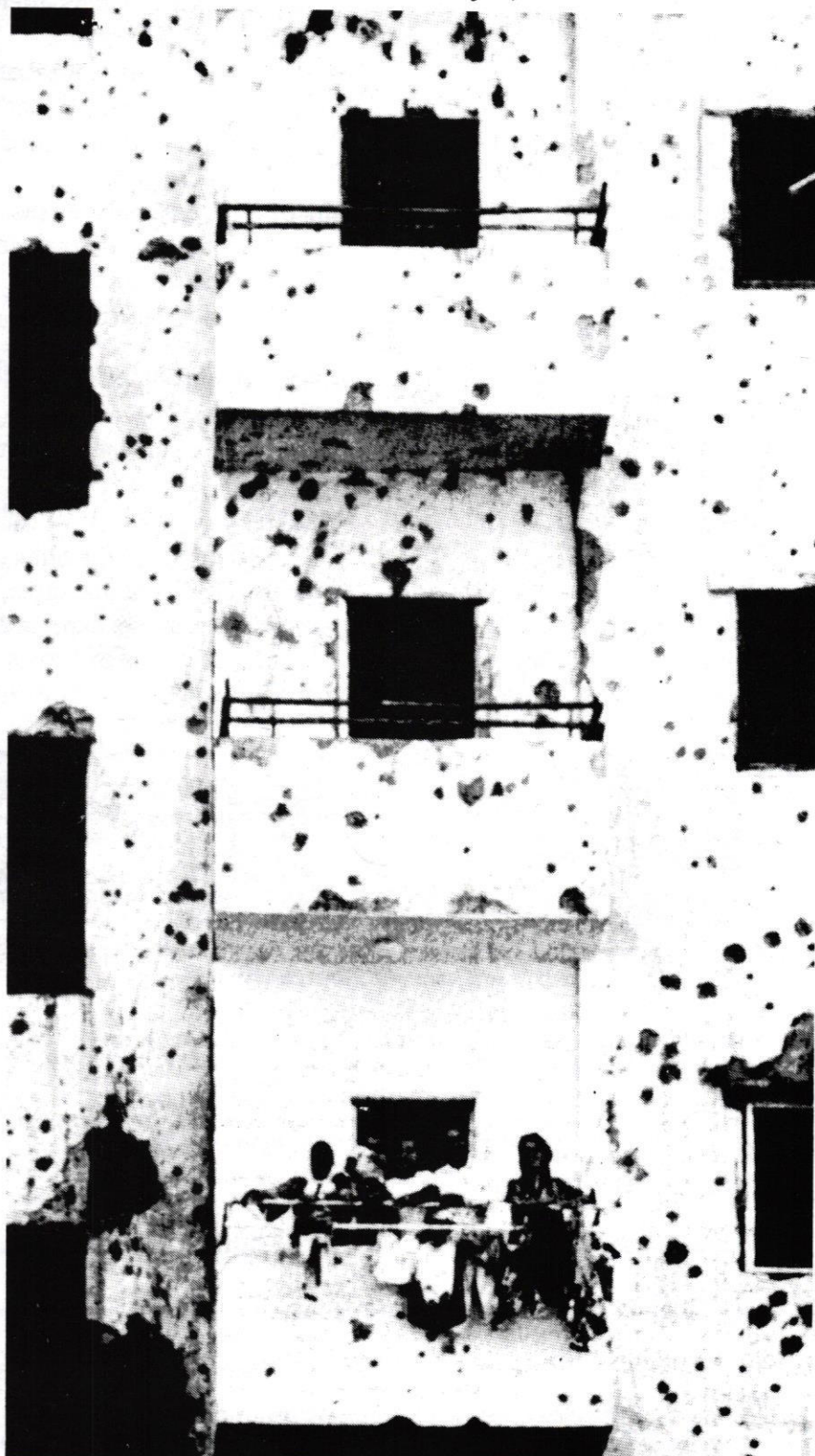


International VIEWPOINT

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Lebanon: the carnage goes on

INSIDE:

USA

Half a million march
for abortion rights

Czechoslovakia

A long wait at the
crossroads

Cuba

Life in a
micro-brigade

Indonesia

Hard times ahead for
the Suharto regime

Peru

"Others are still in
prison — don't forget
them!"

Contents:

LEBANON 3

WHAT are the interests of the imperialists and the Syrians in the current cross-fire? *Salah Jaber* argues that the French government has let itself be trapped by a right-wing campaign

USSR 6

A DELEGATION of US Trotskyists visits Moscow to press for rehabilitation of leader of the Russian revolution — *Carl Finamore*

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 7

DIM PROSPECTS for *perestroika* in the land of "normalization" — *Colin Meade*

PERU 8

PERUVIAN peasant leader Hugo Blanco, welcomed in Sweden after his release from prison, begins a European tour — *Maria Sundvall*

BOLIVIA 10

FORMER dictator tries for a comeback — *Johan Eriksson* reports from La Paz

CUBA 10

AN ALTERNATIVE to market reforms, the special teams in the building industry have received attention in both the international capitalist and socialist press. *Karen Skytte Andersen* and *Lars Halskov* recount their experiences of working in a "micro-brigade"

SWITZERLAND 13

EMPLOYERS are out to scuttle the ban on nightwork for women. A Swiss committee has mounted an international campaign to defend all workers against unhealthy working schedules

USA 14

OVER half a million demonstrate on April 9 against increasing attacks on women's rights to control their own bodies — *Teresa Martinez*

BRITAIN 16

WELSH nationalists, like their Scottish counterparts, call for "independence within Europe." Can they make similar gains? Interview with Plaid Cymru Euro-candidate *Peter Keelan*

INDONESIA 19

MORE THAN 20 years after the massacre of at least a million Communists, what are the fruits of the "New Order" that has maintained a regime of iron-fisted repression ever since? *Subakat* analyzes the economic and social conditions in one of the world's largest neo-colonial countries

Around the World 26

- Senegal ● Yugoslavia
- Basque Country ● Obituaries

USSR 28

IN RESPONSE to the outcry over the Georgian massacre, *perestroika* leaders experiment with new methods of "crisis management" — *Gerry Foley*

International VIEWPOINT

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The carnage goes on

THE WAR in Lebanon entered its fifteenth year on April 13. This grim anniversary would have passed unnoticed, had attention not been drawn back to the country by a spectacular renewal of clashes between the two main camps, the mainly Muslim area controlled by Syria and the reactionary Christian sector.

The "war of national liberation" declared by General Michel Aoun, commander-in-chief of the Christian army, to "put an end to the Syrian occupation" enjoyed unwonted international reverberations and publicity. The western media, the French in particular, have raised an outcry, presenting the Christian rightist camp as the last defenders of a civilization "threatened with extermination by the Muslims."

In the following interview, Salah Jaber describes what is involved in the latest outbreak of fighting.

WHY THIS sudden flare-up, when things had seemed quiet in Lebanon for some time?

There has been less talk about the war in Lebanon in recent years. But it still continued in manifold forms. In particular, there have been battles within both the Christian and Muslim communities. However, this is the first time in a while that the fighting has fallen back into the classical framework of the Lebanese civil war that began in 1975 — that is, a confrontation between the reactionary Christian camp on one side and the opposing camp, mainly Muslim and allied to Syria, on the other. The status quo of recent years has been broken by the clashes underway.

To understand what is happening, you have to go back a bit. For the first time in its history since independence, the country was left without a president, when Amin Gemayel's term ran out in September. Two rival governments were each claiming legitimacy — a government in the Muslim-majority area, which existed before Gemayel's departure (and includes a Christian minister), and a government in the Christian redoubt. The chief of the latter, appointed by Gemayel just before his departure, is none other but General Aoun, commander in chief of the Christian army (a faction of the "legal" army.)

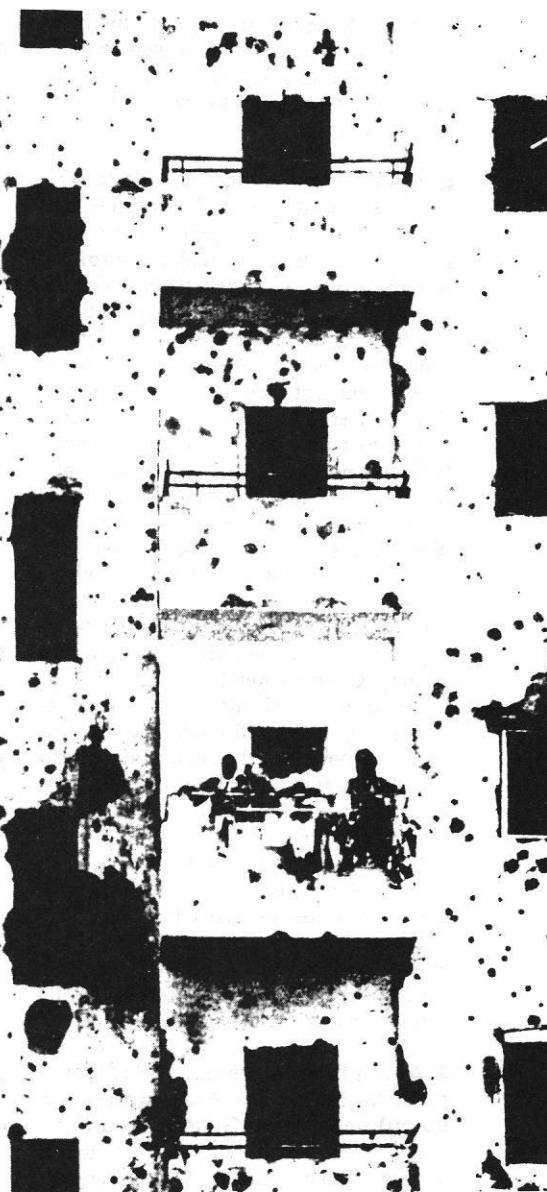
After his appointment, General Aoun formed a military cabinet. This new situation reflected the impasse in relations between the various factions in Lebanon, as well as among the international and regional powers, including Syria of course.

The search for a compromise candidate for the presidency continued after Gemayel's departure. Meanwhile the status quo was maintained, even though in a new form, with the partition of the country being carried further. Wheeling and dealing went on between Syria, the dominant power in the Muslim-majority sector, and the United States, which operated as the patron of the reactionary camp. The compromise achieved was torpedoed by the Lebanese Forces, the Christian extreme-right militia linked to Israel.

General Aoun also took part in sabotaging the compromise, even though he did not oppose it in an altogether direct way. Obviously, he also harbored the ambition of becoming president. So, he tried to pave the way for assuming this coveted position, with the support of Iraq.

■ What are Iraq's objectives, and what role are the other Arab states playing?

For Bagdad, this is a purely anti-Syrian



operation, intended to rock its rival's boat in Lebanon. The reactionary Arab states have also tried to intervene into the Lebanese crisis with the aim of finding a way out. For all of them, Syria is a black sheep from several points of view — its support for Iran in the Gulf War, its support for the PLO dissidents, and more generally its attitude regarding an overall settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Damascus cannot help but oppose any solution that would ignore its own territory of the Golan Heights, which was occupied and annexed by Israel.

It is clear, moreover, that recently the Syrian position has become generally weakened. On the one hand, the Gulf War ended on rather favorable terms for Iraq. On the other, the PLO leadership has enjoyed renewed prestige. The Syrian regime thus found itself rather isolated, which also limited its possibilities for action in Lebanon.

In this context, the problem for the reactionary Arab states was to defuse the Lebanese crisis and, at the same time, limit Syria's possibilities for using Lebanon to

exert an influence in the regional conflicts. But there was no question of their provoking Syria as Iraq did. A reconciliation committee was set up to try to find a way out of the impasse.

■ What about General Aoun's role?

With Baghdad's encouragement, General Aoun wanted to offer proof to the Arab states of his ability to really control the country in order to establish himself as the best candidate for the presidency. Initially, he tried to clean up his own camp, the reactionary Christian camp (it needs to be pointed out that there are also pro-Syrian Christian areas). He attacked the forces linked to Israel in the Christian redoubt (which is not the case of his "legal" army, linked to the United States). This provoked clashes between his troops and the Lebanese Forces, which concluded favorably for Aoun, but without producing a decisive result.

In a second stage, he tried to show his capacity to maintain order throughout the country. Claiming loudly that he was going to put an end to all the different kinds of trafficking, he seized control first of the Christian ports and then declared a blockade of the ports south of Beirut, under control of the Muslim militias. This set off renewed fighting.

At that point, hoist by his own petard, General Aoun declared the beginning of the "war to liberate Lebanon." His objective was no longer to reestablish order and control the ports but to "liberate" the country from the Syrian army. But he totally lacks the means for that.

■ Aren't the imperialist and regional powers (Israel, the Arab states and so on) supporting General Aoun?

One might have thought initially that if he made such bold moves it was because he had received international guarantees. But that is not at all the case. The Israelis have declared that as long as the Syrians don't go south of a certain line and don't introduce certain types of armaments (airplanes, certain missiles and so on) into Lebanon, they won't intervene. As regards the Arab states, there is no question of military intervention. And the US has so far maintained a very cautious and reserved attitude.

The Americans have not forgotten that it was the reactionary Christian camp who upset the compromise that they had worked out with the Syrians, and which they thought was an entirely reasonable one. Above all, they know that at the moment Syria is playing a totally irreplaceable role in Lebanon. There would be no question of their forcing the Syrian army out of the country, without replacing it with another force able to maintain order. But there is no other such force in Lebanon.

Outside Lebanon, Israel has already done what it could, and the multinational interposition forces deployed between 1982 and 1984 failed lamentably. A Syrian army retreat would increase the anarchy and

could enable certain forces — such as the pro-Iranian fundamentalists, who are "worse" from the American point of view — to get the upper hand.

The US position today is that the status quo has to be preserved, while trying to shift the relationship of forces as much as possible in favor of the reactionary Christian camp. That is the reason for their negotiations with the Syrians and their agreement on a president acceptable to both parties, a big landowner, an honorable and very moderate bourgeois.

Aoun has found himself with no real support except from Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which has provided him with massive quantities of weapons, including tanks. But this is not going to be enough to drive out the Syrian army. So, Aoun didn't have any guarantee. He could have limited himself to the war of the ports and stopped the escalation. But the way he plunged into upping the ante, declaring a "war of liberation," makes it almost impossible for him now to be a party to a compromise with the Syrians, which had been negotiable before.

General Aoun has behaved in an irrational and megalomaniac way. His "national liberation" war has proved to be a criminal adventure, with the population paying the costs. On the other side, the Syrians are not considering invading the Christian sector, among other things, because of the line drawn by the Israelis. The result is bombardment back and forth, with its toll of victims and material damage. Of course, the Syrians have more firepower, but this is a most absurd bombardment from both sides, which is resulting in hundreds of civilian victims in both camps, adding to the carnage and destruction that Lebanon has suffered for 14 years.

■ But isn't the aim of "liberation" a legitimate one?

What is there to liberate? In the Christian redoubt, there is no Syrian army. So, it must be the rest of the country that is to be liberated. But the population in those regions does not see the Syrian presence as a foreign occupation. If this had been the case, it would have been reflected on the ground in one way or another. The Israeli army went through hell in Lebanon, and it was unable to stay there. If that has not been so for the Syrians, it is certainly not because their army is more powerful or more effective than Israel's! Acceptance of the Syrian presence, moreover, is not limited to the Muslims. One of the Christian areas in the north of the country is allied to Syria.

So, this would be a "liberation" of a population that feels no need for that and is a thousand times more hostile to its purported "liberator" than to those from whom he promises to liberate them. Furthermore, the forces that could gain the upper hand in the Muslim regions in the event of a Syrian withdrawal are certainly no better disposed to the reactionary Christian camp than the Syrians.

It has to be remembered, moreover, that originally the Syrians intervened in 1976 to save the Christian camp, which was threatened by defeat at the hands of the allied forces of the Lebanese left and the Palestinian resistance. It was in response to the appeal of the Christian forces that the Syrian army intervened in Lebanon! Since then, even if Syria reversed its alliances after 1977, its presence has maintained the status quo and enabled the reactionary Christian camp to run its own territory, secure from any direct threats.

In fact, by controlling the other camp, Syria prevented a resumption of the civil war between the two communities. So, even from the standpoint of the enlightened interest of the reactionary Christian camp, this celebrated "liberation" is not really desirable. Aoun's big talk initially made a certain impression on the population of the Christian redoubt, but they quickly sobered up.

■ How do you explain the attitude of the French imperialists and the press campaign in France in favor of "mortally endangered Christian Lebanon"?

The French intervention has obviously fizzled. At the outset, the French government made a big diplomatic *faux pas* in trying to take sides in the fighting with the Christians, whose "existence" was supposed to be "threatened," as Mitterrand said. This was a falsification, in any case. As it happens, it was General Aoun who unleashed the conflict, and he was the one who set an objective — driving out the Syrians. They, on the other hand, adopted no objective, not even eliminating Aoun. Moreover, the shells are not just coming from one direction. Civilians are being hit in both camps.

