

International VIEWPOINT

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WITHIN no more than a few hours of the election results being declared, it was clear that Thatcher was heading for another victory. Predictions — or hopes — of at least a hung parliament or a greatly reduced Tory majority were quickly dispelled.

The Tories vote in percentage terms hardly changed from the election of 1983, and although they lost 22 members of parliament (MPs), they still retain a majority of 102 seats. The Labour Party (LP) made a gain of 20 seats, pushing up their share of the vote from 27.5% in 1983 to 30.8% — winning one and a half million additional voters (see table). Although Labour's vote still remains below the 1979 level of 36.9%, it is the first increase in their vote since 1964.

The disparity between the overall increase in the Labour vote and the small number of additional seats the party won reflects the fact that these votes were won in the most deprived areas, where Labour's vote is already strong. (The bizarre electoral system of electing the first-past-the-post in each constituency means that such votes are literally "lost" in terms of seats.)

The third major force on the political scene, the SDP/Liberal Alliance were expecting to make major gains in this election and hoping to take over from Labour as the main opposition. In fact, their vote decreased. They lost one seat, although in general their vote held up in the commuter-belts and the gentrified country areas in the south of England.

Massive defeat for the Alliance

It was a massive defeat for this coalition, and has caused an almighty political crisis, with public rows exploding almost before the results were announced around whether the two Alliance parties should fuse. This proposal could mean the Alliance simply becoming a bigger version of the Liberal Party, losing its role as an electoral force that can block Labour coming to power. But, for now, the Alliance still performs this important function, with the additional plus of helping to push Labour's leaders rightwards in the competition for votes.

In spite of the overall election result, there were some glimmers of hope for the left in the north of Ireland and Scotland. Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams won a re-

Tory "landslide" with only 42 per cent of the vote

BRITAIN'S LABOUR movement was dealt a severe blow with the re-election of the Tory government for a third term in the June general election.

While very few people were predicting that the Labour Party would make a comeback in this election, the size of the Tory majority will undoubtedly increase demoralization and the no-hope atmosphere inside the workers' movement, still reeling from the defeats suffered by the miners and printers in the last few years.

HILARY ELEANOR

sounding victory in West Belfast (see the following article). In Scotland, the Tories were decimated, with only 24% of the vote and their seats slashed from 21 to 10. Here, Labour won 50 of the 72 Scottish parliamentary seats. The Scottish National Party gained three seats from the Tories, but lost two to Labour.

But these particular results must be seen in the context of the specific regional political conditions, and the devastating impact of the Tories' economic policies on unemployment and poverty there.¹

The fight for self-determination and national liberation is absolutely central if the working class and oppressed are to make any headway.

Scotland, for example, is to be the testing ground for a new piece of legislation that the Tories rushed through parliament in the week before the election, the Abolition of Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill. This intends to replace local authority rates in Scotland in 1989 with a flat-rate

"community charge" — every adult will be liable to pay the same amount. If implemented, this poll tax will hit the poor, unemployed, young adults and pensioners the hardest. People who cannot afford to pay the tax will lose their right to vote.²

This vicious piece of legislation, which the Tories intend to extend to England and Wales, will reinforce the "dual society" policies of Thatcher, increasing the gap between the haves and the have nots. This is just one reason for the Tories electoral debacle in Scotland, where demands for an independent Scottish Assembly are gaining ground.

Wales also saw the Tory vote slump, with swings to Labour of over 10% in many seats since 1983. Labour won three South Wales constituencies, and the Welsh nationalist party — Plaid Cymru — won a seat in north Wales from the Tories.

Tremendous divergences in voting

The national averages of the seats won in the election, while discouraging, are very misleading. There were tremendous divergences in voting in different areas of the country. The "north-south" divide corre-

1. For a detailed look at the Tories' economic policies and their effects on the working class and impoverished, see the article by Hilary Eleanor, "After eight years of the 'Thatcher revolution'", IV 121, June 1, 1987.

Thanks are due for help in preparing this article to comrades supporting the British journals *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Outlook*.

2. From Labour Research, June 1987, Vol. 76, No. 6.

Number of seats won 1987/1983 (percentage of the vote in italics)

	1987	1983	Change
Tory	375 42.3%	397 42.4%	-22 -0.1%
Labour	229 30.8%	209 27.5%	+20 +3.3%
Alliance	22 22.6%	23 25.4%	-1 -2.8%
Nationalist	6 1.7%	4 1.6%	+2 +0.1%
Other	17 2.6%	18 3.2%	-1 0.6%

sponds largely to a geographical concentration of votes, which is based on social and class differences. Labour increased its vote in this election massively in the north of England, as well as Scotland and Wales, with the Tory vote increasing particularly in London and the south.

In London, Labour lost three seats despite increasing its overall vote there very slightly. On the other hand, the Tories were wiped out in major cities like Manchester, Newcastle, Liverpool and Leicester. There are now no Tory MPs at all in these cities, or in Glasgow in Scotland. At the same time the Conservatives consolidated their votes in some important sectors of the working class in the south-east, south-west and East Anglia.

Labour's result in Liverpool, in particular, was striking. After years of witch-hunts by both the media and the Labour leadership against the left-wing *Militant* tendency that dominates the Liverpool Labour Party, MP Terry Fields substantially increased his majority. Another MP supporting *Militant*, Pat Wall, won a previously Tory-held seat. Campaign Group MP Eric Heffer also did well in Liverpool, taking 65% of the vote — a swing of 9% to Labour.

In the mining areas, the Labour majorities were substantially increased. Alan Meale even won in the Nottinghamshire constituency of Mansfield, where the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers (a right-wing split from the National Union of Mineworkers) had called for a vote against Labour.

Above all else, this election was an expression of the deepening process of class polarization in Britain today, with the "middle-of-the-road" Alliance being squeezed between Labour and Tory. But how is it that the Tories were able to win such a resounding victory in the face of

generally unpopular policies of mass unemployment, nuclear re-armament, cuts in social services and so on?

The answer is that they were able to convince a section of employed workers in areas of relative prosperity that they could increase their standard of living under the Conservatives. Tax reductions and incentives have been popular among some groups of workers. And by and large, the Tories have won the political argument on the economy. During the election, they managed to successfully portray Labour as a party that would increase taxes and inflation. Labour's campaign was unable to reverse the Tory strategy of creating and deepening divisions inside the workers' movement.

An enormous reactionary offensive

In addition, the ruling class whipped up an enormous reactionary offensive before the election, and put all its resources into securing a Conservative victory at any cost. Despite the Labour leadership's rightward policy shift, and its attempts to present itself as a "respectable" alternative government, there was no section of the bourgeoisie favouring the election of a Labour government.

Vital sections of the capitalist class, especially those in finance and banking, have been doing very well under the Tories. Industrial productivity has increased; the rate of exploitation of the workers has risen. The Labour Party, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, is still tainted by "Bennism" — the heterogeneous left current around Tony Benn that challenged the rightwing labour leadership's policies. Although the composition and focus of this left opposition has changed since the early 1980s, it still re-

mains a significant minority current and represents a potential danger to the ruling class.

The determination of the bosses' to secure a Tory victory and the intensity of the media pro-Tory campaign meant that a substantial part of the Alliance vote went to the Tories. This election disproved the theses that the Alliance vote was basically an "anti-Tory" or "left of centre" vote, as expounded by the protagonists of tactical voting to get the Tories out.

Social differentiations in the voting patterns were marked. Young people between the ages of 18 and 25 were the only age group in which Labour beat the Tories. Overall, Labour won about 39% of the youth vote, as opposed to 36% for the Tories. The gender gap among young voters was interesting. While more young men voted Tory than Labour (42% to 31%), among young women the Labour lead was astonishing: 42% for Labour and only 31% for the Tories. This result seems to reflect a specific radicalization of young women around a wide range of social issues.

Labour's overall gain among women was 4.5%, as opposed to 2% among men. Despite this, the Labour campaign fell down badly in attracting women's votes. In fact, the Alliance made the theme of women's rights more prominent in its campaign than Labour did. They had more women candidates than Labour (although, of course, a lot less were elected).

One of the Alliance proposals, for example, was that all public bodies should have a 50% female composition within ten years. The lack of campaigning on issues facing women by the Labour leadership undoubtedly cost the party many votes.

The election of four Black Labour MPs in June was a major breakthrough for Black people and for the working class. It was also an historic event — there have previously been only two Black MPs elected in parliamentary history. Dianne Abbott will be the first Black woman MP to take a seat in Westminster.

This success was due to the self-organization of Black people in the LP — in national and local Black Sections — which have been banned and witch-hunted by the party's leaders. The victory for Bernie Grant in London's Tottenham constituency was a particular boost. He had been subject to a national media campaign against him when he was the local council leader, after Black youth in the area rebelled against police harassment and he spoke out on their behalf. This victory will aid the fight to link workers' struggles and the struggle against state racism and racism in the labour movement itself.

Nationally, the election campaign that the Labour Party waged was one of the slickest and most "professional" waged for decades. Concentrating on TV presentation, and the presidential-style build up of Labour leader Neil Kinnock, it owed its inspiration not to socialism, but to American-style packaged politics. One thing it



was not radical. And although Labour would have won a vote for the glossiest campaign, the fact of the four previous years of internal witch-hunting against the left in the party, and the shift of policies to the right took their toll.

Labour's election manifesto was even less radical than in 1974, when they promised a "fundamental shift in power and wealth to working people and their families." It was also a campaign controlled very tightly from the top, with left-wingers like Arthur Scargill and Campaign Group MP Dennis Skinner being "warned off" from speaking on public platforms during the four weeks of campaigning.

The "moderate" and rightwing character of the campaign disarmed Labour in the face of the Tories attacks. The debate on the issue of defence is a good example. Kinnock adopted the strategy of saying as little about the question as possible, while the Tories hammered the theme that Labour's defence policies would "leave Britain defenceless".

Labour's pledge to get rid of all US-run nuclear bases cut little ice, accompanied as it is with the Labour leadership's support for NATO and for the strengthening of conventional armed forces.

There was no Labour attack around the £15,000 million the Tories wasted on the Trident nuclear submarine system. Or against the thousands of millions still being poured into the "defence" of the Malvinas islands. We can expect that one of the Labour right's main objectives now will be to reverse Labour's non-nuclear defence policy, which they consider to be a major vote-loser.

But despite the lack of any references to socialism, or any real anti-capitalist proposals, there is no doubt that the campaign strengthened the authority of Kinnock as leader of the LP. The conclusion that many people in the Labour Party will draw is that the campaign worked and was credible. It won votes and seats. It will be fairly easy for the Labour leaders to present the outcome as a "first step" to defeating the Tories.

Increased difficulties for the left

Labour's rightwingers will draw the conclusion that the campaign was along the right lines, but that Labour's defeat was due to the "loony left", especially in London where Labour did badly in terms of seats. In the capital the LP left controls a number of local councils, which have implemented wide-ranging anti-sexist, anti-racist policies as well as initiatives for wider community control over local affairs.

This is going to increase the difficulties for militants in the labour movement, and lead to new attempts to shift policies rightwards and further marginalize the left. This campaign has already got off the ground,

with proposals going to the Labour and trade-union conferences in the coming months to reverse the constitutional gains that improved the democratic functioning of the LP. Selection of parliamentary candidates by a postal ballot of all members, rather than by local LP management committees, seems likely to be the first move.

One paradox of the whole situation is that there are now more leftwing Labour MPs in parliament. The election of Ken Livingstone, the former leader of the Greater London Council, and other leaders of the fight for popular, democratic local government — plus the new group of Black MPs — will be important factors affecting the composition and politics of the parliamentary left.

Crucial task now is to organize the fightback

Thatcher's election victory and the detailed results of the poll in many ways sum up the political situation facing Britain's workers, unemployed, poor and oppressed today. The defeat of the 1984-85

miners' strike laid a certain basis for the Tories' victory, as well as the subsequent defeats suffered by organized labour in its fight to defend jobs and communities. These setbacks have strengthened the grip of the right wing in the trade-union movement and the Labour bureaucracy as a whole.

However, with the election just out of the way, it is hardly credible for the rightwing trade-union and Labour leaders to argue for workers "not to rock the boat" and to wait for the return of a Labour government. Renewed attacks on the working class — whether they be privatization, closures and redundancies or attacks on the living standards of the wageless — will have to be fought now. There will be no alternative but defeat.

Although the working people of Britain have taken some extremely hard knocks in the past few years, they have not been crushed. Workers' organizations, though weakened, battered and bruised, are still intact.

The crucial task now is to organize a fightback against the third Thatcher government. ☆

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The legacy of Antonio Gramsci

whose work has often been used to attack the ideas of Revolutionary Marxism. In his article *Luxemburg and Lenin* Paul Leblanc refutes many of the misconceptions that have dogged Luxemburg's work and explores more deeply the perceptiveness of her views on the revolutionary organization and consciousness of the vanguard.

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THE SUMMER 1987 issue of the English language theoretical review of the Fourth International, *International Marxist Review*, is now available.

IN THIS ISSUE

- Much has recently been written, particularly by the Italian PCI, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Antonio Gramsci's death. In his article *Gramsci's Marxism* Livio Maitan argues that, as the PCI's project pushes further and further to the right, they find their claimed continuity with Gramsci increasingly embarrassing. Maitan provides a comprehensively critical review of the man's life and ideas while insisting on the completely revolutionary core of Gramsci's work.

- Rosa Luxemburg is another figure

Sinn Fein weathers bourgeois offensive

ALTHOUGH Northern Ireland is legally part of the United Kingdom, once again the election here had virtually nothing to do with the election in the rest of the UK territory. The competition was not between the Conservative and Labour parties. Neither exists.

Politically, the most important contest was between two Irish nationalist parties, the bourgeois Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), and the revolutionary nationalist Sinn Fein. The Unionists, who represent the community built up in Ireland by British rule, ran a single slate in this election. Only in a few constituencies where the nationalist and Unionist communities are almost equal in size was there a real race between Unionists and nationalists.

GERRY FOLEY

SINN FEIN defeated a concerted attempt by the bourgeois nationalist Catholic party and Catholic Unionists to take the West Belfast seat away from its president, Gerry Adams. The revolutionary nationalist candidate got 16,862 votes, against 14,641 for his SDLP rival, J.G. Hendron.

The Alliance Party, which represents mainly well-off Catholics who accept the union with the United Kingdom, chose not to run a candidate of its own. Although it rejects the SDLP as a "sectarian" (that is, Catholic communalist) party, it was obviously ready to team up with the bourgeois nationalist party to defeat Sinn Fein.

In 1983, the anti-Sinn Fein vote was split by Gerry Fitt, an old nationalist politician who moved to the right. He got about 10,000 votes, but retired after the election to the British House of Lords and BBC personality programs.

Result not a foregone conclusion

The SDLP threw a good part of its notably swelled resources behind the effort to oust Adams. It ostentatiously opened a headquarters and "advice center" in the area, promising to help the local people with their problems. It failed, however, even to recapture much of Fitt's vote, increasing its total only by 3,707 votes.

In fact, the moderate combination against Adams seems to have been a bit too obvious. The flashy opening of the SDLP's "advice center" raised questions about where the party had been before the elections. Also, an assassination attempt on a local Republican leader, Alex Maskey,

shortly before the vote was an incentive to militant nationalists to mobilize for the election.

Nonetheless, in its assessment of the election results, the Sinn Fein paper, *An Phoblacht*, pointed out that the result in West Belfast was not a foregone conclusion. "High unemployment and poor housing breed apathy, not political motivation. And recent rioting and hijackings antagonized many people around the Falls Road." It attributed the Sinn Fein victory largely to "a very good election team which had done its homework well in advance of the elections." In fact, Sinn Fein ran a well organized and highly motivated campaign in the area.

