

International VIEWPOINT

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International VIEWPOINT

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The war cabinet

THE STATE OF ISRAEL has finally got a government. After two and a half months of institutional crises, the deputies have just given their blessing to a coalition of rightwing, extreme rightwing and fundamentalist parties in which even Yitzhak Shamir looks like a moderate. Even though Ariel Sharon is not the defence minister and the leader of the Transfer Party, Rehavam Zeevi, has been turned down as minister for the police, this governmental coalition is the most intransigent that the State of Israel has ever known.

MICHEL WARSHAWSKY

SIDE BY SIDE in the government are supporters of a Greater Israel, the leaders of the Gush Emunim colonists, the authors of the Lebanon war and the Sabra and Chatilla massacres and rabbis who dream of a theocratic state run according to the laws of the Torah.

For Shamir to reach the point where he could announce that he had gathered in the 61 deputies needed to form a parliamentary majority, all manner of coat-turning, treachery, desertion and corruption, both of individuals and parties, was needed. A wing of the Likud had maneuvered for a new government of national union in order to try to rebuild a consensus among the Israeli public and stem the erosion of Israeli-American relations. But Sharon and David Levy have succeeded in imposing a government of the extreme right, which is their sole chance to get themselves in line for the succession to Shamir.

The crisis that put an end to the government of national union was certainly extended by the maneuvering of the small parties and prolonged by the profoundly corrupt mentality of the Israeli political class. But the underlying causes go much deeper. The Palestinian uprising that has been going on in the occupied territories has unfrozen the situation as it has existed, if not since 1967, at least since the Camp David Accords of 1978. The Lebanese War, in 1982, failed to attain its objective of changing the status quo. The relation of forces between Israel

and the Arab world, and specifically between Israel and the Palestinian national movement, did not fundamentally change, despite the latter's military defeat.

The Palestinian uprising on the West Bank and in Gaza has rendered inoperative the old methods by which the Israeli army has dominated the occupied territories. It has made it necessary for Israeli society and the international community to find an alternative to the type of occupation imposed by the relation of forces

in 1967-73. The question of what alternative has polarized Israeli society and its ruling class. On the one side are those who, aware of the price of a military solution for Israel, in terms of unforeseeable military risks, international isolation and internal turmoil, are looking for a way of disengaging via Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Compromise formulas fall to the ground

On the other side are those who, refusing to surrender what they consider to be part of the fatherland, are ready to take any risk, including full-scale military confrontation in the region. All the intermediate formulas, aimed at keeping up a façade of unity and above all of gaining time, have fallen to the ground under the impact of the *intifada*. The ultimatum of American secretary of state Baker five months ago was an attempt to force the Israeli government to choose between negotiation and a military adventure.

"This is a government of war" affirmed the chief of the Labour opposition during the vote on the new government. We may prefer the more nuanced terms of Egypt's President Mubarak: "If you do not move towards peace, war becomes inevitable, and this government seems to have turned its back on the peace process in the region."

At first sight the military option looks like something dreamt up by some of the retired generals, who are unable to read the international political map and believe that everything can be reduced to an exchange of shots on the battlefield. The thaw between the great powers, and the policy of a political solution imposed by these powers on local conflicts, seems to rule out the military option for the Israeli government. However things are more complicated than that. In fact a certain convergence can be found between the policy of General Ariel Sharon, the new government's strong man, and the ideas of the American administration. For Sharon, war is the necessary means for a new redistribution of the cards and in particular for the "liquidation of the Palestinian question." The two things that might make the government hesitate — the question of American support and the deep divisions within Israeli public opinion — do not worry Sharon.

In his eyes, the strategic importance of Israel for American imperialism is such that the latter will always in



the end be obliged to support Israeli initiatives, and, whatever happens, will not put real pressure on the Jewish state. As for the Israeli public, Sharon remains persuaded, even after the Lebanon war, that only a victorious war can cement the national Sacred Union, and that the next war will be the greatest victory in modern military history.

Can such an option be made to relate in any way to the option of a negotiated compromise defended by the American administration? Yes, if one remembers that in the Middle East war and peace are not necessarily opposed. In 1973, desperate to achieve "cold" negotiations between Israel and the Arab states, Henry Kissinger allowed the temperature to rise and regarded a limited and controllable military conflict, in which the need for American support would allow Washington to pose as referee and impose a negotiated solution, with favour. The October 1973 war was an indispensable element in the strategy which finally led to the Israeli-Egyptian peace.

War a real option for American imperialism

Certainly there are big risks, and the military balance of forces makes any attempt to have a "limited and controllable war" very difficult. But this is, nonetheless, a real option for American imperialism. What the Israelis cannot be persuaded to do in peace, they may accept more easily as the outcome of an armed conflict.

This is without doubt what James Baker wanted to be understood when he said to the Israeli leaders last week: "When you are serious about peace, call us". Thus; if Shamir and Sharon want to play at war they will sooner or later be obliged to telephone the White House, if only to get arms supplies.

Some commentators believe that, precisely because the government has the stamp of the extreme right, it may be more capable than a Labour government of taking measures favourable to a reduction in tension in the occupied territories or even opening negotiations with the Palestinians. The invitation to a top UN functionary to come to the occupied territories as an observer would thus be the first concession of the new government. There is talk of the imminent reopening of the universities in the occupied territories.

But it is unlikely that this will go further. Without speaking of the intransigence of Shamir and Sharon, the present government is too dependent on the votes of the far right parties to oppose, for example, the setting up of new colonies in the occupied territories or new repressive measures aimed, as Shamir has promised, to "liquidate once and for all" the *intifada*.



Shamir is not De Gaulle, but a prime minister who is tied hand and foot by the diverse social and political forces on which his government depends. This necessarily means, as the unprecedented mobilizations after the Rishon Le Zion massacres showed, an escalation of the *intifada* and new problems in relations between Israel and the American administration.

Mirage of negotiations with Palestinians

During the last 15 months public opinion, both at home and abroad, has been focussed on the mirage of imminent Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and the specialists have been passionately debating such delicacies as Mubarak's ten points, Baker's five points, or the status of Palestinians in Jerusalem who have a secondary residence in Jericho.

The formation of the new government, however, should allow a more realistic look at the real situation. There is a popular uprising that nothing so far has been able to suppress, and there is the desire of the Israeli authorities to employ the means that will allow them not only to close what they consider a disagreeable interlude, but perhaps also to get the Palestinian people back to their pre-1967 situation — as an atomized population of refugees without a political framework or leadership.

The Palestinian national leadership, whether in the occupied territories or in Tunis, has understood this, and has appealed to international public opinion to centre its attention on the protection of the Palestinian population of the occupied territories, including through the sending of international military forces.

The well-founded nature of such a demand has not escaped the Israeli authorities. After 23 years of claiming that the Geneva Convention did not apply on the West Bank or Gaza, since these were not really occupied territories, they have taken to hiding behind that same convention to insist that they alone are responsible for the protection of the inhabitants of these areas.

The European peace movements and the Non-Governmental Organizations have just decided to take up the demand for international protection and are preparing an international campaign for the autumn where international protection and economic sanctions will be raised together.

As Ciara Ingraio, one of the leaders of the Italian peace movement, which has taken the initiative for the international mobilization "1990 — Time for Peace" affirmed during a recent meeting with Israeli peace groups:

"In 1989 we centred our campaign on peace and on the need for negotiations with the PLO. Today, unfortunately, it is not negotiations that are on the agenda but the right to life of Palestinians living in the occupied territories. It is necessary to communicate this urgency to international public opinion, and this autumn centre our campaign around the duty of the international community to protect Palestinian men and women against the real danger of a massacre."

Peace Now and civil disobedience

The peace movement in Israel remains divided on this question. Peace Now has refused to take up any demand that would imply foreign interference in what, even in the eyes of the majority of Israeli pacifists, remains the private preserve of Israeli sovereignty. What is, on the other hand, now being seriously discussed by the currents near to Peace Now, including in the media, is the perspective of a stepping up of civil disobedience — including refusal to serve in the occupied territories — faced with a government that has little legitimacy in the eyes of 50% of the Israeli population. A massive refusal to serve in the occupied territories would without doubt be the best protection that the Israeli peace movement could offer to the Palestinians. But such a decision will not be quickly taken, and everything will be done by the government to prevent such a development, including a new military adventure.

The race is now on between the Israeli government on the one hand and the Palestinian people on the other. The spread of the *intifada* in the Arab world, and in particular in Jordan, is pushing the Arab leaderships to demand a negotiated solution before it is too late. By deepening their struggle, the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza are not only forwarding their own national liberation — they are also restricting the room for bellicose manoeuvres by the new government. The key that can close the road to war lies in the hands of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories. ★

Czechoslovak elections — results and prospects

IN THE FOLLOWING article Petr Kuzvart, a supporter of the Czechoslovak Left Alternative-Movement for Democratic and Self-Managing Socialism, gives his view of the outcome of the Czechoslovak elections

PETR KUZVART

THE parliamentary elections in Czechoslovakia took place on June 8/9 both for the federal assembly and for the two national (Czech and Slovak) chambers. The voter turnout was very high — 96%, and the elections took place without disturbance. It was clear even before the vote that the Civic Forum (OF) and its Slovak equivalent, Public Against Violence (VPN), would win, with pre-election polls giving OF between 46-49% and VPN 25%. In reality the margin of victory was even greater — OF/VPN gained 46.6% overall for the People's Chamber and 45.9% in the Chamber of Nations, where there are an equal number of Czech and Slovak representatives.

The Christian democratic coalition (KDU/KDH), as expected, got a better result in Slovakia (16 to 20%) than in the Czech Lands (8 to 9%). Overall this was less than they had hoped for. This was perhaps to do with the Bartoncik affair — Josef Bartoncik, a leading Christian Democrat, was revealed to have been working for the secret police under the old dictatorship for 17 years — and other problems in the Ministry of the Interior, which has been run since December by a member of the People's Party, an old satellite party of the Communists and now part of the KDU/KDH.

The Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSC), with 13.6% overall, got rather a good score, and is the second largest party in the Czech Lands. The split offs — the Independent Left and the Czechoslovak Democratic Forum — have not succeeded in becoming significant political forces. The strong anti-communist campaign during the elections pushed the communists together.

The authentic left in Czechoslovakia will face a difficult situation in the immediate future. Obroda, based on reform

communist forces expelled from the KSC after the Soviet invasion in 1968, and the Left Alternative, supported Civic Forum in the elections. Neither the Democratic Forum nor the Social Democratic Renewal got a good score. The left is dispersed and weak, represented by only a few deputies, such as Petr Uhl, some people from Obroda and some of the Social Democrats in Civic Forum¹. The far right did extremely badly in the Czech Lands, with only 1% of the vote.

In Slovakia the Slovak National Party, which has a separatist orientation, got more than 11% of the vote. This bodes ill for the future. The success of the movement for self-managing autonomy in Moravia and Silesia (two of the Czech Lands), with 5.8% of the national vote, was a surprise. Another was the failure of the Green Party which, with 3 to 4%, is not represented in the parliament due to the 5% barrier — something that may weigh on the future of ecological struggles in our country. The Peasant Party — a party of bureaucrats and agricultural technocrats previously tied to the KSC — also did badly, confounding the fears before the election that these new agrarians, supported by a very conservative election campaign, would form a solid bloc in the new parliament.

In general these elections represent a transitory stage — this parliament will only sit for two years. A number of important parties from the political spectrum are not in this parliament, above all from the left and centre. The strength of the Slovak nationalist right will pose

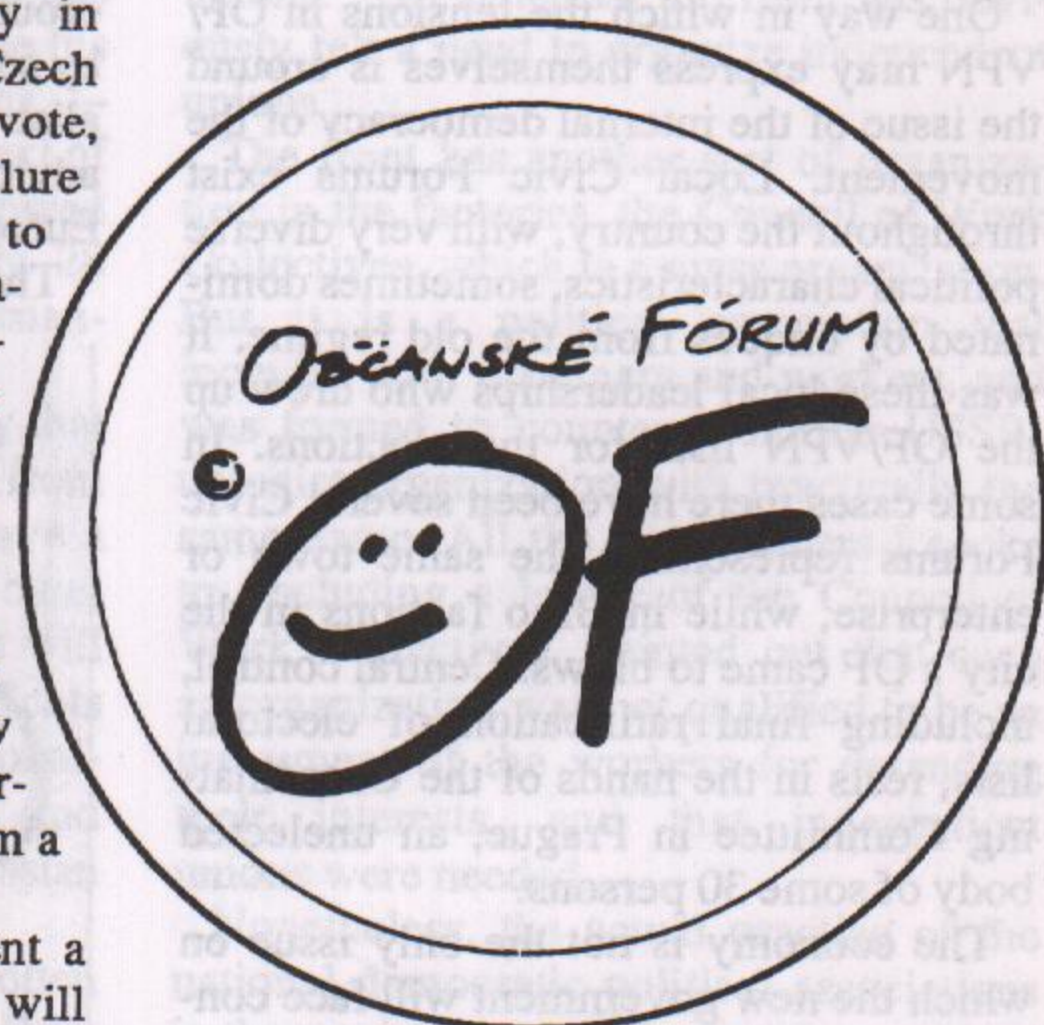
problems.

Given the wide range of forces in the Civic Forum, it is very probable that this preponderant political force will be torn apart, or at the very minimum that there will be splits in all political directions. The further development of the political currents within it, which are now very weak, will be necessary. In this way the political spectrum will become more balanced. There will also be another important tendency at work.

The economic reform, as envisaged by



the finance minister Vaclav Klaus, will deliver a shock to the society stronger than any for 40 years. The Czechoslovak petit bourgeoisie is very numerous, and it is not clear how it will react to this shock. There exists a fear that it will go to the far right or the Stalinist pseudo-left. It will thus be a part of the task of the constructive political forces to defend democracy in future elections. At the same time, the new authentic left has to offer a serious left alternative. These elections were only the overture — in two years time our decisions will have more weight. ★



1. Some Social Democrats, notably well-known dissident Rudolf Battek, stood on the Civic Forum lists, but the party as a whole stood independently.

After the Civic Forum victory

A DEBATE has been going on inside the government for some months, between the Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus, who, so at least the press accounts assert, wants to introduce the economic changes as quickly as possible, and Valtr Komarek who has been arguing for caution — probably with the support of Vaclav Havel.

Furthermore, a mass independent trade union movement exists, closely tied politically to the OF/VPN, that will certainly respond to the concrete effects of market reforms on workers. At the same time there is a left wing in the OF/VPN, around groups such as Left Alternative and Obroda, who may be able to propose a political response to the loss of popular control implied by selling the country on the free market. In particular the introduction of legislation to regulate strikes, threats to social rights, especially affecting women, and the wider debate on a new Constitution will provide the occasion for putting forward some elements of a non-capitalist road away from Stalinism.

An interesting straw in the wind comes in an opinion poll summarized in the independent Czechoslovak daily *Lidové noviny* on June 18, which found that, while 67% of respondents were firmly in favour of privatization in general, only 18% supported the sale of big enterprises to foreign firms.

One way in which the tensions in OF/VPN may express themselves is around the issue of the internal democracy of the movement. Local Civic Forums exist throughout the country, with very diverse political characteristics, sometimes dominated by cliques from the old regime. It was these local leaderships who drew up the OF/VPN lists for the elections. In some cases there have been several Civic Forums representing the same town or enterprise, while in Brno factions in the city's OF came to blows. Central control, including final ratification of electoral lists, rests in the hands of the Coordinating Committee in Prague, an unelected body of some 30 persons.

The economy is not the only issue on which the new government will face controversy. Another will be that of the files of the secret police and the response of the ministry of the interior to the task of dismantling the secret police apparatus.