To portray this business as if a religious community as such were threatened with destruction is a total distortion of the truth. The French attitude could only be seen as a partisan one, dictated by religious sympathies with the Christians and hostility to the Muslims.

As for what's behind the French attitude, I don't think that it represents a position dictated by the real and lucid interests of French imperialism. It seems that the French government, and Mitterrand in person, have let themselves be trapped by a certain pressure from the right in France, which has raised a big hue and cry since the outbreak of the fighting for solidarity with the Lebanese Christians. All this has come at a high point of anti-Muslim racism in Europe in the wake of the Rushdie affair (see IV 160.) Now the French government is trying to smooth things over. The American attitude, from the standpoint of the interests of imperialism, was much more rational.

■ What are Syria's objectives in Lebanon? Is there a basis for talking about a real desire to annex the

country?

This charge is an ideological smoke-screen. It is not, of course, that the Syrian regime is above such designs, but because this does not at all correspond to its real interests, nor therefore to its real policy.

Annexing Lebanon would raise far too many problems for the Syrian regime. First of all, it is a tough nut to crack. Syria can keep its presence in Lebanon and maintain a shaky sort of order with a limited military investment, with a few tens of thousands of soldiers. But to assimilate Lebanon, to extend the rule of the Syrian bourgeois military bureaucratic dictatorship there, would require an investment of forces that is beyond the capacity of this regime. And I am not even talking about Zionist and imperialist vetos on a Syrian annexation of Lebanon.

But there is more to it than that. In fact, annexing the country is not even desirable for the Syrian regime, even if this were within its power. The Syrian economy runs rather deeply in the red. It depends in large part on aid from the East European countries and subsidies that it gets from the Arab states because of its conflict with Israel. Syria maintains an over-large army, partly because of this conflict and partly because of the nature of the regime. Annexing Lebanon would be too much of an additional burden to bear.

On the other hand, Lebanon as it is, in the present limits of the Syrian intervention, is a source of profits for Damascus. Normally, the Syrian army is not involved in the fighting in Lebanon, and this considerably limits the costs of its presence. Moreover, it exacts a real gangster-type tribute from the Lebanese economy. The anarchy existing in Lebanon, for which the Syrian regime cannot officially be held responsible, permits the flourishing of all sorts of traffic. In particular, it has permitted a considerable growth in the production and export of hashish, from which the Syrian military bureaucracy takes a cut.

The black market in Syria itself has also been supplied from Lebanon, the paradise of free trade. And the military have been getting a rake-off in the transport of goods or a direct cut. Finally, the Lebanese banking system, the world's freest and most discreet, enables the Syrian bureaucrats to invest their "profits" in Lebanon or even abroad. So, the Syrian regime has no interest in absorbing Lebanon into its own state-run society.

Its real interest is to maintain its domination — no more, no less. First of all, this is so that it can continue to profit from Lebanon, but also because the country could become a political danger for the Syrian regime if it got out of its control. That is, more precisely, if radical forces — the left

Camps and Civilian Areas in Western Beirut



in the past and the fundamentalists in recent years — gained the upper hand in the Muslim-majority regions. This is the real framework of Syrian policy in Lebanon. It is for this reason, moreover, that the United States, like all of the imperialist powers, and even Israel, tacitly or in undertones, approves of the Syrian military presence in Lebanon. In their eyes, it is a lesser evil.

Up until 1982, the Syrian army was a force that maintained bourgeois order to the detriment of the Lebanese left and the Palestinian resistance. It throttled them and prevented a dynamic of radicalization from developing in the mass movement. Syria's role continued to be to hold back the left from 1976 to 1982, even if its alliances changed after 1977. This restraining role, moreover, became more effective after Syria imposed its tutelage.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 profoundly altered the relationship of forces in the Muslim regions. The Palestinian resistance forces were uprooted and partially expelled, while the Lebanese left was disarmed. But the Muslim bourgeois forces were not touched. The political scene was fundamentally changed. This was not, of course, simply the result of this intervention.

The Israelis only put the final touch to an evolution that began in 1976, with a steady ebb of the left and of progressive forms of consciousness in the Muslim regions to the advantage of communalism and the bourgeois forces. The latter have held the high ground since the withdrawal of the Israeli occupation army. On top of this, the fundamentalists have been the only political force that is really growing.

In these conditions, the role of the Syrians is no longer the same. Today, the Syrian army is playing the role of a buffer between the communalist forces in the Muslim camp. Without it, they would continue to kill each other and massacre the population.

■ Is there still a way out in Lebanon?

In fact, there is no longer any real way out in Lebanon in view of the decay of the situation, in the strongest sense of the term. To say nothing of a progressive or proletarian way out, there is not even a bourgeois solution to the crisis anymore within the frontiers of the Lebanese state. The country is too fragmented, and communalism is too developed for there to be a possibility for suddenly pushing it back. The solutions imposed from outside have also failed, within the limits of what external forces are prepared to invest in Lebanon.

Consequently, the only solution possible is in fact to go beyond the framework of the Lebanese state, toward a fusion of Lebanon with

Syria — as the Revolutionary Communist Group, the Lebanese section of the Fourth International points out. You have to remember that Lebanon in its present borders was conceived under the French colonial mandate in 1920 in a totally arbitrary way. The French had seized Syria (which at the time included Lebanon) in the aftermath of the first world war, and tried to cut it up into several states (one of which was the existing Lebanese state). They combined the various communities in a way to create an unstable balance justifying the French colonial presence.

This unstable balance, for which French colonialism was responsible in Lebanon, exploded in 1975 and has continued to burn since. Therefore, outright fusion with Syria becomes the only way out possible, inasmuch as this region belongs to a single national entity, and there are no national boundaries in the full sense of the term between these states.

Such a fusion fits into the framework of a widespread ideology in the region, that of Arab national unity. This applies also to the Lebanese Christians, who are as Arab as the others and share the same culture. It should be remembered that there are Christian areas in northern Lebanon that are allied to Syria.

This alone could make it possible to overcome the present situation of fragmentation and permanent conflict. But it does not correspond to the interests of the Syrian bureaucracy. The overthrow of the regime in Syria and its replacement by a revolutionary or radical regime is therefore necessary to achieve such a fusion. The future of Lebanon is intimately linked to that of Syria. ★

Trotskyists well-received in Moscow

A DELEGATION of American Trotskyists representing Trotsky's family visited Moscow in March to press demands for rehabilitation of the Russian revolution leader. The following are major excerpts from an article on the trip published in the April issue of *Socialist Action*, the paper of a US Trotskyist group of the same name. Sections dealing with the Soviet elections and the Moscow People's Front have had to be left out for space reasons.

The visit took place just before the Soviet elections, and the author began by noting the intense political activity going on in Moscow at the time.

CARL FINAMORE

THIS WAS the time chosen for a 10-visit by a delegation of U.S. Trotskyists — Susan Weissman, Paul Siegel, Ralph Schoenman and Carl Finamore. We were joined during the final days of the trip by Vlady Kibalchich, son of Victor Serge, a leader of the Left Opposition during the 1920s and '30s.

One of the main objectives of the trip was to deliver a letter to the Soviet authorities from the family of Leon Trotsky. The letter requested that Trotsky's name be cleared and that his works be published freely in the Soviet Union.

We quickly arranged a meeting with Otto Latsis, Deputy Editor of *Kommunist*, the theoretical journal of the Central Committee of the CPSU. Latsis agreed to give the letter to the CPSU Central Committee for discussion, but did not promise an official response from Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Discussion of Trotsky in Soviet press

Latsis also informed us that some of Trotsky's writings would soon be published by the government publishing house. But the partial, edited publication of Trotsky's views concerned us. The official government biographer of Stalin, General Dimitri Volkogonov, has already written that Trotsky was the "Demon of the Revolution" and would have been worse than Stalin.

Every week, we were told, excerpts of Trotsky's writings or reports about Trotsky's views appear in *Pravda* and other major Soviet publications. These reports deal almost exclusively with the period of war communism during the civil war, when Trotsky called for the militarization of labor after his own proposals for a NEP-type program (limited concessions to the medium and large farmers) were rejected.

Certain problems were readily apparent. The presentation of Trotsky's views was being organized by the same political machine that he had so eloquently indicted over 60 years ago.

6 The selection of excerpts, the failure to place them in the context of the party

debates at the time, and the refusal to publish Trotsky's full views have greatly distorted Trotsky's role and ideas in the minds of many Soviet people today. We often encountered the view that Trotsky — and even Lenin — were the intellectual precursors of Stalinism.

One of our first meetings was with Roy Medvedev, the Marxist dissident who is now running for Deputy in the Congress [of People's Deputies]. Medvedev told us that he does not agree with Trotsky's ideas and that he supports *glasnost* and Gorbachev. But, as a historian, he said he completely opposes the current distortions of Trotsky's political views. Medvedev, in fact, publicly attacked Volkogonov's false characterization of Trotsky.

Trotsky's rehabilitation inevitable

Medvedev told us, however, that he believes it is very difficult for the Soviet leadership to clear Trotsky's name. He said that Trotsky's political positions were so antagonistic to the whole Stalinist machinery and the basic structure of the bureaucratized society that taking this step would be a major challenge to the regime.

While most people we spoke to considered Trotsky's rehabilitation inevitable, it is my view that it will be some time before this happens. It is not necessary for the bureaucracy to clear Trotsky's name now.

It is only necessary to allow the mostly one-sided discussion about him to continue.

Whatever happens, it is obvious that the Left Opposition opponents of Stalin are not going to get a fair hearing if the presentation of their views is left in the hands of the governing apparatus. Nonetheless, there are big openings for supporters of Trotsky to participate in the current discussions about the history of the anti-Stalinist opposition.

Almost immediately after our arrival, we identified ourselves not only as representatives of Trotsky's family but as political supporters of his views. We encountered absolutely no fear or apprehension. On the contrary, there was tremendous interest in what we had to say.

As a result of this approach we stumbled on an important meeting we otherwise would have missed. People found out about us and said, "Oh, you're the Trotskyists, well you should go to the writers' meeting, it's going on right now!"

Writers' Union discuss Trotsky's role

They said this meeting was not all that unusual. They repeated what we had heard earlier from Medvedev, that there are regular seminars, panel discussions and occasional articles in the press (and even on Leningrad TV several weeks ago) that raise the question of Trotsky's rehabilitation.

We rushed to the Writers' Union meeting. There were 150 people present. The keynote speaker was Dr. Stuartsev, who gave a two-hour presentation on the need to clear Trotsky's name and the role Trotsky played in history.

The talk was followed by a lively discussion to the audience. At one point, a 106-year-old Red Army veteran got up to speak about his personal experiences with Trotsky.

We were greeted as representatives of Trotsky's and Serge's family and were warmly received. Vlady Kibalchich spoke in Russian from the podium in support of clearing the name of his father (Victor Serge), himself and Trotsky. Vlady is still stripped of his Soviet citizenship. ★

A long wait at the crossroads

CZECHOSLOVAKIA will have to wait a while longer for the dawn of a new epoch. Despite expectations to the contrary, the April meeting of the Central Committee of the ruling Communist Party failed to send ailing head of state Gustav Husak into retirement, while none of the anticipated personnel changes took place.

Party leader Milos Jakes' report was described in the western press as a perfect example of immobility and Brezhnevite orthodoxy.

COLIN MEADE

THERE ARE however fundamental differences between the situation in the Soviet Union before the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev and that of Czechoslovakia now. The Czechoslovak Brezhnevites are fighting every inch of the way to keep their predominance. While Gorbachev was helped into power by old guard figures such as Andrei Gromyko, Lubomir Strougal — who tried to present himself as the prospective Czechoslovak Gorbachev — was despatched into oblivion last year by his Brezhnevite opponents amidst allegations of corruption.

Comments such as that of Jakes at the CC that he is inspired by "some aspects" of the "revolutionary paths" being taken in the USSR should not be allowed to obscure the anti-*perestroika*, and especially anti-*glasnost*, line of the Czechoslovak leader. This expresses itself through the constant attacks in the press on the Czechoslovak Prague Spring — widely regarded as a precursor of *perestroika* — and its leader Alexander Dubcek, recently described by the party daily *Rude Pravo* as an agent of foreign powers, who, in the grip of megalomania, "led our party and country to the edge of catastrophe."

Reaffirming the "leading role of the party"

Furthermore, at a time when significant experiments with a limited form of pluralism are taking place in neighbouring Poland and Hungary, as well as in the Soviet Union itself, the Prague leadership has embarked on the elaboration of a new constitution which will, along with some gestures in the direction of the new thinking, re-affirm the principle of the "leading role of the party." Meanwhile the rejection of any dialogue with non-party forces has

been underlined by repression against any efforts at independent organization.

After the spontaneous week of demonstrations in January in memory of the student Jan Palach, who burnt himself to death in 1969 in protest at the social consequences of the Soviet invasion, a number of people were imprisoned or given suspended sentences for "hooliganism" and "incitement to rebellion", among them the well-known playwright Vaclav Havel.

Criticism and support from other regimes

On March 9, Ivan Jirous and Jiri Tichy were jailed for seven and six months respectively for "incitement to rebellion" because they had circulated a petition that criticized the political record of the bureaucratic "communist" regime. And on March 17 two members of the Independent Peace Association, Hana Marvanova and Tomas Dvorak, received suspended sentences on similar charges stemming from their role in the 10,000-strong unofficial demonstration which marked the twentieth anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968.

The Polish party daily, *Trybuna Ludu*, reported a protest by the Polish writer's union against Havel's imprisonment, and an unofficial demonstration over the same issue was allowed to take place in Budapest. Key figures in both the Polish and Hungarian leaderships have expressed their reservations about the policies being pursued in Prague in recent months.

On the other hand, the East German press continues to support the repression in Czechoslovakia — Havel was described by the party daily *Neues Deutschland* as a provocateur — fuelling talk about an emergent Prague/Berlin/Bucharest axis against *perestroika*. Certainly the Czechoslovak



Zbigniew Jujka

authorities have felt free to censor or halt the sale of Soviet publications when they have touched on the subject of the Prague Spring. What is clear is that Jakes has found a friend in the person of Igor Ligachev, leader of the neo-Brezhnevite sectors of the Soviet communist party. Ligachev recently held up Czechoslovakia as the model to follow in the reform of Soviet agriculture.

The Prague leadership's strongest argument against change is the issue of the living standards of the Czechoslovak working class, which remain relatively high. Jakes and company can point to the awful examples of Poland and Hungary, with their growing poverty and vast foreign debts, which hold out the prospect of further attacks on the both the individual and social wage.

On the other hand, the situation of Czechoslovak workers is only relatively better than those in the surrounding countries; in absolute terms it is low and stagnating. Furthermore, the poor quality of Czechoslovak industrial production means that its exports of these goods are directed mainly to the other so-called socialist countries, but most of these countries are now trying to raise the technological standard of their own industry and are less and less ready to accept poor quality goods purely for political reasons.

Impact of *glasnost* in Czechoslovakia

An enterprise reform was introduced in 1987, followed in 1988 by a new labour code that was intended to "reinforce discipline", but these have had little discernible effect. This is only to be expected, since the basic problem is the complete lack of any involvement or interest on the part of the working population in the planning process.

The other big difference with the situa-

tion in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s is, of course, the ferment in progress in the Soviet Union and in the countries surrounding Czechoslovakia, and its impact inside Czechoslovakia itself. Over the last few years a whole range of new independent groups have appeared, such as the Independent Peace Association, the John Lennon Peace Club, and the Children of Bohemia, mostly involving young people with no direct memory of 1968.

Over 1,000 protested against Havel trial

Young people formed the bulk of those who demonstrated in August and October of last year and who defied savage police assaults every day for a week in January. Religious believers, in particular Roman Catholics, held a massive procession demanding freedom of religion in March 1988, while a petition for the restoration of religious rights was signed by 500,000 people.

At the same time the longer-established opposition circles have become more outspoken, and have started to discuss quite openly how and with what to replace the present system (see IV 160). An especially significant event in the Czechoslovak context, where the party has enforced strict political vetting procedures for all positions involving influence over or contact with the population, was a protest by more than 1,000 prominent cultural personalities over the Havel trial. It is also reported that some branches of the official Socialist Union of Youth expressed their dismay at the suppression of the January demonstrations.

Jakes is a transitional figure. But who will replace him, and what policies will they pursue? There have been repeated signs of doubts and dissension within the leading circles about the repression and the lack of an economic policy.

On February 20, for example, both Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec and another CC Presidium member, Josef Lenart, offered a dialogue to critics, while on the same day Jakes defended the resolute actions of his police forces. There is an important generation gap within the party, while the decline in the number of leading members of Slovak nationality may also be a source of tension, as it was in the mid 1960s.

Commentaries on the inner party struggle, however, remain highly speculative. What can be said with confidence is that the situation is highly explosive, and that the discussions taking place in the opposition about the future of their small country in the heart of Europe will not remain confined to small circles forever. Socialists in the West will be well advised to offer support and seek out contact with the opposition in order to open the discussion on how to end the division of Europe and ensure that all its peoples have full rights in the

8

"common European home." ★

"Others are still in prison — don't forget them!"

