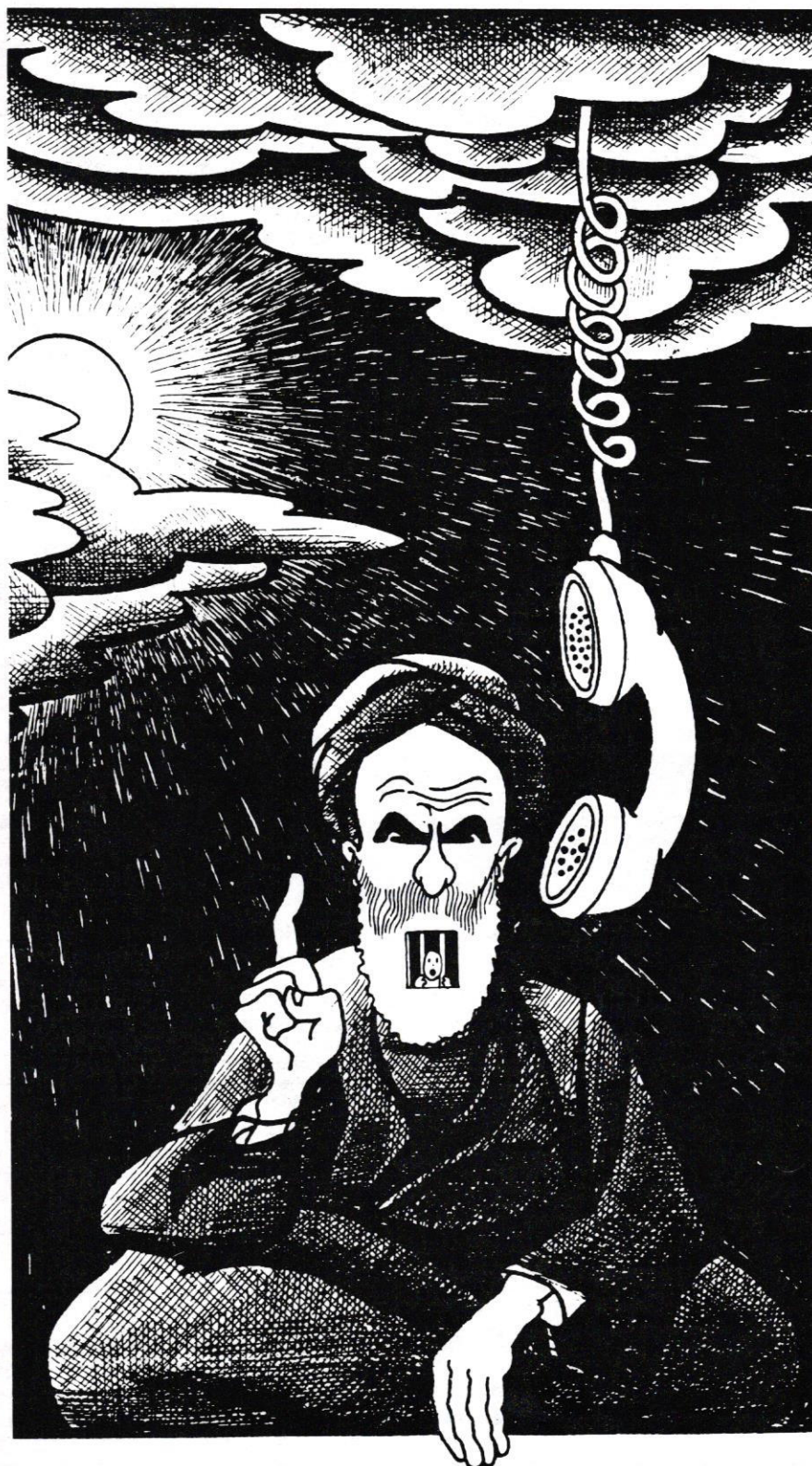


International VIEWPOINT

Issue 160

April 3, 1989

£0.85; \$2; C\$2.75; 12FF



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International VIEWPOINT

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

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

Published by Presse-Edition-Communication (PEC). Directeur de publication: Christian Lamotte. Commission paritaire: 84324. ISSN: 0294-2925. Imprimé par Rotographie.

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

- News closing date: March 27, 1989

Subscribe now!

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

Subscriptions and correspondence to International Viewpoint, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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"We are all Salman Rushdies"

BECAUSE a writer born into a Bombay Muslim family indulged himself in a literary fantasy by making irreverential allusions to the Prophet of Islam and his entourage, for more than two months we have been witnessing what history will doubtless record as the biggest literary scandal of the twentieth century.

SALAH JABER

FROM the burning of Rushdie's book in Britain and the bloody demonstrations on the Indian subcontinent to the death sentence pronounced by Khomeini, the Grand Inquisitor, this is an unprecedented international campaign of fanaticism — the first in the age of satellite communication.

What is the reason for this flood of hate? A few pages of a novel with symbolic characters, which does not pretend to be anything other than a fictional work? Are they a more intolerable offense to Islam than the thousands of writings and speeches, overtly racist or more hypocritical, that have abounded in the

Western world for some years on the theme of the Muslim religion? Why is the hate of the Islamic fanatics not unleashed against the new crusaders of the Christian West? Why are there nowhere near as many people mobilized when fanatical Zionists in Jerusalem "profane" Islam's second holiest place?

Protecting Rushdie with condescending hypocrisy

Is Salman Rushdie a greater danger to Islam than its detractors among racists or fanatics of other religions? For Islam, certainly not; but for Islamic fanaticism, most certainly yes! Indeed, if Rushdie had belonged to one of the categories of those who abhor Islam because they abhor the Muslim peoples, he would not have been harassed.

For the fanatics of fundamentalist Islam, it would have been in the nature of things according to their conception. In fact, fanaticism always feeds on its fanatical opposite number: as Islamic fundamentalism feeds on anti-Muslim racism, or Zionism on anti-Semitism. Or again as "Western Christian" fanaticism feeds on anti-Christian or anti-Western Islamic fanaticism.

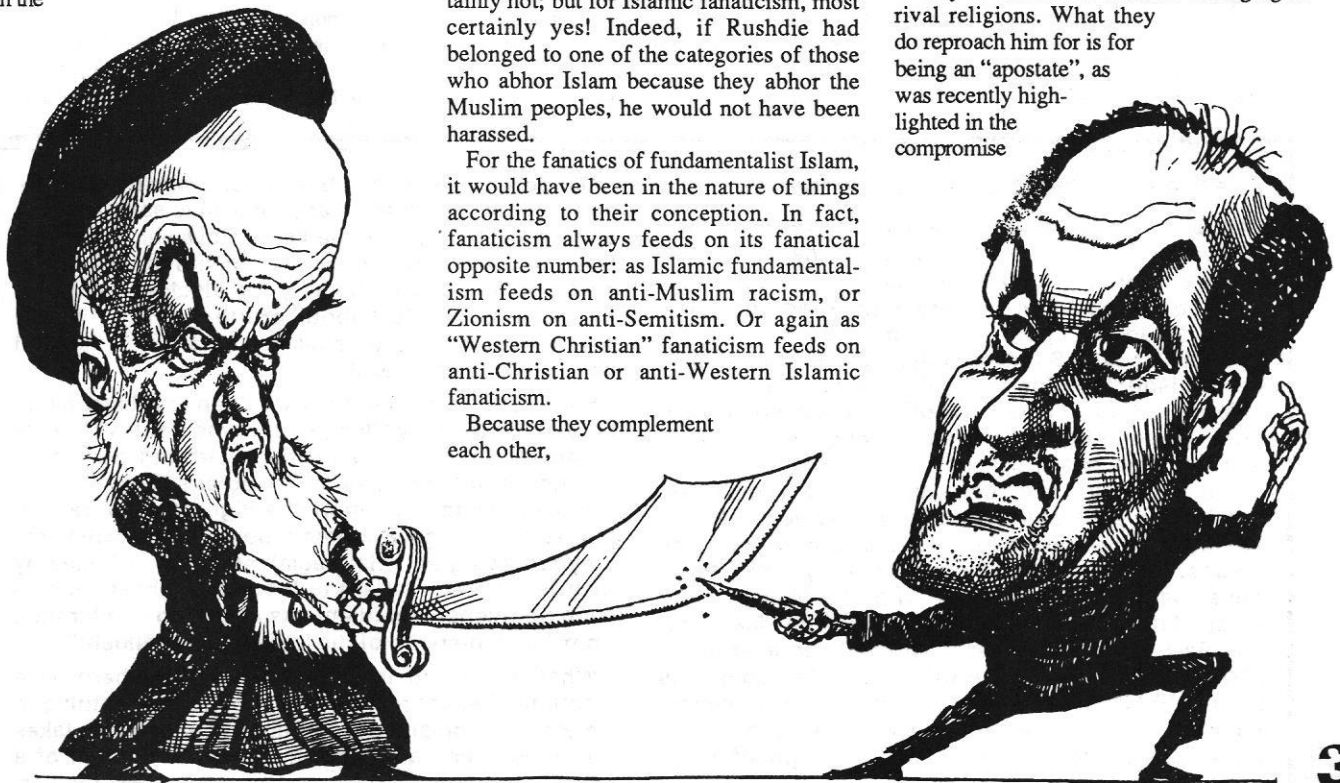
Because they complement each other,

moreover, those for whom Rushdie is only a pretext for a campaign of agitation! Those who are calling for his head to stir up crowds of the wretched of the earth, letting off steam gratuitously against a scapegoat who, in their ignorance, they blame for all the forms of oppression that they endure. And equally those who denounce the latter, protecting with their condescending hypocrisy a man who, in their eyes, belongs to a religion incompatible with their "values", a religion whose sole authentic expression is supposedly fundamentalism. Two premises shared in their entirety by the two camps: as much by Muslim fanatics as by anti-Muslims.

A symbol of the only real danger for fanaticism

If Rushdie has become the incarnation of evil in the eyes of Islamic fundamentalists, it is precisely and solely because he is of Muslim origin. He cannot be accused of anti-Muslim racism in a way that reinforces the fanatics' conception of the world. As demonstrated by his works on India and Pakistan, his fight is unequivocally for freedom of thought, for secularism, for opposition to religious fanaticism. In this sense, he effectively symbolizes the only real source of danger for Islamic fanaticism: a challenge from within. This is something that cannot be compared to foreign hostility, which is always welcome because it is a source of self-justification.

Thus, what the obscurantists reproach Rushdie for is not so much for being a "blasphemer" — there are as many blasphemers of Islam as of any religion, whether they be atheists or fanatics belonging to rival religions. What they do reproach him for is for being an "apostate", as was recently highlighted in the compromise



Iran-Saudi communiqué from the recent Islamic conference held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The message to the West is clear: we have no intention of stepping on your toes; we want Rushdie's head because he is a product of the Muslim world. We respect your "values", but they cannot be applied to our peoples. This is a message that has already been received by certain God-fearing types in the imperialist, Christian West: after all, the Rushdie affair is only a "Muslim quarrel"....

For their part, the obscurantists of other religions have not missed the opportunity to form a united front to make it known that they cannot allow Rushdies in their own communities — Christians, Jews or others, by expressing their comprehension of their Muslim counterparts' feelings when confronted by the "intolerable blasphemy" of the writer, have demonstrated their own fears that the Rushdie affair will become an incitement to free thinking.

As opposed to these obscurantists of all kinds, "against fanaticism and intolerance" as a petition of intellectuals from the Muslim countries that was published in Paris put it, "we are all Salman Rushdies". The affair of *The Satanic Verses* must be not only the occasion for a campaign in defence of freedom of expression in the West, but also and above all for a campaign for democratic freedoms in those countries that do not enjoy them — to the extent where their governments even want to limit them abroad.

The Rushdies who live in these countries must also be able to express themselves freely, because so long as a large section of humanity remains in chains no freedom can be irreversibly won. The defence of Salman Rushdie is not one of "Western values" against "Eastern culture"; it is one of the right of all to free expression, including those in the East. ★

Rushdie caught in tide of censorship

NO BOOK in recent times has caused such literary and political uproar as Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. It has been banned in most of the Islamic world as well as "secular" India and South Africa. In France and Italy, publishers have "delayed" its appearance; but in the countries where it is available, despite (or because of) the campaign for it to be banned or boycotted, its sales are soaring.

Now the European Community has withdrawn its diplomats from Iran because of the call from spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini and other Iranian leaders for Muslims to slay Salman Rushdie.

AHMAD SHUJA

FOR THE LAST couple of months, almost every weekend in one town or another in Britain there have been organized demonstrations against the supposedly "blasphemous" *Satanic Verses*. In Bolton and Bradford [towns with large Muslim populations in north of England] the book was publicly burned, "to attract public attention", according to one of the organizers. This served to horrify millions of people in Britain and non-Islamic countries, recalling the book-burning of Nazi Germany.

On February 12, five demonstrators

were shot dead by police in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, when a huge demonstration led by mullahs tried to attack the American Centre in protest against the planned publication of *The Satanic Verses* in the USA. Not one of the demonstrators had seen, never mind read, the book: indeed ordinary Muslims are not allowed to read any book that has been declared blasphemous — only religious scholars have this privilege.

However, the Islamic world is divided on its response. Hashem El Essawy, chair of the Islamic Society for the Promotion of Religious Tolerance (the organization that started and has led the campaign against

Leaving the field to the right wing

ONE of the most striking images conjured up by the campaign against Rushdie's book is that of Muslim leaders in Bradford burning a copy of the book outside the City Hall. Two leaders of the Bradford Council of Mosques apparently supported the call for Rushdie's death. Subsequently, they claimed to have been misquoted. The Council excused itself, saying "We are not politicians". The officials concerned were only speaking in religious terms; they say they only support legal, peaceful action.

Such confusion has been typical of the whole affair, not helped by local and national newspapers that seem to have deliberately avoided clarifying the issues. Some leading figures in the Labour Party have identified themselves with the Muslim campaign, if not with every detail or tactic. The local Euro-MP, Barry Seal, who is leader of the Labour Group in Strasbourg, spoke at the rally where the book was burnt. MP Max Madden signed a motion in parliament supporting the extension of the blasphemy laws and, more recently, has called for a Muslim "right of reply" to be inserted in the book.

Madden claims he has been misrepresented by the news media, and both he and Seal have said that they oppose the banning of the book. However, they have failed to make clear public statements of this principled position — presumably for electoral reasons. The local council's Labour group, some of whose Asian members have called for a ban, has decided not to take any position!

Such caution has left the field open to others. Members of the Monday Club [an extreme right-wing Tory organization] have been running around posing as defenders of "free speech". Needless to say, this is not because they support the vigorous anti-racism that runs through Rushdie's book. Their claim that they are trying to "relax racial tensions" is belied by their leaflets and letters to the press. These include such traditional ingredients as an end to immigration from "the hinterland of the Indian sub-continent".

What is needed in Bradford, as elsewhere, is a labour movement response that concedes nothing to clerical reaction and censorship, but which also takes up the Muslim campaign in the wider context of a racist society. ★

Paul Hubert

The Satanic Verses in Britain), insists that he is not in favour of burning or banning the book, and considers such actions as un-Islamic. He is also reported to be totally against the death sentence being passed against Rushdie. Scholars from the Al Azhar mosque in Egypt, viewed as the world's leading centre of Islamic teaching for the majority Sunni Muslims, have disputed Khomeini's right to order a death sentence, saying the edict contravenes Islamic law.

Why Muslims find the book insulting

The reason for the whole furore is that Muslims believe the book to be an insult to their very religion. Rushdie's novel is named after two verses that the prophet Mohammed removed from the Koran after the capture of Mecca by his followers, believing that the verses had been inspired by Satan masquerading as the Angel Gabriel.

The implication is that Mohammed may have done this to deceive the people of Mecca. Worse, it implies that Mohammed, not God, may be the author of the Koran. For the followers of other religions and non-believers all this may not make much sense; but for Muslims it is an intolerable insult, because for them the Koran, syllable for syllable, word for word, is the word of God.

The loudest objection against Rushdie's novel is to pages 363-4, which describe the prophet's revelations as "sprouting rules about every damn thing from how deeply a believer should sleep to which sexual positions had received divine sanction, so that they learned that sodomy and the missionary position were approved, whereas the forbidden postures included all those in which the woman was on top".

In another sequence, prostitutes in a brothel are given the names of the prophet's nine wives. There is in all a 12-point list of extracts from the novel that the mullahs find objectionable.