6

The Bartoncik affair (see the Article on

THE NEWLY ELECTED Czechoslovak government, dominated by the Civic Forum/Public Against Violence (OF/VPN) movement, is pledged to an extensive programme of privatization, deregulation and the economic reintegration of the country into the world market. At the same time the OF/VPN is the political expression of the mass democratic movement that rose up to challenge the neo-Stalinist system. At some point, perhaps quite soon, the economic plans of the government will conflict with its democratic credentials.

COLIN MEADE

p.5) shows how explosive the information in the police files can be — and how it can be used for electoral advantage if leaked at the right time! Bartoncik was from the People's Party, an old "satellite" party of the Communist Party. Another member of the same party, interior minister Richard Sacher has been widely criticized for his lack of openness in tackling the question of the future of the secret police and the information they hold.

Racist attacks by skinheads have been on the increase in recent months, particularly aimed at the country's large Romany minority and the 40,000 Vietnamese "guestworkers". On May 12 the minister responsible for policing in the Czech Lands was fired for failing to take these attacks seriously — an example of a vigorous response that could well be studied by some of the governments in the imperialist countries that are now lavishing advice about democracy on Eastern Europe.

There will be pressure for the expulsion

of the Vietnamese and others from the country, and, hopefully, a counter-campaign for the rights of immigrants and refugees in Czechoslovakia.

Although the Christian Democrats did not do as well as expected in the election, they remain a major force, especially in Slovakia. The OF/VPN leadership is keen to make an alliance with them, and this may raise the question of restrictions on abortion rights. There have already been exchanges on this question in the press, although there is as yet no sign of an independent women's movement in Czechoslovakia. The defence of a woman's right to choose will test the democratic credentials of all political

currents.

The rise of Slovak nationalism — and all the Slovak parties, including the Public Against Violence, struck the pro-Slovak note in their electoral propaganda — will certainly persist and deepen, especially if the Czech parties maintain their traditional condescension towards Slovak national aspirations.

At the same time the strong support by Slovakia's Hungarian population for a party of the minorities, claiming to represent the interests of Czechoslovakia's Hungarians, Gypsies and Germans, shows the kind of regional complications that traditionally right-wing and clerical Slovak nationalism may create.

The next few years in Czechoslovakia will be rich in surprises as the real contradictions and limits of November's "gentle revolution" become apparent. The Czechoslovak situation will intertwine with events in Germany, given the impact of that country's economic might on a newly purchasable Czechoslovakia. ★



The politics of Baltic independence

THE KREMLIN has begun to ease its economic blockade against Lithuania. On June 13, the premier of the Lithuanian republic, Kazimiera Prunskiene, announced that the Soviet authorities had agreed to a partial resumption of deliveries of natural gas and other raw materials. At the same time, Gorbachev has floated the idea of a new treaty of union that could involve confederal relations with some republics, presumably the Baltic ones, whose independence was ended 50 years ago by Soviet military occupation and where the pro-independence formations have now won a large majority.

It remains to be seen if the Baltic national movements will accept continuation of political union in any form. But this proposal is a new watermark of Gorbachev's retreat in the face of the rising movements for national rights. At the time of the debate on the amendments to the Soviet constitution in the fall of 1988, he was still saying that he intended to tighten the republics' ties to "the center" rather than weaken them.

GERRY FOLEY

GORBACHEV'S economic reprisals largely boomeranged. In the political conditions in the USSR, the Kremlin does not have the leisure to apply slow strangulation policies. With new cracks in the bureaucratic system opening up every day, time works for the opposition.

At the same time as the Kremlin retreated in its attempts to cow the Lithuanians, for the first time Gorbachev publicly mocked one of the unionist leaders in the Baltic, the chief of the Estonian Internationalist Movement. During the third session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, he said: "Comrade Kogan keeps urging me to take 'revolutionary actions' (*Laughter in the hall.*) But I think, comrades, that we have to find the answer on the political road, and it is already taking form. Let all our friends in the Baltic consider the formula of suspending the decisions that they have made, if only for the time of discussions."

Gorbachev cannot make concessions to the Baltic national democratic movements without stepping on the toes of the unionists, who up until now have been a bulwark of Kremlin rule.

It will be interesting to see now whether Moscow moderates its general denunciations of national movements, which in fact have been written into recent laws against "nationalist agitation." A major

line of attack by the Soviet central press against the Baltic and other independence movements has been that all "separatism" is a bad thing, in the East as well as in the West.

The bounds of the Soviet constitution

This line was put in a quite consistent way by Shved, a leader of the pro-Moscow rump CP in Lithuania, who has said on other occasions that of course his party supports Lithuanian aspirations — if they are expressed within the context of the Soviet constitution. He was allowed to present his opinions in the May 28 issue of *Soglasie*, Sajudis's Russian-language paper:

"Even the West German papers say that if Lithuania's outright withdrawal from the USSR is accomplished it will have a negative effect not only on the Soviet Union but on Europe. The Basques will want to secede from Spain, the Scots from Great Britain and so on. Nationalism is always a dangerous thing. And how they are cultivating anti-Russian feeling in Lithuania!"

In fact, the Baltic fronts have gotten considerable support from the local Russian populations, which are major factors in Latvia and Estonia. I talked to a number who either supported the fronts or worked with them during a tour of the

Baltic capitals in early June. In general, they were skeptical at best about the Baltic peoples' national aspirations, but saw the fronts as the forces for democracy and the "internationalist" movements as die-hard Stalinists. In Latvia, in particular, where non-Latvians make up half the population, the front could hardly have won its two-thirds majority in the republic's Supreme Soviet without getting a lot of votes from Russian speaking people.

In Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, I observed a meeting of trade unionists being organized by Albert Danilson of the Estonian front. They were mostly Russian airline pilots.

They made it absolutely clear that they were interested in pure trade-unionism, free from any kind of nationalism. But they were drawn to the front because it was the only organization prepared to offer them the necessary backing to set up their own organizations. Despite the fact that the front is in the majority in the local parliament, the old trade-union laws are still in force, and they make independent organizing very difficult. During the meeting, Danilson acknowledged that even after a lot of lawyer's work, none of the independent union groups had yet achieved legal status.

Conservative conception of trade unionism

The Estonian independent union is still a new and small bud. The conceptions expressed at the meeting by Danilson were those of conservative, social-partnership unionism. He said that he was against any "purely proletarian" project or "new socialist experiments," such as a federation of independent trade-unions in East Europe. He claimed credit for having blocked the extension of a project modeled on the Polish Solidarnosc into Estonia, looked to the class-collaborationist unions of the West as model, "real unions." Nonetheless, the front has obviously felt a need to organize independent unions.

The front has another sort of organization in the factories, the Council of Work Collectives, which is a mass organization. But it is a political association that includes both managers and workers, and was formed to counter a similar USSR-unionist organization with practically the same name. All the front leaders I spoke to, including a leader of the Council of Work Collectives, pointed out that such an organization was not qualified to be an instrument of the workers for defending their interests, and that independent unions were needed.

Nonetheless, the actual practice of the national democratic political associations in the workplaces will be worth watching. Organizations built on a similar basis in the southern Basque country and Corsica have served as vehicles for workers' radicalization.

In Latvia, the independent union project seems substantially further along. Its leaders say that it exists throughout the country, although some of the front leaders complain that it is stagnating. One of the principal leaders, with whom I talked, is a Russian, Yevgenii Shelyanin.

I asked both Shelyanin and the coordinator of the Latvian front in Riga whether they thought that their organization's aim of democratization included workers' self-management. Both replied that they did, and that they were interested in collecting as much material on self-management as they could.

Baltic representatives at all-Union conference

Shortly before, Shelyanin had attended the conference in Novokuznetsk in western Siberia where a confederation of independent workers' organizations in the USSR was set up (see IV 187). He did not express any reservations or conditions about the Latvian organization participating in this project. As he saw it, there were three currents in the conference — those who were for pure trade unions, those for a social movement and those for a kind of party (he mentioned "anarcho-syndicalists"). He himself identified with the "social-movement current."

The Lithuanian workers' union leaders also participated in the Novokuznetsk conference. The leadership of this organization is centered in Kaunas, and not in Vilnius, and I was not able to talk to any of them. But I heard from a reliable source that the main leader, Uoka, had stressed that his support for Lithuanian independence did not involve any intention of separation from workers' organizations in other parts of previous or future parts of the USSR. After some argument, the conference passed a resolution of support for Lithuania.¹

The Lithuanian declaration of independence marked a culmination of a radicalization of national demands in the Baltic toward claiming outright independence, a radicalization that has been seen in the past period also in other national democratic movements. The people's fronts developed under the cover of *perestroika*, in the case of the Latvian front, explicitly within the tradition of Leninism and the Leninist national policy. In every Baltic republic, the fronts faced pressure from hard-line pro-independence organizations, which rejected Soviet legality in the name of the rights of the prewar republics.

In the Baltic, where the denunciation of national oppression has gone hand in hand with exposing the Stalinist lies about these countries voluntarily joining the Soviet Union and the crimes associated with the Soviet occupation, the demand for independence has in fact come to be expressed as a reassertion of the continuity of the independent republics

destroyed by Stalin's invasion.

Thus, when Lithuania declared its independence, it formally reverted to its prewar constitution, which is hardly an inspiring symbol of the radical democratization the Baltic fronts have called for. The national-democrat dominated governments in the other two republics have followed the same path. For peoples who have had only one brief period of independent statehood in their entire history, and which for fifty years have experienced a concerted campaign to destroy them in the name of "internationalism," the memory of the prewar republics takes on a symbolic importance that overshadows their less attractive features.

This is especially true for Estonians, the smallest of the Baltic nation, who are related to Finno-Ugric peoples of a similar size in the USSR, such as the Mordvin and Komi, whose cultures have been virtually wiped out, and smaller ones that have disappeared. In a chapter in the recently published major work on the national question in Estonia (*Eesti Rahvas ja Stalinus*, "The Estonian People and Stalinism"), Rein Ruutsoo wrote that while Lenin called the Russian empire "a prison house of people," Stalin made it into a "cemetery of peoples."

The speech given by Lennart Meri, now foreign minister of the Estonian SSR, in the main square of Tallinn on February 24 (published in the March 2 issue of the Estonian artistic weekly *Reede*) exemplifies this feeling. He began by saying: "Today citizens of the Estonian republic are voting in a free and orderly way for the first time since the second world war. The Estonian Congress is born. The world knows no such example, no such juridic precedent. A state crushed by armed force and terror lived through the dark days in the hearts of a million people. This state survived these dark days and is with us again like a sheltering roof, like God's protective hand. The Estonian republic that lived on in our hearts now stands before the world as the united will of a people."

High turnout for unofficial elections

He was referring to the election of the Estonian Congress, a body which stands outside Soviet legality and lays claim to the continuity of the prewar republic. Virtually the entire Estonian population participated in these elections. In principle, the Congress is based on citizens committees organized throughout the country. Similar structures exist in Latvia, but they are not as broad, although the Latvian Independence Movement is a far stronger organization than any of the hard-line pro-independence organizations active in the Congress.

The conception of the Congress originally stood in contradiction to the strategy of the front, which criticized it very

sharply in the period leading up to the elections to the Estonian Supreme Soviet. However, it became apparent that the base of the front supported both the front and the congress. In fact, the two organizations have become overlapping. The front has the largest single group in the Congress, although it is a minority. Leaders of the front, such as Maurju Lauristin and Edgar Savisaar, also participate in the Congress.

The dominant forces, however, are "radical" groups — the Estonian Independence Party, the Heritage Society [which has been a sort of front of smaller hard-line independence groups and individuals], the Christian Democrats and so on, who participate less, if at all, in the front. In general, the debates between moderates and radicals on the national question have been most developed in Estonia, where there are two overlapping but also conflicting mass organizations. In an interview in *Reede* of March 7, Tunne Kelam, chair of the Committee of Estonia (the executive committee of the Congress) described the project as a vehicle for uniting "the right and the center."

So, I was interested in finding out exactly what that meant. I asked Mart Laar, a young former dissident and a leader of the Christian Democrats, who explained that he belonged to the "right." He is writing a book on the armed resistance to the Stalinist occupation, and is the author of a general article on the human cost of the occupation, which has brought denunciations and a formal charge (not yet pursued) from the Soviet authorities²

"Right" and "left" support for free enterprise

I asked Laar if "right," meant support of private enterprise. He was astonished: "But the Communist Party is as much in favor of private enterprise as anybody; that's no dividing line". He identified the term "right" and "radical," and it seemed what he meant by it was radical opposition to the Soviet state institutions. In general, the economic programs of the various groups seem still very vague. Andres Ehin, a leader of the Estonian front and prominent writer, remarked to me that one party calling itself the "People's Conservatives" and another calling itself "Social Democratic" have indistinguishable programs.

Maurju Lauristin, one of the leaders of the front is also a founder of the Social Democratic Party. The editor of the *Looming*, the main Estonian literary magazine, dismissed this group as a bunch of professors at Tartu, who were trying to base themselves on a program for the workers after the restoration of capitalism.

Despite the vagueness of the differences among the myriad of parties in Estonia, they seem more developed here than in the other two republics. The front had to



The (Estonian) banners read "The People's Front supporting perestroika"; "The Constitution for Human Rights"; "Political Rights"; "Power to the Soviets, not the bureaucracy".

adopt a document on its relations with parties inside and outside of it at its congress at the end of May.

Savisaar, the principal leader of the front, who does not identify himself with any of the parties, does have an economic program, the so-called IME [the initials in Estonian for "Estonian self-financing," which also spell the word "miracle."] As the name indicates, it is based on Gorbachev's economic program. After a brief period as economics minister, Savisaar was elected a few months ago to the post of premier of the republic. He has said that he thinks that the country cannot afford to maintain the present level of social benefits.

It seems that the other fronts have similar economic programs. But, in general, they are put in the context of "perestroika from below," that is, the democratization of decision making in all spheres.³ There is an obvious contradiction, but it has hardly begun to be experienced in practice.

In fact, I found very little discussion of economic questions, for better or worse, at the congresses of the Estonian Front and Congress, which took place while I was in the country.

The whole discussion centered around the problems of achieving national independence. The argument is polarized between "realists" and "principled" fighters for national rights, the first with a tendency toward reformism and the second

with a tendency toward abstract notions of "legality," currently expressed as insistence on the legal continuity of the pre-war Estonian republic.

Nationalists set up defence force

The People's Front congress I attended seemed to be made up mainly of people from middle layers of the society. The Congress assembly was more popular. Former dissidents seem to be concentrated in the Congress, and the "realists" of the Front frequently attack it for an "underground" mentality. It was also marked by the presence of a large number of young monitors, the *Kaitseliit* ("Defense Union"), which was formed after unionists tried to storm the Supreme Soviet on May 14. The front congress was guarded by a professional force.

The *Kaitseliit* could be seen as a paramilitary project. It was announced that a fund has been established for it by Estonians in the US. Congress people say it numbers about 2,000. But the monitors at the Congress sessions were very far from paramilitary. A similar group has been organized by the Latvian Citizens Committees-Movement for Independence, the *Aizsardzibas Klubs* ("Defense Clubs"). But an Independence Movement leaders told me that it is only an initial nucleus of about 200 persons.

In his speech to the Congress assembly,

Edgar Savisaar stressed the dangers of any "dual power" project, arguing that it would undermine the authority of the national-democratic government of the republic and open the way for secessionist operations in areas where Russian-speakers are in the majority.

I asked a representative of the Estonian Independence Party if the hard-line pro-independence forces looked forward to the Congress forming a parallel government and taking over the society. He denied any such "revolutionary" perspective.

He saw the Congress as a means of organizing nationalist pressure on the government and the front, a sort of guarantee that it would not make any rotten compromises with Moscow. He said the goal was the election of a legal parliament of the republic of Estonia, for which the conditions were withdrawal of Soviet troops and the restriction of the vote to "citizens of Estonia."

It is notable that the hard-line independence forces have not boycotted the official elected bodies, as might have been expected from their rejection of Soviet legality.

1. See *International Viewpoint*, No. 186, June 4, for the text of this resolution.

2. For a translation of this article, see *International Viewpoint*, No. 157, February 20, 1989.

3. See, for example, the program of the Latvian People's Front in *International Viewpoint*, No. 169, September 18, 1989.

Publicly, the Congress leaders, including Independence Party leaders, call for a sort of fusion of the Supreme Soviet, the Congress and the representatives of the old Estonian republic in exile. Trivimi Velliste, leader of the Heritage Society, stressed that the leaders of the various rungs of government were often also members of the Citizens Committees.

The adoption of the demand for independence by the fronts and their gaining control of the main official institutions of government in the Baltic republics has clearly put a squeeze on the hard-line independence groups, which have tended to move, or be pushed, into the position of being seen as the conscience, or insurance policy, of the national democratic movements but no longer a driving force.

In this situation, factionalism is strong, and was very much in evidence in the congresses of both Estonian organizations. For example, there was a whole exchange in the front congress over whether speakers from the Congress had "fanatical looks in their eyes."

In an article in *Reede* of May 25 on the Congress, Rein Ruutso reproached Mart Laar for being so factional as to have voted for a Communist Party member against Maurju Lauristin for speaker of the Supreme Soviet.

