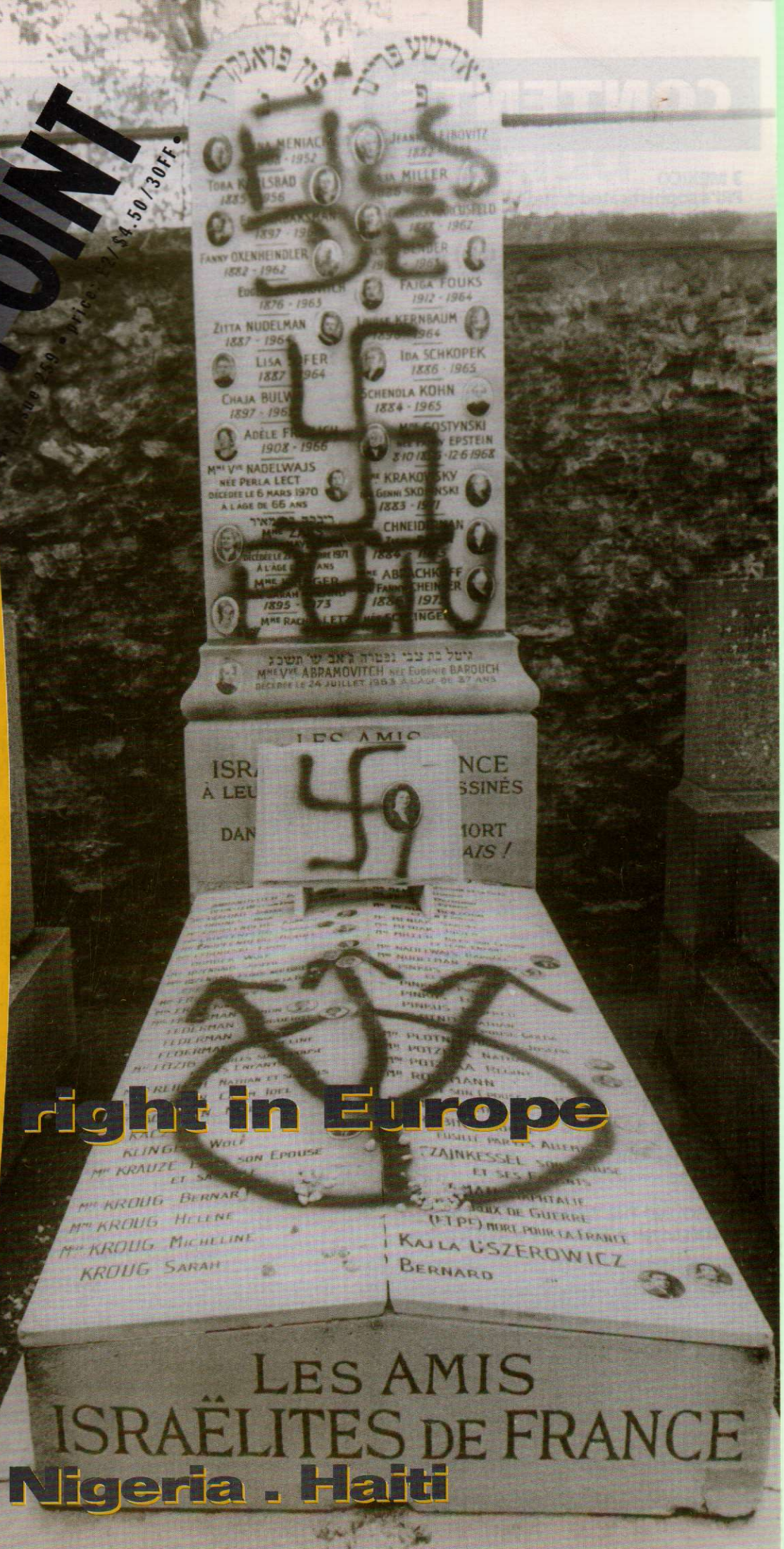


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The far right in Europe

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International Viewpoint is a monthly analytical review published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

Published by Presse-Edition-Communication Internationale (PECI) BP 85, 75522 Paris, CEDEX 11, France. Directeur de publication: Jean Malewski. Commission paritaire n° 64324. ISSN: 1294-2925. Printed by Rotographie.

All correspondence to: *International Viewpoint*, BP 85, 75522 Paris, CEDEX 11, France

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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- All surface mail and Europe airmail: £18; US\$48; C\$65; 280FF; 320 DKK; 345 SEK; f 85; 1650FB
- Airmail outside Europe: US\$57; C\$70; 340FF
- Solidarity subscription: US\$75 or equivalent
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(half year — five issues)

- All surface mail and Europe airmail: £9; US\$24; C\$33; 140FF; 160 DKK; 175 SEK; f 43; 825 FB
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PRI's sophisticated fraud

THE ELECTIONS held in Mexico on 21 August were the most closely monitored in its history. However, they were still undemocratic. The PRI won once again, while the democratic opposition candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, came only third, with a much lower vote than six years ago, when Salinas de Gortari took the presidency through large-scale electoral fraud.

ALFONSO MORO

By manipulation, intimidation, vote-buying and marginalisation of opposition leaders, the Mexican State apparatus went all out for the PRI, achieving an unexpected result. The electoral register, with over 47 million names, had a margin of error in excess of 5% (2,350,000 potential votes) while thousands of people were unable to vote on the day due to a shortage of ballot papers. The only difference from 1988 was that this time the State party regime committed electoral fraud in more sophisticated fashion, in that it did so before voting took place, rather than after.

Just hours after voting finished, state-controlled media credited the PRI with more than 50% of the vote; only the immediate reaction of Cárdenas at a press conference, that he would not stand for any tampering with the result, changed this. In the end, the official figure for Ernesto Zedillo, the PRI candidate, was 48%. At 2% short of an absolute majority, this is unusual for Mexico.

The PRI will enjoy considerable room in which to manoeuvre. To the votes of its own deputies can be added many of those of the National Action Party (PAN), a right-wing party which achieved second place; its economic programme differs little from that of the PRI.

However, although Zedillo was over 20% ahead of his nearest rival, demands will be placed upon him by the various factions which make up

the PRI, which, although they supported him in the election, do not view him as "their" candidate. While there is support for his technocrat agenda,

Zedillo cannot rely upon any group of his own to guide him through the complicated web of compromises and favours

upon which rests the state machinery. For this reason (at least at first), he will be but the mouthpiece for those groups demanding their slice of power. This position of relative weakness inside his own party (and so at the heart of the State apparatus) explains why he is now stating that, for the most part, he does not intend to interfere in the decisions of his own party.

This same weakness could lead to Zedillo having to collaborate with politicians in his cabinet who are not active in the PRI, or who are members of other parties, notably PAN. This will only encourage those who still want a "transition to the Spanish way".

As for those organisations in the National Democratic Alliance (AND) which, together with the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), supported Cárdenas, clearly the result was a poor one and there are many questions to be answered in the immediate future. The political outlook is bleak and only deeply held political conviction enables any optimism.

Although they are the obvious democratic alternative to PRI continuity, Cárdenas and the forces which supported him were unable to break through the fear of change held by broad sections of the population, particularly since the assassination in March of Donaldo Colosio, the successor chosen by de Gortari to replace him.

The assassination, the kidnapping just before the elections of a number of

businessmen, and a sustained campaign by the media (to the effect that a PRI defeat would plunge the country into political and social instability) all determined the final result.

The country's political crisis, in the midst of which the elections took place, is not over. The PRI-government will exploit it so as to defuse the focuses of social resistance which have begun to flame since the indigenous Zapatista uprising on 1st January.

For its part, the democratic opposition can rely upon the National Democratic Convention to organise broad social resistance to unbridled government liberalism. It is vital that we support the decisions of the Convention by virtue of the legitimacy which it holds; this will also form a counterbalance to the pressure which the government will be placing upon the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN).

Democracy has not won the Mexican elections but must wait for another opportunity to make itself felt. What is certain is that the consequences of this defeat will be felt not only in Mexico but throughout the whole of Latin America. ★

Just look how democratic we are. Even the dead have the right to vote!



Democracy, liberty & justice!

Zapatistas take political initiative

THE ZAPATISTA uprising began on 1 January 1994 and lasted 13 days. After the shock of the first hours, the Mexican president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, ordered the army to intervene. Dozens of civilians were executed by the soldiers and villages were subjected to aerial bombardment.

The army's intervention led to large-scale mass mobilisations, notably in the Mexican capital. Salinas de Gortari had to backpeddle while the Zapatistas, for their part, understood that it would be impossible to push their offensive further. The armed confrontations ceased. Yet the Zapatistas have not laid down their arms. In June 1994, after 6 months of negotiations, they refused to sign a peace agreement. In order to arrive at an agreement, the regime had made a series of significant commitments (some currently being implemented — schools, health units, roads, supplies of water and electricity). The Zapatistas rejected the agreement because they had put forward as their fundamental objective the end of the PRI regime.

Militarily weak in relation to the Mexican army, the Zapatistas have taken the initiative on the political plane.

The Democratic National Convention is the high point of their initiatives thus far. Participating as an international observer there, I was profoundly impressed by the maturity of the political propositions and the depth of the movement.

It was in July that the Zapatistas called for a Democratic National Convention, stipulating who should and should not be invited to participate; "All those are invited who struggle or wish to struggle for democratic change. Those who do not want democratic change are not invited. (...) All those who are convinced of the necessity for a transitional government and a new constitution are invited. All those who recognise that the party-state is the principal obstacle to democratic transition are invited. Those who do not recognise this are thus not invited..."

Following the appeal of the Zapatistas, nearly a thousand social and political organisations from all over the country prepared methodically the positions they would defend at the Convention. Tens of thousands of militants participated in this process and elected their delegates (5 per social organisation, 10 per political party).

Then the delegates met in each of the 32 Mexican states. The congress of Mexico City alone brought together nearly a thousand delegates in two sessions.

On 5 August more than 5,000 people arrived at San Cristóbal de las Casas to receive their official accreditation from the national organising commission of the Convention.

On 6 August the delegates divided into 5 working groups (of more than 1,000 delegates each) who met together for on average 10 hours to discuss the different propositions emerging from the state congresses or advanced by the social and political organisations, including the Zapatista Army.

The next day, from 5 a.m., 232 buses left to take the 200 kilometre journey deep into Zapatista territory, where the work of the congress continued for another two days.

After having heard the motions adopted by the 5 working groups who had met at San Cristóbal, the Convention passed to a vote. It ratified almost unanimously the majority motions appealing for active participation in the elections and a vote against the PRI, decided to launch a broad movement of civil resistance to electoral fraud, presented a set of demands to the different candidates for the presidency, and demanded a revision of Mexico's international treaties (NAFTA and agreements on the foreign debt), as well as a new constitution which would be drawn up by a constituent assembly. Below, we publish major extracts from the speech given by one of the Zapatista leaders, Sub-comandante Marcos, to the Convention. **Eric Toussaint** ✪

I speak on behalf of the EZLN at Aguascalientes, Chiapas, a barracks, a bunker, an arms factory, a military training centre, an explosives depot. (...)

Before Aguascalientes, it was said that (...) no successful conference could be organised on the eve of the elections. Before Aguascalientes, it was said that no sensible person would respond to the call of a rebel group, proscribed by law, (...) with a language which attempts to reclaim old, worn words: democracy, liberty, justice. (...)

Before Aguascalientes, it was said that there was too little time and that no-one would embark upon a project which was (...) doomed to failure.

Before Aguascalientes, it was said that fear (...) would lead to the conclusion that it was easier to do nothing. (...)

Before Aguascalientes, it was said that the insuperable differences which divided us and set us against one another would prevent us from focusing on the same objective. (...)

Law-breakers

Before Aguascalientes, it was said that (...) the call for a dialogue between a group of law-breakers and a shapeless, disorganised and fragmented mass (...) would only result in paralysis.

Before Aguascalientes, it was said that (...) the National Democratic Convention (CND) would self-abort, that it was not worth the trouble of sabotage and that it was preferable for it to collapse of its own accord, so that Mexico and the world would see that the non-conformists were incapable of agreeing among themselves and therefore were incapable of putting forward a better project for society than that of the institutionalised revolution. (...)

This is what was counted upon, why the Convention was allowed to be called and why you were not prevented from coming here. (...)

Before Aguascalientes, we told ourselves that the differences which divided

us and set us against one another would not prevent us from focusing on the same objective: (...) the State party system and its institutionalised absurdities: hereditary dictatorship, the dismissal of the struggle for democracy, liberty and justice as impossibly Utopian, (...) the poverty and ignorance of the dispossessed. (...)

Before Aguascalientes, we told ourselves that (...) our call for a dialogue between the faceless armed and the faceless unarmed (...) might well lead to a movement which would at last turn this shameful page in Mexican history. (...)

SUB-COMMANDANTE MARCOS (Transcript)

For this reason thousands of mainly indigenous men and women (...) have raised (here) this tower of hope. For this reason we have placed to one side for a time our guns, our bitterness, our sadness at our dead, (...) and organised a conference which, if successful, will be the first step in denying ourselves as an alternative. (...) If Aguascalientes should fail then we shall once more be obliged to lead from in front (...) so that everyone has a right to their place in history.

For this reason we have invited you and are pleased that you have come here. We hope that your maturity and wisdom will lead you to discover that the real, most powerful and terrible enemy is not seated here among you.

For this reason we respectfully ask this CND, in the name of all, men and women, young and old, and both the living and the dead of the EZLN, not to prove right all those who have predicted the collapse of this Convention, to seek what unites us, to speak truly, not to forget the differences which separate us and set us against one another more often than they should, but to put them on one side for long enough to be able to discover the common enemy. We respectfully ask that you do not deny or betray your ideals, principles or history. (...)

The EZLN has twenty delegates at this CND, with one vote each. We wish to clarify two points. The first is our commitment to the CND. The second is our decision not to impose our point of view. We have also rejected taking any part in the presidency of the CND. This is a Convention for seeking the way to peaceful change. It must not be presided over in any way by those who bear arms. We are only grateful that you have allowed us to make this speech.

We wish to state, in case there should

be any doubt, that we do not regret having taken up arms against the government. We repeat that we were left with no alternative. (...) We do not bemoan our dead but are proud of them. We are prepared to offer more blood if this is the price for democratic change in Mexico.

Many have asked (...) what the Zapatistas want from the CND; A civil accord? Coverage in the national and international press? Justification for its insurrection? Civil backing for the war? (...) Here, today, the EZLN can reply. We are not attempting to stretch the sinister arm of war into the furthest corners of the country by means of a civil organisation, nor seeking press coverage which reduces the struggle for dignity to short paragraphs, arguments with which to gild ourselves, a platform for political calculations, (...) the appointment of an interim government, a new constitution, (...) support for a candidate for the presidency of this republic of pain and conformity, or war.

But we say yes to the construction of a project greater than Aguascalientes, peace with dignity, yes to a greater effort, (...) for democratic change which includes liberty and justice for the forgotten. (...)

Forgotten

We do not wish to occupy, nor can we occupy, the place which some hope for, where all opinions, courses of action, responses, and truths would come from us. (...) We hope that at this CND we will be able to hand over the banner which we found alone and forgotten in the palaces of power; (...) the banner which we cherish night and day, which accompanied us in war and which we hope to have in peace, (...)

We say yes to struggle so that all Mexicans can make the banner their own, the NATIONAL BANNER. Comrades, your banner. (...)

We hope that this CND will speak truly; for peace, but not for defeatism in the struggle for democracy; for peace, but not renunciation of the struggle for liberty; for peace, but not pacifist complicity with injustice.

We hope that this CND will understand that the right to call itself representative of the feelings of the nation does not come from votes or consensus but must still be won in the urban districts, the shanty towns, the suburbs, the indigenous communities, schools and universities, factories, businesses, scientific research institutes, cultural and artistic centres; throughout this whole country.

We hope that this CND realises that this is only the first step of many which

must be taken, including in conditions which will be more difficult than at present. (...)

Finally, we hope that this CND will be a collective call to struggle for that which belongs to us, which the wealthy have by right; for our place in history. It is not the time for arms, and we put them to one side, but we are not leaving. We await the day when (...) we will no longer be necessary. (...) We hope that this CND will allow us to return to the land with the dignity of a mission completed, to return to silence, into the night from which we came, (...) to disappear in the same way as that in which we appeared, (...) without face, without future. To return to the depths of history, (...) and to the mountains.

It has been said, wrongly, that the Zapatistas are biding their time before resuming the war, and that this will happen if the (election) result on 21 August is not as they wish. This is a lie; no-one, and certainly not the EZLN, can impose timescales or make ultimatums.

For the EZLN, timescale is to be determined by civil, peaceful mobilisations. We submit ourselves to these, even if we should disappear as an alternative.

If war should recommence, it will not be due to action by us. There are no Zapatista ultimatums for civil society.

Struggle. Struggle without rest. Struggle and defeat the government. Struggle and defeat us. Never would defeat be so sweet, if it was part of a peaceful transition to democracy, dignity and justice.

The Secret Indigenous Revolutionary Committee (CCRI), the General Command of the EZLN, gives you Aguascalientes to unite you and (...) for you to discuss and organise the civil, peaceful, popular and national organisation of the struggle for democracy, liberty and justice. The CCRI-EZLN now gives you the national banner and reminds you of what it represents: Country, History and Nation. For you this signifies: democracy, liberty and justice.

We salute you, brother and sister Conventionists. For you, in the midst of armed territory, we built Aguascalientes, this space for peace with justice and dignity.

Many thanks. Democracy, liberty and justice!

From the mountains of southeast Mexico, the Secret Indigenous Revolutionary Committee-General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Mexico, August 1994. ★

Striking for democracy

ON 23 June, Moshood Abiola, who is widely recognised as the legitimate victor of the presidential elections held on 12 June 1993, was arrested and imprisoned by General Sani Abacha's military dictatorship on charges of treason. The arrest followed a rally held to mark the first anniversary of the aborted presidential election, at which Abiola proclaimed himself President and commander-in-chief of the armed forces — in a bid to regain the political initiative from the military regime. With Abiola in prison it is the 150 thousand strong oil workers' union, Nupeng, who have taken the initiative, with an all-out strike which began on 4 July. While working conditions and other grievances have figured in the workers' demands, Nupeng has made it clear that the strike is aimed primarily at forcing the regime to release all political prisoners, including Abiola. British Fourth Internationalist, BALA KUMAR, looks at the different social forces at work.

THE arrest and imprisonment of Moshood Abiola on 23 June coincided with the start of a "constitutional conference" convened by the military regime of General Sani Abacha. Its supposed aim was to discuss Nigeria's ill health and prepare a time-table for transition to civilian rule (see the interview with Glory Kilanko below). However, the programme is not at all dissimilar from that developed by the previous military ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida,¹ who, despite spending millions of naira, last year scuppered the plans as a parting act.

Most Nigerians saw the conference for what it was: a way for Abacha to

stay in power for some years; to amass wealth like all his predecessors and meanwhile deflect criticism from home and abroad. The turn-out in the pseudo elections for delegates to the constitutional conference was so low as to be derisory, and indicative of public cynicism. The Provisional Ruling Council formed by Abacha and which governs the country has been deeply embarrassed and thrown on the defensive by the actions of the oil workers and the pro-democracy movement.

The National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (Nupeng) has been joined in the strike by the white-collar Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (Pengassan). Ninety percent of the country's income is derived from the sale of oil and natural gas, and Nigeria is Africa's largest and the world's fifth largest producer of oil. While many of the protests have been concentrated in the (oil-rich) southern regions this has been outweighed by the national economic importance of the industry. During the strike, Nupeng in particular has established itself before the rest of the mass movement as the class struggle wing of organised labour.

Tradition

The anti-military pro-democracy movement has traditionally been dominated by human rights and civil liberties organisations, the student movement and progressive intellectuals drawn from the middle class and professional groups. The best known of these are the Campaign for Democracy led by Dr Beko Ramsome-Kuti. While the oil workers unions are now setting the pace in the struggle, and forging a new relationship with other sectors, in the past trade unions have often been marginal within the movement.

Partly this has been on account of the politically opportunist leadership of the Nigerian labour movement. In 1978, under a military decree, all trade union federations ceased to exist and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) was created as a unitary body. Today it has 41 affiliates and 3.5 million members. For much of the past decade the NLC, and particularly its current President, Pascal

Bafyau, has been close to the military. Bafyau even served on an advisory council formed by Babaginda, the Political Bureau, and is thought to have favoured his patron staying on — remaining silent during the elections last year. When Nupeng went on strike in July, he issued a statement against their action, had having returned to Lagos from Abuja where he was a delegate at the sham constitutional conference!

