuna to become part of the institutional political framework. Their objective is clear: HB must be coopted, or cease to exist.

JOSE IRIARTE BIKILA

ON THE other hand, we want the reverse. We hope that Herri Batasuna stays strong and stays firm. The road to revolution is not straight and narrow, and we need collaboration among all revolutionaries — even those with different ideas. It is very important for us, the Revolutionary Communist League (LKI), to analyze the significance of Herri Batasuna and to learn from this experience.

Herri Batasuna was founded ten years ago. This was during the pre-autonomy period; the constitution of the Spanish state had not yet been approved, the social movements were still active, the labor movement was calling large general strikes, and demonstrated its opposition to repression through its struggle. Above all, discontent was pronounced in most sectors of *abertzale* (Basque radical nationalist)

opinion.

Shortly thereafter, during the vote on the constitution, the total of no votes and active abstentions testified to the rejection of the constitution in Euskadi. For a large sector, the ETA seemed to be the vanguard of the resistance. Many people identified with the attacks against the system. However, this social sector was not homogeneous. In a general sense, they were all *abertzales* (some had been for a long time, others were more recent), but many had differing ideologies and belonged to different parties. In the end, HB drew on different sources: classic nationalism, left nationalist organizations, some groupings coming out of the assembly movement, and activists with many good qualities. In one way or another, all identified with the ETA's struggle.

The origins of Herri Batasuna are found among the organizations making up the Altasu bureau, which wanted a united, democratic, radical nationalist alternative. In doing this, the Patriotic Socialist Coordination (KAS) filled this broad social sector's need for organizational instruments.

Exposing constitutional autonomy as a fake

Herri Batasuna developed around the rejection of the pre-autonomy and a call for voting against the constitution. It quickly became the major player in the political developments in the Basque country around these two themes. Ultimately, it was the only parliamentary party that denied the constitution's legitimacy in Euskadi (there is no longer any carry over of the negative vote by Euskadiko Ezkerra, and one no longer even mentions the Basque Nationalist Party's abstention), and which exposed the autonomy in the constitution as a false solution.

Just before the status of juridical autonomy was to be put into effect, confronted with the institutions in formation, HB proposed the setting up of the Euskal Herriko Batzarre Nazionala (National Congress of the Basque People, EHBN) hoping it might be able to serve as an organ of dual power. This initiative did not attract a following. The movement was not strong enough, and the project was too vaguely defined.

After a good electoral showing, HB gave a strong push to the mobilizations, setting off general strikes and supporting national delegated assemblies. It was always very respectful of united front struggles, which at this time were called in unity of action with the revolutionaries. HB gave impetus to, and led the fight against repression and the national struggle, and provided a political cover and support for other kinds of struggle.

It also denounced the reformist parliamentary game, giving priority to mobilization and the struggle, and decided not to participate in the Basque and Spanish parliaments. Later, it withdrew from the Navarra parliament. This tactic had its

Basque organizations

EA: Eusko Aikartasuna (Basque Solidarity). A 1984 split from the PNV, led by the former president of the Basque government, Lendakarl Carlos Garaikoetxea.

EE: Euzkadiko Ezkerra (Basque Left). Formed in the beginning by former members of the political-military wing of the ETA, who had abandoned armed struggle, this organization has since become openly reformist.

EMK: Euskadi Communist Movement. The Communist Movement (MC) organization in Euskadi.

ETA: Euskadi ta Azkatasuna (Basque Nation and Freedom). Founded in 1960, under the Franco dictatorship, a radical reaction against the conservatism of the PNV.

HB: Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity). Created in 1978.

KAS: Patriotic Socialist Coordination. Political platform of HB, of which the three most important points are the right to self-determination, the reintegration of Navarra with the Basque territory, and amnesty.

LKI: Revolutionary Communist League. The Euskadi organization of the Fourth International's section in the Spanish state. It came out of the fusion in 1970 between the Spanish LCR and a split from the ETA (ETA 6, the Sixth Assembly of the ETA).

PNV: Basque Nationalist Party. Created in the last century by Sabino Arana, considered the founder of Basque nationalism.

positive aspects, but also its weaknesses. Its far too rigid application was the cause of many lost opportunities. Yoldi's intervention in the Basque parliament inaugurated a more even-handed tactical approach.

PSOE launches attacks on Euskadi

Tejero's attempted putsch on February 23, 1981 marked the end of this phase. Faced with the danger of a coup, HB and the ETA did not adjust their position. Explaining it away as a sort of internal military coup, they did not give the situation the serious attention it deserved, and did not respond to the real fear which was developing in the entire population.

After taking over governmental responsibility, the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) launched harsh attacks on Euskadi, directed, though with differing forms and intensities, both against the autonomy statute and the radical resistance. The autonomy statute was stymied and the PNV split, trying to find a way out. The "officials" decided to

give into centralism, while the *garaikoetxistas* (EA) held to the earlier tactic, which they baptized the third road. On the other side, the only way in which the PSOE communicated with the ETA and HB was through the language of repression.

At the same time, the PSOE attacked the labor movement and succeeded in weakening it in the course of some very hard struggles. Finally, turning its back on the anti-NATO movement, it organized the manipulation-referendum, getting a majority to vote for NATO membership by means of political blackmail.

Differences among revolutionaries

This whole process was not without its impact. It had a double effect in the statute's defenders' camp. On the one hand the autonomy statute appeared more and more dependent on the good will of the state, which proved Herri Batasuna's case. But on the other, part of the nationalist movement went over to the centralists, which increased HB's isolation.

All of this put a definite end (whether this was planned or not) to the positions supported up until then by the PNV on the refugees, the repression, and negotiations. Among the resistance, neither the fact that HB had maintained and slightly strengthened its electoral position despite the difficult circumstances — with its victory in the European elections — nor the success of legal mobilizations, nor the result of the NATO referendum could obscure the diminishing capacity for mobilization in response to attacks.

Behind some triumphalist speeches, which failed to cover up this concern, it is becoming clear that the ETA and HB, confronted with the change in this situation, are giving more and more importance to

the strategy of negotiation. Although the latter was linked for a while with a total break with the status quo, today it is taking on another meaning. Seeing that the situation is at an impasse, they are searching for a way out.

Throughout these years, especially on the initiative of the KAS, an organizational process has been developing within HB that has replaced the originally more open way of functioning. The current situation requires that we close ranks, especially since the movement is at low tide, and it is for this reason that we must stress organization. We think now that it is possible to find an equilibrium that will not necessarily have to be established at the expense either of pluralism or the unity of the movements.

It is true that some of Herri Batasuna's stands bother us, like certain proposals on negotiation, some economic proposals about Basque national reconstruction, certain positions on a national front, and the separation into distinct phases of national and social liberation. But these are differences among revolutionaries. We place our general assessment of ten years of struggle above everything else. Herri Batasuna and its influence have had a very positive impact on revolutionary struggle. The majority of Basque revolutionaries are in Herri Batasuna. It is a broad mass movement which has confronted the regime, and above all a popular grouping organized around a project that has kept faith with the ETA, a revolutionary organization. That is something.

An organization that, like HB, has been capable of continuing the struggle for ten years — and what a struggle — deserves all of our respect, all of our esteem, and all of our support. We hope and wish that many years "of joy and of combat" lie before us, until we get real freedom: an independent socialist Euskadi. ★

"A tactical and strategic alliance between the working class and the popular masses"

IN VIEW of Herri Batasuna's ten years of existence, Zutik interviewed Josu Iraeta, a member of HB's national leadership.

FOR TEN YEARS, Herri Batasuna has been the basic expression of Basque national resistance and of opposition to the political framework created by the reform. How would you describe the foundation of HB's identity?