Escalation of nationalist rhetoric

In Latvia, the front leaders complain about the Independence Movement escalating its national rhetoric. "Now, they keep repeating 'the Latvian nation' as if it were a litany." The Movement has now defined itself specifically an organization to defend the rights of ethnic Latvians. The editor of its paper, *Neatkariba*, Aivars Jirgens, explained to me that the Movement had in fact to find a new niche.

The Latvian Independence Movement is larger and apparently broader than the Estonian Independence Party. It has adopted an orientation of moving toward becoming a party, but Jirgens thought this would be a slow process. The Movement's main public leader, Eduards Berklavs, is a former secretary of the Latvian CP, purged for bourgeois nationalism in 1959. He was imprisoned under the pre-war dictator, Ulmanis, whose picture hangs in the office of *Neatkariba*.

Berklavs told me that he had become disillusioned with Marxist economics, and recognized that Ulmanis had done a lot of good for the farmers (badly treated under Soviet rule) but that he still believed in Lenin's national policy. That position runs counter to the attempts in vogue now to prove that Lenin was ultimately responsible for the Stalinist national policy.

Berklavs has earned a reputation for political honesty, but he was evidently trained in the Stalinist school of pragma-

tism. When I remarked that most movements of oppressed nations in the West were oriented toward socialism because they thought that effective freedom for small peoples was impossible under capitalism, he replied: "But how can you survive as a small socialist country surrounded by big capitalist states?"

Now, however, the attitude of the big capitalist states has become a concrete issue. Saavisar began his speech to the Congress by stressing: "In the past period, the illusion has been dispelled that since the West did not recognize our incorporation into the Soviet, it supported our struggle for independence. Lithuania's situation today should give everyone pause for thought. Lithuania has been put in a very tight spot, and the West has not taken one concrete step to support her."

It is not unlikely that this point was aimed at least in part at the hard-line nationalist legalists. Their position has been attractive because it seemed an uncompromising assertion of national rights: "We had a recognized independent state that was illegally occupied; therefore independence is our right and cannot be discussed," Trivimi Velliste stressed to me.

Leaving aside the broader questions, this position raises two practical problems: First, it implies appealing to the Western powers, whose unwillingness to support national struggles in the USSR and especially the radical movements is now clear. Secondly, it places the national claims of the Baltic peoples on a higher level than those of other oppressed peoples in the USSR and thereby opens the way for a division.

Human rights and national rights

This problem was raised in an article by Andrievs Ezergailis in the June 9 issue of Latvian literary journal *Literatura un Maksla* (who, by the way, began his article by stressing that he was a moderate): "It is true that the international juridical status of the Baltic...is of a different sort than that of other republics that have never managed to get free of the empire."

"This juridic distinction can never be forgotten, but it must not be forgotten either that for the world the principles of human rights are most important. Fundamentally, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine and other oppressed peoples have the same rights to sovereignty as the Baltic peoples."

Further on, he wrote: "For the Baltic peoples to trust in law at this historic moment seems absurd." He also ridiculed exiled politicians implicated in the pre-war dictatorship who were now trying to speak in the name of democracy and the 1922 constitution.

In general, the legalistic approach of the hard-liners tends to lead to illusions

that material problems can be conjured away by legalistic pronouncements. One of the sharpest debates in the front congress, for example, was over the question of citizenship. Maurju Lauristin had to warn the hard-liners that excluding Russian speakers from citizenship would "not change the demographic situation one bit."

Savisaar pointed out that although the unionists had the support of only a minority of the Russian speaking population, they had still managed to get a dangerous amount of support. At the same time as the congress, an autonomous district was declared in an area in the northeast where Russians are the majority.

The tensions in the Latvian and Estonian national movements are barely perceptible in Lithuania. The hard-line group, the Lithuanian Freedom League of former dissident and political prisoner Antanas Terleckas, has remained a handful. Terleckas himself works closely with Sajudis and told me that he does not think that political currents within it are yet very well defined.

He himself thinks that in the present circumstances the most important thing is unity. Sajudis also adopted the demand for independence much earlier, in February 1989, as opposed to the fall of 1989 for the other two.

The fact that the Lithuanians have found their only real allies to be the democratic and workers' movements in the USSR and the movements of other oppressed peoples has given the Baltic movements a strong push back toward a democratic political approach and away from abstract legalism.

In fact, the debate in the national movements is still at a relatively early stage. There are even different conceptions of the fronts. The Estonian front has a conception of itself to some extent as an umbrella body, as defined by the document accepted by the congress at the end of May. A leader of the Latvian front told me he thought that in normal conditions his organization would be a center party.

The Baltic States as a political laboratory

In many respects, the Baltic is the political laboratory not only for the national movements throughout the USSR but for Russians as well. Although the bureaucracy's control of the mass media is beginning to break down now in other areas, it is still only here that there is real freedom for political debate in front of the masses, and for mass involvement in political life. There seems to be good reason to hope that this will lead to the emergence of clearer and more rounded political currents, to broader conceptions of how to advance the cause of the oppressed peoples in the USSR and not only there. And this would have to involve new ideas about economic solutions as well. ★

A crisis programme

IN EARLY JULY the Communist Party of the Soviet Union meets to discuss its own future and that of the vast country it has ruled for over 70 years. For the first time since the earliest years of the revolution there will be organized factions at the congress.

In our last issue we published extracts from the Marxist Platform in the CPSU. Below we publish extracts from the Democratic Platform, many of whose supporters are talking openly of splitting from the CPSU at or soon after the congress.

The extracts, including the introduction, are taken from the version of the Platform published in *Pravda* of March 3.

INTRODUCTION

DEAR comrades, we propose publication of the Democratic Platform in the party's central organ, *Pravda*. It was adopted at an all-union conference of party clubs and party organizations on January 20-21 in Moscow. While it is in agreement on a series of questions with the Draft Platform of the Central Committee of the CPSU, it also differs fundamentally from the CC document, both conceptually (the conception of the transformation of the CPSU into a parliamentary rather than a vanguard party) and in its contents.

We maintain that only in conditions of broad internal pluralism, in free discussion, with the possibility to acquaint oneself with all points of view or platforms that exist in the party, can Communists make a conscious choice and clearly define what they want their party to be like in the future.

We hope that the words in the Draft Platform of the CC of the CPSU about "also considering alternative drafts" will not be out of line with what is done in reality.

The Coordinating Council of the "Democratic Platform in the CPSU", February 15, 1990.

1 Crisis in the society and in the party.

WE, Communists from 162 party clubs and party organizations from 102 cities and 13 republics of the country...are seriously concerned about the fate of *perestroika* and the crisis-wracked situation of both the society as a whole and the party.

Rooted in history, the crisis is hitting all spheres of social life. The reforms are suspended in air. Inflation is growing. Despite the measures undertaken, food supply to the population is getting worse. The list of shortages is constantly growing. Break-downs in the large-scale technological systems are taking on a threatening character.

Tension is increasing more and more in inter-ethnic relations. In many regions, the environment is in a wretched state. Crime, especially organized crime, is growing.

Political and legal reforms, the transfer of power from the hands of the party apparatus to the soviets, the establishment of legal guarantees of *glasnost* and socialist values, are being implemented in an extremely inconsistent way.

All this is increasing the discontent of the masses, leading to a decline in the authority

of the leadership, generating a growth of social tension and political instability in the society. The fundamental responsibility for the deepening of the crisis that is leading the society to a dangerous point falls on the ruling party. In the existing conditions, the CPSU itself is going through a crisis, which is hitting all aspects of the party's activity, ideological, political, organizational and moral.

Fundamental is the crisis of Communist ideology and above all its modifications, which have governed the CPSU for many decades. In contemporary conditions, in the light of new political thinking, the unsoundness and amorality of many means and methods by which the goals proclaimed were achieved, the excessive cost of the results achieved by "actually existing socialism," have become obvious. There needs to be a radical reexamination of dogmatic conceptions of the role of the working class; of the dictatorship of the proletariat; of the inevitability and necessity of socialist revolution; of socialism without a market; of the possibility of popular sovereignty without political pluralism; of the steady growth of the leading

role of the ruling Communist parties; and of the supremacy of social interests over personal ones, international over national. Today only the first steps have been taken on the road to renovating the party's theoretical baggage. The most important reflection of this crisis is the sharpening ideological-political differentiation within the party....

The party in its present state cannot handle the weight of tasks that has fallen on it — to carry the processes of *perestroika* through to their logical conclusion. Maintaining the monopoly position of the party, more exactly of the party-state apparatus in society, is extremely dangerous, not only for the society but for the party itself, because it is leading to the degradation of the party, a loss of authority and influence among the masses....

The CPSU's strategic lag revealed itself with special acuteness during the summer miners' strike, when the local authorities and the central apparatus proved totally unprepared to handle the situation, when in a series of regions de facto dual power arose. The strike committees became the power, the party-state structures held it only nominally. Reelections everywhere of administrations, union committees, party committees, demands for calling special forums were a serious warning to the ruling party.

A further worsening of the tendency to lag behind could lead to a defeat of the party in the elections for the republic and local organs of power, the results of which would be catastrophic for the CPSU.

Indissolubly bound up with the ideological and political crises is the organizational crisis of the party.... The main cement of the undemocratic character of this party, as well as of the whole political system, is the principle of democratic centralism.

Democratic Centralism

a) does not guarantee a real pluralism of opinions in the party and the possibility to defend such ideas and to criticize the decisions by organized means.

b) It does not guarantee defense of the rights of minorities, in part generated by innovating ideas, and by the same token condemns the party to permanent stagnation.

c) It does not give the right of decision making to those directly concerned; it prescribes subordination of the lower party bodies to the higher ones in all questions.

d) It bans the formation of horizontal ties, as a result of which the party apparatus becomes all-powerful and uncontrolled, able to manipulate the opinion of individual Communists, as well as of all party organizations.

g) It dictates an iron executive discipline, excluding creative initiative and activity from below, thereby regimenting the party ranks and transforming Communists into an adjunct to the party apparatus.

e) It does not permit the members of the

CPSU and elected people's deputies to express the will of those who elected them rather than that of the higher party bodies.

The second major source of the party's undemocratic character is the nomenklatura system of selecting and placing cadres for every function, leading to the "partification" of all leading posts, to the formation of a party-state elite with its own special interests, corrupted by irresponsibility, overgrown with privileges, mired in corruption and favoritism, abusing power, a part of which is intimately bound up with the shadow economy and organized crime....

In the present stage, what is necessary is not an improvement and perfection of the existing party structure and relations but a radical democratic reform of the party, involving a transition from the totalitarian model of the party to the modern democratic model of the parliamentary party in the framework of a multiparty system.

To achieve the consistent application of such a reform from below, in its radical variant, is the strategic task of the Democratic Platform, of all vanguard forces in the party.

II Radical Reform of the CPSU

In today's conditions, the primary task is to work out a conception of democratic reform of the CPSU and on this basis of an anti-crisis program for our party. Such a reform must become the centerpiece of a body of democratic reforms aimed at a thoroughgoing liquidation of the regime and transition to democratic socialism....

Along the road of carrying out the reform of the party, we see two basic stages, with the following context.

Stage 1. The transfer of power from the monopolistically ruling party to the soviets, democratization of the party.

The foundation for this stage was laid by the "March" revolution, the spring 1989 elections of people's deputies of the USSR. It involved a slow limiting of the governmental functions of the party. The party is renouncing direct involvement in economic, social and spiritual life, it is narrowing the sphere of its cadre policy, concentrating its attention on ideological-political leadership. The supreme power is being transferred to the Congress of People's Deputies and in the localities to the soviets. All this is taking place in the framework of a conception of separating the legislative, executive and judicial branches.

The leading role of the party in society is ceasing to be a constitutionally established monopoly and is being based exclusively on its authority, its ability to continue its role of initiator of the processes of *perestroika*.

A differentiation is occurring between radical and conservative wings in the parties. Various platforms, groups and factions are taking form.

At the same time, the formation of democratic structures of civil society is continu-

ing, with the formation of new political organizations and movements preparing the way for the emergence of various political parties. We consider that only a union of the progressive wing of the CPSU with the independent democratic movement of the people can give *perestroika* a real social base, extricating it from its present state of crisis.

In order to achieve such transformations in the framework of the first stage, the following are needed.

1. Revision of the constitution of the USSR (removal of Article 6 [which established the leading role of the party]) and the adoption of a law on social organizations (or a law on political parties) which must guarantee the freedom to form political parties and equality among them and define their political status.

2. An ideological reform that must find its conceptual expression in a new program for the party. We think such reform should include the following:

a) Renunciation of the dogmatic interpretation of Marxism. Using that part of the Marxist heritage that has retained a significance in today's conditions. From now on, the party must make extensive use of the leading achievements of human thought, abandoning the resort to schemas that obstruct the process of innovation and creative research.

b) Genuine avowal of the enormous responsibility that the CPSU bears for the results and consequences of the totalitarian regime in our country. There must be a full and irreversible condemnation of the state socialist model that led our society into deep crisis.

c) Scientific definition of the goals of the reforms undertaken, thoroughgoing liquidation of the totalitarian regime and a transition to a democratic society, based on a priority for general human interests and values — the principles of democracy, humanism, pluralism, social justice, non violence, solidarity and tolerance for other world-views and social systems.

3. Reform of organizational structures and inter-party relations on the basis of new democratic statutes for the CPSU.

The aim of this reform is to replace the principle of democratic centralism with established democratic principles (elections, *glasnost*, removability of leaders, the subordination of minorities to the majority within the framework of a statutory guarantee of the rights of minorities) and total rejection of the nomenklatura system.

To this end, we propose that the following principles be introduced into the statutes of the CPSU:

— Direct elections of the secretaries of party base organizations, district committees, city committees, the members of party committees and delegates to party forums, on the basis of platforms, with a variety of candidates and with the right to put forward candidates freely.

— A return to freedom for factions and groupings and ideological tendencies,

annulling the 1921 "On Party Unity" resolution of the Tenth Party Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) [which banned factions].

— Establishing the possibility of forming horizontal structures in the party (for example, associations for general, functional, professional and other interests).

— Freeing the party control commissions and mass media from subordination to the party's executive organs, making them responsible only to party congresses or conferences.

— Continuation of the mandate of delegates to party congresses and conferences for the entire period leading up to a new forum (if delegates are not recalled).

— Liquidating special privileges and benefits for the chosen team and apparatus, which undermine the party's authority.

— To replace the nomenklatura system by elections, competitions and other mechanisms for selecting cadres.

— In view of the growth of national consciousness of the peoples, of the growing tendency of the republics to independence (and the possibility of adopting a new treaty on the formation of the USSR), transition, as conditions ripen, to the federal principle for the structure of the CPSU in accordance with the structure of our state, forming a Communist Party of Russia.

The immediate bounds and character of this transitional stage will be largely determined by the bounds of political and ideological pluralism in the party itself. The faster and deeper the process of democratizing the CPSU goes, the gentler and less painful will be the transition to full power of the soviets and the formation of a multiparty system.

Stage 2. The transformation of the CPSU into a parliamentary party operating within the conditions of a multiparty system, a parliamentary and constitutional state.

It seems to us that the possibility of transition to this stage depends first of all on the definitive consolidation of the authority of the soviets and the creation of a new parliamentary and constitutional state; secondly on the emergence of mass political parties and organizations able to participate in a real way in the formation of governmental organs of power and to assume responsibility for ruling the country; and thirdly on the transformation of the CPSU into a real, modern democratic party ready for dialogue on an equal footing with other political forces, including those in opposition to it.

All this makes possible a transition to a parliamentary system with proportional representation of the parties in the organs of power in accordance with the direct expression of the will of the voters. The logical foundation of this stage is the preparation and holding of regular (and special) elections of people's deputies of the USSR.

While we are for maintaining our party's leading positions, we consider that the CPSU's right to political leadership has to be gained exclusively in elections and con-



problems facing the society.

In this period, the party will concentrate its attention on four basic functions — the programmatic (the elaboration of socio-economic, political and other programs offered as alternatives within the parliamentary system of the country), the political (the fight to win a majority of the seats in elections for the organs of power at all levels, and, in the event of victory, to form the government and carry out its election program), the ideological (championing, in conditions of ideological pluralism, its own ideological positions and views, propaganda and agitation for its ideas, bringing citizens over to the side and into the ranks of the CPSU) and the organizational (the organization of inter-party relations on genuinely democratic bases). The maximum simplification and decentralization of the party structures, liquidation of excess intermediary links between the Central Committee and the party base organizations will be underway.

A further democratization in internal party life will be carried out in accordance with the principle that decisions taken by the party organization in the framework of the powers invested in it are not subject to being overturned by higher organs. A mechanism will be created for holding referenda on basic questions in the life of the party and its separate organizations. The parliamentary fraction of the CPSU will get wide autonomy in its activity and be subordinate only to the party congress.

In this stage, definitive organizational differentiation will take place between the radicals and conservatives in the party. The various ideological currents, platforms and factions arising in the previous stage can become a basis for the emergence of several political parties proposing different models of socialism and roads to achieving it....