The decision taken by the NLC that a general strike would commence on 2 August and then a second decision to call it off barely two days after it had begun must be seen in this context. Instead of carrying on the strike while negotiating for Abiola's release — the reason for the strike — the NLC declared that the strike was "suspended" so as to ease negotiations (it is not unknown, as Glory Kilanko observes, for the NLC to use the strike weapon and the threat of strikes purely to assume a better bargaining position with the authorities and to restore its credibility among workers). Bafyau also called on Nupeng and Pengassan to stop their strike when he announced that the NLC and the regime had arrived at a deal over Abiola's future. Wariebi Agamene, President of Nupeng, condemned the NLC for suspending the strike and accused them of conniving with the government in "deceiving Nigerians and engaging in a mockery of justice."

Now that details of the deal with the military have been revealed it seems that Agamene was not far off the mark. The regime agreed to release Abiola only if he undertook not to address any political rallies and refrained from participating in politics for the rest of his life. Abiola refused and is holding out for an unconditional release and military hand-over of power.

Abacha is increasingly uncomfortable with the criticism he has been receiving from Western governments and local capitalists for imprisoning Abiola and being unable to curb the political instability which is endangering their investments and profits. Foreign companies are unhappy over the scale of corruption and tiers of bureaucracy

1. Edwin Madunagu, 'Controlled transition on the ropes', *International Viewpoint*, no. 239, 23 November 1992.



which eat away at their returns (one has only to be a senior army officer in Nigeria to become an overnight millionaire). An Abiola government is acceptable to them because it would not overturn the stranglehold of transnational capital on the economy and would, they hope, "clean it up" by curbing bribery and commissions. Abacha badly needs to extract himself from his present difficulties.

Unfortunately, one of his options is to declare war with neighbouring Cameroon — or at least threaten his readiness to do so. The Bakassi peninsula is at the centre of a territorial dispute between the two countries. The peninsula's 1,000 square kilometres is rich in oil and gas reserves and the offshore waters are abundant in fisheries. Abacha has sent troops to occupy the area and Cameroon's President, Paul Biya, has promised to respond in kind. Both have domestic agendas. Abacha hopes that patriotism will quieten down protests, and that military manoeuvres will keep his rivals in the army occupied. Biya faces a secessionist movement among the anglophone minority in his country — one of whom stood for president in 1992 and lost in a highly suspect contest.

The complication is the role of France. The Mitterand Presidency has close links with the francophone Biya government and a defence pact between France and Cameroon guarantees French military assistance in the event of an external threat. However, the French Prime Minister, Eduard Balladur, is trying to mend fences with Nigeria because the French trans-national oil company, Elf Aquitaine, hopes to increase its holdings and involvement in an oil industry which is presently dominated by the Anglo-Dutch company, Shell.

Meanwhile Abiola too is aware that his popularity increases with every day in prison. When Babangida installed the Interim National Government of Ernest Shonekan (deposed shortly after by Abacha), Abiola, a multi-millionaire and publishing magnate, jumped on his private jet and fled to London instead of confronting the military as the democracy movement expected him to do. He was also ambivalent towards Abacha at first, perhaps believing that the latter had launched the coup to restore the June 1993 mandate.

Inflammatory

The Concord newspaper group owned by Abiola was at this time publishing some inflammatory articles suggesting that the reason he was not permitted to assume the presidency is because the northern Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups and their kin-folk in the military leadership do not want to lose their political dominance to southerners who pre-dominate in economic life and the state bureaucracy. Abiola is a southerner belonging to the Yoruba people. There is some truth to this, but the effect was to stir up ethnic tensions. All these issues compromised Abiola's reputation and it has taken his arrest and reports of the harshness of prison conditions to evoke public sympathy and support.

Almost without exception the democratic movement, including its radical wing, has stated its objective as being the release of all political prisoners, including Abiola, and for the honouring of the 12 June 1993 electoral result. Abiola was seen as the dream ticket: a Yoruba from the south but a Moslem, and therefore acceptable to the largely Moslem north, with a vice-presidential partner who is a northern Moslem, with his vast wealth which would surely indi-

cate that he had no need to rob the treasury. The voting seemed to bear out this perception when not only did he have a large lead over his rival in the south but also won one-third of the votes counted in the north.

Many rationalise supporting the 12 June result by explaining that only after civilian rule by bourgeois democrats like Abiola has been consolidated and the military ousted from political life for good can socialists advance their own alternatives.² This overlooks the experience of

Nigeria's post-colonial history let alone that of the rest of the continent. The brief interludes of civilian government by capitalist elites have left behind bitter legacies of extravagance, embezzlement and ethnic division — not constitutional stability, democratic freedoms and a productive economic base.

The military coups which have succeeded these governments have invariably been greeted by (short-lived) relief as the new regimes promise to root out corruption, punish the wrong-doers, abolish poverty and so forth. Yet they have succeeded in wasting away the vast oil wealth, plunging the country into a debt trap (US\$30 billion foreign debt), and implementing austerity measures, despite soaring rates of inflation (116%) and widespread malnourishment and near starvation in rural areas. Absurd as it may seem, there have often been acute fuel and energy shortages, and queuing at petrol kiosks was common well before the current strike.

The election of 1993 was hardly an exercise in democracy. Only two parties were allowed to contest, the "little to the right" National Republican Convention (NRC), and the "little to the left" Social Democratic Party (SDP). The names of these parties, their constitutions and manifestos, were drawn up by Babangida's government and two exactly similar headquarters built for them in Abuja. Both SDP candidate Abiola and NRC candidate Bashir Tofa are multi-millionaires with close links to the military. Both were also senior members of the former party of the capitalist class, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN).

2. The tragedy of the Nigerian socialist movement and some of its debates are reviewed in E. Madunagu, 'Problems Of Socialism: The Nigerian Challenge', Zed Books (London), 1982.

Journalist David Pallister notes: "In the early 1980s one senior politician, going to the heart of the matter remarked: 'There are only two political parties in Nigeria — the NPN and the army.' Put another way, it has been argued that the army is the military wing of the NPN, and that the Nigerian elite for all its political and ethnic differences, is in fact a tiny homogeneous group passing the parcel of power and wealth that flows from it."³ While Pallister underestimates the intra-capitalist rivalry which takes the form of ethnic and regional loyalties, it remains the case that the June 1993 elections did not break this mould.

Many who recognise that the labour movement and socialist forces are too weak to take on the ruling class see a Sovereign National Conference as the mechanism whereby representatives of the exploited and oppressed masses, the Talakawa, could administer the country until genuine multi-party elections can be held. They recognise that in the interim they would have to share power with capitalist politicians such as Abacha and that the relationship of forces is still not in their favour. How then can they best prepare themselves before, during and after such a conference?

A number of activists have already drawn the lesson that if the democratic struggle in Nigeria is to be successful it must not only encompass, but transcend the demands for human rights and greater freedoms. They realise that there is no substitute for building a political movement dedicated to stimulating and supporting the self-activity and self-organisation of working people, in order, as Glory Kilanko says, "to capture power ourselves". ★

3. *The Guardian* (London), 5 June 1993.

Striking for democracy

GLORY KILANKO was formerly chair of the Nigerian Labour Congress women's section, National Co-ordinating Secretary of the socialist-feminist group, "Women in Nigeria", founder of the Campaign for Democracy and is a leading militant in the newly formed organisation, Democratic Alternative. **BALA KUMAR** spoke with her on 7 July, three days after the oil workers' strike began but before the NLC called a general strike only to call it off two days later.

TO MARK the first anniversary of the repudiation of the 12 June 1993 elections there have been renewed protests against the military. Meanwhile a constitutional conference has been organised by the Abacha regime to redraft the constitution, after which a handover to civilian rule is promised. How do you assess this conference?

Abacha has come to office to fulfil his life's desire not because he has any policies to offer to the country. There was an arrangement whereby the previous military dictator, Ibrahim Babangida, would rule for four years and then hand power to Abacha for a further four years. At this point we fought hard to say that Nigeria is not a relay race for the military to hand the baton of power to one another.

Nothing fruitful will come out of this latest conference. Babangida spent 40 million naira on the last conference, which rewrote the 1979 constitution. We have neither implemented the new constitution nor experimented with it. Now the hand-picked delegates to the conference are idling in the federal capital, Abuja, because apparently there is no accommodation for them. The people there are the likes of Umaru Dikko who looted the entire treasury when he was a minister, before running away to London. This same man is today given a red carpet welcome by Abacha to give legitimacy to the conference!

As a woman active in grass-roots struggles, I am disappointed that Abacha's wife has produced a programme called "Family Support". She is not prepared to support the "Better Life" programme that Miriam Babangida, wife of the previous ruler, spent millions of naira on. The first phase of this new programme is to last

four years, surely a clue as to her husband's plans! This new programme is designed to push women back into the kitchen, so that their unemployed menfolk can take their jobs.

We are determined to fight Abacha in the same vein we fought Babangida and we will not relent in our efforts. There have been continuous protests since the President-elect, Moshood Abiola was arrested on 23 June and they have been spreading around the country and growing in momentum.

What kinds of protests have there been recently?

Initially there were mass demonstrations and people were man-handled and shot down. Abacha sent in tanks and heavily armed men on to every street in Lagos. The situation was so tense that people were afraid to leave their homes. There are over a hundred and fifty in detention centres solely for demanding the restoration of the people's verdict of 12 June 1993. Market women participated in the protests by locking their stalls for four days. They demonstrated and chanted songs in front of the American Embassy and the British High Commission, demanding an end to military rule. Imagine the sacrifice these women made. They survive on their daily earnings but they were prepared to suffer today for a better future for their children.

The National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (Nupeng) which has 150,000 members has been on strike since 4 July supporting pro-democracy demands. Yet the sole trade union centre, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), has not supported the strike and is taking a conciliatory position towards the dictatorship. Why is this?

The shameful fact is that the leadership of the NLC are participants in the Constitutional Conference. They see it as an opportunity to make some fast money and have been doing all they can to frustrate the efforts of the democratic forces. I used to be Chair of the women's section but I was removed from that position because of the role I played in the democratic movement. They were in support of Babangida remaining in office. While I was underground evading arrest by State agents, the leadership stage-managed an election for my position. Never mind, at

least I don't have to mortgage my conscience. The NLC leadership operates like this: they pretend to go on strike in order to negotiate with the military authorities; then they tell the workers that the dispute has been resolved but never inform them of the details of the settlement. Some of us are working seriously with the rank and file so that decisions at the level of the NLC are made by each worker in each union affiliate and not by the President or General Secretary of the union on behalf of the workers. We are fighting to democratise the NLC as well as wider society.

There are two main forces leading the democratic movement. The Campaign for Democracy (CD) which groups together about forty human rights, civil liberties and progressive organisations and the new National Democratic Coalition (Nadeco) which is made up of ex-generals, discredited civilian politicians and business people who seem to have belatedly developed a democratic conscience.

All avenues for the individuals in Nadeco to make money have been blocked; that is why they want Abacha out. These people at one time or another ruled Nigeria but never did anything useful for the country and now they claim to know what democracy is. It is not true. It is not our intention to push out Abacha so that someone else of his ilk comes into office. We have gone beyond that stage.

Our differences with the leadership of the CD stem from the secret talks that its Chair, Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, had with Abacha's second in command, Lieutenant-General Oladipo Diya, prior to Abacha's coup last year. Diya promised Ransome-Kuti that should Abacha come to power, he would install Moshood Abiola as President. We had one binding principle within CD, which was that we were against military rule and intervention of any guise and at any time. Today Ransome-Kuti is fighting against the military because they have reneged on their promise to him. He was stupid to believe them in the first place. He calmed some of the protests and bred illusions in Abacha's regime. He told people that Abacha had come to "clear up the mess".

There remains the possibility of another military coup, this time against Abacha and led by either Oladipo Diya, Babangida

loyalists or lower ranking soldiers, all claiming to stand for the 12 June result. How do you view this?

We are worried about this situation. There are soldiers with a number of grievances against their leadership, like the regulars who have served all their lives but who are not in positions of power because they have been by-passed by the graduates of the elite Nigerian Defence Academy. All these groups seek power to loot the country's wealth.

Our position is this: if the military strikes ten times, we will fight them each time. Out of thirty-four years of political independence, the military have ruled for twenty-six and look at the mess which Nigeria is in! We are not against Abacha as an individual but against the role of the military in politics.

Why did you and others leave the CD and found the Democratic Alternative? What are your immediate demands?

We are calling for an Interim National Government comprising the Social Democratic Party presidential candidate, Abiola, and others, for eighteen months. This government would lead towards genuine multi-party elections and the enduring democracy which people yearn for. We strongly support the principles behind 12 June and not characters like Abiola. That election brought Nigerians together as one for the first time, cutting across regional, ethnic and religious lines.

We left CD because we felt betrayed by Ransome-Kuti. We are not agitating for the sake of it. We aspire to capture power ourselves, the masses of Nigeria. Unlike CD, those of us in the Democratic Alternative are building a political movement. We are not a part of this movement just for Nigeria's sake, we are trying to visualise what Africa should look like. We are fed up of military rulers and discredited politicians mis-ruling our continent. We are fed up of imperialism dictating to us what our lives and futures should be. We need a strong Pan-Africanist movement, a mass movement which unites Africans in the diaspora and those on the continent. Our common enemies are the African leaders, military or civilian, and we have to overthrow them. ★

Anti-imperialist fighter back in gaol

Ken Saro-Wiwa, well known Nigerian author and leader of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (Mosop) was arrested and detained by the military in May and is kept in leg irons and hand-cuffs at an army camp in Port Harcourt.

This is not the first time that Saro-Wiwa has been arrested and ill-treated by the military authorities in punishment for his role as a spokesman for the 500 thousand strong Ogoni community in the Niger Delta.

Ogoniland is the site for the oil-mining operations of Shell. Frequent oil spills and poor safety conditions have despoiled the land and poisoned its inhabitants. Fish no longer live in the polluted waters, livestock die, nothing of value grows on the land and the air is heavy with the stench of petroleum fumes.

In an interview last year, Saro-Wiwa said: "I've accused them of racism because Shell do in Nigeria, and in Ogoni, what they do not do in other parts of the world. The West worries about elephants. They stop the export of rhino horns and things like that. And then they cannot worry about human beings dying."

In desperation over Shell's refusal to clean up their lands and award fair compensation, Mosop was formed to campaign for autonomy and control over the Ogoni's land and the resources under it.

The Nigerian military regularly launches murderous raids against the Ogoni, massacring entire communities and imprisoning hundreds of its youth, as they try to suppress riots and uprisings against the oil companies and the government.

There are wide-spread concerns for the health of Ken Saro-Wiwa who is a heart patient and suffered a heart attack while in prison last year. According to an independent investigator, he has been repeatedly beaten, starved and denied access to family and lawyers. An international campaign has been launched by environmental groups to secure his release and *IV* readers are urged to join these efforts. ☺

The rats break from cover

THE recent European elections confirmed the presence of the far right as an enduring feature of the political landscape in most European Union countries.

Legitimised by universal suffrage, the far right is rooted in the big cities, its material and membership resources greatly magnified by its presence in the institutions of the bourgeois state. Progressively consolidating its organisations, it has established networks at every level of society, a substitute for its lack of big social organisations. It can thus influence institutional political life and in some places organise certain social categories hardest hit by the crisis. It enjoys a solid programmatic basis allowing it to go beyond extremist denunciatory propaganda to formulate "positive" propositions on jobs, social benefits, schools, health, housing, even ecology. Demagoguery equating immigration and insecurity remains its most fertile ground, but it has developed a broader discourse, allowing it to take its distance from the classical fascist heritage, "condemn" the excesses of Nazism, distinguish the "good" from the "bad" in the Hitler and Mussolini governments, and disown neo-Nazi/skinhead violence. Its real programme (war, racial inequality, suppression of democratic liberties, liquidation of the workers' movement) remains concealed for now, although its cadres are discreetly educated in a purist fascist ideology.

In sum, the far right has broken out of political and social isolation in imperialist Europe (Britain excepted). It has gone beyond the groupuscule stage to the creation of "modern" political formations which are potential parties of government, alone or in coalition.

What will be the next stage? What is the gravity of the fascist menace today?

Two errors should be avoided. The first is to define fascism by its ideological content. This is not very useful, given that many of the reactionary elements involved - racism, nationalism, patriotism, colonialism, militarism, sexism - are also part of the spiritual heritage of our imperialist bourgeoisies.

The second error is to confuse the rise of fascism with the reinforcement of the repressive arsenal of the State. For the bourgeoisie, the fascist option involves different objectives and methods to any other form of authoritarian regime. All other projects have as their axis the (legal) reinforcement of the bourgeois State, avoiding the frontal battle to the death with the workers' organisations and the destruction of all social liberties which fascism entails.

Manifestly, conditions today favour the flowering of fascist mass movements, but do not put the installation of fascist regimes on the immediate agenda. The differences between now and the 1920s and 30s are as striking as the parallels. Hitler and Mussolini emerged from World War 1 as heads of armed private militias, and unceasingly proclaimed their fascist objectives and methods of struggle until victory. The "modern" groups behave differently. They emerged from obscurity by exploiting "the immigrant question", then turned towards a tactic of entry into the state institutions and a "united front" with the right of the traditional bourgeois parties around certain common themes, implying a deepening of their democratic respectability.

They either do not wish, or have not succeeded, in transforming their electorate into a mass combat organisation. The search for a united front with the right means a lower fascist profile, and the risk of accepting co-responsibility for the crisis. The MSI, for example, cultivates its "Mussolinian" image for its rank and file, but is the least critical of Berlusconi of all the parties in the Italian parliament. All a question of tactics? Perhaps, but the transition from the parliamentary-institutional road to a policy of extra-parliamentary confrontations will require new objective and subjective conditions.

The big European far right groups know that a further leap forward requires at least tacit agreement with those sectors of large capital which can open the door to participation in power.

The favoured option of the ruling classes is not currently fascist. It is based on the liberalisation of world

trade, the remodelling of the productive apparatus and a frantic search for gains in competitiveness. This implies immense social changes, as well as the maintenance of the European Union. Hindered by world competition and a workers' movement which is "too strong", the bourgeoisie must pursue its offensive against social gains; but at the same time, it seeks the active collaboration of its work force to optimise the labour process in the workplaces. What is sought is a progressive "Americanisation" of the workers' movement, rather than reliance on the fascists to change the relationship of forces through violent confrontation. The MSI presence in the Berlusconi government is considered exceptional by the European bourgeoisie, while both Berlusconi and Bossi have made public offers to collaborate with the PDS.

The bourgeoisie has understood that this gigantic gradual counter-reform, alternating "social pacts" with far-ranging attacks, has reached its intrinsic limits. In short, it fears social explosion, especially given the fragility of the current political system. Thus, bourgeois politics is radicalising. This means, first and foremost, a reinforcement of the executive and repressive capacity of the State apparatus (laws, repression, control) on a national and EU basis, combined with an ideological offensive around favoured themes. A new type of politician emerges; ideologically very conservative, populist in methods of government, liberal in economic credo, and clearly more militant and energetic. Thatcher inaugurated this approach, Berlusconi followed and undoubtedly Pasqua seeks to emulate it in France. If this new muscular approach succeeds in several European countries, it would represent an important change in the political situation. The social and political relations accumulated since 1945 are beginning to tear apart. A broader space opens for the far right. Should they present themselves as the militant wing of a right-wing government, or bring all their weight into the State apparatus and accelerate their extra-parliamentary activity? All this is conjuncture. Whatever the fascist option, the struggle to combat it remains an urgent priority.

François Vercammen ☉

Wolf looks for new clothes

GUIDO CALDIRON has been active at an anti-fascist documentation centre since 1990, mainly concerned with the question of the far right but also with the question of social exclusion, particularly in the poor urban neighbourhoods. He is a journalist with *Il Manifesto*, the independent communist daily newspaper, published since the early 1970s. *International Viewpoint* spoke with him in July.

C *AN YOU describe the work of the anti-fascist documentation centre in Rome?*

The centre was set up by militants emerging from different experiences in the social and associative movements, like the women's collectives who work around the question of immigrant women, the "redskins" who work largely around music and the question of "image" in the anti-fascist struggle, and some traditional political militants who come from different organisational experiences. We have chosen to come together to work on racism and fascism, with the appearance in Italy of racist politics linked above all to the rise of the extreme right.

Can you explain the spectacular rise of the far right in Italy?

To reply to this question, it is necessary to go back a bit, because the electoral victory of the far right was prepared by a social climate which goes back to the early 1980s in Italy.

