

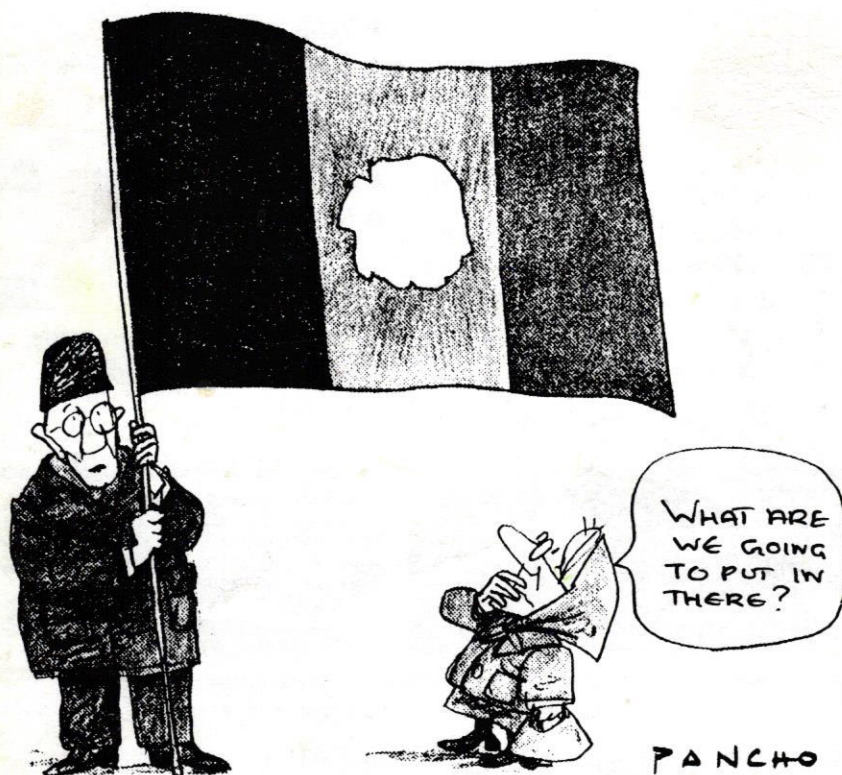
International VIEWPOINT

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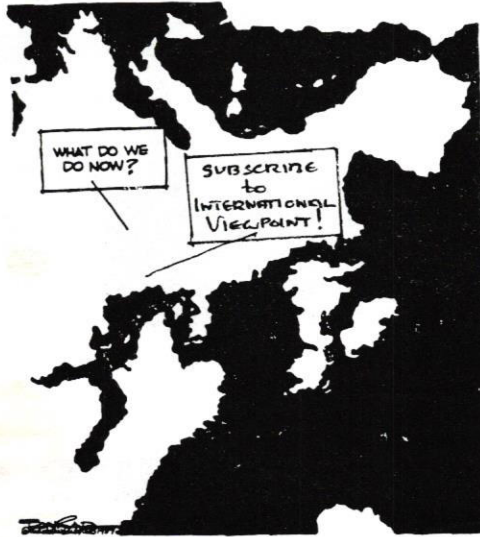
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International VIEWPOINT

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After Ceausescu's overthrow — hope, fear and distrust

THE FIRST victorious mass uprising in a Stalinized country since the Hungarian revolution took place in Romania in the days around Christmas. While the army took command of the fighting and managed subsequently to disarm the irregular forces, under the pretext of stamping out the "terrorism" of the secret police diehards, the state repressive apparatus has been thrown into disarray. Romanian journalists speak of a "phantom state." The Communist Party is so much on the defensive that its members and leaders claim that overnight it vanished totally and forever. In response to a small demonstration in Bucharest on January 12 that reflected a general feeling that the same people are still running the country under various disguises, the new government, itself composed mainly of former CP leaders, declared the party illegal, although they have since back-tracked. The "National Salvation Government" is clearly terrified of any demonstrations getting started, and prepared to promise practically anything to prevent them.

GERRY FOLEY

H OPE, mixed with apprehension and distrust — those were the feelings of a group of Romanian-Hungarian refugees returning to their country on January 2. One had fled illegally across the "green frontier," like many thousands of others threatened by Ceausescu's police. I found myself in the same compartment with them. It was the first train from Budapest to Bucharest in four days. (There is only one, and it goes overnight.) Rail traffic had been halted after secret police diehards fired on the international trains. As we approached the Romanian frontier, my companions pulled the blinds shut and turned off the lights for fear of snipers.

They begin to talk fearfully about what might await them at the frontier. They recalled incidents of harassment in the past, waits of up to seven hours. I told them about the treatment Irish people get at points of entry in Britain and about the way the French government treats Basque refugees. That started a long and very fraternal discussion about the resemblances among oppressed peoples.

A journalist from the publication of a nationalist pro-capitalist organization in Hungary was pessimistic about the future for Romanian Hungarians. He had grown up in Romania, and thought that nothing had really changed; the Romanians were still chauvinists and only making pretences for the sake of European public opinion.

Attitude to national minorities a touchstone

I said I thought the future depended on whether the revolution went forward and that a touchstone of any revolution was its attitude toward national minorities. If the revolution advanced and the people took their lives into their own hands, the demands of the Hungarians would be met; if it went backward, the minorities would be the first to be attacked. Most of them were hopeful.

We reached the border around midnight. The officials were notably unaggressive. The Hungarians were astonished. But the whole elaborate apparatus was obviously intact. We waited for three hours in a desolate frozen landscape with snow falling and filtering into the poorly constructed cars, as officials slowly went their rounds and soldiers searched. The train was almost totally empty after we passed the first big Hungarian towns inside Romania.

The Hungarian journalist went all the way to Bucharest, his hometown. When he arrived, he said, with relief, that the rhythm of life seemed normal. That proved to be a superficial impression. Very little had been done to repair the damage done in the fighting. Broken glass still lay everywhere. Bullet holes could be seen in plate glass windows. In buildings around the downtown squares, rows of windows stood empty, surrounded by

traces of fire. Along the sidewalks in the central squares were shrines to the martyrs of the revolution — rows of candles in front of placards and makeshift altars, often covered with loaves of bread and fruit. Crowds were always gathered around them, mostly made up of young people, many of high school age. The papers were full of homage to "the heroic youth."

There were slogans on the walls, but they seemed to date from the previous weeks — "The dictatorship has fallen," "the shoemaker [Ceausescu] has fallen," "Shoemaker, we will make shoes out of your hide." There were some slogans of "Down with Communism." There were

many posters, but they seemed essentially to have been put up by the new government. The message was always along the lines "the people have won, and now the National Salvation Front is in charge and everyone must rally behind it." In the underground stop at the Piata Universitarii in the city center, typed communiques were pasted up apparently by private groups. There were always crowds reading them. Mostly they were appeals for democracy and "dialogue."

Here and there were lines in front of stores, apparently for meat, fish and cigarettes. The longest lines seemed to be for newspapers and books. The journalists I talked to estimated that the demand for

ROMÁNIAI
MAGYAR SZÓ
KÖZPONTI DEMOKRATIKUS NAPILAP — BUKAREST

Új, demokratikus lapunk,
a romániai magyarság
szócsové,
ma különkiadásban
jelenik meg

1. szám
1989.
december 23.
szombat
Új sorozat

GYŐZÖTT A NÉP! MEGDÓLT A DIKTATÚRA!

3

papers was four times the supply. They thought it would be impossible to increase the press runs to anything like that amount because of a lack of paper. Romania has its own paper industry, but a lot of it was exported.

Some critical books, originally printed in tiny editions, were being reprinted. One was Marin Preda's *Cel Mai Lubit dintre paminteni* ["The Most Beloved of Earthlings"], a fictionalized account of the early days of the Stalinist regime. The longest line I saw was for such books at the Sadoveanu bookstore near the Piata Universitarii. By the end of the day, it was possible to get into the store, but it needed an extraordinary hunger to fight one's way to within actual reach of the books.

Massive shortage of books and dictionaries

There were, in fact, few books of any kind in the bookstores. Ceausescu had been suspicious of all kinds of books, I was told, even Russian ones. This was the first major city I have ever been in where there was no Russian bookstore. Dictionaries of foreign languages were virtually unattainable. Contacts with foreigners had been forbidden. But many Romanians spoke French — the country has been under French influence since it achieved independence, and especially in the inter-war period. Moreover, it is an article of nationalist faith that Romanians are a Latin people, and that gives a special importance to the language of the major "Latin" power.

I saw a huge crowd surrounding a truck full of newspapers. They were copies of the Paris daily *Libération*. The crowd pounced on them like famine-stricken people on food relief.

Almost all the periodicals in Bucharest were published in a Stalin-gothic palace on the northern edge of the city, called the Casa Scintei, for *Scinteia*, the organ of the Communist Party. It is now called "Freedom of the Press Square." The building was ringed by military forces and armed guards belonging to the building's staff. I went first to the office of the official press agency. The staff there had not been changed. An official told me that she had been offended by a denunciation of the CP by Brucan, himself a former CP leader. "He was privileged; I wasn't." She was bitter about the cuts the Ceausescu regime had made in the agency's budget. It had cut off all the foreign press services and subscriptions. She noted that the budget for them amounted to about as much cash as Ceausescu's daughter, Zoia, had on her when she was captured.

I went to the editorial offices of *Adevarul*, the old CP organ renamed. I met a journalist who was on the staff for his second day and had just written his first article. He told me, "I participated in the revolution. As soon as it was over, I came to this paper and asked them if they want-

ed someone from the revolution on the staff." Otherwise, the paper's staff remained essentially unchanged, and it had been unchanged for a long time. There had been a freeze on hiring, and for years, there had been virtually no openings for young people.

He thought that National Salvation Committees now existed at all levels of the society, but he did not have much concrete knowledge about them. It soon became clear that the situation was quite uneven. In *Adevarul*, there was a National Salvation Committee that played a monitoring role. It was explained that such a committee was necessary there because the staff had been so little changed and the old party organ remained suspect.

In the case of *Romania Libera*, another Bucharest daily, three well-known dissidents, people who had tried to start an underground journal but were grabbed by the secret police during the printing of the first issue, had taken over the editorship. They had credibility, and so it was felt that there was no need to form a National Salvation Committee there.

New editors elected on CP youth paper

At the other Romanian daily published in the Casa Scintei, *Tineretul Liber*, the former CP youth organization paper, new editors were elected the very day I visited the paper. Since there had been elections, it was argued, there was no need for a National Salvation Committee.

Government subsidies had been cut off. All the papers claimed to be independent. But no new system of financing has been conceived. For the moment income from sales is unusually high, but it is far from clear that the press can be financed that way. The staffs are small for daily papers, about 100 for *Adevarul*, 40 for *Tineretul Liber*, 62 for the Hungarian daily *Magyar Szó*. The printing plant workers have already organized and won Sundays off.

"The first legal student rally in 45 years," as the students and the press billed it, took place on Sunday, January 7, at the Polytechnic Institute. The report of it in *Adevarul* of January 9 was an indication that the population had good reason to mistrust the old party paper.

The article reported none of the conflict between the government and the new student association that formed the background to the rally, that had been called to protest decisions taken by the Ministry of Education to set the winter term without consulting the students.

In fact, the students had wanted to hold a demonstration, but found that the government was dead set against that. It told them that there was no reason for demonstrating because the government would agree to any demands they raised. At the same time, a decree was issued requiring 48 hours notice for any demonstration. A prolonged argument continued among the

students about whether to hold the meeting indoors or outside. The issue seemed finally to be decided by the freezing weather.

Competence must be the criterion

Three or four thousand students showed up, despite the vacations and return of the large numbers of students from the provinces to their homes. Slogans against corruption predominated — "Merit and competence," "No bribes [to professors to pass exams]." There was also a placard against "politics." There were expressions of hostility to "former Communist Party members."

The organizers of the meeting said over and over again that the new student associations would be "nonpolitical." Their explanations that the students were too young and inexperienced to take political positions did not seem to be well received. But a rejection of "politics" — meaning the substitution of political criteria for scholarly ones, political domination and political corruption — was very much in evidence. The students' demands included university autonomy and the inviolability of university precincts.

On the other hand, the "nonpolitical" nature of the associations was invoked every time the question of possible differences with the National Salvation Front came up. The question of political positions was raised in the press conference following the rally by a Romanian exile who had returned as a correspondent for the *New York Post*. He argued at length that elections were coming up in a couple of months and the students could not remain passive. The representativeness of the student spokespersons was also challenged by Romanians present.

During the rally, students told me that they had heard that teachers were involved in the initial organizing committee, and that they were opposed to that. They wanted a purely student organization. (The teaching staffs were generally corrupt, and are very discredited.) This distrust of the first groups to come forward and propose new organizations became a constant theme. The journalist at *Adevarul* said, for instance, that he had the feeling that while he was fighting in the revolution little groups of the old opportunists, "the people with political experience," were meeting and deciding how to put themselves forward again.

There were a large number of monitors to maintain order at the rally. One of them told me that he felt that the world was looking to them with hope, and was worried that the foreigners were disappointed with the timidity of the students. A delegation spoke from the French National Union of Students and one from the Polish Independent Student Union. The latter hung out a banner in Romanian from a balcony saying "We are with you."



I was joined by a comrade from Socialist Action, an American Fourth Internationalist group and the editor of an opposition paper for the rail unions. We went together with the journalist from *Adevarul*, who had been a railway employee himself until a few days before, to try to talk to rail workers.

Contact with railworkers impossible

Our friend said that he had been one of the initiators of the free union at the railroad, but that he had not been able to get any information about it since leaving. We found it impossible to make any direct contact with the railworkers. The railroads are called the "the country's second army," and remain under tight military control.

We were able to talk to Ionel Chiru, the editor of the railway workers' paper, *Lupta CFR* ["Railway Struggle"]. The *Adevarul* journalist told us that this was one of the few journals in the country that did not have to change its name because it was able to maintain a relatively good reputation even under the old regime. (It is a continuation of a militant railworkers' journal founded in 1932.)

Chiru gave us a picture of a very oppressed workforce. Workers were forced to work unpaid overtime, called "voluntary hours," and often ended up working 12 hours a day for only 70% of the pay due them for an 8-hour day, since the administration claimed that they failed to meet the norms and docked them 30%. The January 4 issue of *Lupta CFR* published the program for a new free union of transport and communications workers on its back page.

We got closer to the process of working class organization at the Peripheral Electronics Plant (a computer research and production center) in Bucharest's industrial suburb of Pipera. Even there it was not easy. We asked to speak to the organizers

of the free unions.

It was the manager of the factory and the coordinator of the National Salvation Committee who came to meet us. The coordinator was a young programmer in his late twenties or early thirties; the manager a middle-aged man. Both stressed that there was very good cooperation between the management and the workers' representatives.

The factory management had been known to be a liberal one. That was confirmed by people outside the plant. The coordinator explained that here workers were assured of getting their full wages. The manager said "voluntary hours" had not been imposed. The workers were idle part of the month because of supplies problems; then they had to work overtime to make up the slack, but they ended up working even less than the basic time.

Ceausescu outlaws use of word "computer"

The plant was unusual in many respects. It was a new industry, and one mistreated by a regime that "put politics in command" in the style of the cultural revolution and looked down on technology. The manager told us that for a period even the word "computer" was banned from the official publications. Thus the management and the workers were united by a common cause.

The National Salvation Committee was made up of 30 delegates, one from each of the plant's 30 departments. Its composition thus reflected the workforce, about four fifths production workers. The coordinator said that organizing committees for free unions existed in only 10 of the departments.

Defense of the plant was organized by a committee of eleven, including both the manager and the coordinator, which was formed during the revolution. The plant guards were independent within the plant

grounds, but subordinate to the army command outside the plant limits. The two told us that the same setup existed at all the factories in Pipera. The manager expected the guards to be disbanded in a few days. The coordinator agreed, although with an apparent reserve, and he stressed that even if they were dissolved, they would be ready to go into action again immediately if necessary.

Different views on privatization

The manager and the coordinator differed frankly on two questions — the future of the plant's National Salvation Committee and the question of privatization. The committee was supposed to be a provisional body, formed to operate in the interim before the April elections.

I asked why they linked the committee, which they said was "nonpolitical", to the elections. They had no answer, although the manager said that this was actually a good question. He thought that the committee would break up into different political parties. The coordinator was dead set against the existence of political parties in the plant. They introduced nonprofessional criteria into staff relations, he said. They could be divisive and obstruct effective collaboration. "What we need to do now is earn money." As an example of the dangers of parties, he mentioned that some of the new parties were calling for reestablishing the monarchy. He was against privatization, and thought that the plant could function on a collective basis: "We feel that we are the owners."