Supporting radical reform of the party, we at the same time do not harbor any illusions that the conservative wing of the party, the party apparatus, will eagerly accept such transformations. A stubborn struggle lies ahead. And we are convinced that if the CPSU continues to try to maintain its leading positions, based on popular confidence, then there is no alternative to democratic reform. In this event, if the healthy forces in the CPSU do not carry through democratic transformations, the crisis will inevitably lead the party either to political bankruptcy (as in Poland) or to the iron fist (as in China)....★

The end of the social democratic "miracle"

THE former minister of finance, a leading Social Democrat, joins the board of the the biggest Swedish company, Volvo. The May 1 demonstrations are reduced to around half the usual size and in at least one town the demonstration is suspended for political reasons. The biggest trade union in Northern Europe, the municipal workers' union in Stockholm, with 50,000 members, says no to continued affiliation to the Social Democratic Party and demands the resignation of the chairman of the main trade union confederation.

The government prepares a new law to protect six of the highest ranked police officials in the country who are being prosecuted for illegal interception of Kurdish and Palestinian refugees. The proposed law is withdrawn only after massive protests from legal experts. Members of parliament grant themselves a salary rise of 20% at the same time as new figures show that an average workers' family has lost 16,200 crowns [\$2,700] in purchasing power since 1976.

MARIA SUNDVALL

THESE are some snapshots of Sweden this May, snapshots that reveal a political and social climate in transition, not to say in crisis.

This crisis will no doubt come as a surprise to many people in other countries who are at this very moment being taught that Sweden is a model of harmonious social development. The "Swedish model" is right now being marketed from Poland to Spain, from the Baltic States to New Zealand.

The Swedish model is most often described as a system which combines a high standard of living, social security and a social pact between the government, big industry and the trade unions — the latter exercise strong influence without resorting to strikes. And it is true. Thus described, the Swedish model has existed and in some aspects continues to exist.

But those who make propaganda for it tend to forget something essential — the "model" was constructed under very specific historical conditions for Swedish capitalism as well as for the Swedish working class movement.

To understand the historical peculiarities of this situation, we have to go back 101 years to the foundation of the social democratic party, the SAP, in 1889. The SAP was founded as a party "based on class struggle" but was from the very start influenced by the development of the

revisionist wing in the German SPD. As early as 1886, the future party leader Hjalmar Branting, declared that parliamentary elections could replace revolution as a means of taking power.

The Swedish working class at that time was a young class, recently immigrated from the countryside, growing rapidly from 50,000 industrial workers around 1860 to 265,000 in 1900. This inexperienced working class poured into the trade unions, which at a very early stage became extremely centralized. There they were joined by a layer of intellectuals coming from the liberal circles, among them Branting himself.

Early bureaucratization of Social Democratic Party

These two factors — the rapid growth and centralization, the inflow of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals — facilitated an early bureaucratization of the social democratic party and of the trade unions. It also facilitated the growth of reformist influence.

The consequences of the bureaucratization were successively seen — politically as a strengthening of a line of class collaboration, organizationally as a weakening of the workers' control over their own organization. Here are some memorable dates in that development:

● In 1906 LO, the Swedish trade union confederation, signed the so-called

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"December compromise" with the employers' association. A compromise giving the workers the right to sign collective agreements, in exchange for accepting the notorious article 23, giving the employers the right to freely employ and dismiss workers as well as to organize work. This was less than what some militant unions had already achieved in local agreements (for instance, the closed shop system), and the compromise led to workers' protests, which however failed to change the agreement.

Historic general strike ended in defeat

● In August 1909 LO reluctantly called for a general strike, after more than a year of a campaign of wage reductions from the employers and after the employers' association had threatened to lock out 80,000 workers. After one month of the strike the LO decided to break the strike front and only keep half of the 200,000 workers out. Defeat was assured and in the aftermath of the strike 20,000 workers lost their jobs. Many radicals were black-listed and had to leave the country. Several thousand of the most radical trade unionists also left LO to form the anarcho-syndicalist federation. So the result of the strike was that LO kept only half its membership and the left pole within the trade union movement was considerably weakened.

● In 1917 there was a big rise in mass activity, expressed in strikes and hunger revolts. As a result, the social democrats got into government for the first time, in coalition with the liberals. The same year, a few months before the elections the left within the party had left to form what was to become the Communist Party.

But no sooner had the social democratic ministers taken office before they started to make a compromise with the liberals on the issue of universal suffrage, which was one of the most urgent demands raised in the mass actions.

● In 1928 a law on collective bargaining was passed, taking a big step to limit the possibilities of striking through the introduction of the "peace obligation". That is, conflicts are forbidden as soon as the central agreement is signed.

● In 1938, LO and the employers signed the "Saltsjöbaden agreement" establishing a network of rules to regulate bargaining and limit strikes. This process continued throughout the 1930s and 40s and the result could be summed up in the following way — it is almost impossible to wage a legal strike in Sweden today.

In every branch the leadership can veto a strike. What is more, the central leadership of LO with 15 persons, can veto any strike that affects more than 3% of the members of any branch within the LO!

The first social democratic government was formed in 1932 and the SAP remained in government — with a few

exceptions such as a broad coalition during the war and an alliance with the farmers' party in the 1950s — until 1976. During this period Sweden changed totally, from an agricultural country to a modern industrial nation. A huge public service sector took form, reforms in all fields of life were introduced and social wealth increased. All of which the social democrats claim are the product of their wise government.

But there can be no doubt that what was more important was the fact that Sweden did not participate in the Second World War. During the war Swedish factories could produce at full pace for the countries at war. In 1945, Swedish factories were undamaged and could compete favorably with the industries of war-struck Europe. Swedish capital could thus draw the maximum benefit from the post-war boom, when it began in the late 1940s.

It was during this period that the Swedish model took shape. A leading Social Democrat coined the phrase, "what is good for industry is good for Sweden" and this became the lodestar of social democratic politics. The Social Democrats opted for a long term stable alliance with the most modern sectors of Swedish capital — the companies producing for export — and gave them benefits accordingly. Society was restructured in the interests of big industry, tens and maybe thousands of workers had to leave their homes and native regions and move to the new factories.

They were rewarded with rising wages, better housing and better education for their children. And it seemed that these rewards were the result of the parliamentary work of the SAP, in collaboration with big industry and without resorting to class struggle methods.

Emptying of political life from workers' movement

This peaceful development together with the already extreme degree of bureaucratization and centralization contributed to an emptying of all real life out of the workers' movement. The SAP branches today have virtually no rank-and-file activity. Trade union meetings are normally attended by a few handfuls of members, even in big factories. The distance between the workers' leaders and "the led" has grown bigger and bigger. The present LO chairman, as an example, has a salary of 560,000 crowns a year — while his average member earns around 140,000.

In the 1960s we could witness a wave of youth radicalization and the formation of a "new left" in Sweden — a left that was often formed on questions of international solidarity rather than on a sharp-eyed criticism of class society at home. This left came out of the middle classes and had a very small base in the tradition-

al workers' movement.

For this new left, the relationship to social democracy became a key question on which there was much vacillation. But the different new left organizations coincided in claiming that social democracy could not be reformed, arguing that social democracy had made a historical option of serving the interests of big capital. This was possible in times of economic boom, but would inevitably lead to a crisis in periods of capitalist crisis. In such a situation the SAP would not be able to change its basic line.

This is exactly what is happening today. In 1976 the Social Democrats lost the elections at a period of increasing crisis for traditional Swedish industry — in the mining, ship building, and textile industries amongst others — and of increasing unemployment.

Drastic devaluation of Swedish crown

Six years later, in 1982, the SAP got back in government after a period of increasing workers' discontent with the bourgeois governments and their austerity packages. The first measure taken by the Social Democratic government was to devalue the crown by 16%. A drastic austerity measure, widely exceeding anything the bourgeois governments would have dared to do.

Things have continued in the same way. The Social Democrats claim to have chosen the "third road" avoiding the double evils of inflation and unemployment. The basic message of the "third road" has been directed at the workers: "The country has been mismanaged by bourgeois governments. We must repair all that, getting industry working. And that can only be done if we allow profits to get higher. So you workers will have to wait a few years until things are better and you can get your share."

There was an initial willingness to accept this bitter pill. The traditional strong links between the Social Democrat-led trade unions and the government were a guarantee for that.

But it was soon obvious that the results of the "third road" were not increased investments and flourishing industrial activity but the growth of an unproductive speculation economy and a massive redistribution of income from the public sector and the low wage earners to the banks, the private companies and the richest 10% of the population.

As a radical trade unionist stated a few years ago: "The third road has become a cul-de-sac for the workers and a motorway for the capitalists." The British financial magazine, the *Economist*, applauded Swedish economic policy a few months ago, describing it as more Thatcherite than Thatcher.

The right wing turn by the Social Democrats is not confined to economic

issues. The government has decided to restrict the possibilities for refugees to enter Sweden, whilst it is favourable to a proposal to import "guest workers" from the Baltic States. The government has decided to build a new motorway near Gothenburg and a bridge across the Channel to Denmark, siding in this with Volvo against strong public opinion, including inside the SAP, demanding a reduction in car traffic and pollution. The SAP claims that Sweden cannot join the Common Market, given the country's traditions of neutrality, but at the same time is collaborating with the bourgeois parties and industry to quietly bring Swedish legislation nearer and nearer to *de facto* entry into the EC. There have also been a whole series of decisions and proposed laws restricting civil liberties and democratic rights.

There has been a slow growth of working class reactions, one of the more important being the launching of the first "Dala rebellion" in 1985. This is a rank-and-file movement in the trade unions, which over the past years has waged campaigns against the unjust redistribution of income and in favour of higher wage increases. At the beginning of 1989 the Dala rebellion organized a meeting bringing together 500 trade unionists from around the country.

Passive discontent shows through in elections

There have also been actions against the new motorway construction projects. There have been massive protests against the recent restrictions on immigration with month-long vigils in churches throughout Sweden. There have been a few examples of long and militant strikes, for instance in one of the SAAB car factories. But in general the situation has been marked not so much by active protest as by passive discontent, expressed for instance in the elections of 1988. The SAP lost 200,000 voters in these elections and 900,000 voters abstained.

But none of this can be compared to the explosion of anger and discontent this spring. At the beginning of February the social democratic government proposed a package containing a wage freeze and a ban on strikes. These measures were proposed just as the municipal workers — who have been the big losers in the last ten years of austerity — threatened to strike for higher wages.

The answer was immediate and spontaneous. Short strikes of protest, thousands of workers leaving the social democratic party, big sections of the trade unions immediately stopping all financial contributions to the SAP, demands from all over the country that the LO leader Stig Malm (who had accepted the strike ban) should resign. After a little less than a week, the social democratic government retreated and withdrew the strike ban —



"What's all this fuss about Moscow?" — Turmoil in the VPK (Swedish Communist Party).

which anyway, given the "normal" restrictions on strikes, was an unnecessary provocation.

Even parliament rejected the new deal (though the Communist Party, the VPK, hesitated long before deserting its traditional line of compromise with the Social Democrats) and the government resigned — only to come back in the same shape a week later. The only difference was that Kjell-Olof Feldt, the minister of finance and future Volvo board member had decided to resign. The "new" government at once introduced a new austerity package, this time with the support of the liberal People's Party, a package that is not so provocative, but still hits working people hard. Combined with a new tax reform decided upon last autumn, it will increase inequality.

The acute crisis has passed, but social democracy cannot feel safe. Opinion polls indicate that there is an increasing number of voters — around 17% — who do not know which party to vote for. And the VPK has been gaining, recording nearly 9% in recent polls compared to 6% at the last elections.

Also, for the first time there is a sign that the discontent is finding active political forms. One sign is the formation of a new workers' party, the Workers' List, which was first announced at the end of January and finally founded with almost 2,000 members at the end of May.

The Workers' List addresses social democratic workers frustrated with the policy of income redistribution and has attracted some of the more important spokespersons of the Dala rebellion. An early opinion poll indicated that up to 26% of the voters could imagine voting for the Workers' List. Obviously this gives an inflated idea of the List's real support, but it indicates that many workers are prepared to consider an alternative on the left.

But there are also problems in the formation of the Workers' List, one of them being a lack of programmatic clarity on many issues, and another one being its relation to other left currents. The Work-

ers' List has so far kept its distance from the VPK, not wanting to be associated with "decaying communism". But in reality there are very small differences on most current issues. The congress also took a hesitant position on a proposal for an electoral alliance with the VPK in the general elections of 1991, the hardest opponents often being Workers' List members coming directly from the social democracy.

Socialist Party indicates path to new workers' party

Members of the Socialist Party, the Swedish section of the Fourth International, have argued that a new workers' party can only be formed through the coming together of different currents, as a result of practical collaboration in the work places and in trade union struggles. The party has argued that such a new organization must keep an open structure and see itself as a melting pot of different traditions, organizations and individuals. Several SP members also took part in the initial setting up of local Workers' List branches and were elected as delegates to the congress. These delegates were however forbidden from taking part in the congress, in spite of the fact that the congress itself decided that dual membership should be allowed during a short transitional period.

The VPK has also been affected by the current changes in political climate. The party was Eurocommunist before Eurocommunism, but still failed to cut all its links with the East European and Soviet bureaucracies. Nor did it draw the necessary conclusions concerning the construction of socialism. This party, which has founded so much of its legitimacy on the capacity to get parliamentary agreements with social democracy, has also been affected by the crisis of the SAP. An increasing number of party members and voters have questioned the agreements on tax rises, on reductions in public budgets and so on that the VPK leadership has hurried to make. The party lost 6,000 members in the 1980s and now has slight-

ly less than 13,000 members. Over a longer period the party's social composition has changed — it is now dominated by high salary white collar groups in the public sector, and has virtually no base in the factories. The party's paper is suffering a grave financial and political crisis.

Against this background the VPK held its congress from May 23 to 26. As the result of a meeting held earlier this spring with representatives of the VPK, the SP, the Workers' List and independent trade unionists, the party leadership proposed that the congress support an electoral alliance. The proposal also had the purpose of achieving a compromise within the VPK between the "renewers" who want to change the party's name, omitting the "K" for communist, and who in general want to accelerate the rightward turn of the party, and the so-called "traditionalists" who want to keep the "K" either because they do not want to cut links with Stalinism or because they oppose social democratization.

This proposal was, however, sacrificed at the congress in order to preserve party unity. The VPK chairperson, Lars Werner, in his opening speech decided to back down on the leadership compromise and opt for a more rapid "renewal" changing the party's name. With the support of a minority of the congress (136 for, 133 against with 4 abstentions) the party decided to follow his line and took the name "The Left Party".

And, in the process, the idea of seeking broader alliances and electoral unions was dropped and forgotten. After the congress leading VPK members — who however did nothing during the congress — are trying to minimize the importance of that decision and are not ruling out an electoral alliance.

Common left front difficult to achieve

This decision, as well as the decision of the Workers' List, will make it more difficult for all those who would like to see common action on the left in the coming period. It is a fact that broad mass activity has been held back during the last years not out of satisfaction with the policies being pursued, but because there has been a total lack of positive examples of class struggle and because of the lack of real, credible alternatives to social democracy.

Today we can see a small upsurge in the struggles, but there is still an imperative need to strengthen all forms and forums of unity — a task that is going to be central to the Socialist Party in the coming period.

It is a task that must be undertaken, whether within the framework of the Dala rebellion, in united action against racist attacks on refugee homes, in coordinated campaigns against entering the Common Market or in continuing the fight for a united left slate in the elections. ★

Step forward in fight for abortion rights

THE framing of the new abortion law in Belgium caught the attention of the world's media when the king refused to sign it. After getting a majority in the Senate, the law was passed with 61% support in the Chamber of Deputies. After a short delay the law came into force on April 3, 1990. This is the first time that the 1876 abortion law, which is based on the French penal code of 1810 and which absolutely forbids abortion, has been amended — and in a fundamental fashion.

IDA DEQUEEKER

WOMEN decide: According to the new law, women can legally obtain an abortion up to 12 weeks after conception if they find themselves in a situation of distress. All they have to do is inform a doctor of their situation, which they define for themselves. The abortion must be carried out by a doctor in a medical institution. This means that in practise it is the woman who decides whether or not to have an abortion. This is all the more true in that a network of abortion clinics already exists where abortion is carried out according to these principles. Abortions that are carried out without reference to these regulations remain an offence, except in cases where the health of the woman is seriously endangered or the foetus has an incurable disease.

This partial, but important decriminalization of abortion is without doubt a belated — and therefore unacknowledged — recognition of 20 years of actions by the women's movement and the left. At the same time it is the result of the development of the political relation of forces, and the decline in the power of the Christian party, the CVP, which has historically tried to reconcile the different social classes in Belgium and has been the main political instrument of the Belgian bourgeoisie.

A parliamentary breakthrough: The text of the new law is dated 1985, when a proposed liberal/socialist law was presented to the Senate. Despite the fact that at the time the government was a liberal/democrat/Christian coalition, the proposal got onto the parliamentary agenda. Previously, even much less radical proposals had not got this far. The CVP always managed to block any debate, forbidding any questioning of the ideological basis of the Christian workers'



allegiance to the CVP.

Why was there this breakthrough in 1985? This is a long story. While in 1973 a doctor from Liège, Dr. Peers, spent 33 days in preventative detention for openly stating that he carried out abortions at the request of the women concerned, by the end of the 1970s such a thing could no longer happen. Several university clinics were openly carrying out abortions, and there are abortion centres in Wallonia [French speaking Belgium] and Brussels. Another centre was opened in Gand in Flanders in 1980.