During these years the political situation was not determined by the forces of the right or extreme right, but above all by what was called in Italy the "CAF" — which are the initials of the three principal political personalities of the Socialist Party and Christian Democracy. The 1980s were the years of Bettino Craxi (and Andreotti and Forlani), who monopolised power inside the

Socialist Party through some very populist means, using authoritarian methods inside the party. Craxi was able to change completely the image of the Italian Socialist Party which became a very much more centrist and above all fiercely anti-Communist party, basing its politics on the rejection of any trade union heritage and all the conquests of the workers' movement during the 1970s.

The Craxi years had had consequences for the workers' movement, and challenged traditional class solidarity as well as the gains of social combat during the 1970s, like the organisation of work, the system of trade union representation and the power of workers in their workplaces.

A cultural and media offensive was launched with the objective of renovating the image of imperialist Italy, a country which was now part of the circle of "the great of the earth". During this period we also saw debates on the installation of Cruise missiles in the context of the integration of Italy into NATO. It was during this same period that the renovation of the Italian military apparatus was embarked upon. This policy was carried out in a nationalist framework, and episodes like the holding of the World Cup in Italy in 1990 were part of it.

These things prepared the electoral successes of the far right and the right wing coalition with the other different formations, because everything changed in the political climate. The different corruption scandals and the "clean hands" operation discredited the whole of the traditional political class. There was no longer the possibility of advancing the traditional responses of the workers' movement and the parties of the left because the 1980s had hit very hard. During these years the Italian Communist Party (PCI) were in opposition, but in several northern towns and even in Rome the PCI had participated in local government with the Socialist party (PSI) of Craxi. The trade union leadership gave its support to the Socialists. They tried to freeze social conflicts, holding back the workers and the radical movement which existed in the factories, and this prepared the electoral victory of the right. The "clean hands" enquiry discredited the whole of the

political class, not just Christian Democracy (which did not constitute simply a political party but a system of management of power), but also the Socialist Party, and at the level of the local administrations in the towns some elected representatives of the PCI have been mixed up in the same affairs as the Christian Democrat mafiosi. Thus nobody had clean hands on the political scene. It is easy at this moment for the far right and the MSI, which has never or almost never held power, to have a clean image, while the Northern League began to develop in the north of Italy, the "industrial triangle" where the economic crisis hit hardest.

The League developed from the mid-1980s onwards and it was something which gave a political representation to the new social situations which emerged on the basis of the ruin of the old industrial towns of northern Italy. The third and largest component of the coalition which won the elections was Berlusconi, who was perhaps the least new force because he had been close to the Socialist Party in Milan. Before that he had been very close to the fascists in the 1970s, when he had helped finance *Il Secolo di Italia*, then the daily of the MSI. He made his fortune through some very specific laws favouring his communications empire, while the Milan local administration, which was in the hands of the socialists, helped him acquire cheap land for the purchase of new buildings. Thus he began his career with the construction of new towns like Milan II and Milan III, which are the big residential centres in the suburbs of Milan. Berlusconi was very much part of this rotten political class, but he has undoubtedly given a new image to it, the image of a "golden boy" won in the 1980s, which still excites the imagination of many Italians.

Is the MSI a fascist formation?

This is a question which has generated a lot of debate, as has the overall characterisation of the coalition which was victorious at the general elections. If one wishes to give an image of the whole of the governmental coalition one could say that it is very clearly on the



extreme right. On the social questions and the organisation of society, they are against abortion; they have positions very close to those of the Pope and the Vatican hierarchy. Then one could make some big differentiations, because the right has three faces.

With the League one has the invention of a community which does not exist; there is no language or anything in the north of Italy to form the basis of this community, it is something linked to questions of money. The ethnic question serves to conceal social egoism.

The northern regions hardest hit by the economic crisis were once the great regions of worker solidarity. Now individualism and regionalism have replaced that tradition. The process is linked to Italian history: the workers of the south became immigrants to make the fortunes of Agnelli and the big owners of the car factories in the north of Italy; this became part of the social body, and a kind of racism was born. The League invokes an ideal community which never existed in reality because for example the immigrants who worked in Turin for 20 years now could vote for

was never dissolved and was utilised several times by Christian Democracy to support the government from outside. It was, above all, used in some towns to guarantee the corrupt mafia dealings of Christian Democracy.

Some MSI leaders were rehabilitated by Christian Democracy in the 1950s and became leaders of the party; inside the MSI there are deputies of different currents, for example, in latter years the young secretary of the party, Fini, who made his career as the leader of neo-fascist youth, has sought to give the party a new image, inspired by the success of Le Pen in France. Fini followed a racist and xenophobic orientation, but this only bore fruit when the Christian Democracy began to founder because of the corruption scandals. There was in some towns only one party which was capable of taking up its heritage and this was the MSI. For example, in Rome the MSI completely absorbed the heritage of Christian Democracy, including those mafia elements who had previously collected votes for the Christian Democrats. Thus Fini came second in the elections at Rome but gained nearly half of the

votes and so the MSI became the first party in Rome. Also, in Naples they had a very good score with Alessandra Mussolini, and

success in other towns, since the Berlusconi movement had not yet emerged. The internal opposition is represented by Pino Rauti who is a former leader of the radical right New Order and was recently re-elected to the European parliament. He is going to represent the social soul of this party — socially the MSI represents the middle managers of the public sector and thus the idea of drastically pruning this sector is not a good thing for the MSI electorate. Thus it is possible to envisage a crisis inside the government in the coming months, because the MSI represents people who would be very hard hit by a radical liberalism.

Then there is Berlusconi, who represents the Latin American populist formula mixed with US style media razzmatazz, but also with aspects of a banana republic, because he made his fortune with a football team and has imported the language of football into politics, and also has had as candidates football players, TV journalists and so on. He is very much to the far right but with more acceptable positions, but behind him in the Cabinet there are people who have

worked since the beginning in Forza Italia, including veterans of the MSI like the minister of foreign affairs, who comes from the MSI section in Rome and says that he has the same anti-Communist culture as Fini.

What happened during the last European elections?

The League understood that its electorate, which comes in part from those disappointed by the left and the former Christian Democracy, liked the look of Forza Italia, above all in that, although it was successful throughout Italy, it had a "northern" image; they were linked to Milan football team while Berlusconi is someone linked to the Milan bourgeoisie. With this new government the true centre of Italy is no longer Rome but Milan. This is something which has pleased the regionalist and racist electorate of the League and they thus lost nearly 2 million votes in total to Forza Italia. There was a great media campaign in the press and television by Berlusconi against the League, because they had said that Berlusconi was OK but needed controlling, was a businessman rather than a politician, and that while they wanted to change everything Berlusconi did not. There was a TV programme where the interviewer spoke to youth in the street who were by coincidence very favourable to Berlusconi, and every evening there was someone who said "I was with the League but now I support Berlusconi because Bossi has betrayed". The same thing happened with the MSI, who lost 1.5 million votes but is still nearly the first party in Rome and in most of southern Italy. It is already the first party of the Italian community in Bolzano where there is the question of the Tyrolian community, and is very strong in Trieste. The MSI is in many ways the strongest constituent of the coalition because it is the sole party implanted socially at a rank-and-file level.

Before the electoral successes of the far right we believed, notably after the 2 October 1992 street battles between trade unions and police, that something new was going to emerge in Italy, that the radical champions of self-organisation (the trade union left, in local neighbourhoods, youth movements, and universities) were gradually going to turn the tide against the revisionist leadership in the CP and the unions.

On 2 October 1992 the trade unions came on to the streets and confronted the police for the first time since 1977. We

Fini followed a racist and xenophobic orientation...

the League and feel themselves to be Torinos, but they speak the Torino dialect with a strong Sicilian accent. It represents the defeat of integration. Integration for these people is only realised in the factory, after the factory there is no more integration. Thus they defend things which are not theirs. Thus the ethnicist regionalist far right has a somewhat particular face.

The MSI party — the Italian Social Movement — is the direct inheritor of the last incarnation of the fascist regime in Italy, namely the Italian Social Republic established around the Lake of Garda in the north of Italy under the protection of the German army. It was the "toughest" version of Italian fascism, which came closest to the features of Nazi Germany. After the war the veterans of the Italian Social Republic like Almirante, who was in charge of propaganda and had been responsible for the shooting of partisans, founded this party, whose aim was to take up the flame of those who died to defend the ideal of the Italian Social Republic. There was a long debate on the banning of the party because it rejected the constitution, but it

Election danger

GERMANY's "super-election" in October could see various far-right and even fascist parties entering assemblies at regional and national level. The left have launched campaigns to oppose this danger but there is still an overall lack of perspectives for the anti-fascist/anti-racist struggle.

DAVID MULLER *

MANY people on the left expected re-unification to be followed by a rise in social struggles. This assumption was not without foundation but overall it proved false. The main reason for the failure of the various predicted hot autumns, springs and summers to appear was the racist tide which swept across Germany.

When the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) campaign against the right of asylum began, it had already become clear that the East was not starting on a radiant future under capitalism. The sections of the state bureaucracy tied to the CDU and CSU were horrified by the possibility of electoral successes by the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Greens and even the former Communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). Their horror had quite straightforward material reasons — fewer votes, fewer jobs. On top of this, wide sections of the middle classes, who have a direct influence on the policies of the CDU/CSU, had and still have a hysterical fear of strike movements, as in times of crisis their businesses are unable to meet wage demands. This layer not only gave massive support to the policies of the Federal government over asylum; in some cases they took the initiative. For example, in Han Munden (Lower Saxony) the town's biggest businessmen were behind a "citizens' initiative" against a refugee hostel.

However, large-scale capital was more hesitant, having a more realistic appreciation of the likely success of the East German strike wave. Nor did it have much to fear from the possibility of

a new government centred on the SPD. Furthermore, it also knew that any campaign against refugees would also affect immigrants, who often provided much of the workforce in large factories.

It is, of course, the attitude of the police and courts which has been the most appalling. No serious attempt has been made to break up the fascist networks. Indeed, they have often acted according to the view that "left and right extremists are the same". Fascist attacks are played down as the work of isolated individuals while left-wing activists have faced a far harder response. In Munich, the alleged purchase of an alarm clock was enough to warrant a conviction for "supporting or promoting a terrorist association (art. 129a (3))." Again, there is a material reason for this. In the event of a fascist take-over few judges and police officers would lose their jobs. On the other hand, if socialists were to take power they would lose their privileges.

Terrorist

At the beginning of the 1980s, when fascist groups such as the National Socialist Alliance/National Activist (ANS/NA) and the "Wehrsportsgruppe Hoffman" carried out terrorist acts, there was a clamp down, but it never went far enough. Today, matters have worsened. The swift release of the responsible editors of *Einblick*, the paper of the Anti-Antifa which has carried out attacks on a very wide range of anti-fascist organisations, and the acquittal on 11 February 1994 of two skinheads who had murdered a disabled person, for "lack of proof", are but two examples which show that much of the legal system downplays the fascist threat. The murder and terrorising of immigrants, asylum seekers, the disabled and left wingers are seen in these circles as trivial offences.

These are signs of a frightening lurch to the right in ruling circles in preparation for larger confrontations with the working class — a clear indication

* The author is a German supporter of the Fourth International. The article was originally published in the German Fourth Internationalist journal *Avanti*, no. 38, March 1994. It has been specially updated for *International Viewpoint*.



that at least part of the state apparatus does not want to move against these fascist groups, even when clearly they are going beyond their earlier function of preparing the ground for bourgeois policy.

This trend is even clearer in the police. They have passively watched every pogrom, and instead attacked anti-racists. On 11 February this year police brutally attacked a demonstration against a visit by the leader of the Republikaner, Schönhuber, to Hannover. Despite orders to back off, mounted police charged the demonstration without warning. Such freelancing is not the rule, but it represents a disturbing trend.

Police officers are not machines simply carrying out orders. Their consciousness is determined by their material existence. The specific structures of the repressive apparatuses almost compel the appearance of a mentality close to fascism — the police officer has to obey his superiors but he can also push around those within his own power. On top of this is the crisis of legitimacy of the bourgeois democratic system, known in Germany as *Parteiverdrossenheit* — “feeling sick of parties”. It is therefore no surprise that the social democratic expert on fascism, Leggewie, was not allowed to carry out an investigation into far right tendencies in the police in the Baden-Württemberg (the pro-Republikaner sympathies of many police officers are an open secret). Again, it is no surprise that the police take no measures to stop even the worst outbreaks of fascist violence or the formation of terrorist networks such as the Anti-Antifa.

This rightward drift in the bourgeois spectrum has facilitated the strengthening of far right and fascist forces. These could become an independent factor, in the West in elections, in the East

on the streets, and even take the first steps on the road to power.

Unlike the left, the radical right in Germany can look back on an unbroken tradition. This is not only a matter of the mass entry of former Nazi officials into the state of the Federal Republic. Outright fascist organisations and cadre have persisted. The Sozialistische Reichspartei — later (ineffectually) banned — provided Nazis with their first meeting place in the 1950s. In the 1960s and 1970s, the leading force in the far right camp was the National Democratic Party (NPD), but the failure of two of its major offensives led to splits. At the end of the 1960s the NPD operated mainly in the electoral arena but lost much of its support to the CDU/CSU camp. In the mid-1970s the NPD became more militant. There were, in particular, a series of shows of force by the NPD youth despite protests from democratic and socialist opinion. However, despite enjoying massive police protection, each of their street marches ended in battles. These actions undermined the NPD’s “law and order” image and it rapidly lost influence.

Ideology

At the same time, new currents developed among militant Nazis, in particular around Michael Kühnen,¹ including the New Right at the ideological level and the National Revolutionary current. At first both of these tried to make inroads into leftist circles, targeting especially the peace movement and in some places the Greens. The National Revolutionaries adopted a pseudo-revolutionary discourse while the New Right put forward refurbished racial theories, no longer talking of the “superiority of the Germanic/Aryan race”, but rather

a theory of “to each people its homeland” — the Germans had Germany, the Turks Turkey, the Nicaraguans Nicaragua and so on. On this basis they demanded the “liberation of Germany from US and Soviet imperialism” and supported the liberation struggle in Nicaragua.

However, results were limited. The terrorist strategy by parts of the National Revolutionary camp failed. Further, their distance from the traditional fascist organisations, the NPD and German Peoples Union (DVU), was clear. Contacts were always retained but at the beginning the orientation of the National Revolutionaries was certainly towards the left.

In the early and mid-1980s the old and new far right moved closer together. The old adopted the new-style racial theories and stepped up their social demagogy. In the other direction, many National Revolutionaries abandoned their rejection of the Hitlerite tradition in German fascism and participated decisively in the campaign to deny the Nazi crimes.

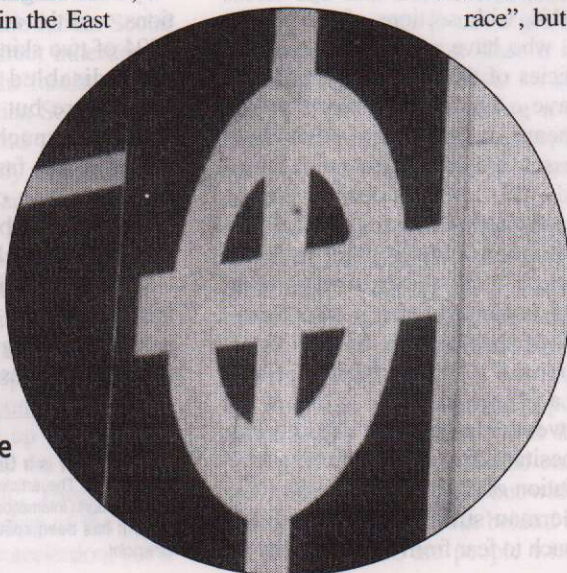
Fascism’s scope for action in West Germany was thereby hugely increased. The New Right’s ideologies opened up opportunities in university circles. Increased emphasis on social questions made it possible to gain influence in the working class.

But, most importantly, Michael Kühnen succeeded in the late 1970s and 1980s in building a stable cadre of fascist militants. These people, initially organised in the ANS/NA, today play leading roles in the most militant Nazi groups. They were able to ride out relatively well the shift to terrorism at the start of the 1980s and the banning of the ANS/NA which led to most of Kühnen’s cadre moving to the previously insignificant Freedom Workers’ Party (FAP). This cadre does not have its origins in Hitler’s Nazi party and marked itself off from the ageing networks of the old right. This leading layer on the far right is a product of the 1970s, whereas on the left it is from 1968 or before.

The breakthrough for the neo-Nazis came with re-unification. Their tightly-knit structures, activism and base amongst working class youth made them well equipped to act in the social desert of the East. In the West, with its strongly-rooted parliamentary system, the

1. Michael Kühnen was a central leader of the militant fascist movement from the 1970s onwards until his death in 1992. A former professional soldier, he was principally an organiser, who was particularly responsible for the growth of fascist groups in eastern Germany following re-unification.

Fascists in Europe are gaining in influence once again — but their real aims, like their post-war symbol (right), remain the same



promotion of fascist policies took place through the electoral successes of the Republikaner and "Liste-D". The former, incidentally, should be characterised as a far right party with a solid base amongst lower ranking civil servants and the police. Since their poor results in the European elections their influence has declined dramatically and it is unlikely that either "Liste-D" or NPD will be able to fill the gap. For the moment, the Republikaner are not aiming to build a militant street movement or form activist cells. But they could very well be part of an overall fascist regroupment. In any case, they form a bridge between right-wing conservatives and fascists, especially in making racism respectable.

With the wind of the "asylum debate" in their sails the organised fascists were able to act as a right-wing vanguard, using direct action to shift public opinion sharply to the right. Without the racist outrages in Hoyerswerda and Rostock there might well have been no compromise between the major political parties to restrict asylum. Violence against the defenceless undermined the reaction of solidarity, which many were frightened to show because this might cost something, possibly even physically. It was easier to find reasons why it was not so bad after all or even had some justification.

Self-organisation

But the terror did not go unchallenged. Some 5 thousand demonstrated after the Hoyerswerda pogrom. Initially these were mainly the far left and young people. The biggest weakness of this movement was — and remains — the lack of self-organisation. There were certainly impressive successes, the high point being the Bonn demonstration against the SPD's special conference on the asylum issue in November 1992, but there were no structures to facilitate ongoing work and increasing political awareness.

This meant that nothing was done to clarify the ambiguities in the "lines of light" movement. They produced impressive mobilisations in which large numbers could take part and stimulated much discussion. The "lines of light" were more than just an expression of the attitude of particular bourgeois and petty-bourgeois circles — large-scale industry, liberal intellectuals — who feared that their material interests outside Germany would be harmed or who were personally afraid of the terror. Moreover, the fact that they were so

"unpolitical" simply reflects the low level of anti-racist awareness in Germany. Nonetheless, the impact of the "lines of light" is not to be sneered at, even if their deliberately "unpolitical" direction — Biblical quotations rather than demands — hindered further development and gave many the feeling that they "had done something" — and did not have to do anything more.

The next upsurge followed the murders in Solingen. Here Turkish immigrants predominated at the demonstrations. This presented the opportunity for a real anti-racist movement with immigrants playing a leading role (and/or organising independently). It was missed. Only in a few places, notably Hamburg and Munich, was an anti-racist united front which included the real immigrant community — and thus nationalist, religious and liberal forces — successfully created. In most cases, the attitude of the far left was that it was not possible to demonstrate against racism alongside nationalists.

The refusal to construct a common front of all those affected — excepting fascist formations such as the Turkish Grey Wolves — had precisely the opposite effect: chauvinist forces supported by the Turkish State had a free hand in many immigrant communities.

In the immediate future, the work of the anti-racist/anti-fascist movement will be shaped by the elections.

For the moment the electoral success or failure of the far right and fascist parties has taken on greater importance. It is not that street level violence against refugees and immigrants has significantly abated but it is no longer the number one topic in German society. The elections are combined with the possibility of a renewed debate over the right to asylum, especially in Bavaria, where the CDU/CSU is set on a xenophobic election campaign — "taking fears about being swamped by foreigners seriously".

Countering the street violence and opposing the terrorist groups will of course continue, although the latter is more difficult. They are clandestine and the police are not ready to break them up. Here, the anti-racist/anti-fascist movement is seeking to build, through self-organisation, the strongest possible

support for those affected; people on the "black lists" who have been, or will be, subjected to terrorist violence. The protests must be as broadly based as possible around concrete demands and actions, such as self-defence of threatened institutions, or full information about and consistent following through of police investigations. Left wing gatherings must be better protected and security questions taken more seriously.

Since it is difficult to apprehend the terrorists themselves, after specific outrages there should be demonstrations at the addresses of the instigators and leaders: offices and business premises of the far right and fascist parties or meeting places of known neo-Nazis.