But there is no doubt that the campaign against the book is to some extent politically inspired. In India, the elections are due within one year, and Rajiv Gandhi knows the importance of 100 million Muslim votes. In Pakistan, the demonstrations that brought deaths and hundreds of injuries were led by opponents of the new regime of Benazir Bhutto. "Was it a genuine protest?" she asked, "or was it rather a protest by those people who lost the election, or those people [who benefited from martial law], to try to destabilize the process of democracy? The dying order always likes to give a few kicks before it goes to rest".

A political motive is also a factor in the Iranian stance, not only in Khomeini's bid to take the leadership of the world's 1 billion Muslims, but also in the need for his regime to find a new external enemy on



which to focus domestic discontent in the aftermath of the disastrous war with Iraq.

At the same time there should be no doubt that Muslim feelings are genuinely hurt. Islam has not undergone any reformation or experienced any "Age of Enlightenment". Doubts about the origin and teachings of the Koran are forbidden. The prophet Mohammed, however disguised with fictional names (as in *The Satanic Verses*), his family, and his original companions are seen as beyond reproach.

Rushdie is not the only victim of censorship

The problem is not restricted to Rushdie's book. The works of one of Egypt's greatest Nobel Prize-winning novelists, Nequib Mahfouz, are banned in his own country — and Egypt is relatively liberal. Jordanian writer Fadia a Faqir, also banned in Egypt, complained recently in the *Times Literary Supplement* against the "rising tide of censorship and intimidation in almost all of the Islamic world". On the other side, a Saudi Arabian group has declared a *jihad* (holy war) against "modernism" itself.

Some moderate Muslims who have no time for mullahs or fundamentalists still feel that Rushdie's novel has produced the opposite of the effect the author desired, and has served instead to strengthen the hand of the fundamentalists among ordinary Muslims. The whole affair has triggered a wider debate: who defines what is Islamic and what is un-Islamic?

The terms can quickly change. Not long

ago, when Pakistan dictator Zia ul-Haq carried out barbaric punishments against hundreds of his countrymen and women — for no greater crime than voicing political opinions or protesting against Zia's new Islamic code — the mullahs applauded him or kept quiet. Where were the protests of the likes of Hashem El Essawy against Zia's barbarism, or against the beatings and torture carried out by fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami louts against their opponents?

Only after some artists and writers had the courage to make a film exposing the treatment of women in Zia's Islamic Republic were there belated screams by "sophisticated, enlightened Muslims" in this country claiming that the (now safely dead) Zia had "only exploited the name of Islam". By then the climate had changed, and any association with Zia's dreadful regime had become a liability. Yesterday's Islam became "un-Islamic" overnight!

Zia's anti-woman Islamic Code

Under Zia's Islamic Code it was declared that the evidence of two women, even in a rape case, would be equal to that of one man. The religious leaders who formulated this code were quite indifferent to the insult and misery it must have caused millions of Muslim women throughout the world.

Muslim leaders, including the Islamic Society for "Religious Tolerance", who now shed tears for the hurt caused by Rushdie's book would do well to dwell on the feelings of the Bahais in Iran and the

Ahmadis in Pakistan, who are constant targets of abuse and vilification from the mullahs. The Ahmadis worship the same God as other Muslims, regard the Koran as their holy book, say prayers like other Muslims — but were, under pressure from religious leaders, declared non-Muslim by the regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Advocates of “religious tolerance” might be taken more seriously if they campaigned for better treatment of these victims of the mullahs, and for equal rights for women, and showed some concern for the plight of non-Muslims (like Pakistani Sindhis, who were forced by fear and intimidation to leave Pakistan, and long to return home).

Socialists must defend Salman Rushdie

Unfortunately, the anti-Rushdie Muslims have now been joined in Britain by the “I am against censorship, but...” brigade, and the lobby for the extension of the blasphemy laws [which apply only to blasphemy against the Christian religion]. This dangerous and ill-advised group of people are unwittingly playing into the hands of the reactionary elements, many of whom would happily step up such censorship but equally happily drive out Britain’s Muslims — along with any other Black people, and any representatives of “alien culture”.

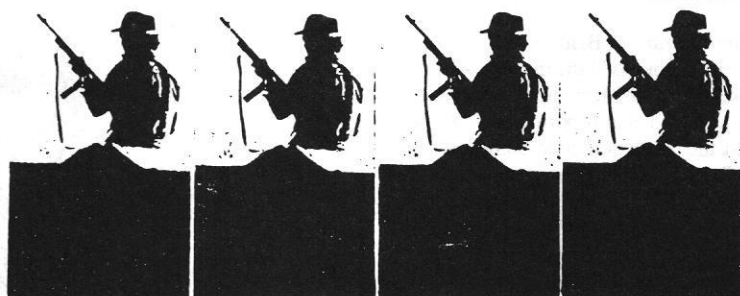
An equally dangerous response comes from Labour member of parliament Max Madden, who has joined Hashem El Essawy and others in demanding that a short statement from Muslim critics be “inserted in the book or displayed in bookshops or libraries”, explaining to those who choose to buy or borrow the book why some Muslims find it offensive. This they term “a modest right to reply”.

Why do they stop at *The Satanic Verses*? What about Darwin’s *The Origin of the Species* (still banned from schools in parts of the USA)? What about the *Communist Manifesto*, or the holy books of all the main religions — each of which contains passages that followers of other religions find offensive? If this ludicrous suggestion were taken to its conclusion, almost every book would include at least one “short statement” and bookshops would need to erect new walls on which to pin up objections to books on sale!

Socialists must defend Salman Rushdie; but by no means all his would-be defenders are socialist or progressive. [Press baron] Robert Maxwell, for example, in a signed editorial in the *Sunday Mirror* on February 19 urged the British government, among other things, to tell the Iranians that “all Iranians, except proven enemies of Ayatollah Khomeini, will be sent home”.

With “friends” like Robert Maxwell, Salman doesn’t need enemies. ★

■ **This article is reprinted from the**
6 British monthly Socialist Outlook,
March 13, 1989.



Electoral victory for ARENA in El Salvador

THE VICTORY of Alfredo Cristiani, Alliance for National Renewal (ARENA) candidate in the March 19 presidential election, must not be interpreted as a sign of popular support for this ultra-rightist and militarist bourgeois force.

In the first place, most Salvadorans did not vote. A million people are supposed to have voted out of a total of 2.2 million entitled to cast ballots, from a population of 6 million. That indicates the support for the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the National Union of Salvadoran workers (UNTS), who called a boycott and a widely observed transport strike.

Participation in this election was even lower than in the previous one in 1984. Cristiani has declared that he got 54% (500,000 votes). His main rival, Chavez Mena of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), claims 30%. Moreover, the vote for ARENA first of all reflects a rejection of the outgoing president, Duarte, and of the PDC. In the absence of a sufficiently credible left alternative, the tactical vote against Duarte went to ARENA, as in the 1988 legislative elections.

Finally, ARENA focused its campaign against Duarte, temporarily putting aside its line of confrontation with the mass movement and the FMLN. It even claimed to be in agreement with the popular movement, moderating its privatization proposals.

In the days preceding the elections, Washington seemed to have given up on a Christian Democratic victory (and the massive electoral fraud that that would have involved). A US spokesperson said that he was awaiting the result of the elections tranquilly because, while the Christian Democrats were not being abandoned, he was pleased to note that that ARENA had “moved toward the center.”¹ Nonetheless, ARENA’s victory is going to increase the social polarization.

ARNOLD BERTU

THE FMLN's political and military offensive dominated the presidential election. For nearly two months, the FMLN has been taking a daring political initiative. For the first time in nine years, it pledged not to boycott the elections if they were postponed for six months so that they could be held in a democratic way. That meant ending the repression; no intervention by the army during the election campaign and that it stayed in barracks on voting day; including Convergencia Democratica into the Central Elections Commission; amending the election law to make it more democratic; and finally making it possible for exiled Salvadorans to vote (at least 500,000 live in the US).

This proposal aggravated the crisis of the ruling-class parties and put the new Bush administration on the spot. In fact, it caused such disarray that all the political parties and authorities of the regime, including the army general staff, had to take positions and act in the greatest confusion.

Initially, President Duarte declared that the FMLN's proposal could not be considered because it was unconstitutional. (According to the constitution, Duarte has to turn over his office to his successor in June 1989). He had to go back on this quickly, when US vice-president Quayle visited El Salvador and said that the FMLN proposal had some positive points.

So as not to be left behind, ARENA, which could expect to win if the elections were held on March 19 as scheduled, proposed a temporary amnesty to enable the FMLN commanders to come to the capital to participate in dialogue with the Legislative Assembly. Of course, this was a maneuver designed to mollify the US and the Salvadoran people, who are enthusiastic supporters of dialogue.

Existence of real dual power

Nonetheless, the mere fact that such a proposal was made — for welcoming "terrorist criminals," as they are called in the propaganda of all the right-wing parties, into the Legislative Assembly — reflects quite well the existence of real dual power in the country.

Finally, the ruling-class parties [see box], unable to reject the FMLN's offer out of hand, went, together with Convergencia Democratica, to Mexico February 21-22 to meet the guerrilla commanders. After many other vicissitudes, the elections went ahead on March 19.

At the same time, in the people's camp, an initial form of unity (a very fragile one, to be sure) was achieved between the main anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist mass organization, UNTS, and what remains of the people's organizations that supported Duarte — the National Workers' and Peasants' Union (UNOC). UNTS, which has

more than 400,000 members (wage workers, peasants, students, and so on) and UNOC, which has about 200,000 members and is subsidized by the US, joined together on February 11 to declare that there had to be dialogue with the FMLN and to challenge the ruling parties' monopoly on representing the masses.

While the UNOC leadership for the first time, under the pressure of its rank and file, joined with UNTS, it nonetheless continued to support the PDC's official candidate, Fidel Chavez Mena. For their part, the Christian Base Communities, which organize major sections of the masses through the parishes, were preparing the people for action.

"Our people are preparing the decisive blow"

In a long communiqué published in the daily *El Mundo* of February 9, the Christian Communities draw a parallel between the Biblical past and the present that did not beat around the bush²: "Moses [the vanguard] did consciousness-raising and organizational work...A verbal confrontation took place with the pharaoh. The people put forward their demands, and they were rejected. Repression increased....A section of the people hesitated, the majority remained determined....In the face of the pharaoh's refusal, the people resorted to violence in its most painful form. Through this violence, the people attacked sections of the regime....The people undertook the march toward the promised land....The pharaoh took the road of defeat.

"Our people are passing through the same process. Today, our people...are preparing to strike the decisive blow. The God of the poor has been and will be victorious.

"Against the people's struggle, the regime is hardening its position....This hardening is the result of fear of losing all the labor it exploits. It is making the regime act in a blind and irrational way and take the road leading to its defeat...

"The Salvadoran regime is taking a harder line. It is resorting constantly to more repression, and it is less and less inclined to honest negotiation....The importance of what is emerging here exceeds the Salvadoran framework. This is a confrontation with the American empire.

"It will mean not only our victory but that of many Latin-American peoples and of the poor in general."

By its radicalism, this message broke from the official line of the Catholic hierarchy, which is holding to a temporizing position far behind that taken by Monsignor Romero, who was assassinated nine years ago, in March 1980. In such a polarized situation, this sort of language is striking a greater and greater chord.

The FMLN's proposal not only exposed the impasse of the PDC, which is supported by the US, but also that of ARENA, which had to maneuver to reject the

FMLN's offer while trying to show that it was well disposed to dialogue.

The way in which the proposal was formulated could not help but attract the support of the masses and create big problems for the regime and the US. Subsequently, at the time of the meeting in Mexico, the FMLN posed a new condition, a purge of the government's armed forces and a drastic reduction in their numbers (from 60,000 to 12,000). This proposal got an enthusiastic reception in the popular camp, and put the army in a tight corner.

The FMLN made its proposal from a position of strength. Militarily, it is continuing to increase its firepower. This is shown by its tighter control over more than 30 per cent of national territory, and the range of its action, which includes the entire country (the cities as well as the countryside).

On Monday, February 21, when the dialogue began in Mexico, the FMLN launched attacks in all 14 departments of the country and managed to cut off the electoral supply to 60 per cent of the territory. Over and above this military aspect, what is essential is the FMLN's capacity to appear in the eyes of the masses to be the lever for achieving peace and deepgoing social changes.

Removing remaining obstacles to struggle

The refusal of the regime and of the United States to offer a positive response to the FMLN's proposal and their inability to make counter-proposals that could appear credible to the people are improving the conditions for unleashing an insurrection.

Nonetheless, neither the FMLN's military strength nor the extent of organization and consciousness of the working-class sectors of the masses nor the impasse of the regime are sufficient to convince the masses to throw themselves into an insurrection. The great firepower of the government's armed forces continues to be a substantial obstacle to a mass uprising.

The memory of the massacres of 1979-82, still present in everyone's mind, and selective repression (several hundred political murders a year, to say nothing of the casualties caused by the army's attacks in areas controlled or disputed by the guerrillas), make the masses think carefully before openly taking sides with the FMLN.

The strategy followed by the FMLN is removing the remaining obstacles to a decisive struggle one by one. The rest is a matter of time. ★

1. Such "tranquility" may not be shared by all the US congressmen. They may question US aid to El Salvador. It is in fact greater than the income of the Salvadoran state itself, which is in third position (after Israel and Egypt) in the hit parade of countries getting the most US "aid" (in absolute figures).

2. Quotations from the *Book of Exodus*, chapters 4, 5, 12 and 14.

The main political forces

FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front), the main revolutionary organization. It includes five political military organizations — the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PRS) and its military arm; the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP); the People's Liberation Forces (FPL); the National Resistance (RN), and its armed wing, the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN); the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS), which commands the Liberation Armed Forces (FAL); the Central American Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRTC).

FDR (Revolutionary Democratic Front) is the legal civilian political ally of the FMLN. It includes the Social Christian People's Movement (MPSC, a split from the PDC at the beginning of the 1980s) led by Rubén Zamora; and the National Revolutionary Movement, led by Guillermo Ungo (which is linked to the Second International).

Convergencia Democrática, an alliance of the FDR and the Democratic Socialist Party. Its candidate in the March 19 election, Guillermo Ungo, got only 4 % of the vote. It was prevented by repression from waging a real campaign. It also suffered from the boycott.

PDC (Christian Democratic Party) of outgoing president Napoleon Duarte. It held an absolute majority in parliament from 1984 to 1988. It was one of the key players in US strategy, but its candidate, Chavez Mena, got only 30%.

ARENA (Alliance for National Renewal) was in power in the early 1980s, until the US opted for the PDC. It has had a majority in parliament since 1988. Its candidate, Cristiani, won the presidential election with 54% of the vote.

PCN (National Reconciliation Party), the former party of the oligarchy and the army, won only 1.8%.

MAC (Authentic Christian Movement), led by Rey Prendes, a former minister under Duarte. It got 0.3%. ★

“There are indications of a quasi-insurreccional situation”

HUMBERTO CENTERO is one of the main leaders of the National Union of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS), in which he represents the telecommunication workers' union (ASTEL). Arrested several times, jailed and tortured for long periods, he has been released on every occasion as a result of protest actions in El Salvador and internationally.

On February 24, 1989, he was publicly sentenced to death by the People's Counter-revolutionary Army (ECRP), one of the sinister death squads. A reporter for *International Viewpoint* did the following interview with him in February in San Salvador.



WHAT WERE the reactions of the ruling-class parties to the FMLN's proposal to postpone the presidential elections to September 1989?

The FMLN's proposal was a bold one. This is the first time that the Front has taken such an attitude to elections since the start of the war nine years ago. The initial reaction of the Christian Democratic president Duarte was negative. In fact, he is living in the past. He reacts as if he were still under the Reagan administration and that all he has to do is reject every proposal by the FMLN.

ARENA, for its part, dragged out its moth-eaten so-called "peace and freedom" proposal, which it formulated after it won the legislative and municipal elections of March 1988. It proposed a temporary amnesty, which would permit five FMLN commanders to present their proposals to the Legislative Assembly.

But when the general commander of the FMLN declared that he was ready to go to the capital to speak to the Assembly, ARENA balked at putting this proposal to a vote.

After maintaining a total silence in the first few days, the general staff of the armed forces reacted by saying that it was up to the civilian government to decide. Subsequently, the chief of the general staff, Colonel Emilio Ponce, said, in essence, "If the army accepted the FMLN's proposal, it would split. If we reject it, we will look bad in the eyes of the population. That is why it is up to the civilian authorities to make the decision."

Anyhow, a few days later, other military chiefs said that if the elections were postponed, that would be a violation of the constitution, and then they would be obliged to stage a coup d'état.