The manager said that he was not so sure that the plant could function collectively. "I am older and not so optimistic." He thought privatization could be a good thing, but that it had to be done "prudently." Both hoped to see foreign investment, but the coordinator stressed that it could not be allowed to lead to foreign control.

He thought that the committee should lead toward a free union organization.

My companion argued that the workers could not leave politics in the hands of others, or they would again become dominated. The coordinator said that the weapon against that was the right to strike, which was a weapon not against the management but against the army and police, who could become dangers.

As we left, he told us that if we wanted to see a conflict, we should go down the road to the Electronica factory, where there was "trouble." The *Adevarul* journalist told us that in fact there were a lot of conflicts. We found a big one at Tracturul, the tractor factory in Brasov, the country's second city and major industrial center. It was the first case we encountered of a factory manager actually removed by the workers.

1987 revolt in Brasov brutally crushed

There is a massive industrial complex at the edge of the city, dominated by Tracturul and the Red Flag truck factory, each with twenty thousand workers. About 100,000 workers and their families are concentrated in the neighborhood. It is here that a massive revolt against the Ceausescu regime took place in 1987 and was brutally crushed. We arrived just as veterans of this rebellion were giving an interview to a Swedish TV team. One of them, a young man in his twenties, told us he had been given back his old job a few days before. After the rebellion, he had been exiled to a remote town. He told us that he and others had just started organizing a union, and that it would not just talk but actually solve the problems of the plant.

The truck factory was under the control of the National Guard, a militia organization that includes virtually the entire male population and is commanded by reserve army officers. A battle with the secret police had taken place at the tractor factory, and it was under the direct control of the regular army.

At the truck factory, we met a young engineer who worked in the central office of the complex of 38 factories. He turned out to be a leader of a group of dissident young people that had existed before the fall of the dictatorship, but had not been able to carry out much activity before. He told us that in this coordinating office, the eleven managers had constituted themselves as the National Salvation Committee in the days of the revolution.

The staff demanded a committee of 21, realizing that with such a number it would have to include workers. The managers were forced to accept that, but then they proposed their flunkies and their flunkies nominated them. The election was held in a general assembly. There was another wave of protests, and a new election was to take place the following day [January 11], by secret ballot containing all the names of

staff members. The workers had already gotten together and decided that they would not vote for managers.

In the evening, I had a discussion with members of the dissident group. They wanted to talk about how to set up a newspaper. They explained that the local paper, the *Gazeta Transilvanii*, had not changed at all, and refused to accept articles from them about the problems in the city. In fact, even technically the paper was a poor effort for a big city newspaper. They explicitly rejected "Communism, socialism and the far left." "We just want democracy." "We have to learn about democracy, we have no experience of democracy." But in fact they were very similar to far-left young people in the West—similar origins, attitudes and aspirations. The *Adevarul* journalist discussed with them into the small hours of the morning. As a reporter, he was in the middle of the social process. Given the weakness of the government, people are taking their complaints to the newspapers, demanding that they become the tribunes of the people.

Manager ousted by forge workers

The following day, we had a long discussion with workers in the forge at the tractor factory who had ousted a manager. Physical clashes had occurred, since the manager had bought the loyalty of a section of workers with free drink and other benefits. Despite this radical struggle, however, the workers did not express any conscious aspiration to run the factory themselves or elect the managers. They expressed a desire only for unions that would defend their immediate interests. But in that respect, they were more advanced than many white collar workers, who are refusing to sign up for the new unions on the basis that they are political, that is, that joining them involves taking a public position for something. They are still afraid of putting their names down for anything.

In general, in the second week in January, it was the first tentative steps of organization that were being taken. Generally, people expressed uncertainty, hesitation and self-limitation. But the process is massive, and it is taking place in a political and organizational vacuum left by the collapse of a despotic regime and the total discredit of all its organizations and personalities. The language is generally anti-Communist, with an explicit rejection of anything that is reminiscent of Communist or even Socialist themes.

However, there was little or no concrete talk about privatization. Two reasons were commonly given for lack of interest in privatization, at least immediately: Firstly that the reforms in the USSR had created chaos and secondly that the only people who had the money to start private businesses in Romania were the mafia of

the old regime. The number of people involved in private business is microscopic. The peasants (still 20% of the population) are predominantly elderly. The Romanian Orthodox Church, which was very submissive, is not a political or social force.

The real control of the country is in the hands of the army. The new minister of the economy is a general. Political activity remains strictly forbidden within the armed forces. But the Romanian army is relatively small, and has been shaken up by the revolution. The soldiers have gone through the experience of fraternization with the masses.

Hunger for discussion with foreigners

Most people seem to look to the West—"the countries where there is democracy"—as the model. But there is a general hunger for discussions with foreigners and information about foreign countries. All the people we talked to were willing to listen to a description of negative aspects of the developed capitalist countries.

In 1981 in Poland, I had not always found that to be true. There, some people tended to feel that conditions were so much better in the West that it was useless to tell Poles about "the problems you rich people have."

For example, I raised the question of the Irish struggle with the editors of the Bucharest Hungarian daily, *Magyar Szó*. They said they were happy to have the chance to talk to someone who knew something about it. All they knew was what was in the big press, that is, that there was a problem of terrorism. But they did not believe that.

They knew about the desperation that can develop among an oppressed people. I explained the reasons for the conflict in Ireland, and got a very warm response. "This is your home, too, now; and we hope you come back soon so that we can discuss more."

The Romanian press voices a lot of hopes in the Soviet leadership, in particular for aid, and says nothing about the conflicts in the Soviet Union. The head of the Council of the National Salvation Front, Ion Iliescu, is thought to be close to Gorbachev. But many people raised the question of Moldavia, and the conviction that the Moldavians were now going to be interested in reunification with Romania. That is obviously not going to facilitate good relations with the USSR.

Despite the hesitations of Romanians surprised by the sudden collapse of an entrenched totalitarian regime, it seems certain that the process of self-organization of the masses, already wide spread, will gather steam, and that as it does so, political consciousness will deepen, and problems will arise for which "Western democracy," offers no answers. ★

Free trade unions begin to emerge

— Documents

DRAFT program of forge workers at Brasov Tractor factory

1. Depoliticization of the work in the enterprise.
2. Freedom of oral and written expression without restrictions or intimidation.
3. The creation of a free union of workers in the forge which will defend their rights through its freely elected leaders.
4. The right to conduct organized strikes, in accordance with the laws in force, in consonance with the urgent needs of the workers' collective in our section, as well as the right of the workers to negotiate, through their representatives, with the management over major problems such as work, working conditions, wages, and social conditions for all workers.
5. The right of solidarity with other committees in the enterprise and outside with respect to their rights.
6. Improvement of working and living conditions in order to assure a civilized and dignified life.
7. Respect for the eight-hour day. Over-

time can be worked on the request of the enterprise in agreement with the unions and at rates of pay in accordance with the labor code.

7. Respect for Sunday as a day of rest.
9. Respect for the major religious holidays (Easter, Christmas) through the granting of time off.
10. Reduction of the workweek to five days.
11. Assurance of free medical and social assistance for the forge workers, both in the enterprise and in social life.
12. For the fulfillment of the production plan transmitted by T. 31 (the Production Service), we request the following:
 - a. Assurance of basic material and energy supplies in accordance with fundamental technological norms.
 - b. Assurance of technical competence.
 - c. Assurance of repairs and of spare parts in accordance with manuals issued by the producers of machines and installations.
 - d. Assurance of a workforce for the maintenance and supervision of the technical level, as well as of productive

personnel at the necessary levels.

13. The stabilization of a qualified work force in the hot sectors through the following measures:

- a. Group I pensions retroactively for all employees.
 - b. Food for all personnel to counter the toxic effects, and bonuses for toxicity.
 - c. Free medical care for special problems.
 - d. A system of steel production in accordance with norms for personnel, wages, protection and work.
14. Abrogation of the rules requiring financial contributions by persons without children.

15. No limitations on the wages that workers and technical personnel can earn in accordance with the quantity and quality of work done.

15. The appointment in the machine shop of a chief of a team for major repairs and spare parts.

17. Preparation of a general overhaul of Section T-32.

18. Generalization of the individual contract for personnel involved directly in production.

19. Exact definition of the roles of technical and productive personnel (review of the Table of Organization).

20. Priority for solving the housing problems of personnel working in the section.

21. An obligation for all workers to respect technological norms concerning the quality of production, failure to do so being punishable administrative sanctions in conformity with the laws in force.

22. Material incentives for inventions and innovations in order to improve efficiency.

23. The formation of hot sections in a separate autonomous factory for forged and cast parts.

As the free union, we call on all workers to respect work discipline and the technical experts (engineers, foremen, technicians, and the management of the production processes), whom we need.

All decisions by senior technical experts must be taken in the framework of rationality and collective analysis.

We appeal to all workers not to engage in acts of hooliganism and personal vengeance and to respect in a civilized and consistent way the laws of the country that are in force, as well as the rules of the work collective.

The National Salvation Committee of Section T32 (The Forge), Tractorul, Brasov ★

Draft Statutes of the Free Union in the Forge at Tractorul, Brasov

1. The free union at T-32 is based on the workplace principle and the defense of the rights of its members with respect to the management of the workshop, section and enterprise management.
2. Membership in the T-32 free union is voluntary.
3. Decisions are by a simple absolute majority (over 50%) in all cases except strike votes, for which a vote of two-thirds of the membership is required.
4. Union meetings are to be called at least once a month or at the request of at least one third of the membership.
5. In its relations with other administrative bodies, the free union will be represented by its leader or his two deputies.
6. The leader of the union and his two deputies will be elected democratically on a roughly yearly basis, and they may not be elected for two consecutive terms or more than four times in ten years.
7. In order to avoid subjectivism, the union leader and his deputies may not hold political posts.
8. The union leader can only make decisions after consulting the union and after it gives him a mandate.
9. The leader and his deputies can be recalled by a simple majority at any time that the organization decides that they no longer represent it well.
10. Nominations to higher union bodies must be made individually and not by slate. Such representatives cannot be leaders of the local unions.
11. Local union leaders and representatives cannot have any more rights than any other union members.
12. Changes can be made in the statutes at organized meetings of the union by simple absolute majority (over 50%). ★

Program of the first congress of Printworkers and Journalists' unions

THE free unions of journalists and printing workers of Romania will fight for the following rights:

1. The establishment, as juridic persons, of free publications
2. The freedom to form associations in various fields in the framework of the Union of Journalists and the Federation of Free Unions of Printing Workers.
3. A guaranteed maximum workweek of 40 hours.
4. Assurance for printing workers and publication staffs of the best working conditions, heating, light, clean air, properly functioning equipment, a review of the number of hours necessary.
5. Assurance of protective equipment and other means of protection and sanitation in the work process.
6. The right of unions to petition, demonstrate, and strike in order to defend their members' interests and in order to win respect for fundamental human rights.
8. Regaining the rights that printing workers and journalists have benefited from in the past — lowering of the retirement age and reduction of worktime, more time off, bonuses to compensate for unhealthy conditions, and so on.
9. Defense of the social rights of union members — the right to a job and vacations, to education, to social and medical assistance, to protection and healthy working conditions.

10. Paid days off for national and religious holidays.

11. Defense of the specific rights of young printing workers and journalists.

12. A guarantee of the right to information of all sorts necessary for freely exercising the profession.

13. Repeal of the 1974 press law and of all the regulations that restrict the rights of journalists and print workers; the passing of new laws, including a press law, after consultation with representatives of the union.

14. A guarantee of means for exercising the profession, through giving priority to, and reducing the prices of, typewriters, tape recorders, cameras, videos and reproduction equipment, personal calculators and so on.

15. Recognition of some lost rights, such as free travel for journalists on all means of public transport, air, marine and surface, necessary for the exercise of the profession. Free subscriptions to the written and electronic press, free access to all cultural and artistic performances and sporting events.

16. Assurance of wages in accordance with professional status and dignity for journalists and printing workers.

17. Additional pay for articles that help to increase circulation.

18. The granting of a substantial yearly prize by the union for outstanding work by journalists and printing workers.



19. The possibility for perfecting one's knowledge of foreign languages, access to courses of all sorts, including for learning the techniques of video work.

20. Certificates for journalists who have not had this right in recent years.

21. Legal help for all sorts of litigation arising from the job or from journalistic activity.

22. Discounts on costs of moving around the country and abroad for professional purposes.

23. The creation of journalists' and print workers' funds, as well as vacation funds.

24. The Creation of a Council of Honor to deal with litigation among journalists and cases of loss of professional status.

25. The union defends the right of opinion and fights against any attempts to force journalists, in any way, to write or publish articles contrary to their consciences or convictions.

26. Reinstatement and compensation of journalists and printing workers prevented from exercising their profession in the period of the dictatorship or wrongfully removed for opposition or other antidemocratic reasons.

27. Restoration of the former property of the Sindicata Ziaristilor [Journalists' Union], the Uniuni Ziaristilor [Journalists' Union], as well as the former Uniuni Presa-Poligrafie-Edituri. Guaranteeing by law the property of the Federation of Free Unions of Printing Workers and the Union of Journalists.

28. Establishment of pensions for printing workers and journalists in conformity with the generally accepted European norms. Additional pensions from the unions.

The Federation of Free Unions of Printing Workers and the Union of Journalists will have their own press organs.

The Action Group ★



Insurrection in Azerbaijan

THE "peace operation" launched by Gorbachev touched off uprisings in Azerbaijan. The occupation of Baku by the Soviet army on the night of January 19-20 is estimated to have resulted in the deaths of 500 people, far more than all those reported killed in the communalist outrages of the past year. In *Le Monde* of January 21, Bernard Guetta reported: "In only one of the city's [Baku] hospitals, a hundred deaths and many casualties were reported. 'They keep coming. What is happening here is horrible,' a clerk said in tears. For the first time, blood has flowed as a result of an order by Gorbachev."

GERRY FOLEY

THE POGROMS against Armenian residents of the republic and the blindly chauvinist blockade of Armenia, still suffering from the effects of last December's earthquake, are what made it politically possible for Moscow to launch a general crackdown against all mobilizations and independent organizations in Azerbaijan. This was a predictable outcome of the chauvinist campaign against Armenia and Armenians by the Azeri Popular Front.

American government backs crackdown

The American big capitalist press months ago noted that the Caucasus was the only place that Gorbachev could use military force without destroying the credibility of his reform program. The same thing has enabled the American government to openly back Gorbachev's crackdown. US State Department spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler announced: "We obviously recognize the right of self-defense for those who try to contain acts of violence." (*Libération*, January 20).

The Soviet operation was not confined to defending the lives of threatened Armenians. The "emergency" measures announced in *Pravda* of January 16 included: "Banning meetings, rallies, marches, demonstrations and also theatrical performances, sporting events and other public gatherings, supervision of the mass media.... Banning strikes; imposing a curfew, limiting entry and exit of citizens [to and from the territories concerned]; provisional expulsion of citizens from dangerous territories, offering them other accommodation Restricting or banning the use of.... radio and TV equipment; introducing special rules for communica-

tion." These measures involved putting an entire people in a straitjacket. They were met with massive resistance.

Two days after proclamation of the emergency measures, January 18, Guetta described the situation as follows: "Nothing moved in Baku... We learned not only that the siege of the Central Committee building [in Baku] was continuing but that the strike was spreading, which kept the newspapers from coming out and interrupted Azerbaijani radio and TV broadcasts."

Baku population resists Soviet army

Azeri Popular Front leaders claimed that Moscow's intervention has been met with a general insurrection in Baku. A spokesperson for the Popular Front was quoted by Agence France-Presse as saying: "There is firing everywhere. The population is trying to block the way by setting up cars across the roadway. All our people are in the street." Fuad Agayev, a spokesperson of the Azeri nationalist Council of National Defense, claimed that the Communist Party had lost control of the republic: "We control the situation all over the republic. Our checkpoints are on duty on all roads. The absolute majority of the people follow the orders of the Popular Front." (*International Herald Tribune*, January 20).

Guetta described revolutionary takeovers by the Front: "The capital of Azerbaijan was no longer in a situation of dual power. As in Lenkoran, another city of the republic whose authorities were thrown out pure and simple by the local section of the Front on January 11, Baku was led by the nationalists, by the various tendencies of the Front including liberals, fundamentalists, Westernized intellectu-

als and fanaticized unemployed."

The Front in fact has a contradictory history, and has acted in a contradictory way in the latest crisis. The Azerbaijani republic government was one of the most reluctant to recognize "informal" organizations. The Front was only recognized after the general strike of September 4, 1989. It has been in conflict with the authorities since its inception, and clearly had mass support. Its program includes many of the same national-democratic demands as those of the other Popular Fronts. It was not the Front, but the Azeri authorities, with the backing of the neo-Stalinist wing of the Soviet CP leadership, that started the chauvinist campaign against the Armenians. (See IV 172)

The mass demonstrations encouraged by the authorities got out of hand, and the Front rode the wave of national feeling. There are, in fact, far more important motives for such sentiments than the question of the small territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The Azeris, like the other peoples of Muslim tradition, suffer from severe national oppression.