You are right when you say that HB has been the basic expression of the resistance and opposition to the Spanish reform. A decade ago, HB came into existence as an electoral regroupment, which became the outlet for what a large part of our people felt. Later, its nature was more defined as "Popular Unity" and it had specific tasks to accomplish. But today, ten years later, we would characterize Herri Batasuna as a tactical and strategic alliance between the working class and the popular masses, engaged in accumulating strength and in a concrete framework, that of political negotiation leading to the putting into practice of the KAS tactical alternative.

Consequently, Herri Batasuna is developing its political practice in the context of the national and social liberation of *Euskal Herria* (the whole of the Basque territory and peoples). HB identifies with these goals and, in consequence, with those who struggle to obtain them. This is why it advances demands and protests. For HB, any national liberation process involves a whole series of objectives, and therefore one cannot look at it in isolation, whether this is in relation to those who are taking part or to the common enemy.

That is why Herri Batasuna, which knows both its enemies and the means they



use, as well as the reality of *Euskal Herria*, is developing its political activity with firm resolve, in the aim of building a Basque state for our nation. The proof of the correctness of this activity is seen in the mass struggle and the constitutional struggle built in the course of these ten years. And this, not only through the electoral process (NATO, the European Parliament, and so on) but in the whole dynamic and whole activity developed by Popular Unity, a dynamic and activity which, as a reference point for the broader liberation movement, has been irreplaceable for the task of defending the movement's positions in *Euskal Herria*.

In consequence, Popular Unity has come up against and will continue to come up against repression. This repression is not only aimed at weakening Popular Unity, but also at introducing factors of division into the movement, between its different active structures. These attempts have failed up until now and will fail in the future, thanks to the cohesion and the progressive nature of Basque liberation positions.

■ **Looking in from the outside, one gets the impression that early on within HB, social themes were more important than they are today. It seems that there is a somewhat one sided view of the national problem (or today, of negotiations) in all HB's areas of work. What is it like on the inside?**

When you don't use a scientific method to analyze the political reality of a people (in all of its aspects, economic, social, cultural, and so on) it's easy to counterpose concepts that, as they belong to this reality, are a common expression of it. In this way, in south Euskadi all kinds of groups, with very divergent political positions, running the gamut from the reactionary right to the left, including dogmatism, reformism, Eurocommunism, social democrats, and what is called nationalism, have all tried to face up to the concept of a Basque nation and society. This in itself is already a misunderstanding of our people.

I want to begin by pointing out that the Basque national and social fact is situated in a very concrete context. Our situation in a highly industrialized Europe — with a strong proletarian make-up and an economic development subjected to international ebbs and flows — is not unrelated to the evolution of certain legal and political forms, in particular the French and Spanish states. As regards south Euskadi, with the 1978 constitution, the Francoist Reform sought to consolidate the privileges of an oligarchy based on exploiting and oppressing the working class and the popular layers. For me, it is obvious that the national consciousness of a people as highly proletarianized as ours defines both the objective and subjective conditions for establishing the basic criteria of a liberation struggle.

It is not a question of stumbling from

one criteria to another. Both aspects are inseparable in the Basque liberation program. We simply want to adequately situate our reality. For the bourgeois state, it is essential to uphold the status quo, in its own class interest. That is why a break with the status quo, the breakdown of the present framework, favors the Basque working class.

Adopting a Basque national strategy involves scientifically understanding the contradiction that exists and is reflected by our people. This conception is therefore neither exclusivist nor one-sided, but approaches the problem in the only possible correct manner. And this is what interests Basque working people.

It is a mistake and a misunderstanding to think that political negotiation is the basis of HB's work, an end in itself. In any process, one establishes areas of work, tactics and mechanisms. To attain certain objectives, an accumulation of forces is necessary. The political negotiation between the ETA and the oppressor Spanish state is a mechanism designed to get implementation of the KAS tactical alternative, and in any circumstance, this requires a favorable relationship of forces. The process of negotiation and the dynamic which has developed to achieve the KAS tactical alternative's goals thus continue to be tools for accumulating forces.

■ **Occasionally one sees writings that contain the idea of a national front which would include the PNV, and EA. To speak more to the point about this, you have at times proposed to the PNV and EA a governmental accord on the basis of national sovereignty.**

How do you perceive this question of a national front, given the history of Herri Batasuna?

The national front understood as an alliance, even a conjunctural one, with those parties of what is called Basque bourgeois nationalism makes no sense whatever in the Basque national liberation movement. It makes no sense and is not realistic in Basque socio-political conditions. HB is the only national front which answers the objective interests of the working classes and popular sectors.

The leaderships of the PNV and of EA and the economic and political forces they represent are in no way interested in changing the current political and legal framework, under the hegemony of the Basque people (which is to say the implementation of the KAS tactical alternative) and they are even less interested in an independent Basque state, that would also be socialist, united and *eskaldun* (Basque-speaking, of Basque culture).

The PNV and EA, in essence, have the same political project. They are separate organizationally only as a result of the progress made by the Basque national liberation movement. Through their leaderships, they are linked to the oppressor Spanish and French states, to the European

Common Market of the monopolies and to international capitalism. Their function is to legitimize any legal framework which that stands in the way of the movement. Thus, defending the interests of the so-called Basque bourgeoisie, their purpose is to hold back the struggle of the movement as a whole. They want to divert the struggle of Basque working people against the oppressor states into an internal struggle between "Basques themselves". There is only one way you can interpret their moving to higher and higher stages of collaboration in order to support the police-black propaganda answer to the "Basque problem" that our enemies have been concocting.

For all of these reasons, I must say that the only national front bringing together the popular and working sectors of our people is HB. It has a clear function in the framework of a truly alternative political program, a political program that once won will offer an adequate road forward.

● **Egin, HB's weekly paper, regularly publishes a historical review that states "ten years is nothing".**

However, this does not really fit with an idea that is beginning to catch on that the solution to the big problems is going to arrive shortly, or before 1992.

It seems to us that the relationship of forces is not as certain as all that, and that in order to get to that stage there would need to be, among other things a big change in the state of the labor movement. It seems this is seen differently within HB. How about it?

The answer is simple. It should, I think, be clear to everyone that within the complexity of the political situation in south Euskadi and, fundamentally, in the Spanish state as a whole, to set 1992 as the date for a solution to any problem is notion of nearly infantile naivety.

In the first place, 1992 is only a reference date. The year 1992, the deadline for the implementation of the "Single Europe Act" (which will cause many serious problems for our people) is the target time set for a projected solution, by means which imply the liquidation of the liberation process, to the problem posed by our people's liberation struggle for the Spanish state and to Europe.

With its single market, the "freedom" of financial circulation, of the job market, and so on in the context of a political militarism whose expression — rejected by the Basque people — is NATO, Europe is demanding internal order. The social-democratic government of Felipe Gonzalez is charged with imposing it. The year 1992 is a key date for this government, not for Basque working people.

For us, it is only a reference point which enables us to firm up, along with our people's political and social structures, the goals of Basque national construction. To do this, the development of all forms of struggle is essential, and struggle of the workers' movement is part of that. ★

US tries to put the lid on revolution in the Caribbean islands



REAGAN's plan for the Caribbean, put into practice after January 1, 1984, has brought a deepening of the international division of labor to the Caribbean islands, as well as a fall in the standard of living, and a spectacular growth in social inequalities.

In the major countries of the region, pressure is mounting for radical change. But the North American military threat remains a powerful dissuasion.

ANDY BROK

REAGAN's plan for the Caribbean, also known under the initials CBI (Caribbean Basin Initiative), is the result of a twofold concern of the North American ruling class. First, to restructure the Caribbean economies to provide a larger opening for American exports and private investment, notably from North American firms; and second, to re-launch economic activity in the private sector, and in that way stem the rise of revolution stimulated by the Grenadan and Nicaraguan revolutions, the armed struggle in El Salvador and Guatemala and the consolidation of the Cuban revolution.