These are, of course, practical tasks. What is also required now is an open debate on how to take the anti-fascist movement forward. Above all, a new direction is needed — one which can stop the rise of the far right and the fascists in their tracks. ★

Their tightly-knit structures, activism and base, amongst working class youth made them the well equipped to act in the social desert of the East



Three voices make discord

THE RISE of the far right in Belgium is no longer a uniquely Flemish nor a uniquely electoral phenomenon. Since the last European elections the Vlaams Blok has consolidated its position and made breakthroughs in areas where until now it has experienced difficulties in implanting itself (for example in the province of Limbourg). Meanwhile, in Brussels and Wallonie, two other far right formations, the Front National and AGIR, are surging forward. Although this disproves some of the more simplistic analyses and explanations which have been put forward,¹ the crucial problem remains: how, against a background of social and economic crisis, austerity, spectacular increases in unemployment and political disarray - phenomena which are not going to disappear but will get worse — do we hold back the "brown tide"? We begin by examining what the far right in Belgium represents.

VINCENT SCHELTJENS*

24 NOVEMBER 1991, the day of the legislative elections in Flanders, remains marked as "Black Sunday". The Vlaams Blok obtained 10.6% of the vote in Flanders as a whole and 25% in Antwerp, the principal town of the region. With this score the party of Karel Dillen (elected "president for life") and Philip de Winter (the de facto leader of the party) became the biggest electoral formation in Antwerp, surpassing the Social Democrats, the Christian Democrats and the Liberals. Although 12 June 1994 has not been characterised as a

second "Black Sunday" (the newspapers are getting used to the situation), the Vlaams Blok again increased its vote to obtain 12.6% and double its representation in the European parliament (from 1 to 2 seats, out of a total of 14).

Still on the electoral plane, the next battle will take place during the local elections, scheduled for 9 October 1994. The morning after "Black Sunday", the Vlaams Blok announced its intentions; to confirm itself as the strongest party in Antwerp, to take over the government of the town and to win the mayorship. Everything is being thrown into the battle, including the "Führer" himself: de Winter, a native of Bruges, has set up house in downtown Antwerp to take the head of his party's list.

Breakthroughs

This party is no longer a uniquely electoral phenomenon. The Vlaams Blok has succeeded in the past few years — on the basis of consecutive electoral breakthroughs and through its deputies in the institutions of bourgeois parliamentary democracy² — in structuring and implanting itself. In its fiefdom, the province of Antwerp, the Vlaams Blok now has around 20 local sections, which intervene more and more actively in public life, in the neighbourhoods and even at the gates of factories and schools. Its youth organisation, the Vlaams Blok Jongeren, has several thousand adherents, while the circulation of its monthly has risen to 37,000 (plans to launch a daily have foundered up until now). To assess this party and fight it effectively, it is necessary to first distinguish three different levels:

- Its cadres, the political-ideological kernel, which while trying to project a respectable image, which represents the nucleus of a fascist project.
- Its members, found above all among the petty bourgeoisie, but also in the working class.
- Its electorate, containing a high percentage of workers, unemployed, the under-educated and very many youth, all prone to xenophobic prejudice, fundamentally because of the lack of a credible left alternative.³ It is this third category which is at stake in this battle.

The recipe for its success is well known and does not fundamentally differ from those employed elsewhere in Western Europe: faced with the crisis of capitalism, the social democratic co-management of this crisis, the disappearance of a credible left alternative together with ruptures in the social tissue (at the beginning the breakthrough always happens in the traditionally "red" popular neighbourhoods of the big cities), the Vlaams Blok capitalised on popular discontent through presenting a verbally radical alternative with a specific identity (Flemish, anti-Belgian and racist). The zenith of this line was the publication of its "70 point programme to resolve the problem of immigration", which represented a gamble.⁴ With the increasing influence (some have said the putsch) of the "young wolves" led by de Winter, Van Hedke (a deputy in the European parliament and previously secretary of the far right fraction at Strasbourg), Van Hauthem and others (all aged between 25 and 35), a change of direction took place; the immigrant presence (linked with unemployment and insecurity) became the focus of propaganda and agitation, to the detriment of anti-Belgian propaganda for an inde-

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1. Analyses which sought to show that the rise of the far right was linked to the character of Flemish society, as if the rise of Hitler and the Holocaust could be explained by the "character of German society", or other analyses explaining that the rise of the far right had no link with the global crisis of society in which capitalism finds itself.

2. The Vlaams Blok today has 18 parliamentary representatives (12 in the chamber of deputies and 6 in the senate) and 36 representatives in the provincial councils. Thanks to its federal deputies the Vlaams Blok received (under the old legislation) 11.2 million Belgian francs in state subsidies in 1992. Under the new law of state subvention of political parties the Vlaams Blok receives, starting from 1993, some 34 million Belgian francs above this amount, or a total of 54.5 million Belgian francs per year. Its participation in the right wing fraction of the European parliament also brings it some millions of Belgian francs.

3. The Vlaams Blok does better electorally among the young members of the two trade union federations (the social democratic ABVV and the Christian Democratic ACV) than it does among the population as a whole. Among ABVV members of less than 35 years, 21% vote for the Vlaams Blok (15% in the ACV). Among the members of the socialist trade union federation, the Vlaams Blok is in second place in every age category, behind the Socialist Party!

4. In this programme (drawn up in 1992), which was unanimously condemned for racism and non-respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the Flemish regional parliament, the Vlaams Blok proposes, among other things, a system of apartheid in teaching ("to prepare immigrants to return to their countries of origin") and in social security.

pendent Flemish state. This was in conjunction with a series of meetings with Le Pen. The fact that the Vlaams Blok defends a "nationalism of the peoples" as opposed to the "state nationalism" of Le Pen's FN did not deter these young convinced fascists, emerging as they did from the most notorious "black" circles such as the high school students' movement, the NJSV, or the NSV student movement, organisations which are not afraid to indulge in militarist provocations (de Winter, who became a parliamentary deputy at the age of 26, was president of the NJSV and vice-president of the NSV).

This does not mean that the Vlaams Blok has not defended racist positions since its foundation. Such positions were to be found in its founding programme,⁵ but they were not put forward as the axis of its electoral agitation. Nor does it mean that the Vlaams Blok no longer has a separatist profile. At the same time as it claims to be the only Flemish nationalist party, it fiercely opposes any "pro-Belgian" sentiments among the public.⁶ For the Vlaams Blok the two things are linked, and there are no profound divergences among the leadership of the party as to ideology or political programme.

The undeniable strength of this party — and something which is little commented upon in the "left" analyses — is that it has succeeded in fusing two generations. The generation which was active in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, basing itself on the example of Mussolini and later — although partially and with more hesitations — of Hitler (sometimes with active collaboration with the Nazi occupiers, and the sending of young volunteers to the eastern front to combat the "Communist devil") was strongly marginalised and repressed at the end of the war. The small groups — often circles of ex-combatants — living in "the catacombs" succeeded in passing the torch to a new generation, coming into politics against the background of the "betrayal" of the traditional Flemish nationalist party Volksunie (Union of the People), a party which was a constituent of several federal governments, notably to elaborate the different stages of reform of the state. The ideological and political formation of this new generation was rooted in the 1920s and 1930s: Flemish priests and poets working for a "new order", like Cyril Verscaeve, August Borms, Joris Van Severen, Wies Moens, Staf De Clerq, Father Brauns and many others. The political itinerary of all the "young wolves"

include the same organisations; the VNJ scout movement, the two student organisations already mentioned, Voorpost (a Dutch-Flemish organisation which struggles for the unification of "Dietsland"), Were-Di — a club for intellectuals — and VMO (Order of Flemish Militants) — a private militia, condemned as such by a judicial tribunal in 1987.

A second success for the Vlaams Blok has been its ability to conquer hegemony of this entire far right Flemish movement. Following on from this, given its electoral credibility and its presence in the elected institutions, it has been able to draw behind it other Flemish nationalists (who did not originate from the far right) such as the Flemish intellectual Mark Grammens, who not so long ago was still to be seen in some left circles around the Communist Party in Flanders.

Born leaders

How has the Vlaams Blok imposed itself in such a fashion as the sole and unique political voice for this movement? It has been a real coup. In these milieus there is no shortage of individuals who regard themselves as born leaders. The rare dissidents inside the Vlaams Blok have never succeeded in acquiring any electoral or organisational representation. This is due to the role of its founder, Karel Dillen and the "modus vivendi" which he has found with the youth. Opting for a "parliamentary-respectable" road, he has never denied his collaborationist past and has condemned neither the revisionism of some, nor the militarist actions of others. Other voices on the far right have always received a place in the first rank of the party. Two examples; the ultra-violent ex-leader of the VMO, Xavier Buisseret, is the party's propaganda chief⁷ and currently a deputy in the national parliament. The "ideological guru" of the Flemish far right, Roeland Raes (one of the few who participated in the debates around the "New Right") is vice-president, acknowledged ideologue and deputy in the Belgian senate. During Vlaams Blok demonstrations, in which corteges of para-military groupuscules such as Assaut or Jonge Wacht) participate, it is Philip De Winter himself who directs the contingents. And in this way the Fuhrer indicates to the troops that he has not forgotten.

Throughout the 1980s in Wallonie an important sector of the left (situated principally within or around social

democracy) saw in the revival of the far right in Flanders the confirmation of their own well-cultivated myth: Flanders, always right wing and Catholic, formed a "natural" terrain for fascism, particularly since the national question has always been isolated from social emancipation (which is, however, not entirely true).⁸ According to these same sectors, "Red" Wallonie would always be immune against fascism — something which again has not been completely true in the past⁹ — to such a point that some have declared that Wallonie was "the white spot on the map of fascist Europe".¹⁰ Both assertions were caricatures of reality.

The far right in Wallonie lagged behind that of Flanders in making its electoral breakthrough, although the roots of the crisis being even worse than in Flanders, the objective terrain was present. However, in the two years after the 1991 elections, many elements intervened to reinforce a spectacular breakthrough of the Francophone far right. The deep divisions between the small far right groups were gradually resolved, and then came the present offered by social democracy: austerity for the workers, corruption and profitable swindles for the party bigwigs.

Let us examine the depth of this breakthrough. In the European vote, the Front National (FN) and AGIR together received 9.2%: 7.3% for the FN, 1.9% for AGIR (the FN gained 1 seat out of a total of 10). In their respective fiefdoms, the FN scored 11.5% in Brussels city (where it had already had a deputy elected in 1991), while AGIR received 4.7% in Liege. The breakthrough of the FN can be considered general throughout Wallonie: thus the party received 9.5%

5. The founding programme (1979) is entitled "Vlaams Blok. Basic principles. Manifesto of a nationalism of the right".

6. After the death of King Baudouin in August 1993 a real Belgian nationalist fervour emerged. Fiercely republican, the Vlaams Blok declined to comment on the deceased monarch. During the speech to parliament of the new king, Albert II, the Vlaams Blok fraction was absent, leaving a libertarian-populist deputy to mount a sole protest.

7. Buisseret, convicted several times for acts of violence against leftwingers, homosexuals and immigrants, once had the idea of naming this service of propaganda "national secretariat — service of agitation and propaganda". In Dutch its initials read NSDAP.

8. A well known example is that of the priest Daens and his brother who, at the beginning of the century, presented an alternative list to that of the Catholic party, to defend the interests of the workers, a struggle which went hand in hand with the battle for cultural and linguistic emancipation.

9. Just as well known is the example of the fascist Léon Degrelle, who recently died in exile in the Spanish state. Emerging from the reactionary Catholic currents, he made a spectacular breakthrough in the 1930s with his REX party. During the Nazi occupation he formed an SS-Wallonie brigade to fight on the eastern front.

10. Unhappily we are obliged to quote our friend, the Walloon republican José Fontaine.



in the province of Hainault (capital Charleroi), and 8.5% at Namur. An extrapolation for the legislative elections reveals that the FN would triple its number of seats (from 1 to 3) whereas AGIR would stand a good chance of winning its first seat.

To explain this surge it is first necessary to examine the nature of the crisis in Wallonie. De-industrialisation and massive unemployment (above all among the youth), and this time with the PS in the national, regional and local governments. No excuses then for a PS knee deep in corruption; the "godfather of the PS", the state minister André Cools, was shot in July 1991, the inquest leading to gangster circles around another PS minister; corruption in 1988 during the purchase of the Italian AGUSTA helicopters leading this year to the lifting of the parliamentary immunity of three PS ministers, the "three Guys": Guy Spitaels (former president of the party and president of the Walloon government), Guy Coëme (deputy prime minister in the federal government) and Guy Mathot (minister in the Walloon government).

Given the crisis of credibility of "socialism", the fact that the same PS had just introduced an austerity plan to meet the criteria of convergence for the Maastricht treaty, and the corruption, the only electoral gains would be for the far right. The two right wing parties enjoyed themselves to the hilt, leading an anti-corruption and anti-immigrant/asylum-seekers campaign. The votes lost by Francophone social democracy were almost entirely gained by the two far right formations.

These formations do not have a great deal in common. The Front National stands for "state nationalism", royalism and Belgian unity. It longs for the "Belgian greatness" of the colonial period. In deference to its pretensions to "Belgicism", the party's full name is the FN-NF (the same thing, but in Dutch). In fact, it has hardly any Flemish members but it does have the support of some members of aristocratic families. As to AGIR, its strongest base exists in the region of Liège and Brabant-Wallon (where historically there is a tradition of Francophone fascism). AGIR is virulently "Walloonist" ("the Walloons first"), anti-Belgian and more "militant" than the FN. AGIR employs

an "anti-capitalist" discourse, in common with neo-Nazi currents which advocate the "second revolution" (in the tradition of Rohm, the Strasser brothers, and so on). But these are merely words. AGIR, while fulminating against foreign (above all American) capital, declares that it has no intention of challenging "fundamental ideas like private property".¹¹

What the FN, AGIR and the Vlaams Blok have in common are royalism, authoritarianism, reactionary Catholicism and racism, united in a project to "cleanse" civil society (and above all the workers' movement) in the service of the big bourgeoisie, which — for the moment — does not need this project.

In its Brussels stronghold, the FN built itself through the Committee for the Defence of Social Beneficiaries, distributing hot meals to the poor. The FN too has its "president for life", the doctor Daniel Féret, now a European deputy (although in 1987 he was condemned to a year's imprisonment, fined 60,000 francs and banned from exercising his rights as a citizen for 5 years, for having provided a false alibi for a gangster on the run from the police).

"Pole-position"

The fact that Féret's party has been able to conquer "pole-position" on the Francophone far right is also due to a unification effort. Up until a few years ago battles still raged between the FN and the PFN (Party of New Forces).

Finally, the majority of PFN members entered the FN, except, significantly, in Liège. After an unsuccessful attempt to seize power, the head of the Liège branch founded his own party, AGIR.

Vlaams Blok and the Front National detest each other. What is at

stake is Brussels, the capital of

Belgium. For the Vlaams Blok, Brussels should be the capital of an independent Flanders, whereas for the FN it represents the capital of a strong, unified, royalist Belgium. The competition between the two formations in Brussels is so strong that the Vlaams Blok distributes bilingual tracts and opens its lists to Francophone candidates! The two formations are also in competition for "official recognition" from their big brother in France (a battle which seems to be largely going the way of Vlaams

Blok). Relations between the Vlaams Blok and AGIR, on the other hand, are more cordial. Starting from 1990, AGIR has been regularly invited to Vlaams Blok activities. Thus, in 1990, Destordeur addressed the youth congress of Vlaams Blok and made a speech on the glory of a free Flanders and Wallonie.¹²

It is intriguing, if beyond the purposes of this article, to reflect on the influence exercised by these forces on the ideas and practices of bourgeois and social democratic politicians. All are opposed to "fascism", certainly. But some maintain that these are essentially "parties like the others, which should not be isolated or stigmatised, since that would only reinforce their success".¹³ Numerous are those who openly take up the themes of these parties in relation to security policy against immigrants and asylum seekers. On the other hand, the law against racist acts has just been reinforced, as have the powers of the centre which combats racist and xenophobic acts. Cadres of the Vlaams Blok, ex-PFN and others have been put on trial on the basis of their material and propaganda. But it is certainly not by the road of state repression that the influence of these parties (and their ideas) will disappear.

Since "black Sunday" a number of mass anti-racist and anti-fascist initiatives have taken place in Belgium. The results of 12 June demonstrate that it is not enough to mobilise on the basis of anti-racism or anti-fascism. Meanwhile, the austerity policy continues, the trade union mobilisations coming up against the complicity of the national apparatuses with their friends in the government.

Every anti-fascist initiative must be linked to a discourse and a practice of anti-capitalist inspiration. A change of course is needed which gives priority to the social needs of the majority, and it is necessary to create an alternative left political pole to give back credibility and identity to people impoverished by the crisis and the youth who can see no future. Such a movement has to reconquer the big cities, the neighbourhoods... if necessary house by house. The struggle against fascism must be treated as a war.

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11. Agir, its programme of action.

12. Quoted in Gwenaël Bréès, 'L' Affront National, le nouveau visage de l'extrême-droite en Belgique', ed. EPO/REFLEX, 1991.

13. The most notorious mouthpiece for this "tendency" is the current Minister of Defence, the Flemish Christian Democrat Leo Delcroix, right wing heavyweight of the CVP.

...united in a project to "cleanse" civil society (and above all the workers' movement) ...

Courting the rich and poor

IT IS now ten years since Le Pen and his Front National first made their mark on French political life. Ten years during which their vote has never dipped below 10%, and went as high as 15% during the presidential election of 1988.

CHRISTIAN PIQUET*

THE reasons for the Front National's (FN) implantation are many. We can cite principally the economic crisis and the relegation of several million people to unemployment and insecurity, favouring the temptations of nationalist withdrawal as well as the search for scapegoats for all the evils of society. Or again, the impasse of the traditional right, which continues to seek its axes of re-organisation and is permanently tearing itself apart over its choice of representative in the presidential election. Or finally, a workers' movement which finds itself suffering from both the bankruptcy of social democracy at the end of a decade in power, and the historic decline of a Communist Party (PCF) incapable of emancipating itself from its Stalinist past and developing a credible strategy.

This context has allowed a mass fascist force to take root, despite the attempts made by both the Socialist Party and the parliamentary right to isolate it through ephemeral "republican fronts", or marginalise it through an electoral system aimed at depriving troublesome formations of representation. In election after election, the FN thus receives the support of a radicalised right wing electorate, escaping the grip of the parties which previously channelled it, and an electorate of social protest which expresses in this perverse manner its disarray and its anguish.

The phenomenon is no longer limited to the electoral field. Having once espoused a fashionable ultra-liberalism, Le Pen's party has progressively re-orientated its discourse in the direction of those sectors of the masses hardest hit by unemployment and the devastating effects of the Maastricht project of

European union. In a "national-populist" synthesis, it has become past master in the art of linking its racist and nationalist diatribes to the denunciation of insecurity, taxes, unemployment, the Common Agricultural Policy, GATT, the threats against social security — which it argues should be reserved for French nationals — poverty and injustice. Faced with a neo-liberal Europe, it calls for a "new protectionism". And faced with the right, in power since March 1993, it presents itself as the "national alternative", a strategy summed up in these terms by its secretary general, Carl Lang: "Governments change, the problems get worse: immigration, taxes, insecurity, unemployment, education, social security, nothing has changed since March 1993... Real change will be led by us and the Front National will be there when the French people want it."

The result is that the FN is currently enjoying a deep implantation in several regions of the country (Mediterranean perimeter, the old Parisian "red belt", industrial areas in the north and east). Because of this, it has a significant network of locally elected representatives (regional and municipal councillors). Although its militant capacities remain uneven according to the themes advanced by the party leadership, they allow it to begin to contest the social terrain with a workers' movement weakened by a terrible haemorrhaging of militants, indeed to find some space inside the trade unions. In an incident symptomatic of a worrying evolution, some months ago at Le Havre, the local FN section participated in a demonstration in defence of jobs at the Alsthom factory.

The European elections on 18 June revealed the broad tendencies at work in France. Certainly, the FN experienced its first regression in a contest of this type, obtaining only 10.51% of votes against 11.2% in 1984 and 11.73% in 1989. Their vote was even slightly down in their bastions in the Parisian region and the south-east. But this set-back, all the more marked in that their declared objective had been 15%, was largely the consequence of the emergence, on the fringes of the FN, of a new political actor, the regroupment launched by Philippe de Villiers and the British millionaire Jimmy Goldsmith.