Pogroms create pretext for Moscow's intervention

The Armenians, seen as historic allies of the Russians, were simply an easier target. The Front leadership did not try to resist this drift. That would, in any case, have been very difficult. In failing to do that, it got itself caught in a trap. The anti-Armenian outrages created the political conditions for Moscow to intervene and smash the challenge to its authority. There are reports of attempts by the Front to restrain the attacks on Armenians. But the atmosphere it fostered by focusing its fire against Armenia, against the aspirations of an entire people, made communalist attacks and outrages unavoidable.

This error was not inevitable. Other national-democratic leaderships have avoided such a trap. The Ukrainian Helsinki Committee, for example, solidarized with the demand of the Crimean Tatars to return to Crimea, hardly a less important territory than Nagorno-Karabakh. Birlik, the Uzbek popular front, denounced the pogroms against the Meskhetian Turks.

In their blindness, the Azeri Front leaders put their people and their movement and all the mass democratic movements in the USSR in jeopardy by allowing a situation in which it appeared that only the arbitrary use of state power could prevent outrages.

In fact, as Guetta reported, the Soviet commanders negotiated with the Front to get agreement for some patrols to move. But there is no indication that Soviet authorities tried to negotiate with it to assure protection of Armenians. Ultimately, there is no solution for the conflict between these peoples except dialogue and negotiation between their chosen representatives. ★

Soviet journal interviews Trotskyist economist

THE MOST WIDELY READ Soviet liberal publication, the weekly *Argumenty i Fakty*, which has a circulation of up to 30 million, published an interview with Catherine Samary in its December 2 issue (No. 49). Samary is the author of a comprehensive study of the Yugoslav economic model published by the Notebooks for Social Research and a leading revolutionary Marxist critic of the economic systems of the bureaucratized workers' states. The interview was given last summer. The following is a translation of it as it appeared in *Argumenty i Fakty*.

MANY SOCIALIST COUNTRIES are now going over to market relations. Does the market offer the key to solving the problems arising from overcentralized bureaucratic planning? Our correspondent G. Valiuzhenich discussed this with Catherine Samary, a sovietologist, instructor at the University of Paris and a collaborator of the Institut de URSS et de l'Europe de l'est. Her doctoral thesis was devoted to a study of the "Yugoslav experience." Today she is studying the reforms underway in our country.

■ Catherine, in the 1960s, "market socialism" was introduced in Yugoslavia. Many of us now place hopes in that, but that country is in a crisis. In your opinion, what is the reason for this?

Most of the specialists consider that the reason is that the market has not been developed enough. I argue that it is the insufficiency of economic and political democracy in Yugoslavia.

From the early 1950s until 1964, there was a system in which most of the decisions were made first of all at the central level, "from above," although the enterprises were "self-financing." Self-management was strictly limited by the price and credit systems established by the central planning bodies and directives. In this period, despite the rapid rise of the economic indicators (yearly growth rates of over 10%, a sharp increase in the production of consumer goods), certain sources of tension developed (dissatisfaction of the miners with the low prices for coal that led to lowering their incomes; opposition by the well-off republics to the

redistribution of means among the republics). In connection with this, an attempt was made to reduce the role of the government in favor of the market.

By the way, it seems to me that a stereotype has formed in your country — whoever is against the market is for dictatorship. That is far from the way it is. In fact, another variant is possible.

In a centralized system, you could plan only the big strategic questions and determine priorities. Most decisions should be taken on the regional, local or enterprise level. The economy should be regulated, but without exercising "tutelage" over every enterprise.

However, this variant requires a fundamental democratization of political life. That did not happen in Yugoslavia. In 1965, the centralized capital investment funds were liquidated, along with other previously used instruments of planning.

The labor collectives were free to use the surplus of various production funds left over after payment of taxes. That, of course, was a positive aspect. But at the same time, the decentralization of decisions on capital investment and criteria for redistribution quickly led to serious disruptions of the balance among industries. Dependence on imports increased. Local resources were underused, resulting in a growth of foreign debt. Beginning in 1968, there was a new rise of strikes for higher wages. Inflation exceeded the projected price increases. Unemployment rose.

The Yugoslav economy became very fragmented, divided up as if into feudal fiefs, and burdened with a foreign debt on the order of \$20 billion. Under the pressure of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the prevailing orientation from the

start of the 1980s was to renew the course of market reforms in an attempt to reunify the country and cut down the foreign debt through tight austerity and regulating production with the help of world-market prices.

The results were catastrophic. Today, inflation has reached 100% [it is now over 1,000%], and 12% of the workforce is unemployed. Powerful social tension has developed.

■ Nonetheless, market regulators have enabled the capitalist countries to reach a high level of satisfying people's needs and solving social problems that we cannot handle now.

The present level of economic development and social protection cannot be seen only as the result of the market. To a large extent, social guarantees were won by the working people themselves through a long struggle for their rights. Besides, today's capitalism represents a society where there is a high level of planned development of social policy within the framework of the firms and corporations.

The notion that it is possible in a few years to go down the same path that it has taken the developed capitalist countries two centuries to complete is utopian.

Moreover, the market will lead to vast gaps between the incomes of various strata of the population. And inasmuch as values different than those in the West are deeply rooted in the consciousness of the people, this will serve as a dangerous source of tension.

Those who rejoice over the successes of the free-enterprise wave in recent years usually say nothing about the fact that it has widened the gap between the developed and developing countries. Besides this, it has made it possible to delay a new worldwide crisis through a vast extension of credit. The US has become the world's biggest debtor; its debt equals the total debt of the so-called third world countries.

■ So, you are against overcentralized bureaucratic planning as well as against the market. In that case, where do you see the way out?

The choice is not between the market (which is supposed to bring efficiency and democracy, that is, for those who have to have money and jobs) and social protection (with inefficient bureaucratic planning and an absence of democratic freedoms)! This is a false alternative that has to be rejected.

I am not against the market as such. I am against the dictatorship of the market (just as I am against the dictatorship of the bureaucracy), against looking to the market as a cure-all. A market is necessary, but under the control of the society. The principal solution is economic democracy, self-management.

Working people have no reason to



accept inequality, imposed by the dictatorship of the market, as a natural thing. They have no reason to regard it as just (the result of some "universal economic laws") that they are treated as "things," as "commodities," which can be used and then thrown on the street in accordance with market criteria.

Labor must be freed from the condition of wage labor. In fact, even the capitalists of the leading countries have been obliged in their own way to recognize this fact. They are trying to involve the workers in solving the problems of production, to link their interests with those of the entrepreneurs. To this end, they are even elaborating a "company" ideology. But the limits of this workers' "self-management" are, of course, very narrow.

The new technologies are being oriented solely by profit criteria. They are eliminating more jobs than they create. In these conditions, it can be said with certainty that capitalism cannot remove class struggle and replace it with a corporative spirit. This is prevented by rebellions of the poor and unemployed.

Do you think that there are crises developing today in our country as a result of socialism?

Can you call "socialist" a system in which there is no "free association of the producers," in which there is no control by the society over social ownership? I don't think so.

Judging from the press, some economists here are saying that the socialist model was wrong from the start. It is responsible for everything, they say. It was the October revolution that threw the country into all its subsequent woes. They even say that there was no alternative to Stalinism, which supposedly was based on the ideas of socialism. These arguments are based on the ignorance of people who lack any deep knowledge of their own history. In your country, they have not yet even published the platform of the Left Opposition, which fought Stalin and proposed an alternative road for building socialism. In fact, you are now coming to its ideas — building genuine socialist democracy and self-management. ★

"We must preserve respect for social justice"

THE new Czechoslovak government, under the presidency of Vaclav Havel, has already taken a number of striking initiatives. Negotiations are under way for the removal of all Soviet troops from the country by the end of this year, while Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus has called for the abolition of the Soviet dominated Comecon trading bloc. Czechoslovakia has asked for membership of the OECD group of industrialized countries and Havel himself has supported the reunification of Germany as a part of a more general process of European unification.

Nonetheless the government is only in power provisionally until the holding of elections in June. During and after the election campaign hard choices will have to be made to give form to popular aspirations for national sovereignty and prosperity. In the Western media all the talk is of an inevitable return to capitalism and the "free market", a view that seems to predominate also in the new government. In the interview below, noted human rights activist and revolutionary Marxist Petr Uhl, who has spent nine years in jail for his beliefs and activities, takes issue with this view and also gives some insights into the real debates taking place and to come in Czechoslovakia. The interview was conducted in Prague on December 24, 1989 by Hubert Sandor and Catherine Verla. It has been shortened somewhat for space reasons.

MY FIRST question is the following: why have you persisted in saying that you are fighting against the Stalinist system not in spite, but because of your communist convictions? How far have you been able to convince people of this?

At a meeting of ex-political prisoners, mostly from the 1950s, most of them very anti-communist, I stated that I was a Trotskyist, a revolutionary Marxist. I explained that it was my Marxist convictions that were the driving force behind my commitment; in my eyes there can be no socialism without human rights. And it seems that the system did not see my Marxism as a mitigating circumstance, as is shown by the time I have spent in prison during the past 20 years. Of course, you might say that my Marxism is an eccentricity or a sign of false thinking. But it is not so easy to view my activities — texts, the organization of youth in the 1960s, my involvement in Charter 77, in the Committee to Defend The Unjustly Persecuted (VONS), the defense of political prisoners and for the extension of free thinking — in the same way. There

is respect for whatever motivates that kind of activity, be it religious belief or Marxist convictions.

There are big differences amongst us: there were those, like me, who saw the Charter as a step towards political revolution; others saw it as a way of spreading the word of Christ....I respected them as they respected me. It was a real laboratory for the tolerance of different viewpoints amongst people engaged in a practical struggle. This was less the case in the emigration.

■ But do you not think that your persistent Marxism can lead to the charge that you are congenitally incapable of a radical break with the system, while the anti-communists have made a complete break?

But it isn't true. They do not make the complete break you are talking about. On the contrary: many of them are supporters of an authoritarian system. They want to calm down the revolutionary upsurge in order to put through economic reforms, and then there is the scramble for the posts of Minister or Deputy Minister, involving all kinds of anti-democratic practis-

es....My criticisms of such practises are couched in a polite form at the moment, since the old regime has not been finally defeated. But I think this shows that my Marxism is more radical than their anti-communism.

This raises something very important from the point of view of my beliefs. I am interested in the emancipation of the individual, who changes from object to subject not only on the economic but also on the political level. What I want to discuss is not the words "socialism" or "Marxism" but the emancipation of human beings as the condition for social emancipation.

■ Yes, decades of Stalinism have confused the meaning of these words. Unfortunately we have to use words to think. In the Soviet Union, for example, there are lots of people who want to defend the interests of the workers and fight against growing corruption. Many of them are supporters of socialism. Unfortunately their spokespeople are too often connected — directly or otherwise — with the apparatus. There are also a lot of people who are fighting for democratic rights, national sovereignty, the right to initiative and responsibility and a radical break with the old system. Unfortunately, their spokespeople generally insist that there is no way forward except through the development of the market.

These two groups hardly overlap at all; only a very few people consciously reject at one and the same time the capitalist and conservative solutions. On the other hand, there seem to be more supporters of the "third way" in East Germany. What is the situation in Czechoslovakia?

My own opinion is that the market must be allowed to develop in Czechoslovakia. This might seem a step backward from the communist ideal of a classless society, but it seems to me inevitable now. I am of course a supporter of a plan that is democratically worked out to decide the big questions, but we must avoid any illusion that it can regulate production down to the finer details. Only a market can allow real freedom of choice to the consumer for such things as footwear, ties and so on.

You will say that there is a problem of how far the market can impose its laws, how many employees an enterprise should be allowed in the private sector and so on. It is difficult to codify all this, but I think that, precisely because I consider a certain development of the market inevitable, it is necessary to give great weight to the problem of democratic control and the practical forms of workers self-management. This is even more true for investments by foreign capital: Poland must have received massive foreign support to get such a big debt, but it seems

that, in the absence of workers (and consumers) control, little benefit came of it.

Unfortunately, not even a slightly worked out conception of economic and political self-management is current in Czechoslovakia. The other conception, that of full-scale privatization, has several times been discussed behind closed doors, but never openly presented. That will start with the legislative elections and will continue afterwards. All the political parties that are now being formed will have to take a position on this. As for the workers in the enterprises, I am convinced that they will be opposed to privatization and the domination of Czechoslovakia by the Western economy, if this means attacks on their living standards, working conditions and produces social differentiation. At that point, I think, the struggle for socialism will finally begin.

The question of ownership, and power to dispose of, the means of production, is very important for me. The day after my last release from prison there was a meeting of the Coordinating Centre of the Civic Forum in Prague — this was before the Council was formed — where its programme was adopted. I voted against with three others. There were five abstentions and 60 votes in favour. The basic reason for my vote was one phrase — although no doubt there were other things that could be discussed — that stated that all forms of property should be equal. I asked if the form of property where the Politburo — or the party and state leadership — decides everything and deprives the working people of all power was equal to a cooperative where, for example, 20 people decided on what to produce, on their conditions of work and so on. If these two things are really the same, then stealing and crime are equal to honest work. I cannot agree with that. Of course, in the way I put it, nobody in Czechoslovakia would accept that all forms are equal. Of course the formulation is there in order to legitimize private property.

■ You pretended not to understand....

Of course! Then, curiously, the phrase got into the outlines for a future Constitution, under an even odder form. There is no mention of the political system — it could be a monarchy; nor of the Federal Assembly, elections or the Presidency, but the phrase on the equality of forms of property is there. That did not get forgotten. Even so, I think that the great majority are clearly opposed to the privatization of the big enterprises. There are doubts about medium sized concerns and almost everybody, even me, is in favour of freedom of enterprise for artisans, family concerns and so on. This is almost a technical necessity. As I say, the real problem is not that of the number of workers or employees in this sector, but under what forms of control the economic opening to Western capital is going to take place. That is the

real danger, because there is nobody in Czechoslovakia who could buy the enterprises.

■ Despite your disagreements, you are a member of the Council of Democratic Forum....

No, of the Coordinating Council of Civic Forum. Furthermore, I am not the only dissident. There is a small left inside the collective of a hundred.

■ What currents are emerging and how will Civic Forum approach the coming elections?

The "Left Alternative" (see IV 175) was created on November 17. Our theses were edited after that, but drafted before. The "Left Alternative", like the "Czech Children" — who are monarchists — or the "Association of Anarchists" are a part of the flowering of dozens of — often rather marginal — new groups. Several groups are bigger, and have hundreds or even thousands of members. In the latter category are the Social Democracy, of which there are three groups in the Czech Lands and another one in Slovakia; the Green Party or rather parties; the Christian Democratic Party; and finally the Liberal Democratic Party, known as the "Democratic Initiative". These last are the most dangerous. They are absolutely determined to be a part of CF and wanted to have a Council member. Now they have got one, and someone made the following remark to me: everybody wears pullovers and uses familiar forms of address, but the DI people wear ties and speak formally. They are perceived to be a bit odd, but everyone respects them.

The big struggles will begin during the election campaign. But I see another danger for CF, that of repeating the kind of electoral process seen in Poland. In the circumstances it was a necessity in Poland, but nothing obliges us to do the same thing here, that is: to present a single CF candidate in each constituency. In such a situation no other candidate has a chance. It would be possible for the CF as such to present no candidates and support all those who support a democratic system in general. Or there could be three or four CF candidates representing the different parties or opinions. Of course, in this case, parties not recognized by CF would have little chance.

■ You mean parties tied to the old system or extreme right-wing parties?

We should be careful before eliminating everything tied in whatever way to the old system. Take for example the Socialist Party and People's Party. They were an integral part of the old system: but there can be no question of throwing them out, because they were with us from the beginning — the Socialist Party helped us before November. Furthermore, these parties have carried out purges of their own at



different moments. Even in the Communist Party a Democratic Forum has arisen, although I do not know what support it has. Although they remain in the CP, their slogans and ideas are correct enough and really democratic and I think that they will be able to make an impact at the elections, especially if they take their distance from the CP. But then what will remain of the old CP?

It is important to understand the relations between CF and members of the CPCz. In the Coordinating Centre in Prague there are no longer any party members. There were some at the start, but they have become ministers — Komarek for example. On the other hand, outside the capital there are often party members in the leadership of CF, which proposed members of the CP for the government.