The plan calls for placing additional funds at the disposal of local private sectors and governments. It removes import barriers for the entry into the United States of products manufactured in the 22 countries benefitting from the CBI. Corresponding reforms are expected from those countries "benefitting," such as privatizations, opening to foreign investment — especially through the creation of industrial free trade zones, devaluations, and debt conversion into foreign investments.

With the 1983 invasion of Grenada, the

White House went even further in demonstrating that it would use any means to preserve capitalist interests in the region. The Grenadan revolution represented, in fact, a serious danger for imperialism. It showed the English-speaking peoples of the islands a road towards social and national liberation that was much more realistic than the parliamentary reformism they inherited from their colonial past.

Centuries of foreign domination

Overall, the Reagan plan has achieved its first objective. According to a recent study by the United States Congress, between January 1, 1984 and 1988, new and follow-up investments bringing in foreign currency in the 22 CBI countries reached a level of \$670 million for a total capital investment of \$1.5 billion. These investments have supposedly directly created around 100,000 jobs. Some 47% of the new investments are by American companies, as against only 37% from Caribbean firms.

Even though the countries in the region

have been dominated for centuries by foreign interests, these investment figures show the extent to which local capital is subordinated or relegated to the role of a junior partner in the only dynamic sector of these economies, that is to say the one directed towards foreign markets.

Decline of traditional exports

In fact, this wave of investments is only beginning to hit some of the countries in the region, in particular Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, which offer considerable "comparative advantages" to labor-intensive firms: among the lowest wages in the world (between \$0.40 and \$0.80 an hour), zero taxes, no import duties in the United States, and physical proximity to this big market. Currently, within and outside of these free-trade zones, more than 200,000 women workers (and a smaller number of men) work in assembly factories (textiles electronics, shoes, sporting goods, jewelry, toys, and so on). In view of the past rate of growth and the projects underway, the number will approach 400,000 by the end of 1990.

However, economic deflation is far from being achieved. Owing to the decline of traditional exports such as sugar cane, bauxite and oil, the restructuring of Caribbean economies has not brought an increase in the value of exports. Imports from the region to the US even dropped from \$9.2 billion in 1983 to \$6.5 billion in 1986.

Moreover, the relaunch affects only some activities like assembly and tourism, which are easily shifted to different countries or regions. Each country plays its own game to attract agricultural investments, tourists and assembly work. One example in this last sector, which leads in job creation, is

Barbados, where exports of electronic components fell from \$150 million in 1984 to \$0.5 million in 1987. In 1984, this country was undoubtedly the leading Caribbean exporter to the United States in this sector. In three years, it lost its competitive edge, in large part owing to the devaluations in Mexico, Jamaica, and in the Dominican Republic.

One of the most indebted regions of the world

Finally, the free-enterprise policies imposed by Washington have further depressed the — often already dreadful — living standards of popular layers in almost all of these countries, and further deepened inequalities.

In most of the Caribbean countries, with the striking exception of Haiti, the per capita foreign debt is more than \$1,000. This region is one of the most indebted in the world. In 1986, Jamaica earmarked 40% of its national budget to paying the debt.

The region is a mosaic of islands, most of them differing greatly in their histories, their culture, geography and economy. It is therefore not surprising that they all have very specific political situations. However, at least one common feature unites the Caribbean nations: the fact that they are all, to a greater and greater extent, dominated by the United States. This economic domination brings with it authoritarian regimes (with, in general, "democratic" intermediaries), worse poverty in almost every case, and growing inequalities that go hand in hand with the "respect for the laws of the market." Such a situation is, evidently, favorable for the development of mass struggles. In the region itself, Cuba and Nicaragua bear witness to the possibility of victorious revolutions.

At the same time, another example, that of Grenada, is just as much in the minds of those who want to lead their own country to true independence and democracy. One of the big lessons of Grenada is the weakness of each country on its own against the United States' capacity for economic and political and, if need be, military aggression. In most Caribbean countries, the threat of imperialist intervention is one of the most serious obstacles to the development of a revolutionary process, especially since North American imperialism is not the only one militarily active in the region. The United States has already included the armed forces of other great powers such as Great Britain, France and Holland in its large scale training maneuvers in the Caribbean.

The case of the three most populous independent countries in the "American Mediterranean," that is, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica, testifies to the potential for struggle, but also the handicap imposed by the very unfavorable relationship of forces vis à vis imperialism.

The sharpest turn to free-enterprise has

come in Jamaica since Edward Seaga became the head of state in 1980. Announcing from the outset that he was going to "liberate" the captive market forces and replace the "import substitution" model with an export model, the new Jamaican prime minister has enthusiastically led the way with a "neo-liberal" program — devaluation, cuts in public spending, privatizations, dismantling of protective tariffs, lures for foreign investments, and an exchange of Jamaican assets against foreign-debt paper.

Apart from the new start for tourism, the most spectacular effect registered in the economic field was the development of a large industrial assembly sector. The garment export industry also, to be sure the largest, employs around 25,000 people.

The Jamaican people are paying very dearly for this sort of "development," with a deterioration of public services, and a drop in purchasing power. In these conditions, Michael Manley's Popular National Party (PNP) out of power since 1980 has regained much of the ground it had lost to its adversary over eight years of social-democratic shilly-shallying.

Crisis of Jamaican parties

According to all of the polls, the PNP has majority support. However, the destruction in the wake of Hurricane Gilbert may enable Seaga to win the elections that are to be held in early 1989. He is considered best able to get major subsidies.

In 1980, the CIA intervened on Seaga's side using every possible means, in a campaign marked by violence and murders. This time Manley is preparing in advance...by retreating ahead of time: he promised a month ago "to increase deregulation of the economy in order to encourage production."

Manley fought hard against the left in the PNP, which finds itself today in a very weak state. As for the Stalinist Workers Party of Jamaica (WPJ), which played a pernicious role around the time of the Grenadan crisis, it went into a crisis after its failure in the municipal elections. Recently, it has been impelled to question its subordination to the "socialist states," its anti-democratic functioning, and its manipulative practices. An echo of *glasnost*?

Between 1978 and 1986, the Dominican PRD, a bourgeois populist party affiliated to the Socialist International, withered popular illusions about a "social-democratic" road to development. Its management was marked by massive corruption, submission to Washington, selective repression and the April 1984 massacres. The policies of President Balaguer — a former lieutenant of the dictator Trujillo and today head of the Conservative Party (the PRSC) — elected in 1986, have been distinguished from those of the preceding regime primarily by an acceleration of the social crisis: a drop in real

wages, deterioration of public services, and a rising spiral of crime. In February 1988, riots broke out in several cities.

Along with this, the continuing devaluation of the national currency is favoring foreign investments, especially in agribusiness, tourism and assembly for export. Investors, including from Asia, are flooding in even faster than in Jamaica to mount an assault on the United States market from the Dominican Republic, where labor costs are \$0.50 an hour, all charges included. A dozen industrial free-trade zones already employ about 90,000 people.

Despite the traditions of struggle inherited from the fight against the Trujillo dictatorship and the 1965 war, the Dominican left is also in a difficult position, even if it is different from that of the Jamaican left. An attempt at regroupment called the Dominican Left Front (FID) broke up before the 1986 elections. Today, the left in the Dominican Republic, though dispersed, plays a very large role in social struggle and within union structures. But it is very weak in the electoral arena, while the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD, a populist formation) is occupying more and more space.

This complicated situation has precipitated a crisis in most of the organizations on the left, and many have suffered splits. The difficulty of sustaining a revolutionary project is in part the result of the victorious 1965 uprising against the local army, which was then drowned in blood by the intervention of 40,000 US marines. Long before Grenada could serve as a reminder, the people of the Dominican Republic became conscious of the size of the obstacle to their national and social liberation.

In these conditions, it is not surprising that the hope of an electoral solution, even after the disillusionment with the PRD, has been reborn around another populist party, the PLD led by the professor and ex-president Juan Bosch, despite the latter's advanced age and authoritarianism. There is no doubt that today this party has attained a majority of public support and has become the focus of hope for a radical change in the 1990 elections.

