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PHILIPPINES

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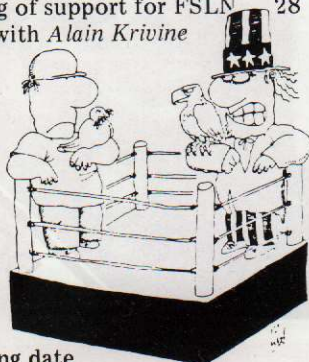
INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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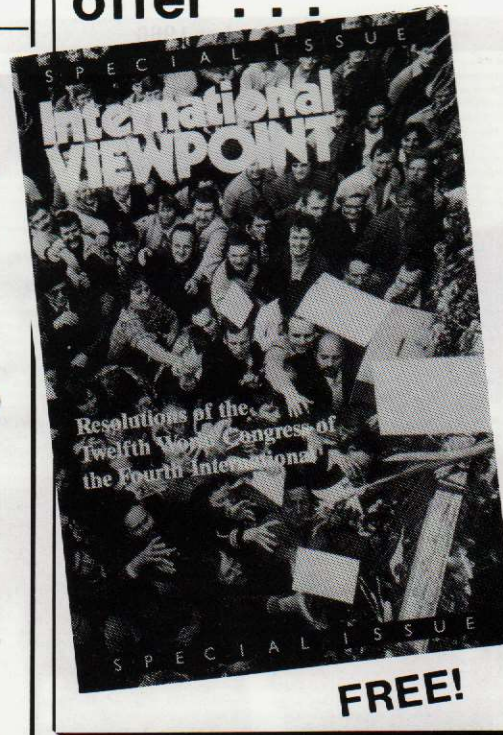
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Cover photo: *Juan Ponce Enrile* during the "February revolution"

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The end of the first Aquino government

THE UNSTABLE balance in the government coalition put together in February 1986 has just been broken by a succession of dramatic events — the brutal murder of Rolando Olalia, the mass demonstration at his funeral and an aborted coup d'état. (1)

President Corazon Aquino had to make a quick decision. She struck a blow at the far right by removing Minister of Defence Juan Ponce Enrile. But she also seemed to strike at the center-left by carrying out a broader cabinet shakeup.

PAUL PETITJEAN

The main beneficiaries from the government crisis are the military hierarchy, which has tightened its control over the government; and General Fidel Ramos, chief of the general staff, who has come to the forefront of the political scene.

Aquino's first government was an elitist bourgeois one. It nonetheless reflected the peculiar coalition of forces that ousted Marcos in February 1986. Alongside Enrile, the instigator of the martial law system under Marcos, sat various personalities known for their work for human rights and for participating in the "government of the streets" after Benigno Aquino's murder in 1983.

Cohabiting in this government were elements who wanted to carry the anti-dictatorial "February revolution" through to a conclusion by setting up a fully civilian regime, and others wanting to crown the February coup d'état by assuring the army a central role in the politics of the country.

This coalition apparently held up for nine months. During the first three, the regime forced the general staff to accept a series of radical measures and political reforms — release of a great number of political prisoners, dissolution of the rump parliament, the handing over of powers to the presidency, the dismantling of parasitic economic monopolies, purging of the administration and the introduction of important democratic rights.

However, since June 1986 the combined activity of the military hierarchy and the most conservative forces, both inside and outside of the government, blocked the government's course of bourgeois reform. Despite retirements and reassignments, the martial-law army — protected by

the United States — remained intact, as well as the economic and social power of the rich.

The contradictions within the government grew without letup, given the ceasefire negotiations with the National Democratic Front (NDF), the announcement of a constitutional referendum for February 2, 1987, and the buildup for legislative elections next spring. They have just come to breaking point.

Enrile, the eternal minister of defence, is a civilian, a former lawyer, like Marcos. Although allied to the "Rampos," the hardliners in the leadership of the RAM (Reform the Armed Forces Movement), he does not have a solid base within the military hierarchy. His political base is a provincial one (the Cagayan valley) and a regional one (the clients of the Marcos regime in the Ilocano country in the northern part of the island of Luzon).

Devoured by personal ambition, Enrile sought to place himself right after Corazon Aquino, being prepared even to open up a major political crisis before the referendum-plebiscite scheduled for next February.

It was in this context that a full-fledged strategy of tension was set in motion — sabotage of the ceasefire negotiations (with the arrest of the communist leader Rodolfo Salas and then the murder of Rolando Olalia), the kidnapping of a top Japanese technocrat, planting of bombs and the assassination in Manila of Ulberto Umawa Tugung, a Muslim political leader allied with Aquino.

Thus, Enrile as a member of the government became, even from the standpoint of the imperialists, a politically irrational figure and therefore for the moment a dangerous

one.

The general staff in fact is pursuing several objectives. It seeks to maintain surveillance over the course of negotiations with the NDF, an initiative of civilians that has entered a new stage with the signing of a 60-day ceasefire agreement. It wants to rid the government of those elements most opposed to intervention by the army in political affairs. And it seeks to reunify an army that has been very divided since February 1986.

The military hierarchy has gained at least a partial success. The new minister of defence, Rafael Iletto, who was trained at West Point, has a varied experience in counter-insurgency. He led the Rangers when the Huks were crushed in the late 1950s. As ambassador in Iran, he saw the fall of the Shah. As ambassador in Thailand, he was able to study closely the crisis of the communist guerrillas in the early 1980s.

Since the lawyer Jose Diokno, known for his democratic convictions, is ill, Ramon Mitra is directing the negotiations with the NDF. He has the confidence of the military. Bobbit Sanchez may be ousted from the government. A former minister of labor who stands politically to the center-left, he aroused the open hostility of the multinationals, Washington, Filipino business circles and of the leaders of the TUCP (the union confederation recognized under Marcos) by favoring the development of independent trade-unionism.

The role of Joker Arroyo, the president's advisor, will probably be reduced. A human-rights lawyer close to Aquino, he has long been considered the most powerful person in the government. But, lacking political experience, he has never been able to utilize this position.

Although he was evolving toward the right, Aquilino Pimentel, leader of the PDP-Laban and former minister of local government, a key position in the buildup for the legislative elections, was seen by the military as an intractable element. On the eve of the recent events, his head was quite formally demanded by General Fidel Ramos, along with those of Sanchez and Arroyo.

We will have to await the composition and policy of the next government to assess the exact price that Aquino has paid for her alliance with the military hierarchy. But we are seeing a clear readjustment of the regime to the right. The general staff and Washington are consolidating their right to keep a direct check on the political affairs of the country.

1. See 'International Viewpoint,' No. 109, November 24, 1986.

Nonetheless, the regime's difficulties have not been resolved. Enrile and the Marcos "loyalists" are going to constitute a strong and active neo-dictatorial opposition to the government. The army is far from reunified. The second Aquino government will continue to be undermined by internal contradictions, particularly as the legislative elections approach.

Above all, the mass movement will not let the democratic gains it won in intense struggle be taken from it. The revolutionary left remains powerful. More fundamentally still, Aquino's political project itself — bourgeois reform to head off revolution — has been put into question by her growing dependence on the military. □

Filipino leaders explain their perspectives

WE ARE publishing the following interviews, done in Manila in August 1986, to give a picture of three new movements that emerged this year. In the first, Edicio "Ed" de la Torre describes the Volunteers for Popular Democracy (VPD), the way this organization was formed, the idea of launching such a movement, its struggle and its place in the current political field.

In the second Jose Maria "Joma" Sison, former leader of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) describes the Partido ng Bayan (PnB, People's Party). It was officially founded at the end of August, but Joma had been working for its formation several months before. Nonetheless, he does not hold any official position in the leadership of the party. Until his murder, Rolando Olalia was chair. The general secretary of the PnB is Alan Jazmines, a former political prisoner.

In the third interview, Francisco "Dodong" Nemenzo and Randolpho "Randy" David describe Bisig, which was formed at the end of May 1986. Bisig groups elements coming from almost every section of the Filipino left. Dodong and Randy explain what unites these diverse elements, the lessons that they have drawn from their past experience and how the new organization was forged. In doing so, they were led to take up fundamental questions, such as the united front and relations among progressive forces, as well as the content and timeliness of a socialist perspective.

These three interviews illustrate the pluralism of the Filipino left today and the ripening of what are already long-standing debates. After the development of a multiform resistance to the Marcos dictatorship, the experience of mass struggles in the years 1983-1985 and of the "February revolution" in 1986, all the components of the people's movement are trying to make balance sheets.

They are also seeking, for the first time in a systematic way, to incorporate the lessons of revolutionary experiences outside Asia, especially those of the Central American revolutions.

In the Communist Party of the Philippines itself, a fundamental debate has emerged. It is difficult to know its full extent or all of the positions involved. But from dialogue with activists, reading interviews with leaders and thanks to the circulation of internal discussion documents, it is possible to get an idea of the scope of the questions raised.

Differences on CPP self-criticism

The self-criticism published last May by the CPP characterized the boycott of the presidential elections as a "grave tactical error." Elements of the CPP were opposed in principle to this self-criticism. But it is clear that there are also disagreements about the extent of this error, on the reasons for it, on what reorientations are desirable, and on what meaning should be given to the term "tactical" in the self-criticism.

Since his arrest, Jose Maria Sison has not held an active leadership post in the CPP. He speaks in his own name. But it may be supposed that sections of the party identify with positions he expresses. Joma stresses the limits of the error committed.

In his view, the party's traditional analysis of Filipino society (characterized as semi-colonial and semi-feudal), its strategy and its fundamental tactical conceptions are not in question.

However, at the time these interviews were made, Satur Ocampo, one of the key leaders of the CPP, recognized the existence of a debate within the party precisely on these questions. "The previous boycott position has since been criticized by the CPP and the NDF. Our participation in the elections would doubtless have made it possible to exacerbate the class conflicts At this moment an intense internal debate is going on [in the CPP and NDF] on tactical considerations. Our understanding of the united front was undoubtedly wrong. We certainly had our failings and maybe we showed sectarianism but a broad anti-Marcos opposition front was not established. On the other hand, we are studying and analyzing attentively the transformation of our society from the 'semi-feudal, semi-colonial' stage to a system that is essentially capitalist. Shortly, the NDF's 12-point program will be brought up to date." (1)

Finally, discussion articles signed by Marty Villalobos take up straightforwardly a certain number of big political questions in the light of the Central American experience in particular. (2) They analyze the turn in the situation in the Philippines in 1983 and its implications for revolutionists. They discuss the anti-dictatorial struggle and the question of the united front, the quickening of the pace of the fall of the Marcos regime, the shift from a strategy of prolonged people's war to a more insurrectionary one and, finally, the tactical flexibility and capacity for national initiatives that the party must demonstrate when the time is favorable.

The discussions underway are all the more difficult since there is not a solid tradition of political and ideological debate within the Filipino left. While they are necessary, it is not certain that these debates can be carried through to the end in the coming period. But they are nonetheless rich and basic, of interest to every revolutionary activist.

These discussions have also been made more difficult by the country's great political instability. □

1. Interview with Satur Ocampo, August 21, 1986, published in 'Philippines Informations,' No. 46, October 1986, p. 4.

2. The documents signed Marty Villalobos express the point of view within the CPP of a group of influential cadres, especially in the capital. This name was made up from the names of the Salvadoran revolutionist Joaquin Villalobos and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front.

Who are the Volunteers for Popular Democracy?

EDICIO "Ed" de la Torre, priest of the Divine Word Society, is today on leave from the order. Starting out as a chaplain in the Federation of Free Peasants (FFF) and an activist in the Christian social-democratic group Xi Rho, he radicalized and in 1972 became chair of Christians for National Liberation (CNL).

A leader of the National Democratic Front (NDF) from its establishment in 1973, he was arrested and spent over five years in prison. He was conditionally freed in April 1980 and sent to Rome and Louvain for "study".

Arrested again on his return to the Philippines in April 1982, Ed de la Torre regained his liberty after Corazon Aquino's victory. Today, he leads the Volunteers for Popular Democracy (VPD), along with Horacio "Boy" Morales, ex-chair of the NDF.

Question. Shortly after your release, together with Boy Morales, also an ex-prisoner, you launched the Volunteers for Popular Democracy. What is the place of this new organization in the Filipino left?

Answer. Too many people have tended to overestimate our project. What we are trying to do with the VPD is simple. It was in the detention camp, a few days before being released, that we started to discuss it. After Cory's victory, it seemed likely that we would soon be released. The problem was what to do then.

We tried to analyze the political situation and certain tasks that we saw as necessary. The dictatorship had not been completely dismantled. In this area, the struggle was to continue.

In opposition to those forces that wanted to consolidate an "elitist democracy," it was necessary to fight for the rise of a popular democracy. Don't think that this is a conception. It is only a descriptive term, including in particular the idea of a direct democracy not dependent on the traditional parties, as well as the idea of political pluralism and a multi-party system.

There was a clear need to fight for the application of a policy in accordance with the needs of the people and of regrouping the left forces, as well as centrist currents. Hence the necessity for a political coalition.

Moreover, after our release, something happened that we had not anticipated. That is, ministers and

freshly appointed progressive officials asked us to help them come up with guidelines for their work. For this purpose, we set up a working group.

On the one hand, the VPD have thus set up a working group helping the government's liberal and progressive wing; and on the other they intervene in the mass movement, outside of the government, to assist in the formation of a political coalition.

Q. In this perspective, what position do you take toward "alliances" of activists, such as Bayan and Lakas, and toward the political movements?

A. We could have become members of Lakas ng Sambayanan. But a section of the "yellows" [yellow is the color of the Aquino forces], as well as sections of the National Democrats showed a certain lack of enthusiasm for this prospect. On the other hand, we did not want to go into Bayan. So, we decided to do something else. But it was not to form a third alliance between Lakas and Bayan. We want rather to help to build bridges between these groupings, to be a link. We do not want either to be a new party or to be identified with an existing party.

In view of our political history and choices, we naturally have been identified with the national democratic movement. We are not trying to run away from this political identity! But we are making a conscious effort to get liberal democrats, social democrats and national demo-

crats to work together. Lakas, moreover, like us, is developing the theme of "popular power."

It should also be noted that the social democrats of Bandila are playing a much more limited role in Lakas than was the case before. On the one hand, they have very likely gotten too caught up in governmental and administrative activity. On the other, they are too busy relaunching their own political party to play their role giving impetus to Lakas. They lack cadres. Lakas must be helped to put into practice its conceptions of popular power.

Q. You explained that one of the VPD's tasks was to support the progressive wing of the government by offering concrete proposals. In doing that, don't you risk being associated with a bourgeois government and compromised?

A. I don't think that is the danger. We have no illusions about what this government can offer. It is a coalition of forces. You could even say that Cory herself is a coalition! It can be thought that progressive elements are in a minority in this government. And it is not enough to keep an eye on Enrile, the minister for defence. General Ramos, the chief of the general staff, has the reputation of being a "professional" officer. But he could step into politics, like the Thai generals. He has a good image and important connections in the United States. He comes from a family that is very much involved in the political game. And Ramos controls the police, which is a particularly repressive body.

There is no question of having any illusions. And it is true that there have not been any key social or economic transformations. The strategic facts of the situation have not changed qualitatively. This is often invoked by the left that tends too often to minimize the importance of what happened in February. Nonetheless, something definitely changed, something important. And today we have to take the maximum advantage of the possibilities in the situation. We have to make the maximum possible gains. That is what we are concerned about now.

You are familiar with the pamphlet that serves as our point of reference. (1) It is not a rounded program, good for all times! To take the maximum advantage of the present situation, to exploit all the potential, we have to operate on two levels. On the one hand, we have to make a common front with all democratic elements against the neofascists. On the other hand, we have to bolster popular

1. 'Popular democracy: realizing a possible dream,' VPD, 1986.

democracy against the supporters of elitist democracy.