In other words for some years the law has been openly flouted. Starting in 1974, against a background of big mobilizations on the abortion issue, a series of Belgian governments, always including the Christian Democrats, tried to avoid confronting this explosive question. In 1974, abortion was referred to an "Ethical Commission" which came up with a split verdict — 13 for a change in the law, 12 against. Several attempts by the Liberals to introduce into parliament slight changes in the law ran up against the opposition of the CVP.

For a whole period the courts, while waiting for the law to change, had adopt-

ed a tolerant attitude to the developing pro-abortion network. However, in 1982-3 judicial attacks recommenced. These attacks were arbitrary, introducing a situation where rights were not secure. In 1985 there was a monster trial of 52 helpers and patients in the abortion centre in Gand. Marijke Colle, a member of the Belgian Socialist Workers Party (POS/SAP — Belgian section of the Fourth International) was among the accused, as president of the centre. Nonetheless, a survey found that in 1985, Belgian citizens underwent 15,940 abortions, of which some 5,000 were carried out in the Netherlands and the rest in Belgium itself.

Thus, even from the point of view of a bourgeois democratic state, an intolerable situation was developing. Nonetheless, the CVP maintained its totally uncompromising attitude, while from the other side the notion of a minimal compromise became increasingly less acceptable under the pressure of the way that the real situation was developing.

This polarization was the background to the liberal/socialist alternative that was to form the basis of the new law with the support of the Greens. This alternative had the merit of corresponding to the practise of abortion as it really existed, which was felt by much of the population to be a gain, as well as matching the conceptions of an important part of the population. Furthermore the bill had a good chance of getting passed given the electoral decline of the CVP. At the same time the CVP, the eternal party of government and the incarnation of the austerity policy, was facing a growing degree of autonomy on the part of the Christian workers' movement. On top of this, since the 1987 reform of the state, the CVP, the majority party overall, has had to confront the Socialist Party (PS) which is the majority party in Wallonia.

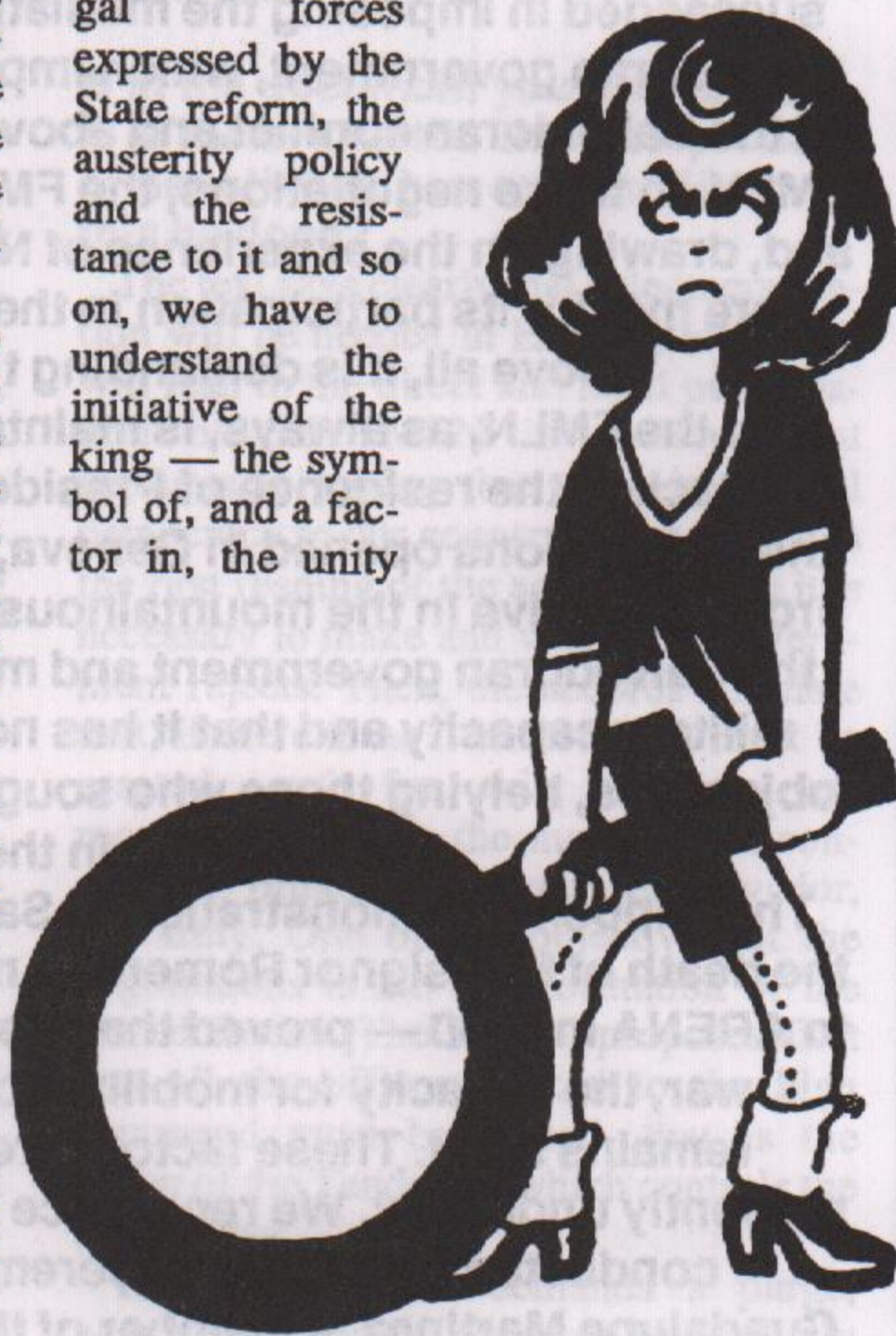
With its traditional "nyet" against any movement on the abortion question, the CVP ended up clearly in a minority, supported only by the extreme right. Its efforts to use the advice of the State Council to block the liberal/socialist proposal, or to arrive at a more moderate consensus, ended in failure. This left the CVP in a cleft stick, expressed in contradictions within its own ranks. One position, put across by the prime minister Martens, concerned with the stability of the government, supported a "realistic" approach, another, represented by the party president Van Rompuy, upheld ideological purity.

The fundamentalists, who had threatened to bring down the government if the law was adopted, had in the end to bend to the realists, after a further effort to find a compromise — permitting abortion in cases where the health of the woman was in danger and in cases of rape or incest — came to nothing. Even the declaration with which the CVP tried to console itself

— pointing to its majority position in Flanders — vanished into thin air after the vote, when it turned out that a majority of the Flemish deputies had voted for the law.

The king: With hindsight we can perhaps identify another reason why the CVP maintained its rigid attitude for so long. The court made it known in a discreet fashion that the very Catholic king was opposed to the proposal. But in vain. When the law was passed, the king renounced his constitutional duties. He refused to sign the law, referring to insurmountable problems of conscience.

Was this just a caprice of the "melancholic" king? No. In the Belgian political context, with growing centrifugal forces expressed by the State reform, the austerity policy and the resistance to it and so on, we have to understand the initiative of the king — the symbol of, and a factor in, the unity



of the country — as a conscious attempt to intervene in an authoritarian fashion, using problems of conscience as a pretext. The parliament unanimously let the king off, recognizing his temporary inability to govern. Thus as the ministers signed the law in his place, the king could address the nation as its just and principled father. Some 55% of the citizens were found to "understand" this attitude. Could this be a precedent allowing in other circumstances a royal intervention from above the parliamentary melée? All the parties, including the socialists and the Greens, covered up this intervention by the king — who according to the constitution, as king, does not have the right to freely express his political opinions — with moralizing about the king, as a human being, having the right to a personal conscience.

Socialists: Throughout the whole history of abortion legislation in Belgium, the Socialists have not shown much initia-

tive, either inside or outside parliament. A Socialist bill introduced in 1974 to change the abortion law while taking into account the sensibilities of the CVP, had the merit, together with the first public statements by doctors, of launching the public debate on abortion.

But even in those days the new women's movement, as well as a part of the traditional women's movement, found the proposals unsatisfactory. They wanted the recognition of a woman's right to choose. It was only in 1978, after the big mobilizations by women in the 1970s around the slogan "abortion out of the penal code, let the woman decide" that the Socialists put forward a bill to decriminalize abortion. The women's movement and the revolutionary left supported this proposal. But the SP itself did not mobilize: there was no attempt to arouse a broad social movement to support the bill and no policy was developed towards the Christian workers' movement — for example demanding that it would, for democratic reasons, not place obstacles in the way of a parliamentary vote. The party hid behind the fact that there was not at the time a majority in parliament for the proposal. Having more or less regilded its banner, the SP put the abortion question off indefinitely.

When now at last a satisfactory change in the law no longer appears ruled out in the parliamentary arena, the Socialist parties, who have just re-entered the government are doing everything to limit extra-parliamentary actions of support, which they cannot control. The argument is that we must not upset the delicate balance in the parliament and government. The Greens think in the same way, from fear of negative electoral repercussions.

The women's movement and the left: But nothing can change the fact that the parliamentary victory was preceded by 20 years of extra-parliamentary action in which the women's movement and the revolutionary left were the irreplaceable driving force. They played this role in the big united mobilizations of the 70s (abortion out of the penal code); the abortion committees and their constant struggle for a broad united front; the actions to raise awareness such as the national women's day in 1976 around the theme "abortion, let the woman decide"; the foundation of the illegal abortion centres, which work according to the principle of a woman's choice; and the mobilizations against the trials of patients and helpers at abortion clinics.

All this activity produced the profound change in people's thinking which created the conditions under which women can with dignity demand a fundamental democratic right that has been so long denied them by the patriarchal ideology of the family — the right to control their own bodies.

This activity allowed abortion to be looked at rationally. Thus, the existence

of means of having an abortion has not increased the number of abortions. On the contrary. The number of abortions in Belgium varied between 18,000 and 34,000 between 1968-1972 but was 13,000 to 15,000 per year in 1978 to 1982. The ending on the ban on distribution of contraceptives in 1973 seems to have led rapidly to their generalized use. In Flanders at the start of the 80s, three out of ten pregnancies were unwanted. Some half of these pregnancies were voluntarily terminated. The evolution in social attitudes has surely also had its impact in the Christian milieu.

Only this can explain the silence of a whole series of Christian base organizations when the CVP stated its positions on the recent legal changes. The Bishops' rejection of the new law has also had no impact on the population, who have for a long time been putting the new law into practice.

Ideology: The separation of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary fields of action, the fruit of the Socialists' efforts, has had a negative effect on the terms of the debate. The keystone of the new law is the right of the woman to decide — her right to self-determination. The supporters of the new law restricted this idea in liberal terms of "personal liberty", that is as a conflict of interests between woman and embryo, a conflict of values between the right of the woman to dispose of her own body and the "right to life". This leaves open a space for the right to step forward as the defenders of the rights of the unborn child, weak and defenceless. This approach also skirts round the issue of the problems of maternity under capitalism, tied to the specific oppression of women within the family. The right to abortion implies both the right to refuse maternity in general and to reject specific oppressive form of maternity. This latter poses the problem of alternative, non-oppressive forms of maternity. All this was certainly not on the parliamentary agenda — even despite the fact that abortion is one of the crimes "against the family order and public morality". Inside the women's movement this has always been an integral part of the discussion on abortion.

Let us return to everyday political reality in Belgium. Despite the fact that Belgium has just adopted the new law, the parliamentary debate is far from over. To console the CVP, parliament has voted to set up an Evaluation Commission. This commission is to assemble statistics and also give its advice on further legislation.

On the basis of this commission's reports, there will be a parliamentary debate every two years. Thus the next parliamentary session on abortion will be in the winter of 1992-93. Even if the CVP and its allies will find it difficult to reverse the gains made, it is still necessary to be vigilant. ★

Peace is still a long way off

INTRODUCTION

THE FIRST YEAR of the government of the extreme right National Republican Alliance (ARENA) of President Cristiani reveals a bloody balance sheet — 3,285 deaths, 2,074 detainees and 249 disappearances. According to the Salvadoran Human Rights Commission, the armed forces were responsible for 2,868 murders. The electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua has impelled the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) to give serious consideration to the question of negotiations. It has succeeded in imposing the mediation of the United Nations on the Salvadoran government, which implies an international recognition of the Salvadoran conflict and above all of the belligerent role of the FMLN. In these negotiations, the FMLN is demanding early elections and, drawing on the experience of Nicaragua, that certain conditions are met for its participation in the political life of the country — above all, it is demanding the purging of the army.

But the FMLN, as always, is maintaining its military pressure; thus it attacked the residence of President Cristiani on the same day as the discussions opened in Geneva, and it subsequently launched a broad offensive in the mountainous region of Morazan. It has shown the Salvadoran government and masses that it has maintained its military capacity and that it has not abandoned its revolutionary objectives, belying those who sought evidence of capitulation in its participation in the negotiations.

The imposing demonstration in San Salvador on the anniversary of the death of Monsignor Romero — murdered by death squads linked to ARENA in 1980 — proved that, despite repression and a decade of war, the capacity for mobilization of the revolutionary forces remains solid. These factors are decisive in the negotiations presently underway. We reproduce below extracts from an interview conducted by Radio Venceremos with commandante Ana Guadalupe Martinez, a member of the FMLN delegation that has met with the Salvadoran government.

WHY has the Salvadoran government finally agreed to meet the FMLN?

The government was not very happy to meet us under the auspices of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar — it was forced to do so in order to safeguard its military capability. There is a debate going on now in the United States on the continuation of military aid to the Salvadoran army — after ten years of war, the latter has not been capable of achieving the goals initially set for it by the US Congress. The offensive that we launched in November 1989¹ has then led to a debate in the United States — some observers have begun to ask why the FMLN has not been weakened by these ten years of war, and why the army continues to violate human

rights. At the beginning, the United States wanted to make the army a professional corps and to contain "communism" — they have not succeeded.

The opening of the negotiations in the presence of the United Nations marks the victory of ten years of armed struggle in El Salvador.

■ **In your opinion, the United States have put pressure on the Salvadoran government to participate in this meeting?**

The army and the government did not wish to accept the presence of Perez de Cuellar — for them, the active role assumed by an international organization like the United Nations in such a process confirmed the recognition of the FMLN as a participant in this conflict and officially established the existence of another army

and another force in El Salvador. For if the United Nations is willing to play the role of mediator, it is because there are two armies fighting each other and not phantoms, as the government pretends.

If there is a mediation, it is because you have two powers which confront each other, without either being capable of victory. The FMLN is not just an army, but also a representative social force which is at the source of an established duality of power — that is what explains its popular support. The Salvadoran government is today obliged to recognize that it is not in a position to defeat the FMLN and that is a severe blow to it.

Some claim that this meeting implies the surrender of the FMLN — this is absolutely not the case, on the contrary. The Salvadoran left would never have won the legitimacy and the recognition which it enjoys today without our struggle. In Europe, the left is used to enjoying a certain political space, even if this is contested — its militants can agitate freely and different ideas coexist within society, even if they are not in a majority. In Central America, and above all in El Salvador, to be on the left was a "mortal sin", which people paid for with their lives, before the existence of the FMLN. Today, progressive, democratic and left ideas have some weight in our society. The legitimacy of the FMLN as a participant in political dialogue is admitted by international governments and organizations, and above all by the people of El Salvador. Such a conquest would have been impossible without these years of armed struggle. (...)

■ **The principal theme of the next meeting will be the cease-fire. What will the position of the FMLN be?**

The document we have just signed at Geneva is clear — a process of negotiations is needed culminating in concrete agreements before a cease-fire is discussed. The thesis of the Cristiani government, according to which the sole problem to resolve in El Salvador is the integration of the FMLN in the process of democratization, is thus contradicted.

The signing of this accord confirms that there is no democracy in El Salvador and that the cease-fire can only be concretized to the extent that effective steps are taken towards democratization. The armed struggle remains legitimate, it is a guarantee for change. The accord implies then — and it is a leader of an opposition party who has underlined this — that the armed struggle guarantees and preserves this process of democratization.

It is necessary to be aware that the war will continue to be a determining factor in the negotiations. The FMLN also thinks that, in the situation today, the two parties are going to make efforts to maintain the relationship of military, political and social forces, with the goal of imposing their point of view at the negotiations. The FMLN must then preserve its military

capacities, the support which it enjoys and, above all, international solidarity — it is this which can make the government yield. The time has not come for the disarmament of the FMLN to become a political party, but rather for the battle for real change in El Salvador. The government will be obliged to make concessions.

Today, it is not necessary to limit oneself to demanding democracy for the countries of Eastern Europe, it is necessary to demand it also for the third world — in El Salvador, the whole society demands it. ARENA² and the Salvadoran government find themselves very isolated on this subject. If the "danger of communism" is no longer on the order of the day, why does the United States oppose an opening up of Salvadoran society? That is the question.

■ **In the document you have signed, it is clearly stated that the process of negotiation has opened. How will this be done?**

The text says clearly that a democratization will be needed in El Salvador which will lead to the direct and legal participation of the FMLN in society. That amounts to saying that there is no real democracy in our country today — that is the first reading of the accords which it is necessary to make and which the government rejects. Then, the accords stipulate that, if there is no democracy, it must be created, and for this, changes are required, of which the most urgent concern the principal power in El Salvador, the army. One of the objectives of the negotiations is the transformation of the armed forces. The FMLN proposes first that all the officers linked to the high command must be retired, that is the group of the Tandonas³, which controls the army today.