In his programme, the viscount Philippe Le Jolis de Villiers has nothing to learn from Le Pen. It describes immigrants as "communities juxtaposed in cysts of inassimilable populations".¹ Like the leader of the FN, he denounces the "ravages of world free-tradeism", denounces the right to abortion as a crime, and compares state schooling to a "soviet-type administration".² The influence of the "negationist" historians is evident when he attacks a "delinquent anti-racism... which functions as a backwards anti-racism... a delinquent anti-fascism... to make us replay for ever the Second World War, to change the chessboard of political life."³

The FN has a significant network of local councillors

De Villiers' only real difference with Le Pen is that he originates from the traditional right, in this case the UDF, under whose banner he was elected deputy for the electoral constituency of Vendée. Inheritor of the old legitimist, hyper-conservative, Catholic traditionalist and monarchist tradition, he has succeeded in detaching a new fraction of the electorate from the Gaullist or liberal orbit. His social base is in the image of the French right; upper class, older, non wage-earners. His breakthrough came initially in the regions where the old hatred for the French Revolution and the Republic persists: Vendée, Poitou-Charante, Pays-de-Loire.

There has thus emerged a far right pole which, if one adds together the results of the lists led by Le Pen and de Villiers, represents nearly a quarter of votes cast. A pole which is all the more menacing in that it represents the conjunction, for the first time, of two

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1. Valeurs actuelles, 3 December 1990.

2. Quotations taken from 'Heure de vérité', broadcast on Antenne 2, May 1992.

3. Le Figaro, 25 May 1990.



phenomena which were until then distinct: that of FN style nationalist populism, influential in a mass electorate which is disorientated, and that of a counter-revolutionary tradition, which reaps dividends from the crisis of the traditional bourgeois apparatuses. While the Vendéen viscount mopped up in the well-off and bourgeois areas (23% of the vote at Neuilly, nearly 22% in Versailles), Le Pen continues to prosper in the deprived Parisian suburbs: 16.24% at Aubervilliers, 17.72% at Stains, 18.41% at Bondy. As the Appeal of 250, a movement launched in 1990 by intellectuals and anti-fascist personalities, has underlined: "A frightened France has given a clear message: it wants an alliance between the far right of the beaux quartiers with the plebeian far right."⁴

Such a phenomenon can only engender a reactionary radicalisation of French political life and, in particular, the policies of a government whose sole aim at present consists in winning the presidential elections of May 1995. Already, since the change of government in March 1993, the programme of the far right and its solutions tend to remodel the political and ideological field. Under the inspiration of Interior Minister, Charles Pasqua, several laws have been adopted (a change in the conditions of access to French nationality, hardening of the conditions of entry and right to stay of foreigners, revision of the constitution to put an end to the right of exile) which are directly inspired by the 50 anti-immigrant measures proposed by the FN in 1990. In making every foreigner an a priori suspect, and submitting them to the most completely arbitrary policing, these measures have sanctioned the return, on the right, of an ethnocentrist approach to the management of problems linked to immigration. What is re-emerging today is that tradition which has always formed, from the Dreyfus Affair to the collaborationist regime of Vichy, the most reactionary basis of French nationalism. This tradition, opposed to the principles of citizenship proclaimed by the French Revolution, defines French identity in European and Christian terms and stresses above all territory, right of blood and right of soil as a basis for citizenship.

In the present context, this tendency could well sharpen and favour the rise of an already banalised racism among public opinion. In October 1993, 59% of French asked agreed that "immigration is a threat to the French economy" and 57% considered that "there are too many

foreign workers in France".⁵ This pressure is clearly linked to an offensive seeking the restoration of a moral order. Recently, the front page of *Le Monde* carried the following thoughts: "For one year a perfume of moral order has floated on the benches of the Palace of Bourbon and the Palace of Luxembourg (seats of the National Assembly and of the Senate). Discreet, but insistent, sometimes grating, this change has impregnated all the debates, nourished the amendments, motivated the propositions of law and finally imposed a new spirit of the time. With some favoured themes: the defence of the family and the rehabilitation of marriage, the struggle against deviance, the denunciation of the moral crisis which is at the source of so many social evils."⁶

Draft laws

No less than seven draft laws have recently been put forward by the deputies of the new majority. They seek to favour the maintenance of women in the household, to suppress the tax advantages from which non-married couples benefit, to restore the "sense of the value of money" among youth, to re-establish the death penalty and to withdraw the social security reimbursement of abortion costs. At the beginning of the year, an unprecedented attack on state schools, unleashed by the government under the pressure of the reactionary-clerical lobby, was defeated only through the demonstration on 16 January, of 600,000 partisans of secular education on the streets of Paris.

Inevitably, all this has generated an authoritarian hardening. This October, the National Assembly will consider a draft bill from Charles Pasqua relating to security. In particular, the text envisages a reform of the structure of the national police, on the lines of that which prevailed under the Vichy regime,⁷ legalisation of systems of video-surveillance and recourse to private police and security outfits (where far right circles are active) and considerable restraints on the right to demonstrate (it authorises, for example, the searching of vehicles within 10 kilometres of the area of a demonstration).

It is not abusive to risk a comparison between what is now happening in France and what is currently happening on the other side of the Alps. Certainly two researchers drew the parallel following the European elections that: "The very permanency of the party systems set up following the war is now in ques-

tion. Italy has recently furnished the most striking example, but France is also affected by this phenomenon."⁸

A number of factors attest to the pertinence of this judgement. The social crisis is profoundly transforming the structure of work, institutionalising a variable speed society. The nation-state is being directly challenged by the movement towards the internationalisation of capital. On top of the criminal corruption of the political and economic elites,⁹ the collapse of traditional modes of representation imperils the entire political and institutional edifice of the country. Faced with a paralysed workers' movement, which is incapable of developing a counter-offensive, and where no alternative to the bankrupt leaderships has yet emerged, all kinds of adventures could be envisaged, above all when the right falls prey to a crisis of its own making, while still searching for an alternative policy to the liberalism which has clearly founded in France as elsewhere in Europe.

The conditions are in place for continuing social fragmentation, ethnic ghettoisation, a new division of the country into rich areas and those abandoned to their fate. All this can only lead, among some at least, to the return of the themes of "preference" (national, social, cultural) and of "difference" (morals, customs, destinies). One can envisage in the context of the acute social tensions which will inevitably result, against the background of disturbance of State institutions and the discrediting of the governing parties, in the absence of a credible anti-capitalist pole, the far right, or at least a fraction of it, could become an integral part of a bourgeois solution to the crisis.

All will depend, from this point of view, on the outcome of the debate opened up inside the dominant classes on what international choices to should be made. Before the difficulties experienced by the Maastricht project and the exacerbation of competition between European bourgeoisies, part of the right and of industrial capital (embodied, among others, by Philippe Séguin, the Rally for the Republic [RPR] president of the national Assembly and Jacques

4. *Ras-l'Front*, July-August 1994.

5. From an IVOP survey for the monthly *Passages*.

6. *Le Monde*, 24 June 1994.

7. The proposal reinforces in particular the control of the government over the different organs of the police force through the mediation of prefects.

8. *Le Monde*, 7 July 1994.

9. As in Italy and Belgium, legal proceedings against politicians and businessmen charged with improper use of their influence, corruption or theft of public funds continues to grow apace.

Calvet, the head of the business group PSA) pronounced themselves in favour of protectionist measures, a budget policy of reflation and a lowering of interest rates. From such controversies could develop an implosion of the reactionary bloc. The political weight of the FN (its popular base as much as the timeliness of its ideas), could then facilitate its reinsertion in the political game. From this point of view, the entry of Italian Social Movement (MSI) ministers into the Italian government has lifted the taboo across the continent, following the defeat of European fascism in 1945, which forbade the inclusion of the far right in parliamentary or governmental coalitions.

The xenophobic and security-obsessed tone chosen by Charles Pasqua (favourable, like Philippe Séguin, to a "no" vote during the referendum on the ratification of the Maastricht accords in September 1992) in order to construct himself an image, or again the sympathy shown by the RPR towards the MSI, illustrate the temptations to which a part of the parliamentary right are prey, in particular that section which wishes to be the inheritor of the Bonapartist and authoritarian tradition of Gaullism. It is as yet only one possibility, and its realisation would suppose an acceleration of the political, economic and social crisis. Still, it is noticeable that when the question of the succession to Le Pen is opened, a wing of the FN integrates this possibility into its calculations. Bruno Mégret, number two of the movement, does not hide it: "This internal division... can only go sooner or later in the sense of the political recomposition the FN desires, and which will be profitable for it, when it is the sole organised, structured political force outside of the traditional political parties... Our ideas have made formidable progress when the programme of M. de Villiers takes up the principal ideas of the FN... It is then an ideological victory, and everyone knows that political victories are always preceded by ideological victories."¹⁰ In consequence of which, one could reasonably think that the line of the FN will remain the same: to affirm itself as the real alternative, and trace the perspective of an alliance with de Villiers without abandoning the populist and social tone of its discourse, leaving some margin of manoeuvre to its most radical sectors, concentrated notably inside its youth organisation.

A phenomenon has however emerged to trouble the strategy of the far right a little; the success of Bernard

Tapie. This loudmouthed and shady entrepreneur, a specialist in the purchase and restructuring of bankrupt enterprises (Wonder, la Vie Claire, Terailon, Adidas, Toshiba France), the subject of an incalculable number of legal actions, was one of the surprises of the 18 June election. His electorate comes clearly from the left, 22% of his supporters having voted socialist in 1993, 10% PCF and 13% ecologist. He obtained, beyond this, his best results among the young and unemployed, his areas of influence being situated, significantly, in the areas with an old working class tradition, long dominated by the PCF but where the population today finds itself prey to the most complete disorientation, deprived of any left wing political references. By default — although with the aid, it is true, of François Mitterand and a faction of the Socialist Party (PS)¹¹ — Bernard Tapie occupies the space which has been vacated by the PS and the PCF.

However, he also has recourse to the big themes of populism, which has allowed him, unlike the dominant apparatuses of the left, to escape responsibility for the disasters of the past (even though he was a member of the last socialist government). Since half of the electors did not vote "yes" at the 1992 referendum, he has abandoned his fiery professions of faith in favour of a federal Europe. Certainly, Tapie affirms himself resolutely anti-Le Pen and draws from this an additional popularity among youth and the electors of the left. At this stage, he is understood to favour above all the emergence of a centre-left, a formation associated with the PS and the PCF at the time of the Common Programme. He nonetheless adopts a dangerous tone, that of the charismatic leader directly addressing the people. His demagogic rhetoric seeks to circumvent the organised forces of the workers' movement. He is understood to favour the advent of a left which would bury its references and its memory in a catch-all discourse and would forget the class cleavages which have forged its history.

No one can say, where Tapie's trajectory will end. After all, a century ago, on the basis of the acute crisis of the republican state, a certain general Boulanger began his career in the orbit of the bourgeois left, but concluded it allied to the monarchists and nationalists, in an attempted coup. We are evidently not yet at that stage, and, following the example of most populist upsurges, the Tapie phenomenon hardly promises great things. But the forces summoned up by him will find themselves ardently coveted by the far right. This has led Le Pen to opportunistically posit the construction of a vast "populist front", going from the FN to the Tapestes, while passing through the supporters of de Villiers.

What does it matter if such a proposition is never realised! It illustrates perfectly the menaces weighing today on the left and the French workers' movement. This will only impel the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR — French section of the Fourth International) to pursue its efforts of permanent and organised mobilisation against the far right and racism, to work towards a social remobilisation through which the fundamental programmatic lines, as much as the organised instruments of class combat, can be reconstituted, to develop a tireless unitary activity which will lay the bases for a new, credible force of social transformation. This is the only way to drain the watering-holes of fascisms and populisms of every kind. ★



French youth looking to the right after the failures of the left

10. *Le Figaro*, 25-26 June 1994.

11. The European elections were the pretext for a ferocious settling of accounts between factions of the socialist party, the friends of President Mitterand supporting Tapie in an underhand manner, with the aim of preventing Michel Rocard, head of the PS list, from taking part in the future presidential competition. With some success, since, having obtained less than 15% of the vote, Rocard had to resign as first secretary of the party on 19 June.

The costs of growth

THE HISTORY of post-revolutionary China can be divided schematically into four periods: the first from 1949 to the beginning of the crisis of the 1960s; the second corresponding to what was known as the Cultural Revolution; the third represented by a tormented interlude between the end of the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of the "new course" (1978-1979); the fourth which has now lasted 15 years and the outcome of which is not yet predictable. Balance sheets for the first three periods have been drawn up, from different perspectives. We will not return here on what we have already written ourselves on this subject,¹ but rather will concentrate on assessing the fourth period up to the end of last year.²

LIVIO MAITAN

FIRST, let us recall two essential facts: China remains, overall, a backward country: in 1992, industrial income represented only 27.2% of gross national product (GNP), whereas the world average was 40%.

In this context, the country has in the course of the past few years experienced very high rates of growth. In 1993 GNP increased by 13.4%, while it is predicted to grow by between 9 and 10% in 1994. Industrial production grew by 21.1% in 1993, with steel production reaching 88.6 million tons. Significant progress has been made in several branches of agriculture (production of cereals reached 456.4 million tons, although there was a fall in cotton production). Foreign trade has also experienced unprecedented growth: the volume of import-export, which was US\$20.64 billion in 1978 reached US\$192 billion in 1993. The reputable Moody Investors Service, which periodically provides a classifica-



tion of the economies of different countries, last year promoted China to a higher (A3) category of countries, explaining that "China is politically stable and its economic growth is long term and irreversible."

It is a virtually unanimous opinion, that objectively these results have been achieved thanks to the profound structural changes made in order to introduce a "market economy". Let us examine more concretely to what this adds up to.³ So far as agriculture is concerned, from May 1993 the sale prices of products as significant as cereals and comestible oils have been "liberated" in 90% of districts. More generally, 90% of the prices of commodities will henceforth be determined by the market (*Beijing Information [BI]*, no. 2, 1994).⁴ In 1993, moreover, the state fixed the prices of only 30% of raw materials. The means of production have also become the object of commodity transactions and a text of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has fixed the criteria to follow in the matter of the functioning of the "labour market". Let us recall, finally, that financial markets exist and are expanding and that stock exchanges have operated in some towns for several years.

Against this there is growth in the private sector. It is difficult to give precise figures, all the more because oscillations occur in the official sources and

the interpretations of international sources are often debatable. One could say, generally, that the state industrial sector, which grew enormously between 1950 and 1960, to reach 90% of total production, and which remained stationary in the 1970s, has progressively shrunk to fall below 50% (from 55% at the beginning of 1992). It is necessary, at the same time, to point out that the non-state sector is not automatically synonymous with the private sector: there exists what is called the collective sector, which notably includes some non-private factories on a local scale and which has experienced a significant expansion (there is also the case of those workers who have bought the enterprises in which they work). According to the State Administration for Industry and Commerce, in 1993 the state sector embraced 55% of national product, the collective sector 35% and the private sector — all enterprises together, including those which are foreign owned — 10%. Another source - the president of

1. See our book, 'Party, Army and Masses in China' (NLB, London, 1976) and our more recent essay, 'Il dilemma cinese', *Data News*, 1994.

2. Our article, which takes up some of the themes of our essay *Il dilemma cinese*, is based on documentation which arrived before December 1993, with some supplementary material integrated.

3. So as not to burden this article, we have avoided giving all the necessary references. We have used in particular Chinese publications - namely *Beijing Information*, *China Daily* and *Business Weekly* - and various international publications — the *Financial Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Le Monde*, *Le Monde diplomatique*, *The Economist*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *China Quarterly*, and the Fourth Internationalist journal, *October Review*.

4. We have analysed the formation of special economic zones, the reappearance of the stock exchanges and the floating of shares in our article 'China since Tiananmen', which appeared in *International Marxist Review*, vol. 5 no. 4, Spring 1992. Some societies of shareholders have also been formed by peasants. See also Ossi Rask, *International Viewpoint*, no. 248 & 249, September & October 1993.

the National Federation of Industry and Commerce, Jing Shuping — has indicated that in 1994 there were “17 million industrial and private commercial holdings without employees where 29 million people worked” and “238,000 private enterprises where 3.7 million people worked... The areas of reconstruction, services and retail trade are more than 80% private” (*BI*, no. 25, 1994). As for the collective sector, it accounts for 1.4% of production and 0.5% of industrial production.

However, the phenomenon which has drawn most attention and, which has sharpened particularly in the course of the last three years, has been the spectacular development of foreign investments and joint ventures. In 1990 there was already US\$6.57 billion worth of foreign investments, yet the following year strong growth was registered. In the case of Shenzhen, Deng calculated at the time that foreign investments “represented a quarter of the economy”. In 1993 these investments doubled in relation to 1992 and the number of foreign capital enterprises registered for the first time was 1.29 times the total of the preceding 13 years. In 1993 direct foreign financing rose to US\$25.8 billion (*BI*, no. 14, 1994), which is well above what was predicted by both Chinese and foreign analysts. According to information published at the beginning of 1994, “In the first half of 1993, China had more than 134,000 “sanzi” enterprises (based on Chinese-foreign co-operation or solely foreign capital) and in the first quarter of the same year the creation of more than 62,000 “sanzi” enterprises was approved, more than the total of the 13 previous years, the total of direct investments from foreign businessmen reaching US\$44 billion”. (*BI*, no. 2, 1994). At the end of 1993, the balance sheet indicated that “the new agreements of foreign investment represented overall US\$122.7 billion” and that US\$36.7 billion had actually been invested (*BI*, no. 10, 1994). China has obtained, moreover, important foreign loans: in the fiscal year 1992-1993, it was the principal beneficiary of the loans accorded by the World Bank, to a total of US\$16.5 billion. As we write, some international and Chinese press organs are indicating that in the first months of this year foreign investments will have fallen by 50%, mainly because of new fiscal measures and fears inspired by economic overheating (*International Herald Tribune*, 15 June 1994). It is very likely that this is no more than a conjunctural phenomenon.

We cannot sketch here an overall picture of the joint ventures and foreign enterprises. We will limit ourselves to recalling that, although the lion's share belongs to Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan, very many other countries are also involved; from the European Union to the United States, to South Korea and even South Africa. Sectors of investment have undergone a constant expansion: consumer durables, electrical industry, computers, pharmaceuticals, foodstuffs, supermarkets and big restaurants, not forgetting the construction of roads and urban projects. Numerous foreign banks are also present. Unlike what happened in the first stages, the “new course” now extends to more and more provinces.

Mechanisms

The growing integration of China into the framework and mechanisms of the world economy is confirmed by the expansion of its own initiatives into other countries. For a long time, China exported labour, mainly in relation to the infrastructural works that it carried out in the underdeveloped countries. More recently, it has redoubled its efforts not only to develop its foreign trade, but also to invest abroad, export capital and buy important enterprises in other continents. If we limit ourselves to 1993, the China International Trusts & Investment Corp. (CITIC), founded in 1979 by Rong Yiren, the son of a rich industrialist who emigrated in 1949, and presented as “a pilot enterprise in the march of the country towards a free market economy”, has decided to further develop its activities abroad, notably in Australia, where it has been involved for some years, doubling its fixed capital and increasing fourfold its annual income (which in 1993 corresponded to 100 million Australian dollars). At the beginning of the year, it completed the purchase of Metro Meat, Melbourne, one of the biggest companies in the processing and export of meat. In total there are about a hundred Chinese companies operating in Australia.

For its part, Shougang Concord International Enterprises Co., which operates in Hong Kong as an associate of the Beijing steel enterprise Shougang Corp., has acquired a majority shareholding in other companies, strengthening its previous position. At the same time, it has made an agreement to enter into possession of a steelworks with the Los Angeles based California Steel Inc. Also, in a sensational operation, it has

bought Hierroperù, a Peruvian steel mine, profiting from the campaign of privatisation launched by President Fujimori. It is also interested in Siderperù, another steel company. It is claimed that the Peruvian steel workers will adapt fairly well to Chinese management methods, even if there have been some dismissals (1,600 out of a workforce of 3,300).

To take another continent, in Nakhodka, the first special economic zone in Russia, the Chinese, with around 100 projects, will be the principal investors. Finally, for some time, Chinese enterprises have floated shares on the Hong Kong market and at the end of July 1993, the above mentioned CITIC company began to do the same thing in the United States. According to some estimates, at the end of last year, there were 4,497 Chinese enterprises abroad with investments of US\$5.16 billion (*International Herald Tribune*, 30 May 1994).

In the framework of this international economic opening up, it might be predicted that another classic phenomenon would be reproduced: indeed the People's Daily itself has denounced capital flight taking place under various forms. According to estimates, which it is obviously difficult to verify, the total capital involved would be around US\$35 billion. It is obvious that all this has been facilitated by the fact that, to use the words of a collaborator of *Beijing Information* (no. 23, 1994), the state monopoly of foreign trade “has been broken down little by little”.

“Overheating”

We will not analyse here phenomena of a more conjunctural, yet significant, nature, which could be seen in particular last year and have subsisted in 1994, namely economic “overheating” characterised by very rapid rates of growth, an excessive expansion of credit, investments of a speculative type and inflationary tendencies. All this has led the government and in the first place the Deputy Vice-Prime Minister Zhu Rongji to adopt a fairly drastic series of measures. In the context of its transformation towards a “market economy”, China will face similar problems to those experienced by the capitalist economies and will have to take fairly classic measures to counteract “overheating” and the danger of inflation which flows from it.