The West Belfast election was decisive for Sinn Fein and for the struggle of the oppressed Catholic population. Sinn Fein's strongest organization and political leadership are based there. The gains of the H-Block movement and the politicalization of the Republican movement are most concentrated in this densely populated Catholic ghetto.

People's Democracy, the Irish section of the Fourth International, participated in the Sinn Fein campaign in West Belfast. It argued for a presenting a program that could cut further into the electoral base of the SDLP, focusing on discrimination against Catholics. It argued against a defensive strategy based only on holding "the Republican vote."

Although, Sinn Fein held most of the gains it made during the H-Block movement, it continued to suffer a loss of momentum and erosion in this election. The SDLP gained in most places. What is more, the bourgeois party further consolidated itself as the dominant nationalist par-

ty in important parts of Northern Ireland. In numerical terms, the Sinn Fein vote went down from 102,601 in 1983 to 83,388; while, the SDLP vote went up from 137,012 to 158,087.

The SDLP now has three MPs, as against one for Sinn Fein, whereas in 1983, it had only one elected. It won a second seat, in Newry/Armagh in the special by-elections in January 1986. This time, it had a third elected in South Down, edging out the English quasi-fascist Enoch Powell, an exotic attraction offered by the Unionists. In the latter constituency, the Sinn vote was only 2,363 against 26,579 for the SDLP candidate, Ed O'Grady.

In Newry/Armagh and South Down, a considerable part of the SDLP vote is probably a tactical vote to defeat the Unionists, since there is a close division in these constituencies between Unionists and nationalists. In fact, Sinn Fein encouraged this to some extent by proposing a pact in 1986 for dividing up constituencies with the SDLP.

SDLP support for Hillsborough agreement

The SDLP gains are more dangerous because the SDLP supports the Hillsborough Agreement between the British and Irish government, which is designed to give the "moderates" a club against the revolutionary nationalists and to allow the Dublin government to increase its collaboration with the British and Unionist repressive forces. Although Sinn Fein staved off disaster, it failed to undermine the SDLP's claim to represent the majority of the Catholic population.

Despite important advances in the H-Block campaign and after, Sinn Fein still reveals the lack of a revolutionary political strategy. The two most common explanations offered so far by Sinn Fein leaders for the stagnating vote are quite superficial. One is that more time needed is needed to build up the movement's electoral machine. The other is that the SDLP vote is a middle class vote and so can never be taken by a revolutionary party.

If the majority of the nationalist population, even in the North, were hopelessly conservative, the national struggle would have no chance of victory. Moreover, no revolutionary movement, not even one with the traditional roots of Sinn Fein, has unlimited time. Eventually, if masses of people see no way forward, they fall back into the old patterns.

The Thatcher victory in Britain and a shift of the Dublin government to the right promise stepped-up attacks on the Republican movement. If Sinn Fein continues to fail to advance, worse, it continues to lose momentum, the national struggle could face very grave political and material setbacks. The West Belfast victory has simply gained Sinn Fein time to reconsider its political strategy. ☆

Revolutionaries campaign in the Spanish elections

THE BASQUE revolutionary nationalist party, Herri Batasuna (HB), got 2% of the vote in the June 10 elections to the European parliament, gaining one seat in Strasbourg. The vote of the ruling social democratic party dropped from 44% in the 1986 legislative elections to 39%.

Thanks to its alliance with far-left forces, HB got a better result than the Basque bourgeois nationalist parties. The Euro-election coincided with elections for municipal governments and the governments of some autonomous regional authorities. The social democratic losses were most marked in the municipal elections. They held an absolute majority in only one of Spain's ten largest cities.

A disastrous action by ETA on June 19, however, cast shadow over the campaign by HB and the far left. A bomb exploded in the parking lot of a supermarket in Barcelona, killing 15 people, including two children. Mass protest demonstrations were organized, the largest one including 300,000 to 500,000 people according to the Madrid press.

Gerry Foley interviewed Jose Bikila in Paris on June 28, who describes the campaigns of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (LCR — the Fourth Internationalist organization on the Spanish-state level), and its Basque affiliate, the Liga Komunista Iraultzailea (LKI).

Q *To what extent were the LKI and the LCR able to intervene in the elections that have just been held in the Spanish state?*

A. In the election of European MPs, the most important thing was our support for Herri Batasuna (HB). We had two objectives. The first was a united response to the government's decision that the Euro-MPs should be elected on the level of the state and not the nationalities. Secondly, since Herri Batasuna's decision to run a campaign throughout the state gave us a chance to build a state-wide campaign in support of the revolutionary nationalists.

Q. *Were you able to work with Herri Batasuna in the campaign?*

A. The first contacts were not at all satisfactory. Herri Batasuna told us that it wanted a campaign run by its party in which the other parties would play a purely supporting role. We said no. Outside of Euskadi we wanted full autonomy for the support bodies formed in each nationality or region so that, based on some common

accords, there would be the possibility to take up the concrete problems in each area. Herri Batasuna thought it over and rectified its position. We then reached an agreement on a program.

It had three axes. The first was explaining the need for a Europe of the workers as opposed to a Europe of big capital, the police Europe, the Europe of NATO and of the Common Market. The second was solidarity with Euskadi, meaning not just with the fight for the democratic rights of the nation but also with the Basque national resistance. The third point was a commitment to solidarity with the workers who at the time were taking up struggles or were still fighting, or where the effects of their struggle continued.

Q. *Wasn't there a danger that such a campaign focused on the Basque national question would divert you from offering a general alternative for workers throughout the Spanish state facing the effects of the capitalist crisis?*

A. We thought that the Herri Batasuna

campaign would permit the creation of a pole of electoral regroupment for all the sectors that were fighting throughout the



Spanish state, not only against the system but also on concrete questions. That is what happened.

Many support committees organized throughout the Spanish state. They made it possible to unite revolutionary nationalist organizations in Catalonia and independents who are not in these organizations, but who thought that the time had come for a united vote against the government. This was in addition to the two key organizations on the scale of the Spanish state — the Movimiento Comunista and the LCR.

Besides this, we were able during the campaign to reach important sectors of the working class. We managed to hold rallies in factories in Madrid and Barcelona, which we were unable to do in any of our previous campaigns. The workers who attended of course asked us why we were supporting HB, which enabled us to explain the national question. But these rallies also gave us the opportunity to pose the alternative to this government.

This campaign also made it possible for us to reach out to wider sectors. For example, the meeting in Barcelona brought together 2,500 people. The meeting in Madrid also attracted 2,500, the one in Grenada, 1,500, and there were many other smaller rallies of 600 down to 100.

The solidarity vote outside Euskadi was around 120,000. If we add this to HB's vote in the Basque country, which increased to 250,000, it comes to 370,000 votes, which is a considerable vote.

Q. *How did HB's vote in Euskadi compare with the vote for the other nationalist parties?*

A. For the first time, there was a decline for nearly all the political forces except for HB. The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) suffered a debacle. The split from the PNV led by Carlos Garaikoetxea just held its vote. And the PSOE went down.

On the other hand, the PNV, which ran

in coalition with a sector of the Galician nationalist movement, still got the biggest vote in the Basque country. But it did not get a Euro-MP. Garaikoetxea's party (Eusko Alkartasuna, a split off from the PNV) got a Euro-MP thanks to its alliance with the Esquerra Catalana and with a Galician communist organization. This party made an important advance, particularly in the municipal elections, electing mayors in San Sebastián and in Vitoria, while the PNV only held on to the mayoralty of Bilbao.

On the Spanish state scale, we think that these elections were a real disaster for the government. It still has no big rival to its left or its right, but it suffered major erosion. It lost 1.5 million votes, and the impact of HB was strong. In fact, during the campaign the government was visibly nervous because of the impact that the HB campaign was having.

Q. So, if the PNV got the most votes in Euskadi but still did not get a Euro-MP, then it was the far-left vote in the rest of the Spanish state that gave HB a seat in Strasbourg.

A. Yes, of course. If HB has a deputy, it is because of the solidarity vote in the rest of the Spanish state.

Q. Did this contact with political forces in the rest of Spain have an impact on HB?

A. The campaign gave them a chance to get to know each other. We think that it may lead to a change in HB's alliances. Until now, not officially but semi-officially, it has oriented exclusively toward an alliance with radical Galician and Catalan nationalists, and also with the pro-Soviet party. In this campaign, it had a very big conflict with the Galician nationalists, who ran by themselves, and of course it had no contact with the pro-Soviets. It is to be expected that this has prompted some reflection in HB.

Q. In Navarra, which is a Basque province but not included in the autonomous Basque area,

you ran a different sort of campaign.

A. There is there a long tradition of forms of unity on the left, which have not been absorbed by Herri Batasuna, the *consejales del pueblo* [people's municipal councillors] and so on. Moreover, both the Movimiento Comunista and our party still have more substantial support there than in the Basque nation as a whole. On the basis of these two factors, we considered that in Navarra there was the possibility to run a united slate for the municipal elections and for the local parliament.

This state got a good electoral result, a very good one in the municipal elections, getting 2,300 votes in Pamplona and about 20 city council seats in about 18 municipalities — three in Tudela, for example. Two of the 20 were members of the LKI. The result for the parliament was modest, but significant: 6,800 votes.

Q. Who was in this coalition?

A. It was called *Batzarre* [assembly] — the Assembly of the Basque Left. It included the MK (the Basque Movimiento Co-

munista), the LKI and independents.

Q. Who are these independents exactly?

A. There were two broad categories, people from the old united movement in Navarra and activists in the anti-NATO movement, the women's movement and so on.

Q. The city council members are the same type, activists in the various social movements? They are based on movements?

A. Yes. They are not electoralists.

Q. So, the LKI has two council seats. Do you have a policy for local government representatives?

A. I think that a revolutionary council member can and must do two things. One, take part in all political and social struggles arising from the situation of the Basque working people. Unfortunately not a day goes by in which in one municipality or another they do not arrest and torture people, and often the local government protests, insists that the rights of the arrested person be respected.

In many towns, there are factories in crisis, factories that are throwing the workers onto the streets. I think that this is an area where a council member can propose a position of solidarity with those workers. In towns, there can be activities around ecology or the anti-nuclear struggle — the Basque people have a tradition of nuclear-free towns. There is also work that can be done in the area of fighting male chauvinist aggressions. The questions of municipal administration are more difficult, but action is possible there also.

Q. What effect has the ETA bombing in Barcelona had?

A. In the campaign itself, in the discussions that we held after the speeches, this theme came up: what would happen if ETA carried out an action with negative implications? Our position was quite clear. We consider that the existence of the violence is the direct result of

EUSKADI LUCHA



HERRI BATASUNA

TVE-2 Lunes 8 a las 18'40

tu voto

Elections bring new setback for Italian CP

FROM THE OUTSET, the June 14 parliamentary election was seen as a test of strength between the Christian Democrats and the Socialist Party, that is, between the two major formations in the five-party coalition government.

LIVIO MAITAN

THE SOCIALIST Party emerged clearly strengthened. (Its vote rose from 11.4% in the 1983 elections to 14.3%). But the Christian Democrats also managed to regain some ground, increasing their vote by 1.4%.

However, the results were distinctly unfavorable for the other coalition parties. The Partito Repubblicano Italiano (PRI) lost 1.4%. The Partito Socialdemocratico Italiano (PSDI) dropped by 1.1%, and the Partito Liberale Italiano (PLI) by 0.8%. The Socialist Party, therefore, has a stronger hand to play in negotiations, and for its customary methods of bluff and blackmail.

Maneuvers to shift the balance of power

It was not by chance that the PSI's number two, Claudio Martelli, told the press that "for the first time there is a left majority in parliament." In fact, while the five-party coalition as a whole went up from 56.4% to 57.4%, if you add the deputies of the Communist Party (PCI), the PSI, the PSDI, the Radical Party (PR), the Greens and Democrazia Proletaria (DP), you get a parliamentary majority.

Needless to say, this is a purely theoretical possibility. Martelli himself made it clear in his interview that there was no question of the PCI coming into the government.

So it is likely that in the coming weeks we will see large and small maneuvers designed in the last analysis to shift the distribution of ministerial posts — and more generally the division of the fruits of power — more in favor of one or other of the



the national oppression of Euskadi. Therefore, we will never support police or political repression in response to the actions of the armed activists.

What is more, we think that this violence will disappear only with the national liberation of Euskadi. And therefore, we have always said that the continuation of the violence is the responsibility of the government.

In this campaign, we said many times that we disagreed with actions by ETA, and that if there were actions with which we disagreed, we would explain why. This action had quite negative effects for the campaign itself and for the political situation.

No one is more grieved by deaths than we. We are grieved especially by deaths of workers. And we are doubly grieved when these deaths are manipulated by this government.

The government has utilized this action to overcome the erosion it suffered in these elections. It was an action with a tragic human cost and high political costs. And it was also an action, and I am choosing my words carefully, that was quite disloyal to all those in Catalonia who defended HB's campaign. And I say "disloyal" because it was precisely in Catalonia where HB got most votes.

Q. How do you evaluate the protest demonstration against the bombing?

A. It included hundreds of thousands. Such a large demonstration must have had a deep social impact. I think that the very fact that ETA felt obliged to make a public self-criticism reflects the fact that they have realized the magnitude of their blunder.

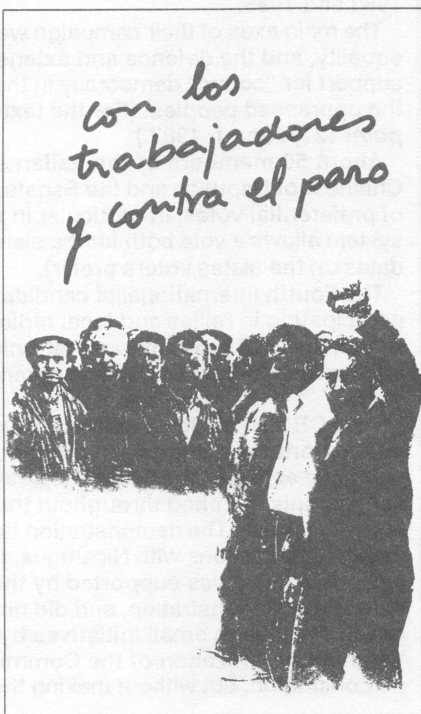
I sincerely hope that the *compañeros* of ETA and Herri Batasuna go beyond a mere self-criticism about a wrong choice of a target, that they will also make a self-criticism based on political considerations about how we must win all the workers of the Spanish state and of the oppressed nations for an overall struggle against the government.

Q. These are two opposite examples aren't they, a positive example and a negative example?

A. Yes. I would cite the election campaign as a positive example, and also the position that HB took before the campaign in solidarity with the workers at Reinosa. [On the Reinosa struggle, see IV 121.]

Q. What impact has the backlash from this action had on the LKI and the LCR?

A. Today, the entire bourgeoisie, the nationalist bourgeois and the Spanish state bourgeoisie, as well as the reformists, have taken this excuse to jump on us like wolves demanding explanations and arguing that we are responsible. I have been abroad for a week. But I have received information here that there have been slogans on the walls saying "The MK and the LCR supported ETA, now they have to pay, pay with their lives." There have been threats and all sorts of pressures. ☆



The vote for the Chamber of Deputies

	1987 Votes	% Seats	1983 % Seats	1983 % Seats
PCI	10,249,690	26.6	177	29.9
DC	13,231,960	34.3	234	32.9
PSI	5,501,980	14.3	94	11.5
MSI	2,282,212	5.9	35	6.8
PRI	1,428,358	3.7	21	5.1
PSDI	1,140,086	3.0	17	4.1
PLI	810,961	2.1	11	2.9
P. Rad.*	987,675	2.6	13	2.2
DP	642,021	1.7	8	1.5
Greens	969,534	2.5	13	—
Others	1,328,577	—	7	3.1
TOTALS	38,573,054	—	630	—

* The Radical Party, a protest party.

two major parties in the coalition.