CF must be the guarantor of democratic elections in the future, and take part in all the preparatory and ballot-watching commissions. It must allow popular control from below, but should not present itself as what it is not: a political party. That would be a big mistake. The mistake is connected to the desire of many to enter into the system as it is: you can see the demand "the interior minister should not be a CP member" turning into "we want this ministry to be headed by Mr. X." And if Mr. X wasn't one of us at the beginning, he becomes Mr. Y, who was.... We are putting forward our own candidates to the Assembly deputies, to be coopted for a short period of perhaps six months. It is really anti-democratic, because nobody has elected them and no-one can recall them, when the old deputies are, in fact, recallable by their electors!

■ What is the reality of Civic Forum? Who can join it? What are its links with what is happening in the enterprises?

There is no worked out structure. The CF Coordinating Centre in Prague is more

or less the 31 members of the Council, plus what could be called the apparatus, that is the unpaid helpers, perhaps 100 to 200 people. This centre rests on the Civic Forums in the city's ten districts and on the Prague Coordinating Centre, which is separate from us. Outside Prague the situation is every uneven. There are for example localities and enterprises where a third of the people have given their names as CF members. Elsewhere the CF consists of nothing more than a few individuals, but they are supported by numerous people who come to meetings. There are also CFs in the army.

There are more than 10,000 strike committees in Czechoslovakia, sometimes alongside CFs in the enterprise, sometimes identical with them. There is an association of strike committees with a rather different function to that of the Forum. They have a trade unionist line; not to launch strikes, but to maintain a kind of state of alert. The strike committees have adopted the objective of cleaning out the trade unions. The Central Council of TUs collapsed and was replaced by an Action Committee that wanted to reform the unions. But the workers have not accepted this. They want to set up another union structure, using the buildings and infrastructure of the old. They want to regain what belongs to them, but change the statutes rather than merely the personnel, as the Action Committee wanted. This is a syndicalist line close to self-management.

A year or six months ago all the enterprises became State enterprises. They were no longer national corporations, but had statutes giving them more autonomy than before. The direct dependence on the ministry was replaced by a double dependence of the management on the ministry and the workers. Formally, a system of workers control was established, described as self-management. It

could be effective, if the workers really believed in it. But on the whole, they saw it as a gimmick by the authorities, and when they elected someone, they did it with a lot of suspicion. However, in some exceptional cases — 5 to 10% — the Councils were elected democratically, and these now coincide with the strike committees. And where this did not happen we often find that the strike committee wants to purge the "self-management" structure and replace the entire system.

Having said this, attention now is focussed on the strictly political plane — the presidential and legislative elections and so on — and this kind of thing is not generally noticed.

■ Are the strike committees represented in the Civic Forum?

Yes. Firstly, in the CF's Coordinating Council in Prague there is a so-called "liaison committee with the workers", whose official is also on the Council. Furthermore there is a workers' representative in the Council itself. The students are also represented in the Council, as are cultural workers.

But there is no division, for the moment, between a civil and political current and a current more directly tied to the workers. We all work together.

■ This is a key question. In Poland there is a division, if not yet an outright split between the "political" current, which is now in government if not in power, and a wing of Solidarnosc tied more directly to the enterprises.

But for the moment the workers in the factories are preoccupied with such things as Havel's election more than strictly social and economic questions. Also, although the economic situation here is hardly brilliant, it is far from dominating people's concerns as in Poland.

■ To return to strictly political questions. You said that the Socialist Party gave you direct help even before November. Can you tell us more about this party?

The Socialist Party is not all that socialist. It is a socialist/nationalist party. It derives from the old National Socialist Party of Benes, which always claimed the heritage of Masaryk¹. Masaryk himself supported the social democracy. The old NSP was something between a liberal party and a social democratic party. It has always been a party of the intelligentsia of skilled workers and the liberal professions with socialistic tendencies. One might say, supporters of a "Swedish model". The SP had about 18,000 members and 16 deputies before November 17. Today they have doubled, maybe tripled in size.

The Social Democratic Party may be

more interesting. It has restored itself now, or is in the process of doing so. It refers to much more left-wing positions than the Socialist Party. The opposite of the West!

■ You have spoken of the relatively open attitude of Civic Forum towards the Democratic Forum in the CP. What do you make of this? A tendency towards compromise or a distinction between bureaucrats and Stalinists on the one hand and CP members considered to be honest on the other?

I am not certain. The spirit of compromise is strongest in Prague; elsewhere there is another problem. There are very few people qualified to take positions of responsibility. Party members thus step forward. There is friction and the more anti-Communist people say that those who were in the CP do not have the right to be in the leading group of CF....Such opinions are not found in Prague.

■ How do you see your activity now? You are both a CF militant and a supporter of the "Left Alternative". Does this not present problems?

There is no contradiction for me. Other currents are also represented in the Forum. And, when they are — unlike us — big, they do not want to be there as individuals but as a current. This could present a problem because we do not want the CF to become another National Front.² In fact, I do not have much time to devote to the "Alternative". It is rather my comrades that do this. I hope that in a few weeks when things are less chaotic in the CF — and also in our press agency on East Europe, the VIA, I could then get more involved. That would allow us to participate in the election campaign. The idea would be to put our ideas forward to the greatest possible number of people in order to have a bit of influence on the political, and above all economic development. It is important that there is a force that can point out the dangers inherent in pro-capitalist ideas — although this characterization appears over-simplified to me.

Of course the pro-capitalist current cannot go too far at the moment. They have to respect a certain idea of social justice, of workers' rights and so on. Our role will be to keep an eye on the maintenance of this respect, in the sense of defending everything that tends in the direction of the self-management of the producers. ★

1. T. G. Masaryk was the first president (1918-1935) of the independent Czechoslovak state, in whose creation he played a fundamental role. After his death he was succeeded by his long-term collaborator Dr. E. Benes.

2. The National Front, through which the Communist Party has formally ruled since 1948, has included a number of satellite parties and organizations.

Zimbabwe — "role model" or "complete turmoil"?

1990 WILL be a crucial year for Zimbabwe. The year marking a decade of Independence will bring to an end the provisions of the Lancaster House Constitution foisted on the two major parties (Zanu, led by Robert Mugabe and Zapu, led by Joshua Nkomo) by Britain at the end of the war of liberation.

1990 will also usher in a new era as Zanu and Zapu will go into the forthcoming general elections (scheduled to take place in March/April) as the new united Zanu party, after a two year integration process that is almost complete.

In addition, the region as a whole is set for a momentous period as Namibia struggles to settle down to Independence, as Angola and Mozambique battle to implement fragile peace plans with the help of their neighbours in the frontline states, and as South Africa faces mounting tensions over the future of apartheid.

Yet notwithstanding the importance of Zanu/Zapu unity, 1989 revealed some of the social tensions engendered by a strategy which proclaims socialism, uses the tools of bourgeois economics and carries the mantle of national liberation.

SOPHIE HAWES

FIRSTLY, the simmering issue of corruption in the leadership of Zanu was brought to the boil in a dramatic series of exposures, dubbed "Willowgate". Secondly, strikes, demonstrations and poor showings at by-elections all indicate that ordinary workers, students and peasant farmers are not prepared to go on paying the price of low living standards just so that the "World Bank is impressed with Zimbabwe's achievements". Thirdly, continuing detentions and harassment of those who openly criticize have again brought into question the extent to which Zimbabweans enjoy real freedom of expression and assembly.

Climate of fear begins to evaporate

The rural and student demonstrations of 1988 (see IV 154) brought in their wake the sudden evaporation of the "climate of fear" that had been the norm previously. Despite the repression, the outspokenness of the students and the brazen defiance of the people of Gutu provided a catalyst for people's anger. Suddenly everyone was complaining about the wrong-doings of

those in power as well as rising prices, the enormous expense of building the new sports stadium, conference centre and party headquarters, the appalling state of housing and public transport and the lack of progress on land reform.

Pandora's Box of criticism is opened

Previously, criticisms were made more obliquely, such as by non-attendance at rallies, or half-hearted responses to the usual answering of slogans at party gatherings. Now the Pandora's box was open, and the complaints voiced in the buses and in the shops, at football games and in the beerhalls had become a deafening roar.

To a large extent, the issue revolved around the "Leadership Code" which had been brought to the fore by the rank and file at the second Zanu Congress in 1984. The Code suggested that party leaders should not own businesses, more than 50 acres of land nor more than one house. They should not receive more than one salary, nor serve as directors in profit-making enterprises.

In a party which is strong on socialist

What they say about Zimbabwe

The World Bank: "Zimbabwe is the key to this part of Africa....It (has a) higher level of development and of organization than most other countries of the area, and....seems poised for a potential economic take-off. It could be a role model to Africa generally."²

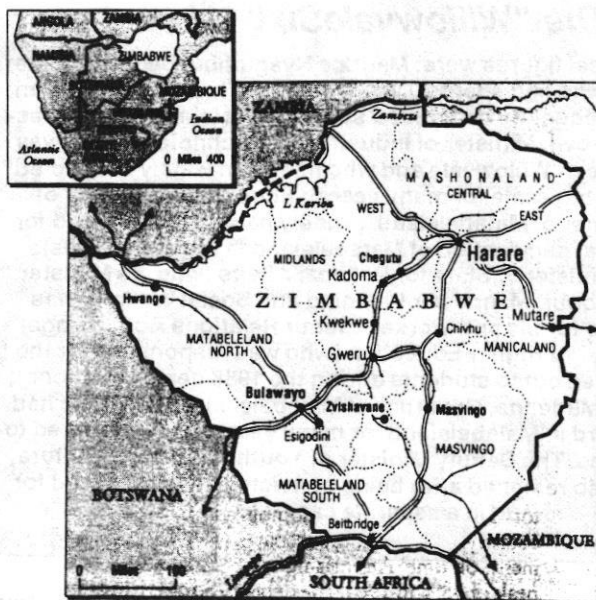
The Government: (on announcing the new market-oriented investment guidelines) "Zimbabwe's new economic thrust....(is based on)....a greater recognition of the role of market forces. Nothing is static, but the direction towards socialism is clear. There is no inherent contradiction between socialism and market forces."³

The Workers: "The government must be strongly advised that its attempts to suppress the growing disenchantment of the masses over the rising cost of living, transport problems, unemployment, destitution and many other negative socio-economic developments, will certainly plunge the whole society into complete turmoil sooner rather than later."⁴

The Students: (The fact)...."that one fought for this country, does not justify them to loot, plunder and wreck the economy of Zimbabwe....let alone stifle people's democratic rights."⁵

rhetoric, but painfully weak on any real policy promoting socialist transformation, the Leadership Code has symbolised for many the anti-capitalist and the socialist direction that the party should take. But leaders have time and time again made excuses. Maurice Nyagumbo — a future Willowgate luminary — declared that the party was finding it difficult to implement the code because "the leaders have become bourgeois". Another Willowgate notable, Enos Nkala, stressed that "the debate was full-blast in the party as not everyone was a pro-socialist". Mugabe himself declared that leaders had two options: "to quit their posts or to relinquish their property", but in effect, nothing was done.

In fact, it is rather well-known that many party leaders own various properties, large farms, ranches, hotels or have a range of business interests — often in the names of extended family members. But since the Leadership Code is not law, these dealings are not necessarily illegal. And while some well-known leaders have been suspected of corruption, there was



no proof, until Geoff Nyarota, editor of the Bulawayo-based (and government controlled) *The Chronicle* decided to investigate a chance lead.

Over a period of weeks, Nyarota and his small team looked into the business dealings of various party leaders in Bulawayo, reporting their investigations on a daily basis in *The Chronicle*. On more than one occasion they were physically assaulted, threatened and verbally abused, which fuelled public interest. Gradually, it became clear that some very prominent people were involved in a racket selling prestige motor vehicles — which they had obtained at government controlled prices from government suppliers, Willowvale Motor Industries — at grossly inflated prices to a range of business associates. Inevitably, the scandal was dubbed "Willowgate".

Corruption Issue can no longer be ignored

The effect of the exposure of Willowgate was electrifying. *The Chronicle* became the most sort after commodity in the country, with long queues forming at sales points on a daily basis. Clearly the issue of corruption at the top level of the party could no longer be ignored. Mugabe ordered an immediate Commission of Inquiry under Justice Wilson Sandura to publicly investigate the whole matter.

Those who could not account for the whereabouts of their vehicles supplied by Willowvale were brought before a public hearing and questioned under oath about their financial and personal affairs. For a brief spell, the Zimbabwean public enjoyed the rare treat of seeing once revered (and feared) figures squirming and sweating in public as they tried to lie or bluff their way out of trouble. The Commission report suggested that, on the

evidence presented, 15 witnesses gave highly dubious accounts of their dealings and recommended prosecution on charges of perjury, and that the due process of law should take its course in terms of subsequent criminal prosecution. Six of the fifteen were senior members of the government. (See Box)

The six also held various senior posts in Zanu, either at the highest level of the Politburo or on the Central Committee (except Mudenda who was a provincial leader), with Nyabumbo being the party's national secretary for administration and Nkala the party's secretary for finance.

Shava was subsequently fined a total of Z\$150,000 (about US\$75,000) for selling cars above the controlled price. He was also convicted for perjury committed during the Sandura Commission hearings and sentenced to nine months imprisonment, but before he could begin his sentence, he received a presidential pardon. Subsequently, none of his other Willowgate colleagues have been brought to court for perjury, though it is likely that they will all be fined for breaking price control regulations.

But if Willowgate represented the most serious crisis faced by Zanu since Independence, Mugabe managed to come out of the whole situation relatively unscathed. His reputation in ruling class circles as an "outstanding pragmatist" was even enhanced by the events. He had shown that he was prepared to allow public criticism of some of his closest colleagues, and even actively encouraged their resignations in recognition that this was the necessary price for quietening down the growing questioning of party policy.

1. *Prize* magazine: E. Nkala, an exclusive interview by Saul Ndlovu, December 1985.

2. Excerpt from press conference given by Mr. B. Conable, President of the World Bank during a recent visit to Zimbabwe, *The Herald* 23/11/89.

3. Dr. Bernard Chidzero, Senior Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, *The Herald*, 9/5/89.

4. From a press statement of 3/10/89 of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions on the closure of the University of Zimbabwe.

5. From a leaflet: "In defence of academic freedom" issued by the Students Representative Council of the University of Zimbabwe, 2/10/89.

The "Willowvale Six"

THE six main political figures were: Maurice Nyagumbo, Senior Minister of Political Affairs (who had spent 20 years of his life in prison under Ian Smith and who subsequently committed suicide by drinking a lethal pesticide); Callistus Ndhlovu, Minister of Industry and Technology (who was technically in charge of Willowvale and who had been widely suspected of corruption on a big scale for many years); Enos Nkala, Minister of Defence, (the "Butcher of Matabeleland", widely hated and despised for his role in the brutal pacification of Matabeleland in the early 1980s); Frederick Shava, Minister of State for Political Affairs (who, as Minister responsible for Labour, Manpower Planning and Social Welfare, was seen as responsible for the anti-worker Labour Relations Act); Dzinal Mutumbuka, Minister of Higher Education (who was responsible for the harsh treatment meted out to students during the 1988 demonstrations); and Senator Jacob Mudenda, Governor of Matabeleland North, who had acted like a feudal lord in Matabeleland for many years. All were forced to resign their positions. The Deputy Minister of Youth, Sport, and Culture, Charles Ndhlovu also resigned after being convicted and sentenced for fraud in a separate case.

Politically, the Commission of Inquiry successfully diverted public attention away from the much more basic issue of the massive accumulation of property and wealth by many of the party elite. The underlying issue of the incorporation of the party into a bureaucratic layer which wholeheartedly defends the interests of capital — as more and more of its members become capitalists themselves — was quietly pushed into the background.

MP calls for glasnost in Zimbabwe

The fall-out from Willowgate was also instructive. Geoff Nyarota, editor of *The Chronicle*, was "booted upstairs" into the post of public relations officer in Harare. His deputy, Davison Maruziva, was brought to heel by being made deputy editor of *The Herald* in Harare. Byron Hove MP, who, although a government supporter, has often been an outspoken backbencher quoted Mikhail Gorbachev in the parliamentary debate on Nyarota's "promotion": "Criticism is a bitter medicine, but the ills that plague society make it a necessity. Those who think that criticism need only be dosed out at intervals are wrong. People who are inclined to believe that stagnation has been fully overcome and it is time to take it easy are just as wrong. A slackening of criticism will inevitably harm *glasnost* and *perestroika*."⁶

But if Willowgate provided the sweet taste of *glasnost*, then the bitter medicine of *perestroika* was not far behind. In May, Mugabe launched the government's own structural adjustment policy to accompany the new investment guidelines.

The Senior Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Dr. Bernard Chidzero — who also chairs the World Bank Development Committee — said the government had, after reviewing Zimbabwe's stop-start growth since Independence, and the growing problem of unemployment, "gone quite a long way in

recognizing at the highest possible level that Zimbabwe needs more market-oriented policies, less government intervention, and deregulation."