Finally, all the parties of the right met for three days, and at the end of interminable discussions, they agreed to say that they were going to meet with the FMLN, but in a foreign capital. That is why a dialogue between the FMLN and the right-wing parties has just taken place in Mexico. Convergencia Democrática also took part in it. If the right-wing parties went to Mexico, it is because they are afraid to show the people that they reject dialogue.

What is the relationship of forces in the electoral arena?

The parties that really count electorally are ARENA and the PDC. The other parties altogether, including Convergencia Democrática, cannot expect to get more than 200,000 votes. ARENA knows that participation in the elections is going to be low, barely 30% of qualified voters, who total about 2,200,000. Roughly, I think ARENA can count on 400,000 votes and the PDC on 300,000.

The two parties that would lose from a postponement of the elections are therefore ARENA and the PDC. I say the PDC as

well because, since it is totally supported by the United States, it is not excluded that a massive electoral fraud will be organized on its behalf under Washington's auspices.

How could such an electoral fraud be pulled off when the overwhelming majority of mayors belong to ARENA?

The mayors play no important role in the elections. The departmental and local election authorities are appointed by the Central Council of Elections and are made up of representatives from the parties sitting in the Legislative Assembly — that is ARENA, the PDC and the PCN. But in fact the experts in electoral fraud are the military. They have several tools for carrying it out.

"Here, it is the army that elects and not the people"

First is the National Telecommunications Administration, whose director is the brother of the minister of defense, Colonel Casanova. Then, the military transport the ballot boxes (often by helicopter). So, fraud is easy, since you just have to have a helicopter carry 20 ballot boxes, of which 15, say are full of votes for ARENA. You stop at a base and replace those ballot boxes with ones full of votes for the PDC. Here in El Salvador, it is the army that elects and not the people. And since the army is under the thumb of the Americans, the PDC candidate could perfectly well win the elections, because he is Washington's choice.

How did Convergencia Democrática's campaign go?

Convergencia Democrática did not have a chance to win over a substantial part of the voters because of lack of time and because the army drastically limited its right of expression, especially outside the capital.

Often participants in Convergencia rallies outside the capital were arrested by the army when they returned to their homes. This became known, and so the attendance at Convergencia's rallies was poor. The army also frequently banned Convergencia from going into localities.

In the present circumstances, therefore, Convergencia is not able to compete electorally with ARENA or the PDC. This is why, as UNTS, we are calling on our members not to take part in the March 19 elections. We are not even going to pick up our voters' cards.

Can you say something about the instance of unity that has been achieved between UNTS and the UNOC?

First it should be said that the only dif-

ference was over the support the organizations linked to the PDC gave to Duarte's anti-popular government and to American policy. Aside from this point, there was already a considerable convergence.

After the PDC's electoral defeat in March 1988 and the internal struggles that ravaged it, UNOC found itself in a more and more contradictory position. A minority supported the presidential candidacy of Fidel Chavez Mena, while a majority supported Rey Prendes. But finally, after various pressures, the UNOC lined up behind Chavez Mena.

After May 1988, UNTS and UNOC engaged in a dialogue in order to confront the resurgence of the death squads and the increasing power of the hardest-line elements (ARENA) in the command of the government's armed forces.

The first discussions made it possible to agree on public communiqués denouncing the repression, although they were often issued separately. It was not until after the FMLN's proposal on January 26 that, on the initiative of UNOC, our two organizations reached an agreement on February 10 and published a common statement. It welcomed the FMLN's proposal as positive, denied that the political parties had any monopoly on representing the people and declared that the constitution could not be an obstacle to dialogue. It is clear that the first two points are extremely important.

This position got a broad response from the masses, and was considered by the media as a change in the situation. In principle, we have agreed to jointly organize a march of 200,000 Salvadorans for peace. But this decision has to be confirmed.

On its side, UNOC held a march on February 14 in which 40,000 people participated. All the demonstrators' placards expressed concrete demands of the workers and peasants, and none supported Chavez Mena's candidacy, even if the organizers reaffirmed their support for him when they gave interviews to journalists.

What is UNOC's position as regards the agrarian reform?

UNOC is very worried at the possibility of an ARENA victory. The cooperative organizations linked to UNOC have received millions of colons from the US [5.5 colons=\$1] to advance the agrarian reform. This has favored them over other cooperative organizations, without however saving them from enormous debts. If ARENA wins, there is a great danger that the lands held by cooperative members will be restored to the old landowners.

Initially, ARENA wants to divide up the lands of the cooperatives, distributing them to the member families, who will then have the problem of repaying the debt as individuals. Since they will not be able to meet the payments, they will have to sell off their family plots. The Supreme Court, which has been controlled by ARENA since 1988, has ruled on several occasions for returning the lands of bankrupt cooper-

atives to their former owners, members of the oligarchy. On this occasion, UNOC leaders have said that if this continues, there will be nothing left but to take up arms and "go into the mountains."

"Whatever else happens, the polarization will increase"

The peasants and cooperative farmers also have to contend with the anti-popular policy pursued by the public administrations controlled by the Christian Democracy. The nationalized banking system and the state institutions have a monopoly on trading agricultural products and act constantly in opposition to the peasants' interests.

This explains why already a large part of the organized cooperative farmers have joined UNTS [UNTS seems to have four times more cooperative farmers than UNOC]. And those who remain in UNOC are also unhappy with Duarte's policy, even though American aid is mitigating their problems a bit. UNOC is demanding a rescheduling of the debt.

■ **If the elections are held as scheduled on March 19, what is going to happen?**

In these conditions, the polarization will increase. If ARENA wins the elections, this is going to create complications for US policy toward our country, because behind its liberalizing mask, ARENA remains fundamentally an extreme rightist formation.

If, on the other hand, the PDC wins, with or without fraud, the ARENA elements that control the army general staff are going to be tempted to carry off a coup d'état. If there is not a coup d'état, as president, Chavez Mena, would have an extremely narrow margin of maneuver, because ARENA already controls the Legislative Assembly, the Supreme Court, the revenue court and so on.

In any case, ARENA is going to step up the war, and the rapprochement that has developed between UNOC and UNTS will pick up momentum. So, the polarization will increase and we will move toward a social explosion, the portents of which can already be seen.

For example, the victims of the September 1986 earthquake, after taking land and building new homes, decided to connect up the houses to the electricity wires and water pipes themselves. There are indications of a quasi-insurreccional situation.

For example, we as UNTS have set up permanent barricades in the street that leads to our headquarters for the sake of self-defense. We did that without authorization, after our headquarters was dynamited on February 15. The people are going to be impelled to render justice themselves. ★

Regime rejects FMLN proposals on elections and cease-fire

THE TEXT of the FMLN's latest proposal for dialogue is published below. It was made in response to Duarte's proposal of February 28, 1989, which called for postponing the elections to April 30 and for a cease-fire until June 1, 1989. The FMLN's proposal was rejected by the regime, which decided hold the elections as initially scheduled.

The FMLN then called an all-out transport strike starting March 16 to support its appeal for a boycott. Convergencia Democratica maintained its candidates, but was unable to offer a credible alternative.

DOCUMENT

THE Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front considers it positive that Duarte has expressed readiness to call a meeting between the government, our Front and the political parties, and that he has proclaimed himself in favor of such a meeting taking place in the shortest possible time.

That is why we think that our peace proposal should be considered in its entirety, in the same way as was done for the agreement with the parties. This meeting should be held with an open-ended agenda permitting discussion of all the problems that the other party might want to submit.

Judging the crimes committed by the army

We think, therefore that it is necessary to demand and to stress:

- That the government specify whether there will be a discussion at this meeting of postponing the date for the elections to September 15; and whether holding these elections, with the military remaining confined to barracks, will be accompanied by an end to the repression, an electoral system with a consensus of support, reorganization of the Central Council of Elections, formation of an body to oversee the elections and a proposal for a way that Salvadorans living abroad can vote.

- That an agreement for a definitive cease-fire be negotiated in conformity with our offer, which calls for concrete mechanisms for judging the crimes committed by members of the armed forces, reduction of

the army to 12,000 men, dismantling the security bodies and formation of a new civil security body.

"We are ready to discuss around any points"

- That the meeting be held in San Salvador. In order to do this, we consider necessary a unilateral cease-fire on each side and the immediate end of the repression, so as to create propitious conditions for the meeting.

If there is a cease-fire, we see no reason why the meeting should be held abroad. The capital is the best place for national agreement on peace among and in front of all Salvadorans. This would facilitate the participation of Duarte himself. Holding this meeting abroad would be a retreat from the gains made by the people in all the previous meetings.

- For our part, we repeat our readiness to discuss all the points that the government may propose.

- We consider that the meeting must have the character of negotiation designed to result in real agreements, and not just an exchange of opinions. Therefore, our delegation will be headed by two members of our General Command.

We consider it necessary for the political parties, the government, the armed forces, the deputies designated by the Legislative Assembly and the FMLN to participate in this meeting in order to follow up on the spirit and content of the meeting in Mexico.

We consider highly positive the mecha-

nism of coordination among the three branches of the state, and we think that if in the past this mechanism made it possible to abolish a constitution and get another adopted, it should today be used to establish peace by eliminating all constitutional obstacles.

An appeal to parties to withdraw candidates

In this respect, it is clear that there are no more obstacles to postponing the elections for the necessary time and that this mechanism must function immediately to make it possible to postpone them until after March 19.

We are issuing an appeal to the parties to withdraw their candidates in order to make possible a solution of the constitutional problem. The Christian Democracy should be the first to set the example.

Our General Command is ready to order a unilateral cease-fire so that the meeting can be held. We propose that it take place on Saturday and Sunday, March 4-5, in the offices of the apostolic nuncio or the archbishop of San Salvador.

We are awaiting a response from Duarte to our proposals.

In this way we are making a positive response to what Duarte proposed. However, we want to express our concern about the fact that the context of some of his proposals does not favor the positive course that events have taken up until now. In this respect, we note:

- His clear intention, also noticed by the parties, to promote an electoral victory by the Christian Democratic Party (PDC). For this, he is counting on the support of the armed forces.

The date of April 30, which was already proposed and unanimously rejected at the meeting in Mexico, is only in the interests of the PDC, since it facilitates the possibilities for electoral fraud.

- The lack of seriousness implicit in the proposal of a unilateral cease-fire until June 1, 1989.

We do not see why, if there were readiness for this, there could not be agreement and the possibility for negotiating a definite cease-fire. So, there remains doubt about whether there is a real will to concretize a genuine cease-fire agreed by all of us in front of the people and the entire world.

- Perceptible in Duarte's proposal is his unaltered aim of getting us to surrender. It has already been demonstrated that this is unrealistic, illogical and impossible.

This objective is quite clear in the proposal for a closed agenda that would not take account of our proposals. ★

**General Command of the FMLN
El Salvador, February 27, 1989
Commanders: Salvador Sanchez
Ceren, Francisco Jovel, Shafick
Jorge Handal, Eduardo Sancho, Joaquin Villalobos**



Crisis in the East

FOR THE FIRST TIME since the bureaucracy usurped political power from the working class, elections will be held in the Soviet Union on March 26 that offer elements of democratic choice (see also pages 27 and 28).

This vote for the new Congress of People's Deputies will be the latest test of attempts by the bureaucracy to regain some legitimacy and therefore greater political maneuvering room. It is part of the policies of readjustment being pursued in a whole number of East European countries.

The following article takes up these elections in their wider context. Eastern Europe is currently being shaken by a crisis unequalled since the end of the second world war. Undoubtedly, this crisis is most serious in Rumania. But Ceaucescu's repression is obscuring its political aspects, except as regards the Hungarian minority. In East Germany, where the standard of living is higher, the crisis has not yet broken out into the open. But the relative stability of these two countries will certainly not last.

ERNEST MANDEL

IN ALL OTHER East European countries, including the Soviet Union, we are seeing a dialectic between political and economic crises. A political awakening of major sections of the population is combining with attempts by a ruling bureaucracy in disarray to co-opt, to varying degrees, political opposition, and to find a pragmatic solution to a critical situation that is moving in the direction of dismantling the social gains of the working class toward a broader opening to the world market and a widening of the the private sector of the economy. All these developments are arousing stronger

and stronger reactions from the working class and youth against the consequences that these liberal bureaucratic solutions have for the masses.

This process cannot be understood unless it is put in its international context — pressures from the International Monetary Fund for payment of the debt and for austerity measures in exchange for new credits; the repercussions in Eastern Europe of Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union, which are making the maintenance of neo-Stalinist regimes more intolerable in the eyes of the population; repercussions of the effects of the political reform put into prac-

tice in some of these countries on those where this course has not yet been adopted; the impact of all these movements on the situation in the USSR and within the Soviet Communist Party apparatus itself.

Can we speak of the end of Europe as it was shaped at Yalta after World War II?

In any case, a Soviet military intervention such as occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1968 seems unlikely, if not impossible considering the public opinion that exists in the Soviet Union itself. On the other hand, we are seeing the coordination of a sort of anti-Gorbachev "international front," including the "conservative" forces in Eastern Europe — Rumania, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, neo-Stalinist minorities in Poland and Hungary — as well as the Communist parties in the capitalist countries that show scant enthusiasm for *perestroika* and *glasnost*.

Contrary to what a superficial glance might indicate, the European bourgeoisie does not look favorably on this destabilization. It has no hope of recovering Eastern Europe for capitalism. At most, it hopes for a military "Finlandization" — that is, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from some countries, other than East Germany. On the other hand, it is profoundly worried by the "destabilizing" effect of the crisis in Eastern Europe on the situation in the Western European countries themselves.

There are two aspects to the "political reform." On the one hand, there is official recognition of more than one party in Hungary, but with the maintenance of an association with the Communist Party, which itself is experiencing accelerated internal differentiation. On the other hand, there is a differentiation in the opposition, with the emergence of a working-class force ready to defend its immediate interests without subordinating them to reformist gradualism, or a social pact with the bureaucracy.

The bureaucracy has to face a more and more inflammable situation. This development has been marked by the explosion of strikes in Yugoslavia, of which the one by Kosovo miners has been the most radical example so far; a wave of strikes, supported by minorities to be sure, but determined ones led by young people in Poland; and the formation of independent unions and an independent youth organization in Hungary.

The radical advocates of using market mechanisms, such as the Polish premier Rakowski and the Yugoslav head of government, are accusing the workers of "destabilizing" the political situation by starting up strikes in the midst of negotia-

tions over the "reform." But the real "destabilizers" are clearly the rulers themselves. In the midst of negotiating over the reform, they are continuing to decree price rises and announce closures of working-class strongholds. These are fully fledged provocations against the workers.

When the workers, driven to desperation by poverty, respond by strikes and demonstrations, the Polish and Yugoslav premiers declare that they are determined to defend "order" by repression. They send the police to club the demonstrators, to attack the strikers, to arrest working-class activists.

This clearly shows the hypocrisy of the argument that the opponents of an excessive recourse to market mechanisms are

"objective economic laws" is a choice of social priorities dictated by the different interests of different social forces — workers, peasants, bureaucrats, private entrepreneurs. It is a lie to say that there is no other way to stop waste and stagnation than to lower wages and impose, by the whip of unemployment, the rule of "work more, earn less."

There are other ways of getting out of the stagnation without touching wages and full employment.

First of all, all big investments other than in the consumer goods industry, agriculture and the services should be cut, until a general, public, democratic revision of the plan can be carried out, with a confrontation of different views. Next, a moratorium on the foreign debt should be declared, all expenses of the state apparatus should be cut, military spending should be drastically reduced, all luxury spending should be stopped, and the luxury stores that abound, as so many affronts to a population called upon to accept austerity, should be shut down.

These initial emergency measures would make it possible to hold back inflation and conduct a discussion an economic reform without the workers' interests being harmed.

It is necessary to get out of the false dilemma that counterposes a market economy to bureaucratic planning. Socialist democracy involves the setting of priorities by working people themselves, organized in councils democratically elected on the basis of a multi-party system, with the broadest democratic freedoms and unlimited civil rights. The arguments against such solutions are not technical but only reflect conflicting interests concealed under the smoke-screen of "objective economic laws."

This is why it is necessary to accept *glasnost* unreservedly, while striving to assure that it

does not stop half way, that it is carried through to the end, so that the working class can regain the full freedom of organization and action that the usurping and parasitic bureaucracy expropriated from it.

The legalization of Solidarnosc is a victory for the working class, regardless of the price that the reformist leaders are preparing to pay for it. But trade-union pluralism must be fully restored, with unimpeded freedom to organize, the right to strike, freedom of assembly, to demonstrate and freedom of the press for the working people.

The first moves toward real elections today in the USSR is a great step forward. But there must be really free elections, with multiple candidates for all the seats in



champions of a society of constraint. (In any case, a major area of market relations in agriculture and the services is inevitable and, before the advent of a society of abundance, an unavoidable corrective in the planned allocation of resources.)