The outstanding result of the elections, however, was the defeat of the PCI. In the 1984 European elections (which were held in exceptional conditions in some respects) the PCI got 34.5% of the vote, as opposed to 29.9% the 1983 legislative elections. Two years ago, in the regional elections, its vote was down to 28.9%. Now it has dropped further to 26.6%, which is more or less the level it had 20 years ago.

This setback is all the more grave inasmuch as the PCI's vote losses were most pronounced in the big cities and in the working-class and popular neighborhoods. For example in Milan, the decline was 4.07%.

Paying the price for moderate opposition

The PCI has paid the price for its policy of partial and moderate opposition to the five-party government, and for its failure to lead a real fightback to the bosses' offensive. It has tied itself in knots trying to extend a hand in every direction. At times it has taken conflicting, if not directly opposing, positions.

For example, on the occasion of the signing of national contracts for certain categories of workers, *L'Unita*, the PCI daily, approved the decisions of the bureaucratic union leaderships. But when the workers began to express their discontent over the content of the contracts, it largely echoed their criticisms.

Another more glaring example is the case of the teachers' unions. With the agreement of the confederal leaderships, they signed a contract that provoked a very sharp reaction. Hundreds of rank-and-file committees were formed in many cities.

At the beginning, *L'Unita* presented the contract in a favorable light. Then, little by little, it assumed a pose of sympathy for the rank-and-file committees.

Moreover, the accommodating attitude of the PCI was reflected in the makeup of its electoral slates. Alongside workers, intellectuals and party activists, it included independents of various hues, even representatives of not exactly proletarian strata. The most glaring case was that of the financier

right.

All of this was reflected at the meeting of the Central Committee held after the elections, and in particular in the election

Communist Party lost votes to DP and Greens

of Achille Occhetto to the post of deputy secretary. Occhetto is looking more and more likely to succeed the present secretary, Alessandro Natta, in a not very distant future. The right opposed him both in the National Leadership (11 votes against, 38 for) and in the Central Committee (194 votes for, 41 against and 22 abstentions).

Although an overall assessment will be possible only after a detailed analysis of the results, it is clear that the PCI lost votes not only to Democrazia Proletaria (which gained slightly, by 0.2%, increasing its deputies from seven to eight), but to the Greens, who in their first campaign got a rather impressive vote (2.5% — 13 deputies and one senator).

Both the DP vote and that of the Greens — to a lesser extent — partially reflected a radicalization and a spirit of opposition that have developed in the country against the anti-popular offensive being waged by the ruling class and its government. In other words, the social and political struggles of the last two years have also had an impact on the pattern of voting and parliamentary representation. ☆

1. See *International Viewpoint* 99, May 19, 1986.

The LCR and DP campaign

FOR THE June elections, Democrazia Proletaria (DP) and the Lega Comunista Rivoluzionaria (LCR), Italian section of the Fourth International, formed an alliance in line with the accords reached between these two organizations in 1983 and 1985.

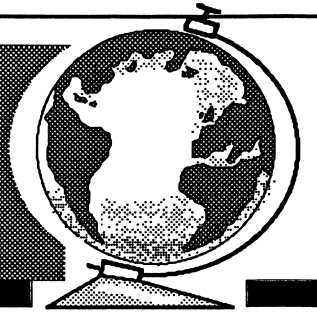
The main axes of their campaign were around the right to a job, healthcare, equality, and the defence and extension of democratic rights, as well as support for "council democracy in the unions" and peace and solidarity with the oppressed peoples. (For the text of the accord, see *International Viewpoint* 121, June 1, 1987.)

About 50 members of the Italian section ran on the joint slates for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and in most cases got a large number of preferential votes, in particular in Rome, Turin, Genoa and Taranto. (The system allows a vote both for the slate and then an indication of those candidates on the slates voters prefer.)

The Fourth Internationalist candidates conducted a very active campaign, participating in rallies and local radio programs. For example, on May 24 in Rome, the LCR brought together union activists, factory council delegates and representatives of political organizations to discuss the workers' struggles.

The LCR also made an extensive and important contribution to building the anti-imperialist demonstration that took place in Venice on the eve of the summit meeting of the world's top seven industrialized countries. Five thousand people marched throughout the city, which was virtually occupied by security forces. The demonstration had been initiated by anti-imperialist solidarity organizations with Nicaragua, the struggle of the Blacks in South Africa and so on. It was supported by the LCR and DP. The PCI did not participate in the demonstration, and did not report it in its newspaper (although it gave coverage to small initiatives by the Radical Party in Rome). Only the Venetian organization of the Communist Youth associated itself with the demonstration, but without making the least practical contribution. ☆

AROUND THE WORLD



EAST GERMANY

Youth unrest

SHARP CLASHES occurred for three nights running in East Berlin over the Whitsuntide holiday [the weekend of June 7] between East German police and up to 3,000 youth. The spark was a rock concert held in the western part of the city, in front of the Reichstag building, right up against the Berlin wall. The following facts are clear from the reports:

Clearly this was by no means a gathering of particularly political youth. Those arrested by the People's Police reportedly had no "relevant records." The makeup of the demonstration was a cross-section of East German youth, according to various reports from Western correspondents and the conclusions of discussions in East Berlin reported by TAZ [an independent left daily].

The origin of the "protests" was the simple wish of East German youth to listen to the rock concern undisturbed and near the wall. The politicization of these nightly assemblies was primarily the result of the attacks of club-wielding People's Police on the young people, and of the many arrests that were made.

But these gatherings were very quickly transformed into political protests. The course and content of the protests indicates that a basis had already built up for the political attitude that came to be expressed and the readiness to protest. Obviously this was part of a long process of ferment and an increased self-awareness among East German youth.

The content of the political protests ("The wall has to go," "We want Gorbachev") and frequent singing of the "relevant" verses of the Internationale ("...the Internationale fights for human rights...") made it impossible to defame these protests as "rightist." Rather, we must support the demands of the East German youth and defend them against the repression of the East German bureaucracy.

There is also another reason why the politicians of The Turn [to austerity] here and the cold-warriors have no grounds for identifying with these protests. While they are shedding crocodile tears about the "stone-age structures of actually existing socialism," they have been sending their civil-war police into more brutal attacks against

peaceful protesters in West Berlin/Kreuzberg, Wakersdorf and Mutlangen than those in which the People's Police engaged in this time. It hardly befits them to complain about a lack of democratic rights in East Germany on this occasion, when they banned demonstrations during Reagan's visit.

The events in East Berlin point up once again the contradictions that mark the bureaucratic regimes in East Europe today. They are shown not only in the fact that the youth took a partly positive and partly ironic attitude toward Gorbachev and his policy of "restructuring" [*Perestroika*].

The Soviet Foreign Ministry made a statement on these events that must have sounded like a provocation in the ears of the Honnecker gang. "Often one is even envious, seeing how high-spirited and joyful young people are in the stadiums and also on the streets." The shouts of the protesting East German youth of "We want Gorbachev" did "not at all upset" the Soviet Foreign Ministry. In fact, there was even "cause for rejoicing."

The spokesperson of the Soviet Foreign Ministry concluded by saying, "The leadership and people of East German fully support the policy of *perestroika*." The actual events show that over Whitsuntide, the demonstrating youth in East Berlin spoke out for a restructuring of their society, oriented first of all toward satisfying their own justified interests and elementary political needs.

The East German bureaucracy responded to this desire for a *perestroika* in its accustomed way — with clubs, arrests and taking names. ★

[From an article by Winfried Wolf, in the June 18 issue of *Sozialistische Zeitung*.]

WEST GERMANY

Solidarity groups meet

MANY HUNDREDS of activists in committees working in solidarity with the under-developed countries met in West Germany on the last weekend in May. The following report is from the June 4 issue of *Sozialistische Zeitung*, the paper of the United Socialist Party of Germany, in which the German Fourth Internationalists participate.

On May-28-32, the eleventh state-wide

congress of the Entwicklungspolitischen Aktionsgruppen [Development Action Groups] took place. The fact of the numbers that attended the plenary session — up to 700 people — illustrates the importance of this gathering of activists, groups and organizations that have devoted themselves to international solidarity, but by no means failed to speak out on other political questions. (For example, the congress called for a boycott of the West German census.)

On Friday and Saturday, the work was centered in forums and workshops. On Thursday, there was a plenary session at which Winfried Wolf spoke on "Poverty and debt, indebted poverty — the debt crisis and our tasks." This talk prepared the way for an intense discussion. At the plenary session on Sunday, the focus was on the perspectives of the solidarity movement. The speaker was Alexander Schubert. There was a lively debate.

Sunday concluded with the adoption of a resolution, The Declaration of Fulda, which stressed the unity of those assembled on the following points:

- To call for a broad alliance for the abolition of the debts of all third world countries.

- To this end, to build common actions to coincide with the 1988 meeting of the IMF. The twelfth congress was scheduled to be held before that date, in the first half of 1988. ★

U S A

Court acquits white vigilante

THE MILITANT, a US weekly, published the following editorial in its June 26 issue:

Responding to the acquittal of Bernhard Goetz in the attempted murder of four Black teenagers, a neighbor of two of the victims angrily declared, "If that was a

Erratum

Apologies to our readers for some errors which appeared in the article "The snowballing financial crisis" by Ernest Mandel in IV123:

Pg. 13, 1st col, 2nd para, 2nd sentence should read: "This brings the total world debt up to around \$7,500,000-8,000,000 million."

Pg. 13, 3rd col, penultimate para, 2nd sentence should read: "The US now has a trade deficit in manufacturing products with these countries, and the major part of these imports are not coming from branches of American trusts established abroad."

Pg 14, footnote 4 should read: "...now a work has appeared on the need for the US's 're-industrialization'."

Pg 15, 3rd col, 2nd para should read: "But re-absorbing the trade deficit without a trade war simply through the fall in dollar exchange rates and reflation in West Germany..." ★

Black man shooting four white kids, would he be walking?"

Her point was well taken. The verdict by a New York jury will encourage new acts of racist vigilantism and embolden trigger-happy cops.

Goetz was cleared of attempted murder and manslaughter charges even though he admitted he had deliberately shot the youths in a subway in December 1984. The jury found him guilty of only a single charge: illegal possession of the .38-caliber revolver he carried in a quick-draw holster.

Illegal possession calls for a sentence of one to seven years, but the judge is not required to impose it. On the basis of the record so far, he is not likely to do so.

One of those commending the verdict was Curtis Sliwa, head of the Guardian Angels, a vigilante gang that supplements police "law and order" efforts. Throughout the trial, they provided Goetz with "bodyguards." With the verdict, Sliwa said, "This jury has sent a message to all decent people that it's okay to fight back."

From the outset, the capitalist media and politicians joined in justifying Goetz's action in the name of self-defence against "crime." This included [New York] Mayor Edward Koch, who declared at the time, "The frustration and anger are so obvious.... The rights of society have been impinged upon, and what they're saying is they're fed up. I'm fed up too."

Ever since the shootings, there has been a concerted drive to put the victims on trial. The Black youths were depicted as "animals." Charges against two of them for totally unrelated offences were spotlighted, as though that somehow justified Goetz shooting them.

This poisonous smokescreen was necessary because the case against Goetz was clear-cut.

There were 10 other passengers in the subway car at the time of the shooting. None said they saw the youths threaten Goetz or anyone else. One passenger, Christopher Boucher, described how Goetz had stood over the already wounded Darrel Cabey and fired the added shot that severed his spinal cord.

Boucher's testimony confirmed what Goetz had told police in a videotaped statement — that he had fired at the seated youth, saying "You seem to be all right, here's another."

Goetz had also told the cops. "When I saw this one fellow, when I saw the gleam in his eye and the smile on his face...I decided I was going to kill them."

This evidence was brushed aside by the jury. "The public may wonder why we reached this verdict," one juror said. "They may wonder why we didn't believe Goetz when he said he did it, himself." Why didn't they believe his admission? "We felt that he may have gotten

confused."

"The jury basically discounted the whole videotaped statement," another juror added.

Acting Justice Stephen Crane did his best to make sure Goetz was acquitted. Last year, Crane threw out the attempted murder and assault charges, but was reversed on this by a state appeals court.

During the trial Crane permitted the defence to goad one of the victims, James Ramseur, with totally irrelevant questions designed to discredit him. When Ramseur finally balked, Crane gave him six months and a fine for contempt of court.

Crane's charge to the jury was weighted toward Goetz, and in response to requests for points of clarification to the jury, it became more so. The entire conduct of the case gave testimony to how deeply racism is woven into the fabric of this society. And it points to why supporters of Black equality are becoming increasingly determined to push the racists back.

That determination was registered in the outcry against the lynch murder last December by a racist gang in New York's Howard Beach — an outcry sufficient to force a reluctant governor to appoint a special prosecutor and obtain murder indictments in the case. (See *IV* 117, 6 April, 1987.) And it was expressed last January when 30,000 people marched in Forsyth County, Georgia, against the violence of the Ku Klux Klan. That was followed this June by significant demonstrations against the KKK in several towns in North Carolina.

Those indicted in the Howard Beach lynch assault, including the admitted ring-leaders, are now awaiting trial. The outcome of the Goetz case makes it especially important that strong public pressure to be

organized to ensure that the killers are put behind bars. ★

DENMARK

Palestine solidarity

SUPPORT FOR Palestinian unions fighting against the terrible conditions for labor under Israeli occupation is now getting a push in the Danish trade-union movement.

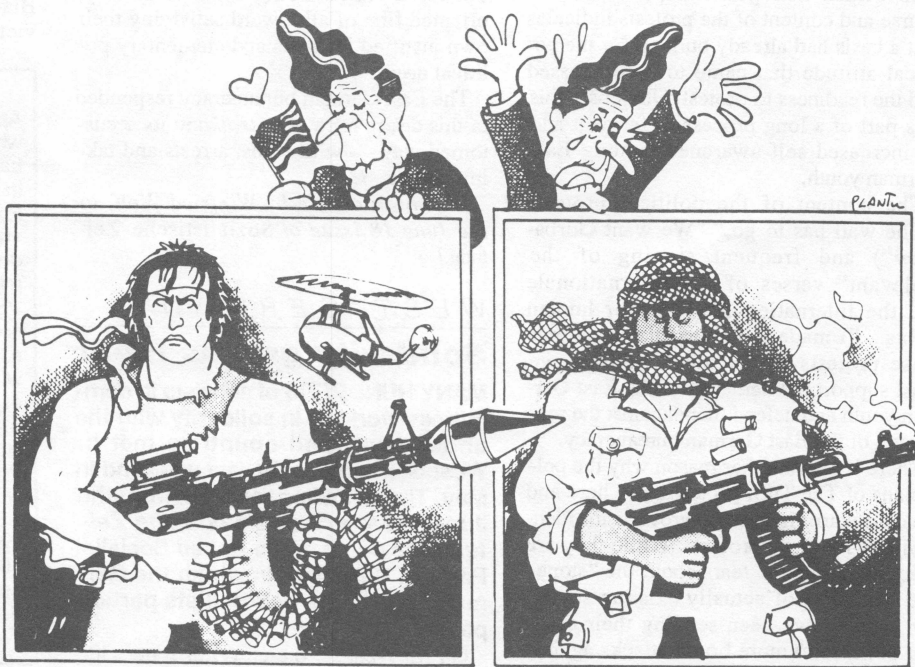
A series of trade-union organizations have taken the initiative to organize a conference [on June 25] to strengthen ties between the Danish and Palestinian trade-union movements.

The organizers hope to set up a trade-union secretariat that can prepare visits of delegations to the occupied West Bank and start up a trade-union newsletter. The idea is also to start a collection of funds for the volunteer work that Palestinian doctors and health workers do in the occupied areas.