At the same time, he was quick to scotch any ideas that this was a negation of Zanu's socialist principles, stressing that Government remained "dedicated to the transformation of the social system so that the poorest can be included." In true neo-Keynesian style he espoused the principles of "rapid growth, full employment, price stability, efficiency in resource allocation and the equitable distribution of benefits."⁷

Attempts to attract foreign investment

Basically the investment guidelines were designed to offer attractive incentives to potential investors, (particularly foreign) in the form of tax concessions, export incentives, the lifting of price controls, an incomes policy, as well as the easing of exchange control regulations. The existing policy that "new" investors (who invested after September 1979....that is, as the war was drawing to a close) could continue to remit 50% of the net after-tax profits arising from their investment, while "old" investors (pre-1979) could continue to remit 25% of after-tax profits was reiterated. Very favoured investments might be allowed to remit 100% of after-tax profits for a short period of time.

The guidelines stressed that priority would be given to the establishment of new intermediate and capital goods industries, consumer goods industries, as well as those which concentrated on viable export-oriented production. In particular, in an attempt to promote growth in the rural areas, the guidelines stressed that proposed investments in areas outside the major urban centres would be looked on very favourably. Mining and manufacturing was stressed, but — in deference to the sensitive "land issue" —

the role of large-scale commercial agriculture was down-played, in an attempt to encourage investments in the communal and resettlement areas, which account for approximately 70% of the total population. There would be a new wage policy, the gradual lifting of price controls, and a trade liberalization programme. The whole package was followed up by Zimbabwe's signing of the Multilateral Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

The reaction of the owners of capital was cautiously optimistic. The CZI (Confederation of Zimbabwean Industries) especially welcomed the lifting of price controls, while at the same time suggesting that more needed to be done to make finance available to help small enterprises, especially in the form of deregulating interest rates.

Steep price rises hit workers and poor farmers

But it was when the first of a series of price increases was announced that the implications of the new economic policy became clear to workers and consumers. In June, the price of Roller Meal — maize meal flour, the staple food — increased by a massive 32%, bread by 21% and cooking oil and margarine by 10%. These were followed later by price increases in milk, meat and rice. Mugabe tried to present the price increases as tools "to enable workers to know what demands to make when bargaining with employers." But even if anybody believed him, the public outcry was still widespread.

This was followed by the effective ending of the price freeze — in force since 1987 — and the introduction of new price control regulations, freeing prices on all but the most essential or strategic goods. Almost immediately, prices began to increase, quickly hitting the pockets of workers as well as the mass of rural dwellers.

The wage policy was unveiled in July. This proposed "free collective bargaining" in those industries governed by Industrial Councils, at the same time recommending that pay increases should be between 5 and 16 percent. This excludes labourers on large scale farms and plantations, domestic workers and those companies facing financial difficulties, for which the Minister would make special provisions.

Even before the price increases began to bite, it was estimated⁸ that the Zimbabwe dollar has declined by 65% since 1980 and that in order to keep pace with inflation, pay increases needed to be around 15% per year. As it is, the effect of continuous minimum wage regulations — which came into force soon after Independence — has been that wages have been

6. Zimbabwe Parliamentary Debates, 15/2/89.

7. *The Herald*, 9/5/89.

steadily eroded with most observers concluding that wage levels now are at about 1975 levels.

Wave of strikes show discontent

In fact, ongoing strikes testify to the difficulties people have in making ends meet. In June, junior hospital doctors — that is, those in the low-paid public sector — went on strike over pay and conditions. In August, it was the turn of railway artisans, enginemen and shunters who undertook a series of strikes for 15-20% increases. While later in the same month telecommunications workers struck for more pay. The government responded by mass dismissals and the drawing up of new emergency powers regulations for industrial disputes. The new rules stipulated that anyone in an essential service who strikes or encourages others to do so can be fined Z\$2,000 (about Z\$1,000 — just under a year's average industrial wage), two years in jail or both.

Essential services include hospital, transport, electricity and water, sewerage and sanitation, coal mining, communications and any service relating to the production, supply, delivery or distribution of food, fuel and coal. Given the structure of the Zimbabwean economy, which is based on agriculture (15% of GDP); a manufac-

turing sector (30% of GDP) which is heavily linked to the processing of agricultural goods (especially food processing); transport services to these two, not to mention coal-mining, oil transportation and electricity generation, the number of workers affected is vast. Clearly, "free collective bargaining" backed up by industrial action has its limits!

Violent protest against rent increases

In addition to industrial actions, there have also been many important social struggles. One of the most spectacular occurred in Kariba, Zimbabwe's premier holiday resort, when working class residents took to the streets armed with sticks and stones over council rent increases of over 100%. They marched to the council offices where they locked in the officials for several hours, and systematically broke all the windows until they were dispersed by police with batons and tear-gas.⁹

But perhaps the clearest indication of Zanu's continuing orientation towards bourgeois solutions to its social and economic problems is in the way it acts regularly and consistently against even the mildest criticism or expressions of democracy in practice. Its two main weapons in this are the muzzling of the Government-owned media and the con-

tinuing use of the Emergency Powers regulations which date from the early days of UDI [the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the white racist Smith regime in 1965]. While government justifies the maintenance of the state of emergency in terms of the very real threats and attacks by South Africa and Renamo bandits, the regulations, which permit detention without trial, have been used regularly against mere critics who have simply dared to open their mouths in public.¹⁰

Independent political party draws support

In a previous article, it was mentioned that ex-guerilla commander and outspoken critic of Zanu, Edgar Tekere MP had been expelled from the party (see IV 154). He has now set up the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) based in his home area, the eastern province of Manicaland. Politically, ZUM is not substantial, having no public programme or even any well-known leaders besides Tekere himself. However, Tekere's great political skill is in articulating the feelings and criticisms made by the *povo*¹¹. For this, Zanu has consistently prevented ZUM from holding rallies and meetings or printing leaflets, and has detained and harassed ZUM organizers.

Despite this, ZUM polled a reasonable 28% of the votes in the Dzivaresekwa (a township in Harare) by-election in July, although this percentage was considerably reduced in the later rural by-elections brought about by the resignations following Willowgate. But despite winning all the seats, Zanu and Zapu were also rudely shocked by the generally low turnouts (around 30%) at the polls.

Democracy was also not very much in evidence at the Youth and Women's Congresses called to unite the respective units of the old Zapu and Zanu parties. The role of both the Women's and Youth Leagues is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that only Mugabe's speeches at these events are reported. While provincial meetings had drawn up their own lists of nominations for national posts in both cases, it was the "Presidency" — consisting of Mugabe, Simon Muzenda, the vice-President and Joshua Nkomo — which made the final selection of candidates on behalf of both the women and the youth. In the case of the Women's Congress, this led to a near riot, as the mass of women

Cars in developing countries

IN ORDER to understand why "Willowgate" became such a *cause célèbre* it is necessary to recall some pertinent economic facts of life in a developing country. Zimbabwe does not manufacture its own vehicles. Instead, KD (knock-down) kits are imported from a few major manufacturers and assembled locally by car assembly and supply plants like Willowvale. Government has imposed (or maintained) price control regulations on a wide range of goods, including both new and second hand vehicles. It is illegal to sell a car above the controlled price. This has led to a growing scarcity of cars unless one imports one from Botswana or South Africa. Obviously this is a non-option for the vast majority since it requires a reasonable quantity of (restricted) foreign exchange, as well as local currency to pay a 65% export duty.

Mugabe provided privileged access to the few new cars assembled by Willowvale to Ministers and other senior government officials. In effect, they would pay controlled prices for brand new, high class motorcars on condition that they

were for personal use (one per person) and would not be sold.

Inevitably, a thriving black market has developed. New cars in particular can fetch prices three or four times their controlled price. For example, the controlled price of a new Toyota Cressida is Z\$29,000 [US\$14,500], yet they were sold for Z\$90,000 or in one case Z\$105,000 [US\$52,500] as revealed during the Sandura hearings. The main market, especially for the new "prestige" cars is private businesses who need them for their executives as a "tax-avoiding" salary perk.

In the light of the above, as well as the fact that average monthly industrial wages are roughly Z\$200 [US\$100], it is easy to see why ordinary workers and peasants were incensed by the profiteering of their party bosses. Clearly, the image of Zanu as a monolithic and heroic fighter for justice against oppression, and as a body comprising the most principled and upstanding sons and daughters of Africa was crumbling. ★

8. Figures compiled by RAL Merchant Bank, reported in *Financial Gazette*, 5/5/89.

9. Reported in the popular magazine, *Parade*, January 1989.

10. An important report listing human rights violations and the abuse of the Emergency Powers regulations since Independence from a group sympathetic to the government, is "Zimbabwe, a Break with the Past?" by Richard Carver, *An African Watch Report*, October 1989.

11. *Povo* means the people or the masses. It derives from Portuguese, from the days when the Zanu forces were based on Mozambique.

simply refused to except the "Presidency's" choice of two candidates, Abigail Vera and Ivy Gwaradzimba.

There was also widespread unhappiness at the selection of Sally Mugabe as the Secretary for Women's Affairs, but this was coupled with a sense of resignation that one can hardly tell the President that his wife is widely unpopular and suspected of corruption on a grand scale.

ZANU women reject official candidates

The case of Abigail Vera, though, was different. The women said that the only reason she had been selected was that she is a close friend of Sally Mugabe, but had no popular base and was an unknown in the Women's League. Similar criticisms were made about Ivy Gwaradzimba. The women spectacularly rejected these two by shouting, jeering, singing and dancing for several hours before the "Presidency" was called in to restore order. This they did, but not before the two women had been replaced by two others selected from the floor of the Congress.

But it was the second round of student demonstrations almost one year after the first, which served to underline the government's intolerance of freedom of expression, especially of views different to their own. The students again pointed to major social and economic issues which are not being addressed by government (Box 1). The response was a 200 strong battalion of riot police which descended on the University campus armed with automatic weapons, tear-gas, rubber batons and live ammunition. A bloody four-hour riot ensued during which students taunted police shouting "Soweto, Soweto" and "ZUM, ZUM, ZUM".

Hundreds of students were rounded up and the president of the Students Representative Council, Arthur Mutambara was detained together with his whole executive, and the University was closed after hurried consultations between the widely disliked vice-Chancellor, Professor Walter Kamba, and the Chancellor of the University, President Mugabe.

This chain of events — which included the detention of 40 students and 11 members of ZUM — was widely condemned. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), however, had the temerity to put its criticisms into a leaflet which is worth quoting at length: "....the Police are big culprits in this whole saga....The enthusiasm and zeal with which (they) have dealt with the students...is hardly demonstrated in other worthy situations, for instance, in 1985 when some politically motivated thugs stoned innocent people's homes, destroying property and even evicting them during the election campaign."¹²

It went on: "the recent University incident....is a clear manifestation of rising state repression which has already been felt by various sections of society. Women....have been harassed and accused of being prostitutes: the informal sector such as emergency taxis and vendors have been harassed often....lecturers, workers and trade unionists have recently been arrested and detained without trial....

Unions denounce government hypocrisy

"We view the emergency powers legislation, which....was passed by the notorious racist Smith regime to protect himself against the masses of Zimbabwe, as a most inappropriate instrument in a democratic society. We wish to remind the government that it is on record heavily

undermining the organizational and political support of its mass base among the workers and peasants, not to mention students.

At the same time it must be recognized that the ruling party has to tread a tortuous path through the minefield of Southern African politics, where Zimbabwe is at the front of the Frontline.

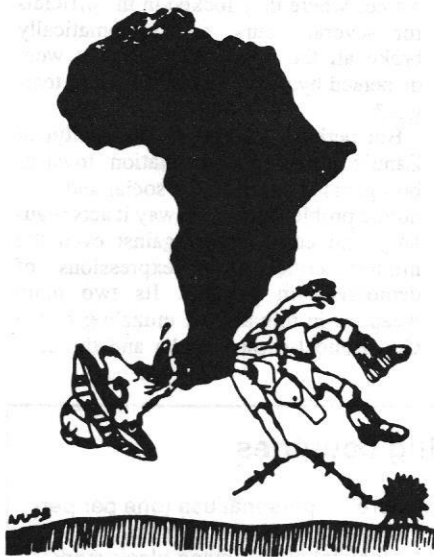
The Zimbabwean army is heavily, and expensively, deployed in Mozambique to protect Zimbabwean trade — including oil supplies — to its nearest port, Beira, as well as assist the Mozambicans to resist the incredibly brutal and destructive Renamo bandits, backed by South Africa. Bandit incursions on Zimbabwe's eastern borders are continuing and are now affecting the tourist trade.

And while the Mugabe government continues to promote sanctions against South Africa, the regional economic facts of life are that Zimbabwe is still economically dependent on South Africa which remains the country's main trading partner — although Britain, West Germany and the USA are catching up.

Zimbabwe in frontline against South Africa

Recent trials of South African paid spies in Zimbabwe testify to the existence of networks of disaffected whites — and some blacks — who still have the potential to destabilize the country militarily and economically. The volatility of the Namibian situation — not to mention Angola and even Zambia which is experiencing a wave of strikes and "food riots" — does not make for quick and easy formulae to solve Zimbabwe's problems, or easy lessons to be learnt by those engaged in the ongoing struggle in South Africa.

Despite the unification of Zanu and Zapu, it remains to be seen whether socialist rhetoric plus the aura of national liberation will be enough to rally the mass of workers and peasants behind an economic programme which is clearly against their real material interests. In the absence of strong independent organizations which can defend working class and peasant interests, and resist the ongoing suppression of democratic rights, it seems that the scenario for the foreseeable future is one of deepening social divisions marked by skirmishes and struggles of varying intensity. It will be interesting to see, as the situation in South Africa unfolds, what the possibility for class alliances across international boundaries can be. ★



denouncing a similar piece of legislation currently harassing and tormenting the masses of South Africa....

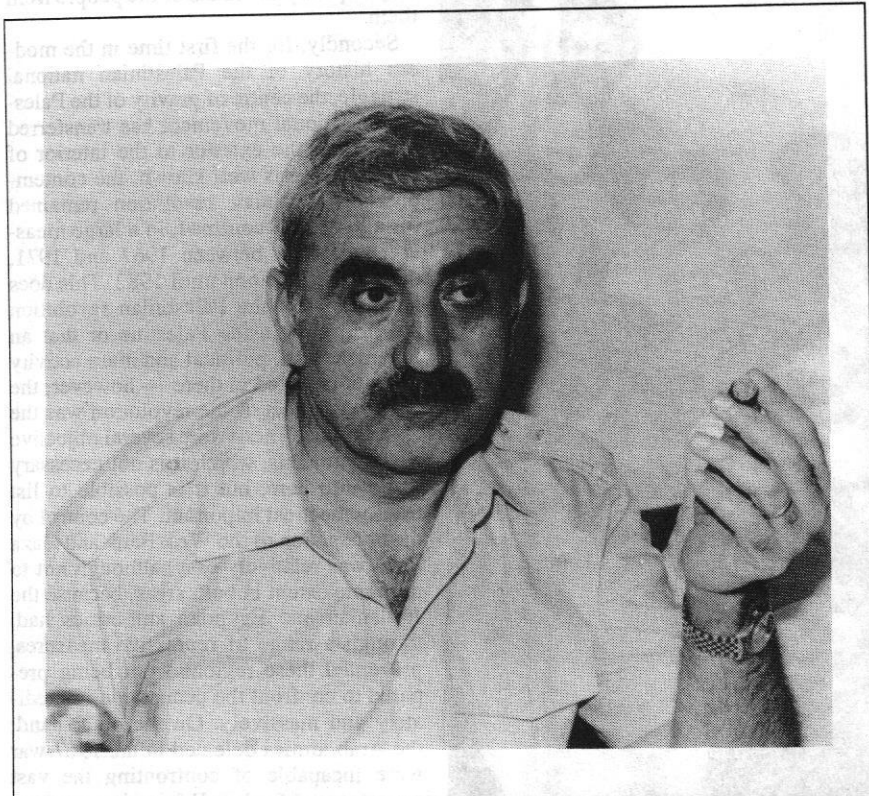
"The government must be strongly advised that its attempts to suppress the growing disenchantment of the masses over the rising cost of living, transport problems, unemployment, destitution and other negative socio-economic developments, will certainly plunge the whole society into complete turmoil sooner rather than later."

The leaflet was signed by the General Secretary of the ZCTU, Morgan Tsvangirai, who was subsequently detained under the State of Emergency regulations, accused of being a South African spy (a ridiculous charge) and then released, without charge or compensation, some six weeks later. Ironically, at the same time several leading COSATU (Confederation of South African Trade Unions) trade unionists were in Harare attending an international conference for public sector workers. They protested the illegal detention of the General Secretary of the ZCTU as did many other trade union bodies.