The truth is the opposite. Revolutionary Marxists are adversaries of any command society, whether run by a state bureaucracy or managers and so-called experts. They are opposed to the crying injustice of a "solution" to the crisis that involves telling some people "enrich yourselves," and preventing others, the immense majority of the population, with clubs from defending even their poverty-level buying power.

No "objective economic law" imposes this injustice. Behind these so-called

the People's Congress and not just in some cases, with the right for citizens to put forward candidates of their choice everywhere, with the right for these candidates to group around distinct platforms, the freedom to form tendencies, factions and different parties, without ideological restrictions.

Behind the still limited and restricted dynamic of the political reform and *glasnost* looms a conflict of social forces.

This is why it is both significant and disappointing to note that the radical supporters of *glasnost* are not orienting, at least not yet, toward even the most minimally consistent defense of the workers' interests. In successive issues, the Soviet weekly *Les Nouvelles de Moscou* (*Moscow News*) has published the platforms of many "radicals." It is already a real step forward that different platforms exist and are being published.

They contain many positive elements — sharp attacks against the bureaucracy, denunciation of Stalinism, defense of the idea of "all power to the soviets," an initial defense of multi-partyism, a denunciation of the "new poverty," proposals for giving priority to improving the fate of the poorest.

Large part of the working class remains skeptical

However, these platforms do not contain a single proposal for defending the workers' interests. There is not a word about the right to strike, not a word about the right of working people to organize horizontally on local, regional, national and all-Union levels in freely elected bodies; not a word about the sliding scale of wages; not a word about a guarantee of full employment and, above all, not a single allusion to the one slogan that strikes at the heart of the bureaucracy — public workers' and mass inspection of production, transport and the distribution of goods.

In these conditions, it is hardly surprising that a good part of the working class is remaining skeptical, taking a wait-and-see, passive attitude toward the reforms.

It is hardly surprising that more than ever its "hero" is Boris Yeltsin. His candidacy in the elections was rejected by the Central Committee, but put forward by dozens of factories, especially in Moscow, and finally had to be accepted.

Yeltsin's sharp populist attacks against bureaucratic privileges please the workers. The fact that he is beginning to raise the question of a multi-party system indicates all the explosive potential of the political reforms underway.

However, for the moment, Yeltsin personifies a line "for the workers" and not a perspective of self-organization. However, the latter represents the only way of proceeding to resolve this crisis along lines leading toward the emancipation of all, toward socialism. ★

Massive rise in Soviet labor conflicts

FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, the USSR has been experiencing the greatest rise in labor conflicts in a quarter of a century. The source of the discontent is the wage reform, a deepgoing restructuring of relations within the enterprises aimed at tightening the link between remuneration and the work done, which had become too loose under Brezhnev.

DAVID SEPPO

IN FACT, in the "command system," conflicts between workers and management were attenuated by considerable collusion to hide reserves of productivity from the higher authorities that decided on production targets for the enterprises. The management did its best to give the workers stable and relatively rising wages (although greatly eroded by inflation). It also tolerated certain infractions of discipline. For their part, the workers helped management fulfill the objectives of the plan by tolerating its failure to respect the labor legislation and bad working conditions.

The reform is aimed at linking the workers' incomes to the enterprises' performance in a market context. The objective is to create a common interest between the management and the workers to find and utilize reserves of productivity in order to increase the economic efficiency of individuals and enterprises, and to produce quality goods corresponding to the interests of the society.

The self-management measures included in the reform flow logically from the latter goal. According to Gorbachev, the workers

should be able to influence the choice of managers and monitor their activity, because their welfare is going to depend on the management's capacities. This is a necessary political precondition for getting workers to accept the other aspects of the reform. But there is also an economic logic here. The aim of self-management is to overcome the workers' alienation, to cultivate a spirit of joint responsibility for the fate of the enterprise.

Election of managers and workers' councils

The reform envisages two self-management measures — election of managers and election of workers' councils that would share both making decisions and monitoring their execution. What is more, a campaign is being waged in the trade-union press for democratization of the unions. What does this amount to practice?

The director of the Communist Party's Institute of Social Sciences has admitted that "workers' participation in management remains a wish, a goal rather than a reality."¹ According to the polls, the workers' councils have had little impact on the life of the enterprises.

As for the unions, they remain as before hand in glove with the management. A poll conducted by the Central Council of Trade Unions found that no more than one or two workers out of a hundred took their wage grievances to the unions.²

Instead of creating a new solidarity between the workers and the managers to improve the performance of the enterprises, the reform has widened the gulf between the workers and the management, reinforced the attitude of "us against them," and increased the number of labor conflicts. It has undermined the old bases of collusion and corruption, without however creating new economically sound bases of collaboration.

This undoubtedly explains the poor results of appeals for democratization of the unions. In conditions in which conflicts are intensifying, neither the political leadership nor, of course, the plant managements, see any real interest in facilitating independent organization by the workers. That could not only undermine the reform (as it is presently conceived) but also threaten political stability.

What are the various sources of conflict? An important one is the arbitrary and illegal application of the wage reform. Violating the law, without consulting the workers, the managers are announcing a general demotion to lower skill grades. This is an easy way to comply formally with the reform, which requires an increase in base wages, accompanied by a tightening of norms and a careful verification of the workers' skills.

1. ZH. Toshchenko, "Soznanie, nastroyeniye, deistvie," *Agitator* 12, 1988, p.11.

2. E. Terentev, "Sotsialnaya sfera i profsoyuzy," *Trud*, July 8, 1988.

The result is a speed-up without compensation in higher wages. In the absence of unions to defend them, the workers turn to the papers to complain, to higher political bodies and, more and more frequently, have been resorting to strikes. In the published reports, the higher authorities intervene to put things right. It is hard to know if this happens often.

But the problem goes much further than the arbitrariness of the managements. The reform aims to put an end to the practice of assigning workers higher grades than they merit. This was a means commonly used by the enterprises to attract workers in the conditions of labor shortage created by the "command" systems.

Making workers pay for bureaucracy's errors

In a more general way, the reform asks the workers to accept a speed-up or a reduction in bonuses in order to end the "injustices of the past" and restore the principle of "social justice"—"to all according to their work" (a formula open to different interpretations, depending on the interests involved).

From the standpoint of the workers, the real injustice is making them pay for the practices engendered by a system of economic management that was introduced and maintained not in the interests of the workers, but of the bureaucracy. However, the regime is not asking those really responsible for the "injustices of the past" to make sacrifices. It is talking about a major reduction of administrative personnel. But that would barely touch the higher ranks. At the same time, the material privileges of the bureaucrats, deeply hated by the masses, would remain largely intact.

Therefore, the workers are reacting against what they consider a unilateral abrogation of an understanding that has long governed relations within the plants by abandoning their former conciliatory attitude toward the failings of the management and its violations of labor law. At the same time, the political liberalization and the official talk about political democracy are creating a new feeling of what is possible in showdowns with management.

Conditions and practices that were tolerated, with ups and downs, in the past are now becoming causes of open conflicts.

This is the case in particular of overtime work resulting from the system's incapacity to assure a normal tempo of production. "Slack periods" at the beginning of the month or the quarter are followed by speed-ups at the end of these periods. This requires long hours of overtime during the week and over weekends. But even when this overtime is paid at a higher rate, this does not always compensate for the loss of wages owing to "slack periods," nor the ravages caused to the personal lives of the workers. If these mainly illegal practices were more or less tolerated under the old

system, they are less so today. The workers are demanding that the managers put production "in order."

As for self-management, this aspect of the reform is running up against the resistance of the factory directors. You can understand their attitude, because the old system of centralized management still remains in place, with all the external constraints and pressures on the enterprises that this involves. Giving the workers a real voice would overly complicate the lives of the managers, depriving them of the flexibility necessary to fulfill the objectives of the plan in conditions of irregular supply of materials.

However, in the rare cases in which the management has encouraged workers' participation, the workers have often been reluctant to take the bait. In conditions in which the ministries are still largely determining the fate of the enterprises, self-management is perceived as a trap designed to get the workers to take responsibility for a situation that they cannot control.

Thus, in those rare enterprises in which self-management is functioning, a new type of conflict is arising — one between the workers and the managers against the ministries over the targets of the plan and attempts to link weak enterprises to efficient ones, and so on.

The market conflicts with self-management

There are in fact workers in the most skilled layer in the factories who would be in a good position in the context of a market reform and who consider autonomy of the plants in a market context as a good solution. But the example of Yugoslavia has shown this to be only a blind alley.

In the last analysis, the market conflicts with self-management, because when the workers have power in the plants they use it to guarantee their jobs and wages. In other words, with self-management you cannot have either a labor or a capital market.

In reality, most of the workers distrust the market reform as presently conceived by the regime. They fear that this reform will undermine the existing social guarantees. According to a Moscow Trade-Union Institute specialist: "The new accounting system for enterprises and the new labor legislation pose in a more urgent way the problem of social protection for individuals. Will not the humanism of socialist principles be sacrificed on the altar of economic gain?"³

The problem is not rejection of the market as such. The question is whether the market will impose its criteria of rationality on the society or whether the society will subordinate the market mechanism to the type of development that it collectively chooses.

In breaking the ties of collusion, the wage reform has in a way liberated work-

ing-class consciousness. For the moment, the conflicts remain local. But there are already attempts at independent working-class organization at a city level.

Workers' groups and unions being formed

In the city of Yaroslavl, a "workers' group" made up of enterprise delegates has joined the local People's Front (an independent movement formed as a result of a mass rally on June 8, 1988, called to protest against the election to the Nineteenth Party Conference of a detested first secretary of the party provincial committee).

The active force in this "workers' group" is the workers' club in the huge motor factory that experienced a week-long strike at the end of 1987 against an attempt by the management to require workers to work 15 Saturdays in 1988. Another "workers' group" has been formed in the city of Andropov.⁴

Toward the end of 1988, in Lithuania, 300 delegates from 70 enterprises founded the Workers' Union of Kaunas, whose aim was to "fight for restructuring the union committees, for a corresponding restructuring of the plant newspapers and for defense of the rights of workers against the arbitrariness of the managements."⁵ Other unions are forming in Vilnius and Klaipeda, and also in Lithuania.

An unpopular measure coming from the center that directly affects the workers' situation, like the price reform, could provide the spark for a large-scale working-class mobilization. Among the population, opposition to such a reform is very strong. Already mass anger is rising in response to a rate of inflation that is eroding wages and to a tendency on the part of the enterprises to stop production of the cheapest consumer goods.

Far from meaning the end of *perestroika*, such a mass mobilization is a prerequisite for a real revolutionary restructuring in the USSR, which is the only kind that would have a chance of succeeding. ★



3. V. Vishnyakov, "Prosit' ili trebovat'," *Trud*, October 6, 1988.

4. A. Mineev, *Moskovskie Novosti*, January 15, 1988, p.8.

5. N. Belyaeva, "Natsionalnyi ili narodnyi?," *Moskovskie Novosti*, December 25, 1988, p.10.

A broad anti-imperialist front

WHAT DID you mean by a broad anti-imperialist front?

This is an idea that has been knocking around in Ireland for the last 20 years. What is new is that it has now been adopted by republicans as the principal strategy that they are now working on. And I suppose, in real terms, it dates from a republican point of view from about three or four years ago when [Sinn Fein president] Gerry Adams started making the point that if the struggle for national independence was to be successful, then it had to take on the question of imperialism in Ireland. Republicans had to find a formula to create a mass movement that would challenge imperialism and the forces sympathetic to it on the broadest political canvas.

■ **What exactly do you mean by "taking on imperialism?" After all you've been fighting imperialism in the North for 20 years.**

In the South of Ireland, republicans have not been involved directly in the political and social struggles. We were preoccupied with the Northern part of Ireland because it was dominated in a very physical way by British imperialism, and we were responding to that.

The last 20 years have politicized republicans to the extent where they now see that the opposition to change, both political and to radical social change, isn't just the British government in the North but is in fact also the Dublin government in the South.

■ **So, "taking on imperialism" means taking on economic imperialism, as opposed simply to taking on imperialist military power?**

I think that Gerry Adams on a number of occasions in his articles on building the mass movement pointed out that imperialism isn't just military. It's economic, its social, it's cultural. And those are the areas where we are now trying to get involved and raise the question.

A MAJOR decision at the annual congress [ard-theis] of Sinn Fein, the political organization of Irish republicanism, was to begin to promote the development of a broad anti-imperialist movement in Ireland.

The first broad national conference pursuant to this was held in Dublin on February 18. It was attended by representatives of the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers' Movement, People's Democracy (Irish section of the Fourth International) and independent nationalist personalities such as the economist Raymond Crotty, as well as representatives of Sinn Fein.

The conference adopted the perspective of organizing a series of discussions, projecting a demonstration in Dublin for the twentieth anniversary of the redeployment of the British army on Irish streets. It also elected a 13-person planning committee.

A few days after the conference, Jim Gibney, one of the principal republican leaders involved in the project and one of the strategists of the H-Block campaign, gave the following interview to Gerry Foley in Belfast.

What we are trying to do, and it's a formidable task, is wherever imperialism impinges on the life of the working people of the country, we are going to try to give those working people some leadership. Now, I have to say that the organization — that is, Sinn Fein — in the South of Ireland is only beginning to take on board this question. It has traditionally been a support

organization for the Northern struggle.

What we're now at the stage of doing is politicizing that party, radicalizing that party's ideological understanding of society, and trying, out of an organization that was once a support organization for the struggle in the North, to build a revolutionary party. One which is capable, competent of using all forms of legitimate political struggle, to focus attention on the consequences of imperialism dominating Ireland.

■ **What sort of economic program do you see as the center for building this movement?**

I made the point at the conference in Dublin on Saturday that I don't think we are at the stage of raising economic demands. I think that the stage which we are at is the stage of raising the consciousness about the quality of people's lives.

■ **But you want to present an alternative to people. What are the outlines of this alternative? Do you have the outlines of an answer to the problem of emigration, answers to the problem of economic development?**

In the South, for example, the argument of the bourgeoisie is that the strategy for developing the country



is giving tax breaks for the imperialist corporations to come in.

Specifically on questions of tax breaks to the multinationals, the history of the multinationals in Ireland since the late 1950s clearly shows that that strategy for industrializing the country, for providing secure employment, isn't working. That the South of Ireland is a tax haven for multinationals and they haven't been able to provide long-term secure employment, and that can be seen from the numbers of people who are leaving every year — 30,000 left last year. That's only the public figure. Other people are estimating that it is much higher. And then of course there's massive cutbacks in education and social services, endemic unemployment.

We are also saying to those who are trained economists, who understand intimately the economic infrastructure and its weaknesses, is: "Look, it's time, long past the time when you've got to come together with other radical democrats in the country and present an alternative, and to present it not necessarily on the basis that we are going to fight elections on it, but present it on the basis that we want to build a popular movement that is going to take on board the implications of imperialism in Ireland.

I think that it is important that whatever movement we build, that it has a national character to it, and that that national character is capable of taking on board the two distinct political realities North and South, which are linked by the economic circumstances that the nationalists, indeed the Protestant working class as well, face in the North, along with the working-class people across the rest of the country.

■ What form do you see this this movement taking?

We only adopted the policy in February of this year. And I think that it would be presumptuous of republicans to say precisely how this movement is going to be built. We're only one element. So, we've got to talk to people. What I do think we need to produce is a movement that has got its arguments worked out, which has roots deep in the working communities, both in a rural setting and in an urban setting.

It has to say very clearly that what passes for politics, passes for democracy in Ireland, what passes for economic security in this country, is totally unacceptable. And within that broad area of argument we then have to define a) the terms of that alternative, and b) the strategy to bring that alternative about.

■ Presumably, if it's premature to be specific either about the program or the structure of the movement, what you're proposing is discussions. That risks being nebulous. Do you think you can attract community and union activists into that framework?

Right across this country there is a network of people involved in all sorts of political opposition to the states North and

South. To a large extent they're working away on their own. They're fighting the state on their own, and the state is able to deal with them, to marginalize them.

So, the task is to weld together that network, and it's important to begin in the manner that I outlined, it's important to begin at that level, so that you can bring into the various conferences those people that you referred to, to allow them to take part in the discussion, to allow them to make their experiences known to the other people in that conference hall.

This is particularly necessary for people from the North, because the North has been dominated by the military struggle and the national question for the last 20 years. Within that struggle, there's an economic dimension to it that is yet to emerge. Those people who have struggled for the last 20 years in the North, when they come to look at the situation in the South, they haven't the experience, they haven't got the political intelligence required to give the sort of leadership that's needed. So, that's why there's a need for dialogue.