Army has held real power in Haiti

In order to assure himself of the good will of the United States and the local bourgeoisie, who have already kept him out of power through a military coup in 1963, Juan Bosch frequently proclaims his determination to maintain capitalist order and is working to demobilize struggles so that there will be no social explosions before 1990 that might threaten bourgeois institutions or the electoral timetable.

The Haitian Army, which inherited its role following the American occupation (1915 - 1934), when it was organized as a auxiliary force, has since then taken on the tasks of repression. Since Duvalier's fall, it has been the army that has held real power.

After the the interim period of Leslie Manigat's presidency, General Namphy's dictatorship exercised its power without restraint. Deprived for the most part of international aid, it lurched senselessly on with its terror policies. It became necessary therefore, for the United States to put an end to this unstable and uncontrollable regime and once again ensure its mastery over the army.

In the beginning of September, contacts were established between Western embassies, the Papal Nuncio and General Prosper Avril's entourage. At the same time, other plots were brewing in the army. The September 17 coup d'état in which the Presidential Guard rose up against Namphy and replaced him with Prosper Avril was the result of several operations, by both the army chiefs and the rank-and-file. But at the end of the day, Avril and the American embassy were the big winners. The officers retired under pressure from the rank-and-file were frequently replaced by men who were linked more closely to the United States. And the soldiers who got out of Avril's control for a few days and wanted to completely purge the army were repressed after being betrayed (see following article).

General strike called by CATH

The United States has thus apparently succeeded in regaining control of the army. But the situation is far from stabilized. The "mad days" which witnessed whole barracks rising up against their commanding officers will have a lingering and profound impact. And the affair of the imprisoned soldiers is far from over. During the successful general strike of November 21 called by the Independent Confederation of Haitian Workers (CATH), one of the major demands put forward was their release.

The very success of this highly politicized strike, declared illegal by the government, shows the radicalization of a population whose living standards are getting worse from day to day, and who needed only two months to shed all illusions in Prosper Avril. The average level of consciousness has risen considerably in the last two years. Another sign is the clear crisis in the Haitian Catholic Church, perhaps more serious than in any other country of Latin America.

14 The credibility of those political cur-

rents whose strategy is based on holding democratic elections has suffered seriously since the election of November 29, 1987, which ended in a bloodbath with the blessings of the CIA. Those currents have concluded that no candidate should be run without the prior agreement of the United States. But as long as the Macoutes maintain their power, holding even minimally free elections remains a dubious proposition. Although still loosely structured, the array of radical people's organizations, anti-electoralists and anti-imperialists is gaining strength. It has proved its capacity to mobilize people on several occasions, even if it is still far from able to offer a political alternative.

Anti-imperialist coordination

In November 1987, the United Peoples Movement (UPM) hosted a meeting of the representatives of English-speaking Caribbean anti-imperialist organizations on St. Vincent. This was the first meeting organized for a sub-region of the Caribbean by the Assembly of the Anti-Imperialist Organizations of the Caribbean and Central America, a group founded in 1984 in Havana. The Assembly itself held its third session in Panama June 20 - 22, 1988.

Representatives of 41 political parties and movements from 23 countries came together and a new Coordinating Committee was designated. Cheddi Jagan (of the Progressive People's Party in Guyana) was elected president, Olga Sanabri (of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party) executive secretary, Don Rojas (of the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement of Grenada) information secretary, and Eugene Gotfried (of the Socialist Movement of Curaçao) treasurer. Also elected to the committee were Michel Bangou (of the Guadeloupe Com-

munist Party) Oscar Allen (from the United Peoples Movement of St. Vincent) and Antonio Martinez (from the Salvadoran FMLN). The outgoing president was Rafael "Fafa" Taveras (from the Socialist Bloc of the Dominican Republic).

"Now we must organize some joint campaigns"

The Fifth Union Conference for Workers Unity in the Caribbean was held from June 22 to 24. It was organized by the Council of Progressive Unions of Trinidad and Tobago. The delegates came from 17 countries in the region. The fact that these conferences are being held shows the growing links being forged between the organizations in the Caribbean basin.

Don Rojas of the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement said last February in the *Militant* that the climate of cooperation, understanding and mutual respect among Caribbean revolutionaries, progressives and democrats has qualitatively improved. It should therefore be possible for these conferences to be extended to embrace all of the revolutionary forces in the region and to become active solidarity groups. Rojas also pointed out:

"It is imperative right now for the anti-imperialist parties in the region to begin to increase our regular joint activity. We have to work together to help the people of the Caribbean clarify the political stakes and to mobilize them in action to assert our interests against those of the wealthy elites.

"The St. Vincent meeting of the Anti-Imperialist Organizations of the Caribbean and Central America was a step in that direction. Now we have to find ways to take the positions adopted there and put them in action around some joint campaigns." ★



Open letter from jailed Haitian soldiers

ONE MONTH after the September 17 coup d'état, the international press announced that an attempt to overthrow the new president had been defeated.

This was actually a total fabrication designed to justify jailing the most committed

soldiers.

We print below excerpts from two statements written by fourteen soldiers currently imprisoned. They were distributed in Creole by CATH, the Independent Confederation of Haitian Workers.

WE ARE fourteen enlisted men whose names are the following: Patrick Bochar, Timoté Jean Frank, Altinor Jean Alipson, Figaro Gentry, Kangar Robert, Oupette Casner, Vilex Saintyl, Jean Mathieux, Germain Sainthonax, Joseph Clébert, Septembre, Philémon Job, Hardrès Pierre Louis, and Delile Frico.

We were the major promoters of the September 17 coup d'état that sent General Namphy and all of his family out to pasture in Santo-Domingo.

Betrayed by the general

We put General Prosper Avril in power on the condition that he meet the demands of the people, which are much very linked to those of the rank-and-file of the army. We thought that in learning the lessons of history the general had exorcised the Duvalierist demons that danced in his head...

In what circumstances were we arrested? On Saturday, October 15, General Prosper Avril gave five of us, along with three civilians, the mission of going to motivate people in the central highlands....

On the Monday that we came back from the mission in the central highlands, all five of us were arrested and taken to prison. What are we accused of?

Of having taken part in a plot to bring down the Avril-Heubreux government! [Sergeant Heubreux was supposed to serve as permanent representative of lower officers and soldiers to Prosper Avril.] At the same time, the general was giving the order to destroy the Suggestions Office of the Enlisted Men's Secretariat set up in the National Palace. Some members were arrested and others went into hiding.

In order to blacken our reputations and our honor, the general has accused us of plotting with Samuel Jérémie, a criminal who spilled the people's blood as long as he could....

Several reasons caused the general to turn against us:

- After the September 17 movement, the general promised us promotions and a lot of other advantages. We answered him by saying that we didn't need to go any higher than staff sergeant or master sergeant, because we didn't want to get out of touch with the army rank-and-file.

- In the accord that we signed with the general, we let him know that he was there to act in accordance with the will of the people.

- He was there to create the conditions so the demands made by the people after February 7 could be met, until they could choose their leaders through elections for all posts from the municipal districts to the presidency.

We had asked him to cleanse the country of all the gangs sowing terror, of the Macoutes, those shameless criminals who besmirch the Haitian people in the eyes of all nations. That is why in the press conference that they organized, the soldiers asked the government to restore the people's constitution and add an amendment to Article 291 excluding the Macoutes from public life for a period of thirty years.

We asked the general to carry out a total purge from top to bottom in all state institutions so that freedom of the press, the right to free expression, free association, and free trade unions could be guaranteed. This is the only road out of the situation that the country finds itself in.

Workers and soldiers...

But like an old monkey trained well in the Duvalier school, the general put his neural circuits to work on how to stop all of this as quickly as possible. In fact, we do not have the same interests as the army potentates. Our interests are closer to those of the working masses, peasants, transport workers and so on.