In the period leading up to the elections in 1990 the party seems to be intent on

12. This refers to many incidents during the 1985 elections where members of Zanu Women's League and Youth League organized themselves into gangs to intimidate Zapu supporters by stoning and setting fire to their houses, wrecking their furniture and evicting them.

A balance-sheet of the Intifada — interview with George Habash



Introduction by Salah Jaber

ON December 9, 1989, the *Intifada* — the uprising of the Palestinian population of the West Bank of the River Jordan and the Gaza Strip, occupied by Israel since the 1967 war — entered its third year. Since its first anniversary in December 1988, the *Intifada* seems to have reached cruising speed and to be ready for the long haul.

Last year we marked the anniversary with a long balance-sheet of the trajectory of the PLO and the dynamic of the Palestinian uprising (see *IV* 156, 157, 158). This year we have chosen to publish the views of Dr. George Habash, the most prestigious Palestinian leader after Yasser Arafat. Dr. Habash is the founder and general secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which is the main left-wing faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the second most significant Palestinian organization after Arafat's Fatah.

Born in 1926, Habash, whose family was, along with the great majority of Palestinians, forced into exile in 1948, studied medicine in Beirut. There he founded the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM). This pan-Arabist organization was chauvinist and socially conservative before aligning itself at the end of the 1950s with Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser, who became the champion of Arab nationalism and then of "Arab socialism" in the 1960s.

The crushing defeat of Egypt in the 1967 war led to the ANM's break with Nasserism. In October 1967, the Palestinian groups of the ANM founded the PFLP that described itself as Marxist-Leninist and supported revolutionary armed struggle. The PFLP was known, until 1972, for its spectacular hijacking of airlines, a practise it renounced, with self criticism.

From 1974 to 1981, taking the lead of the opposition to the rightist leadership of

the PLO, who had opted for a negotiated compromise with Israel under the aegis of the great powers, the PFLP was the organizing force in the Palestinian Front for the Rejection of Capitulationist Solutions (widely known as the Rejection Front), and withdrew from the leading bodies of the PLO. In 1984 Habash's formation, along with other factions of the PLO left, boycotted the 17th session of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the broadest representative body of the organization, because of the alliance between the PLO leadership and the Jordanian monarchy (the session itself took place in the Jordanian capital Amman). In April 1987 the PLO left participated in the 18th session of the PNC in Algiers after the Arafat leadership decided to renounce the "Jordanian option" for which the Jordanian state itself had shown little respect (see *IV* 121, 122).

In November 1988, during the 19th PNC session, the PFLP voted, with a minority of the Council members, against the acceptance of resolution 242, adopted by the United Nations' Security Council in November 1967 after the Arab-Israeli war in June of that year. The PLO had previously rejected this resolution in its entirety, in the first place because it connected withdrawal from the territories conquered in 1967 with peace with the Zionist state on the latter's terms and secondly because the resolution makes no mention of the Palestinian people and of their national rights.

The PFLP has been playing a major role in the *Intifada* inside the occupied territories. Its branch on the ground often comes up with much more radical positions than those expressed by the external leadership and Dr. Habash (see *IV* 158). Nonetheless Dr. Habash continues to enjoy a prestige that goes far beyond the ranks of his own organization for his commitment and personal probity. The interview published below was granted us at the end of last November and was carried out and translated from Arabic by the author of these lines. ★

The Intifada enters its third year

WHAT balance-sheet do you draw of the struggle of the masses after two years of the *intifada*? What have been the principal achievements? How do you see the perspectives of this struggle? What, in your opinion, are the objectives that could be achieved by the *intifada*, and by what means?

The heroic patriotic *intifada*, of which the first spark flared on December 9 1987, constitutes a qualitative new stage of the Palestinian national struggle, with its own characteristics, complimentary in relation to the preceding stages. This *intifada*, with its new particularities, has allowed the realization of numerous achievements at all levels — Palestinian, Israeli, Arab and international. It has also allowed the drawing of new theoretical and practical lessons, which will influence positively all the objectives of the Palestinian national struggle.

I would summarize as follows the principal specific characteristics of the stage which the *intifada* represents:

Firstly, the mass democratic character of the *intifada* — it has encompassed all the classes and categories of the Palestinian people without exception (except for a small handful of collaborators) on the one hand, and the people of both sexes and all ages on the other. The *intifada* has extended itself to each city, town, village, refugee camp, quarter and street, throughout the territory of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

It is important in this respect to emphasize some facts which have a particular importance in my eyes — it has been possible, in the context of the *intifada*, to unify all the classes and categories of the Palestinian people, including the national bourgeoisie which suffers from the effects of the political and economic measures of the occupation. It has been possible, all the same, to neutralise certain social categories that, before the *intifada*, would follow this or that Arab state, notably Jordan or Egypt.

On the other hand, the clearly political character of the *intifada* has allowed the overcoming of numerous social obstacles that, beforehand, made it difficult for Palestinian women to engage in the national struggle in a massive and clear fashion. I can even say that the phenomenon of the involvement of Palestinian women in the struggle is one of the most important and most generalized aspects of the *intifada*.

Finally, it is inevitable that in such a vast mass movement as the *intifada* there are exceptions, manifested by the appear-



ance in our ranks of cliques of collaborators. The Unified National Leadership (UNL) of the *Intifada* has addressed itself to this problem. It is important to be constantly aware of the presence of such a fifth column. It is also very important to know that it is the Zionist authorities themselves who support, organize and arm these collaborators. It is not true at all, as pretended by the capitalist press, that what has happened at this level, that is the operations of liquidation of collaborators, constitutes an internal Palestinian war. The UNL watches attentively to avoid all secondary battles within the ranks of the Palestinian people — all our differences are of a political nature and are resolved by political means. As to the collaborators, they are first warned and publicly denounced, but when they do not cease to collaborate with the occupation

and disrupt the unity of the Palestinian people and its national interest, it is necessary to purify the ranks of the people from them.

Secondly, for the first time in the modern history of the Palestinian national struggle, the centre of gravity of the Palestinian national movement has transferred itself from the exterior to the interior of Palestine. As is well known, the contemporary Palestinian revolution remained for a long time confined, in a large measure, to Jordan between 1967 and 1971, then to the Lebanon until 1982. This does not mean that the Palestinian revolution did not exist inside Palestine or that an organizational, political and mass activity was not engaged in there — however, the principal aspect of the revolution was the exterior one. There were several objective reasons for this, which it is not necessary to go into here, but it is possible to list briefly the most important. The control by the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was relatively easy, although not to the same extent in both areas, because the Jordanian and Egyptian authorities had, through a range of repressive measures, prevented these regions from being prepared to confront the occupation immediately and massively. On the other hand, the Arab armies defeated in the 1967 war were incapable of confronting the vast movement of the Palestinian masses opposed to the occupation, which had shot up in Jordan and in the other countries bordering Palestine, notably in Lebanon.

I said, when beginning this second point, that the Palestinian exterior had remained the principal aspect of the Palestinian national struggle until 1982. It is well known that following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon — principal centre of gravity of the Palestinian revolution until then — this latter received a very heavy blow. Its components had to reconsider a number of questions, one of the most important among them being the nature of the relationship between activity inside and outside Palestine. In the PFLP, for example, we came to the conclusion that it was necessary to accord a special and priority attention to the interior. This does not mean that we did not concern ourselves with the interior beforehand, but, as I have said, the circumstances in which we found ourselves in the exterior placed us more in a position to act there. However, after the departure of the Palestinian revolution from Beirut, it became natural that our attentions were focused more sharply on the interior. Since 1982, several objective and subjective factors have come together in the interior which have made

the *intifada* possible.

Among the most important of these conditions is the fact that the Zionist occupation has pursued its repressive economic, military and administrative policies, which seek to destroy the Palestinian national economy and to push the Palestinians into exiling themselves and leaving their country, policies which have culminated in the seizure of Palestinian land, the pillage of irrigation water and the employment of Palestinian workhands, estimated at 120,000 people, at very low salaries etc. Moreover, several Palestinian organizations, amongst them ours, have accumulated an organizational and militant experience that allowed them, when the *intifada* broke out, to place themselves at the forefront of the masses of the Palestinian people, to organize and lead them in this broad mass movement.

It is important, when speaking of the relationship between the interior and the exterior, to stress that the transfer of the centre of gravity of the Palestinian national movement from the exterior towards the interior absolutely does not signify that the exterior no longer exists or no longer has importance. The Palestinian revolution, by virtue of the forced dispersal of the Palestinian people, will always rest itself on the two fundamental points of support which are the interior and the exterior.

Thirdly, the *intifada* has put to the forefront, clearly, the Zionist-Palestinian character of the conflict, whereas in the preceding wars (1956, 1967, 1973), the conflict was Arab-Zionist. In mentioning this new development, we do not wish to say that the element of Arab-Zionist conflict no longer exists, but only that it has receded in importance. The Palestinian people have thus retaken things in hand, which means that its cause has appeared more clearly than beforehand. This has never happened in this way since 1948.

Fourthly, the combative character of the *intifada* — this character has essentially taken the form of a peaceful struggle with demonstrations, marches, strikes, boycott of work in the Israeli economic institutions, refusal to pay taxes, as well as pamphlets, wall inscriptions etc. This peaceful form of combat has not been in conflict with the presence of a non-peaceful form, with recourse to violence even if it limits itself to elementary levels — throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, use of knives and some restrained military operations.

Fifthly, the organized character of the *intifada*. We understand by this the existence of organized partisan structures leading the *intifada* and formed by the different core organizations of the PLO — the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah), the PFLP, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the Palestinian Communist Party. These organizations have come together in the interior of the occupied ter-

ritories in the context of the UNL. In addition to the Palestinian political organizations, there existed broad mass organizations in the different economic, political and social fields. The result is that, on the basis of these organized elements, Popular Committees have been constituted for the leadership of the mass activity in the various sectors. These organizational forms have established themselves solidly in the ranks of the people to the extent that it has become difficult to distinguish them. Our people have applied in a creative fashion the principle of the fish swimming in the water of the masses. On the other hand, following the consolidation of the organized character of the *intifada*, it is no longer possible for anybody to pretend that it is spontaneous, as the enemy forces sought to do at the beginning.

The establishment of a Palestinian state

SUCH are the principal characteristics of the *intifada*. As I said previously, it is on the basis of these characteristics that numerous achievements have been realized on all planes — Palestinian, Israeli, Arab and international. It is not possible here to describe these achievements at all their levels — I will content myself then to evoke the principal ones.

Firstly, on the Palestinian plane — the unity of the struggle of the Palestinian people has consolidated itself more strongly than ever. The rallying of the masses of the Palestinian people around the UNL, the PLO and the legitimate national objectives of the Palestinian people has grown.

Let us remember the period of disagreement which preceded because of the Amman Accord¹ as well as the attempts of the reactionary Arab regimes to bypass the PLO at the Arab summit in Amman in November 1987. Since the *intifada*, it is no longer possible for anyone to hope to provoke a split in the PLO or to exploit some tactical differences to lessen the unity of the Palestinian people. In the course of the 19th extraordinary session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) held in Algiers in November 1988, we, the PFLP, raised the slogan of "revolution until victory, unity until victory".

Secondly, on the Israeli plane, the *intifada* has had numerous economic, social, psychological, military and political effects. At the economic level, for example, the rate of growth of Israel's Gross National Product has started to fall, to the point where GNP is no longer growing, even in a minimal fashion. Israeli economic losses attributable to the *intifada* are estimated at five million dollars a day. At the military level, Israeli army chiefs now recognize that they are incapable of defeating the *intifada*. Cases of refusal to serve in the occupied territories have mul-

tiplied. At the political level, movements of protest and opposition have appeared. The effects of the *intifada* have reached small political parties represented in the Israeli Parliament. There have been political embarrassments inside the coalition government, and differences have emerged even inside the two big political parties, the Labour Party and the Likud.

To sum up, I can say that a current has appeared inside Israel demanding peace and the recognition of Palestinian national rights. In mentioning this reality, we do not ignore the fact that the general Israeli attitude remains intransigent on the question of peace, and even that opinion polls in Israel indicate generally a tendency towards the extreme right so far as the rights of the Palestinian people are concerned.

Thirdly, on the international plane, numerous achievements have been realized. In addition to the recognition by numerous governments of the Palestinian state proclaimed on November 15 1988, and numerous expressions of a broad mass support to the *intifada* and to the struggle of the Palestinian people which have been seen in very many countries and notably in Europe, the *intifada* has been able to make a strong impact inside the United Nations Organization.

The General Assembly of the UN has adopted several resolutions supporting, on the one hand, the rights of the Palestinian people, and condemning, on the other hand, the Zionist acts. At the same time, the Security Council has adopted some important resolutions among which I would cite in particular resolution 605.

This has designated the occupied territories, for the first time, as Palestinian territories, and underlined the necessity of Israeli withdrawal from all these territories, whereas Security Council resolution 242, adopted in the aftermath of the 1967 war, designated the occupied territories only as those which Israel occupied, without any other identification, and called for withdrawal "from occupied territories" and not from all of these. Let us add that the reality of the existence of the Palestinian people and the justice of its cause have become more obvious than they have ever been since the time of the Balfour Declaration².

Fourthly, the achievements in the Arab context have been the most slender,

1. The Amman Accord was concluded in February 1985 between King Hussein of Jordan and the head of the PLO, Yasser Arafat. It envisaged a common Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to peace negotiations with Israel and, following Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, the creation of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. King Hussein would himself denounce the accord a year later, judging that he could henceforth do without the PLO.

2. The Balfour Declaration made in the name of the British government in November 1917, gave the Zionist movement authorization to establish a "Jewish national homeland" in Palestine, a territory destined to become a British colonial mandate at the end of the First World War.

despite the recognition by the Arab states of the Palestinian state, despite the holding of the Arab summits at Algiers and Casablanca dedicated to the *intifada*, despite the severing of links between Jordan and the West Bank³ and despite the numerous resolutions adopted by the two summits to support the *intifada* politically, financially and in the field of information. Worse still, certain Arab regimes, like Egypt, which have recognized the Palestinian state, have proceeded to empty this commitment of all content by dealing with American and Zionist initiatives or proposing their own initiatives, which do not mention in any way the Palestinian state and are close to the Camp David Accords⁴ — which accord to the Palestinians only a right of autonomy, without independence and without a state.

So much for the Arab governments. At the level of the Arab masses, the balance sheet is no better. I regret to say that despite some mass mobilizations in support of the *intifada*, which we appreciate, the expressions of support and of popular Arab solidarity have been very restrained. The responsibility is incumbent upon the components of the movement for Arab national liberation which have found themselves, or put themselves, in a situation where they could not fulfil their national tasks of support to the *intifada* and to the struggle of the Palestinian people.

In any case, the totality of the achievements realized by the *intifada* has led us to the following conclusion — the establishment of the Palestinian state has passed from the realm of historic possibility to that of factual possibility. That is to say that the establishment of this state has become possible in the foreseeable future. It is on this basis that it has been possible, during the 19th session of the PNC, to proclaim the foundation of the Palestinian state on 15 November 1988.

It is nonetheless necessary to draw attention to the fact that we, in the PFLP, have distinguished between the proclamation of the Palestinian state and its actual establishment on the ground. We have affirmed, from the beginning, that the complete material realization of the slogan of liberty, independence and the Palestinian state, was a long term task requiring still more struggle and sacrifice. We have maintained this, for we know well the nature of the enemy which confronts us, an enemy Zionist, reactionary, colonialist, fascist, expansionist, which will not retreat or renounce its objectives easily.

Strengthening the Intifada

ON THIS basis, we, in the PFLP, had reservations on the question of the concessions made, and especially the unilateral concessions, not compensated for by any

concessions made by the enemy. We insisted more than once, in particular during the 19th session of the PNC, on the necessity of basing ourselves on the *intifada*, on the masses of our people and on all our gains at the Arab and international level, to bring about a change in the relationship of forces forcing the enemy to retreat, to make concessions and to accept the political settlement.

Therefore, our essential interest is still that of concentrating on the tasks of development and of upscaling of the *intifada* by every means. These tasks, in our opinion, can be summarized as follows.

Firstly, the radicalization of the *intifada* — we understand by this the consolidation of the implantation of the UNL in all parts of the Palestinian occupied territories, this by the building of branches of the UNL in all the regions and by the unification of the Palestinian mass organizations, so as to complete organization on both regional and trade union levels. This should be complemented by the extension of the Popular Committees in all their forms until they cover all the regions. In other words, it is about consolidating the unity of the people and its rallying around the UNL.