The FMLN then demands a purge, which is moreover accepted by virtually everybody. Then, the FMLN wishes that the army take on a professional character — to do this, it is necessary to transform its structures but also its way of thinking, and one can only change the ideology of the army by changing its source, the military school. At the end of the negotiations, the size of the army must be reduced. Finally, it is necessary that the police no longer depend on the army — they must be attached to another ministry with different and specific tasks.

In the domain of justice, it is good to remember that Salvadoran laws have always had a limited practical reach, to the extent that our judicial system is not independent and does not find itself free of pressures. It is necessary then to create a new independent system of justice, which is not linked to the ministry of defence. The judges must no longer be afraid, nor run the risk of disappearing, if they indict a soldier — they must have sufficient authority to bring criminals to justice, even if they are members of the

armed forces.

We think that a law is also required to defend human rights and that those who violate them should be punished in an exemplary fashion.

In El Salvador, more than in any other country, economic reforms, and notably agrarian reform, must be discussed during the negotiations. The specific problem of the land has a historic link with the forms of social violence that we have known in our country. Inasmuch as agrarian reform is not realized and inasmuch as the peasants do not dispose of genuine legal guarantees on their land, the latter will be prepared to continue to fight — and there will always be people ready to take up arms in El Salvador, even if the FMLN was no longer to advocate it.

Reform of the electoral system will be another key element of these discussions. The framework currently in position in El Salvador has the function of preserving the power of the party which is in government — the percentage of people who vote for the right in our country has hardly changed since 1982 (around 500,000 people).

If the electoral system is changed so that people can register themselves on the electoral lists, a million new voters will arrive on the political scene. ARENA fears such a situation for it is convinced that this new electorate will vote above all for the left or the centre, and that they have not registered before now because of the influence of the guerillas — above all in the countryside. The youth who were eight years old in 1980 are already of voting age. The problem of registration on the electoral lists thus interests all the political parties. We want then to see a healthy development of the electoral system — in El Salvador, until now, international observers only arrive on election day.

In 1991, there will be municipal and legislative elections. If ARENA loses its majority in the Assembly and the municipalities, it must face a society in its majority opposed to it, which will dispose of legal means to dispute the political terrain with it and which could put local self-management into practice. The government has said that the negotiations must not go beyond the framework fixed by the Constitution and that this itself cannot be reformed. It is necessary then to remove ARENA's majority in the Assembly, to be able to change the constitution and legalize the negotiations. In this context, the

1. See IV 174, November 27, 1989.

2. The National Republican Alliance (ARENA) is an extreme right formation (led by, amongst others, Major d'Aubuisson, who was behind the assassination of Monsignor Romero in 1980) with known links with the death squads — it has been in power since the presidential elections of 1989.

3. Some officers who today lead the Salvadoran army graduated from the same military class and are known as the Tandonas. They are favourable to the pursuit of low intensity warfare, under the leadership of the United States, and have declared themselves hostile to any negotiation with the FMLN.

elections of March 1991 are very important.

■ Will the FMLN definitely contest the next elections, and under what conditions?

It is necessary first to stress that our armed struggle for elections is finding new support — our arms have become guarantees for the holding of the elections and, whilst many thought that the armed struggle would lose its legitimacy in El Salvador, it has become the guarantee of the electoral process. The FMLN has appeared then as a necessary and even vital force for the democratization of the country.

The armed forces find themselves in a contrary situation. The counter-insurrection is losing its legitimacy and its justification — fighting the FMLN because it is anti-democratic and communist — is today no longer valid. The army has become the sole obstacle to political opening in El Salvador.

The United States sees this change in a negative way and asks itself if it should continue to unconditionally support the army in its continuation of the war. The army will suffer pressures from a number of directions, but above all from the US. We think that a certain goodwill exists on the part of the US, which by no means implies an acceptance of our positions — this creates a new political context, different from the counter-insurrection, if the US envisages reducing the economic and military aid to the Salvadoran government. We live then in a very important time — and these negotiations imply above all changes for the army.

It is important for it to play a determining role in the conflict and to establish a reign of terror. If there are political negotiations, a restructuring of the judicial system and if the image of the army as untouchable is shattered — if, for example, the soldiers who murdered the Jesuits are punished — the people will understand that they have the right to have left wing ideas and even to speak about them, without being menaced with torture or disappearance. All these changes would also constitute guarantees that the elections will take place with a real popular participation. The FMLN does not think that these negotiations will be easy, or rapid. It knows that very many things are still required — in the political as in the military terrain — so that the army accepts that it is no longer the centre of power. Even if new space is won before the elections [the electoral campaign begins in December 1990], the FMLN will not yet transform itself into a political organization. However, it could support the elections and establish certain accords with the government and the opposition so that the ballot is fair.

20 If these changes occur in the context of the negotiations, the FMLN could not advocate an electoral boycott, as it has

until now — but, if things do not go forward, it is possible that Democratic Convergence⁴ and even the Christian Democrats will put in question their participation so as not to run the risk of defeat.

■ You would consider supporting the Christian Democrats?

Who has spoken of that?

■ You seem to put them on the same plane as Democratic Convergence...

History has twists and turns, it is not linear. A year and a half ago, the Christian Democrats were our principal enemy, when they were the government⁵ — but today, they have the same adversary as us, ARENA, and it would be foolish of us to fight against the government without coordinating ourselves.

It has not been easy for us to arrive at this conclusion. First, because the Christian Democrats had, at their origin, direct links with the United States in the counter-insurrectionary war and they obviously appeared in the eyes of Salvadorans as having responsibility — or in any case co-responsibility — for a difficult period in our history. But, today, they are also the victims of persecutions, some of their members have been arrested and they have suffered the same fate as we suffered at their hands when they were in government — its members have thus become very much more realistic.

If they lose the elections again, their party will break up — the demands for democratization made by the FMLN protect them then also, to the extent that they open up political space. (...)

The question of support for the candidature of the Christian Democrats does not even pose itself, for the FMLN has its own equivalent amongst the political parties, Democratic Convergence. If the latter reaches agreement with the Christian Democrats, we will see if we will support indirectly such a coalition, through not appealing for a boycott, for example. But we are not going to tell the people to vote for the Christian Democrats. However if such an alliance could beat ARENA, and if we wished to be consistent with our own positions, as a democratic left, we must establish or propose conditions to assist this electoral victory.

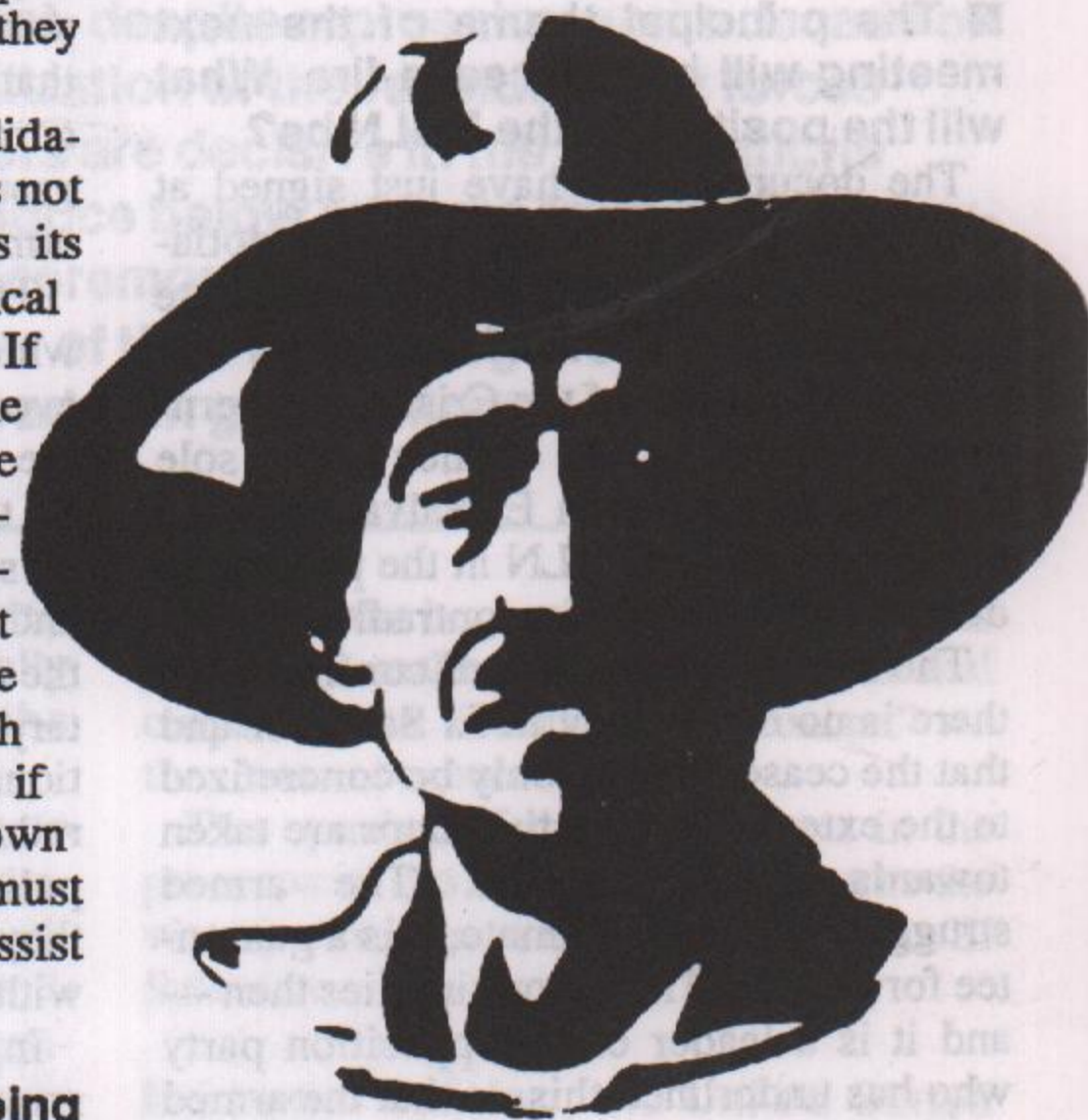
■ How is the military situation going to evolve in the context of negotiations?

The thesis of the government, according to which it was necessary to have a ceasefire before entering into negotiations — because, they say, the people want peace — has fallen to pieces; that is an important element. In developing this discourse, ARENA wanted to benefit from good conditions for governing, both by drawing out the negotiations and reducing

our military pressure. Today the Geneva accords have recognized that a process of democratization is necessary to lead towards a cessation of hostilities. The war is going to be pursued then over a certain period, with the same intensity, until an agreement is reached — it could even revive itself if the army blocks the negotiations too much.

It is necessary to stress that the agreement for the negotiations is not contradictory with the pursuit of military activities by the FMLN. The army, for its part, will also try to maintain pressure on us. The discussions underway do not then imply an immediate peace, on the contrary, the military confrontation could be stronger, inasmuch as a definitive accord is not reached.

At this moment, the FMLN must restore a legitimacy to its war and to the armed struggle. At the same time, it is obliged to take account of what the population thinks of its actions, if they wish to meet the aspirations of the masses. If some of our operations are misunderstood by the population, we will be obliged to change our tactics — but this does not mean that we are ceding terrain to our enemies, it is the proof of our will to respond to the aspirations of the people. It is in this context that we should analyze what the FMLN will or will no longer do. For example, because of the economic crisis, some demand that we steal trucks carrying food supplies to redistribute them — some operations of this kind could increase the popularity of the FMLN in the popular neighbourhoods.★



4. Democratic Convergence was created in 1989 at the initiative of formations which were part of the FDR (Revolutionary Democratic Front), in turn allied to the FMLN. In particular the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR) of Guillermo Ungo (a member of the Socialist International) and the MPSC (Social Christian Popular Movement) of Ruben Zamora are involved. Democratic Convergence received 4% of the votes in the presidential elections of 1989 (see IV160, April 3, 1989).

5. The Christian Democrats were in power between 1984 and 1989.

Negotiations and Reorientations

THINGS are changing very quickly in South Africa. Although nobody can say precisely how the accumulating contradictions will be resolved, the negotiations between the ANC and the government are continuing and becoming more serious. We have previously explained in these columns the national and international reasons for the sudden turnaround. The new policy of the Soviet Union combined with the rise in the mass movement, the government's desire and need to profoundly change social relations, and, finally, the ANC's decision to accept the given framework, are the main factors in the making of the new situation.

PETER BLUMER

THE government wants to get its reforms going quickly. Just recently apartheid in hospitals and public places was abolished, now there is the possibility of a conscript army including non-whites and the abandonment of the "independence" of the Bantustans¹. The Johannesburg *Business Day* of May 17 summed up the situation by explaining that the movement towards a non-racial society is going at such a speed that it cannot be stopped. These governmental reforms are underway even before the real beginning of constitutional negotiations. The country's big bourgeoisie has consciously and deliberately made the choice to establish a new framework for the functioning of South African capitalism. International pressures — sanctions and the need to attract new investment — have obviously played a role. But this would not have been enough to force the ruling class to set the present changes in motion. In reality, de Klerk seized an exceptional opportunity to engage in a radical restructuring of the system of rule.

It is thus essentially on the institutional terrain, and not in terms of the main socio-economic options, that the relation of forces between the ANC and the government will find expression. In the constitutional domain, in fact, nothing has yet been done. Here there is the problem of finding a compromise between the mass movement's demands for universal suffrage and the need of the ruling National Party to preserve the specific rights of the white community.

Apartheid minister demands minority rights

On May 11, Gerrit Viljoen, minister of constitutional development, explained that minorities must have the right to guarantees, among others the holding of regular elections, safeguards against the dictatorship of a single party, a charter of inalienable rights, the maintenance of a system of economic liberalism, guarantees against a communist dictatorship, separate schools, rights to property, the maintenance of discipline in the security forces, representation of minorities in the government and so on. It is amusing to see these people presenting themselves as defenders of democracy.

But aside from these ramblings, it is clear that the current project is to abolish the traditional racial classifications, in favour of a new institutional system that permits the white community to defend and continue its privileged place in society.

This is the real content of the negotiations — the ANC has accepted that social and economic questions are not the proper grounds for a confrontation with the regime. The situation seems to imply a high degree of tactical flexibility on the

part of the ANC leadership. In Europe, Nelson Mandela demanded the continuation of economic sanctions to put pressure on the regime. At the same time he appealed for offers of investment and aid to help the development of a new South Africa and a redistribution of wealth in favour of the blacks, as an alternative to state intervention. It is said that inside South Africa he is playing the card of social appeasement². Does it still have to be proved that what the ANC is interested in today is political rights and institutions rather than socio-economic transformations — as the Freedom Charter itself states³?

We are thus seeing a new political development within the liberation movement — the social project is kept vague and fluid at the very moment when full-scale constitutional negotiations are underway. This situation is evidently not due to chance. The discussions in course are in no way the last step before the "victory" as we might be led to believe by a number of declarations from the leadership of the mass movement. Thus far all of the compromises have been made by the ANC rather than the government — whose hand did not have to be forced to suppress petty apartheid.

Reforms accelerated by new world situation

As De Klerk made quite clear in his speech of February 2, the acceleration of the reforms is permitted by a number of guarantees, including the new world situation. Thus what is at hand is a very profound reform of the state and the forms of social control, and not the transformation of South African socio-economic rela-

tions. Apartheid may disappear, but the mechanisms of "racial capitalism" will remain, guaranteeing the white community its control of the means of production, and maintaining something very similar to the present racial and social divisions through inequalities of income.

Negotiations will centre on electoral system

The negotiations between the regime and the ANC will be over the electoral system and its possible projection in parliamentary and governmental terms. A possible solution would be a stage by stage transition (the principle of an interim government has already been accepted by the ANC) and a very complicated electoral system that would satisfy both the ANC's demand for "one person, one vote" and the concern of the regime to weight the "white vote" in relation to the "black vote".

There are several unknown factors remaining. The first is the radicalization of the fascist extreme right, around the Movement of Afrikaner Resistance (AWB), led by Eugene Terreblanche, and the Conservative Party, currently the main opposition party in parliament. We will

1. One of apartheid's grand plans was to make all the Bantustans into "independent" states, giving a definitive justification to the theory of the separate development of the races.

2. A strike at a brewery in the Cape at the end of 1989 saw the MDM (the COSATU and United Democratic Front leaderships) intervene to negotiate over the heads of the union in the plant. More recently, Nelson Mandela intervened in a healthworkers union (NEHAVU) to bring a strike to an end. And the MDM intervened during the Welkom events in favour of an end to a consumer boycott of white businesses.

3. The Freedom Charter, the ANC's historic programme, contains a proposal for sweeping nationalization under the title "the people shall share in the country's wealth."

have to wait and see up to what point the government compromises with these forces and whether it will be ready to repress them. The events in the mining town of Welkom, where, on May 16, murderous clashes took place between black miners and white supervisors, give some indications of what the future may hold. In this town, the far right, which is very organized and well established, has set up a 4,000 strong armed militia, which the government has been unable to dissolve. There has been no attempt to bring the leaders of this fascist underworld to justice. The Broederbond, a sort of Afrikaner freemasonry, which is very influential, was won over to reformism several years ago. It is now proposing an "Afrikaner conference" to calm things down. This shows that, whatever the openings to the ANC, the regime still has to respond to the pressure from the far right in one way or another. The government will find it hard to keep its balance.