Among the participants is the chair of the Norwegian unskilled workers' union, Harald Øverass. He will talk about the good relations that the Norwegian labor movement has had for many years with the Palestinian equivalent of our National Labor Organization (LO) and its extensive help to the trade unions in the occupied areas. Mogens Elmer, MD, and the project leader from the People's Church Aid, Ole Braue, will explain the volunteer health care in the occupied areas. Also participating in the conference will be Abu Georges from the Palestinian Trade Union Federation. ★

[From an article by Åge Skovrind, in the June 18 issue of *Klassekampen*, paper of the Danish section of the Fourth International.]

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Reconciliation between the generals and the politicians

FOR SOME TIME, the military regime in Turkey has moving in the direction of restoring parliamentary forms of rule. The next major step is to be a referendum in September on lifting the ban on political activity by the pre-coup bourgeois politicians.

FUAT ORÇUN

COMplete paralysis of the parliament was one of the pretexts the Turkish generals put forward to justify the coup d'état of September 12, 1980. The two big parties — the Justice Party (AP — Adalet Partisi) of Sulyeman Demirel, the traditional rightist party; and the Republican People's Party (CHP — Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) of Bulent Ecevit, the traditional party of the left — did not manage to combine forces to suppress the "anarchy" prevailing in the country, which had caused 5,000 deaths within five years.

The military junta held these parties and their leaders responsible for this. Nonetheless, no attempt was made to take legal action against these parties. On the other hand, on various grounds, criminal actions (i.e. not political trials) were undertaken against the Islamic party of Erbakan (the Milli Selamet Partisi — National Salvation Party) and the fascist party of Türkes (the Milli Haraket Partisi — National Action Party).

At the beginning, the generals even considered taking ministers from the two big parties into the cabinet they formed, which was headed by retired Admiral Ulusu. But both AP and the CHP refused. They had gone through an experience of such direct collaboration with the military during the previous intervention of the army into politics in 1971, and had drawn a negative balance sheet from it.

Moreover, it would have been suicidal for Demirel to support the junta (it was his minority government that had been overthrown, and he had been the "legitimate" premier). Ecevit also had to steer clear of supporting the military, so as not to compromise his democratic image once and for all. On the other hand, these two parties did not try to oppose the military and develop an alternative policy. They sat back and waited for "normalization."

In 1982, the generals re-worked the constitution and introduced a clause forbidding the main leaders of the two big parties from participating in politics, some for five years and some for ten. That was the starting point for a real struggle between the traditional parties and the generals. The generals tried to launch a new party purged of the former professional politicians. This operation ended in a resounding failure for the military, as is recognized today by the head of the general staff himself. But all this created a "superfluous" conflict for the regime.

The referendum, or rather the plebiscite, that is to take place in September is designed to eliminate this conflict. The voters will be called on to decide about lifting the bans on political activity by the old bourgeois politicians. The referendum will, however, legitimize an already existing situation, because the old parties have reformed under other names, with the direct backing of the old leaders.

Only three parties allowed to stand in elections

The Party of the Just Road (DYP), supported by Demirel, is posing itself as an alternative to take over from the governmental party of Premier Özal. The CHP, on the other hand, has experienced a split. Most of the party stalwarts have regrouped in the Social Democratic People's Party (SHP) led by Erdal İnönü, the son of General İnönü, Atatürk's successor and Ecevit's predecessor as leader of the CHP. Ecevit himself has formed a small party, the Party of the Democratic Left (DSP), led by his wife, Rahsan Ecevit.

In the 1983 elections, the military allowed only three parties to run. The Party of Nationalist Democracy (PND), the generals' favorite, lost the elections and broke up. The bulk of its

forces joined Demirel's party, and then the PND dissolved. The People's Party, which was launched as a left party, also experienced major erosion in the municipal elections of 1984, and ended up fusing with İnönü's Social Democratic Party, which became the SHP. Of the three parties recognized by the military in the 1983 elections, only the Party of the Motherland (ANAP) held up, thanks to its electoral victory.

However, these processes of recombination have also had the effect of legitimating a parliament manipulated by the military. In fact, Demirel's DYP — as well as İnönü's SHP and even Ecevit's DSP (thanks to crossovers from the SHP) — are today represented in a body that they yesterday denounced as "illegitimate."

An unexpected development, however, has upset the projections for the transition. Contrary to predictions, Demirel's party, the DYP, got a good score in the September 1986 partial elections. It outdistanced the "left" party, the SHP, coming in behind the ANAP, the government party which is losing votes as its credibility wears out. This is going to give rise to a major crisis of leadership for the right.

Demirel winning back an electoral base

In fact, before now, the country had a de facto two-party system, with two big parties (one on the right, the other on the left) alternating in power (with some small parties as coalition partners).

The three main players in the present crisis of the right were already in key posts on the day of the coup d'état in 1980. The incumbent president, Kenan Evren, was chief of the general staff in 1980 and leader of the coup. The incumbent premier, Turgut Özal, was head of the cabinet of the ousted premier, Demirel. The latter is today the "clandestine" leader of the DYP and its direct candidate for power.

These old cronies, who have no differences as regards their general conceptions, are today obstacles for each other on the road to the regime's future. So a transition is necessary. Moreover, local and foreign business circles have already come out clearly for lifting the bans on Demirel and his associates.

Unlike Ecevit, Demirel has managed to maintain control of his apparatus, and is winning back his old electoral base. In the preceding period, he had adopted an "anti-military" profile, getting a favorable response from certain sections of the left, and even from some "Marxist" circles that were desperately trying to hitch themselves to an "anti-dictatorial democratic right."

The fratricidal struggle between Demirel and Özal, the master and his brilliant pupil, has continued to occupy the front of the political stage under the eyes of the traditional left, which has been content to play a spectator's role.

Harmony between President Evren, who supervised the transition, and his premier was a guarantee of stability for the regime. But another kind of transition launched by new elections — even early elections — could have created unnecessary friction, if the bans on political activity by the old leaders were maintained.

Bourgeoisie wants a policy of "liberalization"

In fact, contrary to the generals' illusions, the old parties had deep roots in the society, and more than speeches were necessary to get rid of them. This problem had to be resolved. This is the reason for this referendum.

However, this process could generate grave problems for the ruling ANAP. This party is a typical product of the crisis. It would be unable to maintain itself in opposition, and is doomed to disappear if it loses the elections and thus the advantage of power. Özal has by-passed even a parliament in which he holds an overwhelming majority. He is working in an "American style," relying more on advisors than his ministers. Because his political career is at stake, he has to find a means of neutralizing Demirel at all costs.

Several indicators show that the bourgeoisie is determined to follow a policy of "liberalization," even under the most reactionary sort of governments. This will not, of course, be a thoroughgoing process of democratization. But, in any case, a certain normalization will be carried through without interruptions until the new system with the bourgeois parties is stabilized.

Among these indicators, the following could be cited: In April, Turkey officially applied for full membership in the EEC (it had already been an "associate" member). It also finally signed the accord permitting individual appeals to the Hague court. Even if only intermittently and in response to foreign pressures, the authorities have begun talking about removing those articles from the penal code that restrict freedom of thought and organization. (These are articles taken from Mussolini's penal code and which ban activity by Communist parties.)

After years and despite all restrictions, strikes have occurred, as well as some demonstrations. Social opposition is beginning to express itself, and for the first time feminist and ecological currents have made their appearance

on the political scene. For the first time also, the Kurdish national question is being discussed openly and explicitly, even in the bourgeois papers.

The bourgeoisie is in a very different situation than it was in 1980. Above all, the coup and the crushing of the mass movement have increased its self-confidence. It has seen that it has much greater resources and means for defending its system than it thought. Another factor is that the coup made it possible to test the society's political gains.

For 40 years Turkey had grown accustomed to "civilian" and trade-union institutions. These were not really gains that came out of a militant or revolutionary struggle. But even if the workers did not defend their organizations or these institutions at the time of the coup, there was still a certain tradition too deeply rooted for it to collapse entirely under the blows of the military.

Within the context of the traditional system, even legal socialist parties were able to appear from time to time. Outside of the periods of direct military intervention, Marxists have been able to maintain a presence and legal work. There have been three coups d'état in 40 years of parliamentary life, but the first two did not prevent elections from being held as scheduled. Only the last brought a two-year break in parliamentary life.

However, even today, politicians, writers and unionists who were imprisoned and persecuted by the junta are openly part of the political scene, participating legally or semi-legally in the struggles underway.

In agreement with General Evren, who is supervising the scene on behalf of the putschists, the government is trying to gain time in the crisis and is preparing for new elections. It is limiting itself to placing few obstacles in the way of the use of political rights that existed before the coup d'état.

Political and economic imperialist circles openly want a victory by Özal. The IMF has already loosened its grip and is allowing the government to evade its strict monetary policy in order to get into position for early elections.

Demirel has adopted a less classically capitalist profile on social and economic questions and a much more liberal one on political questions, in order to differentiate himself from Özal's policy. However, it was his government that took the initiative in imposing an austerity policy and the "free-enterprise" policies that Özal was to apply, beginning in January 1980.

However, at that time, social opposition was strong. Ecevit's "social democratic" party was the leading opposition party. Demirel's minority government was under constant pres-

sure on the right from its allies, the fascist MHP and especially from the Islamic MSP. Consequently, a civilian government would have been unable to face up to the requirements and social backlash involved in imposing an austerity policy dictated by the IMF. That is why the military coup became necessary.

As for the heirs of the CHP, who have proclaimed themselves social democrats, they have been incapable of developing a strong and credible alternative. Both the SHP and the DSP have distinguished themselves most of all by their cravenness and their lack of initiative. This political vacuum has given the right the room to fight out its internal wars.

The generals vetted the social democratic candidates at the time of the stage-managed elections of 1983. Despite this, both the SHP and the DSP accepted this parliamentary framework, and even returned to this parliament through the transfer of deputies who had been elected with the endorsement of the generals. They thus separated themselves from the social opposition.

This new situation has opened up important possibilities for the Marxist left, with a rise — even though a modest one — of strikes, student struggles, the Kurdish question, human rights, the feminist movement and so on. After the previous coup d'état, it was Ecevit's CHP that captured the rise of social struggles and radicalization and which filled the political space on the left. The Marxists limited themselves to supporting him in the name of "democracy," and were not able to develop an independent class-struggle alternative.

Left recomposition will be a slow process

Today, the Marxist left, divided into dozens of groups and smaller in size and influence, seems far from being able to regroup its forces and take initiatives. The process of recomposition of the socialist left is far from being completed. This process is going to be long and laborious.

The social opposition [the union movement] had already gone into crisis before the 1980 coup. It was on the retreat, and seemed to be breaking up. It was routed by the military coup without resistance.

The weight of such a defeat and the ensuing repression continues to be felt, and in part explains the slow and timid nature of the process of recomposition on the left. The Marxist left must overcome its divisions and its lack of organization in order to be able to organize and lead this rise of social struggles. ☆

The drowning at Meech Lake

CONSTITUTIONAL questions have played an important part in Canadian politics. In particular, this is because of the bi-national character of the country and its history as a British dominion, and therefore subordinate to British legal institutions.

The rise of Quebecois nationalism put into question the old British North American constitutional framework. In this period also the constitution was "repatriated," that is Canada assumed the right to determine its own constitutional rules. The eclipse of the bourgeois Parti Quebecois (PQ) opened a space for English-speaking bourgeois politicians to try to come up with a new constitutional setup to contain Quebecois national feeling, which remains strong despite disillusion with the PQ.

BARRY WEISLEDER

WE GOT THE worst of both worlds. The constitutional assault on Quebec's national rights, begun with the unilateral repatriation of the British North America Act in 1981, was deepened and perpetuated with the signing on June 3 of the Meech Lake Accord.

At the same time, the capacity of the federal government to implement social programmes across English Canada,

against the resistance of reactionary provincial governments, was undermined.

The over-riding purpose of the Constitutional Agreement — which was signed by the provincial premiers and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and based on a text first drafted at Meech Lake, north of Ottawa, on April 30 — was to co-opt Quebec.

The PQ government of Quebec refused to sign the constitution cooked up in 1981 by the previous prime minister, Pierre Trudeau, and the other nine premiers, because it deprived Quebec of its historic veto over future constitutional change. They also refused to sign because it denied that Quebec was a nation with the right to decide its own future and to take whatever measures may be necessary to protect its own language and culture. (French is the mother tongue of 90 per cent in Quebec, but only 2 per cent in North America.)

Despite some fancy window-dressing, the current Accord represents no meaningful change. Although the constitutional amendment states that Quebec will be "recognized as a distinct society within Canada", it does not spell out what that means. Nor does it say what powers it confers on the government of Quebec "to preserve and promote Quebec's distinct identity".

The Amendment goes on to say that although "the English-speaking population is concentrated outside Quebec, it is also present within Quebec", and vice-versa for Francophones — the classical rationale for Ottawa's hypocritical policy of official bi-lingualism [which is used as an excuse for denying French the rights of a national language in Quebec].

Big business speaks English

Because big business speaks English in North America, Quebecois workers suffer systematic discrimination at work, in education and healthcare, in department stores and restaurants and so on, even where Francophones are the overwhelming majority.

The provincial government in Quebec was led by the bourgeois nationalist Parti Quebecois, first elected in 1976. After they had passed Law 101 to give primacy to the French language within Quebec, the courts ruled the law unconstitutional on the basis that it violated the rights of the Anglophone minority — a privileged minority at that.

So, why did the current Liberal premier of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, sign the Accord — against the wishes of the majority of Quebecois, including the three Quebec union federations (the CSN, FTQ and CEQ), the farmers' un-

ion, the Mouvement Quebec Français, the opposition Parti Quebecois, and even the Quebec New Democratic Party? Certainly not because of minor concessions to Quebec in the areas of immigration, the appointment of Supreme Court judges, or financial compensation for opting out of federal-provincial shared-cost programmes.

The real motivation, one that Bourassa shares with Mulroney and most capitalists across Canada, is to destroy the national aspirations of the Quebecois. Canada's rulers hope that this new Accord, which has "brought Quebec back into the Canadian family", will once and for all put an end to the struggle for Quebecois national liberation.

Quebec is an oppressed nation

Pierre Trudeau's recent strong denunciation of the Accord merely reflects the view of the man who invoked the War Measures Act in 1970 against Quebec — the view that the federal government should not even give the *appearance* of making concessions to Quebec.

But Trudeau's allegation that the federal power has been weakened in relation to the provinces is not totally without foundation. Mulroney and the majority of the ruling class are prepared to pay this price to co-opt Quebec — whereas Trudeau and the more centralist (and protectionist) wing of the capitalist class he represents would prefer a sterner and more rigid stance.

Quebec is not a province like the others — it is an oppressed nation with its own distinct language, culture, history and territory. The refusal to recognize this fact constitutes a central contradiction at the heart of the confederal state. This problem is not confined to the capitalists and their state, however; it is one shared by the working-class organizations in English Canada and their political arm, the NDP, which has upheld a federalist perspective consistently hostile to the aspirations of the Quebecois workers. This accounts for the lack of significant support for the NDP in Quebec until very recently — and now the Quebec NDP has broken with the federal party line to oppose the Accord due to the pressure coming from Quebecois workers.

But, in supporting the Accord, the federal NDP and the NDP government of Manitoba not only betray the interests of Quebecois workers, they place new obstacles in the path of progressive social change in English Canada.

The rights of native peoples and residents of the northern territories are frozen out of this constitutional agreement. There's nothing in it for women. There's no improvement in union liber-

ties and other collective rights that have been severely undermined by recent Supreme Court decisions.

However, more fundamentally in structural terms, the clause that permits a province to receive financial compensation if it opts out of a shared-cost programme in a provincial jurisdiction may put an end to future universal social services.

What constitutes compliance with "national objectives" in order to receive compensation for opting out is not defined. Would it have been possible for the federal government, under tremendous pressure from labour, healthcare groups and the NDP, to force provinces to end extra-billing by doctors under public medical insurance plans, if such a provision had been in effect in recent years?