■ OK, but the sort of people who are involved in struggles would want something fairly immediate and fairly concrete. How do you propose to deal with that? Are you thinking in terms of an action program?

As I said earlier, in precise terms, we haven't it worked out. We're only beginning the process. Whatever the issue is, the campaign is action-related, has to be. For example, we're living in the shadow of Divis flats. Divis Flats was a notorious housing development put up in the 1960s where people were cooped up in flats like battery hens. It took a 15-year campaign by local people for those flats to be demolished.¹ That's an action-related campaign.

We're trying to motivate people in the areas in which they themselves have been working for the last number of years. But we are also trying to put it in a global context. We have considerable political clout in the North, that's not the case in the South. We shouldn't be seen as being arrogant, as having all the answers. At the same time we have to be careful because of the paranoia and fear that exists among people in the South who are political activists about violence and about the IRA. So, there is almost a sense in which we are at a stage of confidence building as well among anti-imperialist political activists, that they don't see us as transporting the type of political activity that republicans by necessity in the North have to get involved in.

■ This anti-imperialist movement that you are talking about would not take a positive position on the armed struggle?

No. Not a positive or a negative one.

■ One of the arguments at the Dublin meeting was that in all the working-class struggles over the

last year, none of them have raised the national question. They have all been directed against Southern capital. What's your answer to that argument?

Partition has had the effect that it was intended to have. It has divided the working class people on this island. It has caused confusion on the relationship between British imperialism and world imperialism as a whole and, of course, domestic capitalism. If we were playing the principal role in those type of struggles, then the national question, the government's record on the economy and its record on the national question could be debated simultaneously.

■ What sort of people do you think you can mobilize in a movement like this?

Obviously, we will be targeting the people who are at the sharp end of the economic crisis in this country, principally the working class North and South, whether they're on the land or in the cities. And we're also trying to attract sections of the radical intelligentsia to this cause. Because I think that a movement of this nature has got to embrace the most progressive and democratic element in the country, and so therefore it has got to take in the broadest political forces.

In the early days of this present administration in Dublin, you've seen the explosion of popular anger that there was whenever the Fianna Fail government did a blatant U-turn on its pre-election economic promises, when it said that it wouldn't introduce the hair-shirt budget that the Fine Gael party were proposing. Then days after coming into office, they went one better and introduced an even harsher budget. Now, the reaction to that was massive anger, seething discontent, and that manifested itself on the streets of the South of Ireland.

Those are pointers for people who want to see change of the potential there is within a sizeable section of the organized and unorganized working people in the South. Now the question that's relevant of course is whether or not that movement, or that sentiment, that anger, can be constructed into a movement for social, economic and political change. That's the big question.

■ What sort of a structure do you envisage? Do you see this as a mass revolutionary party, or a front like the FMLN in El Salvador?

I can't answer that question. I've been involved in the building of a number of popular movements, and I've sat in the organizing committees of most of them, and we never were able to predict the structures. There is an unpredictability about movements of this type. The H-Bloc movement was the biggest popular movement we were able to put on the streets. But its structure was a spontaneous development.

1. For an account of republican involvement in the Divis Flats campaign, see IV 95, March 24, 1986.

At this stage, we are saying that we have no preference one way or the other as to what type of structured mass movement emerges.

■ **OK, I'm sure you will have to feel your way as you go in building such a movement. But I would think that even at an early stage you would have to answer a question from your own people about how you intend to prevent it from being co-opted, as so many social reform movements have been before in Ireland.**

I appreciate what you're saying that we have got to guard against any movement being eclipsed. As concerns our ability to prevent a movement either from running out of steam or being taken over, if we don't have the political intelligence to prevent that from happening, then we should be in the political business to begin with.

I suppose because we have a long-term vision of the type of new society that we want to see in this country, it's incumbent on us to make sure that we learn the lessons of history, and that we appreciate the way in which you put a movement of this type on the streets. We have to realize that some people who will go only a certain distance, and others will go further. And what we have got to try and do is be in the vanguard of that movement to ensure that it doesn't stop halfway, and that the job is left incomplete for another generation to accomplish.

I think that the determination of the republican forces in the North to see British rule ended in Ireland within the time of their contribution to this particular struggle is a guarantee of its success. And if we can translate that resilience into a movement on the island for change, then we can draw off that resilience to see the struggle through to a successful conclusion.

I am being deliberately vague on these questions because it's early days, and we don't want to raise expectations only for people's expectations to be dashed and for this development to be frustrated.

■ **Even in terms of this sort of discussion, is there another conference like the Dublin one projected? A series of discussions?**

There's a series of discussions. This is, as you know, the twentieth anniversary of British troops coming back onto Irish streets. Last year, the 1968 Committee, which was a committee designed to educate people about the politics of 1968, did a very worthwhile job in laying the groundwork, and some good work was done there. Slowly but surely we were raising the whole question of popular movements through the '68 Committee.

Last Saturday's meeting in Dublin was about moving a stage further with what the '68 Committee did, because the '68 Committee was a Northern-based movement. The meeting of the committee elected by the Saturday conference in Dublin set up an attempt to construct a national consensus,

through conferences principally and through a mass march in Dublin on August 14, the day British troops came back onto Irish streets. And then there's the pop gig for younger people who want to be involved through political songs and music. So, they have a program to work to, there is a series of conferences where we want to get people from the trade-union movement, the women's movement, journalists, economists, people from those walks of life. We are going to bring them together separately in different conferences in different parts of the country, North, South, East and West, and argue about these questions.

We are meeting on February 28 to start



our first working day on this question. But I'm satisfied that there are enough people out there from those various walks of life who are prepared to stand up and say, "Our view on the last 20 years of war in the North, the last 20 years of economic decline in the country, is that the cause of both is to be laid at the door of imperialism, and that the solution to the problems are to be found in a program to be constructed by radical democrats." I'm satisfied that we can bring those people together. It is a wide open question as to what we can do when we bring those people together, the quality of the movement we can build. All this is purely speculative.

■ **When you say "radical democrats," do you see this as a radical democratic movement, a socialist movement, or both?**

I'm a socialist, so I have a vested interest in trying to push politics in the direction of socialist conclusions. But we have got to concede at this stage that we are not talking about a socialist movement, that what we are talking about is a movement of people from different walks of life, some in political organizations, community organizations, trade unions, some ordinary people,

hopefully the mass of the movement.

So, I don't want to put labels on the movement, but I think that what we are trying to do is galvanize the opposition that there is in the country and put it together into one single movement of opposition, which is going to challenge the status quo, which is going to say "You have governed us for 60 years, and you've made a mess of it, it's time for you to go." Those are the things that lie before us.

■ **Do you see an international dimension to this campaign?**

There are international organizations that have done valuable work over the last 20 years in supporting the struggle for national freedom. I would expect that as the political circumstances change in this country, in terms of the strategy that republicans are advocating, that that would be reflected in the international arena. And we've a number of people, Bernadette McAliskey principally, who can go to address international forums on questions related to imperialism in Ireland. And we would hope that there would be a very positive response to what we are trying to do.

As we change the quality and type of struggle, we presume that those international organizations that exist would also change. And I think that it is interesting to watch what is happening in Britain, the Time To Go Movement [a broad coalition for British withdrawal], and the way it's shaping up and the plans they have for this year. Support organizations for Irish independence could take a leaf from their book.

■ **How do you see the perspectives for Irish liberation in a world context? For example, the explosion of the national movements in the USSR has again posed the question of how national independence and world economic interdependence can be reconciled.**

On a number of occasions, when Gerry Adams has talked about internationalism and international solidarity, what he's spoken about is a federation of free peoples, an international order where there is no longer the threat of war from the imperialist powers — and I'm not speaking about the Soviet Union, I am speaking specifically about the capitalist powers, because they're the people who pose the grievous threat to humanity in the world today.

Sinn Fein's policy would be to pursue that international solidarity, where the free peoples of the world, particularly those emerging from colonial domination, can align themselves. Because you're perfectly right, no country is capable of remaining in splendid isolation, so we prefer to have working, trading fraternal relationships with countries that have experienced the sort of history that we've experienced at the hands of the British. But we've also got to acknowledge that we live within Western Europe. ★

Manifesto of the Movement for Civic Liberty (HOS)

Democracy for all

THE DEMONSTRATIONS in August last year in Prague marked the end of an epoch — an epoch of fear. A new stage of discussion and political definitions opened up for the opposition. Last October, the Manifesto of the Movement for Civic Liberty (HOS) was published signed by around 100 personalities.¹

Petr Uhl, a well-known Czech revolutionary Marxist, was not among the signatories. He wrote an article in response to the Manifesto to explain his disagreements with it.

We are publishing here major excerpts from the two documents, which include debates that are relevant to all the Eastern European countries.

DOCUMENT

THE TIME HAS COME for a real political work. So let us venture into this terrain, towards which people harbour such widespread mistrust because of those who, over the years, have occupied it with their dictatorship and their incompetence.

This terrain must be rehabilitated. Politics must once again become a place for the expression and the practice of the real interests of the society.

The balance sheet of the results of 70 years of existence of the Czechoslovak state is not a satisfying one. We are living through an epoch of profound moral decadence in the whole of the society; we are living in undemocratic conditions, in conditions of limited and national and state sovereignty; we are deteriorating in the economic and technological spheres; the creative potential of the society is constantly smothered by centralized manipulation; our environment is becoming increasingly repugnant; many representatives of the younger generations, disgusted, are leaving their homeland; our country, in the past one of Europe's most developed, has now regressed into being one of the most backward.

The present government, up to a point, is aware of this crisis and has proclaimed or is preparing some partial reforms. But it is incapable of going beyond its own limits and renouncing its totalitarian-style of gov-

ernment, which constitutes the essential reason for this crisis.

This is why it is high time that the society — that is, all of us — got involved in politics. Starting from this immediate necessity, using the efforts of Charter 77 over a number of years to scrupulously describe the situation in our country and encouraged by the activities of other independent initiatives in Czechoslovakia and other countries in the Soviet bloc, we have decided to form the Movement for Civic Liberty.

"The present government is incapable of going beyond its limits"

We see it as a free association of groups and political clubs that are not subordinated to any central authority, which have been freely created in different regions of the country and which unites people who are not indifferent to the future of our homeland. People who are prepared, in respect for pluralism, for an open discussion of all the political problems and who have decided to get involved directly in the political struggle, whether by organizing discussion forums at workplaces or in the localities, a commitment to general or local demands, trying to present independent

candidates in the elections, or by any other means.

The Movement for Civic Liberty must be the place where the political will of citizens is asserted in a truly free way. Thus, it has to bring together the diversity of interests and of political orientations.

We therefore propose some basic ideas and objectives on which we have agreed until now as a starting point for reflection and for elaboration. We put them forward to all our fellow citizens and therefore also to all the potential participants in the Movement for Civic Liberty.

1 Democracy is our tradition

After the painful events of our recent history, a number of Czechs and Slovaks have wondered whether it was wise to demolish the Austrian empire and create an independent Czechoslovak state, which, as a small country in the heart of Europe, has difficulty resisting pressures from its more powerful neighbours. These people forget that Masaryk² and his collaborators — Czechs and Slovaks — saw the formation of our republic as an integral part of the democratic revolution of the epoch, which aimed at setting up Europe as a community of democratic states developing towards union.

Their conception took as its starting point the needs of a modern world where all the social forces wanted representation on equal footing, where frontiers between peoples and states would inevitably lose their importance. So it was in no way a provincial or chauvinistic conception. Even if European history in recent decades has been very bitter, Masaryk's long-term conception is confirmed as making good sense. The proof of this is given, for example, by the deepgoing process of integration of very diverse countries that has already been taking place for some time in the Western part of our continent.

But the biggest threats facing the world and Europe — military or ecological — cannot be resolved definitively if the ideal of democratic unification is only being realized in one part of Europe. That is why more and more people in the West, as well as in the East, are realizing that the sole way forward for all of us is to aim for an absolute democracy in the whole of Europe, including that part where we live. We are convinced that this is also the only possible way forward for Czechoslovakia. We do not know yet how our country will set out toward democracy nor what forms such democracy will take in the future. A simple return to the past is impossible.

1. This text was translated from a French version that appeared in *Nouvelle alternative*, originally translated by Amber Bousoglou.

2. Thomas Masaryk (1850-1937): leader of the independence struggle against the Austro-Hungarian empire and founder of the Czech state, Masaryk was influenced by the positive ideas of Auguste Comte and Christian humanism, believing in the model of an ideal democracy. He remains a reference due to his moral authority.

Nevertheless, we think that the ideal and values on which our state was born, and the experiences — good or bad — during its first 20 years of existence, constitute an important heritage full of inspiration, a heritage that it is possible to build on.

What must concern us above all is a real democracy, that is to say democracy for all, democracy as a system based on spiritual, political and economic pluralism as well as on mutual tolerance.

Without an overall moral renaissance of the society and a new development of its creative capacities, no democracy will be created by simple bureaucratic fiat. But, at the same time, without building democratic structures, the moral and creative energy of the society can never develop and find its place. The civic courage of individuals and the creation of new conditions or social structures must therefore go hand in hand.

2 Political pluralism

As partisans of independent thinking, we want to work for a state that places no one ideology above all the others, and against any such a domination resting on basic law or other laws. The only limit to equality of opinions, or rather their expression, concerns those who have proven that they do not recognize this equality and who try to limit it. As partisans of democracy, we are opposed to the leading role of the Czechoslovak Communist Party — or of any other party or broad association of organizations that assume the right to speak in the name of all — being enshrined in the constitution.

Those who govern will have to win the confidence of the citizens, and if they lose it they will have to hand over power to those who have won this confidence. For principled reasons, we reject any group in society being superior to other groups. The citizens must not be divided into superior and inferior categories; the nomenklatura and the restrictions about cadres must be abolished; no ideology should be held up as a criterion of the capacity to carry out public functions.

3 For a new democratic constitution

The new Czechoslovak constitution has to be inspired by these principles in order to guarantee, without any equivocation, the equality of all citizens before the law as well as all the essential civil rights of assembly, of association and the exercise of political will. Such a constitution must not put into doubt the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak state.

It must also guarantee all citizens the right to travel freely, both to leave their homeland and to return; the phenomenon of exile must therefore lose its meaning. If, in some exceptional cases, it is necessary to limit this right, these exceptions must be clearly defined in the constitution. It is also necessary to

formally forbid abuse of this limitation, whether this be by promulgating another law or decree or through an arbitrary interpretation of the basic law. Without their agreement no citizens should be deprived of their citizenship.

"The future constitution must be absolutely clear, with no ambiguities"

The constitution must include the possibility of organizing referendums on some important questions concerning the whole of the society. It must reinforce the powers of the president of the republic; introduce the principle of presidential elections by universal suffrage; and create civil courts. It is indispensable to create a constitutional council as a supreme body to watch over constitutionality.

In all its basic principles the future constitution must be absolutely clear, with no ambiguities. But at the same time it must be brief and further evolution must not be ruled out because is too detailed (for example, concerning the structure of the state administration).

A new electoral law and one on political organizations should be promulgated at the same time as the new constitution. This law, in the spirit of this democratic constitution, should make possible freedom of political activity and concretize the means by which different kinds of civic representatives could submit themselves to the verdict of the electorate and participate in the management of public affairs.

Associative life is and always has been the natural expression of a culturally articulate society and the natural terrain of its political life. That is why, at the same time as a new constitution, it is necessary to proclaim a new law on association which, in place of neutralizing this domain will, to the contrary, allow it to re-emerge.

We know of course that even the best of constitutions will not automatically guarantee real democracy just by its existence. But in our situation, simply adopting a democratic constitution will undoubtedly be a big step towards democracy.

4 Re-establish the state based on rights

Legal culture, legal conscience and respect for the law are decaying in our country. To revive them, the first step must be the progressive rebuilding of the whole legal system. It must be simplified, clarified and cleansed of all its totalitarian elements.

To do this, first of all it is necessary that the whole legal system be made to conform to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, unconditionally and leaving no room for evasive manoeuvres. Our legislation must respect human rights' treaties, as well as the other international standards already formally adopted by our state.

We need a Penal Code eliminating all those elements allowing political abuses contrary to a democratic constitution. Civic, economic and administrative rights must be modified in a way that institutes a balanced relationship between the rights of the individual and those of society.

Courts must be given total independence, guaranteeing the same rights to the defence as to the public prosecutor. The bar must be an independent organization. In front of the court, a lawyer must have the same rights as a prosecutor. The creation of civil courts must enable the function of a prosecutor to be limited to public indictments in criminal cases.