This problem is not a new one. It dates back to 1983, after the murder of Ninoy Aquino and the entry into struggle of new opposition sectors. In prison, we analyzed that there were two legal opposition currents — an elitist traditional current and a distinctly popular current.

Even though the situation has changed after the overthrow of Marcos, the strong pressure brought to bear by neofascist forces makes it necessary to maintain a broad democratic front. We cannot remain indifferent to the conflicts going on in the government administration.

We are ready to support the liberal wing so that it will be stronger. But the liberals must also understand that without the left or in opposition to the left they will be impotent. Against the danger of a return to elitist democracy, we are fighting for popular democracy.

Q. Can you specify more what you mean by popular democracy?

A. Up till now we have only begun to take up this question. We do not yet have enough theoretical studies on this at our disposal. Moreover, we have to study the various concrete experiments that have been made in this realm. We have not yet tried out real forms of popular democracy.

It was in a speech by Cory that I first saw the expression "popular democracy"! I looked for the source of the formula. I found out that it was a social democrat who had given Cory the idea. He himself had picked it up from elements of the independent Marxist left in the Philippines. So, I am not the only one to use the expression!

Everyone has to give their own definition of popular democracy. The important thing, it seems to me, is the theme of councils, of popular councils. That is new. We should help to promote the emergence of such councils. This is a timely question. It is even a subject of the constitutional discussions promoted by the Law Center at the University of the Philippines.

I am thinking in particular of mechanisms such as the right to recall elected representatives at any moment, the right of direct initiative regarding elections and adopting laws and the possibility of recourse to referendums. These are some of the elements of a popular democracy.

There still are few Filipino writings on this subject. I am working on this now. I might also cite the work of Alex Magno, Ed Garcia and Conrado Guerrero. (2) What we want to do is

to help in carrying out a concrete test of popular councils, based for example on a municipality where the mayor is a progressive.

Q. Since the February Revolution, a series of discussions have been started up in the Filipino left, including in the CPP. Is this a demonstration of richness or of weakness?

A. For the Philippine left, including the CPP, in the present context, I don't think that these debates are a negative factor. On the contrary, I think that they are a positive factor for all of the left. Left activists were often seen as politically too passive in this area. To the extent that I can judge the reactions of the progressive milieu, I have the impression, for example, that the reaction to the announcement of the CPP's self-criticism and of the existence of an internal debate has been favorable. The CPP was, therefore, capable of having an internal debate after all.

I don't think that debate for debate's sake is always a good thing. I don't think that the mere existence of such a debate is in itself the ultimate test of democracy. I think that a democratic spirit has to be further developed in the left. But it is important to note that the debate that is needed now could get underway and that differences can be expressed.

Q. In an interview that you gave in 1980, you stressed the influence of the education passed on by the family, Church and the schools, which has not prepared Filipinos for exercising their democratic rights. (3) Even in the national democratic movement, you noted then, "the exercise of democracy remains weak." Are you still concerned about that?

A. Yes, of course. But we encounter a lot of problems in this area. For example, in the Filipino left there is an "oral culture" as regards discussion. Today, after the experience of the boycott of the last presidential elections, a lot of people are expressing their opinions. But the discussion within the left remains poorly structured. To get to the bottom of things, you have to be able to pursue a debate, including at a theoretical level, in writing. Otherwise, it cannot be taken up in the movement as a whole, on a national scale. And you have to be able to recognize that there are a lot of unresolved questions. We don't have all the answers, far from it. Unfortunately, few writings are appearing, and they do not do justice to the oral debate. A new tradition of debate has to be incorporated.

Q. What is the history of Christians for National Liberation (CNL)?

What role has this component of the NDF played and what role can it play? Is it to be the CPP's "religious fraction," or a distinct political current?

A. The CNL has never been the CPP's "religious fraction" — the question has never been posed in such terms — but rather the religious section of the NDF. Let us look back briefly over the history of the CNL.

At its origin, the CNL appeared as an independent formation. It was not the result of a project worked out by the national democratic circles at the time (the NDF did not yet exist). It was not the result of a decision by the CPP. It was a spontaneous development.

But when martial law was imposed on the country in 1972, the CPP was the only organization that provided an apparatus able to protect activists from repression. The CNL therefore benefited from the capacity for underground work of the apparatus led by the CPP. As for the CPP, thanks to this association, it was able to gain new cadres.

It was in 1981, at the Second Congress of the CNL, that this current defined a real project of its own, transforming the Church. This was not part of the traditional concerns of the Marxist circles of the CPP. But the latter faced an insoluble dilemma with regard to the Church.

It was difficult to get along with the Church as it was, but it was just as impossible to destroy it. For some Marxists, the project put forward by the CNL was "rightist," for others it was "ultraleftist." But given the dilemma they were in, they did not oppose this attempt to transform the Church.

The CNL had thus sort of "looped the loop." They redeveloped an autonomous and distinct character within the framework of a common struggle. That was demonstrated on the organizational, political and ideological-theological levels.

For a long time, the CNL did not much concern themselves with theology. They were busy with politics. But theology always kept coming back to the surface! It could not be ignored, and it was necessary to take it into account directly. We

2. Alex Magno and Ed Garcia teach at the University of the Philippines. Ed Garcia is a former Jesuit priest who began his political career in 1970 in founding Lakasdiwa (Spiritual Force). He radicalized, and subsequently spent seven years in Latin America. He returned to the Philippines in 1981 and became general secretary of Lakas.

3. "We must transform structures," interview given to 'Breakthrough' (revised version, 1980), republished in Edicio de la Torre, 'Touching ground, taking root,' p. 186, Social-Pastoral Institute, Philippines, 1986.

could not get rid of theology and its vocabulary. We had to fight on every ground, including that one.

The process of evolution that I am describing is not yet completed. The situation remains ambiguous. Our theological tradition is much weaker than in Latin America. And on the side of Filipino Marxism, there is also a theoretical void on the question of the Church.

The "old party" [the PKP, the pro-Moscow party from which the present CPP emerged in 1969] has remained almost silent on this question. We are still back with Marx, Engels and Lenin. In this respect also, Latin America is more advanced, as shown by the book *Fidel and Religion*.

Fidel Castro was ready to confront this problem directly. He goes a lot further in this respect than any leader of the CPP. It should be said that we have been marked by the east-Asian communist tradition, which was forged in countries where Christianity is not part of the dominant cultural tradition, as it is in the Philippines and in Latin America.

Q. What sort of front does the NDF represent?

A. The development of the NDF was deeply marked by the martial law under which the country lived in fact from 1972 to 1986. Under these conditions the CPP, along with the Moro National Liberation Front in the Muslim communities, was the only organization able to operate effectively.

Every underground organization had to accept a united front led by the CPP. There was no alternative. At the time, at the beginning of martial law, there was no other revolutionary Marxist party. So, the NDF was a movement led by the CPP in which elements that did not belong to the party participated.

The CNL, a special component of the NDF, had, from this standpoint, I repeat, a distinct history. They had an independent origin, and a lot of their members were "unassimilable" in the party. While members of the NDF, they were not sympathizers of the party in the process of being absorbed into it.

In this respect, therefore, the NDF is a front that forms a framework for collaboration among elements that can properly be called "National Democrats" (that is, who are engaged in a long-term struggle for national democratic objectives), but will never join the CPP. Such individuals have become more numerous in the NDF as it has grown.

Toward 1982, there was an attempt to bring other forces not of

a Maoist origin into the NDF — the independent Marxists and social democrats. At that time, a new program of the NDF was prepared. This fusion did not come off.

Nonetheless, the attempt at a reciprocal opening made at the time bore fruit. It helped to overcome the former hostile relations and to establish informal relations of practical cooperation.

In the future, it is possible that the NDF, which is itself a united front, will become a component of a broader united front with other forces, including in an underground revolutionary struggle and not only in the framework of legal or semi-legal

mass activity. Other military forces are appearing such as the CPLA [Cordillera Popular Liberation Army]. We will see what the situation looks like when there is a new repressive turn.

I would say that for the progressive movement in the Philippines, the problem is how to build a real coalition without losing sight of the strategic facts of the struggle. And how, in this perspective, to incorporate better than in the past international factors, such as the role of the Soviet bloc; and national ones, such as the role of the social democrats. There is still a lot that must be studied. □

Founding of the People's Party

JOSE MARIA "Joma" Sison is one of the key personalities of the Philippine revolutionary left. Expelled from the PKP (the pro-Moscow Philippine Communist Party) in 1967 for his criticisms of the leadership of the party, he created the "new" Philippine Communist Party (CPP) in December 1968, of which he was chair until his arrest in November 1977.

One of the last prisoners to be liberated after the victory of Corazon Aquino, Joma has played a very specific role since then. With intense activity — writing in the press, appearing on television, giving conferences and interviews — he has expressed himself widely on the present and the future of the revolution in the Philippines.

But Joma has not taken up the job of chair of the CPP again and, what is more, no longer has a leadership role within the party. It was at his initiative that the Partido ng Bayan (People's Party, PnB) was launched, as the political expression of the national democratic current. In the interview below, he explains the nature of the PnB and the role that this party can play in the months to come.

Question: The Partido ng Bayan will soon be established. What will be its role?

Answer: This type of party form of organization is being used for the first time by the national democratic movement. Several other forms of organizations have been already utilized up to now. But the need to form such a party, now called the Partido ng Bayan, has been felt because the national democratic mass organizations have been too limited in the political field. They often had no other choice but to support politicians who belong to the upper classes, but who are exceptional elements

in that they pursue national democratic lines.

In this situation, there has been a tendency to follow traditional parties. For example, in Mindanao, there has been a close association between Bayan and the PDP-Laban. Because of this, Bayan has become a recruiting ground for the PDP-Laban. And we know very well that the PDP-Laban is controlled by people like Peping Cojuangco and other members of the upper classes. So, there is a vacuum that is being filled by the launching of a properly national democratic party.

The PnB has a national democratic program quite similar to the ones of

so many national democratic organizations and alliances. And I point out one provision in its constitution: not less than 60 per cent but not more than 70 per cent of all leading organs from the municipal level upwards must come from the labor and peasant movement, from the toiling masses. This is to guarantee the pro-people character of the party and the development of leaders from the toiling masses.

Also, in the Partido ng Bayan, you get political education, you get organized and mobilized on issues that affect you. This PnB will not wake up only during the electoral campaign. Traditional parties usually do so, and then they make promises. The PnB is a party that will be in constant struggle against those who oppress and exploit the people.

Q. Which questions will the PnB mobilize around in the coming period?

A. It could be slogans against joblessness, poverty, and landlessness. So, jobs and land reform. These are calls which would immediately easily unite the mass movement all over the country.

Of course, while calling for positive things like jobs and land reform, there must be an accompanying criticism of the inimical forces that have caused this state of joblessness, poverty and landlessness of all the real producers of society, mainly the workers and peasants.

Q. The PnB will be a legal party. What is its role in relation to the Communist Party of the Philippines and to the New People's Army?

A. I cannot speak for the CPP, but I can relate the PnB to the CPP in intellectual terms. Well, the PnB is neither a rival or competitor, nor an extension or a replacement for the CPP.

I think the CPP will remain the Marxist-Leninist vanguard party of the proletariat. It remains the proletarian party leading the Philippine revolution and the broad masses of the people. I think that the revolutionaries will continue to make the assumption and that even the officers and members of the PnB would find no reason to complain against that formulation.

The PnB makes no claim to be the Marxist-Leninist vanguard communist party of the proletariat. It does not even claim simply to be the proletarian party.

Let me put the PnB in context. Let's say that you take a revolutionary viewpoint. How would you then compare the legal form of struggle with the armed form? You would of course put the armed struggle in the first place. It is principal to the legal struggle isn't it?

Q. The setting up of the PnB, then, doesn't signify that the CPP has abandoned its line on armed struggle?

A. If I answered your question, it would mean that I accept that there is some relationship between the PnB and the Communist Party. Let's put it this way: personally, I would think that PnB plays a role that is secondary to the revolutionary organizations which could be more effective in the effort to radically transform Filipino society.

But the PnB will have its own organizational and political integrity. It might have similar stands on a number of issues as other organizations, like the CPP. It is not surprising that two different entities have similar views on certain issues. The PnB will always avoid any organizational links which would put it in a position to be submitted to legal punitive measures.

Q. Then the formation of the PnB is not a way of legalizing the CPP?

A. No, the Communist Party, on its own, can very well legitimize itself. And I think the best way for the Communist Party to legalize itself would be to win power or to gain the position of being part of a new coalition government in which the CP would continue to adhere to its revolutionary course.

Q. As a legal party, will the PnB get involved in the electoral arena?

A. Yes. Let me explain why it is now possible to do so. Today, there is a full array of legal organizations and legal struggles. But electoral struggles did not come first. It was necessary to build a broad mass support for the PnB, to be able to face the power of money, which is behind the traditional parties. In a substantial number of areas where the mass movement is already so strong, the money of the exploiting classes won't count so much any more.

Q. How strong is the Partido ng Bayan?

A. Actual members are now running into the thousands. You see, there are two million members of Bayan's component organizations. It's the base for PnB chapters' recruitment. You can say it's our potential. But the present target for the recruitment of chapter members is a minimum of ten thousand.

I think the PnB will be widespread, from North to South. Manila will be one of the strongest places. Where Bayan is strong, the PnB will be strong, that is guaranteed. Where the people have already become militant

along the national democratic line, the PnB will also be strong.

Q. Does this mean that the PnB's mass support can reach ten million?

A: Six to ten million, you could say that this is the potential. But the PnB has to do its own work. This should not depend on the work done by other organizations. As a matter of fact, it admits members on an individual basis. You see, PnB starts with cadre members drawn from national democratic mass organizations and alliances. The seedlings of Bayan would arise in that manner. So they are ready-made national democratic elements. Then the PnB will develop its own momentum in accordance with its own political and organizational integrity. It does not mean to become dependent on Bayan or other...

Joining the PnB is a matter of individual choice. Some Bayan figures who have become Officers in Charge (OICs) have also accepted membership in PDP-Laban...

Q. What will be your function in the PnB, once it is formally established?

A: I will not run for office in the Partido ng Bayan. As a matter of fact, August 30 and 31, when the PnB will be founded, I shall decline any nomination. I am happy to be the chair of the preparatory commission...

Q. What do you think will be the electoral strength of the PnB?

A. The PnB can be sure of being the number one party in 15 to 20 per cent of the country. And in some more areas, the PnB can have its candidates elected through alliances with other parties.

Q. The CPP has made a self-critical balance sheet of its boycott campaign in the presidential elections last February. What's your opinion on this?

A. The boycott policy has been considered as a major tactical error by the Communist Party of the Philippines.

But it strictly means that the revolutionary left did not get as much gains as it could have. It did not mean that the CPP lost part of what they already had. You see the point? It is not a case of the CPP before the boycott having 100 points, and then because of boycott the points became 80. No, it is a case of the national democratic movement getting only 120 points instead of 150 points.

Really, the boycott policy has not been considered a major strategic error. There has been no error like considering that the armed struggle



Defence Minister Enrile (left) and Chief of General Staff Fidel Ramos (DR)

is already useless, that it becomes secondary to other forms of struggle. There is no leadership yet making that mistake.

Q. To what extent did the boycott policy advocated by the CPP affect the results of the February struggles? Did it weaken the position of national democratic organizations like Bayan?

A. There could have been more progressives in the cabinet. But, you see, there are already liberal democrats there. And in many areas, for lack of people, Bayan members have been recruited in so many governmental offices by the various parties supporting the Aquino government, especially when individual merits are weighed.

In places where Bayan and PDP-Laban work together, there have been exchange of concessions between the two. And after the election, after the February events, quite a number of Bayan elements became governors, local mayors, and so on. Let's take Mindanao, they got more than two hundred local officials.