What shook the general the most was when he noticed that soldiers had decided to invite journalists to a press conference.

In his eyes, this represented a serious danger. In the brainwashing that all soldiers have to undergo, they are always told that, apart from national radio and television, all journalists are enemies of the army, enemies of the people, that they are working to destroy the country and that many of them work for communism.

Rising up to defend our rights

When people rise up to defend the rights stolen from them, soldiers are always told that the public peace is in danger, and the country's interests threatened.... That is what explains the fact that when people demonstrate, when workers strike, soldiers are sent to put them down with truncheons, blows, teargas, and bullets. If a soldier does not want to obey orders, it is reported, and it is said that he is against the country's interests. At the first opportunity, he is made to pay.

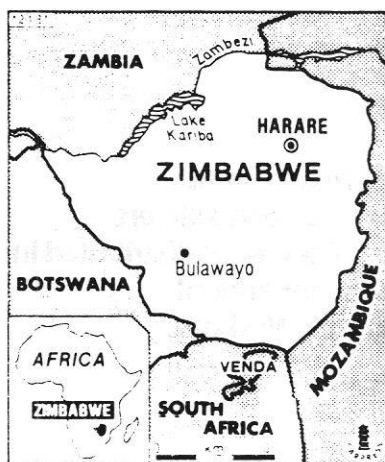
It is because of all of these injustices that we, who are part of the rank-and-file of the army, presented a list of 19 points covering soldier's bad conditions, demands closely linked to those of the people, to the general....

Continuing our work, we began to prepare a list of all of the section chiefs and attachés who used terror under the cover of some Macoute military figure, so that they could be replaced by others chosen by the people.

But the general's new strategy is bringing Duvalierism back to life. It includes dismissals and transfers to remote areas in order to neutralize us when the situation calms down. That is what began in the military hospital, and is being prepared in other barracks, in the Cafeteria barracks, in the Aviation barracks, in the Leopards' Camp barracks and so on.

Today, we declare that, as Nelson Mandela accepted 26 years in prison for liberation, we are ready to sacrifice ourselves for the cause of the Haitian people. ★

Groundswell of opposition to corruption in Mugabe regime



THE RECENT OUTBREAK of urban (student) and rural demonstrations, along with the public outpouring of criticism that accompanied their repression, represents the sharpest political expression to date of mass

disillusionment with the government's lack of progress toward "socialist transformation". That is to say, with progress toward the solution of the material class interests of the workers and poorer peasants.

It also reflects the limitations of this growing movement, which still lacks an alternative form, ideology and coherent leadership. Every attempt at the construction of such a movement is met with the charge of being counter-revolutionary. Until a strategy emerges to cope with this, there is little way this nascent movement can gain sufficient confidence in itself to become capable of a serious class challenge to the petty-bourgeois nationalist regime that President Robert Mugabe has come to represent.

The episode is also instructive, not least for the South African liberation movement, of the way in which a non-working class government — brought to power through a negotiated settlement that leaves capitalist class rule intact — comes to serve the interests of the bourgeois nation-state.

JOHN WEBSTER

ON OCTOBER 23, 1988, students blockaded Harare university and erected street barricades against a rumoured attack by the Youth League of Zanu(PF)¹, the ruling party. This unprecedented action followed a month of unrest that began with the arrest of 478 students who had been locked in violent clashes with the police.

Under emergency regulations police had attempted to confine the student demonstrations, ostensibly against corruption in party and government, to the campus. The arrests led to solidarity demonstrations that were also violently dispersed, as was a demonstration a fortnight later by 200 student teachers who were commemorating the death of Samora Machel. As justification, the pro-Mugabe daily newspaper decried last year's student demonstration, on

the occasion of Samora Machel's death, as "wild, destructive rampages through the city".

The public expressed its opinion on all this in a virtual boycott of the Samora Machel memorial meetings called by the party on October 19. State repression of recent demonstrations had sparked off one of the fiercest debates about democracy to rage publicly in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980.

The immediate cause of the student demonstrations was the seemingly insignificant acquittal, on a charge of arson, of a deputy minister of political affairs (an elected MP for Gutu, appointed to this high office by Mugabe). She had been charged with ordering two party members, both already in jail, to burn down the home of another woman with whom she shared a lover. One

of the students' demands was that the MP be removed from high office. The background to this was a growing disgruntlement with what people increasingly saw as a top-heavy bureaucracy that opened the way to corruption in government and party.

This view had been forcefully expressed by Tekere (MP for Mutare), an outspoken critic of government who had been dropped from high office. He recently called for the ministry of political affairs to be disbanded on the grounds that it was unconstitutional and "worked for the ruling party". He also attacked the government team of 51 ministers and deputies as "far too large" (parliament has 100 seats), and insisted that members of the politburo "should be elected and not appointed". This, along with his criticism of "the trend to appoint hand-picked people", could not have endeared him to either party or government "bosses". Consequences were quick to follow, as we shall see.

Series of political rural demonstrations

What compounded the urban protests, giving them an explosive edge, was a series of overtly political rural demonstrations and counter-demonstrations that also called for the removal of the "arson MP". These were conducted by members of both Zanu and Zapu in the Masvingo province, an extremely militant and well-organized area since the liberation war. Local feeling ran so high that it threatened to split the local party machinery. Overtones of this struggle reach back to the earlier, unpopular, removal from high office of Zvobgo (a senior participant in the Lancaster House talks, whose party base is Masvingo) for having challenged Mugabe.

Coming as all this did in the midst of the Zanu/Zapu unification process (a precursor to the one-party state), it caused the national party officials to ban all meetings and demonstrations in the province. This drastic action followed a call by local party officials for a referendum to "constitutionally" decide the fate of the MP. The recalcitrant local party had also suspended members of a delegation who had travelled to Harare to express their support for the MP (acquitted

1. Zanu(PF) — Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front). In December 1987, Joshua Nkomo's Zapu (Zimbabwe African People's Union) signed a unity agreement with Zanu that was ratified by both parties earlier this year.

of arson) to Mugabe.

This overall situation, which officials of Zanu(PF) felt was getting out of control, forced the central committee, under Mugabe, to decide on further drastic action. This included the expulsion from the party of Tekere, a former general secretary and charismatic leader of the province of Manicaland. At a mass rally in Manicaland, Tekere had supported the demonstrators and opposed their repression. He had charged that "democracy in Zimbabwe is in the intensive care unit", that "the leadership has decayed" and that "the policy of a one-party state would lead towards the creation of a dictatorship". The central committee also threatened action by the "intelligence ministries" against those who "promoted" the demonstrations.

Demonstrators attacked as "counter-revolutionary"

These "reprisals" by the central committee were accompanied by the most objectionable attacks from government ministers, including Mugabe, which depicted the demonstrators as counter-revolutionaries in the service of the enemies of the state. At best these demonstrations reflected a degree of alienation felt by the public against "corruption" in the government and party. The public protests, then, have their limits which should not be overstated and which should be seen in context.

Undoubtedly, a new element has crystallized in Zimbabwean politics, that of a sizeable young intelligentsia disenchanted with the lack of progress towards socialist transformation. This comes at a time when the government itself has admitted to a growing problem of "the educated unemployed". By 1990, a further 250,000 students will enter the labour market with little prospect of employment, while educational institutions are approaching the limits of their capacity.

The education curricula have increasingly included elements of political economy. This, along with a widening realization that eight years after having "entered the political kingdom" the basic character of the economy remains unchanged, has raised the level of political consciousness among the intelligentsia considerably. But not yet sufficiently to cause a radical questioning of the basic character of the state, nor the class politics of the government. Little wonder then that the Students' Representative Council issued a statement saying that they were not anti-government nor anti-Zanu(PF): "we are members of Zanu who are demonstrating against corruption".