Cutbacks in social service programmes

Lise Corbeil-Vincent, coordinator of the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, expressed concern that lax interpretation of "objectives" could give the provinces too much leeway.

She pointed out, for example, that British Columbia is now using some Canada Assistance funds to subsidize baby sitters, who are regulated only by visits from parents. If objectives are defined only, for instance, "to provide care for children", British Columbia could use all its shared-cost money on unregulated services.

Louise Dulude, president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, agreed that the Amendment could paralyze a national plan for childcare. "Ottawa could make proposals but say they have to wait until the legislatures make their will known. That alone could take three years. The need for child care is urgent", she said. "We can't afford to wait."

But the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney has no intention of introducing a universal childcare programme, or any other universal social service programmes for that matter. The Tory perspective is to cut back existing programmes. That is why they have so little difficulty with the Constitutional Amendment.

But a future NDP federal government would face new obstacles in the path of implementing even the simplest reforms.

Another obstacle may take shape in the form of a rejuvenated Senate. Although now the Senate has constitutional power to block legislation passed by the Commons, because it is an appointed body of bourgeois party bagmen and retired political hacks, it lacks the necessary credibility to exercise this power.

However, under a new system of provincial nominations, even though still subject to federal choice, the Senate may attempt to exercise power as an assembly representing "regional (i.e. capitalist) interests".

An NDP or more radical pro-working-class government would be locked in permanent battle with such a structure to struggle to overcome this — as if there weren't enough obstacles in the existing capitalist state (the judiciary, the army and police, top levels of the civil bureaucracy).

Socialists demand abolition of the Senate, not its reform! But the working class in English Canada and especially in Quebec has a more reserved, skeptical — even critical — approach to the Accord.

Socialists should work to deepen that

criticism, to point out that Meech Lake represents the worst of both worlds: the drowning of Quebec rights and the paralysis of future social change initiatives within the framework of the existing state.

Until socialist revolution sweeps away the chains of the present structure of bourgeois domination, working people will look for ways to win our demands, and fight all efforts to place additional obstacles in our path. Socialists should work with our sisters and brothers in Quebec and unite with them on the basis of Quebecois self-determination, because "no nation that oppresses another can itself be free".

For all of these reasons, the entire labour movement and the NDP should organize to defeat the constitutional amendment. ☆

End anti-Tamil repression

Statement of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, June 1987

THE RACIST, pro-Sinhala, bourgeois government of Sri Lanka has in recent weeks dramatically escalated its repression of Sri Lankan Tamils in the north and north-eastern regions of the country. Aerial bombardment has been combined with artillery assaults and troop movements on the ground.

Thousands of civilians have been maimed and killed, their homes and livelihoods destroyed. Thousands of people between the ages of 14 and 30 have been arbitrarily arrested, interrogated and tortured in detention camps set up in the north. Though the military assault has come to a halt because of strong resistance from Tamil militants and Indian pressure, this is likely to be temporary.

The Sri Lankan regime has escaped the censure it deserves. This is partly because imperialism has a crucial interest in maintaining the stability of the Jayewardene government. The US regards good relations with Colombo as important for its strategic designs in the Indian Ocean. Britain, Israel and Pakistan, which are important US allies, are all helping the Sri Lankan government to strengthen its repressive apparatuses, for example providing mercenaries,

training for special security agencies, air-force equipment and so on.

It is also necessary to note that there should be no illusions about the Indian government, to which Jaffna Tamils and the militant groups have been forced to turn for support. The Indian bourgeois state will, if necessary, betray the aspirations and hopes of the oppressed Tamil masses in pursuit of its own regional interests, which are to establish its hegemony in South Asia.

The Indian government wants a military-strategic stalemate. Such a situation would give the Indian state most room for manoeuvre and enable it to exercise most pressure on both sides to achieve the "negotiated settlement" that it wants, and not what the Tamils demand: full democratic rights, peace with dignity and genuine self-determination. We call for:

- A halt to the brutal repression by the Sri Lankan UNP government against the country's Tamil population, particularly in the north.
- An end to the blockade of fuel and civil supplies to Jaffna.
- Release of all political prisoners and detainees.
- A condemnation of the support given to the Jayewardene government by imperialism and its allies — this must be halted.
- The international working class movement to severely condemn the Sri Lankan government and demand that the rest of the world exercise moral and material pressure against this regime.
- An end to the state of emergency and the restoration of full democratic rights for the whole population, Tamil and Sinhala.
- No curbs on the rights of trade unions, such as the Ceylon Mercantile, Industrial and General Workers' Union, nor on all other organizations fighting for the legitimate demands of the toiling masses.
- The right of Sri Lankan Tamils to define their own political future, that is their unconditional right to self-determination.
- Governments to grant asylum to all Tamil refugees seeking entry to their countries. ☆

Railworkers celebrate their victory

THOUSANDS OF South African railway workers celebrated a resounding strike victory in Johannesburg's streets on Friday, June 5. After three months on strike, and with many families near to starvation, the workers had refused to give in to the unrelenting attacks by management and the apartheid state. These articles are from the May 29 and June 19 issues of the British fortnightly, *Socialist Action*.

DOREEN WEPPLER

SIX RAILWAY workers gave their lives to the struggle. Hundreds were detained, including the union's entire negotiating committee. And every railway worker had faced daily intimidation and harassment by the security forces.

In an unexpected move, which left leaders of the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (Sarhwu) "reeling a bit", the South African Transport Services (Sats) finally backed down on Wednesday, June 3. Sats management contacted the union's solicitors with an offer.

Negotiating committee in prison

With the union's entire negotiating committee in prison, the solicitors had to go to the jails to consult over the company's approach. They were given the go-ahead to pursue negotiations and clinch the deal.

The company's climb-down was precipitated by the approach of the June 16 anniversary of the Soweto youth uprising of 1976. Sats and the apartheid regime — with which the transport system is so totally intertwined — knew that the bitter struggle by railworkers would provide a powerful focus for wide-ranging action by the community and the trade-union movement.

Indeed, the strike has already become a focus for many individual struggles and the discontent of broad forces. Sparked by the dismissal of a worker for the "crime" of the late handing in of the £12 that he'd collected as part of his job, the strike rapidly spread throughout the Transvaal region, involving some 20,000 workers.

In the final weeks of the strike, the

determination of the workers in the Transvaal was inspiring other workers further afield to join in the struggle. They saw that decades of racist treatment at the hands of one of the worst employers in South Africa — where even the limited 1970 labour reforms didn't apply — could be challenged.

The spectre of a national dispute was becoming a serious possibility. A national rail strike was a disastrous prospect for the South African employers, given the strategic importance of the rail network to South African industry. Additionally, and unlike any other country, the railway system is also vital for transporting vast numbers of workers forced by the apartheid system to live miles away from their place of work.

The railworkers' strike was deepening as important advances were being made by other workers and in other sections of the population. Cosatu, the 700,000-strong non-racial trade union federation, was able to hail the merger of the car workers' and metalworkers' unions. This new union is a living example of Cosatu's industrial unions' policy. The second largest union in the federation, it will be a powerful weapon in the hands of the engineering industry's workers.

Formidable attacks by the state

The postal workers' union, Potwa, had also won a victory at the beginning of May. A range of overt racist practices — including a 200 per cent wage differential between white and black postal workers — had brought 7,000 out on strike.

These workers closely identified with

the railworkers' action, seeing Sarhwu as virtually a sister union in the light of the common state ownership and close state control of the two industries. The militant struggle of the postal workers at one point forced the government to release two union leaders from prison before the union would start negotiations.

These workers' actions were taking place despite the state of emergency and in the face of formidable attacks by the state. In April, 60,000 engineering workers staged three stoppages to protest against the imprisonment of their general secretary, Moses Mayekiso, one of five people on trial for treason.

The mines have also been the scene of sporadic action as protest strikes have mounted in response to continuing deaths in mining accidents, and as miners' wives and girlfriends moved into seven formally single-sex compounds in defiance of apartheid's inhumane separation of workers from their families.

Overwhelming community support for Sarhwu

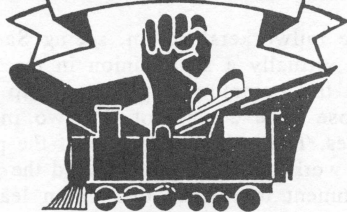
From workers in the food industry and in the sugar mills of Natal to the go-slow in seven Coca-Cola factories, action was escalating. The launch of the "living wage" campaign by Cosatu helped to reinforce the action.

A second factor that the regime had to take into account was the developments within the community. Community support for Sarhwu was overwhelming. Workers in the townships knew of the suffering faced by migrant railworkers whose wages have to support ten other members of their families left to fight for their existence in the barren bantustans.

Additionally, they had direct experience — as commuters — of the repression meted out against the strikers, as armed state forces moved into railway stations and on to the trains, manhandling passengers and carrying out arbitrary searches of the carriages. The community organizations were more and more loudly demanding action from Sats.

Women have been playing a particularly decisive role in the community organizations and have been providing the leadership of the street committees. This deepening activity has found its reflection in the relaunching of Fed saw, the Federation of South African Women, on June 1.

Fed saw had played a major role in the 1950s, especially in the campaigns against the pass laws, but had been dispersed by the repression of the 1960s. Its relaunch — with veteran leaders such as Helen Joseph again in the organization's leadership — is a major



advance for the liberation struggle.

The victory of Sarhwu will give a powerful impetus to these struggles. It will lead to droves of workers flocking to join the union, which was already experiencing substantial growth during the strike itself. The entire union has been strengthened.

But the victory will not mean an end to attacks by Sats. Although Sarhwu has won thousands of workers steeled in struggle and united around the principle of "an injury to one is an injury to all", the union hasn't even got a roof over its head.

All the materials needed to rapidly consolidate the victory were lost in the bombing of Cosatu House. Some of the union's leaders remain in prison or detained. Continuing solidarity by the labour movement, especially by railworkers in this country, will be very important in the coming months. ☆

An eyewitness report

RAIL AGAINST Apartheid (RAA) was formed by activists in the British National Union of Railwaymen in March last year. When the South African rail strike erupted, two representatives of Sarhwu tried to visit Britain to build international solidarity, but were refused entry. So it was decided to send Geoff Revell and Doreen Wepler — the chair and secretary of RAA — to South Africa as an official delegation from the NUR. This article is an extract from their eyewitness report on the strike.

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The settlement

● **Non-selective re-employment:** One of the main demands of the strikers was for their reinstatement. On April 22, 16,000 had been sacked for taking strike action. Sats had originally offered "re-employment", meaning that the company would decide who to take back, and those who were taken back would be treated as new starters.

The final agreement for "non-selective re-employment" is reinstatement put into a face-saving formula. All workers will have their original jobs back. The scabs will go, as Sarhwu demanded. And the re-employment specifies that continuity of service, and other facilities, will be guaranteed.

● **Permanent status for Black workers:** This clause of the agreement strikes at the heart of one of the key effects of the apartheid system. One of the ways Sats has kept a super-exploited workforce is by denying any job security whatsoever. At the end of 11 months, migrant workers would be forced to return to a bantustan (or land reservation assigned to them) and apply for a new contract at their local labour office.

The agreement awards Black workers with two years service a new degree of job security by ending their contract labour status. This concession by Sats was a direct product of the strikers' demand for an end to racism on the railway.

● **The right to elect their own representatives:** Sats had maintained throughout the strike that it would negotiate with representatives elected by workers but not with Sarhwu. But in the negotiations that did take place the workers' representatives were *de facto* union representatives. The settlement now means that Sarhwu delegates will be recognized by the company. It is a major step towards total recognition of the union. ☆

DESPITE THE obstacles, we managed to make our contacts. They were marvellous people. Their underground existence is difficult to appreciate. When they escort you around, their eyes are everywhere. They live like that all day, all night. The union leader sleeps and travels in the boot of a car.

Out in the townships it's even worse. The world cannot see what's going on. There have been many, many murders.

Indeed, there have been many murders inside the police stations. Since the declaration of the state of emergency, there have been 68 people die in detention in John Voorster Square police station alone. It's in that place that Mike Roussos — who we originally had contact with a year ago — is being detained.

Mike is under a murder charge. He's being stitched up for the murder of railway workers! The media and the state have launched a big campaign claiming that these workers were victims of "necklacing" by trade unionists. Mike has been interrogated naked. He has been humiliated in the process. And all for murders that were really done by the security forces.

One day when we were there 15 Sarhwu shop stewards were arrested. The entire leadership of Sarhwu has been detained. And when you're detained under the emergency powers, you disappear. The security forces are under no obligation to say where you are.

Against this background the young leaders of the rail strike are incredible. Their humour and their strength. One of them told us that the night before



they had been spotted by the security forces who pulled out their guns.

The railway workers immediately drove up a one-way street the wrong way, ditched their car, ran through a shopping centre — all this to meet up with us!

Another told us of a "terrible time" he had the previous week. They were driving along a road and were spotted by the security forces. A car drove in front of them and forced them to stop. The security forces put pistols against their heads, opened the car doors and forced them out.

They were sure that they were going to be killed and left in the ditch by the side of the road, when a BBC reporter drove up to report on a nearby incident. Because the BBC had a camera and started filming, the security forces put their guns away.

Under the emergency regulations, it appears that the security forces are a complete law unto themselves. They've got carte blanche to do anything they want.

They don't do it so much in the cities — you don't go shooting up a shopping centre in a city because the world can see what's going on. But in the townships it's different. ☆



Solidarity with the anti-apartheid struggle!

AT THE JUNE meeting of the International Executive Committee, the Fourth International reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to build solidarity with the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

The following document is the text of the motion adopted by the IEC, the leading body of the Fourth International between meetings of the World Congress.

1

The boycott of South Africa

The questions of economic boycott and isolation of South Africa have become major elements in propaganda against the apartheid regime. This boycott has taken various forms: denunciation of all organized expression by or for the benefit of the South African authorities, the "governments" of the bantustans and other collaborators; the demand for an end to all trade with South Africa, as well as to all exchanges of technology and other services; and the ending of all banking or financial relations.

Depending on the countries and the circumstances this has concerned the export of military technology to South Africa, the provision of petrol, the import of Namibian coal or uranium, the maintenance of air links, or South African access to bank loans and credit facilities.

Finally, it has involved exposing foreign investments in South Africa and calling for the withdrawal of imperialist companies from the country.

Over the last few years, several imperialist governments have undertaken to put pressure on the Pretoria regime by adopting a certain number of economic sanctions. For them it is a question of defending a third way (between apartheid and revolution), demanding that the Botha regime commit itself to negotiated reforms, and themselves preparing to take part in these hypothetical negotiations.

What is more, a certain number of companies — including some important multinationals, particularly American — have decided to leave South Africa. Some of them mentioned risks to the image of their product caused by staying in the country. Most of them

put the emphasis on their criticism of the South African system. This, however, had been their main motivation for setting up in the country and making large profits there. So all this cannot delude people. In reality the economic crisis that the country is presently going through, combined with political and social instability, have been reason enough for many foreign companies to decide to close their South African subsidiaries, sell them to South Africans or hold on to sub-contracted markets only.

The solidarity movement must be able to explain these singular practices on the part of people who have colluded with the racist regime for so many years.

It must also know how to avoid the trap of an over-economistic conception of the boycott. Disinvestment must not be translated into a de-capitalization implying factory closures, dismantling of machinery or other formulas which try to make Black South African workers pay for this retreat. The capitalists must sort things out themselves, accept the proposals of the independent trade unions, find appropriate solutions!

Any boycott campaign or call for the withdrawal of a company must be accompanied on the part of the workers' movement and solidarity organizations by a clear willingness to build links with the South African independent trade unions of the branch and the company involved. This is essential if this kind of campaign is not to echo agreement with the demagogic pretensions of certain imperialist governments, the media operations of certain multinationals or bourgeois lobbies.