It is in Manila that Bayan is supposed to have taken the most rigid position on the boycott, and it is there at a certain point that Bayan appeared as being divorced from the masses. That was a loss. But, you see, the basic problems still persist in the country: US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. So, I believe that Bayan continues to have the initiative of developing the mass movement in the national capital region and elsewhere.

Q. During the conference, you said that at some point the PnB will have to set up its own mass organizations. What did you mean? Quite a few mass organizations exist

already...

A. Eventually the PnB might organize its own mass organizations, but these mass organizations will have cooperative relations with the other national democratic mass organizations. There will be no problem: we have 54 million people ahead of us. Bayan, the biggest national democratic organization has been able to organize only two million. More efforts and more democratic initiative will not do harm to the revolutionary movement!

From a very revolutionary point of view, one can say that so long as there is one proletarian revolutionary party and one people's army, then the democratic proliferation of mass organizations is something very fine.

Q. On the assessment of the boycott... you explained that nothing has been lost...

A. Nothing has been lost from the original power and strength.

Q. But you get the impression that the Philippine left is going through a process of profound re-evaluation which isn't limited to the tactical sphere. There is a debate which goes beyond the question of the boycott itself. And the foundation of Bisig also illustrates the developments underway in another section of the Philippine left.

In your opinion, what are the main features of the evolution of the revolutionary forces and of the Philippine left today after the experience of the recent events?

A. I spoke of the non-solution of the basic problems of the Philippines, such as US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism. After the euphoria over the February events, it is now starkly clear that polarization in Philippine politics

continues unabated. There is now a more complex situation for the ruling system and the incumbent government. Even within the incumbent government, there are now three fractions manoeuvring and counter-manoeuvering within the civil bureaucracy and the armed forces of the Philippines. I think that the ruling system is the one that is deteriorating and the solid revolutionary forces are building up their strength.

Q. What do you think of the question of the united front? Is there a difference between before and after February concerning the very conception of the united front or its practice, concerning its extent or the manner of building it?

A. I think the united front as a class line remains constant and the manner of structuring the united front remains constant.

First of all the basic alliance of the working class and the peasantry, the toiling masses, must be assured because it is the stable foundation of any revolutionary united front. Then you come to the next level of expanding the united front: toiling masses plus urban petty-bourgeoisie would be what you call the basic revolutionary forces, the forces that must have a united front. Then, if you add to the basic forces of the revolution the middle bourgeoisie, you have a broad national united front.

Then after that you come to yet another level: taking advantage of the splits and conflicts within the exploiting classes.

What is the objective of all these levels of united front policy? It is to isolate and destroy the worst of the reactionaries and liberate the country from foreign and feudal domination. □

Bisig: an openly socialist force

IN THE RANGE of the Philippine revolutionary left, the movement Bisig occupies a distinct place. It is neither a party nor a coalition. It regroups militants coming from different politico-cultural traditions who openly identify with socialism.

In this interview, Francisco "Dodong" Nemenzo and Randolph "Randy" David, respectively chair and vice-chair of Bisig, explain its origins and character as well as its role in the Philippine revolutionary movement.

Question. Last May Bisig was set up. So, what is this new organization?

Randolf "Randy" David. Bisig is an acronym for Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa. But Bisig as a word also means arm, the arm of a person. In Tagalog, it is the symbolic word for labor. Bukluran means alliance or union. So: union for the development of socialist theory and practice. That is Bisig.

Q. "Union"? It is neither a party, nor a coalition...

Randy. Bukluran in our language can be translated as unity, or a venue for a unity. It is definitely not yet a party. But it's more than just a movement because it is not a loose organization. Bisig is an aggregation of socialists coming from different ideological positions. There are Marxist socialists, but there are also socialists who discovered socialism on account of their faith, their Christian faith. Others discovered it as a result of small-scale organizing work in communities and realized that they could not do community organizing without ultimately going towards structures that were basically socialist.

What unites these socialists together, I think, is a shared revulsion against bureaucratism and authoritarian socialism, or state-centered socialism. Because if you examine the backgrounds of the people who are participating in Bisig, you will find that some of them emerged from the old Communist Party of the Philippines (PKP), some of them from the new Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and some of them from the tradition of populist organizing at the community level who probably started their activism inspired by the ideas of Saul Alinsky. Furthermore, some of

them come from the tradition of Christian social democracy. But all share a firm conviction that the kind of socialism that is appropriate to the Philippines should be one that departs radically from state-centered socialism. In short, a socialism that is clearly popular in character, which assigns a crucial role to popular organizations rather than to one central omnipotent party.

It is also one reason why a number of those who have joined Bisig have been quite reluctant to go directly into party building, mainly because they feel that there should be alternatives to the way of the party. These are continuing questions in our organization.

Q. Would you say that Bisig is the product of the February Revolution?

Francisco "Dodong" Nemenzo. Definitely not. It's true that Bisig was set up in the last week of May 1986, after the February revolution. But our program was basically finalized in December 1985. We had our pre-congress in January. Before the overthrow of Marcos we already planned to launch Bisig. So it is not one of these things that emerged only as a result of the February affair. It would have been formally established even if Marcos was still with us. In fact, our program, known as the "blue paper", which presents our socialist vision still presupposes that Marcos was around. So we'll have to update it. But we did not want to touch the program anymore, then.

There have been two previous attempts to set up a socialist party in the Philippines. In both cases, the socialist party was set up just capitalizing on the millenarian tradition in Central Luzon. You see it in the

writings of Luis Taruc. It is just an appeal to populist sentiments. So that socialist party was easily absorbed in the Stalinist tradition that was introduced also around the same time.

In 1966, there was a second attempt to set up a socialist party. But this time the program was a nationalist program. It was no different from the program of the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN). So we felt that socialism has never been explained to our people.

Socialism has been caricatured and yet people who see themselves as being socialist or even communist never tried to defend socialism *per se*. So this time we are reversing the process. We are going to conduct a socialist education campaign, to explain what socialism is, to defend it against the distortions, to propagate scientific socialism. The idea here is to prepare for the setting up of a real socialist party of the Philippines. Even the Communist Party of the Philippines never defended communism or socialism openly in the Philippine situation. It's always under the guise of nationalism. And there was really no attempt to adapt it to the situation in the Philippines.

We in Bisig come from at least four ideological traditions: the old Lavaite communism, the Maoist version, the Christian social-democratic tradition and those who were never part of any of these currents. In Bisig we are not only trying to link the drop-outs from these four traditions together. We are trying to work out a synthesis.

Q. Are you building a pluralistic organization?

Dodong. I don't like the word pluralistic in this context because it presupposes that different tendencies are just allowed to operate more or less autonomously within a common structure. In Bisig we are trying to forge a coherent ideology but learning from the experience of these four traditions.

Randy. We are trying to keep the usable qualities of each of these, based on our own practical experiences. So it is not as if in our discussions you find a Maoist arguing still as a Maoist, or a social democrat as a social democrat, and so on. That's why it took us such a long time to decide that we were ready to launch Bisig as a formal organization. A year of weekly discussions!

Those discussions, I must tell you, were very educational for all of us. Because sometimes, those of us who were coming from a more Marxist tradition would assume that every one started from Marxist premises. Just to point out one example, one of us from the university would often argue the necessity for socialism from an almost purely scientific point of view. He

argued that under socialism alone it is possible to assure the continuous progress and development of productive forces. Now, many of our friends from the Christian social-democratic tradition found this to be a rather narrow view of socialism. They felt that equal attention must be paid to the ethical superiority of socialism. This is not entirely alien to the Marxist tradition, of course, especially if you look at the writings of the young Marx: he spoke of alienation, and so on. So there were intense discussions on this.

I am certain that at one point or another European Marxists watching this beautiful experiment will remark that this is nothing but eclecticism.

Well, be that as it may, I think it is an attempt — and we say so very clearly — this is an attempt to weave a Filipino socialism that we feel is appropriate to our circumstances. There is a very conscious attempt to get away from any dogmatic tendency.

There is so much openness that sometimes I feel that those of us who come from the university begin to sound like Christians and indeed our friends who are coming from the faith dimension begin to sound like Marxists.

Dodong. When we keep on talking about Filipino socialism, I do not like to give the impression that we have a very partial point of view. As a matter of fact, I think it would not be an exaggeration to say that in the Philippines today we are the most internationalist in perspective. The CPP for instance, since China dropped Mao Zedong, has been very reluctant in making any stand on any international issue. The social democrats also.

The PKP is internationalist only in the sense that they keep on echoing the Moscow line. When we talk about Filipino socialism, we are saying that we reject such a policy, but we are not indifferent to events taking place in the world! We are very much interested in the global economy, in processes in the socialist countries, in the struggle of third world peoples. And we try to inform ourselves of the struggles of the working class in the capitalist countries. Our constant use of the word Filipino socialism should be interpreted in that light.

Q. The formation of Bisig is the product of a long process . . .

Randy. If we go years back, there have been existing groups: the PKP, the CPP, the National Democratic Front (NDF), the Social Democrats, and so on. But there have always been people who have found that they could not agree with certain perspectives as well as methods of work in these parties. And also people who, because of their own

involvements in any of them, realized that there were certain basic differences and got out of these groups.

Most of these people, in different ways, were working for years with these groups, hoping to be able to put in their own perspectives and their own influence as independent left-wing activists.

After the Aquino assassination in 1983, there were various attempts to set up groups with an independent character. I suppose the impetus for the formation of Bisig really came in 1985 after two main attempts at setting up a united front had failed. First the Justice for Aquino, Justice for All movement (JAJA), and then later on the Coalition of Organisations for the Realisation of Democracy (CORD).

When the plan to set up Bayan was hatched by CORD, it was conceived on the basis of the usual divisions: National Democrats (NDs), Social Democrats (SDs) and Liberal Democrats (LDs). The non-aligned groups decided that this was a subdivision that did not encompass the variety of groups that existed. So those who were neither NDs, SDs or LDs decided to start grouping together primarily to form a bloc for Bayan.

This became known as the Independent Democrats (IDs), in the categories of Bayan, and later on was called the Independent Caucus (IC). The Independent Caucus actively participated in Bayan. But it ultimately got out of Bayan, not together with the Social Democrats and the Liberal Democrats who walked out of the convention itself in May, but much later after attempts to set up even a limited united front with the National Democrats appeared too difficult.

Then the members of IC decided to go ahead. So there were weekly

meetings to try to define who they were, what held us together, what particular political perspective differentiated us from the other groups, for more than a year. This created our working relations in the process of practice instead of setting up immediately a formal structure.

Eventually, a pre-congress was held. Bisig was not the name yet, it was still Independent Caucus. From that pre-congress, the decision was to work toward the formation of a union: we were all socialists, we felt that socialism had to be put on the agenda at this point in time. The other groups were speaking of social democracy, national democracy or liberal democracy, all of which, we felt, were transitional points. For certain other groups of course, like the CPP, being a Communist Party should have led toward socialism. But unfortunately the socialist agenda was not being raised by them in the open. And we felt that it was about time that we had a clearer perspective, especially for the workers to identify with towards a longer term struggle that would have a socialist content.

Groups which were not originally part of the Independent Caucus developed, also carrying a socialist line. We got to know each other and these groups took part in May in the formal launching of Bisig.

Q. So Bisig was founded by a set of small organizations?

Randy. Originally the Independent Caucus was formed by organizations and a few individuals. But, concerning Bisig, we decided to be less grandiose in our plans. We refuse to assume that, just because the leadership of particular organizations was already within IC, the whole membership should join the launching of Bisig. Since we were not talking about a

Land reform is a central demand for Negros sugar workers (DR)



specific socialist vision, we decided to set up an initial transitional organization open only to individual membership. It left more time to get down to the last member of each of the concerned organizations and talk of the socialist vision. We did not want joining Bisig to be a simple organizational decision to be taken by leaderships, but a decision that should involve the entire membership of each of these organizations.

Right now about 50 per cent of these organizations have already gone through that full process of dealing with the basic documents, and are now willing to join collectively. So we are looking towards that point in time, hopefully by the end of the first year of Bisig, when we can start to convert Bisig into a unity, but a unity on a higher level than the initial 200 or so individuals who formed Bisig formally last May.

Dodong. One of the advantages of deciding first to go small scale, in terms of individual membership, was to ensure that we considered ourselves as one organization rather than as different tendencies put together into a coalition. And although most of these people were in the leadership of various organizations, by starting in such a way, it would allow us to really break down the labels and the walls that people usually attach to all of us.

When Bisig integrates various organizations, while each organization would still retain its autonomy, we would not be a coalition of different tendencies but a coalition of various sectoral organizations that basically adhere to the same vision. So that it

becomes really a union rather than a simple alliance or a movement. It's a fusion of various tendencies rather than a coalition.

Q. What are the principal sectors of Bisig's implantation?

Dodong. We give utmost priority to work in the labor movement as well as community organizing. Community work is also a form of organizing labor. In the Philippine context, sometimes you cannot organize labor in trade unions in the places of work, but in the places of residence. So that urban community work is an aspect of organizing the Filipino working class.

Some people think that Bisig is essentially an organization of UP (University of the Philippines)-based intellectuals. But in the organization, the biggest single bloc are the urban poor and the community organizers, followed by trade unionists, then students, and then only the academics — the fifth bloc in number. We are not ashamed of the fact that we have, I think, more influence in the academic community than the other tendencies, especially here in UP. But the reality is that in our own organization we are just a small minority.

We are still too weak in the countryside. One of the groups that form Bisig is from Central Luzon. But the ones who already joined us are not really from the rural areas. They are from the urban areas of Central Luzon. So we don't have at the moment many peasant cadres. We really see this as a weakness . . .

Randy. Among the organizers, the bulk of them work in the rural areas. In terms of long-term work

there are members of Bisig who are already working with peasants and fishermen's organizations. We are, however, very strict about not claiming the groups that we either work with or even groups that we lead, as automatically members of Bisig. Not until they subscribe to the Bisig principles will they be considered as members. Because of the individual character at this point of Bisig membership, the peasants and the fishermen are not as numerous as we want them. That holds as well for trade unions and urban poor groups.

Dodong. There is one other explanation why there were few peasants in the Bisig congress. Actually, there were peasants in Central Luzon who attended the pre-congress seminars. It is simply that they did not have the money to come to Manila. But we are trying to form them as Bisig chapters in their areas. There is a commitment to join. Give us a year or so, we will have a broader peasant membership.

Geographically, we are also related with groups in Southern Luzon, in Quezon, in Mindanao and the Visayas.

Q. What are the principal tasks for the coming period that Bisig assigned itself at the time of its founding congress?

Randy. Many things have been said about the government that arose from the February revolution. But I think that there is a common understanding that the most important feature of this government is that it has opened up a democratic conjuncture. It is a perfect atmosphere for organizing, political organizing.

Communist guerrillas have recently agreed to a cease-fire (DR)



We don't know how long this particular conjuncture will last. We hope it will provide us enough time. But whether it is going to be short-lived or relatively long, we feel that it is a time for us to do at least two things. The first is the task of socialist education and organization of socialists. As said earlier, we noticed that while the communist parties, old and new, have been around for quite a while in this country, there has been very little articulation of the meaning of a socialist vision of society. Much political activism has come under the rubric of nationalism, or of democracy, but never of socialism. And we feel that while it may not be possible for socialists to come to power at this particular point in time, nevertheless nothing should prevent them from articulating, explaining and elaborating the meaning of a socialist social program. So that's the first task: socialist education.

The second task which we felt, in the course of our experience, has always been an important issue though rarely addressed is the need to work towards the foundation of a united front of progressive forces. You are aware that the situation in the Philippines has been dominated by the singular presence of the CPP. We believed that it would have a difficult time to come to power by itself and to establish a socialist society. I think it is a view shared by them: it is necessary to have a united front.