THE REVOLUTIONARY Peruvian peasant leader Hugo Blanco, just released from prison, has begun a tour of Europe. His first port of call is Sweden, where he lived in exile for some time. The following article on his arrival there is from *Internationalen*, the paper of the Swedish section of the Fourth International.

MARIA SUNDVAL

"THERE was a decision at the very top to jail me in the town of Pucallpa on February 9." This was what Peruvian peasant leader Hugo Blanco said when he spoke to a welcoming party in Stockholm on Saturday [April 1]. Blanco had just arrived in Europe, which he will tour for a few months and offer his thanks for the support he got while he was in prison.

Blanco explained the grounds for his suspicions that the government ordered his arrest at a town square rally during a peasant strike [see IVs 157 & 158].

"A few days before, the union [CCP, Peruvian Peasant Confederation] had held several similar rallies and negotiated with the authorities without running into any problems. The governor had approved the rally plans. But he suddenly changed his mind. We are convinced that this was the result of pressure from Lima."

Dozens of peasant leaders jailed

The police came into the square and opened fire on the peasants. Eight were killed, 18 have been reported missing. Dozens of peasant leaders were jailed along with Hugo Blanco.

"Suspicions of the government were reinforced by the fact that the premier went personally to Pucallpa. He altered the local authorities' version of what happened. Among other things, he went completely against the local branch of the ruling APRA party, which had criticized the police."

The premier's version, which later became the official accusation, was that the peasants had attacked the police with arms. Hugo Blanco was said to have led the attack, and was charged with terrorism.

He was released only after a two-week storm of protest, both in Peru and internationally.

"Even the police are organized in Peru!"

Why should the government want to attack the peasants' union and Hugo Blanco, who is its national organizational secretary? The peasants' strike in Ucayali, whose capital is Pucallpa, was only part of a vast strike wave last year in protest against repeated price rises. The public employees went on strike. In the fall, the miners waged a long and massive strike.

At the same time, broader and broader groups were drawn into the unions and other people's organizations.

"Aside from Nicaragua and Cuba, Peru is the country in Latin America where mass organizations are the strongest. Even the police are organized.

"Earlier the police struck for higher wages and the right to kill. We opposed them! But in recent years we have seen police strike for the right to choose their own officers. And the police have struck for the right to refuse to carry out orders, if they involve violating human rights."

Blanco compared Peru and Venezuela. "In Venezuela, the recent price rises led to a mass rebellion. In Peru, the price rises have been ten times bigger, but they have not led to a revolt. Does that mean that the Peruvians are less militant? I don't know. But I have to say that I would rather live in Peru. Among us, the resistance is more organized."

This strength has been shown also in the peasant strikes continuing after the massacres in Pucallpa. In the departments of Cuzco and Puno, the strength and anger of the strikes increased. Moreover, among the Andean Indian peasants strikes do not just



Friends and classmates of Maria Beralund/Blanco protesting outside the Peruvian embassy in Stockholm during the campaign for Hugo's release. (Photo: Maria Sundvall)

who do not eat lunch every day but only every

involve economic demands; they automatically become a struggle for the rights of an oppressed people.

"Don't forget that the Indians are despised. Their language, Quechua, is looked down on; the way they dress is looked down on. An Indian is someone who walks down the middle of the road with animals, while respectable folk walk on the sidewalks.

"A peasant strike is an astonishing experience"

"That is why a peasant strike is such an astonishing experience. When thousands of Indians gather in Cuzco's biggest square, in front of the gates of the biggest church, and express their feelings to the governor in the downtrodden Quechua language, that is a profound liberation for these people."

The background to the strike wave is the economic crisis and, as everywhere in Latin America, the foreign debt. "The foreign debt is the expression of imperialism in our time."

When President García's APRA government came into office in 1985, he promised not to pay more than 10% of export income on the foreign debt. The government also introduced a long series of concessions to big companies to make it easier for them to increase their investments and production.

"That's the way reformists are," Blanco said. "As clever as they are when it comes to fighting the left, they are innocents when they come up against the right. Alan García was as innocent as a child when he thought that the capitalists were going to

invest. The companies exploited all these advantages, and then they took the money out of the country."

When García nationalized the banks, the right organized in a new front, the "Democratic Front," led by the writer Vargas Llosa, and managed to stop the nationalizations.

Finally, the government has been forced to admit that it is actually paying about 30% of export income on the foreign debt.

"The only lasting result of the economic policy at that time is a stronger right and the Democratic Front," Blanco summed up. "In the beginning, García's government managed to hold back price increases. But that didn't last.

"To understand that, you don't need to know anything about economics. You only need to know a little physics. If you dam a river, you stop the water, but that doesn't mean that you have eliminated the flood. To the contrary, it gathers strength until it breaks through the barrier.

Many can only afford to eat once a day

"When that happens in the world of physics, a lot of people drown. In Peru, it has happened in the world of the economy, and it has also drowned a lot of people. Prices have soared. Bread has become a tragic thing for Peruvians.

"Some people who used to eat lunch — and by that I don't mean a real lunch of the sort you have here — later managed with tea and a little bread for the evening meal. Today, they can't manage an evening meal at all. You may think that I am exaggerating. But there are some people

other or every third day.

"Hunger has made some people take up stealing. But they have only half become criminals. They still have their own morals, and often break down and burst into tears in the midst of robberies, in the midst of attacks."

Government answers protests with repression

The events in Pucallpa were only one example of the fact that the government is answering protests with repression. Union leaders have been jailed. Recently, miners' union leader Saúl Cantoral was murdered by a death squad.

In the aftermath of the strikes, the government was reshuffled, with the military and the police strengthening their positions. Blanco stressed that the need for solidarity continued, even though he was released. He referred to the broad solidarity campaign in Sweden that helped to achieve his release:

"I was saved because I am a bit known and speak some Swedish. But others are still in prison. Others have lost their lives in the struggle. Don't forget them!"

In the coming weeks, Hugo Blanco will repeat this appeal many times in Sweden. He is going to take part in rallies in Göteborg, Eskilstuna, and Stockholm, among other places.

He will meet with members of parliament and representatives of big organizations, such as the Swedish National Confederation of Labor (LO) and Amnesty International. But he will also meet with the school students in Nacka who demonstrated for his release. ★

Bolivian dictator buys votes

A CORRESPONDENT in La Paz for the Swedish Fourth Internationalist paper *Internationalen* sent the following dispatch on March 30 describing the presidential election campaign in the Andean country.

JOHAN ERIKSSON

LIKE A GHOST from the past, he appears on the TV screen once every hour. "You know me," he says, pointing at the viewers. General Hugo Banzer, the former dictator, is spending huge sums of money to win the May 7 presidential election in Bolivia.

Of course, Bolivia knows him. General Banzer, the bloodthirsty dictator who tried to crush the trade-union movement, failed and was overthrown. The general did not fail in everything. Even today, he casts a shadow over Bolivian economic policy. It was Banzer who introduced the "open-door economy," which continues to prevail in the country.

Today, Bolivia is a brilliant example of the new free-enterpriseism so extolled by Western economists. "I have never seen Bolivia so poor as it is now," said the country's 89-year-old cardinal, Jose Clemente Maurer, in an interview with the daily *Presencia*.

Tania Rodriguez, a Bolivian woman who recently returned to her homeland after eight years' exile in Sweden, reports that she got a bit of a shock when she arrived. "It was so much worse than before, such glaring poverty, so many beggars on the street."

General Banzer's greatest "achievement" is Bolivia's enormous foreign debt. Under his dictatorship from 1971 to 1978, the debt rose from \$782 million to \$3,102 million. The economist Oscar Ugarteche thinks that few countries have so badly

allocated their resources as Bolivia. Only 21% of loans are used productively. Between 1971 and 1984, capital flight amounted to \$677 million.

The bourgeois government headed by Victor Paz that came into office in 1985 has continued General Banzer's new free-enterprise economic policy. Every year, the Paz government has faithfully paid \$300 million on the foreign debt. The austerity policy begun by Banzer has been continued. The poor are taking the consequences, and the social effects are dreadful.

Inflation massively outstrips wage rises

Mining, the heart of Bolivia's economy, has been largely privatized. One hundred and twelve mines have been closed, and 100,000 workers have lost their jobs since 1985. In the same period, consumer prices have risen 269%, while wages have gone up on the average only by 15% a year. According to the Bolivian labor confederation, the COB, the average wage — about \$58 a month — covers only ten days consumption. So, the average Bolivian family's consumption has shrunk by 40% over three years.

That was the aim of the new free-enterpriseism. It is a policy that ordinary people here are thoroughly sick of. "This government" has become something of a

swear word in the streets of La Paz.

The government party, the MNR, does not have very good prospects for winning the May elections. In a country where votes are bought for a sack of rice and where the left has failed to build a real alternative, former dictator Banzer could very well win the election.

General Banzer is being run by his party, the ADN [National Democratic Alliance] in alliance with the Christian Democrats. Outside Banzer's election headquarters on the Avenida 16 de Julio in La Paz, crowds of poor peasants gather every day. They want to join Banzer's party and get some material reward.

In a recent opinion poll, Banzer leads with 31.8% of the vote, as against 19% for the social-democratic MIR. Probably no candidate will get a majority. What is clear is that the real victor will again be new free-enterpriseism. ★



Life in a Cuban micro-brigade

THE AUTHORS of the following article, from the Danish Fourth Internationalist paper *Klassekampen*, recently spent two months in Cuba. During their visit, they worked in one of the "micro-brigades," a new form of labor organization devised by the Castro leadership as a collectivist response to the economic crisis that has hit the country.

KAREN SKYTTE ANDERSEN & LARS HALSKOV

AT A TIME when we are fighting for a shorter workweek, Cuban building workers are mostly working 10 to 12 hours a day, and unemployment is almost unknown. The demand for building is quite strong in Cuba, and since construction was only made a priority in the 1980s the shortage of housing is striking.

At the same time, the country needs general economic development. Since the rev-

olution in 1959 the living standards of the population have improved considerably as a result of a well-developed health and educational system, among other things. But Cuba is still an underdeveloped country; its imports of a few products determine whether or not it can import essential goods.

At the moment, Cuba is going through the worst crisis it has ever experienced as a result of a shortage of hard currency, and

therefore the leadership in the Communist Party is looking to a great extent to tourism as a springboard for the economy. At the same time, Cuba is still suffering from the US economic blockade. That means, for example, that lumber for construction has to be transported all the way from the Soviet Union or Angola.

Limited resources and poor organization mean low productivity in the building industry, in which there are often shortages of raw materials, tools and machinery. On a site where we worked, the workers had no lumber for three days, because there were no trucks to transport it.

Unfortunately, the lack of resources and strict priorities are often used as excuses for not improving things, for not organizing the work better and not improving conditions. There are no private firms in Cuba. The state owns all the enterprises, including in the building industry. That means that it can prioritize resources in accordance with a central plan.

But, at the same time, the country is a one-party system in which, according to the official ideology, different interests do not exist. Every demand from the workers has to be subordinated first to the standpoint of society, and the workers' foremost right and duty is to defend Cuba and the revolution.

"In our society, the party is the leader. Administration and mass organization follow the party line.

There are no differences with the Communist Party or its youth organization," the building workers' union international secretary, Argelio Suarez, told us.

That also means that the unions have a different role than the one we are familiar with in Denmark. The unions' most important task is to help to organize production, along with defending the workers' interests.

Argelio Suarez said: "The unions' role is a dual one. On the one hand, it is to work politically to convince the workers, to prepare and educate them to meet the production plans. On the other hand, we have to make sure that the state administration creates the necessary conditions so that the workers can meet the plan, to ensure that there are raw materials, tools, work

clothes, safety gear, social security, to guarantee that wages are paid, and so on."

The building workers' union has 302,000 members. It includes everyone who works in the industry, from carpenters and bricklayers to architects, engineers and foremen, and the cooks who provide food for the workers.

There are no labor contracts in Cuba. Wages, working hours and safety conditions are set by law. What has been laid down can, however, be changed locally, if certain situations require that. For example, officially the working day is eight hours, but we met no building worker who worked "so few hours."

On the other hand, the average wage for building workers is 205 pesos a month [about \$200], slightly over the general

wages without productivity."

Production in the building industry is especially important now when there is a great need for housing for the people but when, at the same time, economic considerations mean that building hotels, airports and similar facilities for the tourist sector gets the highest priority. Therefore, the building industry is organized in a very special way.

The biggest building projects — which at the moment are first and foremost in the tourist sector — are being carried out by so-called contingents and brigades, which consist of skilled building workers. They are also building hospitals, roads and big housing complexes.

However, many projects for building homes, nursery schools and family clinics

are being carried out by the micro-brigades. They consist of workers from other occupations who, because of the labor shortage, do voluntary work in the building industry for some years.

Even though it is very difficult to get official figures on the building industry, it is quite clear that the tourist sector is continuing to get the highest priority, not only with regard to skilled labor power but also as regards raw materials and machinery.

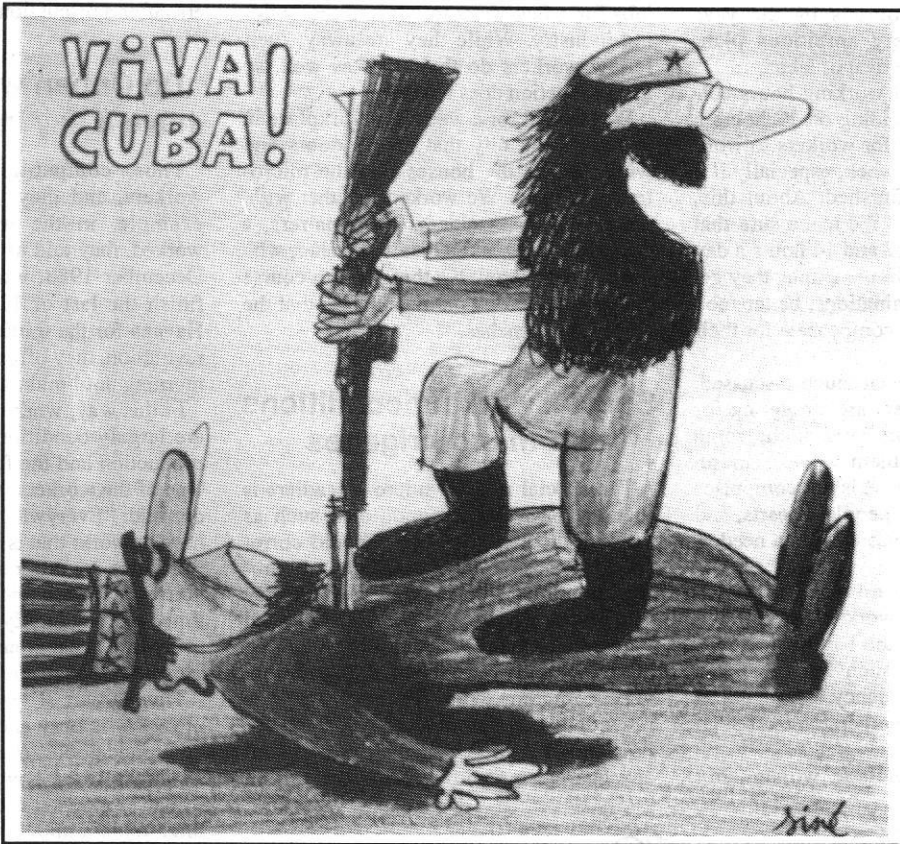
This is a serious situation in a country with a big housing shortage. At the same time it is economically risky. Tourism is an unstable industry

on which it is dangerous to base a country's economy.

"They criticize and punish their own because they do not tolerate laziness and absenteeism or lateness. It is astonishing. There is really no absenteeism in the contingents, and the workers oversee discipline. The contingents are based on a feeling of responsibility for the job."

This statement by Cuba's leader, Fidel Castro, expresses very clearly the function of the building contingents in Cuban society. They are supposed to be in the forefront of production.

The first contingent was formed in 1987, as one of the answers to the economic crisis. At the moment, there are 10,000-15,000 building workers in these contingents, and the number is growing rapidly.



average of 193 pesos. In Cuba, families' fixed expenses are often low. Generally around 10% of their income goes for rent, and 1% for union dues. Basic foods are rationed, and they do not require a big direct outlay. But our impression was that in order to eat adequately, a family has to buy some food outside the rationing system, and there prices are very high.

The supply of goods itself is often unstable, so that it can be hard to buy things you want, even if you have the money.

On wages, Argelio Suarez said: "For us, it is important that there be a relationship between increases in productivity and increases in wages. When you have a planned economy under socialism, it relies on the principle that workers get back what they give to the society. You can't have

Each contingent consists of 100-400 workers, depending on the size of the project. We encountered contingents in which the workers were hired for three-year contracts and lived in special settlements near where they worked. For example, 4,450 building workers are living and working at the moment in the popular beach town of Varadero. They come from all over Cuba and live in four barracks complexes.