In his report of 10 March to the National People's Congress Prime

Minister Li Peng indicated the following as the "obstacles and difficulties which have emerged":

"Investments remain excessive; prices increase at worrying rates; economic restructuring is not proceeding quickly enough; quite a few large and medium state enterprises continue to experience difficulties; public order leaves much to be desired in some regions and all kinds of unhealthy and deplorable phenomena continue; cases of corruption and abuse of power have been noted among a small number of state functionaries and formalism and bureaucratism manifest themselves in the institutions, which could compromise the links between the government and the popular masses."

Let us look more closely at the different problems. In the first place, the disequilibria between the different sectors of production have not been surmounted and, notably in the countryside, there are bottlenecks which have existed since the mid-80s. In addition to the traditional gap between industrial and agricultural productivity and the diminution "in the last few years of the real profitability of cereal and cotton production" (Li Peng), some "new" factors have been added as brakes on growth and obstacles to the satisfaction of the basic needs of the country. On the one hand, the development of construction and property speculation has led to a decrease in cultivable areas, while on the other, many peasants have tended to prefer growing the more profitable crops, to the detriment of cereal production. The lowering of the price of some products and the stagnation in prices of products bought by the state has also had a negative influence, as has the increasing percentage of youth joining the exodus from the rural areas. As an example of the kind of bottlenecks which are happening, while the consumption of animal products and milk is growing by 6% a year, production is only increasing by 1%. Moreover, the price increases in retail trade have benefited speculators rather than peasants. This is how the *Economic Daily* has summed up the long term consequences of such a dynamic: "The re-emergence of the economic gap between rural and urban areas will hinder industrial development in the next century. A large rural population, which lives on agriculture, will circumvent the market. A long term sluggish market, in turn, will block the growth of industry." (21 September 1993)

Secondly, disequilibria continues to exist, and indeed is worsening, in the

non-agricultural sectors. In the past, the disequilibria provoked lively debates on what should be priorities. During the first 13 years of the "new course", it was light industry which experienced fairly strong growth, whereas since September 1991 the accent has again been placed upon heavy industry and chemicals. More recently, the gap between the needs of the industrial sector and an increasingly deficient transport system has been denounced. A similar lack of synchronicity exists because of the insufficient development of the services sector, characterised by the Prime Minister as "the weak link of the economy". Because of an excessive territorial concentration, foreign investments will not suffice to overcome "the irrational structure of investments in the country." (*China Daily*, 15 July 1993) Moreover, the results obtained in some economic zones have been, at least in part, disappointing and even the foreign enterprises in what is in principle the most dynamic sector have often been in deficit: in 1992 according to an official of the Fiscal Administration, this was the case for 45% of 34,000 joint ventures taken into consideration.

Handicap

A major handicap still resides in the fact that a fairly high number of basic industries which, in the words of Jiang Zemin, "constitute the pillars of the national economy", are still in the red; this amounts to 30 to 40%, or perhaps more, of the state sector.⁵ Problems of restructuring and reconversion are posed, including in the industries traditionally considered as exemplary (this is the case of Daqing, the most important oil centre). The leaders seem to be staking on a generalised stabilisation in the space of three to five years, following eventual recourse to concentrations and fusions. But there are problems to this, above all because it could penalise the healthy enterprises under the weight of those in deficit. In fact the conclusion must be drawn that the organic defects of a bureaucratically administered economy — that is, inefficiency of management, insufficient productivity, enormous waste, bad quality of products, and so on — are far from being eliminated.⁶

What is more, disequilibria is appearing from the point of view of satisfaction of needs. Whereas on the one hand there is an abundance of consumer goods destined for the rich minorities and the "modern" needs of fairly wide

layers are largely satisfied, the majority of the population, above all in the rural areas, lives in difficult conditions, of penury if not downright impoverishment.⁷

Finally, the "market economy" has generated financial speculation, practised often by the very same leaders who in principle denounce it. The banks play a premier role in this area, for example by assuring non-authorised loans without worrying too much about how they will be employed. Some illegal inter-bank operations have also taken place; according to Zhu Rongji, amounting to a sum of US\$38 billion. The military can no longer claim to have clean hands. We are not speaking of the very significant economic activity of the army, which, according to official estimates, manages more than 20,000 enterprises employing several million workers; we allude rather to the fact that many in the military are engaged in totally illegal activities and in speculative property sales and that some have opened personal accounts with funds belonging to the army.

This relates to another problem the existence of which has been confirmed by Li Peng himself, although he has tried to minimise its importance. According to an official of the public prosecutor's department, the three principal areas of economic crime are the financial market, property speculation and the futures market: and we should also mention embezzlements of a spectacular dimension (according to the Central Bank, in the space of 18 months US\$28 billion were purloined from public funds!). In fact, corruption prospers, because on the one hand suitable legislation for a "market economy" does not yet exist and, on the other, more generally, to the extent that, in a bureaucratised transitional society, socio-economic ten-

5. The percentage of large state enterprises which are in the red or in crisis varies according to the sources and the period to which one is referring. According to the Bureau of Official Statistics, at the end of March of this year, around 50% of the enterprises in question were in the red, whereas a generally more optimistic balance sheet was drawn up two months later by the director of the Commission for the Economy and Commerce (*BE*, no. 24, 1994). Last year a major crisis struck the steel making centre of Wuhan, with some serious repercussions for employment (*International Herald Tribune*, 6 May 1994).

6. A big problem is caused by those commodities which are not sold because of their poor quality (for example, at the end of May 1991 their value was 200 billion yuan).

7. According to *Beijing Information* (no. 1, 1994), between January and September 1994, whereas the average income of urban citizens grew in real terms by 12%, the income of peasants rose by only 5%. Li Peng, in his report of March 10, furnished some slightly different figures (income rose by 10.2% in the cities and 3.2% in the countryside). But it is incontestable that the gap between town and country has grown of late.

dencies which are incompatible in principle with formally existing law and relations of property develop almost physiologically.

Finally, the state suffers the consequences of two other phenomena which are frequently denounced. Firstly, it loses considerable sums because of a widespread black market in the traffic of cigarettes, the counterfeiting of cassette tapes and the illegal trade in gold. Secondly, tax evasion is quite widespread: according to the minister of finances, because of this evasion, the state has lost nearly US\$17 billion.

The living conditions of the population in the countryside — where 900 million people and 70% of the active population live — have indisputably improved in the 1990s. Nonetheless, far from narrowing, differences have been accentuated: in certain provinces in particular, there are peasants who enjoy incomes ten or twenty times the average, but at the same time broad layers of poor peasants; Further, following the growth of productivity and the progress of mechanisation, the number of agricultural wage workers has increased, and the rural exodus, notably since 1988, has reached gigantic dimensions. At the beginning of the 1990s, it was calculated that there was a "surplus" population of 120-130 million. At the beginning of 1994, "in the Chinese countryside, the active population represents 400 million people, of which 200 million are surplus, and moreover, this number will grow by 10 million a year, which will make 250 million by the year 2000" (BI, no. 1, 1994). It is above all this rural surplus population which is at the origin of another major phenomenon, that of the itinerant population. It was estimated in early 1991 that this population was 60-80 million strong and similar figures have been advanced since then (in fact, it is probable that there has been an increase). Some oscillations in the overall rural population have been provoked by variations in employment in the enterprises situated in the countryside, which have suffered conjunctural vicissitudes and sometimes have sent back some of their workers to their region of origin. A classic phenomenon, often mentioned in the official texts, is that of "the scissors", that is, the growing gap between agricultural prices — relatively stable, notably for cereals and cotton — and industrial prices, which tend to increase. Moreover, according to Agriculture Minister Liu Jiang, in the course of the four decades after the revolution, industrial growth has been four times

more rapid than agricultural growth. As for the incomes of the peasants, calculated at constant prices from 1980, they diminished between 1986 and 1990; on the other hand, they increased slightly after this, notably in 1993 (+ 3.2%). One could say more generally that the disequilibrium between the towns and the rural areas, far from reducing, has tended to increase.⁸

Negative

To the negative effects of certain economic mechanisms it is necessary to add negative factors of a socio-political nature. For some years, the official sources themselves have signalled often enough the fact that, owing as much to the frequent financial difficulties experienced by the State as to the off-hand practices of the banks, products bought from the peasants were not regularly paid for: peasants were given certificates or honorary notes which could later be converted into money. It is understandable that those affected were not too keen on such procedures. Neither were they too keen on the fact that the local authorities arbitrarily imposed payment of all sorts of taxes and sometimes demanded services which were not paid for. In June 1993, the State Council forbade such practices, but often enough the local officials do not take account of central decisions and abusive practices have not disappeared. It is unsurprising that the peasants have not passively accepted such a situation. There have been mobilizations in protest and sometimes actual riots (in 1992, there were around 200 "incidents" and in the spring of 1993 around a hundred "riots"). The vice-president of the permanent committee of the National Assembly made the following comment: "The Chinese peasants are tolerant; they only revolt when the roads are barred; but if they do revolt, the consequences are unimaginable." (BI, no. 27, 1993)

The working class has also experienced some processes of differentiation in the course of the 1980s and will see more in this decade. The great majority, continues to be located in the state sector; their income has not changed drastically and remains modest.⁹ The effects of inflation on its purchasing power have been compensated for by some partial wage increases or by forms of additional remuneration. In 1993, provisional measures for a wage freeze were introduced in some sectors.

A problem which has been debated concerns the hiatus which has been crea-

ted between the great majority of workers and those in the joint ventures — more generally, the private sector, and in particular in the special economic zones. These latter are often better paid. However, the basic wage only corresponds to 60% of the overall wage and, what is more, these workers do not enjoy all the traditional social guarantees, such as stability of employment. According to official denunciations, the foreign partners do not always respect their employees. According to a British author, working conditions imposed are sometimes comparable to those of the first phase of capitalism (*International Herald Tribune*, 13 July 1993). Recourse is also made to illegal hiring; for example, in the Shenzhen zone, 500 enterprises have been implicated in this. In addition, in recent years there have been numerous accidents at work, some very grave, and usually the result of non-respect for the formerly existing safety at work regulations. For the most part there are no trade union organisations in the foreign or joint venture enterprises, where around 6 million people work; this is why the official trade union federation has decided to prioritise the construction of branches in this sector in the next two years.

Degradation

More generally, it is the progressive degradation, if not the suppression, of the post-revolutionary social guarantees, and of the *danwei* (work units) system, which preoccupy the workers. This system guaranteed not only stability of employment, but also cheap housing, social services and low-priced consumer goods. The managers, with a wider margin for manoeuvre, tend to erode, if not progressively eliminate, the social costs of the enterprise; notably, the enterprises in crisis have already begun to annul subsidies to hospitals, schools and various services. At the beginning of July, a new labour law was introduced; we have only received a journalistic resumé of it at the time of writing. The most important measures are: the ban-

8. We will not dwell here on two major problems, demographic growth and the deterioration of the environment, which we mentioned in our article "China after Tiananmen". In 1993 the Chinese population was officially estimated at 1,185,17 million or 13,460,000 more than at the end of 1992. So far as the environment is concerned, according to some estimates, the abuses committed are costing the country the equivalent of 15% of its GNP each year.

9. At the end of May 146,770,000 non-agricultural workers were registered, 108,159,000 in the state enterprises.

ning of work for children of less than 16; one obligatory rest day a week; women are not obliged to work beyond the seventh month of pregnancy and are entitled to a maternity leave of 90 days; women are forbidden to work in the mines and other employment of this type; the formation in the enterprises of committees to settle conflicts, composed of leaders and workers' representatives. At the beginning of this year, norms fixing a maximum of hours worked were introduced; 8 hours per day and 44 per week (*Financial Times*, 7 July 1994). We have mentioned above the phenomenon of the rural surplus population. Indeed, a so-called surplus population also exists in the urban economy. In 1991 it was calculated that the "surplus" workers amounted to 20 million and that each year 10 million youths flowed into the labour market. In 1993, it was calculated that 3.4% of the active population were unemployed (in some sectors it reaches 10%). An already quoted article (*BI* no. 1, 1994) explains that "in the towns and the cantons, another 8 million people are seeking work every year, and there will be 60 million by the year 2000. In the state sectors (...) 10 million employees are going to lose their jobs, which means that by 2000 China will have 320 million people seeking employment". According to another article in the same review (*BI* no. 29, 1994) by the end of the century there will be 490 to 540 million surplus workers in the rural zones. The enormity of the problem requires no comment.

According to the information at our disposal, there have not been in recent years any workers' mobilisations of any great significance, nor episodes comparable to those which marked the second half of the 1980s. Nonetheless, there have been strikes to demand wage increases and improvements in working conditions. For example, according to a Chinese newspaper, strikes for demands of this kind took place in September of last year, at Tianjin, in enterprises owned by Japanese and South Korean capital. A trade union reporter alluded, for his part, to strikes in five enterprises in Dalian in 1992. In the same town, strikes have taken place this year against foreign-owned companies. Teachers have protested because they have not received their salaries or been paid with certificates, the sums destined for payment having been used for other purposes by the local authorities (*China Education News*, 9 November 1993). According to governmental sources, the number of conflicts submitted to arbitra-

tion increased by 52% in 1993 and, according to the trade unions, there were in the same year 15,000 conflictual incidents (strikes, protests, petitions, sabotage, and so on).

It is fairly difficult to draw up exhaustive analysis of the changes currently taking place in other layers of Chinese society. It is only possible to draw out some general tendencies.

Middle class

In the first place, in the context of what has happened in the past 15 years, middle class layers have been enlarged and strengthened. This is on a broad scale, extending from small and medium traders to professionals and economic operators, at the margins of capitalist sectors. In the area of commerce, there has been a spectacular growth of small traders, including itinerants' who sell only one commodity. In the professional sector, there has been a spectacular increase in the number of lawyers: 50,000 are now officially registered and the figure is predicted to rise to 150,000 by the end of the century. These professionals have formed their own private companies (more than 4,000 of them) which are demanding autonomy from the government. Another category, banished after the revolution, has reappeared, namely brokers, mediators, and so on, who are very active in a series of areas (advanced technology, cultural activities, publications, and so forth). According to a Tianjin newspaper, there are 69,400 people employed thus, of which 24,400 are officially registered.

Finally, the "new course" has given birth to the new rich, who can lead an opulent life which bears no comparison to that of ordinary mortals. Some very palpable differences in standards of living had constituted a permanent trait not only under the old regime, but also in the post-revolutionary period: after the disappearance or banishment of the old dominant classes, the bureaucracy usurped all kinds of privileges, which were the subject of live polemics in the first phases of the Cultural Revolution. Now there is new phenomena: real bourgeois layers are appearing, even if presently in a limited fashion, and at the same time a symbiosis is taking place between these layers and some sectors of the bureaucracy, for example the children of old leaders exploit their power to set up private business affairs with which they associate themselves more or less formally. There has even been a reappearance of the old dominant

classes. For example, a well-known entrepreneur is Rong Yiren, whom we have already mentioned, the son of a capitalist who fled in 1949, whereas Yeung Chun Kan, an old shark from Hong Kong, has returned to his home town, Huizhou, and invested there with success.

We have already referred to flight of capital and Chinese investments abroad. Some quasi-symbolic episodes have also been reported in the area of consumer goods. In September 1993, the Chinese newspaper *Business Weekly* informed its readers that 18 Chinese citizens, for the most part independent businessmen, had travelled to the United States to visit properties which they had bought in Florida. It seems, according to the same source, that the price of property there is less than that of a modest apartment at the centre of Peking. Why then not profit from this particular expression of the law of combined and uneven development? On the other hand, for "normal" citizens, the problem of housing has become acute. The government wishes to put an end to the situation where housing was very cheap, increase rents and even sell houses which are State property. In fact, some first steps in this direction have been made, driving up rents and the prices of houses. Moreover, although there is a shortage of housing, some flats for rent remain empty and others, newly built, cannot find buyers and also remain unoccupied.

Changes

Despite value judgements, it is clear that the "new" course has not led to substantial changes in the existing structures and political mechanisms.

In fact, the sectors of the dominant layer which are most directly linked to the central State and party apparatuses have not ceased to exercise their determinant control, in alliance with the military hierarchy. The mass organisations — the trade unions, the women's federation and the youth organisation — remain explicitly subordinated to the directives of the Party. The National People's Assembly itself, where there is some differentiation and conflict of opinion, still continues to take decisions in the framework fixed by the leadership organs of the CCP. The measures recently aimed at revitalising the consultative conference of the Chinese people, which included having non-Communist parties and formations (in truth shadow organisations) did not constitute a real change either: the conference remains, as its

name implies, consultative, and under the control of the party. Moreover, the decision to resort to repression in June 1989 has never been the object of the least self-criticism: on the contrary, it has been made clear that, if necessary, the same would be done again. In short, the current regime, while differing from the three other phases of the post-revolutionary epoch, remains characterised by an absence of political pluralism; it is a form of enlightened authoritarianism — or authoritarian reformism.

Conceptions

The general conceptions of the leading group were reaffirmed at the 14th Congress of the Party, in October 1992. In the report of Jiang Zemin, the principal text adopted, one reads: "The reform of the economic system has the goal of creating and gradually ameliorating a socialist market economy, while maintaining as principal forms public property and remuneration according to labour, and while permitting the coexistence in a complementary fashion of other diverse regimes and modes of remuneration. The reform of the political system seeks principally to develop socialist democracy, thanks to the perfecting of the system of popular assemblies, and also to reinforce multi-party co-operation and consultation under the direction of the Communist Party." To eliminate any ambiguity about who effectively holds power, the reporter added: "Everything depends on the leadership of the party". Significantly, Jiang Zemin is at the same time president of the country and Secretary-general of the Party.

Although the central political bureaucracy has not lost its hegemonic role inside the dominant layer itself, this does not mean that there has been no change. Beyond the formalities, a growing power of decision now belongs to the powerful local bureaucrats who have more significant room to manoeuvre than in the past. An analogous dynamic works to the advantage of the bureaucratic economy (managers, technocrats and so on). A phenomenon which is also important, although, for the instant, not of a comparable breadth to analogous phenomena in the former USSR or in eastern Europe, is the symbiosis (or at least the convergence of interests) between the leaders of the political, administrative and economic apparatuses and some embryonic capitalist layers: more and more clear differentiations and increasingly sharp conflicts will inevitably occur on this terrain. The army can

no longer escape such a dynamic. According to its daily newspaper, there are already some officers who "instead of preoccupying themselves with the defence of the country and of socialism, attend to their private interests, indulging in all kinds of trafficking, disobeying political orders, and establishing shady alliances with the civil authorities in the provinces."

"New development"

There is little happening on the theoretical, or more correctly ideological level, despite the claims of Jiang Zemin that the concept of the "planned market economy" represents "a new development of Marxist political economy". The above mentioned report to the last Congress was, in the last analysis, purely descriptive: "The socialist market system seeks to make the market, under the macro-control of the socialist state, play a fundamental role in the allocation of resources such that economic activities correspond to the demands of the law of value and adapt themselves to the fluctuations of supply and demand." However, if one accepts the idea that the "fundamental role" in the allocation of resources belongs to the market, the logical consequence can only be to renounce the plan, or transform it into a complementary instrument, as is the case with "planning" or "programming" in the capitalist

countries. This parallel has been explicitly advanced, by Deng Xiaoping as well as Jiang Zemin. In fact, despite appearances to the contrary, the Chinese leaders continue to act in a fundamentally empirical fashion, and their speeches for the most part do not go beyond common sense. A declaration by Li Peng, in August 1993, is a good example: "China is still on the road to development and it will take some decades to attain the level of countries of medium development because of its large population and its weak economic base."

It is difficult to envisage what might happen over such a long timescale. It is possible, on the other hand, to attempt to illustrate the significance of what has happened up until now and the dynamic of the tendencies which now operate. That will be the object of a second article. ★



Putting down roots

IN 1967 a peasant uprising in Naxalbari, West Bengal sparked off agrarian struggles throughout the Indian countryside. Out of these emerged the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), adhering to "Mao Zedong Thought". Always more of a movement composed of a number of groups than a party, most of the groups plunged themselves into armed struggle, seeking to replicate the Chinese model in Indian conditions. From around an original 60 groups, who tended to attack one another as violently as they did landlords and police, there are now five major groups. Earlier this year K. GOVINDAN spoke with B. SIVARAMAN, a central leader of one of these organisations: the 50 thousand strong CPI (ML). While we do not endorse everything said by Sivaraman — much of his historical analysis is at odds with our own — we believe that readers will agree that his party's evolution is not only interesting (particularly in relation to China), but healthy.