It is necessary to elaborate a new regulation on detention that corresponds to modern knowledge and experience, that transfers detention centres to the civil administration and that humanizes them. Imprisoned citizens must not be humiliated physically or morally under the pretext of reeducation, and their labour must not be exploited. Provisional detention must only be applied where it has been shown to be indispensable, and its application has to respect the principle of the presumption of innocence.

An amended law on the state security service (SNB) and adequate training should lead all the members of the SNB to behave as citizens whose role is to protect others and not to control them. Security has to be under the control of representative bodies and of the public. The state security service, this enormous, all-powerful, fearsome and

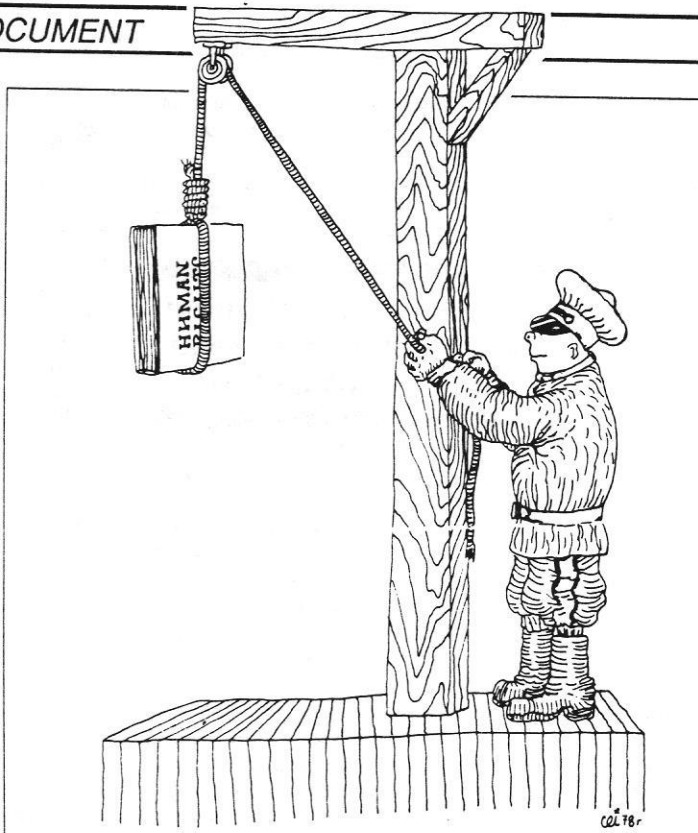
omnipresent instrument of authoritarian manipulation of citizens, whose real authority even surpasses its currently defined powers in a number of cases, must be transformed into an indispensable counter-espionage and anti-terrorist service. The effect of this will be a radical reduction in the number of its agents.

The reform of the economic system will necessitate a thoroughgoing modification of economic rights. The impenetrable tangle of laws and amendments, decrees and ordinances must be replaced by the most simple, comprehensible and stable code possible, which will



give enterprises and individuals certainty on the rules that govern the different forms of economic activity.

Social rights have to be simplified and humanized, starting with administrative rights. Citizens must be relieved of their fear of functionaries as some sort of modern overlords, and the functionaries have to submit to the control of representative public bodies. It is unthinkable, for example, that the delegates to National Committees [these have replaced the municipal councils and also exist at district and regional levels] are only appendices or ornaments of their apparatuses. If National Committees are to be more than a simple caricature of their name, their apparatus cannot conduct itself in a more authoritarian manner than the prefectural administration did in times past.



talk about them in public and to write freely. Spiritual life, culture and the mass media represent the brain and the nerves of society, the instrument of its consciousness. They focus its knowledge and its thinking, and they provide a place where society discovers and forges its moral consistency and identity. The precondition for all improvement is therefore cultural freedom in the widest sense of the term. It is therefore a priority to do away with all obvious and hidden forms of censorship, but also the central manipulations of all kinds in this area. Independent mass media, publishing houses and press agencies must develop and act in total freedom, whether they be state institutions or cooperatives or privately-owned. No central administration, no more than the unions manipulated by their founders, has the right to

5 Saving the environment

[This section talks about the ecological dangers facing the country and the need for a project of development that takes into account these problems.]

6 Roads leading to economic prosperity

Our experience has shown that economic pluralism is impossible without political pluralism, and that without economic pluralism the country's economy falls behind and declines. This is why only a transformation of the political system such as we envisage can open the way to a really radical economic reform that will free the enterprises from the yoke of the centralized bureaucracy. The sphere of the enterprise can be made creative once again using financial levers, by a clear-sighted support for sectors that have a promising future. Above all, this can be brought about by returning to the principles of supply and demand, to market relations, to competition and to real prices.

We think that the search for new forms of social ownership of the enterprises, including self-management forms, is naturally part of such a radical reform of the economy. We are in favour of strong support for cooperatives, we are for pluralism of various forms of ownership and decision-making and for conditions that will allow the different sectors of the economy and the enterprises to look for those forms that best suit their specific needs, which allow the best utilization of an enterprising spirit and which, consequently, lead to their prosperity.

We think that the full re-establishment of private enterprise is inevitable in the areas of commerce, cottage industry, small- and medium-sized enterprises, a section of

"The full re-establishment of private enterprise is inevitable"

agriculture and in the cultural domain. It should be possible for peasants to opt for possessing a family farm or long-term renting of land by a cooperative. The perspective of working for oneself will lead to benefits for the whole of society. Without the participation of private individuals, small cooperatives and small independent enterprises, neither satisfactory services for the population nor a development of inventiveness can be assured. All of this must be generously supported by the granting of long-term credits, as well as by tax reductions and material aid for those starting out. It is in this sector that jobs could be created for those who are going to lose them owing to the indispensable reduction of an excessive administration and the closing of non-profitable enterprises. Entrepreneurs must enjoy a legal status that guarantees them the benefits of the fruits of their work.

As regards big industry, it will be necessary to reorganize it in such a way that the profitability factor is not subordinated to political concerns such as artificial job-creation or the choice of priorities being dictated by distorted international economic relations. The Czechoslovak economy should be integrated naturally in the world economy, based on the international division of labour, which generally has a stimulating effect.

7 A free spiritual life

No problems in this country can be resolved while it is not possible to

limit any form of thought or to decide on its quality — only the public has the right to judge. The administration can only do one thing: create the material and organizational conditions for culture. The unions can only represent the interests of their members on questions of employment, conditions of work or social interests; none of them can a priori monopolize creation and thus prevent the emergence of another union.

It is also indispensable to fundamentally transform teaching, whose current decline is alarming. Schools are not only places where young people prepare for professions that are needed by the national economy, and in no case can they be the tools of any sort of ideological indoctrination where only servile individuals are educated who are incapable of thinking for themselves. Teaching must furnish a truly universal scholarship, inculcate freedom of thought, open up broad horizons and help people to orient themselves morally in the world. This is why the principle of ideological and institutional pluralism has equally to penetrate teaching. The inviolability of university territory must be guaranteed. Political criteria for the selection of teachers, pupils and students, as well as in awarding university and scientific degrees, have to be abolished. Only talent, professional capacity and humane values must be taken into account.

In the area of research, the development of diverse autonomous workplaces must be made possible — institutes, laboratories for practical research — subsidized by the state or by enterprises, organizations or foundations. Totally free circulation of people and ideas has been an obvious necessity for a long time in scientific and university circles. If this cannot be revived, we are going

to pay dearly for it.

8 Religious freedom

Spiritual pluralism means not only equality and mutual respect for people with different beliefs but also the right, mutually respected, to manifest their faith in public and in the appropriate institutions. This is why we fully support the demand for a separation of church and state, so that believers here can enjoy the same liberties as in all civilized countries.

Freedom of activity for monastic orders, masculine and feminine, according to their ancient traditions, must also be guaranteed. Religious freedom is in the interests of all of us and not solely of sections of the community.

While a Christian cannot really live as a Christian, nobody else can fully live as they would wish. The control exercised by the state over the churches is amoral because it introduces an additional inequality in the society: believing citizens in addition must submit to a law that does not apply to others.

From an historical point of view, we regard as particularly important the fact that it was not such a long time ago that it was precisely the Catholics who came out so massively both for the rights of believers and for citizen's rights.

9 Independent unions

Workers must have the right to create unions from below, organize them as they think fit and use them to demonstrate their real professional and social interests. Experience shows clearly the importance of the right to pluralism in trade-union life.

The unions directed by the state and which enjoy a monopoly, even if they try to do their best, by their very nature cannot be anything more than one more instrument of totalitarian power. If the state must not be the sole employer of all the workers, nor the single authorized representative of their interests, it can in no way be both at the same time. The unions must be independent of the state and the employers. This is the only way they can carry out their real function, that the economy can operate healthily and that latent social problems will stop growing worse.

10 Against the militarization of society

[In this section the signatories demand the right to an alternative to military service, and that "negotiations be begun on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia", which contribute "to the imbalance of conventional forces in Europe".]

11 National identity

[This section recalls that Czechoslovakia is a federal state, and that it is necessary to be particularly in respect of minorities' rights.]

12 Czechoslovakia is part of Europe

For the advancement of Czechoslovakia towards democracy is part of a much larger process that, with varying levels of intensity and under diverse guises, is unfolding today in most of the Soviet bloc countries. The citizens are beginning to demand their freedom and governments are beginning to realize that the totalitarian system leads to an impasse.

"We want to put an end to the heritage of the cold war"



Of course, we do not liken such a process to an attempt to break by violent means the links that, historically, exist between our countries. However, we want to transform them into democratic links, based on equality and full respect for the will and the interests of all the participants. So we are not aiming for destabilization, uncertainties and quarrels, but at overcoming all that remains of imperial Stalinist policies. We also want to put an end to the heritage of the cold war, with the traditional policies of balance in Europe based on the interests of the two super-powers, and to the dubious notion the only thing that can maintain peace is reinforcing the status quo.

A real and lasting peace can only be based on reciprocal confidence between peoples who freely enjoy their rights and between democratic states. Of course, this confidence is not created in the offices of diplomatic negotiators. It can only be translated into concrete results after being born and developed in European society as a whole....

We are neither utopians nor impatient. We know full well that Czechoslovakia will not become a prosperous and democratic state overnight. We still have a lot of work ahead of us, difficult work.

But we can no longer put off the start or wait. Too many storm clouds are gathering above civilization today, and the crisis in which our homeland finds itself is far too profound to allow us such a luxury.

We therefore invite all our co-citizens to take the road that we suggest by the means that seem to them the most useful. They can do this not only by signing the manifesto, but by any practical work for the victory of democracy in our country. ★

Initial signatories to the Manifesto for Civic Liberty

Frantisek Adamik, Milan Balabán, Pavel Barsa, Rudolf Batek, Jarmila Beliková, Tomáš Belka, Antonin Belohoubek, Václav Benda, Rudolf Bereza, Karel Binovec, Irena Boruvková, Pavel Bratinka, Marcela Bruncliková, Jana Bucharová, Jan Carnogursky, Jirina Cechová, Albert Cerny, Ivan Dejmal, Stanislav Deváty, Jirí Dienstbier, Viktor Dobal, Jan Dobrovsky, Premysl Fialka, Markéta Fialková, Karel Freund, Eduard Geissler ml., Jaromir Glac, Stefan Gürtler, Vladimír Hajny, Václav Havel, Ladislav Hejránek, Ivan Hoffman, Marie Holubcová, Jirina Hrábková, Ludvík Hradilek, Tomas Hradílek, Jana Hradilková, Simona Hradilková, Jozef Jablonicky, Bohumir Janát, Drahoslavá Janderová, Milan Jelínek, Milan Jungmann, Petr Kabes, Jiri Kanturek, Eva Kanturková, Božena Komárková, Jan Kozlík, Daniel Kroupa, Jiri Krivsky, Marie Rút Krizková, Bohumir Kuba, Marie Kubová, Miroslav Kusy, Ivan Lamper, Ján Langos, Ales Lederer, Ladislav Lis, Jz r Litomisky, Sergej Machonin, Jirí Machovsky, Vladimír Manák, Anna Marvanová, Jaroslav Meznik, Vladimír Mlynár, Dana Mrtvá, Michal Mrtvy, Pavel Nauman, Martin Palous, Radim Palous, Jan Payne, Lenka Payneová, Karel Pecka, Petr Placák, Drahusé Probstová, Lenka Procházková, Tomáš Pstross, Milos Rejchrt, Jan Ruml, Jirí Ruml, Jan Schneider, Anton Selecky, Jirí Skalicky, Dusan Slávik, Karel Srp, Andrej Stankovic, Jan Sabata, Jaroslav Sabata, Frantisek Samalik, Dolores Savrdová, Jaroslav Sebesta, Milan Simecka, Jan Simsa, Jan Stern, Olga Sulcová, Jáchym Topol, Jan Trefulka, Jakub Trojan, Vladimír Turek, Miroslav Tyl, Milan Uhde, Jitka Uhdeová, Václav Umlauf, Zdenek Urbánek, Eduard Vacek, Ludvík Vaculík, Eva Vidlárová, Tomáš Vlasák, Josef Vohryzek, Alexandr Vondra, Josef Vydrár, Pavel Vydrár, Tomáš Zelenka, Rudolf Zeman, Vit Zukal, Katerina Zukalová. ★

Democracy for some

A critique of the HOS Manifesto

"I MIGHT characterize the HOS Manifesto, *sine ira et studio* [dispassionately], as a sort of amalgam including and promising almost everything, and therefore diffuse and vague (which may bring difficulties in growth or rather prenatal complications), if the authors did not pretend to speak in the name of all democrats and therefore in mine as well."¹

PETR UHL

IN THE INTRODUCTION to the HOS Manifesto, I read that this movement "unites people who care about the future of our homeland. People who are prepared, in respect for pluralism, for an open discussion of all the political problems and who have decided to get involved directly in the political struggle...." That all applies to me, no one has ever doubted it. So, let us see how the authors of the Manifesto themselves respect the principle of pluralism.

In 1968-69, when all the critics and opponents of bureaucratic centralism and Stalinism expressed themselves relatively freely, there was a rather broad spectrum of opinion about how a society freeing itself from a dogmatic straitjacket and bureaucratic domination should evolve.

At one extreme of this spectrum were the champions of technocratic conceptions (essentially undemocratic ones in my opinion), who were fighting for a society of production, responsibility and discipline. They put competence to the fore, advocated that specialists rule, or at least have greater influence. Their slogan was "against leveling," and they were against it also in the regulations.

Champions of self-management

At the other end of this spectrum were the champions of self-management at the level of the society as a whole. They wanted the producers themselves to make the decisions or participate in the decisions concerning the means of production and working conditions. In this camp, various anti-authoritarian positions developed, with a critique of the capitalist mode of production and bourgeois democracy, and an attempt to understand the problems of

the third world.

The two camps agreed more or less on the need for re-establishing market relations. For the technocrats this was a clear and welcome imperative. For the supporters of self-management, it was a problematic perspective, calling for development of effective compensatory mechanisms at the social level.

Technocrats for a system of indirect democracy

In discussions on the political system, or rather on the structure of the government, the technocrats came out for a system of representation, for indirect democracy. In accordance with the maturity of their political conceptions, or rather the tactics they chose, they advocated the existence of several political parties or at least several currents or tendencies within the Czechoslovak Communist Party. This was the celebrated "opposition" line formulated in the Czechoslovak CP's April 1968 Action Program.²

Groupings were to rule alone or in coalition and be accountable to the parliament (and not directly to the workers). There was to be public supervision, a free press and so on. The technocrats accepted the possibility, and sometimes the usefulness of, or need for, an economic self-management that would reflect the interests of the workers in the enterprises. But this was not to affect the operational management or medium-term management of enterprises, which were to be given over to specialists.

The opponents of economic management and a multi-party parliamentary system wanted to bring economic power down not only to the level of the managerial teams but to that of the workers and the organiza-

tions the latter themselves would create to express their interests.

In the political sphere, they did not come out against representative democracy, but they called for introducing mechanisms of direct democracy from the beginning, and not only in the sphere of production but also in all areas of social life. Such mechanisms would not be very important at the outset, and would only complement the democratic representative system (a parliament, elected bodies). But they would grow stronger over years, over decades, perhaps over generations, and would progressively limit the manipulation of some by others.

Underestimation of human nature and capacities

This evolution toward communist ideals obviously did not depend so much on the faith people would have in a doctrine that in itself would offer "salvation," but on the overall social situation and its dynamic, especially in the economic sphere (the elimination of want, increased leisure time) and culture (education, a choice of values, especially for the rising generations).