For example, this is what was cruelly lacking at the time of the General Mo-

tors workers' strike in Port Elisabeth in 1986. The solidarity and workers' movements must take up the possible positions of the South African trade unions on the withdrawal of foreign companies, popularize them and make them an element of their own agitation.

The boycott campaigns must be the means of developing mass mobilization. A boycott campaign should be the chance to show the complicity or passivity of governments, as well as the formal character of their denunciation of apartheid. It is an instrument for education and denunciation which cannot be reduced to parliamentary pressure or to formal demands on the governments concerned.

We support the calls on governments that they impose sanctions against the South African regime. By putting forward these demands, we do not encourage illusions in their capacity or their desire to take effective measures. On the contrary, we urge the workers' movement to fight to impose these sanctions. For this reason, we popularize and call on the workers to take direct action initiatives to prevent the exchange of goods and services with South Africa. Our goal is actions like that of Dunnes Stores in Dublin, where the workers fought a long strike in support of South African Blacks.

2

Support for all those struggling against apartheid and for a non-racial democratic society in South Africa

Solidarity must be carried out in a non-exclusive fashion at the same level for all those who are repressed by the racist regime. Solidarity is organized around concrete tasks. It should not get bogged down in judgements on the political positions of one or the other

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group when they are in the same camp against the racist regime. International solidarity should be first and foremost in favour of the mass movement and resistance actions led by Cosatu, the UDF, the ANC and, in particular cases, by other social or political forces.

3 Solidarity with the independent trade-union movement

Among the tasks of the solidarity movement, one is particularly important — that of informing and mobilizing workers and their organizations. The existence of an anti-apartheid struggle by a Black working class fighting daily against the state and the bosses should be stressed. Strikes which take place in the branches of the big multinational companies must be reported.

It is therefore necessary to mobilize workers and their organizations in solidarity with the South African independent trade-union movement. In this context, the defence of Cosatu and support for its unions are urgent and decisive tasks. At present, Cosatu represents the highest form of the workers' united front in South Africa and the most solidly organized social sector.

International solidarity must devote particular attention to this form of support. The international workers' movement must establish direct relations with the independent South African trade unions. The formation of Cosatu, which is the authoritative voice of the union movement in South Africa, provides added opportunities for deepening fraternal ties between the labour movement in South Africa and the unions in every country. Workplace unions and unions in branches of the same multinationals must develop links with their South African counterparts.

Tours of South African unionists must be organized in a unitary fashion. However, they should not only meet trade union leaders but also talk to the rank-and-file. Trade-union fact-finding delegations should be sent to South Africa to meet trade unionists and to bring back information and eye-witness accounts. Appropriate trade union help, popularization of strikes, distribution of the trade-union press and permanent links can be organized, not only to help South African trade unionists, but also to take the solidarity movement to the heart of the workplaces.

Today, the South African independent workers' movement is the standard bearer of a radical anti-apartheid fight. It leads significant struggles against the bosses' exploitation, puts forward specific demands and has important experiences of self-organization and mass democracy. It struggles simultaneously for the disappearance of racial discrimination in society and for the achievement of its own class objectives. It is

in this sense that it is taking a more and more socialist perspective.

4 Free Mandela and all the prisoners

Racist South Africa is a vast prison. Each year thousands of men, women and children pass through the authorities' gaols. Botha has just extended the state of emergency introduced in June 1986, having already achieved a noticeable fall in the political activity of the masses.

Exposing this repression must be one of the central axes of propaganda against the apartheid system.

For twenty-five years large numbers of prisoners have been condemned to heavy penalties for "terrorism", "communism" or "high treason". Nelson Mandela, leader of the ANC, figures amongst these. Mandela has become a symbol of the victims of brutality of the regime against Blacks and against the ANC. His liberation would constitute, whatever the motivations of the government, a significant event for the mass movement in South Africa.

The danger which the various groups of "vigilantes" — the para-military sections of the Inkatha party and so on — present for the mass movement should also be taken into account. Particular stress should be placed on condemning these new phenomena, since they now form one of the main links in the repressive practice of the white authorities.

The trade-union movement, which had been less affected by the repression than other sectors in 1985, is now one of the main targets of the ruling party. Repression against the railworkers' strike, as well as the police entry into the Cosatu offices and the bombings of trade-union offices, confirm this tendency. The trade-union leaderships are now directly threatened in order to prevent the normal functioning of their organizations.

In this respect the example of Moses Mayekiso is particularly symbolic. The leader of one of the principal trade unions in the country — the metalworkers in Numsa — he was imprisoned and is now accused of high treason for having led the coordination of neighbourhood committees in the Alexandra township. Condemning the imprisonment of trade unionists is therefore an element to take into account in solidarity activity — particularly in trade-union solidarity actions and in the workplaces.

5 The academic and cultural boycott is a weapon for solidarity. It must not be a constraint.

It is not acceptable for people — artists, intellectuals or sportspeople — to travel to South Africa in the name of

the so-called "neutrality" of their professional activities. In many cases it is a genuine objective collaboration with the system, in so far as it normalizes relations with South Africa.

In the same way it is not acceptable for South African personalities, with the same aim or for similar reasons, to go abroad. These practices and the public events that result from them should be condemned. This is one means the solidarity movement can use to expose the racist system.

But this cannot become a total blackout, which would damage the development of struggles and solidarity. Today, the South African revolution is opening to the outside world. It can exercise a strong attraction on all those struggling elsewhere. Similarly, those who are fighting in South Africa seek to know about and discover the struggles of other people and to escape from the damper of South African censorship.

Nothing should be done to limit communications between those struggling in South Africa and those who support them abroad. In order for a revolution to win it is clearly not helpful for the people concerned to be isolated from other struggles, from discussion of ideas and the exchange of experiences.

The ANC has just modified its traditional attitude in favour of a complete cultural and university boycott. This was posing more and more problems given the development of international contacts between progressive South African artists and intellectuals and those worldwide — determined to see and to speak out about apartheid. The principle of a total boycott, usually accompanied with special dispensations under the control of the ANC, could not continue in such conditions. According to the ANC itself, the debate remains open in terms of who is going to decide, and on what criteria.

6 A unitary and democratic solidarity movement, centred on the workers' movement and youth

The international solidarity movement needs to last as long as the revolutionary struggle of the people of South Africa continues. For this to be possible the solidarity movements need to reinforce links with the workers' movement and youth, and to aim themselves principally towards these groups. The solidarity organizations should develop in a direction independent of the projects put forward by bourgeois circles and imperialists. These groups are aiming at resolving the South African crisis at the least cost for capitalist interests.

It is in turning the solidarity movement towards workers and youth and in mobilizing for the defence of workers

and youth in South Africa that it will be possible to stabilize solidarity in the long term. This does not exclude any broad democratic campaign (around the boycott, political prisoners etc.), but above all it is a question of turning the solidarity towards the main social forces of the South African revolution.

This supposes broad and objective collaboration with major church organizations in those countries where they play a major role in spreading to the broadest layers of the population the moral repugnance of apartheid and the justification of resistance to apartheid rule inside South Africa.

But allowing two separate, or indeed, alternative sorts of solidarity to develop should be avoided: one being a general denunciation of apartheid, oriented essentially towards boycott appeals, the release of Nelson Mandela and so on; and the other specializing in support for strikes and trade unions. A division of labour between the different solidarity structures is not excluded, but all actions must be seen in a complementary, and not contradictory or competitive, way.

7 Stop South African aggression against the countries of southern Africa. South Africa out of Namibia!

The Pretoria regime increases military operations in countries like Botswana, Zambia or Mozambique in order to stop all aid to the ANC and all chance of South African activists being able to move freely in the region. It aids and trains military movements in Mozambique (Renamo) and in Angola (Unita). The South African government uses not only its military strength but also its economic strength for this, by threatening these countries with commercial retaliation. It also uses the duplicity of the imperialist governments in these matters, who want reconciliation with the aggressor as much as those suffering the aggression. The solidarity movement must denounce these attacks and solidarize with the peoples threatened by the South African regime.

The international solidarity movement must not lose sight of support for the Namibian population struggling against South African occupation. It must support the right of national independence for the Namibian people, including total sovereignty over the port of Walvis Bay, which is a particularly important stake for the South Africans and imperialism. A specific task of explanation has to be made regarding the situation, and solidarity must be given to Swapo and to the independent

Namibian trade unions that are now appearing.

Fourth International groups should seek to collaborate with others to mobilize condemnation of the apartheid regime's invasions of other countries, its continuing illegal occupation of Namibia, and its backing of counter-revolutionary mercenary groups in Angola and Mozambique. We should counter the anti-Cuban propaganda that is aimed at justifying these acts of aggression, denouncing all demands that Cuba should bow to imperialist pressure, ignore the requests of the Angolan government and withdraw its forces — military and civilian — from Angola.

8 Down with imperialist manoeuvres! The "anti-apartheid bosses are not our friends"!

The international condemnation of apartheid has the distinctive characteristic that participation of imperialist governments, of groups of employers and multinationals is more and more common. This is not due to the "marginal" or "atypical" nature of the anti-apartheid struggle, allowing South African racism to be condemned by "the western democracies" and their liberal circles.

On the contrary, it is due to the scale of imperialist interests in this country and to the growing fear that the South African crisis is turning into anti-capitalist revolution. Some governments and groups of imperialists are therefore looking for a compromise solution that can save the basic interests of capitalism in the country, and demobilize the popular movement. The product of such a scheme, if it were to work, would be the formal de-racialization of the institutions, with the preservation of the basic social and racial inequalities existing today.

The whole popular movement now rejects this perspective. Consequently, this hypocrisy must be exposed and its objectives explained. All the protagonists of this policy have been, including some until very recently, model collaborators with, or accomplices of, apartheid. We should use the same slogan as the South African workers, faced with liberal bosses who sack them and call the police in against the strikes: "The anti-apartheid bosses are not our friends!".

All attempts by governments or bourgeois circles to interfere in the affairs of the South African mass movement, and to try to manoeuvre

and divide it, should be denounced.

9 The role of the sections of the Fourth International in anti-apartheid solidarity

The sections of the Fourth International, principally in the imperialist countries, must consider anti-apartheid as one of their long-term international campaigns. In campaigns and specific support structures they should defend a unitary and non-sectarian conception of solidarity. They should always aim to give a mass character to all initiatives, centred on the workers' movement and youth. They should attempt to integrate the trade union organizations into solidarity structures and campaigns.

Fourth International organizations should participate fully in and build the broadest possible solidarity with the struggle against apartheid, centering on the demands for an immediate break of economic, cultural, diplomatic, trade-union and sporting ties with the apartheid regime. This campaign has special weight in Britain, the US, Australia, New Zealand and other imperialist countries where government ties with the apartheid regime are particularly important and where, as a result, the anti-apartheid solidarity movement has developed significant support.

While supporting every struggle against the apartheid regime and mobilizing solidarity with all victims of repression in South Africa, Fourth International organizations everywhere should particularly seek to develop links with the ANC.

The deepening South African revolution is leading to a clarification of discussions in our movement, and among other international currents in the workers' and revolutionary movement.

It is also being reflected in the inter-related political debates being carried on within Cosatu and other liberation and working class forces in South Africa. These discussions are important for the future of the revolutionary movement in South Africa, and for the ability of its working class vanguard to construct a revolutionary leadership. Familiarizing ourselves with these discussions is part of the preparation for competent participation in this development by our current on a world scale.

In the many countries where the existence of competing committees is harmful, the sections will endeavour to help build united mobilizations.

Finally, they will develop in their press their analysis of the South African revolution, the specific tasks of the South African proletariat and the events taking place, in order to contribute to a better political understanding by all those taking part in the solidarity movement. ☆



IN THE WAKE of the rout of the Congress party in the June 17 Haryana state elections, the political weakening of Rajiv Gandhi's regime has reached a critical point. (See the last issue of *IV*.) Calls are already being raised for his resignation.

Haryana was the most catastrophic, but only the most recent of a string of defeats in state elections. Two of the most important were in the elections in Kerala and West Bengal earlier this spring. These were especially important because they are the only states ruled by left governments. In both cases, the ruling coalitions are dominated by the larger of the two Indian Communist parties, the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

In the 1984 elections, following his mother's assassination, Rajiv Gandhi had managed to deal some serious setbacks to the entrenched CPI(M) in West Bengal, for example. The following articles assess what was involved in the electoral bounce back of the left coalitions in these two key Indian states and their future prospects.

Third term for the Left Front in West Bengal

IT IS RARE enough for a political combination including a Communist party to win elections at almost any level in a bourgeois country. It is even rarer, perhaps unique, when the front is led by a Communist party, and has swept the polls for the third time running, with the Communist party alone securing a majority of the seats. Yet that is precisely what happened in the March 1987 West Bengal provincial Legislative Assembly elections.

KUNAL CHATTOPADHYAY

THE LEFT Front (LF) is led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). It also includes the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India (RSP), the All-India Forward Bloc (FB) and smaller groups such as the Revolutionary Communist Party, the Marxist Forward Bloc, the West Bengal Socialist Party, and the Democratic Socialist Party. It has increased its total number of seats compared to the two previous terms of the West Bengal Assembly.

In 1977, the Left Front had secured about 44% of the votes, which rose to 53% in 1982 and, after a sharp fall in 1984, rose again to 51% in 1987. This continuing electoral support for the LF has upset the calculations of its foes

on the right, as well as its critics on the left. However, this victory does not indicate any leftward swing in West Bengal politics or an intensification of the class struggle. Before going into such things, though, it is necessary to look at some election statistics. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

The pattern of voting shows the clear

Table 1
Assembly Seats
(Total 294)

	1977	1982	1987
CPI (M)	177	174	187
FB	25	28	26
RSP	20	19	18
CPI	2	7	11
LF	231	238	251
C(I)	20	49	40
Others	41	7	3
(incl Janata) (See footnote 1)			

domination of the LF over the past decade. Even in 1984, when the polls took place in the wake of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination, the LF gained a bit in the popular vote and took 25 out of West Bengal's 42 parliamentary seats, compared to the 17 seats won by the Congress(I).

The polarization of the votes has also been marked by electoral analysts. The spread tends to be a little more for assembly polls, because during parliamentary polls all-India issues are raised so sharply that third parties get elbowed out. But even in assembly elections, the share of third-party votes has been steadily declining over the last two decades. Thus, in 1987, the challenge posed by former finance minister Pranab Mukherjee's Rashtriya Samajbadi Congress and the United Left Front — comprising dissident CPI(M) and dissident RSP forces — proved to be a total washout.

Congress(I) wins majority of industrial seats

Two other sets of figures are, however, quite significant and need to be taken into account to understand the nature of the West Bengal poll results. One set relates to voting in the metropolis of Calcutta, while the other is concerned with the industrial seats. (See Tables 3 and 4.)

If the Janata, Congress(S) etc. votes are added, it will be seen that only in 1982 did the left, including non-LF left parties, have a majority of Calcutta votes.² Table 4 shows the number of assembly seats/segments won by the LF and Congress(I) between the 1977 assembly polls and the 1987 elections.

This shows that the Congress has had a much more stable base in Calcutta in

Table 2
Percentage of votes in Assembly and Parliamentary polls

	1977 (A)	1980 (P)	1982 (A)	1984 (P)	1987 (A)
LF	44 (approx)	54.39	53.05	48.83	51.06
Congress	—	36.5	36.67	48.16	41.41
Others	—	9.11	*11.28	3.01	7.53

* The 1982 figure for "others" includes about 4.2% votes for the Congress (S), now merged with the Congress(I). (See footnote 2.)

recent years, and a slight swing is enough for it to trounce the Front in all the seats, as indeed it did in 1984 by huge margins. In fact, the distribution of Congress support is such that even when it polled less votes than the LF, it won an equal number of seats (1980 and 1982).