INTERVIEW

London, 13 May 1994

Can you explain why there has been a rise in workers' struggles recently?

All across India, trade union disputes and direct political action by the working class have been on the upswing. In the last two years we have had three general strikes. For example, on 5 April more than 200 thousand workers laid siege to the Indian parliament in opposition to GATT. This was violently broken up, injuring sixty-nine seriously. The earlier strikes

were a response to the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the Congress (I) government.

What is the NEP? Why was it introduced?

We are in the fourth year of a structural adjustment programme dictated by the IMF. In 1989/90 there was a serious economic crisis in respect of the balance of payments and runaway inflation, which reached 18.3 percent — very high by Indian standards.

Throughout the 1980s we had an average of 8 percent industrial growth and 5.6 percent GDP growth, again exceptionally high by Indian standards. But this growth was fuelled by massive external and internal borrowings and by 1989/90 there was a foreign debt of US\$33 billion — a figure which has now almost doubled. A bubble grew, only to burst at the end of the decade. So the crisis was partly structural and partly cyclical.

The economy was opened up to foreign investment, there was liberalisation of the financial sector and privatisation of banks and other public sector companies. Loss-making state companies were closed. Under the "exit" policy, workers can be hired and fired without the relative job security they had in the past. Throughout Indian industry there is a process of restructuring, rationalisation and flexibilisation.

In the so-called "sun-set industries", such as textiles, jute and so forth., the technology is outmoded. Employers are shifting to new areas of production and trying to close down these industries. Here new forms of struggle are developing, for example, the occupations of the Victoria Kanoria jute mills in West Bengal. The workers try to sustain these struggles in ingenious ways.

Every political party in India has its own trade union affiliate and there are many unions with a regionalist or factory-based character. The urban proletariat has been described as "a house divided".

The left trade unions have come toge-

ther to form a joint committee. Our union, the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), which organises 160 thousand workers, is part of this, along with the unions of the CPI and CPI (M) and smaller unions.

The problem with the AITUC and CITU, unions of the CPI and CPI (M) respectively, is that they ceased to be revolutionary unions long ago. They have become huge bureaucratic apparatuses steeped in the spirit of social democracy.

Through our own trade union centre we have found it easier to achieve left unity and to play a key role in the working class movement.

The Indian working class is asserting its own role and is becoming a powerful political actor in its own right.

What are the implications of the completion of the Uruguay round of GATT for India?

It is going to cause major disruption to Indian agriculture. More than 250 million Indians are categorised as "small farmers", cultivating between 1-3 hectares of land. Here there will be sharp polarisation due to integration with the open economy.

The differentiation of the peasantry in India, which was very slow compared to the West, will now happen rapidly.

Due to a rise in cotton prices last year, millions of handloom weavers couldn't afford yarn and many starved to death in Andhra Pradesh state. This was a consequence of GATT and is understood easily by its victims.

Hindu communalism and its electoral arm, the Bharatiya Janata Party, has been a major campaigning target of the Indian left following the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya and the wave of anti-Moslem riots which followed.

Communal forces are temporarily down but not out. They were defeated in state legislature elections in 1993, including three out of the four states which they previously governed. But they have won 33 percent of the vote in some states, and could bounce back at any time.

From our party's point of view, the rise of the right wing communal fascistic forces is organically related to the economic crisis. As the crisis deepens these forces will gain a new lease of life.

Their temporary electoral set-back is mainly due to a social back-ground where lower castes rallied under reactionary populist forces to defeat the upper caste BJP.

There needs to be more serious class mobilisation of the rural poor and agricultural labourers and the winning-over of better-off peasants from the influence of reactionary forces.

We have gained notable success through this strategy. 7 thousand of our comrades were arrested in Uttar Pradesh state, fortress of the BJP. Our student wing defeated their organisation in three university elections, and also at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi.

Our main difference with the CPI and CPI (M) is that they lionize bourgeois centrist leaders, saying that the left is too weak to fight communalism on its own. Their logic is, ultimately, we are weak and we will engage in an approach which will make us weaker. It's a vicious circle.

How do you assess the mainstream Communist parties, the CPI and CPI (M)? What is your relationship with them?

The CPI was formerly pro-Moscow. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union it is facing a serious internal crisis. Several important sections of the party are going over to the bourgeois camp, for example in Uttar Pradesh the state leader has joined a centrist reactionary party. At the CPI's last congress it moved closer towards social democracy, abandoning even formal Marxist positions. It has declared its mass organisations to be independent of the party and merged its trade union with a syndicalist union (HMS), led by Lohiates. It is fast fading into insignificance.

This leaves only the CPI (M) and ourselves as the two main poles of the communist movement. The CPI (M) has been running the government in West Bengal for fifteen years and before then in Kerala. Its method of government has become the main bone of contention for the Indian left.

For the sake of political unity, the CPI (M) has told us that we must give up independent mass mobilisation against its government — which as revolutionary communists we can never accept.

The CPI (M) is involved in anti-people measures. In rural areas its base is shifting to rich peasants. There is large scale alienation of agricultural labourers, who are coming over to us. After a panchayat (village council) election where we won 320 seats the CPI (M) unleashed a reign of terror in Karanda, killing five of our com-

rades and burning eighty houses where agricultural labourers lived.

We are not tactically opposed to communists forming governments at state levels for temporary periods, but we visualise that, through drastic revolutionary measures, these governments will come into violent conflict with the central authority and will become centres of insurrection.

Since 1967 the CPI (M) has never won an election outside of West Bengal and Kerala. In other states they have trailed this or that bourgeois party. They shun alliances with the revolutionary left. We don't rule out seat adjustments with sections of the bourgeois opposition, so as to concentrate on the main political enemy, but electoral tactics are different from programmatic unity with the bourgeois opposition. There is an increasing contradiction between the communist facade and social democratic practice of the CPI (M).

The CPI (ML) came out openly after the fifth party congress in December 1992. What are your origins and present activities?

Our party was born in the course of the struggle against modern revisionism represented by Khrushchev and in the course of the debate between Mao Zedong and the CPSU. This was a time of world-wide upsurge in revolutionary movements and an acute crisis in India, which took the form of an armed peasant struggle.

Many things have changed since that time. Those groups which did not want to change and remained dogmatic have disintegrated, vanished or are moving in the direction of self-destruction. Those which moved too far have gone over to the bourgeois camp. We, on the other hand, have emphasised the need to retain principles and adapt step by step to the present situation.

We have made important tactical changes, from a focus on armed struggle towards mass struggle. We entered the political mainstream leading concrete struggles and have discarded many generalisations and abstractions which didn't suit current revolutionary practice.

We don't want to make a fetish of armed struggle as do some other Marxist-Leninist groups. Rather we subordinate it to mass political struggle. In spite of this there are more people with arms now than when we were waging purely armed struggle. This is because we stress the need for the formation of militia, arming the people and helping them acquire more arms.

India is not like the China of the 1920s and 30s. When we study Indian conditions we see possibilities for worker insurrections. The final outcome of the Indian revolution will be decided through an armed revolution. However, under exceptional international and national circumstances there would also be the possibility of revolutionary forces taking power in a relatively peaceful way.

Our party membership is almost 50 thousand. The combined membership of our peasant associations comes to 750 thousand, with 450 thousand of these in Bihar. Our trade union, AICCTU, organises 160 thousand and our student wing, the All India Student Association, has 60 thousand members. In March we consolidated our women's organisations to form the All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA), which has 40 thousand members.

There are two approaches within the AIPWA. In some areas, for example with garment workers or rural women, we place more emphasis on economic issues. Among urban women there is greater emphasis on gender-related issues. There is lively debate and dialogue among women comrades about the emphasis, priorities and perspectives of feminism.

Despite much apprehension in left circles and within our own party we have floated a Moslem organisation, Inquilabi Moslem Conference. This, we believe, is an unprecedented step in the history of the communist movement. Moslems face a tremendous crisis of survival, let alone identity. They are being courted by obscurantist forces within their community and bourgeois centrist forces are also trying to win them over.

We have a good base among Moslem artisans and small peasantry. We want to mobilise them on class issues but also to defend their cultural identity. In these, special, times, we believe that they should be organised as an oppressed religious community. Seven hundred delegates attended the first conference last year, where there was debate over whether the priority should be class or cultural issues. This is a healthy debate and should continue in a living democratic movement.

As communists we have to make bold experiments. We are confident that at least we will always learn from any mistakes.

In the days to come the focus of the party will be on mobilisation against GATT and Hindu communalism.

Whilst the CPI (ML) was underground, open party work was conducted through the Indian People's Front (IPF),

which has recently been restructured. What role do you see it playing in the future?

The IPF performed a dual role: partly it was a platform on which to unite with a whole range of democratic forces and social movements and partly it allowed open political work by the party. There was always this dichotomy.

In the 1980s there were some within the party who advocated dissolving ourselves into the Front. We termed this a "liquidationist" scheme and defeated this tendency. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Marxist-Leninists were coming under ideological attack and we felt that it was important at this time to assert an open identity and declare that we were here and that we were strong and growing.

There are two other left parties in the IPF, the Lal Nishan Party (Leninist) and Rajasthan Kisan Sangathan. There are also three organisations of national minorities of a regionalist character, Karbis, Jharkandis and Utrakhand, and the Dalit Mahasaba — an organisation of oppressed castes — as well as radical health and environmentalist groups. Medha Patkar, who is a leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the campaign against the Narmada dams scheme, is associated with the IPF in an individual capacity.

We believe that the IPF should be reconstituted as a federal structure of different organisations with a minimum common programme of action, where the constituents can operate as independent entities, including in the electoral arena. It would be a united front, taking common action against imperialism, particularly GATT and the communalist threat.

We are even prepared to discuss a change of name if this will draw in new forces. We are negotiating with Professor Najundaswamy of the Karnataka farmers' movement and it may well join the IPF.

The CPI (ML) recognises the need to interact with forces outside the Marxist-Leninist movement, including non-class democratic organisations. There will be a tension in our relationship but perhaps it will be a creative tension. The IPF provides a framework for collaboration.

How does your party view national struggles, bearing in mind that the mainstream communist parties proclaim their belief in the unity and integrity of India and take positions little different from bourgeois parties?

We support the right of oppressed nationalities to self-determination up to and including the right to secession. This should be part of a package of expropriation from the big bourgeoisie, radical land reforms and reform of the Indian state, including new Centre-State relations, a federal India with maximum possible autonomy to nationalities, and so forth.

Only in the case of Kashmir do we support the right to independence. A military victory by the militant groups over the Indian State is unrealistic and only by integrating their struggles more closely with people in the rest of India can they win their struggle for freedom. It is tragic that there is total insularity between the Kashmiri struggle and other struggles. We are perhaps the only political party which has held high-level discussions with the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front.

We have raised the slogan "For a Democratic Confederation of the peoples of South Asia". It is a long-term slogan but is the only real framework for genuine peace, stability, and development in the region without the interference of imperialism.

What is the reaction of your party to the economic reforms in China since 1979?

We welcome the general direction of these reforms. At this historical juncture no socialist country is able to carry on in the old way. The conception of socialism has had to be reconsidered in areas such as ownership (public or collective), the co-existence of private and State sectors, and so forth.

We don't say that we support each and every measure in each package of reforms, whether Chinese or Cuban. Unlike in the West, rapid industrialisation is on the agenda in countries such as China.

These reforms are pregnant with two possibilities. Either they will lead to the complete restoration of capitalism, as happened in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, or they will strengthen the material basis for socialism.

Our main criticism of the Chinese CP is that there is no powerful ideological initiative from them in respect of mobilising people to safeguard socialism and prevent the restoration of capitalism. We also believe that, although mass organisations have a very important role to play in the process, these are lacking. What is central is a reassertion of the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat, not only in the period of the transition from socialism to communism, but particularly in this present time of risky and complex reforms.

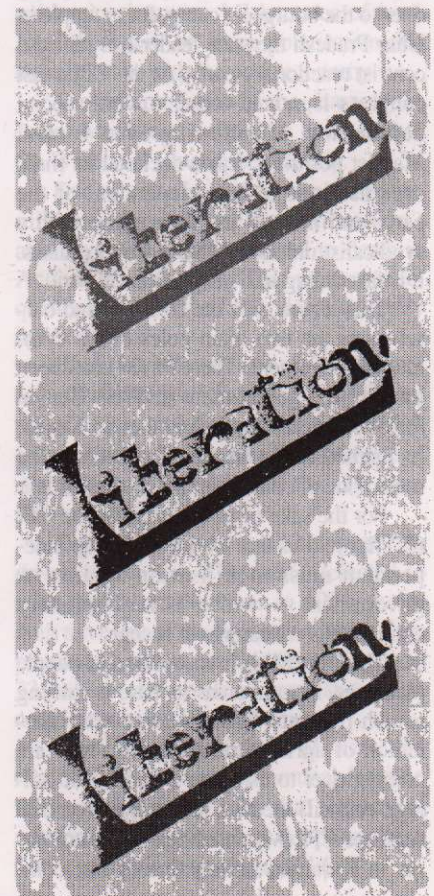
How has the collapse of the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe affected your struggle in India?

The restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union has not had a serious impact on our movement as we come from a tradition which has always been critical of the Soviet Union.

A powerful opportunist current within the Indian Communist movement — not only within the CPI but also within the CPI (M) — went over to the Khrushchevite thesis and began supporting the Indian bourgeoisie. The CPSU made some communist parties dependent on them.

We feel that the contradiction between imperialism and the Third World is a fundamental one. The collapse of the Soviet Union means that one source of derailing national liberation struggles has gone. Revolutionary movements can no longer expect support from abroad, so they must put down roots in their own countries and stand on their own two feet. This is a good thing.

One lesson which we have learned is that, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, there must be a multi-party system, freedom of the press, internal democracy within the party in the Leninist tradition, and so forth. We hope that the Chinese Communist Party will also move in this direction. ★



Invasion on the cards

WILL US President, Bill Clinton, decide on an eventual invasion of Haiti? Deposed Haitian President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, while having said he supports only a "surgical action", appears to be pushing for this solution.

ARTHUR MAHON

ON 31 JULY, the United States obtained the green light from the United Nations Security Council. As with France and Rwanda, they were authorised to lead a military invasion of Haiti when they wish to do so. The invasion of Panama was condemned by the United Nations. That of Haiti received in advance the blessing of the so-called "international community". One man in particular did a great deal to facilitate this vote: the President of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. On Friday 29 July, he sent a letter to the office of the Secretary General of the UN, Boutros Boutros Ghali. In this he affirmed that "the moment has come for the international community, a party to the Governor's Island Accord, to take prompt and decisive action, under the authority of the United Nations, with a view to allowing the complete application of that accord." The Governor's Island Accord had been co-signed one year earlier by President Aristide and General Cédras. It envisaged in particular the return of the president on 30 October 1993 - which of course never took place.

Precise

The Aristide letter arrived at a very precise moment. During the first discussion on the Security Council, the resolution presented by the United States had been the object of a bitter debate. It could not be voted upon on the date initially set, and was postponed to the following Sunday. Meanwhile, Aristide's letter (undoubtedly written at the behest of Washington), arrived, giving the resolution the legitimacy which it had lacked. Its meaning was confirmed sub-

sequently by an unambiguous letter addressed by Fritz Longchamp, Haiti's representative at the UN, to the president of the Security Council. He asked to inform it "of the agreement of the government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the draft resolution S/1994/904 that the Security Council will examine at its next meeting". To speak of the "government of President Aristide" was a very hypocritical manner of designating Aristide himself. Indeed, the only "government" to which Longchamp could make reference was that of Robert Malval, who resigned last December. However, in spite of the support of Aristide, China and Brazil abstained on the resolution. The vote of Brazil, which currently sits on the Security Council as a non-permanent member, reflected the hostility of the majority of Latin American and Caribbean states.

At the end of 1993, Aristide began to declare, in a disquieting manner, that a military intervention would be welcomed by the Haitian population. He added at the same time that the Haitian constitution forbade him to demand such a thing. He went much further in an interview given to Howard French, a journalist on the New York Times, on 2 June. While repeating that the Haitian constitution prevented him from demanding a foreign intervention, he said, according to French, that "the United States should "commit itself to a surgical action" which would succeed in a few hours in overthrowing the military leaders. According to French, Aristide referred to the US intervention in Panama in 1989 to overthrow the military dictator Manuel Antonio Noriega and added: "Haiti is not the first case. When things like this happen in another country something is done. Why not in Haiti?"

Some days after the invasion of Panama, on 26 December 1989, Aristide was much more lucid when interviewed by Radio Haiti Inter. He said then: "We are still living in the era of slavery; national prestige is trampled underfoot; it is important then to reconstitute it. Those among us who were accustomed to grovel at the feet of a little clique of valets of imperialism should cease to do so, and look at what is happening now in Panama where the Americans oppress

the people organising the resistance. When one thinks that the Yankees have already militarily occupied our soil and that they could well return, this time openly, one can say that, if one does not guard one's prestige, the worst could happen".

After his 2 June declaration in favour of a "surgical action", Aristide took some contrasting positions. The same day, he said: "I am not going to waste time in defining the type of action necessary, because the international community knows what to do." But later, during a conference at Managua, Nicaragua, then during an interview in Washington, he made it known that "Never, never, never would I accept a return to power thanks to an invasion. I am against a foreign occupation". These positions are only apparently contradictory. Aristide developed his position at an OAS meeting on 6 June. For him, "rapid and determined" action would come to an end once the military regime was eliminated. The Governor's Island Accord would then be applied anew. Those forces which had participated in a "surgical action" would be replaced by the Mission of the United Nations in Haiti (MINUHA) envisaged by the Governors Island agreement, and then characterized as a mission of "technical co-operation". Then he could himself return. In this theoretical schema, there was certainly no place for an "invasion" or an "occupation". Unhappily, the idea of a US division swooping down on the leaders of the Haitian armed forces, to capture Cédras and his friends, and leaving immediately, like a horde of guardian angels, is purely utopian. And the bloodthirsty example of Panama is there to show it.

"Sentiments"

Even if he says that he perceives no community of "sentiments", Aristide claims to note the existence of "mutual interests" with the United States. "If I was capable of intervening alone, I would do it", he says. "If the United States could act alone, they would do it also. But we must advance together." The networks of militants still active on the ground are well aware, they say, that a US intervention would be disastrous,

not only because of its long term effects, but also because the concrete action of the US services in Haiti since the coup d'état has sought to annihilate them. They can see this every day. They are familiar with the practices of the US embassy. They know that the US services collaborate with the Haitian soldiers and the civilians in their pay. Under cover of humanitarian concerns, the US has opened three offices in Haiti, where it is possible to demand exile. This programme is supervised by specialists in "counter-insurrection" who have proved themselves in Latin America and Vietnam. One of these specialists helped set up a computer data-base in Colombia to struggle against "subversives, terrorists and drugs traffickers". Another, a veteran of the Nazi army, worked for Somoza in Nicaragua until 1979. Interviews with candidates seeking political asylum allow the US services to make a detailed X-ray of the popular and democratic movement. On this basis, some cadres of the popular organisations have received visits, on occasion from US functionaries offering them a US visa if they cease their activities, but sometimes from soldiers or civilians who have come to arrest them. A US intervention would allow the US services to increase their activity tenfold. A number of militants of the popular organisations could be assassinated during so-called armed confrontations. One officer told the newspaper *Newsday*: "These people who are training themselves are not going to try and fight the United States. They are going to flee with their arms and use them. Against who? Against *Lavalas* (the creole name for the mass movement)." Already, during the invasion of Panama, US soldiers prepared lists of persons to liquidate. The United States wishes to reform the Haitian army and bring to heel an oligarchy which is incapable of setting up a stable regime. But their first priority is to reduce the Haitian people to silence. Aristide has burnt his fingers before in trying to conclude a "tactical alliance" with cer-

tain sectors of the bourgeoisie, and later a "marriage" with the Haitian army. He is continuing along the same road in believing that he can find a convergence of interests with imperialism.