Civil war in Natal continues

The other big problem is that of the civil war in Natal between the supporters of the reactionary Zulu movement, Inkatha, and youth sympathetic to the ANC. Nelson Mandela's appeals for an end to this endless and murderous confrontation have had no effect. The government is hoping to gain some purchase on the situation by presenting the army as a pacifying element and using the Inkatha leader Buthelezi as a firm link in the negotiations.

A final and decisive aspect of the situation is that of the changes going on within the liberation movement. The strike movement is still at a high level and the new conjuncture has without doubt given renewed vigour to the political debate in the mass organizations. The direction of the negotiations, the autonomy of the ANC in relation to them, the future of the workers' struggles, and trade union independence are at the heart of the debates. In this framework strategies and programmes are being rediscussed and redefined, giving glimpses of the rapid changes in the political profiles of various currents and organizations.

The present opening is allowing all the currents to massively increase their direct influence. This means first of all the ANC, which is going to pick up support among black workers and the petit bourgeoisie,

and even among whites. The Congress is capable of drawing support from a very wide social spectrum, which will present new problems in terms of leadership and where the social centre of gravity should be. The ANC is today in a position to build a real implantation amongst the non-white employers, throughout the middle classes and among the traditional African notables. This will provide a counter pressure to that coming from the workers and popular layers.

In the shadow of the ANC, the Communist Party is set to strengthen its influence in the union movement and among youth. The SACP hopes to combine its "agreement" with the rest of the ANC leadership

away from its working class bias. We should be ready for an inevitable sharpening of inter-class ideological conflict in the run-up to victory and its immediate aftermath. This is not an argument for narrowing the base of the ANC. It is an argument for consolidating and massively extending our party and the trade union movement as independent forces and part of the liberation alliance."⁵

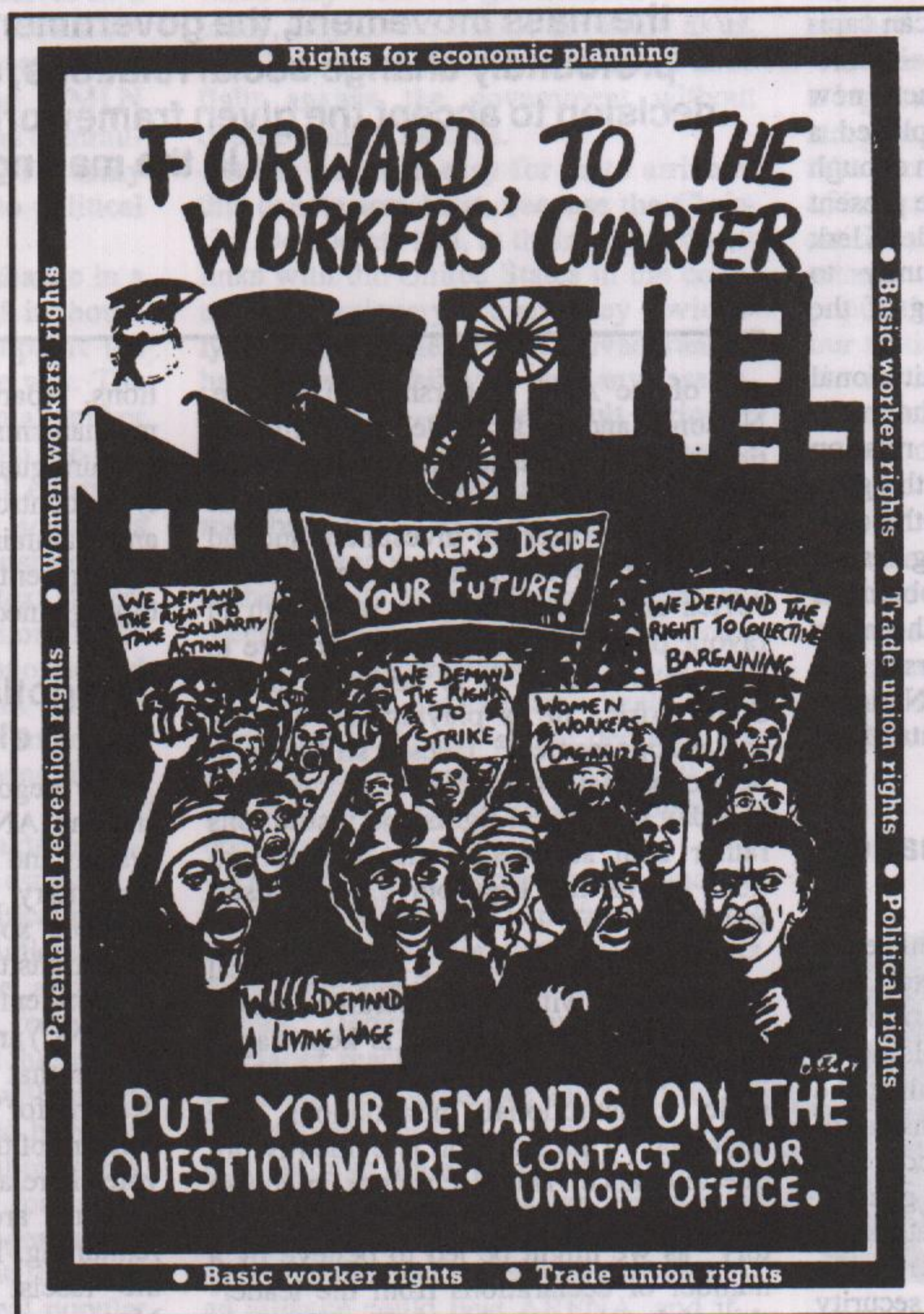
For its part, the Pan Africanist Congress has benefited somewhat from the doubts and resentments aroused by the ANC/government negotiations. The PAC has publicly opposed these discussions, but has shown itself incapable of presenting a clear strategic alternative in terms of building a mass movement. The PAC, which has little understanding of how to enter into debate and joint work with the large layers under ANC influence, finds itself reduced to denunciations.

Far left could expand influence

The far left may find space to grow if it can avoid the PAC's mistakes and take into account the fact that the majority of the unions and popular movements are today controlled by the ANC and the SACP. The scale of the debates inside these latter as well as the continuation of a high level of struggle provide the opportunity for the far left to go beyond propaganda and act as a new component of the political scene, giving answers to the burning problems of the day.

The debates in the union movement as well as in the Communist Party vividly show the stakes and their relation to the new international situation. The SACP leader Joe Slovo has been giving many interviews both in South Africa and abroad. The variation in what he says, depending on who he is speaking to, shows that the party has also decided to address a

very wide range of audiences. It is also notable that, overall, the interviews that he has given in Britain⁶ are less radical than those in which he addresses the militant currents in South Africa. However let us begin by looking at Slovo in his most



with a specific appeal to the workers and unions. The party is well aware that it is going to get increasingly difficult to keep a balance between support for the line of the ANC, which is today openly reformist, and its own professions of faith in favour of socialism. Its leader, Joe Slovo, recently gave an even more explicit than usual description of the ANC-CP schema:

"We need now to build an ANC of massive strength and every party militant must help to make this a reality. In the building of a mass-based ANC it is inevitable that some strata with their own agenda will flock into its ranks and will, consciously or otherwise, seek to steer it

4. See IV 179.

5. *South African Labour Bulletin*, Johannesburg, May 1990.

6. See notably *Marxism Today*, London, March 1990.

7. The SACP remains faithful to its old Stalinist positions on the necessary stage of a "democratic state" before the struggle for socialism is posed. For several years, faced with the rise of socialist ideas amongst young people and the union movement, Joe Slovo evoked the absence of a "Chinese wall" between the two revolutions.

SACP leader assesses Stalinism

JOE SLOVO has published a self-critical balance sheet of Stalinism entitled "Has socialism failed?" It has been presented as a personal contribution "approved for publication" by the party. It is a very important text, since the communist leader returns to the past errors of his party with regard to the USSR, the balance-sheet of the crimes of Stalinism and the complicity of those who did not see or want to see. One part of the text is dedicated to the defence of socialism.

This pamphlet is worth a few remarks. In his balance-sheet, Slovo talks of "distortions" in the functioning of socialism. Although he describes the extent and horror of these "deformations", he does not draw any conclusions about the existence of a particular political and social regime in the USSR, that is, the rule of the bureaucracy. This affects the analysis of the present events in the Soviet Union as well as a thorough balance-sheet of Stalinism.

He also leaves out any reference to the world Stalinist movement, in which his own organization had fully participated. This leads him to a total silence on the political theories of Stalinism which parties such as his own are reproducing to this day. Finally, he gives much space to the acceptance of multi-partyism in a socialist society.... However this is done to show that he is not opposed to other social classes having their own political representation. As for the working class, however, it has only one party — the Communist Party, led by Joe Slovo!

This is a really important document. It recognizes many truths that the SACP has denounced with violence for years. It thus offers a good basis for discussing with the militants of this party. It can also be tested against what actually happens on the ground, now that Slovo has announced that it is necessary to end the sectarianism and exclusions of the past. ★

developed and left-wing guise. An interview in *South Africa Labour Bulletin* of May 1990 gives the flavour. In this review, which is basically aimed at very politicized left-wing circles, Joe Slovo presents the current political processes as constituting the phase of the "national democratic revolution".⁷ The way in which he approaches present tasks implies the idea that a "victory" is on the order of the day, echoing declarations made in the union movement and parts of the ANC explaining that "we must prepare ourselves to govern". Thus all the themes treated, from democracy to economic reforms are dealt with as if there was a debate on the tasks of the national democratic revolution — in total contrast with what Mandela has been saying and the explicit content of the official negotiations. The ideas of the communist leader must thus remain extremely abstract since they do not seem in any way to start from the real relation of forces and the concrete situation.

Slovo refers to "People's State"

Like all the COSATU (Confederation of South African Trade Unions) leaders, Slovo uses the term "post-apartheid state". At the same time, he spells out that this state could and should be a "People's State" — something very rarely made public by the SACP. He then embarks on an interesting description of an uninterrupted transition to socialism.

When the journalist takes up the question of nationalization Slovo first takes the precaution of correctly pointing out that a simple transfer of property is not the end of the matter. But he adds: "It must be able to achieve effective control over the direction of the economy, for the purpose of beginning to redistribute wealth." Further on, he returns to the point: "If capital says: 'right, we are no longer prepared to invest because of the social direction you are following,' we can neither ignore the fact, nor can we allow it to dominate our policies."

This, it appears, should convince those who have, for a long time, been asking the SACP to spell out the social and political content of the transition and what the party calls the national democratic stage.... The problem is that Slovo also has another set of proposals, which amount to a new theory of the "mixed economy". Thus in the British euro-communist journal, *Marxism Today* he says: "We must accept an historic truth, which was ignored in many of the socialist countries, that there is no Chinese wall between systems which succeed one another...." And in the French daily *Libération*: "There are a lot of clichés about the question of nationalization. It is necessary to redistribute the riches in our countries. But there can be no policy on redistribution without compensation. Even with regard to the sectors of the public economy that are privatized. The important thing is that the working class reinforces itself in an organized way in

order that the fruits of its liberation are not confiscated by an exploiting class of another colour."

Ambiguity in Slovo's Ideas

One of the main ambiguities of Joe Slovo's often contradictory ideas is that he uses the current experience of the application of market mechanisms in the Soviet economy to justify his position on the mixed economy. But whatever opinion one has on the reforms in the USSR there is an immense difference on this point between a country where there is no bourgeoisie, nor a capital nor a labour market, and a country like South Africa, where the economy is dominated by six or seven big companies and a big bourgeoisie. What comparison can there be between these two situations in a theoretical debate?

Via such confusions, the SACP is in the process of carrying through a fundamental political reorientation within the leadership of COSATU, in particular in the trade union left. A type of new realism is progressively winning over some leading circles in the unions, notably those who, a short while ago, were calling for class independence and socialism. The confusion reaches its height when, in these circles, the idea that access to "power" is coming shortly fuses with the acceptance of the given framework of negotiations and compromises, or when a critique of command planning (confused with any sort of national and centralized planning) mingles with a slide towards forms of co-management in the minds of currents who have traditionally fought for workers' control.⁸

Rapprochement between COSATU left and SACP

The spectacular rapprochement between the COSATU left and the SACP is often presented as the result of the destalinization of the latter. In reality what is involved is a much more complex evolution, through which certain of the main metalworkers union leaders seem to have rendered the impasse in which they have found themselves into a grand theory.⁹ Confronted by the ANC's hegemony and the deterioration in the level of activity of

8. For example, Bernie Fanaroff, one of the metalworkers' leaders, explained that, taking account of the failure of "command planning" in Eastern Europe "the workers in factories and businesses [in South Africa]...can push their bosses to give subsidies and grants to improve the housing and education system; they can also push businessmen to put pressure on the state to spend more resources in these areas." *Weekly Mail*, Johannesburg March 9, 1990.

9. Alec Erwin, one of the main leaders of the metalworkers and of COSATU writes: "Command planning can achieve structural change but causes stagnation in productivity and living standards; the market imposes an efficiency discipline on producers and increases variety and quality if carefully managed"... "Finally, economic restructuring will have to go hand-in-hand with building a new democratic state in South Africa... Our democratic future depends on our own *perestroika*." *Weekly Mail*, Johannesburg, March 30, 1990.

the unions, they are tending to pass from understandable tactical preoccupations to political convictions largely similar to those of the CP.

These ideas are going to run up against two problems. The first is that of the real — as opposed to pretended — political line of the CP with regard to the ANC. The CP explains, in effect, that in its struggle for a socialist society it is first necessary to go through a stage during which the big democratic and national questions are resolved. It is in the name of this stage that it is engaging through and alongside the ANC, and taking full responsibility for, the course of the negotiations.

Now, there will very quickly arise a contradiction between the theory of the full and complete resolution of the democratic and national tasks by a "post-apartheid state" and the coming compromise with the existing regime. Without radically reducing the concept of democracy it is hard to see how the current discussions can lead to an authentic solution to the big democratic and national demands, including putting an end to racial discrimination and exclusion through poverty.

Problems of democracy in workers' movement

The other problem which will confront the COSATU union leaderships is the growing deficit in democracy inside the workers' movement itself. There has been a progressive withering away of the system of control from below and of shop stewards' organization. The financial independence of COSATU is very limited in this respect. And the more political or strategic a decision is, the more certain it is that it will be taken at the top. This was where the decision was taken that the union leaderships should take part in the official negotiations and situate itself in a "strategic alliance" with the ANC and SACP.

This raises a very serious problem of union independence, and it is thus a further contradiction for the CP who claim that their *raison d'être* is to defend the independence of the working class in the political battles underway.

In general the width of the gulf between the professions of faith in the imminent victory of the liberation movement and the extreme realism of the concrete proposals is astonishing. This is the case, for example, with the unions' project for a Workers' Charter. This debate will reach its culmination in September with a congress bringing together the two main confederations, COSATU and NACTU.

In COSATU today the debate with the rank-and-file over the elaboration of the Workers' Charter amounts to a five-part questionnaire concerning questions which, however important, have nothing to do with any project for a different soci-

ety.¹⁰ At the start it was the union left that put forward this project in order to enter into a debate on the perspective of an independent workers struggle against capitalism.

Political break with capitalism not posed

All this has nothing to do with the idea of equipping the working class with a programme starting from immediate demands and going on to sketch out an anti-capitalist project. It is rather a question of drafting a labour code — a very democratic one, but without posing any political break with the capitalist organization of the enterprises and labour market.

Finally even the content of the Freedom Charter is being called into question. The debate on nationalization, in which Mandela himself took part, is indicative. On May 23, in front of several hundred businessmen he stated in substance that "nationalization and redistribution" are not the only economic words in the ANC's vocabulary.

According to him, the country should draw its inspiration from the anti-trust laws in force in the United States and Britain to avoid concentrations of economic power. Participation in the administrative councils of the enterprises by directors named by the government would also be a possible option for the state.

The perspective of a sweeping nationalization of the big trusts has thus been abandoned. For the ANC leader the problem bears less on the economic mechanisms than on the composition of the government. The principle of a government where the ANC and De Klerk's National Party would openly cohabit is now openly accepted.

How, in this case, can one imagine the near future in terms of the "transition" and victory of the "national democratic revolution"? ★



10. The questionnaire sent to the rank-and-file to formulate this Charter talks of the rights of the workers (conditions of work, social security and so on), union rights (negotiations and strikes), the rights and protection of women, family assistance and political rights, essentially the independence of the unions from the state. Of 24 questions, only one asks, in a very general manner, "What political rights should workers have?"

ARGENTINA

Mayday against Menem

THE Argentinian left has just scored a success against Peronism, through the organization of a united demonstration which brought 100,000 people together in Buenos Aires on May 1, at the appeal of the United Left coalition (whose components include in particular the Movement Towards Socialism — MAS, an organization of Morenist origin which had two deputies elected at the last elections in 1989 — and the Revolutionary Front of National Liberation — FRAL, a Communist Party front), with the participation of organizations of the independent left.

Despite the criticisms made of the government's policy by certain bureaucrats of the General Confederation of Workers (CGT, led by the Peronists), the latter did not appeal to their supporters to demonstrate on May 1, for fear of being dwarfed by the mobilization of the left.