In this respect, it is necessary to work for the integration into the UNL of those Palestinian forces which still remain outside its framework. More precisely, we mean by this the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), with which common action has until now taken the form of coordination on the ground. Our aim is that Hamas should become a part of the UNL — this is possible if the necessity is considered of agreeing on the confrontation with the occupation, and leaving aside all ideological divergences. In any case, we attempt to regroup all the organized masses around the UNL.

Secondly, the upscaling of the *intifada* — we understand by this its upscaling on the economic and military planes. We think that the infliction of growing economic and human losses on the Zionist enemy will constitute an important factor in making it retreat.

In this area, our people will find themselves confronting the objective necessity of defending themselves against the daily Zionist repression which kills, wounds, imprisons, deports, destroys houses, etc. It will be thus legitimate for them to use arms. On the other hand, we would not carry arms, were it not for Israeli intransigence and the refusal of the Israeli government to submit to the will for peace.

Thirdly, the development of the support given to the *intifada* by the masses of the Palestinian people from the Palestinian territories occupied since 1948 and of the diaspora, under all forms, political, material and in the field of information. In this respect, we concentrate ourselves in particular on the development of the support of our people within the "Green Line"⁵, in such a way as to progressively raise the

level of their support until the stage of their integration into the *intifada*. For our part, we think that such an integration is impossible today because of objective and subjective conditions which differ from those of the regions occupied in 1967. To achieve that, a further stage will be necessary.

Fourthly, the political protection of the *intifada*. Our Palestinian people face not only the daily reality of Zionist oppression in all its forms — it also faces the American-Zionist-Arab reactionary projects which seek to put an end to the *intifada* without realizing its objective of freedom and independence. Since the period when George Shultz was at the US State Department until now, our people have defeated all enemy plans. Today, they face the plans of Shamir, Mubarak and Baker. We are confident that the unity of our people will defeat all these plans, like their predecessors.

Fifthly, the realization of a democratic reform of the framework of the PLO — we think that the *intifada* offers the opportunity to realize such a reform. It is inconceivable, after two years of the *intifada*, that the offices, embassies and institutions of the PLO remain as they are, incapable of structuring and dynamising more than three million Palestinians in the diaspora who do not carry out in full their task of support for the *intifada*.

Sixthly, on the Israeli plane, it is necessary that we strengthen links with the whole range of Jewish non-Zionist forces that support the rights of the Palestinian people, as well as with the protest movements which oppose the terrorist methods of the Zionist repression.

Seventhly, on the Arab plane, we will act at two levels — governmental and popular. As to the first, we will work to make the Arab states meet their commitments of support made at the Algiers and Casablanca summits. I specify here that the Arab states must, at least, say to the American administration that its relations with them depend on its attitude to the *intifada*. The American administration must know that its interests in the Arab region are in danger as long as it will support Israel and its attitude.

As for the Arab popular level, the Arab liberation movement must upscale its solidarity with the *intifada* by every means. We hope that the second anniversary of the *intifada* will be the occasion for these

3. On 31 July 1988, faced with the strength of the *intifada* in the West Bank which, until 1967, had been annexed by Jordan, King Hussein decided to "sever legal and administrative links between the two banks of the Jordan", that is to abandon his pretensions to regain the West Bank for his own kingdom.

4. The Camp David Accords were agreed, in 1978, between President Sadat of Egypt, the Israeli Prime Minister Begin and President Carter of the United States. They opened the way for the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed in 1979.

5. The "Green Line": the name given to the frontier which separated the state of Israel from the West Bank until 1967.

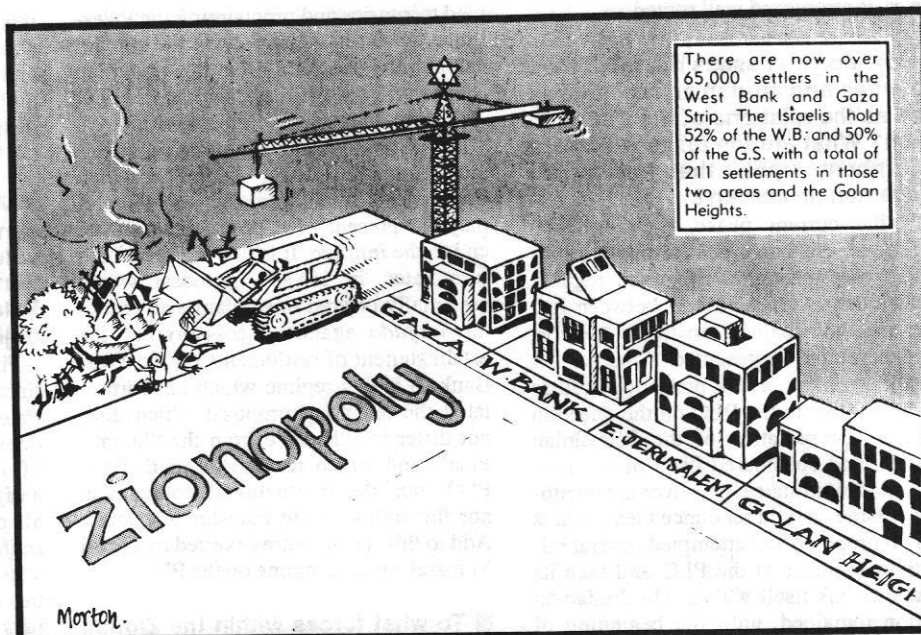
organizations to do it. We have the right to ask them: why have they not raised themselves up to the level of the *intifada*?

Eighthly, at the international level, we have the obvious possibility of gaining new recognitions of the state of Palestine. There is the invitation to Euro-Arab dialogue launched by President François Mitterand, which we must use to unify efforts towards an international peace conference with the participation of the PLO as an independent party, as well as the five permanent member states of the UN Security Council. Let us add to this the importance of pressure on Israel in the fields of information and economy, and on the American administration to modify its position of absolute support for Israel, as well as the necessity of continuing to foster the international public opinion which supports the *intifada* and condemns the repressive Zionist practices.

These are the tasks whose realization will permit the establishment of the Palestinian state in the next stage.

■ What balance sheet do you draw of the political options of the leadership of the PLO, a year after the last session of the PNC? How do you evaluate the consequences of the acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242? In your opinion, where will these concessions lead, as well as the subsequent concessions made to the United States and the Zionist state?

I would like first to clarify the position which we adopted during the session of the PNC on the subject of resolution 242 and of its acceptance as the basis of a political settlement. Without any doubt, we take into consideration the importance of world public opinion for our cause and we underline constantly in our publications the importance of the international level — we do not live in isolation from the world, its changes and its attitudes. That is why we said — the PLO must make use of international legality, that is the UN resolutions relating to the question of Palestine and the Middle East. These resolutions, as is known, recognize the PLO, the international conference, as well as the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to return, to self-determination and to the establishment of the independent Palestinian state. Resolution 242, on the contrary, does not recognize the Palestinian people, and treats the Palestinians solely as refugees, of whom the problem must be resolved. Consequently, this resolution on its own, separate from the other UN resolutions, is not enough, in our opinion, to settle the conflict. The question that we posed at the



PNC was — why limit ourselves to one resolution, bypassed by international legality itself?! After this, we saw the leadership of the PLO make new unilateral concessions.

Today, one year after the session of the PNC, we ask ourselves — what have been the tangible results of the policy followed by the PLO leadership? We do not deny that there have been some effects and some changes due to this policy, without forgetting however that the fundamental reason for the change is the *intifada* itself. It is the European attitude, for example, which has been principally modified, as well as the beginning of the American-Palestinian dialogue. But the results can not be judged solely in relation to the European position or to the dialogue with the United States. Europe which calls for an international conference, for example, has not been able to pass beyond the American position which continues to procrastinate on the subject of this conference and to work for bilateral negotiations and separate settlements.

The Israeli attitude is more important than all this. The Israeli government persists until now in its intransigent attitude of refusal to recognize the PLO, the international conference and the rights of the Palestinian people.

We are aware of the positive changes which have taken place in Israel at both the civil and political levels. However, the general tendency of Israeli public opinion, on the other hand, is more and more extremist and rightist. We have always known the nature of the Zionist enemy, its ideology and its concrete policy founded on the material profits drawn from the occupation. We said that the policy of unilateral concessions would not push the enemy to make concessions and recognize our rights. It is the *intifada* and its unceasing upscaling which will force it to

come to a political settlement.

Similarly, the American administration, which has begun its dialogue with the PLO (we consider the dialogue as a positive achievement for us), has not ceased, after the concessions which have been made to it by the PLO, to demand new concessions. Regrettably, the PLO leadership, after having accepted resolution 242, made new concessions, such as the recognition of Israel, the renunciation of "terrorism" and the declaration that the National Charter was "void". And nevertheless, the American administration persists in its attitude, in the same way as the Israeli establishment.

In the light of all this, is it not permissible for us to ask ourselves what the utility of this policy is, are we not right to say that this policy creates confusion in the ranks of our masses, as well as in the ranks of the Arab masses?! Are we not right to say — the policy of unilateral concessions has weakened and continues to weaken our demand for the isolation of Israel?! In all seriousness and responsibility, we wish that the PLO leadership considers these results so as to draw from them lessons and experience, to adopt a firm attitude towards the American and Israeli governments and to concentrate anew on the development and intensification of the *intifada* which has realized our greatest achievements.

That said, it is important to specify that this disagreement inside the PLO does not stop us from pointing to the elements of unity in its midst. The resolution of the PNC relating to UN Security Council resolution 242 is not the only one. There are also the resolutions of national unanimity on the subject of the proclamation of the Palestinian state, and those of support to the *intifada* and of its development. In the same way, unity on the ground in the context of the UNL, inside the occupied terri-

tories, is strong and well rooted.

■ How do you assess the role of the Egyptian and Jordanian regimes, as well as the relations of the PLO with them? What are the tasks which are incumbent upon the Palestinian movement in Jordan?

In the current phase, the Jordanian regime is less dangerous for the Palestinian cause than the Egyptian regime. Before the severing of links between Jordan and the occupied territories, the Jordanian regime represented a danger for the Palestinian cause. It presented itself as an alternative to the PLO on the question of the representation of the Palestinian people, and considered itself as the possessor of legitimate rights over the territories if Israel should renounce them. That is why it prepared and attempted several initiatives to strike at the PLO and take its place, or link itself with it. The Jordanian option remained, until the beginning of the *intifada*, in the thoughts of the United States, Israel, and Arab reaction. It is on this basis that, for our part, we fought the Amman Accord which we considered as a violation of the principle according to which the PLO is the sole representative of the Palestinian people, and a renunciation of the programme of the present stage, that of the establishment of the Palestinian state. The Accord signified that the Jordanian regime shared with the PLO the representation of the Palestinian people, and replaced the objective of the Palestinian state by that of the Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. We also fought against the Arab summit of November 1987 in Amman which attempted to orient the political evolution in the direction of the Jordanian option. However, the *intifada*, after having imposed on King Hussein the severing of links with the West Bank, has for the time being pushed back the Jordanian danger, all the more so because the PLO has stood up against the challenge of the Jordanian regime by considering itself responsible for the occu-

ried territories and proclaiming the Palestinian state. In saying this, we do not exclude the possibility that the Jordanian regime will try again to supplant the PLO — but we do not sense this danger today.

In our opinion, the Egyptian regime is more dangerous today. The danger which it represents stems from the role which it plays at present of attempting to put an end to the *intifada*. It is this regime which formulated in 1988 a proposal which essentially offered to exchange an end to the *intifada* against a cessation of the establishment of settlements on the West Bank. It is this regime which has formulated the ten point proposal which does not differ in substance from the "Shamir Plan", and which recognizes neither the PLO, nor the international conference, nor the rights of the Palestinian people. Add to this the pressures exerted by Hosni Mubarak and his regime on the PLO.

■ To what forces within the Zionist state must the Palestinian movement address itself in your opinion? What is your assessment of the choice to hold a dialogue with the Zionists?

As I said previously, we address ourselves to the Jewish non-Zionist democratic forces, those who support our legitimate national rights, and we refuse to address ourselves to the Zionist forces. Zionism, as you know, is a racist, colonialist and expansionist movement. We base our opposition to Zionism on resolution 3379 of the UN General Assembly which characterized Zionism as a form of racism and ethnic discrimination.

We consider that meeting with Zionist forces, aside from the fact that we refuse it on principle, is tactically dangerous. For example, some African states which had broken relations with Israel after the 1973 war, reestablished them after Egypt recognized Israel. Our task, and that of all our friends, is that of isolating Zionism, not of breaking its isolation through contact with various Zionist forces. I recall on

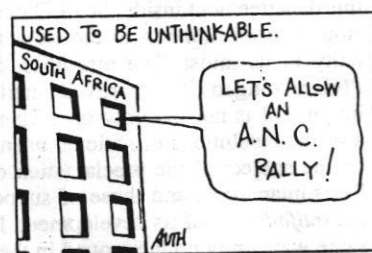
this subject that the PLO has established numerous contacts with Zionist forces, and that we considered this as constituting a violation of the PNC resolutions which restricted relations to the democratic Jewish forces.

■ What, in your opinion are the fundamental conditions for a genuine solution to the Palestinian question? And what are the tasks of the Palestinian left in relation to these objectives?

First, the genuine solution to the Palestinian question is the liberation of all of Palestine. It is a strategic objective which does not stop us from seeing the necessity of intermediate objectives. We do not assign to the *intifada* the task of realizing all our objectives at a single blow. The *intifada* has put the call for a Palestinian state on the agenda. As to the project of the democratic state including Palestinians and Jews, the *intifada* cannot realize this by itself. We desire a democratic Palestinian state which is a model of coexistence for all humanity. The conditions for the realization of this democratic state differ from those of the Palestinian state in the occupied territories. The principal condition for the realization of the democratic state is a common Judeo-Palestinian struggle for its realization.

We believe that the creation of a Palestinian state today will open to us new perspectives for the future, perspectives for which Jews and Arabs can act together. Why then do we insist on the liberation of Palestine and the realization of our strategic objective of establishing a democratic Palestinian state? Because we consider the state of Israel as the embodiment of Zionist ideology and of its colonialist project of settlement and expansionism in the Arab region. Israel being like this, it is not possible in our opinion to coexist with it. Add to this that Israel is not only a danger for the Palestinian people whose land it has usurped, but also a danger for the whole of the Arab peoples. In addition to its seizure of Palestinian territory, Israel occupies still areas of Syria and Lebanon, and has even officially annexed the Syrian Golan Heights by act of Parliament. This is not to mention the strategic role which Israel plays regionally and internationally, as a junior partner of US imperialism.

I can say, furthermore, that the creation of the state of Israel has not resolved and will not resolve the Jewish question. Israel is today a big ghetto, and the majority of the Jews of the world have not emigrated there and are integrated into the countries where they live. Marxism has presented assimilation as a solution to the Jewish question — we present also the democratic state as a solution. As to the solution presented by Zionism through the creation of the state of Israel, it is only a mystification which has not resolved the Jewish question in practice.





■ What should be, in your opinion, the priorities for the international movement of solidarity with the Palestinian people?

I think that in this phase of the Palestinian national struggle, all our friends in the world, after having proclaimed their support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people, the PLO and the rights of the Palestinian people, must pass on to a higher level. They must denounce the repressive and fascist Zionist practices, as well as the intransigent Israeli attitude which refuses to recognize the PLO, the international conference and the rights of the Palestinian people, first of all the right to return, to self-determination and to the Palestinian state. In sum, to denounce the Israeli attitude of refusing peace.

As Israeli intransigence persists and as it is anticipated that it will continue to defy international wishes and legality, all friendly forces must act, seriously and actively, to treat Israel as they treat South Africa today. I mean by this, to isolate Israel and boycott it, including demanding that all states boycott Israel economically so that it is dissuaded and submits to the desire for peace.

On this subject, I remind myself of what has been said by the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edward Shevarnadze, who warned Israel, during a tour of the Middle East, not to find itself, in refusing to respond positively to the wishes of the international community, in a position identical to that of South Africa today, that is a position of condemnation, boycott and isolation.

On the other hand, all our friends have the task of supporting the *intifada* by every means — political, material and at the level of information. I am not perhaps asking too much in demanding of our friends in the world to support the *intifada*, as they did in the course of its first months. Perhaps it is useful to underline that the *intifada* must not be transformed into an ordinary everyday event on the agendas of our friends, something with which they will occupy themselves only occasionally. The struggle of our people, their sacrifices and their suffering must encourage all our friends to find every means, original, everyday, unceasingly and repeatedly, to support the *intifada*. I am confident that this task will get all the attention it requires from our friends. For instance, broad and democratic organizational forms, supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and the PLO, and denouncing the Israeli and American policies, are an urgent and immediate task. ★

A contribution to the discussion

THE preceding interview with George Habash was conducted by fax. We sent Dr. Habash the themes that we wanted him to deal with and he sent us his replies. Thus it was not possible for reasons of distance to have a direct dialogue with the leader of the PFLP as we would have wished. In order to stimulate a discussion that we would like to be able to pursue in the future, here are some remarks on Dr. Habash's contribution.