Construction of tourist developments

Varadero is a high-priority tourist zone where today there are 2,500 rooms for tourists. According to the plan, it is to be greatly expanded. With restoration and new construction of hotels, there are to be 30,000 rooms for tourists by the year 2,000. This is a very ambitious plan, which requires a great deal of labor.

The contingents set working hours collectively — often deciding on 12 hours a day. It is not unusual for workers to work all seven days of the week, especially if a building has to be finished. About this, Argelio Suarez said: "We make sure that those who work 10, 12 and 14 hours a day get special attention. For example, they get regular medical examinations, better food and better housing to compensate for their long working hours.

"This system has been much discussed. Internationally workers are struggling for shorter working hours, and at the same time we are asking them to work more. But this is not the law, it is not compulsory. It comes from the people's hearts, and from the conviction that there is a need to work harder."

In Cuba we often heard that it is hard to find young people to work in the building industry because it is too hard. It was also our impression that such long working hours reduce real efficiency, especially in a country where the temperatures often go over 30°C.

The contingents include women, but

very few of them are manual workers. Recently, the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) has formed a women-only contingent. It is building houses in old Havana, and at the same time training people as bricklayers, carpenters and electricians. There are also some women in the micro-brigades.

The micro-brigades are a special Cuban invention. They were set up in 1971 in an attempt to meet the population's demand for housing. They were given a lower priority for a long period, but got a big boost after 1986 as a result of the economic crisis. The micro-brigades make it possible not only to build more housing but also more nursery schools and family clinics, without reducing production in other areas. They consist of 30-40 workers from other professions who leave their normal jobs for a few years to work in the building industry. While they are away, their fellow workers do their jobs as well, so that production does not fall.

We worked for a week in a workplace in Havana's old city that makes doors and windows for the houses that the micro-brigades build. We worked together with, among others, welders, TV repairers, a customs officer and a history teacher, who had all gone through a three-month course before they started on machines and at the carpenters' benches.

Special working conditions for micro-brigades

The special rule for micro-brigadiers is that the basic labor conditions, such as working hours and wages, should correspond to those in the workplaces and professions from which they come. But they often work longer than the stipulated workweek. Workdays of 10-12 hours, often including Saturday and Sunday, are very common. This volunteer work is rewarded only with a better chance for housing when it is assigned, but without any guarantee of how many years it will

get to get a place.

The state and the brigadiers' former workplaces share the costs with the building industry. The micro-brigades and the former workplaces get 60% of the housing to divide up, and the state gets the rest. In the capital alone, there are about 35,000 workers in the micro-brigades, and the problem today is more a lack of raw materials than of labor.

The housing the micro-brigades build is divided among the people who built it and partly among the workers at their previous workplaces who have increased production. Who gets housing depends on the individual workers' social needs, their labor contribution, their revolutionary attitude and the number of hours of voluntary work that they do. The allocations are made by a generally assembly of the workers, after a discussion and a vote.

Do Cuban workers really have a say in production?

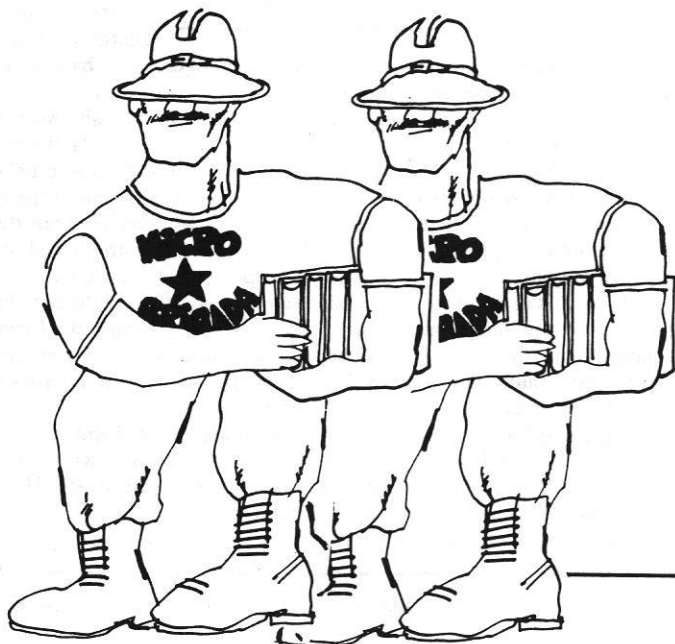
Thus, competition increases among workers, and they work extra hard. For example, in the workplace where we worked, they told us that in November and December 1988, when it was planned to finish the last of 110 nursery schools in Havana for the thirtieth anniversary of the revolution, they often worked from 7 in the morning until midnight.

In this way, working conditions in Cuba are largely conditioned by the relation to production and the fulfillment of the plan. One of the workers in our workplace, Guido, said: "Everywhere in the world people have to work; that is a necessity in order to live. Here we work a lot because we need houses. It is a choice. I have to sacrifice time with my family now and get a house sometime. That is necessary. You have to sacrifice yourself for your family."

Thus, a part of volunteer labor in Cuba in reality is only another way of dividing up limited goods, even if it is often used as an example of how enthusiastically the Cuban workers are supporting the political line. When one's labor contribution, volunteer work and revolutionary attitude determine access to basic goods, that means that a lot of criticism of working conditions, on-the-job safety and so on is muted. No one wants to take the risk of being seen as an enemy of society. Thus, strikes and other such forms of action are not employed in Cuba.

During our whole time there, we found it a problem to get people to give concrete information going beyond the official explanations and the set expressions about production.

At the same time, there is very little debate about the development and the course of the economy in the papers and on TV, so that overall we found grounds for questioning whether workers in Cuba have a real influence over production and the direction of the country's development. ★



European campaign to ban nightwork for all

IN JUNE 1989, a conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO) will meet in Geneva, Switzerland, to rediscuss Convention 89, which bans nightwork for women in industry. This convention came into force in 1951 and has been ratified by 56 countries. However, there is a strong risk that it will be modified, or that some countries — Switzerland has already announced its intention — will not re-ratify it.

The ILO conference, bringing together representatives of governments, employers and trade unions, will not provide a real opportunity to hear the opinions of rank-and-file workers and their experience of, and opposition to, nightwork. For this reason a committee of trade-unionists, feminists and others has taken the initiative to organize a symposium against nightwork in Geneva on June 10, 1989, just before the opening of the ILO session.

THROUGHOUT Europe, women's nightwork in industry is becoming a focus of sharpening conflict between bosses and trade unions. Convention 89 of the ILO has, up to now, formally banned nightwork for women in industry.

The reality, of course, is already different. In France for example, which has not withdrawn from this convention, a derogation was given for women to work nights in the electronics industry, under the fabulous pretext that it was a question of national military defence!

There are many reasons for the employers' wish to introduce women's nightwork. They include:

- Increasing use of machinery for the best return possible and at the lowest cost in sectors where sophisticated machines require enormous investment (electronics, optical instruments and micro-electronics, for example).

- The need for totally flexible production without stocks that immobilize capital, which could otherwise be spent on publicity and marketing.

- The difficulty, particularly in economically developed countries, of finding stable, submissive, flexible, competitively-priced workers prepared to work day and night, weekdays and weekends.

- In high-technology sectors, nightwork is basically for unskilled workers, working without the normal supervision (it is very difficult to find technicians prepared to work nights), doing repetitive, boring work

which nevertheless requires a lot of attention.

Employers think that it is easier to use women as a workforce that works day and night when the orders come in and stays at home when they do not, and to overcome the difficulty of recruitment and the prob-

lems of decline in productivity and quality because women are reputed to be more conscientious and punctual (and lower-paid).

Employers hope that if they reach an agreement with the unions within the ILO their projects can be implemented without trouble. They want an international agreement so that there will be a "fair" basis for competition.

The social and health arguments against nightwork need no further repetition. The appeal launched by the United Committee for a Symposium Against Nightwork in Switzerland summarizes them (see box).

The formal position of trade unions in many cases remains opposition to nightwork. The European TUC reaffirmed this position in December 1988 by adopting a motion restating its general opposition to nightwork for men and women, calling for strict control over the grounds for exceptions and for compensatory working conditions where nightwork is necessary.

In the context of the discussion in the ILO, it will be important to mobilize opinion within the unions and at the level of rank-and-file workers to make clear that workers will not accept any attempt by the union leaderships to go back on this position during their discussions within the ILO.

The Committee is hoping that delegations of trade unions, workers and women's organizations will attend the symposium in June and add their voices to the case against lifting the ban on nightwork for women and for extending this ban to all cases, for men and women, except where there is proven social necessity.

Copies of the appeal can be obtained from: Comité Travail et Santé, CP 119, 1211 Geneva 8, Switzerland. ★

Appeal for a symposium against nightwork

■ Because nightwork is a danger to health

It is recognized today that people who work at night — men or women — suffer serious effects on their health: problems in sleeping, gastro-intestinal trouble, and psychiatric problems among others. It is impossible to go through all the social and family problems caused by nightwork, as well as the chronic fatigue that comes from a lack of night-time sleep. It has been proved that the body never adapts to changed rhythms, and that constant tension results from the fact that the different biological functions do not have real rest periods.

■ Because nightwork leads to isolation

Nightwork forces one to live at counter-current to the majority of society, and therefore makes it difficult or impossible to participate in collective activities. As well as social isolation, there is also isolation at work because very often at night the factory or workplace is deserted. Finally, the nightwork of one member of a household spoils the quality of life for all the others.

■ Because nightwork is not the result of a free choice

For the majority of workers, nightwork is imposed upon them, either because, in refusing it, they would be without a job; or because the average wage in their sector is so low that they absolutely have to improve it through bonuses; or because, given the lack of crèches, nightwork seems a solution for parents.

■ Because equality should go in the direction of social progress

The protection of women against nightwork is justified because they are still traditionally responsible for domestic tasks more than men. In addition, the ban on nightwork is not an obstacle to their promotion because in most cases nightwork consists of repetitive tasks.

Most social gains have been won first for a limited group before being generalized. Now in the field of nightwork the ban should be extended to men.

Nightwork can be socially necessary (in hospitals or transport, for example). In these cases, there should be compensatory working conditions. But it is a health danger for all women and men. It should be banned for all women and men when it is not socially necessary. ★

ALTHOUGH the right to safe and legal abortion has been chipped away bit by bit over the past eight years under Reagan, it was not until the Supreme Court agreed to review the constitutionality of a Missouri anti-abortion law, in the case *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services*, that the threat was great enough to build this massive demonstration.

Theoretically, the US Supreme Court cannot be lobbied. But in practice it is impossible for the justices to function in a vacuum. Chief Justice Rehnquist once admitted that the Supreme Court is affected by "the court of public opinion." Over half a million people from all over the US demonstrated what that opinion is.

Webster, accepted for review upon special request by the Bush administration, involves the constitutionality of a Missouri statute that would severely restrict women's access to abortion services. The statute's assault on a women's right to control her body begins in the preamble which states that life begins at conception and that "unborn children have protectable interests in life, health, and well-being." It bars the use of public funds for abortion counseling programs and "to perform or assist an abortion, not necessary to save the life of the mother."

It also prohibits abortions in all public hospitals and clinics (even if conducted by a private physician with private funds), and requires fetal monitoring tests on any woman who is over 19 weeks pregnant and is requesting an abortion, in order to determine if the fetus is viable — able to survive outside of the womb. The most recent lower court ruling declared the Missouri law unconstitutional.

The implications of Supreme Court rulings

The Supreme Court could rule in any of three ways. The first, and least likely outcome, is that the lower court verdict will be upheld and *Roe vs. Wade* will remain intact. The second possibility, that *Roe* will be completely overturned, is also unlikely, but ultimately will be made more feasible by the third, most likely result: that the Court will strike down only some of the provisions of the Missouri anti-abortion law.

Considering the composition of the Court, including three Reagan appointees, its recent rulings, which demonstrate that it exists to protect privilege, and the political climate of the Bush administration, a partial disabling of *Roe* is almost assured. It is generally agreed that the decisive vote on the abortion issue belongs to Sandra Day O'Connor, the only female justice on the Court. She personally opposes abortion, but may find problems with the violation of free speech and privacy in *Webster*, as she has done in previous controversial cases.

14 If the Supreme Court were to uphold any of the anti-abortion provisions, it would

most definitely foretell great and continuous losses for women's rights, by allowing each state to devise its own anti-abortion laws around the decision handed down. The following points are among the most immediate dangers for women.

The provision of the Missouri law prohibiting public funds for abortion procedures, if found constitutional, could prove to be particularly harmful in areas where public hospitals or clinics are the only abortion providers. Obtaining an abortion would require travelling longer distances, causing delay and increased health risks and costs. Poor women might effectively be denied any safe and legal choice, and be forced into illegal abortions or having an unwanted child.

Horrific consequences of "fetal rights"

The concept of fetal rights, contained in the preamble and in the fetal monitoring provision, has already proven to be an enemy of the control women have over their bodies in dozens of cases in state and lower federal courts.

Among these appalling cases:

- 1986, Michigan: Penny Fryover was 16 weeks pregnant when she was killed in a car crash while swerving to avoid a dog. Her husband sued the dog's owners for the wrongful death of his wife and her fetus. He was awarded damages for both.

- 1987, Washington, D.C.: Angela Carder was 25 weeks pregnant when she was diagnosed as having cancer. While an emergency regimen of chemotherapy could have prolonged her life, a court-ordered cesarean section was performed on her against her will and against the advice of all of her doctors. The fetus lived two and a half hours and Carder two more days.

- 1989, New York: Nancy Klein was pregnant when she suffered severe brain damage in an automobile accident. Her husband had to fight two complete strangers (prominent anti-abortionists) in court for guardianship of his wife and her fetus. He finally obtained guardianship and an abortion for his wife, whose condition could not handle the strain of pregnancy.

Closely related to these cases are hundreds of others, all over the country, involving forced surgery (generally cesarean sections or sterilization). There are an increasing number of cases concerning fetal abuse usually brought against poor women who are under the watchful eye of government health care. Drugs, diet, sexual activity, and refusal of medical advice can all lead to prosecution, and such cases are most often decided against women, creating the idea that a woman is her unborn fetus's worst enemy.

This is especially ridiculous in contemporary US society. Millions of women, predominantly the urban poor, women of color, and the homeless, have inadequate access to general medical care, much less



Over half a million women march for abortion rights

ON APRIL 9, over 600,000 women marched in the March for Women's Equality in Washington, D.C. The mobilization was organized by the National Organization for Women (NOW) in response to the Supreme Court decision in *Roe vs. Wade* that affirmed the right to choose an abortion. The march was a direct result of a case that the Supreme Court decided by a 5-4 vote.

The march was the largest specifically involving women in the history of the national organizations. It was also the largest African-American women's gathering in the history of the civil rights movement.

TERESA

to prenatal care and education. Certainly they cannot afford the kind of diet needed to sustain a healthy pregnancy, and they are subject to other external factors that affect pregnancy, including environmental pollution, violence, and stress.

Targeting these minority women for prosecution not only punishes them (more directly than in their daily lives) for society's failures, but the threat of punishment also scares them away from the public facilities where they receive the minimal health care available to them.

Poor women have already had their



Million march on rights

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RTINEZ

reproductive choice limited by a previous ruling in 1980 that federal Medicaid (a limited program of state and federal medical care funding for those unable to afford care on their own) could not be used for abortion unless it was in order to save the woman's life. This law has been added to the books in 37 states.

Teenage women have also had their rights violated. In many states "parental consent" forms are required before an abortion can be performed. This can sometimes be avoided if the woman can convince a judge that she is capable of making a

mature decision or that the abortion is in her best interests.

These two victories for the anti-choice minority were not very difficult to achieve due to the racist/classist and ageist fabric of US society. Although the women's movement as a whole has struggled against this legislation for quite some time, with the *Webster* case more white, middle class women and men are noticing the urgent situation that is encroaching on the everyday lives of almost everyone.

The right-wing creeps around places other than the courts. Since the 1973 decision in *Roe* that ended the violence, destruction and death of self-induced hanger and back-alley abortions, the right has taken to bombings, arson, physical threats and emotional harassment of women and healthcare workers.

Christian fundamentalists and "Operation Rescue"

The most recent activity, of the fundamentalist Christian strain, to have captured the attention of the popular media is Operation Rescue. Founded in New York and also active in Boston and Los Angeles (where the leader is a white, male, former car salesman who sees himself as Martin Luther King, Jr.), this group usually assembles early in the morning and tries to block access to and shut down healthcare facilities. The majority sit, stand, and scoot on their rears upon command, praying and singing continuously. A few others stand near the driveway or walk of the facility waiting to scream, yell and throw copies of their graphic, inaccurate renderings of aborted fetuses in the faces of clients trying to gain the medical care that they desire.