At the mass level of the peasantry, a similar deepening of class consciousness has accompanied their realizations that the land reform programme has been timid, insufficient to satisfy their land hunger, and has left the large-scale commercial farms and estates of the multinationals largely un-

touched — except for the state purchase of unused farmland on a "willing buyer, willing seller" basis.² Against the targeted 162,000 peasant families it had been planned to resettle in the first five years after independence, only about 35,000 families or about 250,000 people were actually resettled — and this not without a myriad of problems. At the same time, population in the mostly over-crowded communal areas has been growing at about 180,000 a year.

All this is accompanied by a deepening class differentiation among the peasantry. It also led to the landless seizing land, the so-called "squatter movement", which has been met with forced removals. This fed the urban drift, giving rise to the inevitable shanty-towns and mushrooming of the informal sector around all the major cities.

The primary goals of the armed liberation struggle were land and liberty, and the frustration of these aims is increasingly felt. Earlier, this gave rise to the "armed dissidents", who were ex-guerrilla fighters dissatisfied with the "reconciliation" policies of Zanu(PF) and, later, with the exclusion from power of Zapu. Lacking in class politics, this movement degenerated into banditry, a situation that was effectively ended when Mugabe/Zanu struck the recent unification-amnesty deal with Nkomo/Zapu.

Although the deepening social contradictions continue unabated, the rise in class consciousness is uneven, given that the populace experience real benefits of post-independence in the form of much improved health, education and social facilities. Today this programme is running up against the limits of its expansion, as the logic of capitalist control of the economy increasingly forces the government into austerity measures.

At the mass level of the working class the same fundamental contradictions are apparent. The early waves of strikes in the post-independence era were met with a combination of mass arrests of strikers, the cooption of the trade-union movement, the establishment of workers' committees, the introduction of minimum wages, the curtailment of collective bargaining and the introduction of a Labour Act which virtually removes the right to strike.

Impact of South African workers' militancy

However, workers' struggles continue, either with strikes — although these are hardly ever reported — and/or in many muted forms of worker protest, including sit-ins and the occasional occupation. In recent times, the militancy of the South African workers (with whom contact is steadily increasing through international union federations) has had its influence. This began to mesh with the improved organization of the Zimbabwean unions, giving rise to a heightened consciousness.

A myriad of problems have been the cause of an increasingly sharp and critical conflict between government ministers and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. These include: the failure of the minimum wage to keep pace with rising inflation (which is hitting particularly hard at the urban low-paid and unemployed) — today \$1 is buying what 40 cents did in 1983; the growing unemployment problem (1 million of the workforce are unemployed out of a total population of 8 million); the falling standards of living in the overcrowded urban townships (worsened by the forced removal of urban shanty towns); and the critical transport problem.

This is a reflection of the union movement struggling to assert its class independence and express the material interests of its membership, thus extending beyond the government's plea for reconciliation and productivity "in the interest of national unity and development". Furthermore, new layers of young workers are entering onto the scene, bringing with them a critical view that has slowly matured in the eight years of independence.

Mugabe promises to end corruption at the top

Since independence there has also emerged a sizeable new class of the black petty-bourgeoisie, in the form of the burgeoning civil service with their higher standards of living (40 per cent of the national budget is channelled towards salaries, with debt service repayments taking a further large chunk). This is in addition to the small-scale commercial farmer and the "emergent businessman" that the government promotes.

Meagre as the incomes of ministers, top civil servants and party officials are when compared to those of the captains of commerce and industry, they are infinitely higher than the incomes of the workers and peasants. It is from their new found "wealth" that this new class is buying property and employing labour. Their salaries are bolstered by the loans and largesse so readily available from the private sector (who purchase the political leverage they need to ensure that "politics" does not conflict with their "economic" interests).

The country is rife with rumour about top officials who have bought farms and businesses and who treat their labour "worse than the white man". In August 1988, Mugabe, talking to the British BBC 4 radio, roundly condemned "the creatures at the top" who are amassing wealth, and promised to implement the "leadership code". This code is a very popular party instrument designed to curb the amassing of wealth by those entrusted to lead the nation

2. This legal barrier, expressly forbidding the seizure of lands, was a central part of the 1980 Lancaster House agreement, whose specific intention was to keep the newly independent Zimbabwe firmly in imperialism's orbit.

"Father, when I grow up I want to be a Minister of Housing."



in socialist transformation.

Since the last party congress the country has been waiting for the implementation of this code. If properly implemented, it is popularly believed, the code would rid government and party of those "reactionary" elements whom it is believed have gained control over the "progressives", which Mugabe still represents in the popular mind. The recent student demonstrations have not been the first public demand for the code's implementation.

This time the student demonstrations coincided with rural protests, with an upturn in union militancy, with the two-party unification process, with a sharp fall in living standards, and with a sharper political climate determined by the events unfolding in Angola, Mozambique and South Africa. In addition, the demonstrations coincided with a general change in class consciousness. All of this combined to cause the government to over-react and let loose a wave of critical discussion.

We said before that the limits of this criticism, which can be seen from the content of each incident, should not be overstated. Nor should we forget that the students are the sons and daughters of the workers and peasants, who constitute the bulk of the party membership, which explains its national impact.

"Kenyan-style" referendum on MP

The rural demonstrations were organized largely by the local party functionaries and hangers-on involved in a power struggle. Their popular support came from rank-and-file party members who were genuinely peeved over the MP's unjust acquittal for arson — seen as corruption going even to the level of the courts; otherwise, why jail her accomplices who testified against her?

When eight out of 23 district representatives visited Mugabe to express support for

his appointee, they blamed the meetings and demonstrations on a "clique of power-hungry and jealous government and party officials...civil servants, police officers, some members of the Integration Task Force [uniting Zanu and Zapu], and some party provincial leaders...". The counter-charge was that the eight had no mandate and were thus suspended for "misleading the president".

Yet when these "party democrats" wanted to show that democracy was being served they called a referendum to decide the fate of the MP. However, voting was to be "Kenyan-style", where the populace would publicly line-up "for or against" the MP. This would immediately identify friend and foe in a situation where many issues of survival depend on patronage. Again, when Zanu's national officials simply declared the local decisions null and void, they did so in the name of the "constitution". After all, what was at stake was not only the authority of Mugabe, who is president of both Zanu and the nation, but also the authority of the central committee. (When Mugabe met the delegation and explained his choice of the women MP for high office, he described her as a dedicated woman, saying: "that one is a man"!)

On October 30, the referendum was eventually held under the watchful eye of the politburo. The populace returned a massive "no" vote, with only a handful supporting the MP. This was a real slap in the face for Mugabe and the party bosses, who now have to decide what to do. Members of the Zanu(PF) Women's League had travelled down to rally to her support, but to no avail. Little wonder that tempers flared and police

control was necessary. In the 1985 election, this MP had collected 35,000 votes (although she claims that she got 100,000), and now she could only win 1,000. She charged that the referendum was rigged and that people were threatened with death if they supported her.

On the same day in Harare the first national convention of the united Zanu/Zapu Youth League was held. This gave some comfort to the top leadership, in that 1,000 young people staged a solidarity march in support of President Mugabe's leadership, and lauded the unity accord that called for a one-party state. However, this convention had been used as a rally to whip the youth into line. The major speeches from party bosses (there is no report of the voice of the youth themselves) repeated attacks that the university lecturers and students were counter-revolutionary, as had been charged by the Zanu(PF) central committee earlier.

On October 22, the central committee had met with Mugabe in the chair. They let off a torrent of abuse against those they saw as enemies. Mugabe spoke of "political dissidents and malcontents" who somehow had been allowed to emerge in the party's ranks. He described the students as "anti-party and anti-government". He had used similar language against the armed dissidents when he sent his select Fifth Brigade to "pacify" Matabeleland in 1983-84.³

Ominous threat to political activists

The central committee, it is reported, "felt unanimously disgusted" by the attitude, behaviour and unfounded criticism of the government by the students, and threatened that "action would be taken by the intelligence ministries" against the initiators of the illegal demonstrations. This is a particularly ominous threat to political activists.