There was a lot of discussion. I still hear the reservations expressed about utopias, reservations owing to a lack of courage and an underestimation of human nature and capacities, which is a common feature of Stalinism, subsequent totalitarian currents and of technocratic conceptions.

However, as often in Bohemia, the extremes were not represented. We did not have anarchists championing an egalitarian and libertarian society (we still do not, unlike Poland). We did not have technocrats who wanted to halt, at least for a time, democratic mechanisms (parliament and parties) and suspend barely won democratic freedoms. The two camps were not even very well defined. Most of the opponents of bureaucratic domination took up an intermediate position between the two points of view that I have separated out for didactic purposes.

This was also reflected in the documents of the time, for example, in the proposed law on enterprises, in the positions of the trade unions.

Nonetheless, the two tendencies described — the self-management tendency, which stressed the development of direct democracy; and the technocratic tendency, which was not prepared to go any

1. The introduction to this article (which is published here in an abridged form) notes that the HOS signatories were called in by State Security for questioning about their writings. Petr Uhl was also called in to "testify," and of course refused to do so, because whatever his differences with HOS, "it is clear that champions and opponents of HOS will be in the same boat until the fall of the bureaucratic dictatorship that tramples on the rights of the entire Czechoslovak people."

2. A document adopted officially by the Central Committee that provided the framework for the Fourteenth Party Congress scheduled for August 1968. While making concessions to the democratic movement that was developing, it maintained the essential aspects of the system, including the leading role of the Party.

further than indirect democracy — did really exist in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s. The authors and signatories of the HOS Manifesto cannot be unaware of this. Several of them were avowed supporters of self-management for the society as a whole.

If today they act as if the only possibility were indirect democracy, and this is not a lapse of memory but a conscious choice. The Children of Bohemia want a king.³ HOS can work for indirect democracy. That is in the order of things. But it would have to wipe out the ideas that were not only theoretically formulated in 1968 but also concretely implemented in the student movement, in other youth organizations, in a part of the trade-union movement, and in production itself, if in an embryonic way. In the sphere of culture in particular, everywhere a tendency toward direct democracy appeared. Pressure groups, sometimes effective ones, were formed. The rights of the active minority relative to the uncommitted majority were discussed.

Manifesto has nothing to do with socialism

However, in the Manifesto, the principle of direct democracy is mentioned only once. That is where the call is raised for referendums to decide some very important questions affecting the whole of society. The "self-evident" aspect of the formulations about the political system shows that the authors of the document did not doubt for an instant that there was no alternative to a parliamentary system of parties contending for power in elections (see section 3, paragraph 6). This is despite the fact that it says at the beginning that "We do not know yet how our country will set out toward democracy and what forms such democracy will take in the future."

The worst thing, clearly, is that in deliberately putting the idea of self-management of the entire society out of their minds, as well as the idea of progressive development of direct democracy, the authors say unperturbedly in the introduction there is plenty of room in HOS for all those who respect the principle of pluralism.

Over the last 20 years, political thought in Czechoslovakia has quite perceptibly shifted from democracy toward models founded on manipulation, from democratic ideas in production toward technocratic conceptions, from a sensitive study of the relationship between the rights of the individual and those of society toward an emotional populism reminiscent of the Czech renaissance, as well as toward a belief in the possibility of a just state standing above society. A part of all this is also found in the HOS Manifesto.

What is sad in this is that many of the signatories, who personally have a high level of culture and a socialist past (in the best sense of the term), have managed to shed their ideas so rapidly and support a docu-



Czechs rally to greet Gorbachev in Prague, April 1988 (DR)

ment that has nothing to do with socialism. (By socialism, I obviously mean a socialism based on democracy. The "actually existing" socialisms and others are as alien to me as they are to my political opponents in HOS.)

Have they come to this from taking account of public opinion that has shifted markedly to the right? Or have they rather yielded to some neo-conservative signatories to the Manifesto who would never have associated themselves with a statement that accepted, along with representative democracy, even the possibility of a direct democracy? I do not know. But in either case, the balance sheet does not look very good.

However, the abandonment of left positions has its own deeper causes. Basically, after years of fighting socialist ideas, people no longer believe in a better future for humanity. The horrors of Stalinism, the all-pervasive stagnation in the countries of the Soviet "bloc," the relative prosperity (whose more general causes have not been studied) of the Western European countries, and now the Gorbachev orientation, with its perceptible elements of "Westernization," which has become the main hope of the political veterans — all that is so depressing that people are now looking for a way out in denying everything that they previously believed...

"My views are somewhat unfashionable"

I am well aware that my views are somewhat unfashionable, but if I abandoned this vision of the prospects for humanity — which are not splendid or radiant but in any case are better than what exists — I could no longer work in politics or in the area of human rights.

I have already touched on the problem of ownership and the right to dispose of the means of production. It is not surprising

that the proposals of the HOS Manifesto agree on this point with what has been recently introduced in Hungary and Poland, and what is being prepared on a still larger scale in the USSR and perhaps also in Czechoslovakia. HOS recommends a pluralism of ownership of the means of production. In cases where the means of production have been "state owned" up until now, it is for economic self-management.

Measures must be found to reflate the economy

So, self-management penetrated into Manifesto, but obviously only in its economic (Yugoslav) form. Support for the cooperative movement (in services, retail trade and a section of production) is certainly quite necessary in present conditions in Czechoslovakia and also for small private enterprises that do not exploit outside labor (such as family businesses).

The economic situation in our country is bad, and according to predictions will get worse. In these circumstances, it goes without saying that the means must be found to reflate it. Given the continually growing lag of the Czechoslovak economy, foreign involvement is being proposed as a remedy, including foreign investment in various branches of Czechoslovak industry.

I do not share the opinion that this restoration of capitalist production relations, as it is being carried out in Hungary or in the USSR, as hinted at by Jakes and Adamec, or as postulated by HOS, would mean abandoning "the gains of socialism" or the

3. A surrealist and pacifist youth movement. One of the groups at the origin of the August 1988 demonstrations.

"privileges of the working class," if only because no such gains and privileges exist, either in a relative sense (by comparison with the Western proletariat) or in an absolute sense.

Nonetheless, the fact that people are envisaging selling off the Czechoslovak economy and including it in the West European economic system raises a series of disturbing political and social questions.

On November 29, 1988, four independent groups in the German Democratic Republic — the Environmental Library, the Democratic Socialists, Socialism from Below and The Votes Against — sent us a statement of solidarity with the victims of political persecution in Czechoslovakia. I identify totally with the conclusion of their statement, which I quote in full (see box).

This is a different sort of language from that of the HOS Manifesto: "We are for pluralism of various forms of ownership and decision-making and for conditions that will allow the different sectors of the economy and the enterprises [who in these "sectors" and "enterprises"? — Petr Uhl] to look for those forms that best correspond to their specific needs, which allow the best utilization of an enterprising spirit and which, consequently, lead to their prosperity," the HOS Manifesto says.

Misuse of the term "pluralism"

It should be said clearly that the word "pluralism" is being misused here. The HOS has, of course, the right to propose such pluralism, in the same way as others may propose, in the framework of a "pluralism of punishments," that beating be included among them. Or, in the framework of "pluralism in education," it could campaign for private schools for those who can pay their fees.

But opponents of beating, of religious schools or the exploitation of others' labor cannot be accused of a lack of democratic spirit, insofar as they do not want to elimi-

nate debate on these questions. Nor can the problem be overcome by arguing that the present penal, educational and economic systems are in such a state (here it is possible to describe factually the horrors of the prisons, schools and factories) that the measures proposed would represent a marked improvement.

Rejecting enterprise based on exploitation

Having said that, there is always a possibility for seeking other forms of improvement. I would like today and for the future to convince my fellow citizens that the pluralism of forms of ownership should be more limited, for example, than that of opinions. (Even there, to a certain extent, it is necessary to restrict the propagation of racist and xenophobic views or advocacy and encouragement of terror, brutality and so on).

From the political standpoint, this is of course a matter of choice. For example, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, whose membership is by no means limited to socialists, has taken the following position on this question: "It rejects all social formations and organizations based on a monopoly, on the dependence of citizens and of the people, on their oppression and exploitation, whether this is in the name of private capital or the totalitarian state."

Not only socialist convictions but the conception of human rights that is propagated everywhere today can provide the motivation for rejecting enterprise based on the exploiting other people's labor (that is, when the workers do not participate in decisions concerning their work, the product of this work and the conditions on the job, but only sell their labor to employers, which is the case for the overwhelming majority of working people now).

If the right of free enterprise is not directly stipulated by the international agreements on human rights, it is nonetheless possible to deduce it from Article 17 of the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is necessary, however, to proceed from the principle that the exercise of a right is accompanied by legally imposed limitations that are indispensable, among other things, to protect the rights of others.

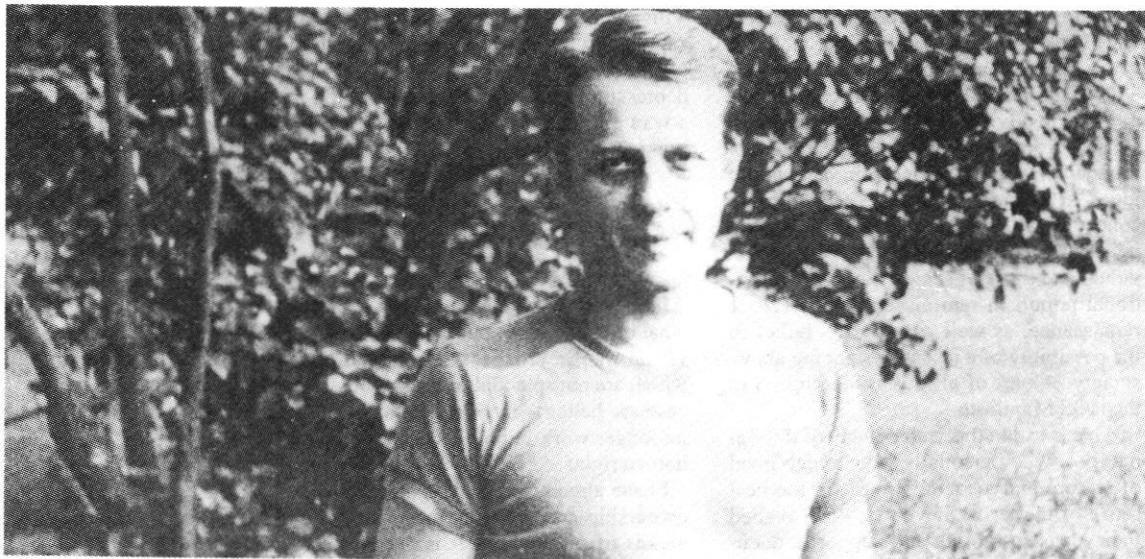
Of course, in an economy of scarcity, based on monetary and market relations, all economic activity treads on the rights of someone else, since underlying the principle of competition on which such an economy is founded is economic warfare, conflict of interests. Unrealistic ideas about jumping over this state of affairs into an egalitarian society have long been abandoned by socialists. They now take account of the violations of the rights of others that occur in the economic mechanism where there is a re-establishment (or more exactly, a modification) of capitalist economic relations. And they try at the same time to set up socio-economic structures and institutions in which the economic interests of the associated producers (enterprises) can coincide, and where their conflicts can be resolved by compromises that can also satisfy society as a whole. That is the task of economic and social self-management in which everyone can participate.

Free enterprise must be limited by law

However, what socialists can never give up is their opposition to the principle of employer/employee relations in its legal aspect (the right to work), as we know it in its entirety from the capitalist economy or from the situation of ordinary employees in Czechoslovakia today. In fact, the right of free enterprise (a right included in the model proposed by the HOS) should not be based on the utilization of others' labor.

Violation of the employees' (hypothetical) rights of free enterprise in order to favor those of employers is so marked that it is essential to limit this right by law to individuals or to family businesses (under public supervision).

**Petr
Uhl
(DR)**



Statement of the East German Independent Movements

THESE repressive measures demonstrate the depth of the crisis afflicting the bureaucratic leaders of both our countries. They reject public discussion of the necessary democratic and economic political reforms.

They avoid facing up to real history. They refuse to give an accounting to the workers.

Instead of that, the bureaucracy is taking refuge in escalating repression at home, while abroad it is trying to plug into the mechanisms of the imperialist market, hoping in this way to resolve its economic difficulties. These attempts

go in the direction of the interests of capitalism, which is trying to penetrate into new countries with low wages, outlets for goods, raw materials resources and promises of profit.

They also go in the direction of the interests of the bureaucracy, which is trying to maintain its material privileges and role at the least as manager of an economy henceforth directed in the framework of new production relations, market relations.

However, this can only mean a sharp decline in the living standard in our countries, inflation and the selling out of social

gains. We do not see any solution in the restoration of the capitalist economic mechanisms, in which wealth for some always means poverty and oppression for others. Moreover, the high living standard in the West is made possible to a large extent by the poverty of the third world.

The economic progress of the country and getting the benefit of an increased effort by the workers to achieve such progress cannot be accomplished with a government of apparatchiks and those co-opted by the apparatus. It can only be achieved with the political rule of the work-

ers themselves, on condition that democratic rights are fully assured. Some circles in the East and West are coming closer and closer in their attempt to maintain their privileges of power.

This is why only one road remains for us — deepening our mutual relations and international solidarity with all those who are struggling for their rights and against the repressive apparatuses in their countries, whether in Gdansk, Reinhausen or South Africa, who are fighting for international democratic socialism and the right of peoples to self-determination.



The stagnant sectors of the Czechoslovak economy — especially in the spheres of small production, commerce and so on, individual and family cottage industry, alongside cooperatives where it is possible to assure democratic management of labor — will be a sufficient framework for those who want to start businesses with their own labor. The HOS's postulation that "the full re-establishment of private enterprise is inevitable in the areas of commerce, cottage industry, small- and medium-sized enterprises, a section of agriculture and in the cultural domain" (not just in a part of culture but in culture as a whole) is one of the most important phrases in the Manifesto.

A liberal democratic platform

It shows clearly the direction that HOS wants to take. By the way, what could the demand for a total commercialization of culture mean exactly? If that were achieved, it would be a world first, a sort of Pol Pot Cambodia in reverse, because there is no country in the world — fortunately — where culture depends exclusively on private enterprise.

However, the last sentence of the section of the Manifesto entitled "Roads to Economic Prosperity" frankly took my breath away: "The Czechoslovak economy should be integrated naturally in the world economy, founded on an international division of labor beneficial for all." A friend explained to me that I should read this as "in a world economy that should be founded on an international division of labor beneficial to all."⁴

But, if that is what the authors had wanted to say, they would certainly have done so. I read what is there in print. Throughout the Manifesto, there is of course not a word on the North-South problem, on the exploitation and plundering of the third world, in which, by the way, Czechoslovakia also participates through world prices, even if to a lesser extent because of its shortage of capital. HOS, apparently, would like to increase the Czech share of this booty. There is not a mention either of the economic inequalities within the "first world," either between the different countries or within individual countries. What more need I say?

One might observe that this is a liberal democratic platform close to that of the West German Liberal Party (the FD) or the English liberals. It is a platform clearly demarcated from any element of socialism, except perhaps the demand for self-management in the big enterprises (the small and middle ones are supposed to go to the private sector). It is a platform of opening toward the right, toward neo-conservatism.

It was certainly because of them, the neo-conservatives, that the fine words about trade-union pluralism were not complemented by the quite simple demand for the right to strike, even if the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights introduces this right in the framework of the laws of the individual countries. The right to strike might well upset the functioning of the small- and medium-sized private enterprises. This is no oversight. I know that when the document was being drawn up, there was a proposal for including the right to strike in the Manifesto.

The proposal for widening the responsi-

bilities of the president of the republic, who is to be elected by universal direct suffrage, also comes from the conceptual stock in trade of the right.

Shutting their eyes to totalitarian danger

Taking into consideration only representative (indirect) democracies, you have in general a choice between two systems — the presidential system as we know it in the United States and in many Latin American countries (and in Europe to a lesser extent in France) and a system where the president (or the monarch) has only a symbolic function, as is the case in West Germany, the Scandinavian or Benelux countries, and so on. Governing through presidential decisions (decrees) resembles the idea of a Fuehrer, and conceals a totalitarian danger to which the neo-conservatives willingly shut their eyes.

Another concession to the neo-conservatives is that the Manifesto does not come out against the death penalty, although Czechoslovakia is one of the last European countries where this legal reform still is still on the agenda at the end of the twentieth century. The International Pact on Civic and Political Rights, however, provides a good basis for a struggle against the death penalty.