After being arrested and jailed on several occasions, these groups have started to drain the resources of the cities that they target. Financial considerations and the bullying techniques (which are not considered legitimate protest) have driven some city governments to successfully sue the leaders of Operation Rescue under a set of laws, the Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), originally intended to combat organized crime.

The violence of the past 16 years and the ultra-conservatism of the past eight have left a mark on pro-choice activists and sympathizers.

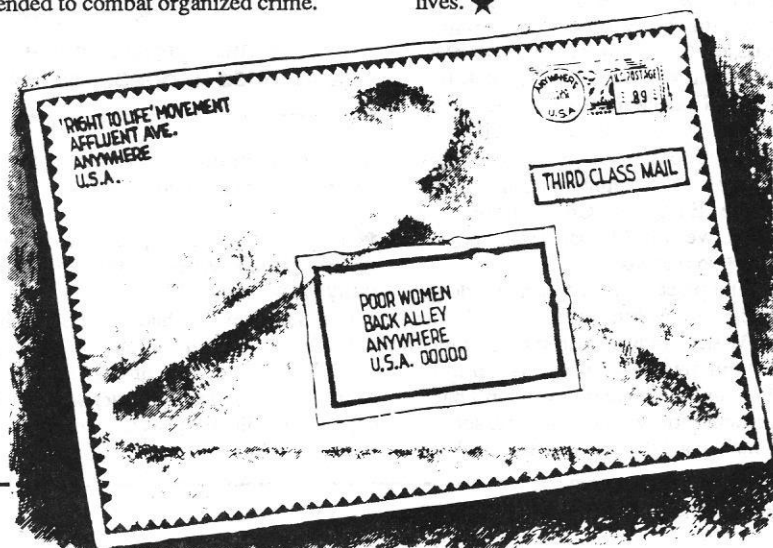
Conviction thinned by caution

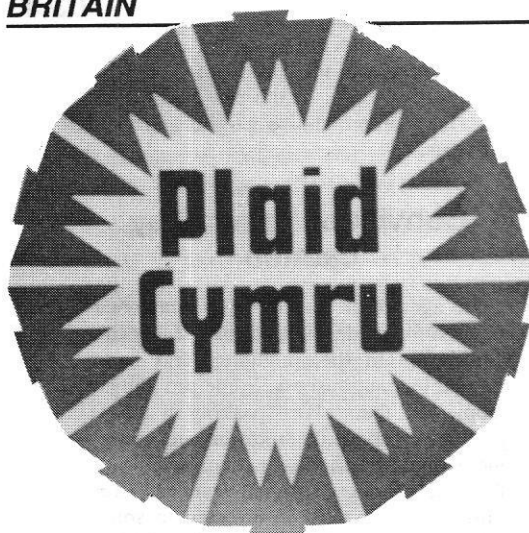
The agenda of the right has somewhat successfully made abortion shameful again. Conviction in the movement has been thinned by cautiousness. Some pro-choice people find themselves speaking in apologetic terms about the abortion procedure, and women confident in their choice to abort feel more guilt than in years past. But while thoughts may be affected to some extent, the actions and habits of women in the US come through loud and clear. The US annual abortion rate of 28 per 1000 women of child-bearing age puts it among the highest of the capitalist countries.

Of course the fight won't end this July, regardless of the decision in *Webster*. There is already another case before the Court that would dictate strict requirements for the licensing of facilities that perform abortions, demanding that they have equipment that is largely unrelated to the conduct of safe abortions. And on the state level, the barrage of cases challenging women's rights will only increase with each successive Supreme Court decision. The struggle for women's control of their reproductive rights must also address, on a greater scale, the forced sterilization of minority women.

The broad coalition behind the March for Women's Lives has demonstrated potential for leading the movement in the upcoming struggle. It is obvious by the number of people who took to the streets on April 9 that women are finally ready, once again, to take the offensive in the fight for their rights.

This fight should not be limited to the court systems. In addition, to continue in the offensive, women must organize alternative healthcare facilities, educational programs, and networks of mutual support. It is necessary to increase the present momentum and take to the streets again and again until all women achieve complete autonomy over reproduction and control over their lives. ★





Interview with Plaid Cymru Euro-candidate Peter Keenan

COULD YOU describe the constituency you're running in and what Plaid's history in it is?

The constituency is the South Wales European constituency. There are four Euro-constituencies in Wales and each one consists of either nine or ten Westminster constituencies. The number of voters is about half a million. The two constituencies of South and South-East Wales are the most densely populated, with all of the industrial valleys and the towns and cities along the coastal belt.

The campaign that Plaid is running is for greater representation of Wales directly in the European community, without having to go via Thatcher's government in London or via the Tory-controlled Welsh Office, which doesn't seem to be doing enough in terms of bringing in regional development grants, structural grants or in terms of putting the Welsh point of view across in the European community.

■ **Does that amount to demanding independence within the European Community like the Scottish Nationalist Party?**

Our policy is for full independence for Wales within the European community. The platform that we're fighting this election on is seen as a step towards that. It is also an anti-Thatcher campaign, because of her stance of opposing social dialogue within the European Community, of simply pushing for the development of the market within the European Community. We know that we would lose from that in Wales for two reasons.

In the first place, with the bringing down of trade barriers within the European Community, Wales' industrial sector of small and medium-sized enterprises is going to be very badly hit. Secondly, we don't have the representation we need in Brussels to ensure that we get the best possible deal out

"Our policy is independence for Wales within Europe"

THE VICTORY of the Scottish nationalists in the Govan by-election on November 10 sent a shock through both of the big British parties, the Conservatives and Labour. The gains for the nationalists, moreover, were clearly related to their promise to wage a militant campaign of civil disobedience against Thatcher's regressive poll tax.¹

Since the fates of the Welsh and Scottish nationalist parties have historically been closely linked, attention turned to the by-election in the south Wales valley constituency of Pontypridd at the end of February.

The Plaid Cymru (Welsh Nationalist Party) candidate, Syd Morgan, did win a substantially higher vote, five times the party's previous score and nearly twice that of the Conservatives. But he still got only about half that of the Labour candidate. Moreover, Plaid Cymru had gotten big votes before in the south Wales valleys, which are in a way intermediate between the anglicized southern coastal belt and Welsh-speaking west and north Wales, where the nationalist party competes on a basis of equality with the big British parties.

Plaid Cymru and the SNP responded in opposite ways to

the defeat of the 1979 Labour-sponsored referendum on devolution for Wales and Scotland. The SNP strengthened its nationalist profile, and tried to project itself as the leadership of Scottish struggles, even at the cost of appearing sectarian toward the Labour Party. The Plaid Cymru leadership tended to dissolve the demand for independence into vague formulas of regionalization all round and equally murky notions of alliances with all sorts of forces, some even more to the right than the right-wing centralist Welsh Labour Party.

In this context, it also took a swerve to the right on the question of defending the rights of militant Irish nationalists, throwing the left wing of the party into confusion and demoralization. Some of the ideologues who theorized the right-wing turn in left-wing terms have extended their woolgathering to European horizons.² However, there seems now to be some pressure for a turn back toward Plaid's traditional, if limited, radicalism. The European elections will be a test of that, among other things.

The following interview was given to Gerry Foley in Cardiff shortly after the Pontypridd by-election by Peter Keenan, a Plaid Cymru Euro-candidate in a key constituency. *Gerry Foley*

of the new Europe and to assure that the social dialogue is taken on board.

■ **Your constituency is in industrial south Wales, where Plaid is historically weak, isn't it?**

That's true. We've had a number of individual successes in the past in industrial south Wales in certain of the Westminster constituencies, Merthyr, Caerfilly, Rhondda, and we did very well recently in the Pontypridd by-election.

■ **Your constituency includes the valleys then.**

It does. The South Wales constituency includes three of the valley constituencies. That is, Pontypridd, Maesteg and the Ogwr valley and the Afan valley, coming down to Port Talbot at the coast. The rest of them

1. See IV 152, November 28, 1988.

2. See "Europe and Nation" by Gwyn A. Williams in the British Euro-Communist magazine *Marxism Today*, April 1989.

are coastal constituencies, including all of the Westminster constituencies in Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridge-End.

■ You have got a considerable vote in the valleys previously. But the real question would be the coastal zone. Do you expect anything different this time?

Yes. In the European elections, we always do much, much better than in the Westminster elections. There are a number of reasons for that. One is that the election campaign is not fought in a purely British context. It is fought within a European context, and our policies at the European level are policies that do appeal to people right across the spectrum. Our line of better representation within the European community is obviously something that appeals to a wide spectrum. Also, since this takes place in a European context, the media aren't as biased toward London-based parties. Thirdly, this time around we're also much more integrated into the European Free Alliance, which is a part of the larger Rainbow Group in the European Community, which has 20 MEPs. When you're fighting as a part of that sort of grouping, people take you more seriously.

■ Do you have a program for the EEC itself?

Our program for the European Community itself is to see the European Community superseded by a fully European body, elected by proportional representation, and elected from the regions rather than from the nation states. We do not see this as a military bloc, but as an economic, social, international and environmental bloc that would try to implement some of the more progressive policies that are coming from the center and center-left parties, including the Greens within the European Community.

So, in terms of economic policies, that would mean greater control of multinationals. It would mean decentralization of economic control to the regions, not the nation-states. In terms of social policies, it would mean more progressive and socially egalitarian policies. And that means obviously vastly increasing the structural, regional and social funds. Some of the money for that would have to come from a big transfer of funds from the military to social and economic programs.

However, that has to be done via the European Community at the moment. That is where we differ from some of the fringe left elements, who say that we should pull out of the European Community now. Our stand is — and this is being taken up more and more by the left in England as well — that you have to use the European Community as a more progressive platform than we have in Thatcher's Britain at the moment.

■ How do you define a region? Is

it an economic or a traditional ethnic unit?

That basically has to be decided by the people of the area in question. We have to accept that power should be decentralized to the level that people want it to be. It is clear that that is not just down to the level of the [existing] nation-states at the moment. You have decentralist political tendencies within Spain, France, Italy, the UK, Belgium, a whole range of countries in the European Community. You can see that happening as well within the Soviet Union.

One of the biggest failings of the left in the past has been their failure to take on board the progressive elements in these regional and national movements. In that way, they split the left so that Thatcher has a majority in Britain today and the parties of the right have a narrow majority in the European Community.

■ Are you in favor of the breakup of the imperialist nation-states — Britain, Germany, France, Italy?

We're in favor of opposing imperialism or colonialism anywhere, whether that's within the European community or further afield. In Nicaragua, for example, there has been a movement that has been revolutionary in comparison to anything happening in Europe. That struggle was fought within the confines of one nation, Nicaragua. We see that as very, very similar to what we're trying to do, but within the institutions of the European community, because we have democratic channels where we can win political power. They did not have that in Nicaragua; it had to go to an armed struggle.

That fight was decided within the confines of one nation-state against a very aggressive imperial government, that of the United States, and particularly that of Ronald Reagan. What we're saying is that you can see these imperialist tendencies in the USA, in the USSR, as well as in some of the older nation states within the European Community, such as Britain, such as France particularly. What we're saying is that we're not breaking up anything; what we're trying to do is prevent further imperial and colonial tendencies within the European Community.

■ Have you had any contact with



organizations representing the peoples on the Nicaraguan Atlantic coast, for example?

Those organizations have been in contact with some of the organizations we've been working with, because they're seen as minorities within Nicaragua and have been recognized as such by the Nicaraguan government, and we think that is a welcome trend. We thought it was a very good example to the rest of the international community as to how national or regional governments should recognize minorities within their own borders.

■ Did you participate in the protests against funding for the contras, for example?

Yes. We had policy against funding of the contras.

■ Within the EC are some very powerful and very aggressive imperialist states. Margaret Thatcher's response to the Govan by-election was that she wouldn't have any truck with separatism, and that she was sure that the other European powers wouldn't have any truck with it either.

Mrs Thatcher tends to talk with two tongues. She says that she will have nothing to do with separatism, and yet her Bruges speech showed her to be a total isolationist within the European community. The UK is a signatory to the treaties of Rome — that means that she is just one of the partners within the EC. And yet she has said that if there are further integrationist tendencies, she will pull out. That is, she is isolationist.

Now what the parties of the European regions and nations are saying at the moment is that we want to take part in the European Community, because we know there are progressive tendencies there, and there is a popular basis of support for our type of politics, the rainbow politics of working with a number of groups on the left and the center left and the Greens.

What we're finding nowadays is that the older nation-state parties — particularly those on the right, but also some that see themselves on the left, like the British Labour Party — are seen to be the isolationist parties, not us.

■ You mentioned the Soviet Union a number of times, the explosion of national movements in the Soviet Union. Do you think that that is an important example for Welsh nationalists.

I think that what is happening in the Soviet Union at the moment is important for everybody right across the world because of the progressive tendencies that I think Gorbachev is trying to follow. But to do that he needs support, and I think that's why the national minorities in the Soviet Union have been backing Gorbachev's proposals

for *perestroika* and *glasnost*, because they see that as one way forward for reestablishing their rights as minorities within a larger grouping, within the Soviet Union.

I think that is very similar to what's happening in the European community. We both have to find our path through the channels that are opening up at the moment.

■ **In an interview that I did with him some years ago, the president of Plaid Cymru, Dafydd Ellis Thomas, said that the non-capitalist countries were a different world, and that whatever national questions there might be there were not relevant to Wales.**

That was true at the time. I think things have changed now. The Soviet Union has become much more open. We've got a lot more information. It's much easier to go there and talk to these people.

■ **Are you interested in contacts, say, with the People's Fronts in the Baltic republics?**

The political movement that we're involved with in the European Community is interested in making links all over the world with minority groupings, with ethnic groupings, with progressive left groupings, with environmental groupings. The movements in the Soviet Union would offer interesting lessons for us, as would those in Central America.

■ **Have you made any attempts to contact the People's Fronts in the Baltic republics, for example?**

Within Wales, the first contacts were made by CND-Cymru, when they invited some people from the Latvian People's Front to speak at last year's CND-Cymru annual general meeting, and then some people from CND-Cymru were invited back to see how the peace movement is developing in Gorbachev's Soviet Union. We'd also like to develop that further afield within Central America, North America and South America.

■ **So would you protest against the repression of the Karabakh movement?**

We're not going to act as an apologist for any large, powerful authority, which tries to use its power against ethnic or national minorities for their own narrow political ends. There's no way we would support that, wherever it happens.

We have a general policy on these sorts of developments. We haven't got a specific policy on every one of these instances, because we feel they're all subsumed under our general political program. What you have at moment, not just in the Soviet Union, but right across the world, are problems of ethnic minorities within national communities. Until we can establish internationally that minorities of whatever sort have the right to be treated humanely, and

that democratic channels of expressing their grievances and progressing their own political program should be open to them, then there will be repression anywhere.

■ **To take the Baltic republics for instance, what you say about *perestroika* is true, it created openings for them. On the other hand, they do not identify totally with Gorbachev's projects. There are conflicts. And those movements will probably need all the outside support they can get as this process develops.**

There is no way in politics and society over the next decades that we're going to avoid differences of opinion, conflicts and so on. What we've got to do is have a much wider perspective on where we want to go in the future, and with that larger aim in mind work through these smaller problems.

We can do that at the moment with the opportunities opening up for us in the EC, the Soviet Union and certainly at the moment in Central and South America with the more democratic forums opening up there. The dictatorships there are one by one losing ground fairly steadily.

■ **What about population movements within the EEC? Obviously, there's the problem of rich English people taking up homes in rural, Welsh-speaking Wales. In the USSR, the Estonians, for example, are protesting about being flooded by Russians. What's your answer to the problem of English immigration into Wales?**

In Wales we've identified this problem first and have brought out a series of programs for tackling the problems that arise in terms of large flows of people around the European Community.

What we see as essential is that the European regions and nations have the democratic control over their own economy and over their own society necessary to ensure that they can adapt to the sort of changes that are taking place, not just at the economic level, but at the social level, the cultural level, and the level of demography.

■ **How do you propose to establish this type of control? Nationalization and a planned economy?**

No. Our economic policies are for decentralization of economic control, coordinated at the level of a Welsh parliament. Our policy is for decentralization of political control to district authorities, at the moment, to get rid of one level — the county level — and to concentrate it at the lower level, the district level.

At that level of political control they'd have available a whole array of economic tools to regenerate the local economy, and maintain and develop it. That would include the private sector at the family and small-firm level. It would include the cooperative sector. It would include local gov-

ernment intervention into the economy, either as employers or as initiators of industrial and economic projects. And that would take place at the level of Wales as a nation.

■ **You defined the private sector in terms of small businesses. What about the multinationals?**

Multinationals can only be tackled now at the level of regional economic blocs, such as the EEC, North America, or the Andean Pact. Multinationals can only be controlled and made to work for the benefit of people, if they can at all, at the level of these new economic blocs. And so our policy is to ensure we get the type of European Community and broader European political grouping that is large enough to have some control over the multinationals. Then by working at the UN level — which is what the European Community could do more effectively than any one nation-state — ensure that there are regulatory controls over their activities at the international level.