But a united front is premised on the existence of other progressive forces that are similarly organized. So we felt that it was necessary to start other groups. Since we come from different socialist traditions, Bisig is in a very good position to serve as a link among the different progressive forces in Philippine society. So this is the second objective of Bisig.

Q. The experience of diverse coalitions and united fronts, especially in 1983-84, played a major role in the formation of Bisig. Can you go over some of the lessons that you drew from this.

Dodong. Ever since the 1950s in the Philippines we have had a series of efforts at building a united front. But all of them presupposed a united front behind a single vanguard. This has never worked. You have the mass organizations of the party forming a semblance of united front with a sprinkling of naive liberals or some opportunistic politicians who wanted to get the backing of the party. But, it was never, properly speaking, a united front.

We were hoping that Bayan would be a united front of the kind you have in El Salvador, or even Nicaragua:

where different tendencies work together, without one tendency controlling completely the whole process of united front building. Our convictions about what should be a united front were fully vindicated by what happened afterwards.

Now, however, there are again efforts to build united fronts around very specific issues. I think we are going to play an important role in this whole process because we have reflected seriously about the previous experience in united front building.

Randy. Of course, in a sense you cannot blame only the party that was strongest for these failures. They were and they are really the largest! But one major difficulty that always surfaced in trying to build various coalitions and forms of united fronts was that you had one large active grouping, with a definite ideological perspective, operating alongside the mass organizations and the people — many of whom really did not have a very clear ideological perspective. So the ideological distinctions that we think are necessary for a united front to be real, and not the front of a single party, were not expressed. That was one major stumbling bloc.

Another stumbling bloc, of course, was the mutual suspicions and all sorts of experiences in the past which kept groups constantly on their toes. This goes back all the way to even pre-martial law days, between let's say, the SDs and the NDs. Getting them together, especially after the Aquino assassination, was a bit of a problem because of the past situation.

In our case we feel that here too we can play an important role in helping to build a united front. Those of us who were formerly part of either the SDs or the NDs have often maintained fairly good relations with our previous organizations. Those who have always been independent of these two groupings are often open to various tendencies existing in the country, and they are unhampered by the acrimonies and the old hurts that existed in the past. We hope that it will be easier in the future to get together. We'll see about that.

One of the more specific problems related to this mutual suspicion is that you have mass organizations operating on the legal level, but somehow related to the underground NDF, or the CPP. This automatically creates in the mind of the other groups the suspicion that there is a hidden agenda. But the tendency has been to sweep under the rug the differences rather than try to battle it out and see exactly what would be the concrete basis of unity. Invariably, in the process of working

with each other, all these differences started to surface, which led to the breakup of many of these coalitions, like JAJA.

Q. What are going to be the main political events in the coming six months?

Randy. I think that certain issues will be occupying the center. The first one definitely in the next six months will be the fate of the negotiations between the Philippine government and the NDF.

The second would be the issue of the proper role that the military should play in government. We see before us that there is a determined effort on the part of the military establishment, at least the portion of the military led by Mr Enrile, to claim a larger turf for itself than it has so far been allowed under the Aquino government.

The third issue will be the issue of the local elections. Everybody is watching whether Ms Aquino will set up her own electoral party, whether a coalition or a new one. People are also watching the extent to which the forces of the left would participate, the manner in which they would participate in the local elections.

The fourth issue has to do with the work of the constitutional commission, because within the next six months a draft of the new constitution will be submitted for ratification by the people. At this point in time, we don't know exactly what the shape of this constitution is going to be and what position will be taken by the different groups: whether to campaign for a rejection or for an acceptance of the constitution, for a boycott, and so on. As it is, in the process of making up a new constitution, several issues have come up: the issue of economic sovereignty; the proper role — if any — that foreign investments can have in the Philippines; the question of the American bases; the question of the policy in regard to the nuclear weapons; the question of land reform.

I am certain that these issues, which already attracted a certain amount of controversy in the past few weeks, will resurface in the next six months when the time for ratifying the new constitution comes.

I guess those will be the foremost important political questions in the next six months. Of course, there is always the challenge being posed by the abandoned supporters of the Marcos regime who, I am convinced, are totally powerless to seize state power. But in combination with the Enrile wing of the military, they can pose serious problems for the Aquino government. □

An assessment of the US elections

INSOFAR AS there is an overall pattern to US voter choice in the November elections, one could conclude that by and large Reagan's policies have been repudiated. The Senate is now composed of 55 Democrats and 45 Republicans. However, given the limitations of a two-party system where any independent challenge must confront unfair election laws, the handicap of being outspent 10 or 20-to-1, exclusions from public debates and the day-to-day attention from the media which the Democratic and Republican parties receive, this repudiation is not reflected in the development of an independent alternative.

DIANNE FEELEY

It's true that the balance of power in the Congress has moved to the Democratic Party, but the leadership of the congressional committees has only moved from the Republican Party to the hands of the entrenched southerners within the Democratic Party, that is, its most conservative wing.

And because the Democratic Party comprises liberals and conservatives, the liberals are constantly attempting to compromise with the conservatives rather than building an alternative to them. Thus the liberals find themselves continuously outmaneuvered by the conservatives, who know what they want and drive a hard bargain. Thus there are liberal Democrats who oppose Reagan's foreign policy. But they share the same conceptions about US imperialism and the benefits of flexibility in dealing with destroying the Nicaraguan revolution.

According to the *New York Times*, New England's "most complex election" was the three-way race for governor of Vermont. Madeleine Kunin, a Democrat, was running for re-election, standing on her record as a fiscal conservative who had appointed some women to office and supported some environmental issues. Peter Smith, the Republican who had been lieutenant governor, ran his campaign to the right of her. But the spice to the race was Bernie Sanders, an independent socialist, and the three-time mayor of Burlington.

Sanders ran a campaign focused on reversing the tax burden on working people. He called for cutting property taxes of home owners by 20 per cent; increasing taxes for businesses and those who make more than 50,000 US dollars a year; cutting utility rates by nearly half; increasing the minimum wage from 3.35 to 4.00 US dollars (with another raise to 4.40 dollars), and increasing social spending for education, day care, human resources, and aid to the family farm. He has become well known not only in Burlington, where Sanders wins the working-class wards by 80 per cent, but to ordinary working people and farmers throughout the state.

Running as an independent, Bernie Sanders built a campaign that transformed the governor's race from a typical race around personalities to one centered on concrete issues. And because he is the mayor of the largest city in the state it proved impossible to exclude him from the debates. Kunin and Smith each spent close to half a million in campaigning while Sanders raised and spent slightly more than 50,000 dollars. Yet 350 campaign supporters throughout the state distributed Sanders campaign literature and staffed tables at county fairs.

Sanders was denounced by liberals and even by those who consider themselves radicals. The primary charge against him was that he "would split the vote" and therefore allow the Republican to win.

In Vermont, the governor must be elected by a majority, not merely a plurality. Just days before the election, a number of liberal Democrats held a press conference and urged people not to vote for Sanders because it would only throw the election into the state legislature. Patrick Leahy, a liberal Democrat whose campaign for re-election was an easy victory, threw his support to Kunin in a visible way during the last weeks of campaigning by publicly loaning her several thousand dollars and by joint public appearances.

The Democratic Party in Vermont pulled out all the stops against Sanders. At a rally for passage of a state Equal Rights Amendment, held four days before the election, Kunin supporters attempted to make the non-partisan rally into a pro-Kunin one. Although the Vermont National Organization for Women (NOW) decided to focus on campaigning for a "yes" vote on the amendment and declined to endorse any candidate for governor, a national NOW leader, Molly Yard, without any consultation with the state organization announced NOW's support to Madeleine Kunin. Arthur Kunin, speaking for Men for the ERA, called for a vote for Kunin.

Vermont state NOW president later indicated that the state organization would send a letter to Sanders, who spoke earlier, apologizing for the unfortunate incident.

Criticizing Reagan's foreign policy

The final election vote found Kunin with 47%, Smith with 38% and Sanders with 15%. That is, the Democratic Party could not convince enough people to resist voting for Sanders so that Kunin could win a majority, although the campaign obviously had an effect on many who would have voted for Sanders under other circumstances. In Burlington — which was the home base of both the Kunin and Sanders campaigns — Sanders won 20% of the vote. In Rutland — the second largest town in the state — Sanders won 25% of the vote.

Interestingly enough, Sanders continues to prove to be more popular among working people than among the liberal community. Although he supports progressive legislation — including shutting down the nuclear power plant, Vermont Yankee, and replacing it with hydro-power, passage of the Vermont ERA — and is criticized for spending too much time criticizing Reagan's foreign policy when he's only running for state

office, most liberals prove too timid to break with "lesser evil" politics. They will admit Sanders takes better positions on a whole range of issues than Kunin, but end up voting for Kunin on the basis of preventing the Republican from winning.

As mayor of Burlington, Sanders helped to set up a sister city program with Puerto Cabezas (on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua), was the highest-ranking US official to visit Nicaragua for its 6th anniversary celebration, and has worked to help send 600 tons of material aid to Puerto Cabezas through the sister-city project. This was the largest supply of material aid to reach the Atlantic Coast to date.

Sanders has indicated that the reason there is less federal money available to the states and communities is because of the military budget. He believes that to be an effective local leader means organizing to reverse those priorities. As he explained in one of his speeches:

"What we have done is to use city government, and the office of the mayor, to involve people to make the fight for peace. We have one of the most antiwar states in the country. Dozens and dozens of communities in Vermont have passed resolutions supporting a nuclear freeze . . .

"Suppose a governor got up and said, 'What we are losing right now because of the hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars being spent to destroy the people of Nicaragua, we are losing x numbers of millions of dollars for housing and education and environmental protection. What do you people think about it?'

"The response would be enormous, and the lies would be exposed. So local government and state government can be an important vehicle in debating national priorities and getting them reversed."

The Sanders' campaign has had a dramatic impact on the governor's race. Kunin was forced to announce several programs, including a day-care program, in the final weeks of the campaign in order to try to steal some of the thunder out of the Bernie Sanders campaign. Many others reluctantly voted for Kunin this time, hoping that Sanders will run for governor two years down the road, and that they can vote for him then. Clearly Sanders has increased his base statewide.

The current administration in Burlington, with Sanders as mayor and several aldermen, is run by the Progressive Coalition. It is a heterogeneous formation, composed of people who are definitely for building a third party along with those who are dis-

affected with the Democratic Party machine in Burlington, but who continue to vote for Democrats. The Progressive Coalition will have to make a decision on how to organize for the next round of city elections, scheduled for next spring.

The Rainbow Coalition in Vermont — which has an orientation of both supporting Democrats and working within the Democratic Party, on the one hand, and supporting some independent campaigns on the other — supported the Sanders' campaign for governor. Initially the Rainbow was going to staff the Sanders office and build support statewide. But under pressure of the liberal sentiment, the Rainbow Coalition advised Sanders to withdraw, and backed out of administering the campaign. Although it continued to support the campaign, the Rainbow Coalition criticized Sanders for "running to win" not running "to educate." The Vermont media used this incident as a sign that the Sanders campaign was in bad trouble.

The continuing relationship between the Progressive Coalition and the Rainbow Coalition is obviously one question that is up for discussion in the next period. One Democratic Party candidate backed by the Rainbow Coalition did get elected to the state legislature. Terry Bouricius, a Burlington alderman who ran for state legislature as an independent, was defeated by one vote. There may be a recount on that contest.

The ERA was defeated in Vermont by a close vote: 51%-49%. The anti-ERAs were well funded, and used scare tactics, claiming that if the amendment was passed, it would mean AIDS in the schools, homosexual marriage would be legalized and so on. Big money was put into the campaign.

Like the defeat of the state ERA in New York and New Jersey in 1976, this defeat is surprising given the basically liberal climate of the state and the number of public officials — including all candidates for governor — who supported it. Nadene Martin, spokesperson for the Vermont Coalition for the ERA, said that it was the victim of a "disgusting, very dirty campaign with funds from outside Vermont — it was fear that won."

A Burlington referendum issue to authorize the City Council to write to both Reagan and Congress the official condemnation of the city for appropriating 100 dollars in aid to the contras was passed.

A number of other issues were on the state local ballots. All of the right-wing initiatives which opposed the use of tax money for abortion were defeated. Clearly a majority of voters continue to believe women have the

right to decide their own reproductive lives and oppose the cut-off money for poor women's abortion. This is an important victory, despite the level of right-wing organizing that will continue. In fact, the terrorist attacks against abortion clinics means that many are faced with constant threats.

Right-wing ballot on AIDS defeated

In California, the right-wing forces led by Lyndon La Rouche were able to place on the ballot an initiative that would have quarantined any person suspected of having AIDS. This measure was opposed by almost everyone, but there was the suspicion that some voters might not listen to the factual information, but vote their prejudice or fear. But in fact the initiative went down to defeat.

However, another right-wing initiative in California, to make English the state's "official language" — and thus repudiate the idea of a bilingual society, passed overwhelmingly. Although California is a state that was part of the southwest territory which was pledged to respect the cultural language and tradition of the Spanish-speaking people, in fact that has never been respected. The referendum issue was worded so that many voters, who have been raised to believe the US is a "melting pot" and English is the common language, voted for a racist issue without fully understanding the implications of the vote. Most people expected that the referendum — rather cleverly worded to hide its intent — would pass.

The Wisconsin Labor-Farm Party, which is a serious third-party formation, won 2% of the vote and was thus able to maintain its ballot status. Dennis Boyer, a Vietnam veteran and attorney, won 35,000 votes as its candidate for state attorney general; its candidate for statewide treasurer, Joan Hollingsworth, a Black woman from Milwaukee, won 50,000. Perhaps more importantly, the party has been able to make inroads into areas of the state in which it has not been previously active.

The examples of independent action are still small and isolated, but they have not gone unnoticed. A number of areas are beginning to talk about the need to organize outside the Democratic Party — an idea that makes a great deal of sense when only a tiny handful of elected Democrats stand up to Reagan's bombing of Libya or oppose in any meaningful way the mounting attacks on Nicaragua and growing US militarization throughout Central America. □

The killing of the Rhine

THE FIRE at the Sandoz storage facility in Basle [or Basel], along with Ciba-Geigy's criminal negligence in dumping 400 litres of herbicide into the Rhine, have highlighted a host of questions about the functioning of the chemicals industry.

CHARLES-ANDRE UDRY

An examination of the various far from unavoidable accidents in the chemicals industry, immediately shows a common denominator: The chemical companies pay little if any attention to the most elementary regulations laid down by the various state bodies. These big bosses, the champions of law and order, do not miss a chance to break the law where their profits are concerned. Here are a few examples.

In his book *La civilisation du risque* (*The Dangerous Society*), Patrick Lagadec writes: "In Flixborough [a small rural town about 260 kilometres from London], Nypro installed a storage capacity 43 times that authorized. In Seveso, Icmesa (a subsidiary of Hoffmann-La Roche) violated the rules of all the regulatory agencies. These violations, moreover, were not 'acceptable adjustments in view of an overzealous administration.'

"When you go so far as to ask for authorization to build a waste-treatment facility to eliminate the residues of a dangerous production process that was not declared and therefore not authorized, there is obviously an unacceptable gap between the law and the practice." (1)

In 1974, the explosion at Nypro, which made intermediate products for the fabrication of nylon, killed 28 people, wounded dozens and damaged 2,450 homes.

The reddish cloud that escaped from the Icmesa factory [in Seveso] in July 1986 contained a highly toxic product (dioxin), endangering the health of the local population and contaminating the area.

A few years later, Hoffmann-La Roche compounded the crime. Through Givaudan, a Geneva firm that it controlled, it made a contract with the German firm Man-

nesmann AG to dispose of toxic waste from Seveso secretly and thus with a clear conscience!