Finally, we can take a look at those seats where the working class is either in a majority or is in the deciding section of the voting population. There are 39 such seats. Of these, 3 are in Calcutta, 5 in the Howrah district across the Ganges from Calcutta, 20 more are in the urban agglomeration stretching away from Calcutta, and the rest in other parts of the province.

The LF polled 1,881,475 votes (50.76%) against the Congress(I)'s 1,704,755 votes (45.99%). The LF won 2 out of the 3 Calcutta seats, 1 out of the 5 Howrah seats, 16 of the 29 other Greater Calcutta or CMD seats and 6 other seats. Of the 14 seats won by the Congress(I), the majority were more clearly industrial seats than many of those won by the LF.

A new generation of voters

LF leaders have put forward the explanation that the Congress(I) won the votes of non-Bengali workers along linguistic lines. Even if this were the whole truth, it shows that after a decade of LF rule, class consciousness is overshadowed by "national," linguistic and caste identities.

As for the Front's weakness in Calcutta, that is due only partly to urban middle class hostility to the Front on a class basis. More important are factors such as rising unemployment (4.3 million for the entire province, as against the 35.4 million who figure in the voters' list), the coming of a new generation of voters who have not seen the Congress(I) in power at the provincial level, and the strong-arm tactics of the CPI(M) in its efforts to capture all institutions of civil society, particularly its action in crippling the functioning of Calcutta University ever since it failed to get its nominee elected to the post of vice-chancellor.

Having looked at the election statistics, it is necessary to turn to the background of the rise of the LF. That in turn will make it easier to understand the functioning of the Left Front government.

Bengal in pre-independence India, and West Bengal in independent India, had a long tradition of leftist politics. Sometimes this leftism was quite ill-defined, as with Subhas Chandra Bose and his Forward Bloc. But there was also an early development of the Communist movement.

Table 3
Votes polled by the LF and C(I) in Calcutta

	1977	1980	1982	1984	1987
LF	440,574 40.86%	536,668 43.13%	688,882 49.64%	571,938 37.04%	741,454 46.06%
C(I)	256,189 23.76%	524,229 42.13%	628,359 45.27%	920,141 59.6%	813,494 50.54%

Table 4
Assembly seats/Assembly share of parliamentary seats in Calcutta

	1977	1980	1982	1984	1987
LF	17	11	11	0	9
C(I)	1	11	11	22	13
Others	4	0	0	0	0

On the eve of independence, the CPI had led a major peasants' movement; and the CPI, and to a lesser extent the RSP, had formed significant components of the leadership of the post-war urban upsurge. Since independence, the left has led a number of major movements — one against the proposed merger of West Bengal with Bihar during the 1950s, two rounds of food movements, major popular movements protesting against US interventions in Korea, Vietnam and the imperialist conspiracy against Lumumba's government. By the 1960s, the CPI had emerged as the dominant left party. After the split in the CPI, the "left" faction, which took the name CPI(M), became the biggest left party.

In the 1967 elections, two popular fronts were formed, one led by the CPI(M) and the other by the CPI and a breakaway Congress faction calling itself the Bangla Congress. Despite their internal conflicts, they defeated the Congress. A short-lived United Front ministry was toppled by defectors. But in 1969 the UF swept back to power with a bigger majority.

The Bangla Congress pulled out of the UF, leading to its collapse. After some time, this unsettled period was brought to an end by the Congress, which rigged the 1972 elections. The trial run of the Emergency of 1975-77 [during which Indira Gandhi suspended parliamentary rule] was made in West Bengal in 1972-73.

By 1974, the CPI(M)-led Left Front was able to launch some movements. But the Emergency stopped those, at least partly because the CPI(M) adopted an ostrich-like policy of waiting till the storm blew over. However, even its passive opposition to the Emergency was enough for it to gain even more popular support than in the past. In 1977, the elections witnessed a mass upsurge, and the Congress was driven out of power.

Thus, when the LF came to power in 1977, it had almost unlimited credit from the masses. However, between 1976 and 1977, the CPI(M) had

changed greatly. Most of its revolutionary cadres had been Maoists who were purged or had left on their own after the peasants' movement in Naxalbari (North Bengal) was hailed as the beginning of the Indian revolution, and after the same movement had been attacked by the state government.

In spite of that, in 1967 and 1969, the CPI(M) had at least tried to play some kind of a militant role. But the fall of both UF governments had taught it a lesson. If it wanted to form a stable government, it could not permit the unhampered development of mass movements. Ever since 1977, it has proved time and again to the bourgeoisie that even if it carries out certain reformist measures, it will not rock the boat.

Limited reforms for the rural and urban poor

Thus, the LF's strategy since 1977 has had certain constant elements. Within bourgeois limits, it has carried out certain secondary reforms. These serve a dual purpose, as a study of the reforms shows. On the one hand, they have meant a real, if limited, benefit for sizeable sections of the rural poor, the urban middle classes, slum-dwellers, and so on. Among the measures taken was "Operation Barga" — the registration of sharecroppers — which has given them a better share of the produce and relative security from eviction.

About 800,000 acres of surplus land distribution is supposed to have benefited 1.64 million recipients. According to the National Sample Survey, the percentage of people below the poverty

1. In 1977, a large part of the traditional Congress vote went to the Janata Party. In the same year, the CPI was not a partner in the Left Front. Other left parties who won seats included: In 1977, SUCI (Socialist Unity Centre of India — a centrist group) 4 seats; a CPI(ML) faction 1 seat. In 1982, SUCI 2 seats. In 1987, SUCI 2 seats.

2. Congress(S) was a small split from the Congress(I), named after its leader, Sharad Pawar, who has now rejoined the Congress(I).

line has gone down from 59% in 1977 to 43.8% in 1983-84. Other rural reforms include a significant extension of irrigation.

The number of shallow tube-wells has risen from 78,000 in 1977 to a little less than a quarter of a million at present. Deep tube-wells are up from 174 to 454. Nearly 138,000 hectares of additional land is being brought under irrigation through a Rs156 crore (over \$110 million) World Bank-aided plan. Already, these have enabled a doubling of the third paddy crop production. Minor irrigation as a whole has gone up by over a half a million hectares in the decade of LF rule, which is a little more than the area covered in the three previous decades together.

Another important step was the holding of the *panchayat* (rural self-government bodies) elections. That has meant the election of peasants, in some cases poor peasants and agricultural labourers, to positions of authority. The *panchayats* play a not unimportant role in rural life, including such things as the generation of substantial employment for the rural poor, the maintenance of schools and so on.

The other side of all these has been the growing institutionalization of bourgeois political ideology. The LF has very clearly abjured the path of struggles, to which their government is supposed to be committed, both according to Marxist theory and their own previous political stance. The slogan "The Left Front Government is a Weapon of Struggle", has really meant that people should expect reforms from above and should not launch any movements unless the government gives them a go-ahead.

Left Front has shifted to the right

Militant forms of movement are particularly frowned upon. As the chief minister, Jyoti Basu, has put it several times, strikes are the ultimate weapons of the working class, and hence should be used sparingly. Other forms of movements once made popular by these very left parties, such as *gheraos* (forcing the management to stay inside their offices or the factory for prolonged periods) or road-blockades, have been denounced as unacceptable forms of agitation.

After one decade of rule, the Left Front has become a clearly electoral combine, which has dropped almost all pretences to social transformation, and which has shifted to the right — not only compared to 1967 but even to 1977.

The ideology of the Front, and especially of its major partner, the CPI(M), has become regionalist (or sub-

nationalist), reformist and anti-militant. To understand its precise nature, we have to understand the nature of leftist response to Bengal's economic crisis. Economically, Bengal entered a period of decline a long while ago. Ever since the British occupation, the city of Calcutta has sucked the province dry. With the transfer of the capital to Delhi in 1911, the advantages that had previously come to Calcutta began to disappear. To this has been added the fact that some of the major older industries are stagnating due to the owners' policies (for example, the jute mills have not been modernized for many decades, and their profits are taken away into other sectors and other provinces).

This prolonged crisis enabled the left to mobilize workers quickly. But they did so by putting forward catchy populist slogans. As a result, once in power, they found that they had no workable strategy, and certainly none that would fulfill the workers' aspirations.

The ideological response to this problem was fashioned above all by Dr. Ashoke Mitra, a former World Bank economist turned CPI(M) member, who served a stint as the LF's finance minister. In order to stave off criticisms of its failure to deliver the goods, the Front had talked a lot about the deprivations of West Bengal. Mitra gave it a precise content, and chalked out a campaign for the restructuring of the centre-state relations. Shorn of the verbiage, the basic position was that the state government could do little, because the constitution and the economic laws gave it too little political

and economic power. So, what was needed was a more federal type of constitution. Till then, the centre was to bail out the provincial government.

The curb on strikes and so on, mentioned earlier, was linked to this theory. Since the state government had so little power, agitations should not be directed against it, but only against the centre.

Reformist measures aimed at getting votes

Another element of the regime's ideological position was born out of the heritage of the anti-Bengal/Bihar merger agitation. Bengali sub-nationalism and the left were identified. By the early 1980s, the CPI(M) was identified more or less with the Bengali people all over eastern India. During the Assam movement, the CPI(M) took its stance not from any class consideration, but through its identification with the Bengali people.

In Tripura, its stance lost it a major part of its tribal base. Finally, in West Bengal itself, its hostility to the tribals' demand for a Jharkhand state including a part of West Bengal, and more recently its chauvinist campaign against the demand for a separate province for the Gorkhas, were based on Bengali sentiments.

Some of the arguments and the data put forward in the course of this campaign about the deprivation of Bengal are quite correct. But the LF made no attempt to explain such things in class terms.

The economic policy of the regime was in practice all too often a copy of the policies pursued by Congress governments. The reformist measures in the countryside were aimed at securing electoral support, not as the beginnings of vast rural struggles, which alone can fundamentally alter the class relations. The industrial policy consisted of advocating orderly settlement of disputes, central aid to "sick" mills, calling for nationalizations as a cure-all, and preventing the growth of any workers' struggles outside the Front's control — by any means, including the deployment of para-military and police forces.

In a decade, West Bengal has become one of the provinces having the least "labour troubles", with far more work-days being lost due to lock-outs or other actions taken by the employers than due to working-class struggles. This in turn has enabled the Front to convince the big monopoly houses and multinational corporations that West Bengal is a good place for their investments.

While the deals they strike — such as the Rs850 crore (\$607 million) Haldia petrochemical project with R. P. Goen-



ka — may generate some additional employment, and have some effect on the economy of the province as a whole, they will also, and inevitably, mean a more right-wing ideology of capital accumulation, one that tends to converge with the central government's strategy. Industrial workers and the unorganized workers in the "informal sector" will find the going even tougher.

Naturally, the LF has drawn fire from the left due to such policies. But it has weathered all such attacks. The only trade-union federation to make real gains at the expense of the unions allied to the LF has been the Congress-led INTUC. The dissident LF unionists and the far left have small pockets of influence. But none of them have anywhere near the ability to pose as an alternative across the province.

One of the factors behind the success of the LF has been its policy of systematic selective violence. The LF rode to power on a programme that promised to restore democratic rights. But the LF began foot dragging as soon as it came to power. Political prisoners, particularly those with definite Maoist connections, were released only gradually, and that after a prolonged prisoners' release campaign. At the same time, a policy of intimidation was adopted.

As early as 1977, workers in the Calcutta dock areas were shot at and killed by the police. The policy of terror had two main targets — the far left groups and the SUCI (a centrist formation) on the one hand, and working-class militants (including some who were initially supporters of the LF) on the other. The scope of the terror increased from 1982, when, taking advantage of the activities of a Maoist group calling itself the Second Central Committee of the CPI(ML), which believed in a policy of individual liquidation, the government decided to terrorize the Bengal countryside.

Police camps were set up all over the province, particularly in Nadia district and in parts of north Bengal. Between 1982 and 1987, the powers of the police have increased further. A notorious creation of the early 1970s, the "Anti-Naxalite Cell" of the Special Branch (the political police) has been revived, and the police officers who are responsible for torturing and killing many Maoists have been restored to that cell.

The CPI(M)'s youth and student wings, the Democratic Youth Federation of India and the Students Federation of India, have been pressed into service, particularly to tackle urban popular movements such as those protesting repeated hikes in public transport fares (three times in the last seven

sector workers' union), the Coordination Committee of the State Government Employees' Associations, the Krishakh Sabha (peasants), the DYFI, the SFI, the Ganatantrik Mahila Samity (women), several cultural organizations, bank employees' associations, etc. Through the *panchayats*, the party also controls a wider rural base. As long as the electoral options are this well structured, Left Front and the Congress(I), the victory of the LF is virtually assured.

The failure of the far left and the centrists is due to their inability to open up extra-parliamentary alternatives. The reasons for this are complex. The SUCI has been able to defend its base in South Bengal through all these years, but it has failed to make significant progress elsewhere. The far left (mainly Maoists) has also clung to its bases, but without making much of a gain.

One reason is the inability of these groups to put forward a revolutionary alternative. Since they, like the CPI(M), call for a "people's democratic revolution," they fail to challenge certain important class collaborationist principles of the CPI(M). As a result, a number of these organizations appear more as left pressure groups than revolutionary forces with an alternative strategy.

Another factor operating against them is the senseless splits that they undergo. The majority of the Maoists have basically similar positions, but they are still split up into nearly 20 organizations in West Bengal. This certainly does not inspire confidence in their abilities to lead political movements.

Given these failures, electoral participation for the Maoists often becomes divorced from general political practice, and leads them to the same "parliamentary cretinism" that they accuse the CPI(M) of falling prey to. Thus, one Maoist group contested the recent West Bengal polls in alliance with a Muslim minority communalist party, the IUML, which is in alliance with the Congress(I) in Kerala. Others fought with the slogan "Defeat the Congress(I)." Since they contested only a few seats, in effect this meant a



years).³

So the third term for the CPI(M)-led Left Front has been accompanied by a steady rightward swing in its orientation. During the elections, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's bluster about overthrowing the "red bastion", provoked a reaction among the people, and most political parties and commentators tend to agree that this consolidated the LF's position. But it would be wrong to find any left upsurge from that.

Indeed, the bourgeoisie, or large sections of it, would prefer to see the Front in power at present. The West Bengal Congress(I) presents a dismal, faction- and caucus-ridden corrupt picture. On the other hand, in the case of the Front, despite its decade in power, the number of ministers or party leaders who can be accused of such corruption are still limited.

Another reason why the people voted LF was that to a majority, the hoodlum years of 1972-77 and the Congress are still identified together. The CPI(M)'s effective propaganda about centre-state relations, and the projection of Jyoti Basu as the one leader who can stand up to the center, cater to Bengali sentiments. But above all, the fact is that electorally there is no alternative to the LF. The CPI(M)'s party machine is a powerful one, with units in every town and a majority of villages, either directly as party units, or through front organizations.

The party has numerous front organizations, including the CITU (private

3. For a discussion of the LF's attitude to democratic rights, see Nilanjan Dutta, *Violation of democratic rights in West Bengal since independence*, C.G. Shah Memorial Trust Publications, Bombay 1985.

call to vote the LF elsewhere. The problem that this slogan created for them was that they characterize the CPI(M) as a pro-bourgeois, or even "pro-social imperialist" party.

Excluding the CPI(ML) (For a New Democracy) faction, which contested the polls in alliance with the Muslim League, the far left put up 27 candidates, polling 78,079 votes out of a total of 25,570,190 votes casts in those districts.

Just as the failure of the far left reflects the fact that disappointment in the LF is not leading to any significant radicalization, other indicators show the direction of the people's consciousness. Two examples will show the trend. In 1967, when the first UF ministry took the oath of office, the rallies in its support were genuine expressions of popular aspiration for social change. In 1987, the victory rally of the LF was packed with youth who had not come walking with flags and so on, as in the past, but had been packed into trucks and vans, and with slogans and behaviour more often associated with the Congress youth organization.