■ **What you are talking about then are controls and not nationalization by a supra-national state?**

We are not in favor of supra-national states as they are understood today. The idea that people have is something like a Britain writ large. We're not in favor of the kind of state, or the political structure that we have in Britain.

What we want are coordinating mechanisms combining progressive development of policies at these international levels, with detailed control decentralized to the lowest level possible. That way, people can control their own lives at the level of the community, the region and the national community, while taking part at the same time in these European regional and international groupings. We see no conflict there at all.

■ **If you are talking about something strong enough to control the multinationals it has to be a state structure of some kind. It may be decentralized or more democratic than the European nation states as they exist now, but it would presumably be some sort of a government that would have the power to nationalize if it wanted to.**

I think that nationalization by now is an old-fashioned way of looking at it. It's being abandoned right, left and center as a way of looking at things.

I think what we need to talk about is how people control their own lives economically, as well as in other spheres. Nationalizations didn't work, because what they created was a bureaucracy which didn't fulfill the demands that people made upon it. That has failed, in one sense, as has the private sector at the national and international level with multinational companies. They also fail to meet the needs and fulfill the wishes of ordinary people. ★

Hard times ahead for Indonesian regime

DURING the last six months, Indonesia — one of Asia's last surviving military dictatorships — has once again drawn international attention for its human rights abuses. In August and September last year, the issue of Indonesia's ongoing genocidal colonial war in East Timor came to the fore once again when President Suharto and foreign affairs minister Ali Alatas paid a provocative visit to the territory, arousing considerable indignation even among the regime's imperialist backers.

The same can be said about the regime's second spectacular move, the execution of two political prisoners who had been sentenced to death in frame-up trials last October, twenty years after Suharto took power. An international campaign is currently underway to save the lives of 11 other prisoners (see box p.22).

SUBAKAT

ALMOST TWENTY years ago, in his book on the counter-revolutionary coup in Indonesia Philippe Gavi drew the lesson of the defeat of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and its total destruction by a fascist mass movement in collaboration with the army in late 1965 and early 1966. Gavi stated that to Che Guevara's call to "create two, three, many Vietnams" should be added the call to "prevent another Indonesia".

What may appear at first sight to be just a catchword phrase actually contains a reasonably exact assessment of the strategic importance of the 1965-66 defeat, both for the Indonesian and international workers' movements. It is indeed comparable to the defeat inflicted on US and international imperialism in Indochina. In 1965, the Indonesian CP was the world's biggest communist party outside the workers' states.¹ The fascist mobs in Indonesia, composed of well-off Muslim peasants, as well as the urban middle class (notably university students), encountered virtually no organized resistance when they — together with special army units — massacred at least one million actual or alleged members and sympathizers of the PKI and its mass organizations.²

Although the coup fitted perfectly into the worldwide imperialist counter-offensive after the victorious Cuban revolution — and there are strong indications that the propaganda campaign that was

launched to whip up the anti-communist hysteria was masterminded by the CIA — it would be wrong to regard Indonesia's reactionary forces as mere handmaidens of their imperialist masters. It was the Indonesian national bourgeoisie's own class interest that led them to abandon the people's front-type NASAKOM-alliance³ under Sukarno, with its politics of limited confrontations with imperialism, and to embark upon a total reintegration of Indonesia into the world market, an "open door" for foreign capital and a close alliance with imperialism. It is more than tragic that the misplaced confidence in the progressive potential of a "national bourgeoisie" led to another catastrophe in Chile, eight years after the Indonesian debacle.

Structural weaknesses of Indonesian economy

All predictions of the rapid disintegration of the "unstable" Suharto regime, which have been made every time public discontent and protests spread in the country during the last 23 years, have, unfortunately, proved to be nothing but illusions.

After a period of considerable economic growth, since the early 1980s the Indonesian economy has slipped deeper and deeper into a crisis that has mercilessly revealed its structural weaknesses.⁴ The annual growth rate sank from 9.9% in 1980 to a



meagre 2.2% in 1982⁵ — hardly even enough to compensate for population growth — and it has never recovered. Revenues from oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports, which at times accounted for about three-quarters of Indonesia's total export value, plunged from \$20 billion in 1981 to \$15bn in 1982, and are estimated to have fallen to \$8.5bn for the period 1987-88.⁶

Debt servicing reaches dangerous levels

As the Suharto regime continued to borrow vast sums of money to finance large-scale industrial and infrastructural projects of doubtful importance for the country's development (as well as for the consumption of luxury goods for the ruling classes), the country's foreign debt rose from

1. Estimates vary concerning the membership of the PKI and its mass organizations (the trade unions affiliated to the SOBSI federation, the peasants' front BTI, the women's organization GERWANI, the youth organization *Pemuda Rakjat* and others). The figure of 15 million is cited in a number of sources, for example in *Repression and exploitation in Indonesia*, Taylor et al, Nottingham (Britain), 1974. But this seems considerably exaggerated, and half of that number is probably closer to the truth.

2. See *The Indonesian Communist Party and land reform 1959-1965*, R.A. Mortimer, Monash Papers on South East Asia 1, 1972, p.65. On sporadic resistance after the massacre and the destruction of the PKI as a national organization see also *Tien Jaar onrecht in Indonesie*, W.F. Wertheim et al, Amsterdam, 1976, p.153-.

3. An acronym of *nasionalis* (nationalist), *agama* (religious), *komunis* (communist).

4. Some economic growth occurred in the early phase of Suharto's "New Order" regime, mainly due to the influx of foreign investments and the return of domestic capital, which had fled the country during the Sukarno era. Nevertheless, this growth reached spectacular proportions only after the oil price rises of the mid-1970s: Indonesia's per capita GNP rose from \$150 in 1974 to \$530 in 1981.

5. *Nederlands Dagblad*, September 12, 1983.

6. *Ibid.* plus World Bank figures from *Tempo*, May 28, 1988. World Bank projections for the year 2000 put the oil and LNG export revenues at \$17.2bn — that is, still below the 1980 level.



\$18.8bn in 1978 to \$47.3bn in 1987.⁷ Decreasing export revenues, combined with sky-rocketing foreign debt, raised the debt service requirement to the dangerous level of 41% in 1987.⁸

Another factor to be taken into account is that the structure of Indonesia's foreign debt is gradually changing. Credits from the late 1960s and early 1970s that had extremely advantageous repayment conditions are being replaced by government loans with higher interest rates and shorter repayment terms, alongside credits from commercial banks.⁹ Given the present unstable situation in the oil market and Indonesia's limited success in compensating for losses in the oil and LNG sectors by promoting alternative exports, the economic prospects look grim indeed.

Little wonder, therefore, that last year's World Bank recommendations read like stories from *A thousand and one nights*: sustained growth at high rates in the non-oil/LNG sector, double digit growth rates for private investment, an overall increase in efficiency and other achievements will boost Indonesia's export surplus and facilitate a steady repayment of the debt, bringing down service on the debt to 22% in 1995.¹⁰

Dramatic cuts in "development budget"

This concept relies heavily on the performance of the private sector, which has traditionally not exactly been the main pillar of the Indonesian economy. In 1988, the private sector even failed to fulfill the modest hopes of the regime's technocrats regarding its contribution to the state's tax revenue.¹¹ One of the major weaknesses of this concept is that the private sector, especially industry, has been hard hit by the decrease in government revenue.¹²

The dramatic cuts over the past few years in the "development budget" — that part of public spending allocated to investment in infrastructure and industrialization — has

caused serious problems for private business as well, especially in some sectors like construction. The industrial sector's performance deteriorated partly in parallel to the decrease in oil revenues: the industrial growth rate fell from 22% in 1980 to 10.2% in 1981, declining further to 1.2% in 1982 and only slightly recovering to 2.2% in 1983.¹³ While diminishing oil revenues may not have been the main cause of the collapse of Indonesia's industrial growth, it has evidently prevented recovery.

Collapse of raw materials' prices

Furthermore, the World Bank's concept does not take into account the fact that the prices of a number of the main export commodities — tin, nickel and palm oil, for example — have also gone down during the last few years. On the other hand, commodities such as timber will hardly become a major export revenue earner, except for a very short period if the regime is willing to take the risk of the final destruction of the

Kalimantan tropical rain forest.¹⁴ As for the chances of exporting manufactured goods — leaving aside Indonesia's weakness in that field — neither the sharp competition with Asia's four "little tigers" and other newly industrializing countries nor the imperialists' increasingly protectionist trade policy should be forgotten.¹⁵

Major imperialist countries' investments have also been stagnating for some time, and even domestic investment is lagging behind expectations.¹⁶ The notorious corruption of government officials, as well as the time-consuming procedures necessary to obtain operating permits and to employ foreign staff, have put off quite a number of potential investors despite Indonesia's extremely low wages.

Strategic interests of major imperialist powers

What is more, strengthening the private sector means pushing ahead even further with the deregulation drive of recent years.¹⁷ In its turn this leads to a loss of sources of revenue for the military and civilian bureaucrats who have appropriated the state apparatus and who had developed networks of patronage with businessmen. Capital accumulation and the entrenchment of a much stronger capitalist class in Indonesia during the past 20 years were facilitated in the first place by these bureaucratic capitalists.

Deregulation will even mean cutting down on the privileges enjoyed by Suharto's own family, which, making use of their direct access to power, is known as the strongest business formation. Indeed, criticism of "monopolies" in Indonesia's economy has often been a means employed by dissatisfied factions in the ruling class to lash out at Suharto.

Although the economic problems discussed above considerably limit the regime's ability to ensure the loyalty of certain groups via bestowing material bene-

7. *Tempo*, *ibid.* The projection for 1990 is \$53.2bn.

8. Cited from the proceedings of the Netherlands parliament 1986-87, 19700, hfdst.V, nr.131, p.9.

9. *Tempo*, June 11, 1988.

10. *Tempo*, May 28, 1988.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Not only do oil and LNG provide the lion's share of the country's export value, but the state has also become more and more dependent on them for its revenues. The share of oil alone as a generator of public revenue (mainly through taxation on oil companies operating in Indonesia) increased from 19.7% in 1969-70 to 61.7% in 1981-82. *Indonesia: The rise of capital*, R. Robison, Singapore, 1986, p.171.

13. *Kompas*, June 21, 1986.

14. The exportation of log timber is now forbidden. Plywood exports have been growing for some years, in 1986 earning some \$1.2bn in foreign exchange (*Kompas*, December 2, 1986). Nevertheless, the enormous fires that destroyed vast areas of Kalimantan's tropical rain forests some years ago — viewed by experts as the biggest ecological catastrophe in the country's history and expected to cause a permanent change of climate in the region — clearly show the narrow limitations of such destructive exploitation. In any case it is clear that earnings from the timber industry will never compensate for more than a small fraction of the

losses in the oil sector.

15. An example is the US government's protectionist measures against textile imports. Brought to the verge of bankruptcy in 1985 by insufficient export opportunities, most Indonesian mills and garment plants operated at only just over 50% of capacity. (*Kompas*, March 15, 1988.)

16. Indications of this tendency are the massive revocations of investment permits for foreign, as well as domestic, investors due to the failure to realize projects filed at the Investment Coordination Board. The diminishing interest of Japanese investors in Indonesia has been the subject of a public debate by the country's leading economic analysts. (*Kompas*, January 12 & 24, 1986.)

17. For example: simplification of the import licence system; the lifting of certain monopolies; and even the transfer of Indonesia's customs to a Swiss company, the SGS, in 1985.

18. Civil servants are one example. Due to their quasi-compulsory membership in the ruling corporatist movement, GOLKAR, their wages (and those of public enterprise workers) increased tenfold between 1969 and 1977, but have been frozen for several years now. ("Pockets of privilege..." by C. Manning in *The life of the poor in Indonesian cities*, Jellinek, Manning & Jones, Monash Univ., 1978, p.31.)

fits¹⁸, there is no question of it facing short- or medium-term bankruptcy. The major imperialist powers, organized in the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI), will not allow that to happen.¹⁹ Besides their strategic interest in keeping a stable reactionary regime at the head of one of the principal members of the Asean group of countries, there is also inter-imperialist competition for the sizeable Indonesian market. Access to this market depends a lot on official goodwill, which in turn is bought with credits. European members of the IGGI worry about the "unbalanced", high levels of Japanese contributions to the IGGI's aid fund for Indonesia, which evidently stem from the dominant position of Japanese imperialism in the Indonesian market.²⁰

Aside from the problems of corruption and inefficiency, the monopolies controlled by members of the Suharto family and the regime's extremely poor human rights record have at times stirred up anger among the regime's imperialist backers. The latter would undoubtedly prefer a regime like those existing in Malaysia or the Philippines, but for the time being there seems to be no credible alternative to Suharto that could guarantee the same stability of bourgeois rule in Indonesia with all its implications for the region.

Beefing up the Indonesian armed forces

Apart from the IGGI credits, the Suharto junta received various forms of financial, military and diplomatic support. Britain's aircraft sales, West Germany's supply of submarines and Dutch corvettes (all of which have been campaigned against by anti-imperialist organizations in Europe and Australia, unfortunately without success) significantly helped the Indonesian army to effectively wage its colonial war in East Timor. Despite the somewhat delicate position of some of them as military allies of Portugal, all major imperialist powers have given at least tacit diplomatic support to Indonesia's annexation of the Democratic Republic of East Timor (by abstaining in the UN General Assembly when the question was voted on). At least the USA, West Germany and Australia are involved in training schemes for Indonesian army officers.

In Bandung, West Java, the Indonesian aircraft industry IPTN was established with considerable help from West German and Spanish companies. Shortly before the fall of the Marcos regime, IPTN supplied the Filipino army with two medium-sized transport aircraft.²¹ Imperialist aid has also been used for the setting up of the PT PAL naval construction plant in Surabaya, East Java, where small- and medium-size vessels for the Indonesian navy are being constructed.

Beefing-up the Indonesian armed forces and developing the country's arms industry

does not only help to stabilize the Suharto regime against popular movements on Java or regional independence movements on the other islands, but also strengthens the reactionary Asean community on the military level.

Abysmal wages and working conditions

Although the "New Order" regime's modernization drive has brought about an increase in the number of workers employed by industrial enterprises and a decrease of those earning their living in petty commodity production, the Indonesian working class nevertheless remains quite fragmented and unstable in its composition. Apart from a very limited sector of foreign capital, as well as a number of major domestic and state enterprises (oil, high-tech industries and so on, which need a stable, qualified workforce), the turnover rate of the workforce in any given enterprise is very high, as is the level of circular migration that reintegrates urban proletarians into the ranks of the rural poor or allows them to be absorbed into the urban "informal sector".²²

Apart from the section that is sometimes referred to as "protected workers"²³, living conditions for Indonesian workers are precarious. The majority of workers have to make ends meet with wages considerably lower than even the "physical minimum need" (KFM, *kebutuhan fisik minimum*) fixed by the ministry of labour affairs. It goes without saying that this index is determined in a manner that is not particularly favourable to the workers. In 1985 in the East Kalimantan province, one of the richest in Indonesia, the KFM-index was fixed at 64,851 rupiahs for a worker without children, Rps 146,064 for a worker with one child and Rps 181,472 for a worker with two children.²⁴ One third of the workers earned less than Rps 60,000 a month. As the average number of children in an Indonesian working class family tends to be more than two (to put it mildly), it can be assumed that the majority of working class people in the area lived in abysmal poverty.

For Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest town, the KFM-index in 1984 was Rps 45,000 rupiahs, but even according to the official yellow trade union, FBSI, many companies only paid their workers Rps 700 a day!²⁵

Working conditions are hardly more encouraging than wage levels. Although in theory even under the military dictatorship Indonesia has relatively progressive legislation, in practice working conditions frequently defy description. Protective equipment is hardly ever supplied by the companies, or has to be paid for by the workers themselves. At a cold-storage plant processing prawns on Pulau Buaya-Island, for example, workers had to enter the freezing chamber at -17°C without any protective clothing. They could purchase

insulated coats at the cost of Rps 40,000, or 50 days wages.²⁶ Agricultural workers often use pesticides without any protective masks. Accidents are frequent and medical provisions quite limited. In case of invalidity there is hardly any financial compensation or continuous support.

A serious pressure on the living standards of Indonesian workers is exerted by the enormous unemployment in the urban centres, as well as the large percentage of under-employed rural poor. Reliable overall figures for unemployment (and under-employment, which is also an important factor) are not available. But the regime admits that the difference between the annual demographic expansion of the workforce and the capacity of the labour market alone means a rise of 600,000 unemployed.²⁷ And this figure does not include existing unemployment or the effects of the massive lay-offs in industry during recent years of economic crisis.

Poisoned rice and mass starvation

But the rural population is even worse off. Research among the urban poor carried out by some Indonesian social scientists indicates that, despite their deplorable living conditions, people are better off in Jakarta's slums than in their native villages in Central or East Java. The so-called Green Revolution that has been pushed through during the last 15 years has aggravated the already critical situation at the end of the Sukarno era when the Indonesian Peasants' Front (BTI, *Barisan Tani Indonesia*, linked to the Indonesian CP) waged a struggle for the implementation of the land reform law promulgated in 1960.