They buried a shipment of animal carcasses in northern France, at Anguillcourt-le-Sart. They were found out by accident. Only then was Hoffmann-La Roche forced by the pressure of the French government and public opinion to build a special furnace to incinerate and neutralize these poisonous wastes. (2)

After the Bhopal catastrophe in December 1984, Union Carbide was responsible for another accident in its Institute factory in West Virginia in the United States. This accident was discovered by the workers and people of the area by means of their sense of smell. The noses of those endangered are often considered a security device by industrialists who claim, in order to justify their refusal to provide information, that they rely only on science and technology and distrust the "panic reactions of the population." If looking ridiculous were as deadly as dioxin, a lot of these captains of industry would have long since removed themselves from the scene.

"Deliberate violation of the regulations"

After an investigation of the Institute accident, OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration), a federal regulatory agency, imposed a fine of 1.4 million dollars on Union Carbide. In his argument, the Reagan administration's secretary of labor, William Brock, indicated that the commission of enquiry had found "a continual and deliberate violation of the regulations." He added that the worst thing "was in

the atmosphere, the attitude [of the management] that a few accidents here and there were the price that had to be paid for production." (3)

All these remarks could be applied to Sandoz or Ciba-Geigy, with one exception. In Switzerland, there is very little chance of seeing a commission of enquiry set up to look into the Sandoz affair as competent and independent as the one appointed by the American administration (even under the reactionary Reagan) to look at the Union Carbide accident at Institute.

However, after the Basle accident, an official of the Office Federal pour la Protection de l'Environnement (OPFE), Hans Peter Hauri, accused Sandoz of having violated several articles of the environmental protection law that went into force in 1985. (4) It is certain that the same thing applies to Ciba-Geigy's "spillage" into the Rhine. Nonetheless, the real offenders remain at large, while their products remain in the Rhine.

All studies of the bigger accidents in the chemicals industry show that they have been repeats of previous ones. The only thing that sets these more notable ones apart is their greater scope, which attracts the attention of public opinion and, only after that, of the authorities.

These observations lead to the conclusion that these catastrophes are not "inevitable" but are rather quite often foreseeable. Evidence of this is that the insurance companies, which do not want to have to pick up too big a tab for the mess (as the insurance bosses say privately) generally point out the dangers to the industrialists. It is known that the American insurance companies did that in the case of Union Carbide. And the same thing happens in Switzerland.

Five years ago, the Zurich Insurance company made numerous criticisms of Sandoz's safety system. The firm's response was simple. It changed its insurance company, and took no serious step to deal with the deficiencies in its safety setup. That is a good illustration of the so-called freedom of the market, of respect for the law of supply and demand.

To collect the fat premiums that formerly went to its competitor, Zurich Insurance, Winterthur and Gerling were prepared to shut their

1. Patrick Lagadec, *La Civilisation du risque*, Le Suel, 1981.

2. John Elkington, "Poisons to burn — or bury," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, suppl. 1984, p. 364.

3. Charles Perrow, "The Risky Systems — the Habit of Courting Disaster," *The Nation*, October 11, 1986, pp. 347-356. [All quotes originally in English have been retranslated from the French.]

4. Roger Gaillard in 'L'Hebdo' of November 13, 1986.

eyes and hope that all would be for the best in the best of all possible chemical worlds. Sandoz continued its criminal stocking of highly dangerous products without encountering the slightest sanction.

So, Sandoz was warned by Zurich Insurance. Today, now that the crime has been committed, Sandoz had not even been legally put on notice (to say nothing of preventive imprisonment!). It is Winterthur that has to take the consequences and Zurich Insurance that can congratulate itself.

This moral double bookkeeping that is inherent in private property, the market economy and competition simply reflects the respect of the industrialists for profit and their disdain for the people and the workers.

It is worth noting that Sandoz changed its insurance company in the wake of a study by the Mac Kinsey firm, specialists in reducing production costs, from "general costs" to wages. Safety and profits do not get along well together, especially when "rationalization" measures are being applied.

Servility of state bodies to the chemical trusts

A closer look shows that certain state bodies also took a tolerant attitude. In fact, the highly toxic products were stored in facilities built in 1968 to house machinery. But, ten years later, in 1979, Sandoz claims it got authorization to transform these facilities into storehouses for chemical and agro-chemical products.

It would be interesting to know in detail what investigations were or were not carried out by the component services before the administrative green light was given.

All these accidents have demonstrated either the servility of the state bodies to the chemical trusts or their inability to enforce respect for a series of basic regulations, or both at the same time. It is no coincidence when investigating committees established to look into accidents of a certain scale turn up scandals.

Will we ever get to know what lies behind the Basle mysteries? It is ironic to note that a love of secrecy and for releasing information drop by drop are as much a characteristic of the Swiss chemicals industry and the confederal authorities as they were of Gorbachev at the time of Chernobyl. The difference is that at the time of Chernobyl, the US satellites informed (and misinformed) public opinion about the unfolding of the nuclear accident. Here we do not have the benefit

of the explanations that might be offered by the Soviet espionage services!

We have to be satisfied with a few revelations coming from the German Greens (following a leak that was certainly not looked upon unfavorably by Zurich Insurance), or more or less directly from German and French competitors of the Swiss chemical companies. The latter are quite happy to get a chance to "clean up" their consciences on the cheap by tripping up their esteemed Swiss colleagues and business rivals.

The Basle accident makes it possible to point up the underlying thread connecting all the previous and future catastrophes in the chemicals industry. (5)

In fact, the chemicals industry works essentially with a relatively limited number of raw materials (oil, coal, chlorine). On the basis of these substances, the industry multiplies intermediate products more than Jesus did the loaves and the fishes. Some of these are highly toxic. They are used in a great number of finished products. Thus, a whole series of dangers are created by the economic and technical logic of the process of producing these intermediary products.

Barry Commoner has been pointing this out for some time: "Thus the astonishingly high level of profit in this industry [chemicals] seems to be the direct consequence of the intervention and production at short intervals of new synthetic materials which, when they enter into the environment are most often a source of pollution (since they are toxic and non-biodegradable) An evolution of this sort is a nightmare for ecologists, because the period of four to five years in which a new synthetic substance [intermediate or finished product] turns up massively on the market and in the environment is literally too short for it to be possible to determine its ecological effects.

"By the time the effects become known, the harm has been done, and the great weight of the investment made in a new productive technology makes it extremely difficult to abandon production." (6) Fundamentally, this explains the ecological disasters caused by Sandoz and Ciba Geigy.

Private ownership, competition and the accompanying secrecy, as well as the primacy given to calculating production costs for an enterprise, considered as an economic unit, makes it impossible for civil society to exercise an effective control. All this leads the chemicals industry to get entangled, "without serious safeguards and without any reliable

guidelines" in a jungle of procedures to perfect intermediate products that are often very dangerous.

Moreover, as the Sandoz example shows, these products are stored haphazardly, without any clear account being kept, various products piled up next to each other, with all of the attendant dangers. For example, 30 different products were stored in Sandoz's Hangar 956. Among them were 25 tons of Parathion (Ethyl-Parathion), known by the code name E 605. The Roempps chemical dictionary defines the toxicity of this product as follows: "A dose of 0.1 to 0.2 grams swallowed by a person amounts to a lethal dose." (7)

What led to the tragedy in Seveso was the overheating of an intermediary product — 2,4,5 TCP — which produced dioxin.

Massive potential for accidents

In 1985, confederal statistics recorded 346 chemical companies operating on Swiss soil, along with 924 firms with licences for producing chemicals and 794 firms working in plastics and rubber. Many of these enterprises store dangerous chemical products. Often, the latter are transported in unsafe conditions.

It is thus possible to get an idea of the potential that exists for accidents. In many cases, they can be theoretically foreseen by the insurance companies or the state administration. But the response to these threats is a "fatalism," which is a palpable manifestation of the great "invisible hand" of the market described by the English free-enterprise economists of the nineteenth century. (8)

Given the jumble typical of chemicals production, a listing and classification of the intermediary products, as well as a schedule of their toxicity, are not only difficult to establish but often such preliminary steps are deliberately neglected or kept secret by the private firms.

5. In its November 14, 1986 issue, 'Die Zeit' gives a list of the major accidents in the chemicals industry. The following can be noted: 1948, explosion at BASF in Ludwigshafen, 200 dead and 3,800 wounded; 1974, Nypro explosion in Flixborough; 1976, the leakage of dioxin in Seveso; 1979, Mississauga explosion near Toronto, 25,000 persons evacuated; 1984, Bhopal, 3,000 dead.

6. Barry Commoner, 'L'encerclement,' *Le Seuil*, Paris, 1972, pp. 260-261.

7. 'Die Zeit,' November 14, 1986.

8. On this subject, see William Kapp's classical work, 'Les couts sociaux dans l'economie de marche,' Paris, Flammarion, 1976. (The English original was published in 1950 and a second corrected edition came out in 1986.)

This state of affairs can be seen today at Sandoz. Worse still, the confederal and cantonal institutions lack the necessary means and information to make such an accounting. Representing Sandoz, Ernest Zugger had the gall to say that independent inspection of the chemical firms is virtually impossible technically. The American example alone is sufficient to refute this. But worst of all he had the effrontery to claim that such a regulatory agency would cost the taxpayers dear! As if pollution does not cost them anything, as if the profits of the chemical industry were not enough to finance a genuine independent inspection!

The mechanisms themselves of producing intermediate toxic products lead to increasing the dangers. A line of research needs only be abandoned and the result of the past research piles up in the form of toxic waste. A chemicals firm making intermediate products needs only to see its orders decrease, either conjuncturally or structurally, and dangerous residues build up. The list of examples is endless.

Imagine only, to get a concrete picture of the problem, that all the cars junked or kept in storerooms were highly toxic products, poorly looked after and poorly put away but with clearly identifiable dangers for the population.

Some would say that efforts are being made now to get better looked after disposal sites for toxic waste. That is partially true. But one figure alone is enough to show the limits of the measures taken in countries that are much more advanced in this field than Switzerland. For example, in the United States in 1983, the Environmental Protection Agency judged that only 35 of the 275 tons of toxic products produced annually came under its purview. (9)

Finally, everyone thinks that it is normal that before a medicine goes on sale, a state institution, independent if possible of the pharmaceutical industry, gives the go-ahead. But for thousands of highly toxic intermediate products put on the market (if only on the inter-enterprise market) such precautions do not exist. That is another feature of the capitalist chemicals scandal.

The Basle accident poses at once the problem of the procedures for invention and fabrications of chemical products, of their social, economic, and ecological utility for humanity (and a number are useful in the present historical stage), and of effective social control over the activities of the chemicals firms, of safety and protection measures. □

9. J. Elkington, *op. cit.*

Dutch complicity with British repression

ON OCTOBER 21, the Dutch Supreme Court ruled that Brendan McFarlane and Gerry Kelly, two escapees from Northern Ireland's Maze Prison, could be extradited. (1) In effect, it put the decision in the hands of the minister for justice.

Because of the court's recommendation that the minister seek guarantees that the prisoners would not be ill-treated, it was generally expected that the actual handing over of the two could be delayed. However, the minister announced within a matter of weeks that the two would be turned over to the British authorities. It is urgent that there is an international protest against this decision. Letters and telegrams can be sent to Korthes Altes, Ministry for Justice, PO Box 20301, 2500 EH Den Haag, The Netherlands.

The following article is from the November 28 issue of *Klassenstrijd*, the paper of the Dutch section of the Fourth International.

KAREL TEN HAAF

The two IRA men arrested in the Netherlands, Gerry Kelly and Brendan McFarlane, can be handed over to the British authorities, according to the decision of the Supreme Court. The defence's political objections were rejected.

Of course, the court advised the minister of justice to ask for guarantees from Britain that Kelly and McFarlane would be treated humanely. But the ministers rejected this advice.

In the parliament's standing committee on justice, a majority represented by the Christian Democrats and the [free-enterprise] Liberals agreed with the minister's decision.

Van Bennekom, Kelly and McFarlane's lawyer, has instituted summary proceedings. In this way, he is trying to force the minister to ask for guarantees and to wait for a decision from the European Court of Human Rights on this affair.

In his presentation, Van Beenekom systematically pointed out the political character of the struggle the IRA is waging in the North of Ireland. The law on extradition includes a ban on extraditing people for political crimes. Britain called for extradition on the basis of alleged crimes committed by Kelly and McFarlane during their escape from the Maze prison on September 25, 1983. Mentioned in the extradition request were the murder of a guard and grievous

bodily harm to four other guards, as well as wrongful imprisonment of some people.

As regards the alleged murder of a guard, the facts are clear. The autopsy report shows that the guard died from a heart attack. As a man with serious coronary problems, he was in fact unsuited to the job.

As for the charge of causing grievous bodily harm, from the statements of three of the four wounded guards there is no proof of any kind that either Kelly or McFarlane caused these wounds. In the case of the fourth guard, there is evidence that grievous bodily harm was inflicted on him by Kelly.

Did the British authorities in their extradition request refer to this as an attempted murder because this was the only case in which it could be shown that one of the two IRA men held in the Netherlands wounded a guard? The truth, however, is different from what the British authorities would have us believe.

The plan of the escape called for subduing people who jeopardized the breakout. Guard John Adams put the success of the escape in danger. So, he was subdued.

On the wrongful imprisonment of

1. See articles in 'International Viewpoint' No. 108, November 10, 1986.

some people, the fact that this was necessary for the success of the escape is shown clearly by the unfolding of the operation. (This is recounted in the interview Brendan McFarlane gave to Derek Dunne in Amsterdam and which was published in the April issue of the Dublin Magazine *Magill*.)

"On Sunday, September 25, at 2.15 in the afternoon, Brendan McFarlane and two others walked into the nerve center, the "Circle" of H-Block 7. They were armed. The guards in A, B, C and D wings were overpowered. One of the guards made an attempt to push the alarm button, and was shot down. The guards were stripped and some of the prisoners put their uniforms on.

"McFarlane ran to the door marked 'guards' and was let through. The plan was to take over all the doors one after the other and station the IRA prisoners there dressed as guards. They seized a food delivery truck, and the plan was that men from the truck would take prisoner any guard who got in the way. In the place known as the Tally Lodge, however, there was too much coming and going of guards. One of them started blowing his whistle as he was running away. Two cars stopped in front of the truck. Skirmishes occurred and some guards were knocked down.

"The IRA prisoners pretended to give up. Tempers calmed. Then they stormed over the fence. In the confusion, the army was unable to fire on the fleeing men. Prisoners dressed as guards, and guards dressed in civilian clothing were running together. Cars were hijacked as soon as they reached the road. Nineteen escapees were almost immediately caught.

"Brendan McFarlane, dressed as a guard, led seven men to the road, commandeered three cars and rode away in the direction of Moira." [Retranslated from Dutch.]

That the escape was a political act is shown by the fact that the IRA men who escaped and managed to stay out of the hands of the police all continued the struggle against the imperialist yoke of Britain. Their objective in escaping was to continue the struggle. It is disgusting to see a so-called unpartisan body such as the Supreme Court reject the argument of the defence that this was a political case.

This false judgement stemmed from a political unwillingness to recognize the right of the Irish people to self-defence and therefore to condemn Britain's imperialist policy. The fact that the minister of justice eagerly took this golden opportunity to gratify a "friendly

state" should surprise no one.

Although the Supreme Court did not want to recognize the offences as political, it was convinced that very rough treatment was in store for Kelly and McFarlane. For that reason, it advised the minister to ask for special guarantees from the English authorities (without however specifying what these guarantees should be). The minister rejected this advice.

Grave physical dangers facing Kelly and McFarlane

This recommendation to get guarantees about the treatment of the IRA men from the British

FROM JIMMY BURNS' LETTER:

WHEN I was brought back to the Maze with the other recaptured prisoners, we were met at "reception" by the guards. While we were taken out of the prison van one by one, we were set upon by various guards with drawn truncheons. They systematically clubbed us to the ground. Others tried to set German Shepherd dogs on us, and then pulled them back at the last minute, just before the beasts got a chance to bite us. I was beaten over my head, neck, arms, back and legs with truncheons and repeatedly punched and kicked. Then I was dragged to the reception room, where I was verbally abused and threatened with further punishment, and even with death.