The other instance is even more serious. Attendance in temples and mosques is steadily going up. To take only one example, the Temple of Tarakeswar has been getting more and more devotees throughout the past decade, with over two thirds of them falling in the under-30 age group. A feeling of hopelessness, lack of jobs or job-insecurity, coupled with the absence of a sharp secular ideological thrust by the left, has contributed to this.

Communal organizations have grown

Communal organizations have grown steadily. The Viswa Hindu Parishad has increased its activities. In response, Muslim communalism has also grown to the point where IUML could even make an electoral come-back in West Bengal after nearly two decades, wresting one seat away from the LF. The LF is not a patron of communalism. In recent years, the CPI in the Punjab and the CPI(M) in Kerala have taken bold stances against communalism. But the LF has also failed to make anti-communalism, especially anti-Hindu communalism, a permanent plank of its campaigns, because of its electoralist and reformist outlook.

Continued failure on this front may lead to the type of social tensions and riots already common in many other provinces of India. That these have not developed so far in West Bengal is more due to the residue of secular traditions among the people of West Bengal, and not to any achievement of the Left Front. ☆

Left victory in Kerala

THE VICTORY of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in the March legislative assembly elections in Kerala is regarded as a historic event.

To some left journalists, it is a repetition of 1957, when for the first time in India a Communist Party (the CPI) came to power in a state and subsequently carried out major reforms benefiting the low-caste Ezhava community. (It was thrown out of office by a decree of the central government in 1959.)

However, a closer analysis reveals that this is an exaggeration. The LDF's triumph was just another victory of the opportunist policies of the "left of the centre" parties. Moreover, in 1957, it was the undivided CP that came to power on its own.

VENUGOPAL

UNTIL THE LATE 1960s and early 1970s, the Communists and Congress were the main forces that could win state elections on their own. Now this is no longer possible, as a substantial fragmentation and communalization of Kerala politics has taken place.

So two basic coalitions now contest each other: the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the LDF.¹ The smaller parties play an important role in the LDF, be they bourgeois "secular", like the Janata and the Congress(S), or "communal", such as the Muslim League, Kerala Congress [a Christian party] and BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party, a Hindu communalist party].² Even the SRP — Socialist Republican Party, an Ezhava party — has to be wooed by the rival coalitions of LDF and UDF.

The present LDF coalition cannot be said to be a pure left alliance. Congress(S) and the Janata Party are partners in the alliance. The coalition also includes some non-party communalists, such as Mr. Lonappan Namabdan.

On the programmatic level, there was no difference between the LDF and the UDF. Except on the issues of law and order and police atrocities, the LDF did not manage to clearly differentiate itself from the policies of the UDF.

Despite all the drawbacks of the UDF, the rural poor were for them. To the rural poor, the danger of communalism, as projected by the LDF, had no meaning at all. Last year the CPI(M) officially renounced its political line of uniting against Congress at

all costs, that is, aligning with explicitly communal parties to defeat Congress.

In Kerala, the explicitly communal parties are the Kerala Congress, which represents Christians and has two wings, led by Joseph and Mani; the Indian Union Muslim League; and the BJP, which is based on the Hindu cultural organization Rashtriya Sevak Sangh (RSS). Christians make up roughly 20 per cent of Kerala's 26 million people, and Muslims about 30 per cent.

Belated break with communalism

The official refusal to ally with "communal" parties broke with the line established since 1964, when the CPI(M) was first formed. This change also led to a small split in the CPI(M) in Kerala and the formation of the Communist Marxist Party (CMP) led by M. V. Raghavan, perhaps the most dy-

1. The UDF includes Congress(I), the Indian Union Muslim League, both wings of the Kerala Congress, one wing of the Socialist Republican Party (SRP) and the National Democratic Party (the party of the upper-caste Nayers). The LDF includes the Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Janata Party (a right-wing party), Congress(S), and one wing of the SRP. (See following footnote.)

2. Congress(S) — a bourgeois split off from the Congress(I) whose most prominent leader was Sharad Pawar. He was the former chief minister of Maharashtra. In fact, Sharad Pawar of the Congress(S) in Maharashtra reintegrated himself into the Congress(I) some months ago. The Kerala unit of the Congress(S) refused to do so, remaining in opposition to the Congress(S) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by it.

dynamic youth leader in the Kerala CPI(M). In the Muslim Malabar region, where the CPI(M) traditionally had a strong presence, the CMP took away perhaps 15 per cent of the CPI(M) cadres. It is not strong elsewhere.

Even this belated break with communalism had a catch that made it quite different than it seemed on the surface. The CPI(M) leaders focused their their "anti-communalism" almost entirely against the parties of the minorities that they considered communalist.

In the selection of candidates and in its propaganda activities, the LDF was keen to pamper communal interests. What they did was to select candidates belonging to the vote banks in each constituency. And they tried to buy the Hindu votes by saying that only they can oppose the danger of minority communalism. This paid them high dividends. As BJP had no chance of winning the elections, the desperate Hindu communalists voted for the LDF.

Muslim candidates chosen in many constituencies

Its "anti communal" stand helped the CPI(M) in another way also — helping them to attract more Hindus. A recent feature of Kerala politics is that more and more young people are going away from CPI(M) to the RSS and the BJP. The new policy was intended to stop this flow.

After the date of the elections was announced, the communalism of the LDF became very clear. In the Malapurram district of Malabar (where the Muslim community is the dominant one), they chose Muslim candidates for many constituencies. Special mention should be made of Guruvayoor, where the Muslim League candidate (UDF) was opposed by a CPI(M)-supported independent candidate, who is notorious all over northern Kerala for his stance on the Barbari Masjid issue [see box].

Even arch communalists were afraid of this man's extreme position. In the Neyyattinkara Taluk [sub-district], in all the five constituencies, LDF candidates belonged to the same Christian sect. The LDF also started communal propaganda. In one constituency, the CPI candidate, in public, exhibited his birth certificate to prove that he belonged to the Ezhava community.³ This was to counter the UDF argument that he was not an Ezhava.

To woo the Ezhavas of the south, the LDF projected the name of an Ezhava politician as the next chief minister. This had an interesting epilogue. When the LDF won the elections, the CPI(M) decided on a non-Ezhava, E. K. Nayanar, as their leader. Now momentum is building up within the CPI(M) against this "betrayal". The oath-taking cere-

The Barbari Masjid Affair

The Barbari Masjid affair is an extremely sensitive issue that flared up in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It refers to a mosque [masjid] that is said to be located in the birthplace of the mythological hero of the Hindu epic, the Ramayana, Lord Rama. There is a shrine to Rama there. So, the issue is known as the Barbari Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi (Rama's birthplace) affair.

In view of the sensitivity of the issue in the face of counter claims as to the rightful control of the place (the mosque and the Hindu shrine are next to each other), the place had been sealed off for some time until a local judge took it upon himself to order it opened up for Hindu pilgrims last year. This led to a major communal riot between Muslims and Hindus. Hindu communalist groups in Uttar Pradesh had long been agitating for just such an opening of the gates. ★

mony of the LDF ministers witnessed noisy scenes, and posters are coming out vigorously against this "discrimination" of the leadership.

An analysis of the election results proves beyond doubt that the victory of the LDF was not a victory of the anti-communal, secular forces. Internal rivalries and groupism within the Congress(I) rebels and the many independent candidates in every constituency were some of the reasons for the LDF victory. The candidates of the LDF were young, sincere, smart and not corrupt when compared to the UDF candidates. This also helped the LDF, as the new voters chose to vote for the candidates who had a clean background.

The most striking feature of this election is the emergence of the BJP as a strong political force. In three constituencies — two of them in Malabar — they came in second, pushing the LDF into third position.

CPI(M) losing its traditional base

In the last elections, the BJP could not make a good showing even in a single constituency. But now, in 29 constituencies, the LDF won only because of the presence of BJP, which cut into votes that would otherwise have gone to the UDF. Wherever the BJP thought it would win and mustered all its votes, the LDF lost. From this it can be assumed that many BJP votes went in to the LDF.

In this election, one fact emerged that may disturb the leaders of the CPI(M) for a long time to come — they are losing some of their traditionally "safe" areas. In the 1987 elections, the CPI(M) lost heavily in Malabar. Many of the seats (which were previously "safe") in this area went to the UDF.

It was from Malabar that the CPI(M) had a strong base in the past. Malabar is the area that saw many peasants and proletarian struggles led by the Communists. In the northern district of Kasargode, they could win only one seat — that of E. K. Nayanar. The process of alienation from the masses in the early 1970s has spread all over the north. This is evidence for our view

that the CPI(M) is increasingly becoming a petty-bourgeois organization. In another sense, it is also the result of the reformist path it has followed.

For the first time, the CPI(M) came to power due to the support of the people belonging to the southern districts. But this support cannot be taken for granted forever. In the past this area has never consistently backed any party or coalition. This time, they voted for the LDF only because of their opposition to a corrupt, inefficient and non-functioning government. This support may not last long. But at the same time, the victory of the UDF in the northern region is a gain for them in every sense.

Though the LDF would not be able to do much to defeat communalism, we think that this LDF victory can objectively stimulate the construction of a genuine Left Front in Kerala. Only such a genuine secular alliance of all the left forces can effectively fight the growing threat posed by majority and minority communalism in Kerala.

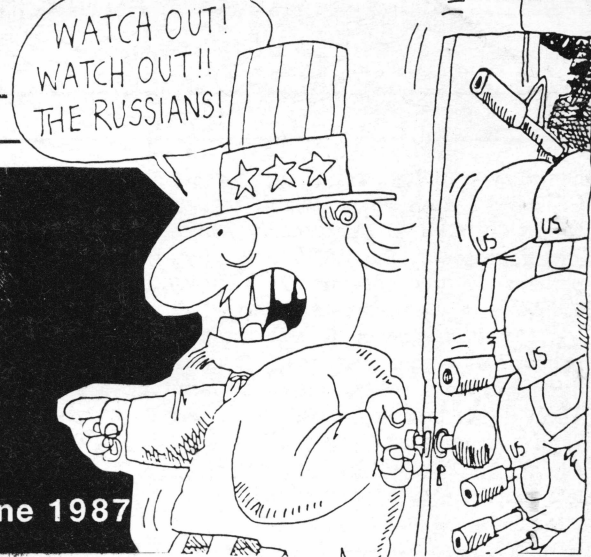
Particularly disturbing is the rise of various forms of Hindu communalism as reflected in the growth of the BJP, the RSS and such new cultural-political offshoots as the Hindu Munnani, or Hindu Front, which ran for the first time in the March elections, winning over 300,000 votes. ☆

3. The Ezhavas are not Untouchables, but are among the lower castes, and are also the single biggest caste among the Hindus of Kerala. Traditionally, they worked as toddy tappers [those who tap the juice of coconut trees], agricultural labourers and poor farmers, loaders in transport and so on. Historically they constituted the most important support base for Kerala Communists, and it was their bloc support that brought the CPI to power in 1957. However, over the decades, the Ezhavas have experienced substantial economic differentiation, with many layers becoming more prosperous. This has meant that the CPI and CPI(M) have lost their unitary dominance among Ezhavas. Many of the caste continue to support the Communists, but others support the Congress, and they also have their own explicit Ezhava party, called the Socialist Republican Party (SRP), which is divided into two wings.

Although the Ezhavas are now economically stronger and have considerable political clout, they are still socially backward. For example, they lag far behind other communities in education, and are thus demanding affirmative action, such as special quotas in government-controlled schools and colleges and for jobs in government concerns. This has been resented by others, such as Brahmins, who, while of socially high status and with educational advantages, have seen an erosion of their economic and political position.

Solidarity with the peoples of Central America

Statement of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, June 1987



ON JULY 19, Nicaragua will celebrate the eighth anniversary of its victory over the hated US-controlled Somoza dictatorship.

In those eight years the need for international solidarity with the heroic people of Sandino has grown as Washington has escalated its war — aimed at trying to bring down the revolutionary government led by the FSLN and return the Nicaraguan people to their former state of servitude and domination.

IN EL SALVADOR, the September 1986 earthquake which destroyed much of the capital city brought even greater suffering to the Salvadoran people, while the Salvadoran bourgeoisie raked in millions through even more graft and corruption. But the increasingly discredited Duarte regime, armed and financed by US imperialism, has since then been on the defensive.

The Salvadoran workers and peasants have pressed their demands with new determination and better organization, especially in the urban centres. The founding of the UNTS in February 1986 and the increased military capacity of the FMLN both indicate the political advances of the revolutionary forces in El Salvador.

The fate of the revolutions in El Salvador and Nicaragua are intertwined. Any advance of the workers and peasants of El Salvador strengthens the hand of the Nicaraguan people. Any setback in Nicaragua would place an even heavier burden on the national liberation forces of El Salvador, Guatemala and the rest of Central America.

US imperialism understands this well. From 1979 on, US aggression against the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean has intensified. Honduras and Costa Rica have been transformed into bases of military operations for imperialist forces and an army of mercenaries, the "contras". Joint manoeuvres, involving tens of thousands of US troops, have been repeatedly carried out on Honduran soil. The Caribbean basin has been the arena of numerous joint naval operations, costing more than the entire Malvinas war. Against the

will of the Puerto Rican people, the US has turned its Caribbean colony into a military base used to threaten the entire region. Salvadoran military forces have been trained in the US and armed with a new generation of weapons, such as those used in the war against the Vietnamese people.

Contra army defeated politically and militarily

In Nicaragua, despite the hundreds of millions of dollars and the logistical backing of the CIA and US military forces, the people of Nicaragua have politically and militarily defeated the contra army.

The capacity of the Nicaraguan government to politically disarm the counter-revolution in the vast region of the Atlantic Coast by audaciously pursuing its historic Autonomy Project has set an example of special importance.

But the capacity of the contra forces to inflict economic damage and exact a cruel toll of lives will continue as long as it is funded by US dollars. Moreover, the US economic blockade has further aggravated the economic crisis. Pressure on vulnerable countries like Mexico and Venezuela to cut definitively Nicaragua's lifeline of oil supplies has placed Nicaragua under enormous pressure, dependent as it is on tankers from the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries on the other side of the globe. And even those supplies do not meet the growing needs created by the imperialist aggression.

Opposition among the US people to

Washington's war against Nicaragua and US military operations in Central America continues to grow, expressed by the mobilization of some 200,000 in the streets of Washington and San Francisco last April 25, and by the thousands of US citizens, young people especially, who travel to Nicaragua each year as *brigadista* volunteers.

This broad opposition to US policy in Central America is one factor underlying Contragate, the US government crisis that continues to deepen.

That crisis, however, by no means signifies an end to bi-partisan Democratic and Republican party support and funding for the contras. On the contrary, both parties have sought to keep all options open to renew or even increase the \$100 million voted to fund the contras in 1987. Whether the contras will be kept alive by US imperialism for another year of murder and destruction will be decided in struggle over the coming months. The scope of international solidarity with the peoples of Central America — from street mobilizations to work brigades to material aid campaigns — will weigh in that struggle.

The International Executive Committee of the Fourth International calls on all who support the right of self-determination of the peoples of Central America to redouble their efforts.

- End US intervention in Central America. No aid to the contras. International solidarity to assure Nicaragua the resources needed to defeat imperialist aggression.

- End all aid to the Salvadoran regime. All US military advisors out of El Salvador. Step up solidarity for the people of El Salvador.

- Support material aid campaigns for Nicaragua, such as "Nicaragua must survive", "A flower for Nicaragua and peace for Central America", "Tools for peace", "Quest for peace" and many others.

- We call on working people — especially young people — from every country to join the work brigades in Nicaragua, offering their skills and energies to assure that imperialism's goals will not be realized. ☆