Repeated cases of mass starvation are even reported in the tightly-controlled Indonesian press. Particularly tragic are the numerous cases of peasants dying from poisoned rice, prepared by the authorities to kill rats and then washed by the desperate people who thought that when its warning colour vanished so would the poison.

According to the so-called Sayogyo criterion proposed in 1978, for rural areas families with an annual per capita income

19. The great "concern" of imperialism about the country is for example reflected in the fact that the US government even drew up plans for invading Indonesia in 1956, when political relations between Sukarno and the imperialist powers deteriorated. (*Kompas*, April 13, 1985.)

20. *Nederlands Dagblad*, October 29, 1988.

21. *Kompas*, January 11, 1986.

22. Manning, op.cit., p.27.

23. Manning (op.cit., p.26-) divides the Indonesian working class into three categories: protected, semi-protected and unprotected workers, according to the stability of their jobs and earnings, the degree to which they enjoy the protection of labour legislation, social benefits and so on.

24. Exchange rate (before the 1986 devaluation) was approximately Rps 1,000 = \$1. Figures from *Kompas*, February 21, 1985.

25. *Kompas*, June 23, 1984.

26. *Kompas*, February 21, 1985.

27. *Kompas*, April 3, 1985.

Political prisoners need solidarity

SEVENTEEN members of the PKI, or military personnel sympathetic to the party, have been executed since 1985. They had been imprisoned and condemned 15 or 20 years previously. The last two executions took place on October 17, 1988.

Fifty-nine others, imprisoned at the time of the 1965 events, are still in jail, and 14 of them were given death sentences — as yet not implemented — between 1965 and 1971. These prisoners face execution at any moment. Among them are:

Ruslan Wijoyasastra; Sukatno; Iskandar Subekti; Asep Suryaman; Satar Suryanto; I Bungkus; Surono; Athanasius Buang; Simon Petrus Soleiman; Marsudi; and Nobertus Rohayan.

Demands for their sentences to be repealed and for the immediate release of these prisoners should be sent to President Suharto, Bina Graha, Jalan Veteran 17, Jakarta, Indonesia, with copies to national embassies. ★

equivalent to less than 240kg of rice have to be classified as poor, and those below the 180kg mark as living in misery.²⁸ Even according to this extremely flexible criterion, which barely allows for physical survival, there were still 52% of Java's rural population living below the poverty line in 1976.²⁹

The impact of the "Green Revolution", while in the mid-1980s putting Indonesia for the first time in decades in the position of being self-sufficient in terms of rice production, nevertheless destroyed much of what has been left of mutual assistance between villagers, and deepened social polarization in the countryside. Sharecropping arrangements for rice harvesting, as well as the traditional labour-intensive harvesting methods, have been largely abandoned in favour of wage labour with more efficient harvesting methods. Whereas formerly large numbers of landless or almost landless peasants would have found seasonal employment as harvesters, cutting the rice with a small *ani-ani* knife and remunerated with one-third of the actual harvest, the work is now carried out by wage labourers who cut the more resistant, high-yield varieties mechanically with sickles, and are paid in money the equivalent of only about 10% of the crop's value.

Harsh repression waged by the regime

It is hard to estimate whether in absolute terms the living standards of the urban and rural proletariat, urban poor and poor peasants have fallen during Suharto's rule, as they were already deplorable during the Sukarno regime. But it is certain that their relative share in the nation's wealth has decreased drastically, and that even the small gains by some sectors (civil servants, oil workers) are presently being lost as the regime, with its IMF-inspired austerity policy, tries to make the masses pay the foreign debt bill.

The above-mentioned problems of economic crisis, widespread unemployment and fragmentation of the working class already suggest that the conditions under

which the exploited masses of Indonesia have to wage their struggle even for the most modest immediate demands are extremely difficult. Yet the most decisive factors limiting their combativity are those engendered by the harsh repression waged by the regime against any attempts to achieve improvements in their material situation (let alone to gain basic political rights), and the total atomization of the workers and poor peasants through the destruction of their organizations in 1965-66.³⁰

Difficulties for organizing resistance

The traumatic experience of the fascist and military repression — which reached genocidal proportions in certain rural areas of Central and East Java, where whole villages regarded as BTI/PKI strongholds were virtually depopulated — seems to be underestimated by those (sometimes even progressive) analysts, who try to explain the difficulties encountered in organizing resistance against the Suharto regime with the arguments of "traditional submissiveness of the Javanese" and other "cultural obstacles". While not denying that certain backward and authoritarian behaviour patterns rooted in traditional culture are at times skilfully exploited by the regime, as well as by individual capitalist or landlords, it would be fallacious to analyze such factors in isolation from the concrete political context and their historical development.

But in spite of these adverse conditions, labour conflicts are by no means a rare occurrence. The demands raised by workers in their struggles cover protests against lay-offs or demands for severance pay, higher wages, bonus increases, working conditions and so on. The forms of action are varied, too. They range from complaints filed at the arbitration board or collective prayers to demonstrations and strikes.

The reactions to struggles of individual capitalists and the repressive apparatus differ widely. Their central principle is to

avoid at all costs a dispute that could continue long enough to develop a dynamic where the workers gained self-confidence and experience of struggle, and where a leadership could crystallize. To achieve this, sometimes the company in question is forced to make minor concessions and, at the same time, the workers are intimidated into ending their action lest it should be considered as "masterminded or manipulated by political elements" (that is, communists) and suppressed.

New witch-hunt against suspected militants

In other cases the conflict is ended by outright repression, as in the case of the 800 workers at the PT United Can Company in Jakarta who were collectively fired by the minister of labour affairs, ex-admiral Sudomo. (Sudomo was formerly the head of the notorious "command for the restoration of security and order", *Kopkamtib*, which was responsible for some of the massacres in the aftermath of the 1965 coup.)³¹

This strategy of the regime has so far effectively prevented the development of even embryonic forms of organization. Even at a plant level, there has never been a case where workers in the same company waged actions more than once under the same leadership. Given the tight surveillance of labour affairs by the military and the secret services, it will be an extremely difficult task to change this state of affairs. An additional illustration of how difficult it is for workers to organize is the fact that sometimes they even have to wage a fight to obtain recognition of a factory branch of the regime-sponsored yellow FBSI trade union federation.

Struggles can still sometimes yield certain limited results, but the present economic situation puts workers in a definitely weaker bargaining position than they were a decade ago, when struggles flared up again for the first time under the "New Order" regime and a big strike at the oil company Caltex was won. On the other hand, it remains to be seen whether the regime's industrialization drive, aimed at replacing revenues lost from the oil sector, will result in a more stable composition and overall strengthening of the industrial proletariat.

The already difficult situation under which Indonesian workers have to wage their struggles has recently been exacerbated

28. *Kompas*, August 28, 1984.

29. *Ibid.* the population of the more sparsely-populated "Outer Islands" was better-off, with 29% below the poverty line. However, their situation has also probably deteriorated in recent years, as vast areas of poor tropical rain forests have been cultivated by transmigrants with disastrous results, especially in Kalimantan.

30. Primarily, the SOBSI (*Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia* — All-Indonesian Trade Union Congress) and all its affiliated unions; and the BTI (*Barisan Tani Indonesia* — Indonesian Peasants' Front).

31. *Tempo*, August 31, 1985.

ed further by a new witch-hunt against suspected former members of the progressive mass organizations. In order to intimidate the workers, but also to push through layoffs — regarded as “economically necessary”, but which are unpopular and in contradiction with the regime’s self-proclaimed paternalistic “*Pancasila* labour relations”³² — there have been several instances in recent years of mass redundancies of public sector employees. They were regarded as belonging to the “C2” category of involvement in communist activities (something McCarthy might have called a “second class fellow-traveller”).

Since 1988, a large-scale campaign has been launched for a “clean environment” (*bersih lingkungan*). This is Indonesia’s version of the Nazi’s *Sippenhaft*: everybody who has even a distant family member involved in progressive organizations before 1965 is to be dismissed if he or she works in the public sector or any other enterprise of “strategic importance”. Given the massive membership of such organizations before the military coup on the one hand, and the far-reaching family ties on the other, this criterion applies to the overwhelming majority of the country’s population and is a very effective means of intimidation.

As for the rural proletariat and the poor peasants, their situation tends to be even worse. The massacres in 1965-66 affected the rural poor and their organization, the PKI-linked peasants’ front BTI, even more than the urban proletariat. The so-called unilateral actions (*aksi sepihak*) that had been waged by BTI supporters in their struggle for the implementation of the 1960 land reform law had incited the wrath of the rural elite organized in Islamic groups, which conducted the anti-BTI/PKI campaign in the countryside at times even more savagely than the army.

Struggles by the rural poor, according to the scarce information available, are less frequent than those of industrial workers. They usually centre around defensive issues like compensation for land taken over for government projects, problems created by pollution or the election of village heads. Except in the few cases where human rights groups in the towns took up a cause or even tried to mobilize international support, these struggles are usually quickly suppressed by intimidation carried out by the local military. The Indonesian (and particularly Javanese) countryside is under very close surveillance by the military, which is omnipresent down to village level.

To keep the countryside even more closely controlled, even the two political parties created by the regime itself, the PPP

and the PDI³³, are not allowed to conduct election campaigns in places below the level of district capital. Only the governing corporatist organization GOLKAR (dominated by military and civil servants) is entitled to do so.³⁴

The land question in Indonesia is particularly delicate because of the difficult demographic and ecological conditions. Two-thirds of the Indonesian population are concentrated on the three islands of Java, Madura and Bali, which represent only slightly more than 7% of the country’s territory. Over-population of rural Java has



empty spaces. As agronomic and ecological studies have shown, the relative “emptiness” of Indonesia’s bigger islands definitely has ecological reasons — the poor soils of the tropical rain forest support only a very limited amount of shifting cultivation, which has been the traditional mode of agriculture of its original inhabitants. Transplanting the extremely intensive cultivation methods used on the fertile volcanic soils of Java quickly leads to economic disaster, such as the vast bush fires that have destroyed considerable sections of Kalimantan’s tropical rain forests.³⁵

Important as every single action of the workers or poor peasants in defence of their interests might be, there will always be little chance of success and a greater danger of retaliation against activists if the subsequent step, building trade unions and poor peasants’ organizations, cannot be taken. One of the major preconditions for the re-emergence of such organizations is a minimum of political freedom. Although it is certainly not ruled out that a minimum margin of democratic freedom could be brought about by a future crisis in the regime — due to internal faction fighting, or a “liberalization” under a coalition of reformist forces within the army and a faction of

32. *Pancasila* or “The Five Pillars”: 1) Belief in only one god; 2) just and civilized humanitarianism; 3) Indonesian unity/nationalism; 4) democracy led by wisdom, born of consultation; 5) social justice for the entire Indonesian population.

Pancasila was a populist ideology launched by the first president, Sukarno, but flexible enough to fit neatly into the fascists’ need for a state ideology. Criticism of or resistance against the *Pancasila*, or even against the present regime’s interpretation or implementation of the five “principles”, is automatically regarded as subversive and therefore liable to the death penalty.

33. In the early 1970s the Muslim parties were forced to merge into a single party, the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP or P3, Unified Development Party), whereas the secular nationalists and smaller Christian parties were ordered to form the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* (PDI, Indonesian Democratic Party).

34. As with a lot of other repressive legislation, this is modelled after the policy of the Dutch colonial regime, which — along with harassment of nationalist activists — tried to use all kinds of regulations to keep the anti-colonialist movement out of the villages in the 1920s and 1930s.

35. One of the main reasons for the continuation of the demographically almost useless transmigration policy is the regime’s intention to better control some sparsely-populated regions via colonization and to destroy bases for future regional guerrilla movements. The jungles of the Malaysian/Indonesian border region, for example, were the principal base for armed struggle of remaining PKI forces until the mid-1970s. (Wertheim et al., *ibid.*, pp.157-160.)

Not surprisingly, the transmigration projects attracted enormous financial support from several imperialist countries, as well as the World Bank. A quite intensive international campaign has been waged in recent years by human rights groups and ecologists against this destruction of Indonesia’s natural riches for the sake of profit and counterinsurgency.

thus reached a level where the struggle of the poor peasants and rural workers cannot be led by simply putting forward the demand “the land to the tillers”.

Cooperatives used to exploit poor peasants

The situation is further complicated by the fact that peasant cooperatives — the formation of which is imperative under conditions where redistribution of land on an individual basis would only lead to the creation of extremely small units insufficient to produce a decent income for a peasant family — have been used as an additional means of exploiting poor peasants, thereby thoroughly discrediting the idea of cooperatives in general.

Meanwhile, the disastrous results of large-scale transmigration projects involving hundreds of thousands of poor peasants who were resettled in Kalimantan, South Sumatra, Sulawesi and West Papua (see *IV* 161), have shown that the question cannot be solved either by colonizing so-called

National liberation struggles

A PART FROM its crimes against the popular movement in 1965-66 and the continued repression ever since, the Suharto regime has also ruthlessly waged colonial wars against peoples not willing to accept Javanese rule. Regionalist movements in the 1950s, usually led by right-wing leaderships linked to Dutch or US imperialism, were usually condemned by the Indonesian left as "running dogs of imperialism".

But the popular support that some of these movements enjoyed indicates that the problem as a whole cannot be reduced simply to separatism instigated by the CIA. Given the enormous cultural diversity of the country it is obvious that national rights, including that of exercising self-

determination through separation from the rest of Indonesia, are indispensable, and are the only way to get rid of the new type of colonial oppression that has developed in Indonesia.

Since its installation, the Suharto regime has waged savage wars against the Papuan people (see IV161) and, for the last 14 years, against the people of East Timor. Today, the aspirations of both the Timorese and Papuan peoples have become accepted among progressive forces in Indonesia.

Despite savage repression, during the past years the West Papuan people have been able to broaden and deepen their implantation among the population of that region. In East Timor, there is apparently still

armed resistance against the Indonesian occupation. According to press reports at the end of 1988, there are still some 15,000 Indonesian troops guarding that tiny territory. FRETILIN forces are estimated at around 500 guerrillas.

Besides the two most well-known struggles mentioned above, numerous other nationalities in the Indonesian state are unhappy about Javanese paternalism. Recently, there has been a certain revival in the underground activities of nationalists in the South Moluccas themselves (and not by exiled groups in the Netherlands).

The Acehese nationalists seem to have received some support from Libya. Their main leader, Teungku Hasan di Tiro, is presently in charge of the *Mathaba* organization set up by Gaddafi to prop up his image as a supporter of national liberation movements around the world. How much support the movement enjoys in the Aceh region itself is unclear, but it may not be insignificant given that there have been repeated reports of ferocious repression against it for some years. So far, this region is the only one where the regime has displayed a certain measure of caution in pursuing its Javanization drive in order to avoid arousing the fighting spirit of the Acehese, who were much feared by the Dutch colonialists. This fighting

ACEH

ACEH was the last independent state of Indonesia to be conquered by the Dutch at the beginning of the century after 30 years of war. The heroic guerrilla resistance of the Acehese continued even until the late 1920s. After freeing themselves from Japanese occupation at the end of World War II, the Acehese never allowed the Dutch military to set foot on Acehese soil during the war of independence.

spirit was again displayed by Daud Beureuh's movement in the 1950s.

Occasional reports in the Indonesian press (*Kompas*, July & August 1984) suggest that there is also considerable dissatisfaction and desire for autonomy in other areas, such as Lampung (South Sumatera), where Javanese transmigrants have already outnumbered the local population, and South Sulawesi.

A correct position on the national question and the abandonment of the concept of "separatism" will be crucial in the fight to bring down the dictatorship, and to prevent the divide-and-rule tactics being used successfully by the regime to defend itself. ★

EAST TIMOR

EAST TIMOR was a former Portuguese colony that declared independence in November 1975. The struggle for independence was led by the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (FRETILIN). Several days after the declaration of independence, the Democratic Republic of East Timor was invaded by Indonesian troops. In 1976 the Suharto regime announced the annexation of the territory, but armed resistance continues to this day.

The massacres committed by Suharto's *soldateska*, as well as widespread famine after the invaders deliberately destroyed crops, claimed the lives of about 200,000 Timorese, or one-third of the population. Recently, a petition signed by 182 members of the US Congress urged the secretary of state to push for a solution to the conflict that would put a stop to the Indonesian forces' human rights abuses.

the industrial bourgeoisie opposed to the inefficiency of the present patronage system — it would be fatal to place too much hope in such a development.

Legal aid groups, which provide assistance for victims of human rights abuses and try to force the regime at least to stick to its own laws, have been an important factor in denouncing repression and providing a limited opportunity for defence. The shamelessness of the regime in violating its own legislation frequently defies description, and exposures of abuses such as those occurring during the trials against

Muslim grassroots activists since 1985 have by themselves helped to create a good deal of critical consciousness. Because these groups — whose clients include quite a number of workers — operate either under the patronage of prominent political figures renowned for their anti-communist attitudes or of religious organizations, it is not easy for the regime to simply crack down on them.