That afternoon, I was beaten again, but not so hard, because the prison doctor and the head of the medical service were present. After these two had had the nerve to "search" me, I was taken to the punishment cell. Before being locked in, I was beaten again. My head was repeatedly banged against an iron barrier and I was again kicked and punched. That is just a brief resume. You might object that tempers were heated and emotions were running high. But all this happened six days after the escape. Until that time, the police had held us in custody. The authorities and the guards made no secret of the fact that they hold Brendan McFarlane responsible for everything that happened during the escape. And they make even less attempt to conceal that they would give him much worse treatment. The beating we got would pale by comparison!

Therefore, I again appeal to you to do everything possible to get the judges to review their decision to hand over Brendan McFarlane, if only for humanitarian reasons.

[Retranslated from the Dutch]. □

authorities did not come out of the blue. Immediately after the initial decision on the case by a local Amsterdam court on March 25, 1986, Irish Republican prisoners in the Maze prison started a letter-writing campaign to warn the outside world of the grave physical dangers facing Brendan McFarlane and Gerard Kelly if they were handed over to the British authorities. Special attention was called to the position of McFarlane, who was seen as the brains behind the escape.

These letters were not allowed out by the prison authorities. They were written on cigarette paper and smuggled out.

In April, Jimmy Burns wrote from the Maze prison in the North [See box]. He is one of the 38 political prisoners who escaped from this prison on September 25, 1983. He was one of those who were almost immediately recaptured.

But humanitarianism is an unknown concept for the minister. That is why Van Bennekom initiated summary proceedings to force the minister to wait for a ruling from the European Court of Human Rights. On Thursday, November 20, the European Court decided not to ask the Dutch government to postpone the extradition. The court wants to wait for the decision in the summary proceedings, which is expected for November 25. Moreover, the court claims that there is insufficient evidence to suppose that the IRA men would be subjected to ill treatment in British prisons.

Van Bennekom's response to the ruling was as follows: "The meaning of this decision is limited. The complaint as such was not rejected. The practical importance of the ruling is that since the court at the moment sees no reason to intervene, it is not likely that in a short time it will see reasons to."

The European Commission is to take up this case on December 1. In the Standing Committee on Justice, a majority made up of Liberals and Christian Democrats are in agreement with the minister. The PvdA [Labor Party] and the PPR and PSP [small "far left" parties] are considering the possibilities for putting the case on the agenda of parliament. As we go to press, nothing has yet been decided. The PvdA leader Maarten van Traa has said: "In any event, we are not happy about this. I think that a formal question will be put to parliament." □



"The revolutionary reconquest of Ireland"

THE CONGRESS of the Irish republican political organization Sinn Fein, on November 1-2 marked a watershed in the history of the traditional revolutionary movement. In our last issue, we published an initial assessment of the meaning of the decision to participate in parliamentary politics in the formally independent part of the country. Below we are publishing major excerpts of the keynote speech at the congress (Ard-Fheis) by Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams.

The speech illustrates the process by which the republican leadership came to its decision and the arguments it used to convince the majority of the movement. It tells quite a lot about the republican movement and about a leadership that is now trying to give this movement a more developed program. It also helps to explain how this leadership has been able to carry through a fundamental change without yet suffering a major split. (There has indeed been a split which is not insignificant, but whether or not it will become a real challenge remains to be seen. That will probably depend to a large extent on how effectively the Sinn Fein leadership applies its new approach. For the moment it holds the high ground.)

For all these reasons, we have decided to publish the bulk of Gerry Adam's presidential address. There are many historical references, which are explained when they are important to the political points he is making. It should be pointed out at the start, however, that when he says he rejected a "dual power" approach, that refers to schemes for building up parallel governments now as a substitute for participating in parliamentary politics. He says that in 1918, when a rebel parliament was set up, there was a genuine dual power situation.

One thing has to be said and said loudly so that the whole world can hear. *We are still around.*

Despite all the best efforts of the British and Dublin governments, despite all the bluster of Fine Gael or their Northern representatives, the SDLP [Catholic bourgeois party], despite the bullies of the DUP [Democratic Unionist Party], Sinn Fein has not gone away. Ta muid ann agus fanfaigh muid ann go mbeidh bua againn. [We are here and will remain until victory is ours.]

The IRA is also still around. The Volunteer soldiers of Oglagh na hEireann, now 17 years in the field, have demonstrated, time and again in the past 12 months, that they are unbeaten and unbroken. Their tenacity, in the face of a numerically stronger and much better equipped enemy, has become a legend among

freedom-loving people throughout the world.

It is no accident when Conor Cruise O'Brien [a consistent advocate of Irish national surrender to British imperialism] was quite properly chased ignominiously out of South Africa by students they chanted: "Victory to the ANC! Victory to the IRA!" We share their contempt for Dr. O'Brien and we also share their solidarity in our common struggles. We extend that solidarity to national liberation armies throughout the world. We especially extend that solidarity to the men and women Volunteers of Oglagh na hEireann.

The struggle for the past 12 months has been carried at a great cost by republican activists.

One of the most important debates so far in this phase of our struggle will take place tomorrow when the

Ard-Fheis will address itself to the question of abstentionism.

You will be asked to consider and support a motion from the Ard Chomhairle, [national committee] and from cumainn [branches] and comhairli ceantair [district committees] throughout Ireland, calling for a change in our abstentionist attitude to Leinster House.

Before addressing this issue directly, I would like to take this opportunity to address myself to the debate and to the mood and conditions in which I think it should be conducted. Of course, I cannot force these conditions upon anyone. When delegates address the Ard-Fheis they are free to do so in whatever way they choose, but I appeal to you all, regardless of what view you hold on this issue, to remember that we are comrades in struggle and should conduct ourselves accordingly.

We are a political organization and political organizations must, by their very nature, discuss and debate issues which they consider pertinent. We cannot do so properly unless all sides of the argument are articulated, unless all sides are accorded equal respect and consideration and unless all are bound by the democratic wishes of their comrades. The Ard-Fheis is the supreme authority in Sinn Fein — not the Ard Chomhairle, not the Coiste Seasta [Executive], not the president. The assembled delegates of an Ard-Fheis are the authority. You are the leadership. And whatever you decide on this issue, as on any other issue, is binding on us all. None of us can predict or anticipate tomorrow's vote; none of us, on our own, can decide which way this party is going to vote, but each of us can decide as individuals what we are going to do when the vote is counted. And we can make that decision today.

Many republicans have deep and justifiably strong feelings about abstentionism. I share and understand those feelings. But none of us, regardless of the strength of our views, has the right to present the establishment and our opponents with the opportunity to project internationally the spectacle of yet another republican "split". Indeed, we have a duty to deny them such an opportunity. This struggle is bigger than all of us and it demands of us, as a basic requirement of our involvement, that we develop the ability and maturity to agree to disagree, even on fundamentals, and to unite in the great struggle for the reconquest of our country.

Unity is strength. Not a conditional unity or a qualified unity but a total commitment to a unified acceptance of the democratic mandate of this Ard-Fheis.

I can understand that some comrades view a change of the abstentionist policy as a betrayal of republican principles. Some of you may feel that a republican organization making such a change can no longer call itself "republican". If there are delegates here who feel like this I would remind you that another republican organization has already done what you fear we are going to do tomorrow. I would remind you that the Army Authority of Oglai na hEireann [the IRA], assembled in a General Army Convention, has democratically made a judgement on this issue and that Oglai na hEireann has remained united in its determination to pursue the armed struggle and is united in its confidence in us and our ability to pursue the political struggle.

"To leave Sinn Fein is to leave the struggle"

The decisions of a General Army Convention are not binding on Sinn Fein Ard-Fheiseanna, but the logic of those who would consider withdrawing from Sinn Fein if we change the abstentionist policy must be applied also to your attitude to the Army. And the logic which would dictate withdrawal of support from Sinn Fein if decisions go against you means that you have already decided to withdraw solidarity and support from the IRA and the armed struggle. It means that you have decided to stop supporting captured republicans incarcerated in British or Free State prisons or in prisons in Europe and the USA. I do not believe that any republican could take such a decision and then attend this Ard-Fheis.

There is going to be no split in Sinn Fein on this or any other issue.

Some comrades may decide to leave us. Perhaps they have already decided to do so. If this is so it is something I deeply regret. I have spoken privately to some of the main supporters of abstentionism from Leinster House [the Irish Parliament] and I am firmly convinced that anyone who leaves us over this issue will regret their decision in the years ahead.

To leave Sinn Fein is to leave the struggle. The spectre of a "split" is being raised to panic and intimidate us. It is aimed at unnerving people who want to remove abstentionism but who don't want the price for this to be a split. Talk or speculation about the split is aimed at making people draw back.

This leadership is not going to be blackmailed by any such speculation. We have been elected by you

to give leadership and we will not be found lacking in the task of leading and uniting this party.

In the course of a debate, one may, of course, review, change or alter one's opinions, but it is the quality of the debate and not the vote which has that effect. The question is wider than one of principle or tactic and it is not unique to Ireland nor post-partition Ireland.

It is a question of whether a struggle such as ours can be advanced by opening up another front in a parliament of the establishment which oppresses us and the interests we seek to represent. As such, this question of electoralism as a means of revolutionary struggle has affected all struggles in areas where parliaments with universal suffrage exist. As with all such questions, the answer lies in people's attitude to those institutions.

Our experience has taught us that our struggle — and this affects every aspect of the struggle for national liberation — cannot be built merely on the republican perception of things. We have had to consistently pitch our struggle at the level of people's understanding and we have had to develop it from this common denominator, taking into account, in an objective way, all the forces and factors involved.

It would be much easier, of course, if all the Irish people, or a large section of them, were born with our perception and our view of things, but this is not the case. If it was, there would be little need for a republican struggle. But there is such a need and if we want to win then there is a fundamental need to make it a people's struggle. Of course, if we have no concept of winning we can remain as we are — a party apart from the people, proud of our past but with little involvement in the present and only dreams for the future.

If this is so, it is easy to ignore this problem or to let our own republican view of things blind us to realities. If nothing else, republicans must be realistic, especially about people's

Gerry Adams (DR)



perception (as opposed to our perception) of things. In the 6 Counties, in regards to Stormont or Westminster, a sizeable section of nationalists and republicans feel no affinity with those institutions. In the 26 Counties, it is different. It is a massive mistake to presume that our republican attitude to Leinster House is shared by any more than a very small section of our people, especially the citizens of this state, who might otherwise be open to our policies on all other issues. It must also be clear that the reconquest of Ireland, much less a British withdrawal, cannot be completed without the support of more of these people.

Of course we have a duty to point out to these people the shortcomings and the history of the present system, and we have a duty to win them to our view, but we can only do so at *their* level of understanding and we can only proceed from the objective reality of their consciousness.

We should not reject participation out of hand, but we should always be aware that such rejection may become essential. It all depends on the objective reality and conditions of the time.

1918 was such a time. The strategy of 1918 was the correct one. It was a dual power situation. It was much more than merely refusing to attend any enemy parliament. It meant withholding our consent to be governed by the British when the people — not us, but the people — established an alternative Dail Eireann. (1) But even then republicans made a mistake. To a large degree many of those politicians who represented us in Dail Eireann were not republicans. They did not reflect the interests of the mass of people and they certainly did not represent the interests of the people doing the actual fighting. Thus a majority of them found it possible, if not easy, to accept the Treaty arrangement. (2)

It was in their own class interests to do so. For this reason they implemented the Treaty with a terrible ferocity. And they defeated us. With animal savagery, great cruelty and brutality, they imposed the British partition of Ireland upon this nation and they established the Free State and, within a modernised

1. In 1918, Sinn Fein elected the majority of Irish members of parliament. They then withdrew from the London parliament and proclaimed an independent Irish legislative, the Dail Eireann, under whose formal authority the war of independence was fought.

2. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, which accepted partition and association with Britain. It led to a civil war in which the intransigent nationalists, the ancestors of the modern republican movement, were defeated.

neo-colonial arrangement, they continue to represent those interests which crucify the Irish people.

At that time, many republicans refused to co-operate in any way with new Free State set-up. At that time, unlike today, abstentionism meant the withholding of all consent to be governed by the new state. As in 1918, this meant much more than merely abstaining from taking their seats.

It meant refusing to co-operate in any way with the new state. It meant a refusal to recognize any aspect of the Free State, its courts (in both civil and political cases), its education system, its labour and agricultural schemes, limited though they were, or even its postal system. But unlike 1918, no political alternative existed during the Treaty period and Liam Mellows' *Notes from Mountjoy*, which pointed in a clear [left] political direction, was never implemented. By the time the "soldiers of the rearguard" dumped their weapons — not in surrender but in exhaustion and in weary anticipation of another round of hostilities — the offensive was with the Free State. Armed struggle had been the only manifestation of republican resistance. Once that armed struggle ceased, as it had to, there was no other form of organized resistance relevant to the needs of ordinary people.

In 1924, Sinn Fein fought its last meaningful election on an abstentionist policy in the Free State. Given the destabilising effect that abstentionism had on a young Free State, plus the widespread though mistaken belief that partition would not last, and coupled with the support that we continued to enjoy despite the vicious cruelty of the civil war counter-revolution, it can be argued that abstentionism was the correct approach at that time. If so, the emergence of Fianna Fail [the more nationalist of the two bourgeois parties], and its subsequent electoral successes with republican support, marked the end of abstentionism as a viable policy in this state. The coercive policies of the Fianna Fail leadership in government are a matter of historical record.

The IRA leadership and a depleted Sinn Fein organization remained on the high ground of abstentionism but yet, at the same time, they were prepared to give at least passive support to another party which was not only prepared to attend Leinster House but was committed to becoming part of the partitionist system. They failed to present the people with any realistic political alternative.

I have talked and listened to men and women who have fought for the Republic since 1914 to the present

day. In the last 20 years, in all parts of this country, I have enjoyed the hospitality of republican households which sheltered the Countess Markievicz, James Connolly, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey, George Plant, Frank Ryan, Charlie Kerins, Sean McGaughey, Tom Smith and many others.

I have spoken at monuments to the heroic victims of Free Stateism and knelt in prayer at lonely graves in Kerry and Donegal. I know many of those invincibles who spent years in Free State dungeons not just in the '20s, '30s, '40s and '50s but in the '70s and '80s. Some of them are present here today.

I share their abhorrence of neo-colonialism and their detestation of those who govern this part of Ireland in the interests of imperialism. My family were opposed to the Treaty and the Partition Act. Like many Northern republicans, they suffered for their beliefs at that time, not only in the 6 Counties but in later years in the glasshouse of the Curragh Concentration Camp and other Free State prisons.

"Fundamental need for republican politics"

They witnessed the rise of Clann na Poblachta, [the Republican Party], which received republican support when many republicans again made the mistake of leaving the "politics" to those outside our movement. Sometimes I ask myself if we will ever learn. The central issue is not abstentionism. It is merely a problematic, deeply-rooted and emotive symptom of the lack of republican politics and the failure of successive generations of republicans to grasp the centrality, the primacy and the fundamental need for republican politics. This truth must be grasped. It is a difficult one for many to accept given the conspiratorial and repressive nature of our past, our distrust for "politics and politicians" and a belief that "politics" is inherently corrupt. But once it is grasped then everything else follows logically, especially the need to develop our struggle at the level of people's understanding.