4. This formulation is different from that of the document we republish in this issue, which says "based on the international division of labor, which generally has a stimulating effect." Maybe this is an amendment by HOS, which, while attenuating the sentence with which Petr Uhl polemicalizes, does not modify the positive judgment of this economy and therefore does not invalidate Petr Uhl's argument.

Some details illustrate well the authors' lack of competence. For example, there is a demand for a law not only on elections but also on political organizations (including parties) that would make it possible to "concretize the means by which different kinds of civic representatives could submit themselves to the verdict of the electorate and participate in the management of public affairs." (Note that soliciting the approval of the electorate comes before managing public affairs.)

Question of laws regulating political parties

In the legal framework, post-war Czechoslovakia has inherited the conception of political parties that existed between the wars, and which was borrowed from France after World War I. That is, political parties exist and operate, and no law (except a possible ban) places any constraints on them or limits them or concretizes anything. What is not prohibited is allowed. Even in the USSR, today people are beginning to understand this. This is a very simple view. Political parties are a natural phenomenon, and the less they are regulated, the better it will be.

The present situation, it is true, is a bit complicated by the National Front law⁵ that dates back to the fall of 1968. But calling in such a way for a law on political parties (I am not talking about an electoral law) reflects a misunderstanding of the problem. As far as I am concerned, I recommended that there be rules in the constitution preventing political parties — in the form of a one-party monopoly or coalitions — from concentrating all the political power in the society into their hands, or rather into the hands of the leadership of one or more parties, even if freedom of expression, of press and so on were assured and where the government would be subordinate to parliament (where such a party or coalition would have the majority).

Other than this, I would not want to restrict the activities of political parties by any law. I even think that—outside of charitable works and fairs to which they want to relegate the Children of Bohemia — parties could play an essential and prominent role by presenting various proposals to the society as a whole. They can and must become the organizers and leaders of political life. This is, of course, without seeking any exclusiveness or even predominance. In no case must they monopolize power, because then we would be jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire.

Political power should be "diluted" as much as possible among the population, and if, for many reasons, that is not possible today, we should nonetheless think about a model of society going in the direction of a progressive dilution of power.

Bourgeois parliamentarianism of the type in which the "rule of political parties" prevails, does not permit this. To the contrary,

it leads to indifference, to apathy, to manipulation by the specialists and the politicians, and therefore to political stagnation followed by cultural, moral and social stagnation.

I find it a bit peculiar for people to demand that a lawyer (in criminal cases) have the same rights before the court as the Ministry of the Interior. Even though it often (but not always) happens that practice does not correspond to the principles of the law, defense lawyers today have more rights than the Ministry of the Interior. For example, the attorney general is obliged to collect evidence pointing to the innocence of the accused or diminishing their guilt, while defense lawyers in principle are forbidden to present evidence incriminating their clients who have not yet been found guilty.

Lawyers can defend their clients by all means (even by lying, and naturally by remaining silent), although prosecutors do not have the right to do this. Defense lawyers also get perfectly justified advantages from the order of pleas, in which they get the last word, from the right to read testimony against their clients before it is presented to the court and so on.

The demand for equal rights for defense lawyers and the prosecution reflects a certain striving for "privatization" of trials, in which two equal partners — the state and the accused, represented by a lawyer — appeal to an impartial and independent judge (or a court, a jury) to decide the issue. I think that would be a step backward.

Ignorance of current criminal law

What is more, while it is a good thing to aim for greater independence of judges, the result will never be perfect (even if it is possible to achieve a much greater degree of independence than exists today), because judges do not live in a void but in a society divided into classes.

If today judges express the "class" interests of the bureaucracy, they will also express tomorrow, if to a markedly lesser degree, the interests of the leading social groups (for example, the managers of the big enterprises and the owners of small and middling enterprises, if things evolve according to HOS's proposal — let us hope this is not the case).

The demand for creating civil courts and transferring a part of the cases now handled by state prosecutors to them — limiting the function of the district attorneys representing the state in criminal cases — also reflects ignorance of the present rules of criminal law and the position to the prosecution. The authors of the Manifesto probably want to take general supervision of the operation of the legal system away from the attorney general.

I would agree with taking this function away from the state bodies (the prosecu-

tors) and that it be taken over by newly constituted social institutions (such as the VONS [The Committee to Defend the Unjustly Persecuted] and ISO [Initiative Group for Social Self-Defense]). But this is not in the Manifesto. It is not stated either who will replace the prosecutors' offices in pre-trial imprisonment, supervision of the prisons and correctional educational institutions and so on; or who will have the right to bring appeals to the Supreme Court in cases of disregard of the law (in criminal cases or others). It is not explained how the supervision of the prosecutors' offices is to be replaced in civil law litigations and so on. Someone has just written something without bothering to reread the law on the function of the prosecutors' offices. And, nonetheless, the Manifesto has been signed by at least three jurists.

HOS is clearly demarcated from genuine democracy

I cannot rid myself of the impression that with the emergence of the HOS, I have been swindled. The Manifesto is couched in the terms of a basic document for a general democratic platform on which all can find a place if, over and above their own democratic ideas, they agree to discuss other ideas that might, from their point of view, be less democratic.

With its postulates, HOS is clearly demarcated from genuine democracy, which follows from the creation of material and morale conditions for the fullest development of every individual and thereby of the society as a whole. Such genuine democracy tends toward democratic principles in production, whose objectives are the ending of exploitation and the reduction of manipulation, the progressive transformation of economic objects into economic subjects. It stresses the free association of producers as a precondition for the democratic economic development of the human community. It struggles, at least in the long term, for the liberation of human beings, for the replacement of the power of human beings over other human beings by the power of human beings over things. Instead of all this, HOS offers us easy solutions, apparently acceptable and tested ones, borrowed from the bourgeois world — and, what is more, without the slightest criticism or modification.

In the circumstances, HOS's claim to coordinate all independent democratic political activities, a claim that seems to flow directly from the preamble of the Manifesto, has a totalitarian character. I hope that independent democratic thought will develop in Czechoslovakia also outside HOS. Many indications give us grounds for thinking that this is already the case. ★

5. An organization manipulated by the CP, to which all political, trade-union, cultural and other associations and organizations are obliged to affiliate.

IN BRIEF

**Support for Yeltsin**

IN AN interview with *Rouge*, the paper of the French section of the Fourth International, Moscow People's Front leader Boris Kagarlitski commented on the surge of support for the candidacy of Boris Yeltsin in the recent Soviet elections.

"Technically, what sparked the recent mobilizations was a TV program in which Boris Yeltsin was interviewed and in which tendentious questions from a few dozen supposed viewers were put to him. He was embarrassed...It was obvious that many of the letters had been set up. On March 17, in another very popular TV program, journalists said that the letters from TV viewers read in the first program were falsifications. They said this after checking the addresses of the supposed letter-writers and finding that they did not exist. This machination touched off a wave of suspicion and anger."

Kagarlitski described the demonstrations in support of Yeltsin's candidacy as follows:

"The first one was in the Bratievo district in Moscow, where there is a very strong self-management movement. The neighborhood people have had very sharp conflicts with the local authorities on environmental questions, and they have mobilized. They have created base committees. The chair of one such committee participated in the conference of the Moscow People's Front last week. He was the one who organized the first rally, with 15,000 participants, in Bratievo...."

"The second demonstration was very largely spontaneous. It was given impetus by the presence of various informal groups, including the Moscow People's Front and the Memorial Group."

As for what Yeltsin represents politically, Kagarlitski said:

"You have to distinguish between two things — Yeltsin himself and the movement he has aroused. In the recent period, Yeltsin has proved to be a relatively; mod-

erate candidate, even frightened by the breadth of the demonstrations he aroused. Moreover, he has retreated on the question of multi-partyism....

From this standpoint, there is a gap between Yeltsin, the symbol, representing a figure repressed by the apparatus, and popular because of that, and his political project, which remains relatively vague." ★

Clashes in Latvia

IN FEBRUARY *Moskovskii Vestnik*, the journal of the Moscow People's Front, published the following brief article. It illustrates the tensions growing in Latvia in advance of the March 26 elections and, possibly, the Moscow People's Front's attitude toward them.

One has also to wonder what sort of a mass demonstration could be attacked with relative impunity by "hundreds" of youth, and in what circumstances.

About 100,000 people took part in a demonstration and rally in honor of the "Day of the Soviet Army" on February 22 in Riga, the capital of Latvia. On hundreds of placards was written "Invincible and legendary!" "The Soviet army — our pride!" and "Shame to the provocateurs who insult the honor and dignity of the Soviet army!"

The columns of marchers were made up essentially of participants in the Internationalist Front [Inter-Front], that is Russian-speaking inhabitants of Riga, former front-line soldiers, retired soldiers, and labor veterans. Their chests were adorned with military and civilian orders and medals. The demonstrators started their route from the Lenin monument and went to Victory Square.

At the same time, in the center of the square several hundred young people gathered, who expressed their negative attitude to serving in the Soviet army, calling it an occupation force. Scattered clashes took place between the Inter-Front demonstrators and the young people protesting against service in the army. In particular those veterans who appeared in the rear columns were objects of hostility. Inter-Frontists had their medals torn off and their placards grabbed. Naturally, these actions aroused energetic opposition. Only the intervention of the police averted a mass punch-up.

The demonstrators gathering in Victory Square expressed their protest against the "stop action" organized by the militant-minded youth. Speakers said that they did not consider themselves immigrants or

occupiers. Many of their fathers and grandfathers lived in Latvia and more than a few relatives had given their lives to liberate Latvian land from the German fascists and robbers. "Long live the Soviet army, liberator of the Baltic lands" resounded over Victory Square.

On February 2, also in Victory Square a 50,000-strong demonstration of the Inter-Front was held. Participants in it expressed concern about inter-ethnic problems in Latvia. ★

"A flag of struggle"

ON THE EVE of the Soviet elections, *Pravda* published another major attack on Estonian "nationalism." The article was signed by A. Petrushev and V. Shirokov, who were described as "special correspondents" in the Estonian capital, Tallin.

Fire was mainly focused on two targets, capitulation to nationalism in the Estonian CP and expressions of so-called anti-Soviet and anti-Russian nationalism by representatives of the People's Front (Rahvarinne).

Regarding the Estonian CP, the correspondents wrote: "As in Paida, in other regional party conferences demands have been raised for forming a 'sovereign' Communist Party of Estonia. Does this mean separating off Estonian from Russian-speaking Communists? Is this a call for splitting the Communist Party? In the election of delegates to some party conferences, the criterion was nationality."

The correspondents warned: "We are not dramatizing things, but facts are facts. Other 'fighters' are using the development of *glasnost* and democratization to say anything they want. On the one hand, they are mounting massive attacks against individual Communist leaders, presenting them as being in opposition to 'the people;' and on the other they are challenging the leading role of the Party, undertaking open attempts to establish the idea that the Communist Party of Estonia is only one faction in the republic."

Regarding the People's Front, the *Pravda* correspondents accused E. Savisaara of making the following comments when the Soviet flag was hauled down from the Tall Herman tower in Tallin, to be replaced by the blue, black and white flag of Estonia:

"For decades past, they tried to make us forget who were were, to turn the Estonians into a people without a history. The raising of this flag is for us like a rediscovery of ourselves."

"We have won a moral victory. If last fall we said that Estonia was in our hands, and if we are gradually beginning to believe that the government can be in our hands, then today we have raised this flag as a flag of struggle, and we say that under this flag next fall, we will put the parliament of Estonia into the hands of those chosen by the people and endowed by them with a mandate." ★

Gorbachev's elections

FOR THE FIRST TIME since Lenin's day, on March 26 many Soviet voters will have the opportunity to express a choice. There is more than one candidate for about three fourths of the seats in the People's Congress that is to be elected on that date. But a nearly fool-proof selection process has weeded out most challenges to the Communist Party, except in the Baltic republics and in a few other cases such as that of former Moscow chief Boris Yeltsin — Gorbachev's enfant terrible — and S. Stankevich, candidate of the Moscow People's Front. In the Baltic Republics, the existence of mass opposition movements made it impossible to stage mere show-case elections.

The elections are for 2,250 deputies to the Congress of People's Deputies, who are then to elect a 544-strong Supreme Soviet. This number is divided up into three slates. Fifteen hundred deputies are to be elected from territorial and national-territorial districts. The national-territorial districts are divided up equally among the 15 republics, regardless of population and thus maintain the principle of equal representation on which the old Soviet of Nationalities was based.

The other 750 delegates are to be elected by public bodies. Of these 425 are reserved for the Communist Party and associated organizations (100 for the CPSU, 75 for the Komsomol, 100 for the All-Union Central Trade-Union Council, 75 for the Committee of Soviet Women and 75 for the All-Union Council of War and Labor Veterans).

The other 325 delegates from public organizations were allotted to "mandated public organizations," such as cooperative associations, the Soviet Academy of Sciences, the writers' union, Journalists' union and so on.

In all cases in which there were more than two candidates, candidates had to be ratified by assemblies, half of whose members were selected by district election committees and the other half by the candidates themselves. This system made it easy for the Communist Party bosses to pack these assemblies, allowing few genuinely independent candidates to get through. Most criticism in the USSR, reportedly, was focused on this stage. In Estonia, the rulers were forced simply to drop it and register all nominees. ★

THE JOURNAL of the Moscow People's Front, *Moskovskii Vestnik*, published the following statement on the March 26 elections to the Congress of People's Deputies in its February 1989 issue. It has been somewhat shortened.

THE HASTILY drawn up, undemocratic law on the election of people's deputies predetermined the outcome of the election campaign. In essence, this is an obvious game, in which the voters are consigned to the role of helpless mice in the claws of party-nomenklatura cats. Nonetheless, taking part in such rigged games is useful and unavoidable. It offers political experience, attracts sympathy from voters and exposes the machinations of the authorities.

The procedure of candidates being put forward by social organizations confirmed the original undemocratic nature of the formation of this body of 750 participants in the future Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. In essence, these deputies are not being elected by the people but by a narrow circle of leaders of the social organizations, who pay no attention to the opinions of the rank and file of these organizations and generally put forward party functionaries as candidates for the Congress of People's Deputies.

Nothing prevented the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR from confirming "its people" as candidates. No

protests from rank-and-file Communists prevented the plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU from confirming its 100 candidates for 100 seats. This is the "leading and directing" role of the CPSU, to make a show of elections without real choice.

Bureaucracy banned local voters' assemblies

The Soviet party bureaucracy did everything possible to keep the workers' collectives and the local voters' assemblies from presenting candidates genuinely chosen by the people. Not even the pressure of public opinion and the central press had any real effect on the policy of the rulers. A clear example of this is the banning of the local voters' assembly in the Liublin district [in Moscow]. The reason is clear. They had to give the green light to "their man" — the chair of the Moscow City Executive [*Mosgornispolkom*], V. T. Saikin.

The local pre-electoral assemblies became yet another heavy club or hamstring for thwarting democracy. Who were the bulk of delegates to these assemblies? They were from the workers' collectives, functionaries and tame workers; and from the inhabitants of the capital, retired Communists who were elected by the party organizations in the housing offices. In 26 territorial electoral districts, 81 people were registered [as candidates]. Of these, more than 50 were general directors and nomenklatura officials of various ranks.

Characteristically, this time the authorities were afraid even to rely on their customary allies, the representatives of the "workers' aristocracy." Therefore, of the 81 candidates, only nine are workers.

In the final list of candidates, there are very few progressive and radical-minded figures. Of the independent social organizations in the capital, the most active role was played by People's Front and the Fund for Social Initiatives, whose programmatic bases are close to those of the People's Front. The Fund was officially registered not long ago as a voluntary society. Neither the Democratic Union nor Pamyat directly sponsored candidates. The Moscow People's Front put forward four candidates and after the regional pre-electoral assembly managed to get S. Stankevich registered (for the Chermushkin Region).

It should be noted that even a grouping as strong as the Bratievo Self-Management Committee, which got the support of almost 60,000 people in the district, was unable to maintain its candidate in the pre-electoral regional assembly.

At the present time, the question remains, vote or call on the voters to boycott the election in those districts where there are no candidates worth voting for — as for example in the Volgograd, Krasnopresensk, Kuibyshev, Leningrad, Liublin, Proletarsk and Sverdlov Soviet regions (this list should be refined). An active position is probably preferable — crossing out the names of all the candidates on the territorial region-ballot. At the same time, it is essential to vote for Yeltsin and against Brakov, the director of ZIL [the enterprise that makes the Soviet officials' limousines].

In the March 26 elections, it is useful to carry out agitational work, using street meetings, rallies, leafleting, collections of signatures, and meetings of candidates with voters. On the last day, March 25, it is essential to hold mass agitational actions in every electoral region. In a word, everyone to work, everyone out for the elections! ★