Among Muslim non-governmental organizations in recent years, especially after the vicious repression waged against Muslim activists since 1984, bitterness

against Suharto has been growing. Themes like social justice and political rights play a major role in aspirations of a number of them. The submissiveness of the older leaders of the PPP and their readiness to accept humiliation after humiliation by Suharto and his henchmen has produced a certain disenchantment among younger activists.

One example was the recent daring protest of the Muhammadiyah³⁶ students' organization against the banning of some works by left-wing writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Another example was the stubborn resistance of sections of another

Islamic students' organization, the HMI, against the infamous law on associations, which stipulated that the state ideology of *Pancasila* should become the sole organizational principle of every organization.

Groups monitoring pollution problems or defending their rights against government projects (compensation for land and so on) have become more numerous. The regime's tough legislation on social organizations, introduced some time ago, indicate that it is well aware of the dangers of such a development for its rule.

The degree of dissatisfaction with the regime among the masses was clearly demonstrated during the 1986 election campaign, when huge rallies were organized by the PDI — usually associated with the still-idolized former president Sukarno — which were attended by hundreds of thousands of young people who made little effort to conceal their contempt for Suharto and the GOLKAR party. When the masses came into the streets at the end of that campaign it seemed as if they controlled Jakarta. For the time being that remains a dream, but it shows very well that the position of the regime is not exactly one of unshakeable stability. This is especially true since it is young people (a substantial majority of the population) who seem to be the most fed up with the regime, and whose spirit is free from the trauma of 1965-66.

Vital to cut off Suharto's life-line

The fight against repression and for basic political rights, linked to the task of reestablishing trade unions and poor peasants' organizations, constitutes the strategic task of revolutionaries in Indonesia today. It is indispensable for building a movement that can eventually bring down the ignoble dictatorship, which, during 23 years of terrorist rule, has shed more Indonesian blood than the Dutch colonialists did during 350 years.

As support from almost all the imperialist countries has been one of the major factors in keeping the Suharto dictatorship in power for more than two decades, it is vital to cut off that life-line. The key thing here is the financial "aid" given to the generals by the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia. Suharto has been able to almost completely ignore even quite large campaigns, such as those against Indonesia's occupation of East Timor³⁷ or the protests against the executions of long-term political prisoners in 1985 and 1988, simply because he was never in any real danger of losing IGGI credits or facing an arms embargo. It is therefore decisive that support for the Indonesian opposition is not limited simply to protests against individual human rights violations — though such campaigns are not unimportant — but that there are campaigns that will really hit the dictatorship around cutting financial aid and ending arms supplies.

Anti-IGGI demonstrations have been organized for many years by the Dutch-Indonesia Committee.

Destruction of tropical rain forests

A lot of work remains to be done to exert sufficient pressure on the imperialist government's involved to withdraw that support. Bearing in mind the disastrous global effects of the continued destruction of the tropical rain forests, campaigns against World Bank support for transmigration projects and against the imports of precious tropical timber by certain imperialist countries are an additional axis of solidarity. This campaign has already achieved some success and has sensibilized sections of the ecology movement to the situation.

Last but not least, the campaign mainly

led by Amnesty International and other human rights groups against the executions of 11 political prisoners sentenced to death a long time ago for alleged involvement in the coup of Sukarnoist army officers, which paved the way for Suharto's counter-coup, is of utmost importance — not only for humanitarian reasons. Some of the soldiers in Sukarno's former palace guard, who have been awaiting execution for years, are the last direct witnesses to Suharto's involvement in the abortive coup led by Colonel Untung and others. ★

36. A reformist Islamic organization founded at the beginning of the century, involved mainly in educational and social work, and based mainly on the urban Muslim elite.

37. Nevertheless, this campaign has caused considerable annoyance to the regime, and was probably one of the key factors recently preventing Indonesia from mustering enough support when running as a candidate against Nicaragua for the leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement.

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AROUND
THE
WORLD



SENEGAL

Regime's Increasing Isolation

ON APRIL 4 the main opposition party, the Parti democratique senegalais (PDS, Senegal Democratic Party), called a demonstration in the capital, Dakar, on the twenty-ninth anniversary of the country's independence. The PDS made no serious effort to organize this event however, and the party leadership did not turn out for it. Nonetheless, the majority of the city's population came out onto the streets to express their determination to put an end to Abdou Diouf's regime. Diouf had, of course, prohibited the demonstration, and the police

were out in force in the centre of the city. There were a number of confrontations and the police made 180 arrests.

Confidence in the regime has fallen to its lowest point ever. The country has been devastated by an economic crisis, reinforced by rampant corruption at the top (see *JV* 153). There is nothing out of the ordinary in such a situation in a third world country, but what makes Senegal unusual is that the ruling party is a member of the Socialist International, and the country is protected by a strong French military presence. Dominated by French imperialism, Abdou Diouf's Senegal enjoys the total support of the French Socialist Party.

This purported showcase of Socialist International-style democracy in Africa is

usually presented in the Western press as an example of pluralism and parliamentary democracy. The reality is that, despite this, Senegal has been pillaged shamelessly by the ruling class. While arrogant displays of wealth can be found in some districts of the capital the rest of the population has been sinking ever further into poverty. Strikes and demonstrations are usually prohibited or repressed. Around 25,000 French nationals live there, a large number of whom work in business of one kind or another, with others in the state apparatus. Several hundred French military personnel are encamped in the capital.

Virtually every sector of society is hostile to the regime, and a strike of university teachers has been going on since February 11. There is also conflict within the army and the police. The timidity of the opposition becomes apparent when we take this background into account.

The PDS, the party of the liberal bourgeois opposition, refuses to organize the thousands of people who respond to its calls for demonstrations. Along with two pro-soviet organizations it has formed an alliance that restricts itself to demanding a government of national unity with the existing regime. At a time when the majori-

OBITUARIES

James Kutcher (1912-1989)

AMERICA's most effective agitator for socialism during the McCarthy era in the 1950s, James Kutcher died February 10 at Veterans Administration Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. He was 76 years old.

Kutcher was the celebrated World War II veteran who lost both legs to mortar fire in Italy in November 1943 and lost his job at the Veterans Administration to witch-hunters in this country in August 1948. He was fired because he was a member of the Socialist Workers Party, an organization on the attorney general's "subversive list" at the time.

He had joined the Trotskyist movement as a member of the Socialist Party in Newark, New Jersey, in 1936, and was a founding member of the SWP in 1938 and of the Fourth International later that year. He remained a member of the SWP until October 1983, when he was expelled. (This expulsion, as well as the wave of which it was part, was condemned by the Fourth International.) For the rest of his life, he continued to be a supporter of the Fourth International as a member of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

He won his job back in 1956, and two years later he won back pay. For almost ten years, Kutcher — the "legless veteran" — campaigned tirelessly against the political repression of the time. He became the most public and best known representative of socialism in that decade. Kutcher's long fight in defense of socialist ideas and the SWP's right to function legally as a revolutionary Marxist party was a setback for the witch-hunters, a victory for civil liberties and for the labor movement and for oppressed minorities. This son of immigrant workers was a true hero of the American working class. ★

Milt "Alvin" Geneclin (1908-1989)

MEMORIAL meetings for Milt Geneclin, known in the socialist movement as Milt Alvin, were held in San Fran-

cisco and Los Angeles, respectively on February 4 and 19. He died on January 26.

Geneclin was born in Sebastopol to an upper-class Jewish family. They came to the US because the quota for Jews in good schools was filled. Geneclin first worked as a stock broker and made money, but became disillusioned with capitalism as a result of the 1929 crash. He discovered Marxist writings in a public library. When he found himself being called a Trotskyist, he looked up the US Trotskyist organization. He entered the Socialist Party with the Trotskyists in the late 1930s and left with them, becoming a founder member of the Socialist Workers Party.

After the second world war, he became an SWP organizer and educator in Toledo, and builder of the party's fraction in the auto workers' union. During the 1950s, he made an important contribution to keeping the party alive in those witch-hunt years. He served on its National Committee and was a frequent contributor to its public journals and internal discussion.

In 1983, he was expelled in a wave of expulsions condemned by the Fourth International. Despite illness, he continued to work actively to build the Trotskyist movement in the United States, in the ranks of the Socialist Action branch in Los Angeles.

The following message was sent to the memorial meetings by Livio Maitan, for the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

"The Fourth International salutes and pays tribute to the life of Comrade Milt Alvin, a founding member of the FI, a life-long revolutionary socialist. Comrades such as Milt helped to keep the revolutionary concepts of socialism alive for the future generations.

"He is now gone, but his life's achievements will be remembered and his vision of a socialist world will endure.

"Long live his memory. Long live the Fourth International." ★

ty of the population is ready to fight, the main opposition forces restrict themselves to vague propaganda.

Only some small revolutionary currents, among them the Organisation socialiste des travailleurs (Socialist Workers' Organization, Senegalese section of the Fourth International) are attempting, with forces that are at present still weak, to offer a way forward for the popular movement. They propose mass organizations at a district level, giving an anti-imperialist content to the mobilizations, rejecting the idea of a government of national unity and taking part in the various strikes, which the PDS has so far refused to support. ★

YUGOSLAVIA

Kosovo Albanians

THE PAPER of the Swedish section of the Fourth International, *Internationalen*, carried an interview with Kosovo Rexha-Bala, the chair of the Kosovo Albanian organization in the city of Göteborg in its April 6 issue. The Albanian immigrant leader said, among other things:

"What can you do when even children are being killed? The socialist organizations and the League of Yugoslav Communists [the official CP] are participating in attempts to organize resistance. Even Albanians who have lived in Sweden for many years are protesting, despite the fact that they risk not being able to visit home.

"If it goes on this way, there will be a civil war. They are shooting down people in Kosovo, and at the same time festivals are being held in Serbia to celebrate the 'triumph in Kosovo.'"

Rexha-Bala denied that any Albanian "irredentism" was involved in the protests: "That is pure propaganda! The people in Kosovo want to rule themselves. I wonder if Albania would really want to take in these Albanians. The Albanians in Yugoslavia have been born and bred there, and would hardly want Stalinism back." ★

BASQUE COUNTRY

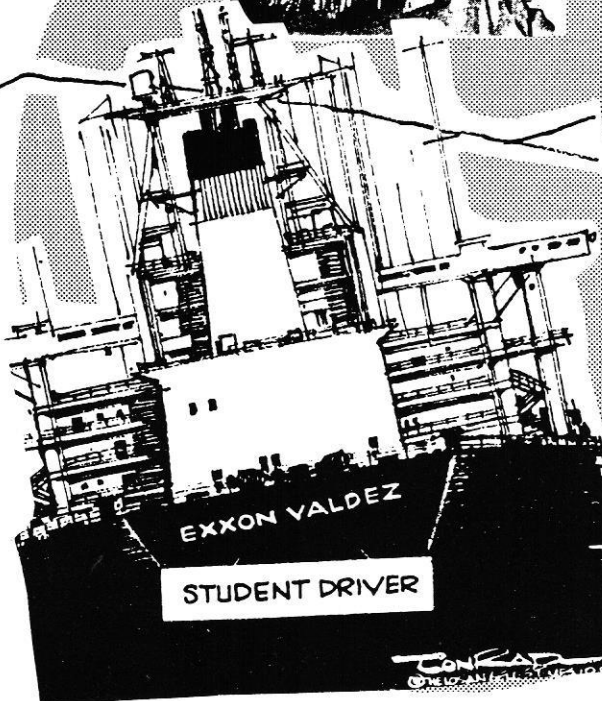
Pravda backs campaign against ETA

IN RESPONSE to the breakdown of the negotiations between the government and ETA, in its April 10 issue, an article in *Soviet Communist* denigrated militant Basque nationalism and identified with the "anti-terrorist" campaign against it. The article was entitled: "The axe or the dove — the roots of Basque separatism."

V. Volkov, *Pravda's* correspondent in Madrid, ended his article with a flourish:

"The symbol of the terrorists is a snake's head and an axe blade. The terrorists paint these sinister symbols on the walls of homes, on fences and decorate their leaflets with them....It is hoped that the dove of peace will prove stronger than the snake and axe. The Basque country, like the rest of Spain, longs for peace and concord." ★

'Great ... First the greenhouse effect — now this.'



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Soviet bureaucracy tries out "democratic" methods of repression

THE MASSACRE in Tbilisi on April 6 has clearly become a dangerous embarrassment for the Gorbachev leadership both inside the USSR and worldwide. Moscow has quickly retreated from bloodcurdling threats of a general crackdown to an oily discourse about new, more democratic methods of handling the problems caused by the "excesses" of the state security forces.

GERRY FOLEY

THERE CAN BE no doubt about what the massacre was intended to accomplish. The scenes filmed by Georgian oppositionists show an overwhelming display of force, a line of tanks advancing on protesters in a confined space and firing gas grenades. The effect must have been terrifying.

The authorities' original story was that the protesters had stampeded and were therefore responsible for the fate of the victims in their own ranks. The pictures made this charge untenable. If there was a stampede, it could be accounted for by the armored charge of the military. Covering a crowd with teargas in a confined space itself could create panic.

Now, Soviet authorities themselves have admitted that poison gas was used that could have long-term effects on those exposed. That is a very effective form of intimidation. Like a police dossier, it is a threat that continues to hang over you.

Immediately after the slaughter in Tbilisi, tanks were sent clattering through the streets of the capitals of the Baltic republics, striking fear into the populations. This was only a couple of weeks after the elections that produced majorities for the Baltic national democratic fronts.

Mute message of the tanks

The mute message of the tanks was made explicit in *Pravda* of April 11. The editorial was a broadside against "abuses" of *perestroika*. It took up the Georgian events only half way through. Fire was focused on "motley grouplets, who, while they present themselves as champions of *perestroika*, are in fact shameless opponents of it." The editorial hailed a new law, the text of which

was also printed on the front page.

Notably, the new legislation makes illegal "deliberate actions designed to arouse national or racial antagonisms or conflicts, diminishing national honor and dignity, or limiting the direct or indirect prerogatives of citizens on the basis of their race or nationality." That is punishable by ten years in prison. Furthermore, the law makes it illegal "to insult or discredit" official bodies or officials.

Potentially witch-hunting legislation

This extremely vague legislation could be used to suppress any criticism of the Soviet authorities and, in particular, any movement against national oppression. It should be remembered that even the expression of pride in the Kazakh-language press at seeing schools filled with "dark-eyed" Kazakh children was denounced as "racist" by the Soviet central press. Notably, protests against Russification in the Baltic republics have been denounced as attacks on the rights of Russians who have come into these small countries after their forcible incorporation into the Soviet Union.

This potentially witch-hunting legislation was defended by explicit reference to reactionary legislation in capitalist countries. "In all countries there are legal norms defending their systems. For example, in the USA, for anti-state crimes, the law provides for fines of \$20,000 or prison terms of 20 years. In Spain, anyone who deliberately damages the authority or the power of the government, who authors or propagates false, distorted or tendentious rumors or reports or perpetrates any action to achieve such ends is punished by six to twelve

years in prison and deprivation of all civic rights."

The official tone shifted with the publication of foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze's speech to the August 14 plenum of the Georgian CP in *Pravda* of April 16. It was couched in hypocritical terms such as those so beloved of British Conservative governments, in particular. Perhaps the "restructuring" in the Soviet government consider those as just as worthy "democratic" models as the "anti-state laws" in the US or belated Francoism in Spain.

Walking the *perestroika* tightrope

Gorbachev's foreign minister declared that "nothing and no one could justify the deaths of innocent people." He went on to say that the world "puts so much hope in *perestroika* that no one can be indifferent to any threat to it, either from irresponsible people who interpret democratization and *glasnost* too freely or those who hold various responsibilities and are unable to break with the false principles of the past."

Shevardnadze blamed the child casualties on adults who exploited their inexperience to mobilize them in protests. The fault for the massacre was put on the republic authorities, who were supposed to have called the military in, a mistake that had been redeemed by the "moral example" offered by the resignation of the Georgian secretary, Patiashvili.

The fact remains that the massacre was carried out by all-Union troops. Indeed, there were rumors of clashes between them and Georgian police. And the revelations about the use of poison gas have come from the Georgian minister of health. At the same time, the central party leadership has been bringing strong pressure to bear on the party in neighboring Armenia in particular to harden it up against nationalist pressures.

Undoubtedly, the tangle in Tbilisi will take a long time to unravel. But it already illustrates clearly two points. First, while the Gorbachev leadership is ready to crack-down hard to stop *perestroika* from getting out of hand, it cannot afford to lose its liberalizing image. Secondly, the attempt to shift from open terror to political means of retaining control puts tremendous pressure on the intermediate and lower levels of the bureaucracy.

They are damned if they yield too much to local pressures and damned if they do not give enough and in time. That risks undermining very quickly the bureaucracy's essential instrument of power. ★