Too often republicans have appeared dogmatic on the question of abstentionism and yet successive leaderships and generations of republicans have at least passively, and in many cases actively, supported other political organizations in election campaigns. This is certainly the case with Fianna Fail in the Free State general election of 1932, later with Clann na Poblachta, and in our own time with the late Frank Maguire,

Frank McManus and Bernadette McAliskey and — although some of them will deny it now — it was also the case with Gerry Fitt, Paddy Devlin and Paddy Kennedy. (3) They would not have been so successful on their entry into politics without republican support and in some of the above cases I was witness to, and in most cases opposed to, that support or at least to a "standing aside" being agreed.

Some republicans believe that politics is the property of the establishment, that so-called "constitutionalism" and politics are the same thing and thus that politics are inherently corrupt and corrupting. The logic of this is that de Valera [the founder of Fianna Fail] was okay until he went into Leinster House, or that the opportunism of the Clann na Poblachta leadership only occurred after their entry into the Free State parliament. If we still believe that, then we don't know our own history and we have little concept of the class nature of this struggle.

The great and most recent example of the corrupting nature of "politics" which is often quoted by some of our membership is the Sticks. (4) Indeed, in the past few weeks some republicans who should know better have actually referred to some people on this platform as Stickies. Oh ye of little faith! Of course, it is easy to hurl abuse — sticks and stone may break our bones — it makes headlines in the media but it also makes this problem more difficult to resolve. To compare us with the Stickies is an obscenity. To talk of "only the personalities being changed" and of "some people believing that the British can be talked out of Ireland" is contemptible.

It is a sign of the maturity of this leadership that we have refrained from publicly answering these remarks and it is a sign of our comradeship that we forgive those who made such remarks.

For anyone who has eyes to see, it is clear that the Sticky leadership had abandoned armed struggle as a form of resistance to British rule as part of their historic new departure into British and Free State constitutionality. Any vestige of armed struggle that continued after this decision was localised and mainly on the initiative of elements which later

3. Fitt, Devlin and Kennedy were originally "Republican Labour" politicians who came to collaborate with the British establishment in the name of "working-class" material interests.

4. The ex-Official Republicans, now the "Workers Party." They were called "stickies" because they introduced stick-on badges. They followed the same route to pro-imperialism as Fitt and Devlin, but combined this right-wing workerism with virulent Stalinist sectarianism.

formed the now almost defunct INLA. (5)

For our part, this leadership has been actively involved in the longest phase ever of resistance to the British presence. Our record speaks for itself. We have led from the front and from within the occupied area itself. We have learned that to be victorious a struggle for freedom must be a struggle of the people. We have said many times that even the most successful armed struggle in the 6 counties — and the struggle there is not merely an armed one — cannot achieve the Republic. The aspiration for the Republic has never been defeated, not even when the republican forces were defeated and the legitimate government of the Republic was overthrown. It is not vested merely in governmental structures. It is not vested merely in proclamations or in parliaments of the past. It cannot be voted, negotiated or coerced away.

Even if our history only started yesterday, the right to the Republic exists today in the right of the Irish nation to sovereignty, independence and national self-determination. It is up to us to make that Republic a reality.

We must develop a 32-County-wide political struggle. This is the most important task facing us at present. While consolidating our base in the 6 Counties, we must develop a popular struggle here in the 26 Counties to complement the struggle in the 6-County area. Of necessity this means, in order to advance at the level of people's consciousness, the removal of abstentionism in regard to Leinster House. You may not do this tomorrow but one thing is certain: as Sinn Fein continues to develop its understanding of the needs of this struggle, you are going to do it, sooner rather than later and your leadership is going to be back here year after year until it has convinced you of this necessity.

But no generation of republicans could or should ever merely absorb the teachings of previous generations. Those who were successful in the past in advancing the republican cause, even by one inch, updated and modernized the teaching and experience of their predecessors. This is what Lalor did, what Pearse did, what Connolly did — and it is what we have to do also.

We have to develop a coherent social and political philosophy which provides a rationale for consistent political as well as armed action. Such a process is one of continual reinterpretation and refinement in response to constantly changing social and political reality.

Mar a deirtear i nGaeilg 'An te nach bhfuil laidir ni folair a bheith

glic'. [As we say in Irish, "those who are not strong must be clever."]

We have at all times been more committed to rebellion than to revolution. The cement which held us together was physical force and, until recent times, physical force was applied in isolation, unsupported by organized political sentiment in the country.

"The development of strategies which can succeed"

Over the last few years I have, like many of you, given serious consideration to the question of abstentionism and of what part it plays in our struggle. I have considered all the alternatives in great depth including a dual power situation which is neither feasible nor practical in this state at the present time. I have considered the strategy of taking seats only when we have a majority in Leinster House. This is advanced by some comrades and is among other things, an admission by them that only mathematics and not principle is involved. But it is also as impractical as the dual power theory.

The only feasible way to break out of our isolation, to make political gains, to win support for our policies, to develop our organization and our struggle is by approaching people at the level they understand. This means Sinn Fein getting among people in the basic ways which the people accept. This means new approaches and difficult — and perhaps risky — political positions have to be faced up to by us.

It will mean the difference between another glorious defeat or the development of strategies which can succeed.

The removal of abstentionism will not provide a "magic wand" solution to all our problems. Indeed, in this state it merely clears the decks and it makes the burden of struggle heavier upon all of us.

We have to cease being spectators of a struggle in the 6 Counties and become pioneers of republicanism in the 26 Counties, putting our politics before the people, confident of the logic of the alternative which Irish republicanism offers.

I say this means risky political positions. This should not be underestimated.

The removal of abstentionism allied to implementation of the other necessities I have touched on here, and detailed in other addresses, will initiate an increase in our party membership and could change the political complexion of this party. It is important therefore that those who wish to change abstentionism recommit themselves to

this struggle and that those who are opposed stay with us also . . .

We need to keep our republican gut. While developing the struggle in the 26 Counties we must never lose sight of our national objectives. We must change our strategies but must never let this change our objectives or our aims. We are a republican party committed to the struggle for national self-determination, committed to the overthrow of British rule in Ireland and to the end of partition and committed to bringing about the political and economic changes necessary for the well-being and security of this nation.

In other words, we are committed to the reconquest of Ireland by the Irish people. This means the expulsion of imperialism in all its forms, political, economic, military, social and cultural. It means the establishment of a real Irish republic and the organization of the economy so that all its resources are under Irish control and organized to bring maximum benefit to the people in a 32-County state in which Irish culture and national identity is strong and confident.

There has been much talk and speculation about how many seats Sinn Fein will win if we contest the Free State election on an attendance ticket. We should not seek to see such a contest merely in terms of winning seats.

If we do contest on an attendance ticket the election after the next one will be the first serious test of our ability to win major support. At this time, our entry in a serious way into electoral politics in this state should be seen in terms of broad political gains as opposed to immediate gains in terms of a seat or seats.

What will make an organization like ours revolutionary is not whether it is committed to any particular means of achieving revolution — such as street agitation, electoralism or physical force — but whether all the means it uses — political work, publicity, mass education, electoralism and armed struggle (which should play no part in the struggle in this state) [i.e. the South] or projects of economic, social or cultural resistance — are conducive to achieving the revolutionary reconquest of Ireland.

No one form of revolutionary work is inherently superior to any other. The judgement of what form of work is required must be made on the basis of what form is most conducive and necessary for the national indepen-

5. Irish National Liberation Army, founded in 1975 by a section of the official republican movement that opposed the rightwing course taken by a majority of the leadership.

dence struggle in the particular circumstances currently existing.

Republican TDs [Teachtai Dala, members of parliament] will act, in consultation with the grassroots, on the direction of the Ard Chomhairle. They will vote in the interests of their constituents, our struggle and this party. I am totally opposed to this party becoming involved in any coalition, at any time, with any of the establishment parties in Leinster House. If we, at times, agree on specifics or if we vote along similar lines, that is fair enough and is acceptable.

"Anti-people policies of successive Dublin governments"

The failure to build a republican base in this state has meant that the anti-people policies of successive Dublin governments are implemented with almost no opposition and that the lowering of national spirit and the pretence that this state is a nation goes on unabated. Partition is virtually a fact of life here for many people who feel powerless.

In this, the 70th anniversary year of the 1916 Proclamation, over 23 per cent of our people are unemployed in the 6 Counties. In the 26 Counties, the official figure is 232,448 people unemployed. Over 74,000 of these are under 25 years of age. The official figures nationally amount to almost 400,000 people suffering the misery and poverty of unemployment — a massive indictment of British rule in the 6 Counties and neo-colonial rule in the 26 Counties.

Not only is the Dublin government exporting the human wealth of our greatest national resource — our youth — it is also exporting our material wealth. In the past 12 months, the wealthy ruling class, in an overwhelming vote of no confidence, has shifted more than £1.5 billion out of this state.

Michael Noonan recently boasted that Dublin has a pro-business government and a pro-business opposition and that not many other countries could say the same. Most other governments would be ashamed to make such a boast. Mr Noonan, like his cronies, is not renowned for his sense of national pride.

He and his cronies are place seekers, shoneens and yes people who have neither the virtue, the sense, nor the ability to govern us. In every sphere they have failed to provide leadership to our people and they have the gall to boast about it.

They continue to foist the dictats

of the EEC upon us while the agricultural sector, like other sectors of the economy, is belatedly beginning to view EEC membership as damaging. They sign the Single European Act — due to go to Leinster House before Christmas — and signal the greatest single retreat from sovereignty ever made by the 26-County state.

This Act effectively binds Dublin by legal agreement to supporting a NATO view of international affairs.

It is no surprise that the Coalition has been reluctant to call for the closure of Sellafield. It produces the plutonium for Trident missiles and the new EEC treaty commits Dublin to "maintain the technological and industrial conditions" necessary for the NATO war machine.

Sinn Fein demands the closure of Sellafield and a complete end to the dumping of radioactive waste in the Irish sea. We indict the Dublin government for its refusal to halt this infringement upon the basic rights of this nation.

We also indict Garret FitzGerald for the mess he made of the divorce referendum. His performance in that campaign was vintage FitzGerald: bumbling, no sense of timing and absolutely amateurish. He proves that the only thing that is worse than a wishy-washy pseudo-liberal is an incompetent wishy-washy pseudo-liberal.

The most telling and historic example of Dublin subservience to outside interests lies, of course, in the Hillsborough Treaty [the Anglo-Irish Accord]. A year ago this month, the news was dominated by this event. Everything was to change: nationalists could hold their heads high, the nightmare was over, we had a framework through which nationalist alienation would end.

Instead of peace — even if we restrict the meaning of the word "peace" to mean an absence of violence — this experiment has, so far at any rate, exploded in the face of its proponents, who range from the desperate political gurrriers in the Dublin establishment to their Northern representatives in the SDLP leadership, to lukewarm British godfathers whose support for and understanding of the Treaty is how far it will go in advancing their interests. The British confrontation with the loyalists, designed to split the loyalists and create a pragmatic leadership which would be bold enough to do an internal deal with the SDLP, has temporarily subsided for a number of reasons.

At our Ard-Fheis last year, before Hillsborough, I warned about a violent loyalist reaction and I pointed out that such a reaction was needed, and indeed that it would be deliberately provoked by Dublin and the SDLP, in

order to exaggerate the substance of the Treaty as far as concessions were concerned and also to camouflage its pro-British bias.

The Hillsborough Treaty, a mediocre agreement by Dublin to assist Britain to govern part of Ireland as a British colony, is not designed to redress the historic injustices perpetrated against the Irish people. It has not been worth the loyalist reaction it has provoked. There is ample evidence to link the resumed loyalist sectarian assassination campaign with Hillsborough and there is a heavy responsibility on the likes of [SDLP leader] John Hume, who has said that a united Ireland is not worth the loss of one life, to explain to the nationalist people why they are dying, why they are being intimidated, and why they are being evicted from their homes for the Hillsborough Treaty. Is the political survival of the SDLP really worth it? Does that survival justify the renewed pogroms and assassinations?

"Stop spending millions on maintaining Britain's border"

Mr Haughey says that he is going to renegotiate the Hillsborough Treaty. He needs reminding that no Irish person has the authority to negotiate or renegotiate any treaty about any issue with the British government while that government claims jurisdiction over any part of Irish national territory. While they continue to do this, Irish people, and particularly Irish political leaders, are duty-bound not to help Britain to maintain its partitionist status quo. This means that if Mr Haughey is serious he will stop spending millions of Irish taxpayers' money on maintaining Britain's border. In this regard we pay much more than the British themselves. It means that he would stop extraditing Irish citizens into the hands of the British. It means that he would send the British ambassador home and recall the Irish ambassador from London.

Sinn Fein is the only party in this country which is totally committed to securing a complete British withdrawal from Ireland. It is only a matter of time until we assist the British government in taking this inevitable course of action which will be hastened by the actions of Oglaiigh na hEireann, [the IRA] the spearhead of republican resistance in Ireland. It is only a matter of time until the British are forced to get out of our country. And when they do, then, and only then, will the basis for peace, unity, prosperity and democracy be established in our country. □

Sinn Fein debates abortion policy

SINN FEIN's policy on abortion was the second most contentious issue at its recent Ard-Fheis. Last year delegates had surprisingly – and narrowly – added the phrase: "We recognise that women have the right to choose" to existing policy. (1) It passed by 77 to 73 votes after the majority of delegates had left the conference.

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In the view of the leadership the policy became contradictory, a "fudge". The party had not been prepared and it took different positions publicly. (One delegate referred to physical attacks on Sinn Fein candidates in nationalist areas as a direct result of this decision.)

The Ard Chomhairle (executive) recommended the removal of the phrase this year. Overwhelmingly carried, the policy now reverts to pre-1985 and says:

"We are opposed to the attitudes and forces that compel women to have abortions, we are opposed to abortion as a means of birth control, but we accept the need for abortion where the woman's life is at risk or in grave danger, e.g. ectopic pregnancy and all forms of cancer."

Sile Fanning, officer for the women's department set the tone for the debate. "We export our abortion problem to Britain", she declared. "No positive alternatives to abortion are given. Women who become pregnant outside marriage are punished – unwed mothers are forced out of their homes. Young girls are accused of deliberately 'seducing' men in order to get pregnant and get the paltry government handouts available. We must continue education on this issue."

Rita O' Hare emphasized the leadership's framework, stating categorically that the "woman's life is paramount."

Broadly, three positions were put: no abortion under any circumstances; abortion under limited conditions (medical); and women's choice/decriminalization.

The whole of Ireland is dominated by the Church – the South is one of the most Roman Catholic Church dominated countries in the world. The Church is active, aggressive, and remorseless in its political campaigns, especially against women's rights. The recent defeat of the divorce bill, and the long delay in access to contraceptive facilities, show the success

the Church has in maintaining its power.

The social conditions which allow the Church's teachings to prevail are a long way from being changed. The most important factor against this is the partition of Ireland. Meanwhile, thousands of women and men suffer from the lack of individual freedom which the Church/state official morality denies them, North and South.

**"Our aim is to establish
a secular state"**

Following last year's Ard-Fheis, women in Derry set up a working group on abortion which drafted a new resolution that recognised the problems set up by last year's decision.

It stated: "Our aim is to establish a secular state. As a secular organization, we believe that the state, its constitution, its laws and criminal code should not embody the code of any particular religion, theology or morality."

"We therefore accept the individual's right to make a conscientious decision for or against abortion without coercion from any other individual or group. In the meantime, we recognize that present legislation must respect the rights and beliefs of minorities and must not criminalize those who avail themselves of abortion in accordance with their conscience. Our short-term objective is to encourage further discussion and examination of all aspects of this issue aimed at advancing the overall understanding to that end. Non-directive pregnancy counselling embodying all choices should be freely available." This was defeated, 117 for and 212 against.

Daisy Mules, a leader of the trade union department speaking for this motion, stated that the Ard Chomhairle position was "disappointing –

they have given it no time, resources or thought. We must lead the people of Ireland on this question. Freedom of choice should apply to all areas of life."