Earlier, four lecturers and six students were charged with contravening the Law and Order Maintenance Act by allegedly holding an off-campus meeting to plan the demonstrations. One law lecturer, Shadrack Gutto, a well-known Marxist-Leninist, was served with a 48-hour deportation order. However, when the court threw out the charges against the ten men the *Herald*, a pro-government newspaper, wailed that the bungling at court allowed the "ten to walk

3. Matabeleland, in the west of the country, is the province of the minority Ndebele-speaking people and historically the political base of Joshua Nkomo. This province has been the focal point of armed conflicts between "oppositionists" (some of whom in the past were sponsored by the South African regime), local white settlers and government forces.

out free men, even heroes", leaving the impression that the government was harassing them, while (in its opinion) it was "sheer ineptitude that cost the government its reputation... giving it a bad name".

Congress of Trade Unions condemns persecution

When the MP Tekere was expelled from Zanu(PF) it was first said that "he could form his own party", but if he continued with his "unfounded allegations against Zanu(PF)" he would face charges of defamation, as would other senior party members who were expressing opposition. It appears that decisions were not as unanimous as was claimed. Tekere was defiant: he said that efforts to have the leadership code complied with were dead, and that he would "not sit back and see the country go to the dogs".

Following the central committee meeting it was left to the Zanu secretary for youth, a minister of state for political affairs, to spell out the government's reply to the students. At the demonstration, the students had issued a document detailing instances of corruption, and calling on Mugabe to enforce the leadership code. What some have described as "an act of loyalty" was now seen by the central committee as an "attack on the integrity of Zanu, its policy, its leadership and the general members of the party", the "counter-revolutionary intention of which was to render Zanu incapable of implementing its socialist policies".

Muzenda, Mugabe's deputy, warned that students were being used by the country's enemies (meaning South Africa) "as a tool to weaken the economic independence of Zimbabwe". Little wonder that the students barricaded the university against rumoured attacks from the Youth League. When Mugabe addressed the Youth League rally he called on them not to assault the students. There is real concern among radicals over what will happen to the students when they return home after the exams. They will have no safety in numbers then.

When Mugabe addressed the Youth League rally he charged that some lecturers "who had lived in luxury during the liberation war, now wanted to hijack the revolution". Holding up an ammunition belt, Mugabe said: "This is the revolution. Revolution did not come from books". Compare this to the sober voice of the academic staff when protesting against their colleague's deportation: in terms of academic freedom they defended the right and duty of staff and students to debate, examine and speak out on any just cause, "including criticism of corruption".

In sharp contrast to the government's attacks is the support expressed by those who opposed the repression.

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions declared that the state was taking advantage of the students' demonstration to persecute and harass progressives. "Social-

ism would never be established under present circumstances where the leadership of the party and government is galloping along the capitalist road. With which forces will the situation be reversed when the state threatens to smash those opposed to the present right-wing trend?" And then a prophetic warning: "As long as the present trend continued, opposition would increase and government would react with more repressive measures to defend the shift to the right, which it has taken".

One correspondent, typical of others, said that the "overall position of workers in the present socio-economic setting has deteriorated. The colonial capitalist structures we inherited still determine the economic position of workers...the spectre of poverty is evident...wages are whittled away through inflation....The Zimbabwean economy as presently constituted is not in transition to socialism — we must fight for real transformation and not mere adjustment".

"Popular feeling voiced by the voiceless"

Another spoke of the leadership code, saying that "the people who have the ultimate responsibility for its implementation are the very people who are violating it...Implementation is not possible without a change in leadership...the code has made the leadership criminals and dishonest people".

Another recalled that student protests under the Smith regime "were a barometer of evil", and that it was students who swelled the ranks of the liberation movements. The validity of student demonstrations lay in their being "an expression of the general popular feeling voiced by the voiceless all over the country". Let there be a vast debate on social transformation, "let the students speak...let the workers wield the power to strike".

Even the *Herald* editorial had to agree: "Zimbabwe is not a socialist state and the country has few if any socialist policies to boast of yet". Let those who consider a negotiated settlement an essential step along the road to South Africa's liberation ponder all of this.

Perhaps the most poignant warning came from an ex-Zanla combatant who was still "scared I shall look back and say the effort and blood which it took to liberate this country was, sadly, all in vain". He challenged the central committee saying that proof of corruption is an elusive creature, which "became more slippery when those who are capable of providing the evidence...are small-time citizens bullied by politicians wielding the power of high office". Many expressed the view that if nothing is done to get rid of corruption and social injustices then the demonstrations express "the beginning of a new era of more to come", and "if demonstrations are suppressed they will still be started

underground".

All of this is a language not publicly heard in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980.

These demonstrations clearly reflect a level of mass discontent with the policies and practices of government. The public outcry is significant given the absence of any democratic alternative to Zanu(PF). The problem is that this protest does not yet seriously question the class character of the regime, reflecting an underestimation of the problem it seeks to tackle. Furthermore, all of this shows just how difficult it is, not only to practice democracy in the so-called "national democratic stage of the revolution", but how the state acts to block the development of class forces necessary for the transition to socialism.

The major question is: How will this groundswell of discontent gain an organized expression? This is a necessary prerequisite to its gaining sufficient confidence in itself to seriously intervene in the political process. What forms of struggle are possible when the state reacts in this way to criticism?

Clearly, the strengthening of the trade-union movement, the student movement and the movements among the peasantry and women in general are the necessary starting points. All this is easier said than done, as there is not tradition of independent political activity. Because no independent class formations existed before the transfer of power, the oppressed classes still await the emergence of a leadership that is capable of articulating an alternative to the rhetoric of "radical" petty-bourgeois politics. The dangers of a one-party state, with its lack of pluralist democracy, is evident.

Regime comes up against limits of reform

All of the layers now moving into political action have, to one degree or another, had their birth in fire. They had to deal with a national leadership that retains the kudos of having led a successful armed liberation struggle, and of implementing unquestionable advances in all spheres of social welfare. They face a government that has earned a reputation for steadfast opposition to apartheid and imperialism.

Today, petty-bourgeois nationalism is running out of steam. It has come up against the limits of reform, given the logic of the capitalist economy, which they shied away from attacking. Capital refuses to invest until both government and party convince them that their socialist rhetoric is simply that, and no more. In practice, this means bringing the mass struggles to heel and disciplining the working class. What this episode reveals is one aspect of that process.

The struggle in South Africa still has the opportunity of avoiding the same pitfalls. ★

**AROUND
THE
WORLD**



U S A

Curtis defense under attack

A SYSTEMATIC campaign of provocation and disinformation is being waged against the campaign in defense of Mark Curtis, a member of the Socialist Workers' Party framed up on sexual assault and burglary charges.

One of the organizers is the Workers' League, a degenerate sect devoted to proving that leaders of the SWP have been agents of the KGB and FBI, and that since the party's leadership is made up of agents, its adherents have the right to enter and cannot be expelled. It has been suing for some years to get the courts to set aside the SWP's rights to determine its own membership.

The moral level of the Workers' League operation is indicated by the statement in the September 16 issue of its paper, *The Bulletin*: "The role of the SWP leadership is as flagrant and open as can be. Like Curtis, they have been caught with their pants down, and like Curtis, they are trying to brazen it out, relying above all on the political stupidity and cynicism of the petty-

bourgeois radical milieu in which they have sought support."

Curtis was sentenced to 25 years in prison on November on charges of burglary and sexual assault. He had also been charged with assaulting a police officer at the time of his arrest, but the prosecution was forced to drop that accusation. In fact Curtis was badly beaten. He testified that a woman had asked him for help and led to the porch on which he was arrested. She then disappeared, and a policeman burst in, grabbed him and pulled his trousers down. He was charged with attacking a fifteen-year-old woman who lived in the house.