SALAH JABER

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Needless to say, we did not choose to interview the PFLP by accident. It was a deliberate choice that reflected our assessment of that organization. The PFLP is the main organization of the Palestinian left and contains the majority of the more radical Palestinian militants. That is why it is both possible and necessary to have a dialogue with the PFLP including its leadership.

Different theoretical and programmatic framework

It is clear, to be sure, that our programmatic and theoretical framework is not the same as that of Dr. Habash, and the same is true of our political orientation, beyond the inevitable areas of agreement between those struggling against imperialism, Zionism and the Arab regimes dependent on the United States. In an overall sense, the PFLP leader has a lot more in common methodologically with the currents traditionally tied to Moscow than with us. This is shown, for example by the way in which he rubs out the differences in the attitudes to the *Intifada* of the different classes and social layers of the occupied territories in the name of the national struggle. A comparison between his views and those of the Palestinian Marxist that we published last year (see IV 158) is eloquent in this respect.

In our series of articles of last year (See IV 156 and 157), we have already criticized the way in which the PFLP, as well as the other left-wing currents in the PLO

have swallowed bitter pills handed to them by the rightist leadership of the PLO in the name of national unity. In this regard we would have liked to be able to ask Dr. Habash how he imagines the carrying out of the fifth of the tasks he mentions, that is, the democratic reform of the PLO. It seems like nothing more than a pious wish, given the institutionalized and immovable character of the Arafat leadership's majority in the PLO. In the same way, when Dr. Habash talks "in all seriousness and responsibility" of his desire to see a change in the attitude of the PLO's leadership, it is hard to see things as more than a powerless wish, since he has deprived himself of the means for influencing that attitude.

Muffled criticisms from left-wing factions

If the only price that the Arafat leadership has to pay for its endless concessions to the enemies of the Palestinian people from the ranks of this people is these muffled criticisms from the left-wing factions, they will not be too bothered. The Palestinian left must show its determination to become an alternative leadership for the mass struggle, while maintaining unity in action with the right wherever possible. It is not enough moreover to try simply to put pressure on the right; what is needed is to break its hegemony over the mass movement and move towards the construction of a majority leadership totally independent of the feudal and bourgeois Arab regimes and expressing the point of view of the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses who make up the overwhelming majority of the Palestinian people.

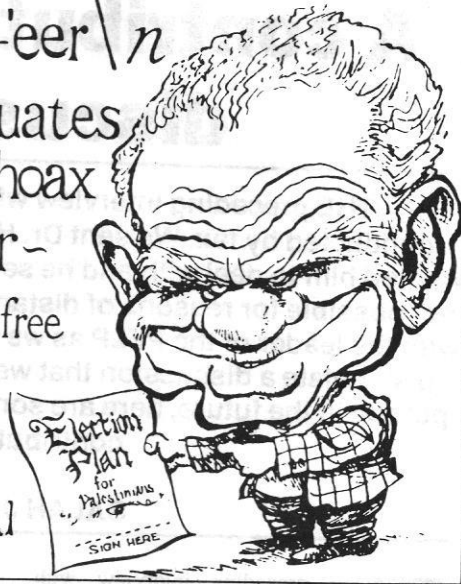
Therefore it seems to us completely contrary to the real interests of the Palestinian left for it to dissolve its ambitions to lead the struggle of the masses into a framework that it knows to be solidly dominated by the right. This applies to the PLO. But is also true of the United National

sham·ir \sham'eer\ n

1: one who perpetuates a sham, fraud or hoax

2: a put-on, a faker - as in "There will be free and democratic elections in the West Bank"

see also: Joe Isuzu



Leadership (UNL) of the *Intifada* inside the occupied territories, which has been placed under the control of the external leadership of the PLO.

Nonetheless, Dr. Habash puts much more emphasis on the role of the UNL than on that of the People's Committees although it is these latter that are the real driving force of the *Intifada* at the grass-root level and are, furthermore, the most democratic form of organization that the Palestinian mass movement has ever given itself.

Besides, we consider the urgent invitation from the PFLP leader for the Islamic fundamentalist movement Hamas to join the UNL as politically short-sighted and stemming from an attitude which threatens dire consequences in the medium term. Hamas has a fiercely reactionary and fanatical, not to say racist, ideology, and has refused until now to participate in the UNL because, among other reasons, the Palestinian Communist Party is a part of it! This current represents a grave danger for the future of the Palestinian struggle, much more serious than that presented by the traditional right. Hamas carefully exploits all the concessions and capitulations of the latter and puts itself forward as an alternative leadership that will replace all other currents.

Through its anti-Israeli radicalism allied with its mediaeval fanaticism, and the sharp and loud criticisms that it makes of the PLO, the fundamentalist movement is gaining more and more ground among the Palestinians, even outside Palestine. It represents potentially a mortal enemy for the Palestinian left as has been shown by similar movements in other countries in the region. It is also the ideal enemy for the Zionist right, an enemy that will make it a lot easier to solidify the Israeli population into a compact anti-Palestinian bloc.

While not rejecting *a priori* occasional unity in action with Hamas in the framework of the *Intifada*, it is of vital impor-

tance for the Palestinian left to conduct a no-holds-barred ideological and political struggle with this current. This also means denouncing the ambiguous relations that have taken place both in the past and now between Hamas (and the Muslim Brothers from which it derives) and the Zionist authorities. It is necessary to warn the Palestinian masses against the mystifications peddled by the fundamentalists rather than giving them added credibility by getting them to participate in the leadership of the struggle. Dr. Habash may believe that, on a number of questions, Hamas' attitude seems closer to that of the PFLP than that of the PLO leadership. But this would be to give priority to what both reject rather than the basic ideas underlying the different positions.

Fundamentalists reject international conference

Unfortunately and paradoxically, some of the positions that mark Hamas off among the forces on the ground work to its advantage in the long term. This is true, for example, of the fundamentalists' rejection of the "international conference" as a way of solving the Palestinian problem.

The conference project, which, according to the PLO's concept, would see the negotiations between the Palestinians and the Arab states on the one side, and the Israeli government on the other take place under the aegis of the five great powers, is in contradiction with the most elementary right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. It would not lead to the independent state to which the Palestinians aspire.

Dr. Habash does not seem to see that there is a contradiction between, on the one hand, his pointing out that it is the *Intifada*, not the PLO's concessions, that has allowed gains to be made, and calling on the PLO leadership to concentrate its

efforts on stepping up the uprising, and on the other his appeal for "unifying efforts with regard to an international conference". This being furthermore, with Mitterrand and his European partners thrown in! Unless one believes, extremely naively, that the conference would be naturally inclined to confirm the gains made by the *Intifada*....

We were also very surprised to see Dr. Habash avoid our question on the tasks of the Palestinian movement in Jordan, on the pretext that King Hussein's regime no longer represents an immediate danger "for the Palestinian cause" since it has pulled out of the West Bank.

This is a strange reply from someone who was politically active in Jordan for a long time and who knows perfectly well that there are more Palestinians living there than on the West Bank and that there is even worse repression there than is exercised by the Zionist occupiers. It is a strange reply too from someone who was a direct participant of the battles in 1970 when the Jordanian state massacred many more Palestinians than the Zionist power did in 1948. It is, finally, a strange reply from someone who aspires to an independent Palestinian state without abandoning the anti-Zionist struggle: is it not obvious, if only for geographical reasons, that the West Bank cannot be independent of the Zionist state without relying on Jordan?

Let us remark, finally, that, if the PFLP leader feels it right to ask the organizations of the Arab liberation movement "why have they not been equal to the *Intifada*?" and throw the responsibility for this deficiency onto them, these organizations have just as much right to throw a large part of the responsibility back onto the Palestinian liberation movement, that has privileged, and continues to privilege, its relations with the Arab regimes, even the most repulsive.

Let us recall, in this respect, how the PLO National Council, meeting in Algiers in November 1988, less than a month after the Algerian *Intifada* was drowned in blood, greeted with touching unanimity the "president and fighter Chadli Bendjedid"! This is not to mention the solid support to the Iraqi tyrant Saddam Hussein or the big service rendered to the Egyptian regime by the PLO leadership which was the first to break the official Arab boycott that followed on Cairo's peace treaty with Israel. It is here, in fact, that we find what is perhaps the main difference that we have with all the factions of the PLO including the dissident wing. We think that the real interests of the Palestinian struggle lie in linking up with the revolutionary struggles of the masses in the countries of the Arab region and not with the governments that oppress them. In the short term that would mean less money in the coffers of the Palestinian organizations, but the Palestinian people would thereby gain the only strategic ally it could really and directly rely on. ★

AROUND
THE
WORLD

MEXICO

Solidarity with Mexican Ford Workers

ON January 10 comrade Cleto Benigno Urbina, died from two bullet wounds fired by thugs working for the general secretary of the Ford workers' union, Hector Uriarte Martinez, and protected by the bosses and the hierarchy of CTM union confederation.

Previously, on January 8, eight other comrades were wounded by bullets and a further three by other weapons in an attack carried out in front of the enterprise. On that day some 100 armed thugs entered the plant, dressed in overalls and carrying company passes with the aim of intimidating workers so that they would "get down to work" and drop their economic demands and their idea of democratizing their union.

These threats had the opposite effect to the one intended. The angry workers confronted the hired killers, expelled them from the factory and detained three of them, leading to the outcome mentioned above. Now the workers are occupying the two plants that the multinational company has in the Valley of Mexico, and is getting ready to put up a firm resistance in defence of their source of work, their economic demands and their control over their union organization.

The conflict had its origin last December when the plant announced an (illegal) cut of some 70% in the Christmas bonus, and, furthermore, that there would be a very low profit share, even though Ford Mexico is the third largest exporting enterprise and has a high rate of expansion. The firm argued that the reduction in the Christmas bonus corresponded to taxes that had not been remitted previously, in this way making the workers pay for its own mistakes. This was the origin of the workers' indignation, which was increased when their leader, instead of defending the interests of the workers, justified the firm's actions.

Before this open betrayal by their leader, the workers had already taken steps to get rid of him. But from the first moment they have run up against the open collaboration between the firm and Uriarte, who has done everything he could to restrain the workers, with the sorry results previously

described. Now the struggle has entered a critical phase, since until now neither the firm nor the authorities has shown any inclination to negotiate or give a satisfactory reply to the workers' demands. On the contrary, on the very morning of January 10, the firm announced that it no longer had any legal relations with these workers. The situation demands urgent solidarity from the international workers' movement.

Protests must be organized in every country in front of Ford factories, and messages demanding respect for the rights of Mexican workers sent to Ford Motor Company, Mexico at Paseo de la Reforma #333, Mexico, DF. Messages should also be sent to the official residence of Mexico's president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, at Los Pinos; to the labour secretary, Arsenio Farrell Cubillas at Periferico Sur #4271 Zona Postal 20. Messages in support of the Ford workers' struggle should be sent to Dr. Lucio #103 Edificio Orion A-4 Despacho 103, Mexico DF or

faxed to 2 86 89 26 or 2 86 89 76 with prior notification to Sr. Raul Escobar, telephone no: 5 78 15 56. Alfonso Moro ★

BRITAIN

"Outlook for Socialism 1989"

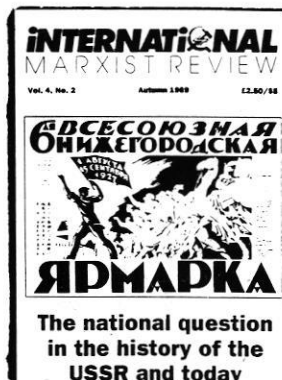
Over 400 people attended *Socialist Outlook's* main event of the year, organized around the theme "The Socialist Outlook for Europe" in December 1989. People came to a series of workshops and plenary sessions that focussed around the momentous events in Eastern Europe and the process of European integration around 1992, featuring speakers from all over Europe and beyond.

The weekend opened with a rally, "The Crisis of Stalinism". An impressive platform of speakers — including Gunter Minnerup, editor of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*; and a speaker from *October Review*, journal of the Fourth International in Hong Kong — dissected the crisis of Stalinism. The highlight of the rally was the closing speech from Ernest Mandel, recently returned from a tour of meetings in East Germany and Poland.

While those attending the event were able to hear a series of speakers in the main plenary sessions: Socialists and 1992; lesbian and gay struggles in Europe; women's struggles in Europe; they were also able to discuss particular aspects of these themes in greater depth in workshops. The event finished with a debate between *Socialist Outlook* and left Labour MP Ken Livingstone. ★

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Unjust Cause

THE invasion of the Republic of Panama by United States troops, ordered by George Bush on December 20, 1989, has dealt a heavy blow to the aspirations for peace of the peoples of Latin America. With this new act of interference, the US has shown clearly that it has no respect for the accords reached in Central America aimed at assuring self-determination and represents a serious threat to all hope of a durable peace in the strife-torn region.

ALFONSO MORO

THE invasion is a continuation of the "big stick" policy applied since the time of President Monroe in the early 19th century. The US proclaimed itself the "guardian of democracy" and took upon itself the right to overthrow and replace governments according to the interests of big capital. The name given to the Panama operation — Just Cause — is not an empty formula. It contains an enormous ideological charge, intended to make acceptable something that everybody who understands democracy should reject: the intention to decide for other people who should govern them.

Tenth imperialist aggression of century

This is the tenth time this century that US imperialism has invaded or occupied Panamanian territory. All this interference has not changed by one jot the poverty and injustice suffered by the population. Thus, Bush's claim that he is going to re-establish democracy in Panama is ridiculous. The terrible consequences of every US intervention in Latin America for the continent's inhabitants are well-known. Misery, hunger and corruption. The argument that the invasion is part of a struggle against corruption is also ludicrous, since it is precisely by buying people that imperialism has tried to

avoid from the start every attempt at civil resistance, offering a fistful of dollars to those who surrender their arms or give information on the whereabouts of Noriega's associates.

More than 300 Panamanian soldiers were killed, and some 500 civilians have been assassinated by the occupying troops without fear of punishment. George Bush is directly responsible for these crimes. He is also responsible for the material damage, already estimated at more than US\$3 billion. He is responsible for the violence against the Nicaraguan Embassy and hundreds of defenseless civilians. Finally he is responsible for the arrest and detention of more than 5,000 Panamanians who have been transferred at gunpoint into secret prisons, without anyone knowing what is happening to them. Among them are many Panamanian social activists and revolutionary militants.

Noriega learnt methods from US

There is not much more to say about the situation of the ex-dictator Manuel Noriega. His role as a CIA informer at least since 1976 — at precisely the time when Bush was responsible for that organization — is well-known, as is his part in supplying arms to the Nicaraguan Contras. Noriega is a product of the anti-insurgency schools in the US. It was there that he learned most of his methods for controlling the population.

US imperialism used all the latest military techniques, notably the new Stealth bomber, in its invasion, as well as the rapid deployment strategies developed by the Pentagon to reinforce the military doctrine known under the title "Low intensity operations". This was exemplified by the participation of the 82nd Airborne Division and the "special task forces". All this shows that the imperialists do not intend to limit their aggression to Panama.

As soon as the invasion started, the Yankee occupation forces undertook to transport Guillermo Endara to one of their 11 military bases on Panamanian soil. It was under these conditions that Endara, a candidate in the elections last May — which were marked by massive overt fraud and which Noriega annulled — took office as president.

The circumstances of its birth define the servile character of the new ruler towards his imperialist patron. A few days after, Endara made a public declaration against the governments of Nicaragua and Cuba, threatening to break diplomatic relations if they did not immediately recognize his

government.

The invasion of Panama took place at a moment when other countries and revolutionary movements in the region are trying to consolidate the democratic process (as with the FSLN in Nicaragua) or gain real political independence (the FMLN in El Salvador). Thus the landing of 24,000 marines in Panama must be seen as an open provocation menacing the whole region with death and desolation. It is not surprising that the only Latin American president who has openly supported the US action is El Salvador's Alfredo Cristiani.

Invasion is warning to revolutionary forces

The invasion of Panama is a clear warning to the democratic and revolutionary forces; the next target of the imperialists is the besieged Nicaraguan revolution. The transfer of the Panama canal to exclusive Panamanian control, scheduled for 1999 by the Torrijos-Carter accords of 1977, has been thrown into question by the invasion. This would be the most damaging the consequence of the invasion for the Panamanian people.

It is necessary to immediately mobilize to demand the withdrawal of US troops from Panamanian territory. It is for the Panamanian people to decide their own destiny.★



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