She was supported by a large number of women experienced in Sinn Fein, veterans of all its major campaigns, some of whom gave day to day counselling to prisoners' wives in the North and spoke from their real experiences.

Referring to their republican beliefs, one Belfast woman said that most people feel that life is sacred, but those here feel that other values are more important – justice and liberty for example. She felt people were using the "sanctity of life" argument as a smokescreen to hide their real views, which were that carrying through a pregnancy was a punishment. If women don't make the decisions over their own lives, who does decide? Doctors are given power over two lives.

A very small minority characterized abortion as "murder" and expressed total opposition to it. The only circumstances in which it is permissible to take a life, said one delegate, was in self-defence and in the armed struggle.

Queuing up along with all the other delegates, Gerry Adams said that last year the Ard Chomhairle had opposed the "woman's choice" not because we're anti-feminist, but because it's identified with the "abortion on demand" slogan. He stressed its contradictory character and appealed for people not to "go too far, too fast, to keep the discussion going and for others not to reject the basic policy".

Replying to the debate, Rita O' Hare objected that some delegates had "defended the leadership's proposals" for the wrong reasons. Ours is a "progressive" stand, she said. "We will be taking a strong stand on our policies. We take positions because they are right and reasoned, not because they'll win or lose votes."

In other discussions, the Ard-Fheis reaffirmed policy on the organization of childcare to encourage women to become active, especially as candidates. It voted down a proposal to end the system of positive discrimination for women at the leadership level. On gay and lesbian rights it said:

"Sinn Fein publicly demands the decriminalization of homosexual acts between men, and also calls for full equal rights for lesbian women and gay men with their heterosexual counterparts." □

1. For a report on last year's Ard-Fheis, see 'International Viewpoint' No 87, November 25, 1985.

AROUND THE WORLD



Western Europe

SOCIALIST FEMINIST FORUM

THE SECOND gathering of the European Forum of socialist feminists, following that organized in Copenhagen in 1985, took place in Hamburg, West Germany on the weekend of November 7-8.

The main theme of the weekend was "Women and restructuring labour". This was discussed from a number of different angles. The starting point, emphasized in the short descriptions of the situation in each country represented, was the massive entry of women into the labour market. At the same time it was also recognized that the crisis is forcing employers to restructure the workforce, in ways which have particular effects on women.

This relationship was discussed from a number of angles ranging from women's entry into the workforce, into what jobs, with what expectations; their role in the workforce and their relationship to it as a worker and through the family situation; to how women workers can be affected by the experiences of redundancy.

The subject was also tackled from the point of view of the relationship between women, the state and their place in the labour market, including a contribution on the work of the European parliament in this respect.

These discussions indicated the interesting work being done by those who define themselves as socialist feminists today. This label covered a broad range of women, those in parties and those not. The parties included the communist parties in a number of countries, social-democratic parties and far-left groups, including revolutionary Marxists.

The 110 women at the conference represented at least 15 different countries, although the fact that the conference was limited to one language, English, meant that there was a higher attendance from northern Europe. It was generally agreed that the experience reflected in the conference was one-sided in being overwhelmingly that of white European women, and that the particular experience of immigrants, political refugees or of Black Europeans, those who are born and bred for example in Britain and identify as Black British,

was lacking. Positive steps to overcome this are to be made for the next forum.

The planned discussion on socialist feminist perspectives on a European scale did not lead to any conclusions other than to organize a third socialist feminist forum, probably in the Spanish state in November 1987. The papers of the Hamburg conference will be published in Britain. □

France

STUDENT STRIKES

ON THURSDAY November 27, more than 500,000 university and lycee (high school) students across France demonstrated against Alain Devaquet's proposed reform of higher education, in what were the biggest student mobilizations since 1968.

Starting with several universities outside Paris, the movement spread in days, so that by Monday November 24 there was a general student strike throughout the country, with hundreds of thousands of students from the lycees joining it. Numbers on Thursday's demonstrations were estimated at 30,000 in Grenoble, 40,000 in Toulouse, 25,000 in Marseille, 30,000 in Lyon, 20,000 in Bordeaux . . . the list goes on. There were at least 300,000 on the Paris demonstration, which forced the debate on the proposals to be put back a day to Friday 28th.

Most of the students on the demonstrations were aged between 15 and 20, and for many of them it was their first political involvement. In general, the students are reluctant to see the strike as overtly "political" and are wary of possible attempts to manipulate their movement. But in the slogans on the marches and in their response to some attacks by the extreme right, the influence of the anti-racist campaign amongst youth is clear.

Devaquet's proposed law, which talks of increasing the "independence" of the universities raises the whole question of their financing. Its most striking effect would be that students who passed their Baccalaureat would no longer be automatically entitled to enter higher education, introducing a system of selection depending on the faculty applied for. There are numerous smaller attacks on the present organization of higher

education and the position of foreign students is also under threat.

In introducing the law, however, the government had not anticipated the sort of opposition it is coming up against. On Thursday night, immediately following the demonstrations the national student co-ordination met and called for the strikes to continue. Occupations of the colleges are being planned from Monday and a national demonstration has been called for December 4. An appeal for support from teaching staff has also been launched.

All the indications at the moment are that the strike is continuing to grow and that the determination of the students, as well as their confidence in their ability to throw out the new legislation, is stronger than ever. □

Mexico

DEBT RESOLUTION

IN LATIN AMERICA, October 23 was a continent-wide day of action against the debt, following a similar protest last year. In Mexico, one of the biggest Latin American debtors, there was a large-scale mobilization of trade unions and mass organizations, which held various forums, meetings and round-table discussions on this issue.

The following resolution was adopted by a trade-union panel which brought together the trade-union organizations independent of the government. It is taken from the newspaper of the Mexican section of the Fourth International, the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), *Bandera Socialista*, October 26, 1986.

On February 21, 1986, President Miguel de la Madrid proposed to bring the payment of service charges on the foreign debt into line with the country's real capacity to pay. Seven months later, he announced the renegotiations of the same debt that has increased still more and will reach 110,000 million US dollars in 1987. Mexico will then be the most heavily indebted country in the world.

This debt, and the obstinate determination to pay this astronomical sum, indicates an increasing dependence on imperialism; a policy that means lowering workers' real wages; an official rate of 15 per cent unemployment; a constant increase in inflation; rising prices for goods and services;

decreasing social spending on health, education, housing; attacks against the workers; brutal attacks on trade-union rights; and cuts in social benefits.

The model of development chosen by the government, so-called industrial reconversion, has simply meant redundancies and plant closures by claiming that modernization inevitably throws thousands of workers onto the streets. There are many different examples: the steel plants of Monterey, Dina, Acros, Aeromexico, Renault, Ficar and so on. This has been accomplished by a so-called reconversion, meaning the super-exploitation of the workforce and changes in the production process with the stated aim of increasing productivity. To this should be added the continued rejection of any increase in wages and social benefits.

What is more, it should be emphasized that many public and private companies, with the complicity of corrupt trade unionists and official factory inspectors, have used these redundancies to get rid of independent trade unions, leaders of democratic organizations and collective contracts. The organizations taking part in the trade-union panel propose to the peoples', peasants' and trade-union organizations to join in the battle for the following objectives:

- * a policy that gets the country out of the crisis and which therefore suspends obligatory payment of the foreign debt and interest payments;

- * an emergency wage rise of 50 per cent and the establishment of a sliding scale of wages; against redundancies and factory closures; for 56 hours pay for a 40-hour week and unemployment insurance;

- * respect for collective agreements and trade unions;

- * respect for the workers' rights guaranteed by the constitution. □

Book review

MEMOIRS

MEMOIRS of a Radical Rank and Filer by Ben Stone, 7.95 dollars, Prometheus Press, Box 318, Gracie Station, New York 10028. 188 pages (Reviewed by Gerry Foley).

A long-time member of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has published memoirs covering the decade of the 1940s and 1950s in the history of the Trotskyist movement in the United States. The book helps to fill a gap by giving a personal account of part of the all-too-thin generation that maintained the continuity of the American radical movement between the upsurge of the 1930s and the new waves of radicali-

zation that began in the 1960s. The author, Ben Stone, also writes about one of the more notable radical labor leaders in recent times, a leader of the painters' union in San Francisco who was assassinated.

The book offers a number of personal portraits of rank-and-file activists, as well as of the leaders that inspired them. In that respect, it is rather in the tradition of a work like the biographies of the Swedish left socialist and communist leader, Zeth Hoglund, especially the volume entitled *De Haerlige tidet (The Glorious Time)*, which tried to do justice to the many people who had to strive and sacrifice to build a party of working people, a new historical type.

Stone also gives some interesting vignettes of circumstances of poor Jews on New York's Lower East Side. □

Guatemala

URNG COMMUNIQUE

VINICIO CERESO, *Christian-democratic president of Guatemala, has just rejected any perspective of dialogue with the Guatemalan revolutionaries regrouped in the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG). By demanding as a precondition for any discussion that the revolutionaries lay down their arms — which they, of course, categorically refuse to do — the government is driving towards a purely military solution.*

Cereso is in an uncomfortable position, caught between the democratic aspirations of a reinvigorated mass movement (see International Viewpoint No. 106, October 12, 1986), and the intransigence of a military hierarchy that considers any negotiations with the insurgents would be a de facto recognition of the guerrillas and a betrayal of the army. The following communique from the URNG was put out at the end of October.

To the people of Guatemala and to international public opinion: After ten months of a new civilian government, it is necessary to demand without delay that the president keeps to his promises made during the election campaign. The time has come not to present successes or spectacular results, but the political guidelines that the government intends to follow.

Proclaiming with a big fanfare the proposal to begin a process of democratization is not enough to get such a proclamation translated into governmental policies and measures.

Far from having seen changes in the power structures and the real decision-making centres [the army], there has been growing repression against the civil population. Families' standard of living have deteriorated alarmingly, all sorts of obstacles have been put in the way of trade-union freedom, the various churches have been ignored when they have called for changes in the repressive forces, the disappearances and assassinations continue and thousands of refugees are still stranded in other countries with no hope of return.

The military high command, with the agreement of the government, is looking for a military solution, trying to annihilate the revolutionary movement and terrorize the population. In the face of this political extremism, the revolutionary forces of the URNG have had to maintain their military activity.

Instead of putting all its efforts into establishing real democracy, the government is content to reiterate its appeals for the laying down of arms. But this has already lasted too long and the people cannot wait forever.

Once more, the URNG reaffirms its political will for dialogue and discussion on the minimal condition of a democratic process. We equally emphasize that there exists the possibility of a real political solution, but in any event that is not the path the government is taking. □

AL-MITRAQA: Revolutionary communist review for the Arab region. Issue 3 out now (April-September 1986). Contents include: The crisis of the PLO a balance sheet; Dossier on Islamic Fundamentalism; The new programme of the CP of the USSR.

Yearly subscription (3 issues), 50FF; 1 issue 12FF. Write to PEC, 2 rue Richard-Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France.



Outpouring of support for FSLN

CELEBRATIONS of the anniversary of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) on November 8 were an impressive display of mass support for the beleaguered revolutionary government. Alain Krivine, a leader of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), attended the ceremonies and gave the following interview on his return to the LCR's newspaper *Rouge*. [The text has been shortened slightly for space reasons.]

Question. How do you explain the unprecedented mobilization on November 8?

Answer. I think that the Sandinista leadership had several objectives. First of all, in stressing the continuity of the FSLN's struggle — from the guerrilla war against Somoza to the seizure of power and to the present struggle to reconstruct a country at war — in putting forward the figure of Carlos Fonseca, the FSLN radicalized its language. It made the link between the revolutionary nationalism of Sandino, the fight against imperialism, and the revolutionary Marxism with which Fonseca identified.

The central message of November 8 was in the slogans referring to the alliance between the working class and the poor peasantry as the pivot of the revolution. This "class-struggle" language was new.

Secondly, in view of the state of war that the country is experiencing, bringing out such a mass mobilization had the value of being a test. There were half a million people in the Plaza de la Revolucion. Nothing like this has been seen since 1984, at the time of the elections!

In spite of all that, from 6.00 in the morning, thousands of people walked on foot from their neighborhoods and workplaces and converged on the Plaza. Buses brought peasants from every corner of the country. By 10.00 am, a vast crowd was listening in blazing sunlight to Comandante Daniel Ortega. An American Vietnam war veteran also spoke, along with Captain Sankara, president of Burkina Faso. To shouts of "No pasaran!" ("They shall not pass!"), the army, military service conscripts, reservists (workers and peasants) and the militia marched on the Plaza.

This demonstration of the power of the Sandinista People's Army was the third objective. Defence organization, still based on arming and involving the people, has made major strides in the past two years. This

new force has succeeded in striking grave blows to the contras, who are supposed to have lost 12 thousand men since 1979. At present, the contras suffer six casualties for every one suffered by the Sandinista army.

This is why the mercenaries are changing their tactics again. They are going back to ambushes aimed at Sandinista leaders or those who work with them in order to sow panic. But they are trying at any cost to avoid the army.

Q. What is the state of the Sandinista party today?

A. The FSLN also wanted to demonstrate its role as a vanguard party. It observes very strict criteria for recruitment, demanding as much from members today as it did of its members in the bloody years of the dictatorship. There must be about 12 thousand "candidates" and barely a few thousand full members. On November 8, 700 were taken into the party in Managua alone. But that was exceptional.

I also want to point out that one of the Front's objectives was, in the ceremonies, to reaffirm its pluralist commitment, its international non-alignment, and to demonstrate once again the power of solidarity. One hundred and fifty parties responded. Besides the communist parties of three continents, leaders of the Socialist International were present, as well as many revolutionary organizations.

Several Fourth Internationalist organizations were invited, including the LCR, our comrades of the Mexican Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Action of the United States. Including the LCR and Democrazia Proletaria of Italy in the conference of delegates of the communist parties and the FSLN leadership was a deliberate choice.

In this area, the Front's line has not changed — no exclusionism against any who support the revolution;

total pluralism regarding the Nicaraguan parties, so long as they do not openly support the contras! While it is true that *La Prensa* remains closed, I attended debates in the National Assembly (which were broadcast over TV) where the opposition continued to enjoy equal speaking time with the FSLN!

The ban on strikes is not being enforced any more now than it was in 1982. Social conflicts are not repressed.

Q. What changes did you notice in the Nicaraguan situation?

A. We should not try to play down the country's enormous difficulties. The war is absorbing 60 per cent of the budget and a lot of energy. There is a general decline in the standard of living, and it is the workers and poor peasants most of all who are feeling the weight of the crisis. Buying power has dropped 20 per cent in one year.

Outside the war zones, supply is more and more difficult. The parallel market, the black market, is continuing to grow.

Continuing to try to solve the problems of production and those of the peasantry, the FSLN has resumed distributions of land in the form of individual titles. This retreat seems politically and economically unavoidable, but it is dangerous in the longer term.

Somozaism left a heritage of bureaucratic behavior, a taste for privileges and patronage. These traits, unfortunately, are being encouraged by the present difficulties and scarcity. The lack of technical cadres makes it possible for those remaining to hold onto big salaries and privileges. The technical incompetence of ex-guerrillas turned administrators or heads of services favors abuses. This is one of the problems of a revolution in an underdeveloped country. The FSLN leadership is aware of that. It is denouncing such behavior and punishing it as much as is possible. Obviously such good intentions run up against weariness and discontent. But the Nicaraguan people don't want Somozaism anymore. They line up behind the FSLN against any possible invasion.

This is a unique experiment. In these difficult conditions, the Sandinista revolution is maintaining its original character, its democratic and internationalist nature. More than ever, it deserves our support. The Nicaraguan people and their leadership are aware of the continental and international implications of their struggle against imperialism. The price that has to be paid is enormous, and our efforts have to be worthy of this exemplary struggle. □