The only evidence against Curtis was the testimony of the arresting officer, who had been suspended in 1978 for beating up a suspect and lying about, and the alleged victim and her younger brother, who proved notably unimpressive witnesses. In fact, the conviction was on the cop's word. There was no material evidence that Curtis had any physical contact with the alleged victim. In fact, the porch where the attack took place was covered with dog hairs, but none were found on Curtis, although there were on the purported victim.

A letter by the father of the alleged victim attacking the Curtis defense campaign

is being circulated by the Workers' League and sent to endorsers. It is couched in insidious demagogic terms, "vicious rape against a working class youth," and makes incredible accusations: "I made several attempts to speak with leaders of the Socialist Workers Party...hoping to convince them that were making a big mistake in defending Curtis....Their response was to laugh in my face and flash a wad of hundred dollar bills at me to show how much money they were making from the case."

The SWP has introduced evidence proving that the police failed to stop this man from smashing up the Curtis defense headquarters, after he told them he was going there to "kick ass." He later claimed that SWP supporters burned a cross in his lawn.

Despite these demagogic attacks, support for Curtis and suspicions of the police are growing. For example, in November, Central Arizona Labor Council President R. T. Griffin sent a protest letter to the Des Moines prosecutor, stressing the bad conditions in the packing-house industry in which the framed-up socialist worked: "Rather than cease these hazardous conditions, they instead try to persecute individuals such as Mark Curtis."

However, the frame-up against Mark Curtis and the provocations against his defense indicate that he and the SWP are the target of a sinister concerted campaign. The maximum international support is need. ★

PROTESTS can be sent to Polk County Attorney James Smith, Room 408 Courthouse; 500 Mulberry St., Des Moines, Iowa 50309, USA. Copies should be sent to the Curtis Defense Committee, PO Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311.



POLAND

A splendid couple!

THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT Current of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) distributed leaflets with the following text on the occasion of Margaret Thatcher's visit to Poland:

Undoubtedly, the British prime minister, Mrs. Thatcher, and General Jaruzelski will be able to understand each other. First of all, it can be assumed that they will exchange their experiences in chopping trade-union rights, in which they are both world-famous experts. A tradition of collaboration has already been established. When the British miners were on strike, Jaruzelski rushed to support Mrs Thatcher by increasing Polish coal exports to Britain. So, they will have no problem seeing eye to eye now.

They will be able to talk to each other about how best to defend the privileged strata at the expense of the poor, how most effectively to drive down the consumption of the working people, how best to cut back social services.

If there were not some difficulties about the "social system," they would really make a splendid couple! Unfortunately, geopolitical interests stand in the way of a marriage.

Could Mrs. Thatcher at least be appointed an honorary member of the Political Bureau? No? Then at least she ought to be brought into the Consultative Council. In fact, her advice was already followed in May, when our media cited the way that the British seafarers' strike was broken as an example, and concluded that solidarity strikes could not be tolerated here either.

Thatcher could supervise the firings of the Jastrzebie miners. She has already laid off tens of thousands of miners in her country. And if it were to turn out that a state of war needed to be proclaimed again, Mrs. Thatcher's considerable experience would certainly be useful. After all, a state of war has already existed in Northern Ireland for 19 years!

Doubtless, Mrs. Thatcher would like to take advantage of her stay in Poland to assume the pose of a defender of workers' rights. Thus, she will express her support for Solidarnosc. Thanks a lot! We would a thousand times rather have the support of the British seafarers and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, who have been subjected to poverty and to the repression and terror of the forces of order. They can understand us. Mrs. Thatcher only wants to use us.

What we have to say to Mrs Thatcher is this: Give the sacked miners their jobs back! Repeal the anti-union laws! Withdraw your army from Northern Ireland! ★

CANADA

Youth organization needed

A YOUTH ORGANIZATION is what is needed. That was the conclusion reached

OBITUARY

Sylvia Bleeker (1902-1988)

SYLVIA BLEEKER, a veteran of the American Trotskyist movement, died in New York on November 23 at the age of 86. She was the companion of Morris Lewit (Stein), a central leader of the Socialist Workers Party in the 1940s and 1950s.

Bleeker adhered to Bolshevism in her native Byelorussia in the revolutionary period and came to the United States in 1920. She and her companion were Yiddish speakers and were first active in the United States in a Jewish workers' club. Bleeker was an outstanding unionist in the needle trades and collaborated in associated in union work with James T. Cannon, then a CP leader and later founder of the American Trotskyist movement.

She and her companion were expelled from the Communist Party on the charge of "Trotskyism" about a year after Cannon, when she was CP candidate for congress in New York. They then joined the Communist League of America, the US branch of the Left Opposition.

In the 1930s they edited a Yiddish-language Trotskyist journal, *Unser Kampf*, in the 1930s, which circulated in 15 cities in the US and in a number of countries where there were concentrations of radical Jewish workers (France, Belgium, South Africa, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil).

During the war, she worked in the Civil Rights Defense Committee fighting the legal victimization of Socialist Party leaders. In the same period, her companion served as national organizational secretary of the SWP.

In 1946, Bleeker and Stein went to Mexico to help reorganize the Trotsky household in Coyoacan. In 1947-48, they collaborated in Paris with the Fourth International center.

In the 1950s, Stein returned to the SWP leadership and Bleeker worked in the party publishing house. In the late 1950s, they became inactive owing to health problems, but remained sympathizers of the party.

In 1984, Sylvia Bleeker opposed a wave of expulsions from the SWP which were condemned by the Fourth International. She continued to support the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, a group established by some of those expelled. ★

by about sixty young people who participated in the open conference held by Gauche Socialiste on November 5 and by the conference of Gauche Socialiste itself on the following day. [GS is a Québec organization sympathizing with the Fourth International.]

After a day of rich in discussion and education, among other things on the questions of the student movement in Québec, youth, women, as well as the struggle against racism and in defense of the environment, the conference participants took up the need for a political organization for youth.

First of all, the links between the various governmental schemes, such as the freeing of school costs and the reform of student loans and scholarships, against which young people have been mobilizing, were seen clearly as the plans of the bourgeois state to keep youth in under-employment and poverty. That pointed up the need for a political organization for young people. The questions of the independence of such an organization and its sympathy with the program of the Fourth International were taken up.

In the evening, Rébecca Houzel of the Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire

[the youth organization in sympathy with the French section of the Fourth International], Pierre Laliberté from the Solidarity group in the United States and Manon Ann Blanchard of Gauche Socialiste presented an internationalist view of the student struggles. The Toronto comrades added a special touch, informing us of their experience in English Canada.

A parallel was easily made between the student demands in Europe and America. On both sides of the Atlantic, students are demanding access to higher education, which requires adequate financial aid for young people coming from the working class.

A youth organization is necessary because the reality experienced by young people often differs from that perceived by the adult world and also because they have own modes of expression and learning process that need to be respected. The struggles of youth have a revolutionary character, and the young people leading them want to achieve revolutionary changes in our society, to fight the bourgeoisie and its grip and to overthrow the capitalist system. ★

[From the December Issue of Gauche Socialiste.]

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3,000 people celebrate Fourth International's fiftieth anniversary



PARIS, December 10: Over 3,000 people, including many International guests, joined the LCR and JCR for a day of celebration for the 50th anniversary of the FI. In between the stalls there was a magnificent photographic and documentary exhibition on the founding of the Fourth International, including archive film of Trotsky on videos.

The five forums on women, internationalism, revolutionary culture, the USSR today and the rehabilitation of Trotsky were all packed out with hundreds of people.

A three-course banquet was organized for 800 people. The highlight of the day was a massive rally, with the principal speakers being Ernest Mandel, Rosarrio Ibarra, Esteban Volkov, Michel Warschawsky and Alain Krivine.

Finally, a Colombian group kept everyone dancing until dawn, finishing off a fantastic day...