Letters

The Security Council resolution of 31 July took note of the letters from Aristide and Longchamp of 29 and 30 July. However, what is envisaged has nothing very much to do with the "surgical action" of a few hours recommended by Aristide in June. The multinational force "constituted by the member states" (for which read: the United States) is authorised to "utilise all necessary means" not only "to facilitate the departure from Haiti of the military leaders... and the prompt return of the legitimately



Maximino Cerezo Barredo

elected President", but also to "install and maintain a secure and stable climate which will allow the application of the Governor's Island Accord." This multinational force will leave only when two conditions are fulfilled: When a stable and secure climate has been created and the MINUHA has been given a structure and adequate personnel to assure the totality of its functions". The MINUHA, in the words of the Governor's Island Accord, must render "assistance for the modernisation of the Haitian armed forces and the creation of a new police force". In July 1993, Aristide had asked for a MINUHA force of 1,000. In September 1993, the Security Council had decided to send 1,300. The resolution of 31 July sought to increase it to 6,000 military personnel. Boutros Ghali had even proposed 15,000 soldiers in one of his reports! The functions attributed to MINUHA are no longer those previous-

ly envisaged. Certainly it is still supposed to "professionalise the Haitian armed forces and create a separate police force", but also, first and foremost, to "maintain the secure and stable conditions created during the multinational phase and to assure the protection of international personnel and the essential installations". Decidedly, there is a lot to fear in these "secure and stable conditions"! What is envisaged is no longer a civil unit, devoted to the construction of roads and schools, as in the resolution of September 1993. Indeed, there is no longer any need of such a pretext to justify the presence of numerous US soldiers.

The task of MINUHA should be finished no later than February 1996, that is, when Aristide finishes his presidential term. But there will be no lack of pretexts to justify, if necessary, the maintenance of US troops. For example, it is probable that the "professionalism" of the armed forces will not be assured by that date. Indeed, research undertaken by the Haiti Anti-Intervention Committee of New York shows that even last year it was envisaged that the training of the army and the police would be assured essentially not by MINUHA

but in the framework of a bilateral US/Haitian programme.¹ This programme was not mentioned, but was not ruled out either by the Governor's Island Accord. This training was, in particular, to be provided by the Green Berets (a unit of the Special Forces), the ICITAP (International Criminal Investigation Training Assistance Program) and the IMET (International Military Education and Training Programs). According to the monthly magazine for mercenaries, *Soldier of Fortune* (which is very well informed), "the Special Forces... trained more than 50,000 Vietnamese 'irregulars'. They've trained the military in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala. They're in Kuwait. They work with the CIA". The ICITAP has notably trained

1. 'Why we oppose US intervention in Haiti'. Available from HAIC, PO Box 755, Fort Washington Station, New York, NY 10040-9998. ☎ (1) 212 592 3612.

the police of El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Bolivia and Panama. The IMET is known for financing the infamous School of the Americas, where some hundreds of Haitian officers have been trained, such as the current chief of police, Colonel Michel François. These are the institutions which are to oversee the "professionalisation" and "modernisation" of the Haitian police and army!

Aristide was elected president because he appeared to have principles, refusing to compromise with the powerful. He has not shown the same qualities on the international scene. Here he has behaved to a large extent with the cynicism characteristic of all presidents. At one UN General Assembly meeting, he even went so far as to express the wish that Taiwan, which had given him some support, might "re-find its place inside the great family of the United Nations". For some months he said nothing about Clinton's treatment of Haitian refugees, who were intercepted at sea by the US coastguards and sent back to their executioners. But when Clinton seemed to abandon him at the end of 1993, and when pressures multiplied for him to share power with the putschists, Aristide used the issue of the refugees as a weapon. He convoked a conference at Miami in mid-January under the theme "Democracy in Haiti: the solution to the refugee crisis".

At the same time, he brandished another threat against Washington: that he would encourage mobilisations, and even armed struggle in Haiti. In his New Year's speech, he explained that, during 1993 the Haitian people had marched to the rhythm of negotiation rather than that of mobilisation. In 1994, it would be the other way round and he recalled a Haitian expression, "Fè koupe fè", meaning "It takes fire to fight fire". These fine words came too late. For, since the coup, Aristide had never seriously occupied himself with helping the popular movement to resist repression and organise itself. From time to time he certainly launched appeals for nationwide mobilisations on an uninterrupted basis. But this was never followed by any concrete work on his part. And nothing indicates that anything has changed in this respect since his ringing declarations of 1 January. As for the refugees, they were again abandoned to their fate during the Miami conference. Under pressure from Clinton, the agenda was changed. A commission discussed the subject, but those who drew up the final resolution took little account of its conclusions.

However, this thorny question was soon to re-emerge. Indeed, every week the US press was carrying stories that the victims of the death squads were being devoured by pigs, that the army, searching for a guerrilla unit, had burnt hundreds of houses in the north of Haiti, and massacred peasants, and that UN observers were alarmed at the use of rape as a new method of repression. In these conditions, Clinton found it harder and harder to justify the systematic sending back to Haiti of the boat people intercepted by the coast guard.

Moreover, during the first months of 1994, the Clinton administration continued to intrigue against Aristide. It wished to impose on him a political solution still less advantageous than the Governor's Island Accord. Congress went so far as to propose that Aristide and the refugees should be installed definitively on a little island situated off the coast of Haiti. But Aristide, drawing the lessons of preceding months, refused to agree.

Denounced

He resorted again to his secret weapon; the question of the refugees. He denounced Clinton's Haitian policy as "racist". And on 4 April, he announced (finally) that he was abrogating the accord, signed by Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1981, which authorised the return of the boat people to Haiti. In the following weeks, Randall Robinson, a famous black activist, began a hunger strike, six members of Congress were arrested while demonstrating before the White House against the repatriation of boat people, and 95 of their Democratic colleagues proposed draft legislation for a change of policy towards Haiti.

Clinton thus had to change course. He announced that he would propose to the UN a toughening of sanctions towards the putschists, would dismiss the US special envoy to Haiti, and would consider the possibility of a military intervention. Military manoeuvres began to be organised. On 8 May, Clinton decided that from mid-June the boat people would no longer be sent back without having been questioned and being able to demand asylum. However, the deportations continued. In July, they reached new heights; on 8 July, 800 people were taken back to Haiti after having been interrogated on an American boat! Finally, Clinton succeeded in provisionally settling the problem by a dissuasive policy. He announced in July that no refugee intercepted at sea would

step foot in the United States; whatever their status, those not returned to Haiti would be condemned to stay indefinitely in an internment camp elsewhere in the Caribbean. The situation which currently obtains in the internment camp at Guantanamo, which led to a revolt on August 13, gives a foretaste of what a US occupation of Haiti would be like. Thus, according to the newspaper *Haiti en Marche*, among those working for the US army at Guantanamo are a brother of the Haitian chief of police, and a brother of a leader of FRAPH (the paramilitary organisation which has taken the place of tontons-macoutes)!

Will Clinton finally decide on a military intervention? Nothing at the moment indicates that this is certain. Two months away from the mid-term Congressional elections, he is politically very weak. Indeed, on the Haitian question, he comes up against opposition from the Republicans, the Pentagon and a business community with interests in the Dominican Republic. None of these has any desire to see Aristide back in Port-au-Prince. The press has been hostile towards the prospect of a military intervention. And the administration itself is very divided. Some, like William Perry, of the Defense Department, say that no military intervention is immediately planned and, in any case, "Haiti does not represent a vital interest for the United States". Like William Gray, the new special envoy to Haiti, he thinks that sanctions, and some assurances as to their future, will be enough to make the Haitian military leaders leave. For him, military intervention should only be a last resort. It is true that, in Haiti, some have argued for the departure of Cédras in exchange for the non-return of Aristide. On the other hand, Strobe Talbott, responsible for the Haitian dossier at the State Department, favours an ultimatum being delivered to the military regime.

Affair

The affair is not simple for the United States, for numerous political problems are posed. What should be done with the Haitian army? Would it be necessary for there to be general disarmament of the army and the paramilitaries (and the partisans of Aristide?) as was discussed in July with Boutros Ghali? Would the population become uncontrollable if Aristide really returned to the presidential palace? Will Haiti be transformed effectively into a US protectorate? For Walter Fauntroy, former

congressman and veteran of Haitian affairs, there would certainly be a lot of problems with an invasion because, according to him, it would be necessary to govern Haiti for at least ten years after. As he puts it: "Conquest is easy, but occupation is difficult." But for Fauntroy, the US has no choice but to intervene. A declaration by the head of the joint chiefs of staff, General John Shalikashvili, is indicative of another position: "The problem would not be so much to enter as to know clearly what we wish to accomplish, how long will be necessary to stay there to attain our objectives, and to have a clear vision of the conditions under which we would be ready to leave."

Clinton faces a complex choice. He knows that if the military quit power of their own volition, the US will have to constitute the essential core of a MINUHA of 6,000. And then, almost the same political problems will emerge as would in the case of an invasion. Yet, pressed as he is today, it would be difficult for Clinton to accept that the military should stay in power and the situation continue until the end of Aristide's term.

A new factor will now weigh strongly on Clinton's decision; the aggravation of the Cuban crisis. Cuban officials have already said that Haiti is being used as a pretext to justify military escalation in the Caribbean. More than ever, the questions of Haiti and Cuba will be linked in US policy. ★



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BOSNIA

Dismemberment

THE FUNDAMENTAL hypothesis of the "contact group" on Yugoslavia (composed of the United States, Russia, France and Germany) is that its "peace plan" for Bosnia can be applied if Belgrade imposes it on the Bosnian Serbs. There are two real issues at stake here. The defeat of the Greater Serbia policy is a precondition for peace. But it is also necessary that the construction of states on exclusive ethnic bases is rejected, while reciprocal protections and rights are assured to all the communities — however, this is not the logic of the "peace plan". On the contrary, the logic is to organise the ethnic dismemberment of Bosnia.

CATHERINE SAMARY

IT IS true that the ending of all political aid from the big Serbian brother will inevitably weaken the Serbian nationalist forces in Bosnia (and in Croatia). And one witnesses a growing public divorce between Milosevic and the leaders of the self-proclaimed "Serbian republic" in Bosnia; this could be the prelude to the fall of Radovan Karadzic and of General Mladic, the principal architects of the "ethnic cleansings" in Bosnia. The divorce underway is the logical consequence of the falling out last autumn in Belgrade between Milosevic and Seselj, his former ally of the nationalist far right, and the most radical defender of the Greater Serbia project. Milosevic knows how to manipulate nationalism and leave the dirty work to his allies when it suits him, then condemns them when it serves his interests: he paved the way for the criminals who practiced "ethnic cleansing", without ever officially recognising the self-proclaimed "Serb republics" in Serbia and Croatia, nor formally defending the project of a Greater Serbia. His official objective remains a Yugoslav federation — the new party of Communists led by his wife has reaffirmed the need to establish links between republics, and indeed to extend them to other Balkan republics. Milosevic will do whatever he believes necessary to retain power, thus whatever will lead to the lifting of sanctions and the international recognition of the current Yugoslav federation (Serbia and Montenegro). But this requires acceptance of the plan proposed by those who claim to personify the "international community". Such a plan concerns in the first place the people of Bosnia — indeed it is precisely there that it has been vehemently rejected, incapable of satisfying any party (neither the nationalist forces, nor the progressives).

Intangible

On the one hand, the plan maintains the fiction of a Bosnia with intangible frontiers — and so does not permit the regroupment of the Serbs in a Greater Serbia; but on the other it does not base itself on those Bosnian Serbs who reject "ethnic cleansing" and continue to defend a multi-ethnic project. The alternative to the partition of Bosnia would be the transformation of the Bosnian-Croatian federation in a democratic and egalitarian sense into a state of citizens granting the same status to all its peoples. But the Bosnian parliament has still not integrated the amendment of the

Civic Council of Bosnian Serbs¹ set up last March, in order to make this federation the state of its three peoples (and not only of Croats and Bosnian Moslems alone). As to the "contact group", it ignores the demands expressed by the Civic Council or those of Circle 99 in Sarajevo² and persists against their will in dividing Bosnia into three "ethnic" entities. Two of these, regrouped in the Bosnian-Croatian Federation (to which the plan promises 51% of the territory) are ready to confederate themselves with Croatia. In such circumstances only symmetrical links with the Serbian-Montenegrin federation could re-establish confidence and modify the importance of the frontiers.

It is well known that none of the parties accept the "peace plan", although, formally, those representing the Bosnian-Croats declare themselves ready to sign; when Karadzic rejected it, this gave them the chance to appear reasonable in the eyes of the international negotiators. But the Bosnian military leaders clearly support a war of reconquest of territories. While they have proposed an amnesty for those who supported the dissidence of Fikret Abdic in the Bihac pocket, one still awaits some political measures aimed at winning the confidence of the Serbs and weakening Karadzic's base. Would this latter, overwhelmingly peasant, be able to keep its lands in a "Bosnian" state?

Goal

The radicalisation of the Bosnian Serbs in the goal of obtaining the recognition of "their" state can only be beaten by a political and military defeat of the Greater Serbia project. That is why it is necessary to give all symbolic weight to the Declaration of the Bosnian Serbs, drawn up at Sarajevo last March:

"No political goal can justify the sufferings of innocent peoples, the genocide and ethnic purification practised against all citizens, in particular against the Bosnian Moslems, the destruction of an immense spiritual and material heritage."

The same logic is expressed in the platform of Circle 99:

"No part of the territory of the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina can be considered as the territory of a single people, whatever it is.... Bosnia-Herzegovina is a secular state and can adopt no law on the establishment of a state religion, no law forbidding the free expression of

faith, limiting the freedom of expression, of the press or the right of citizens to meet together to present their petitions..."

Socio-economic

This platform also underlined an essential socio-economic dimension to any project of common life:

"We express our conviction that civic and political rights, in their universality, cannot be disassociated from economic, social and cultural rights and that social justice is an indispensable precondition to the full expression of human dignity and to all harmonious social development..."

On 12-14 October in Tuzla, in the heart of working class Bosnia, these voices will express themselves,³ to resist the rise of the fundamentalist currents on all sides. With International Workers Aid, we will be at their side. ★

1. On 27 March of this year, 500 Serbs, representing the 200,000 who live on "Bosnian" territory, rejected the idea that Karadzic represented the point of view of all Bosnian Serbs. They appealed for a congress of reconciliation of all the Bosnian peoples, to decide on the future of their country. They demanded that all war crimes be punished on individual and concrete bases and demanded equality of rights for the citizens and peoples of Bosnia. They demanded also that their "Civic Council" is represented and heard in the negotiations - which is not always the case. They received the support of Vuk Draskovic, one of the principal leaders of the democratic opposition in Serbia. If they represent an essential point of support against the project of a Greater Serbia, they are at the same time the pivot of a struggle against reactionary tendencies in the Bosnian-Croatian camp. Their amendment (rejected for the instant) to the Bosnian-Croatian constitution is a test of the official discourses on "multi-ethnic" Bosnia.

2. "Circle 99" is a Sarajevo-based group of intellectuals which rejects all the current projects defined under international pressure as well as the logic of a war of conquest of "ethnic" territories by the nationalist parties. They have established a Charter defining a democratic Bosnia-Herzegovina, which takes up the logic of the declarations of the Civic Council of Bosnian Serbs.

3. This is a conference co-organised by the "Verona Forum" (set up principally by the Greens, in support of the democratic movements in former Yugoslavia), Circle 99 in Sarajevo and the Citizens Forum in the mining town of Tuzla. It takes place on the eve of the elections, in which the non-nationalist parties, until now a majority in Tuzla, face a difficult position. Selim Beslagic, mayor of Tuzla and leader of the former Reformist Party, has formed a social democratic regroupment, representing the most credible alternative to the party of Alija Izetbegovic and the nationalist currents in Bosnia.

SARAH REBECCA LOVELL...

... A VETERAN US socialist, died on June 14, 1994 at the age of 72. Born in Brooklyn, New York, she joined the Socialist Youth Movement in 1938. She was a leader of the Socialist Workers Party until being expelled in 1984. After her expulsion, she helped found the monthly magazine, "Bulletin in Defence of Marxism" and was its copy editor and circulation manager for its first 100 issues. She was the editor of "Trotsky speaks", and co-editor with George Breitman of two of the 14 volume "Trotsky Writings" series, "Trotsky Writings 1932-1933" and "Trotsky Writings 1933". She was an early member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and the National Organization of Women. ★

SRI LANKA

THE Sri Lankan general elections on August 16 saw the centre-left opposition coalition, the People's Alliance (PA), emerge as the largest parliamentary grouping with 105 seats out of 225. The following statement has reached us from the Nava Samasamaja Party (NSSP — Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International).

"The election results show that the support of the urban working class was the main reason for the PA's victory. However, the mistrust felt for the PA by the Tamil people, especially the estate workers, adversely affected the PA results.

This setback was used by the President and UNP party leader, D.B. Wijetunga, and the UNP leadership to cage Chandrika (Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, the PA leader) within the constitutional framework. The UNP was initially given a free hand to try to form a government with Tamil and Muslim representatives, to pressurise Chandrika, who had to appeal to the president. Meanwhile, with the consent of all concerned, the President declared a curfew and prepared the oath-taking ceremony — thus Chandrika took the oath assuring to uphold and protect the constitution.

However, while at the top such activities are taking place, the curfew shows that mass activity is becoming a threat to the property owning classes. In the coming period the destiny of the government will be decided by the action taken by Chandrika in answer to the workers' demands. We have argued;

a) to reject the conditions laid down by the IMF/World Bank, reverse privatization, peg wage increases to inflation, reinstate sacked workers, and offer proper compensation to the displaced

b) to stop the war forthwith and unite the country on the basis of the minimum four point programme put forward by the Tamil parties, with a general amnesty for rebels both in the north and the south.

c) land to the tillers, the abolition of water tax and agrarian debt with a relief scheme

d) to throw out the dictatorial constitution with the President and to call a constitutional assembly with proper representation from the north, for a political solution to the Tamil national problem. The LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) should be asked to send a representation to such a constituent assembly.

Our task is, while making such demands, to take forward the mass struggles that will break out on the basis of the hope of the workers, youth and other oppressed groups, for a real change in the government". ★

11TH INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CAMP...

...ORGANISED by the Fourth International took place in northern Italy from 23 - 29 July. There were more than a thousand participants and the positive contributions made by all the delegations, made the camp a true success.

Young people from all over Europe were the guests of the enthusiastic and energetic Italian delegation responsible for the organisation of the camp. Made up mainly of young militants or sympathisers with the Party of Communist Refoundation, it was proof that Italy has those capable of confronting the policies of the rightwing Berlusconi government.

There were a number of debates, including on the situations in South Africa, Bosnia, Brazil, and Italy, women's participation in feminist struggles, the organisation and position of lesbians and gay men, the international (dis)order and the tasks which lie ahead for revolutionaries.

In today's international situation we can only congratulate such a significant achievement, made possible by years of methodical and collective effort, and a long-term political vision which understands that, while respecting its space and without being dogmatic, activity amongst youth is more important than ever if we are to build a revolutionary alternative. ★

BRITAIN

RAILWAY signalworkers, members of the Rail, Maritime, Transport Workers Union (RMT), have now been on strike for three months - the longest strike in the union's history.

Signalworkers control all train movements, and while in recent years new technology has led to job cuts and increased individual responsibility, management has blocked an extra pay award in recompense. Seven years after presenting a claim for more pay, patience ran out and a ballot produced a 4-1 vote in favour of strike action.

Each week the workers strike for either

one or two days. The rail industry is losing over £10 million pound each day, twice what it would cost to meet the workers' demands.

At first it looked like the employer, Railtrack, would settle, but the government intervened and forced them to withdraw their offer because it would have breached pay freeze policy. Now the Tories see the dispute as a way of smashing the RMT prior to the privatization of the rail industry and are prepared to underwrite Railtrack losses in order to secure victory. What started as a local dispute has been turned into a national trial of strength:

Strikers remain solid, with very few scabs returning to work. In fact the RMT has recruited over 500 members. However, managers are being used to break the strike and Railtrack claim to be running a 40% service. In itself an exaggeration, this also hides the fact that services are unreliable, are mainly short journeys and often run empty. The RMT and the train drivers union have also raised the issue of safety on strike days, exposing the fact that only quick action by drivers has stopped a number of serious accidents.

Public support for the strikers is strong — over 60% in a recent opinion poll, a significant change from recent rail disputes. Despite public opinion and the clear involvement of the government in causing the strike, the Labour Party has refused to openly support the RMT

The strikes look set to continue for some time, Railtrack, under strict control by a committee of government ministers, is refusing to discuss the RMT claim, while the RMT executive, in a way not normally seen in British unions, is seriously trying to win the dispute.

Two factors are key in order for the union to win; maintaining the morale of the signalworkers, in particular by getting out strike pay, and broadening the dispute to involve other railworkers.

On the first, the RMT leadership has appealed for support from other unions both in Britain and internationally (through the ITF). Strike support groups are being set up throughout the country, raising funds and organizing tours for strikers to address labour movement meetings.

The second is made difficult by legal restrictions on "secondary" action. The RMT leadership will not call on its members to take action which could lead to sequestration of its assets, however pressure is growing in the union to involve other railworkers whose safety is put at risk on strike days. ★

Financial support and messages of solidarity are urgently needed — send to: **RMT Strike Fund, Unity House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BL**; fax messages to (71) 387 4123. [copy messages to RMT Southern District on (71) 582 2955]