Since the end of the dictatorship, Argentina has experienced an unprecedented crisis. There are now 2 million unemployed, 45% of the inhabitants of the capital are living in a state of poverty, and 1.2 million children are suffering from malnutrition. Successive devaluations have not arrested inflation. After having pardoned all soldiers guilty of violations of human rights under the dictatorship, Menem, a good pupil of the International Monetary Fund, has undertaken a sweeping privatization program (including railways and telecommunications) and has threatened to forbid strikes in the public sector.

On May 1, however the left showed that it was capable of competing with Peronism in the workers' movement, and it has taken a big step forward. ★

FRANCE

The deconcentration of capital?

LONG term changes in the structure of employment in numerous European countries underline certain problems of organization for the workers' movement. Industrial restructuring and changes in the labour market are favouring an erosion of the workforce in the big industrial and commercial workplaces. In other words, the growth of employment in small firms rather than big leads to a greater dispersion of the workforce, and often to a lowering of collective consciousness and means of organization.

All this is as yet only a relative tendency but it has already had political consequences. In France, for example, more than half of the workforce now work in enterprises of less than 50 people. A recent survey (in *Le Monde*, June 13, 1990) concluded that in France employment in enterprises of more than 500 workers fell from 20.7% in 1975 to 14.6% in 1986. In the building and public works

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sectors, 4% of workers only work for big companies, whereas 36.1% are employed in firms of less than 20 workers. This phenomenon, combined with an absolute transfer of workers from industry to the tertiary sector, weighs heavily on the experience and political consciousness of the workforce.

In such countries as France, the labour movement faces a considerable challenge if it is to avoid a rapid degradation of trade union organization in the work place. ★

SOVIET UNION

Supporters of the "Chilean model"

The March 23-29, 1990, edition of *Nouvelles de Moscou* contained an article by Youri Korolev entitled "The economic defeat of Allende". Korolev, who worked in the ministry of the economy under the Allende government, reviewed the economic factors which, according to him, led to the defeat of Popular Unity and led Chile into the "impasse from which Pinochet emerged".

In opposing the the choice of economic and social policies undertaken by the Allende government to the "natural order" of the existing international organization of production, Korolev condemns all alternatives to the "neo-liberal" economic models which have been imposed by the International Monetary Fund in most Latin American countries and in many other parts of the world.

In his opinion, "a national renaissance, in opposition to imperialism as a system, constituted the fundamental idea of the Chilean concept. And it is also this that constituted the principal danger".

Korolev, whose positions are now indistinguishable from those of the most stalwart defenders of the "Chicago Boys", the monetarist advisers who helped Pinochet develop the famous "Chilean model", affirms that, contrary to other military dictatorships whose leaders "understand nothing of economics and who, in the best of cases (...) think only of the well being of their cor-

poration... Pinochet bought to Chile some gifted young scientists from the economics faculty at Chicago, and put them at the head of the ministry of economics and finance. Ten years later, they have reached their objective".

For Korolev, there is no doubt about the success of Chile, whose economic growth, "rose last year to 10%" and which is "a powerful competitor on the world market". The social costs of this "success" are consciously overlooked by Korolev. [See next issue of *IV* for an analysis of the "Chilean miracle"]. ★

SYRIA

International appeal

AT THE END of March 1990 15 people were arrested after writings were painted on walls in the town of Yabroui, to the

north of Damascus comparing the Syrian president Hafez-el-Assad to the late Romanian dictator Ceausescu. Some of the prisoners are still being held and one of those arrested died two weeks later, as a result of internal haemorrhaging caused by ill treatment while in the hands of the security services.

Faced with this kind of repression and the constant violation of human rights in Syria, a Committee for the Defence of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria has been set up in France. It has just launched an international appeal:

"A state of emergency has existed in the Syrian Arab republic for the past 27 years with its corollaries: a total absence of individual and public liberties and permanent violations of human rights. There are more than 18,000 political prisoners in Syrian jails. Most of those arrested suffer physical and moral torture which are systematically practised. Several have died.

The signatories of the appeal are demanding from the Syrian government:

- The immediate freeing of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.
- An end to the state of emergency and the laws and decrees flowing from it.
- Respect for democratic rights and, in the first place, freedom of expression and of the press, of political and trade union association and demonstration."

To support the appeal write to *International Viewpoint*, 2, rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. ★



Sri Lankan left back on the coalition path

THE RENEWED fighting between Sri Lankan government troops and Tamil separatist guerillas has underlined the continuing political instability gripping the island. The following article, written before the latest outbreak of fighting by two leaders of the Nava Sama Samaja Party, a Trotskyist group, focuses on the response of the major left parties to recent political developments.

NIEL WIJETILAKA AND S. KANDASAMY

BY MAYDAY 1990, the United Socialist Alliance (USA), the major left front, was showing signs of cracking. The Alliance was formed as an alternative to the main bourgeois parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). The Alliance was in a position to put forward a programme against the Sinhala chauvinist forces and pursue a bold campaign for the rights of the Tamil-speaking people.

Bitter lessons of past coalitions

However just before Mayday 1990, the USA split. The Stalinist Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL) and the ex-Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) set their eyes on an alliance with the bourgeois SLFP on the basis of a parliamentary coalition, notwithstanding the bitter lessons of the previous coalitions with this party in the 1960s and 70s. The left of the alliance resisted this trend and on Mayday the USA forces found themselves holding three different demos and rallies.

The old left parties, namely the LSSP, the CPSL, as well as a split from the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (the SLMP-V), held a rally together. The SLMP and the Trotskyist Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) held separate Mayday rallies and marches. The ensuing crisis, eagerly seized upon by the bourgeois press, has caused considerable confusion amongst the working class.

The immediate reason for the present crisis is the policy pursued by the CPSL. After the assassination of SLMP leader

Vijaya Kumaratunga the CPSL floated the idea of an alliance with the SLFP. The NSSP and SLMP were firmly opposed to this idea. These two latter parties therefore decided to put up Ossie Abeygoonesekera of the SLMP as the left candidate in the 1988 presidential election, an election which proved to be a fierce battle to defend the rights of the Tamil speaking people against the murders of the chauvinist JVP and the repression of the UNP government.

The presidential election became an open clash between the left on the one hand and the reactionary and chauvinist forces on the other.

A number of leftists and their sympathizers were murdered by the JVP and meetings in support

of the left's candidate were attacked. An NSSP central committee member, Comrade Chamdrawimala, was killed at the very first propaganda meeting in a JVP bomb attack. A prominent SLMP leader, Deva Bandara, died when the JVP opened fire at another meeting. The NSSP General Secretary, Dr. Wickremabahu, was also very seriously injured in this incident.

Scepticism within socialist alliance

Against this background both the LSSP and the CPSL tried to make out that they were supporting Ossie, while actually supporting Bandaranaike of the SLFP. Thus it is no surprise that the people who had supported the USA became sceptical and disillusioned, particularly with the CPSL. The bitter experience of the coalitions of the 1960s and 70s cannot easily be forgotten by the working class. The old left parties, which were once a major force in the country, were seriously weakened precisely because of their coalitionist policy.

Moreover the CPSL and LSSP's mass base soon dissolved into the SLFP. Where the LSSP as concerned, those class conscious elements who still remained in the party waged an internal battle against the coalition with the SLFP, resulting in a sizeable Trotskyist faction breaking away to form the NSSP. The left-leaning elements which had earlier dissolved into the SLFP then broke away from that party in 1983 to form the SLMP.

People were prevented from participating freely in the 1988 presidential election. The JVP's campaign for a boycott

greatly facilitated the victory of the ruling UNP's candidate, since, while the total vote cast was at an all time low of 50% (in sharp contrast to the 80% turnout in 1982), Premadasa, the winner got some 25%. The CPSL took advantage of this situation to fall back on its customary coalition line. At its 1989 congress, the CPSL passed a resolution calling for the formation of an anti-UNP front with the SLMP on the grounds that the USA could not pose a credible alternative. In order to avert opposition from the rank-and-file, this coalition was presented as merely an anti-UNP agitational front.

1989 was the peak year of the rural Sinhala petty bourgeois uprising. This movement, which started off with brutal killings of political opponents, was shifting to the urban areas, where working class forms of struggle were adopted (strikes, hartals and so on) though of course such actions were forced down the workers' throats by the JVP. However there was also real voluntary support for strike action, in for instance the transport sector. Against this background there was considerable demoralization in the ruling class and armed forces.

Tamil front in power in north-east

The Premadasa government came close to collapse and a bewildered capitalist class began to make a frantic search for a way out. The government's problems were further aggravated by the presence of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in the North and East of Sri Lanka, and the agitation directed against the government by the left-oriented Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), which was in power in the North-East under the newly introduced Provincial Council System.

It was thus clear that the people had no faith in the Premadasa government. All capitalist sectors were trying to push former prime minister and opposition leader Sirima Bandaranaike to take over the reins of power. The NSSP called for the establishment of a Provisional Government consisting of all opposition parties and groups, including the LTTE and the JVP and democratic organizations such as the trade unions, for the purpose of ensuring free and fair elections. The idea was to have an ad hoc body purely for this purpose. But the reformist current in the USA proposed that there should be a provisional government consisting only of the parties represented in parliament, a proposal supported by the SLFP and sections of the UNP.

However, instead of struggling for the overthrow of the UNP government, the reformist leaders participated in the so-called All Party Conference (APC) called by President Premadasa, paving the way for the stabilization of the Premadasa regime, which thereby succeeded in crush-

ing the rural petty bourgeois revolt and also in obtaining loans from the IMF with ease. Because of this extension of support to a decaying regime there was a severe crisis in the SLFP. The leadership of the latter clearly understood that the volatile situation which could follow the downfall of the UNP government would be advantageous to the left rather than the SLFP.

The UNP government which crushed the JVP revolt tried to show that it was capable of bringing peace. By its conciliatory attitude to the dominant Tamil group, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), especially in the wake of the IPKF withdrawal, the government succeeded in pushing the left-oriented Tamil groups into the arms of India for protection and in obtaining ample loans from the IMF.

Government pays out to win hearts and minds

Operating a so-called poverty alleviation program (Janasaviya), the government started offering loans on easy terms to the rural population and distributing some lands sporadically in order to win the confidence of broad layers of the disillusioned petit bourgeois sectors. Certain clauses under the draconian emergency laws which were the targets of severe criticism were withdrawn. The government further tried to impress the world by pledging to eliminate corruption and adhering to criteria of merit and ethnic ratio in the matter of recruitment and so on to the public service and the Corporation sector.

But the emergency laws promulgated against the working class have not been removed. The ban on strikes, pickets and meetings in work places remains intact. The inflationary spiral is ever growing and real wages are steadily falling. The government is aware that the workers are ready to struggle for wage demands.

State defence minister Ranjan Wijeratne charged in Parliament that NASSP MP Vasudeva Nanayakkara was "conspiring" with the trade unions to topple the government. While the broad anti-government agitational struggles are temporarily at a low level, working class struggles have come to the fore.

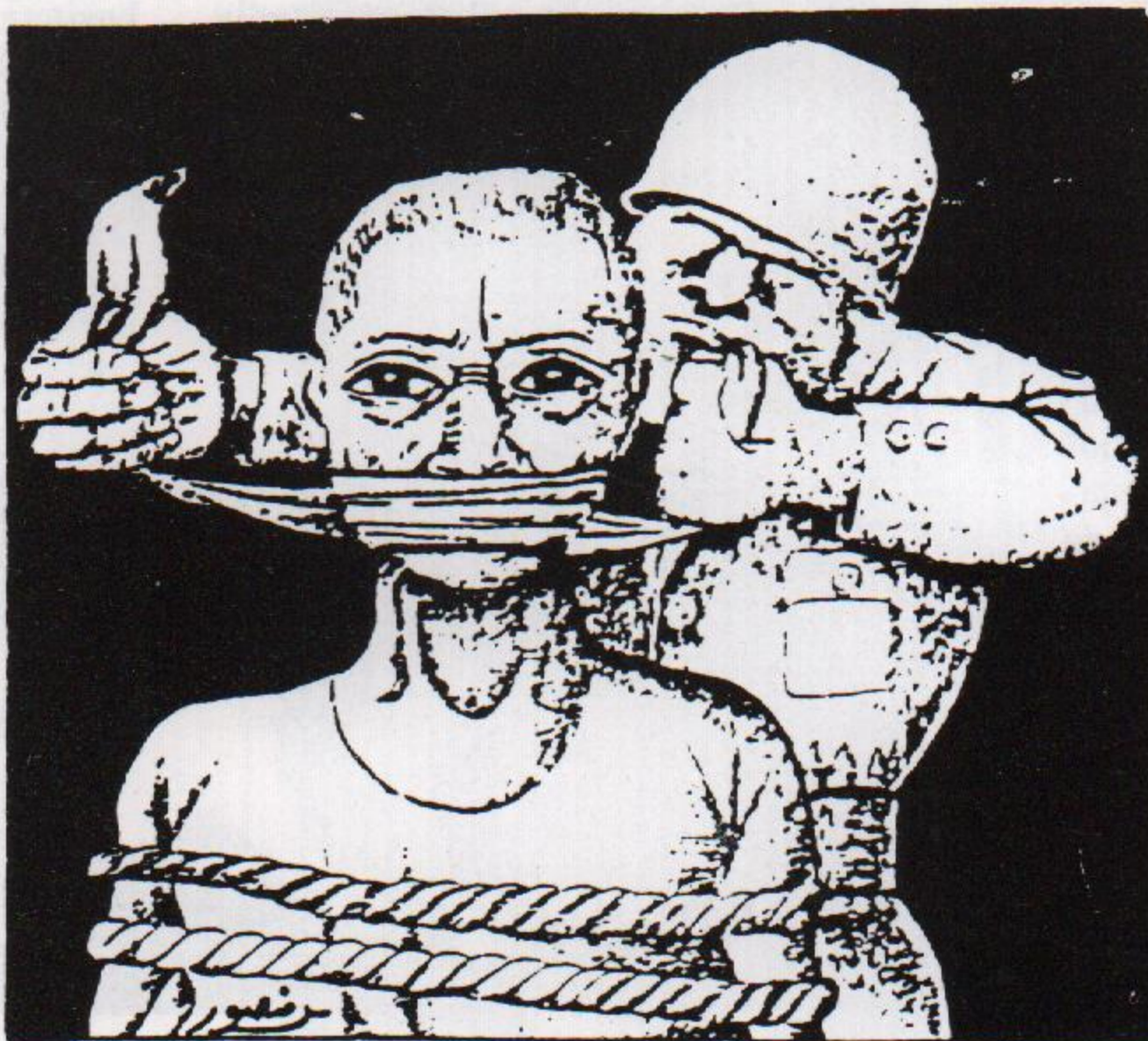
The stabilization of the Premadasa government has intensified the crisis both within the SLFP and the left movement. There is strong resentment amongst the lower layers of the SLFP against its rightist and opportunistic wings and especially SLFP strongman Anura Bandaranaike. His mother, the party leader, remains a helpless captive due to her advancing years and the repeated defeats she has suf-

fered.

Bandaranaiques seek working class support

The leadership of the SLFP have realized that what is needed today is a new leadership which can win the confidence of not only the capitalist class but also the working class, the petit bourgeoisie and the Tamil people. They look towards Chandrika for this purpose. She is the daughter of the Bandaranaiques, and also the wife of the late popular left leader Vijaya Kumarantunga, who had fought against racism and thereby won some confidence amongst the minority communities. Chandrika is in a position to mobilize these forces because of her left orientation. Therefore the CPSL maneuvered to bring forward Chandrika as a prelude to their impending coalition game with the SLFP.

Soon after the murder of Vijaya Kumarantunga, Chandrika left for Europe and has not participated in Sri Lankan politics for two years. Moreover, whilst abroad, she appealed to her party (the SLMP) as well as the left not to field a candidate for the 1988 presidential election. Even when



Vijaya was alive, Chandrika chose to withdraw from political life for some time purely to allow some compromise to set in with the SLFP led by her mother who was one of the 1988 presidential candidates. The CPSL had aimed at putting forward their coalition demand on May Day. While the LSSP wavered, Chandrika unmistakably expressed her stand in favour of such a coalition. This is undoubtedly a conspiracy to tie down the working class behind the racist, capitalist forces.

The NASSP was obliged to launch a vigorous campaign against this. In the southern provinces there was severe opposition to the LSSP joining hands with the SLFP. Consequently the LSSP and CPSL were

obliged to celebrate May Day under the USA banner.

Encouraged by Chandrika's return to Sri Lanka, the CPSL quickly maneuvered to sabotage the USA's May Day commemoration by insisting that the splinter SLMP(V) be admitted to the USA. The SMLP rejected this and decided to hold an independent May Day rally, but did not object to the other parties commemorating May Day under the USA banner. Ultimately, the CPSL contrived to fulfil its coalition line by proposing that the SLMP(V) leader Chandrika should chair the USA May Day rally. But the capitalist class saw in Chandrika a bridge between the USA and the SLFP.

Three separate Mayday rallies held

Against this background, the NASSP decided to hold its May Day demonstration and rally separately in order to expose the reactionary coalition perspective of the other left parties and the rightist opportunism of the SLMP. The three coalition-oriented parties, the CPSL, LSSP and the supporters of the Militant Tendency mustered about 7000 people, whilst the anti-coalition SLMP had 15,000 in their demonstration and 50,000 at their rally (according to reports in the *Ceylon Daily News*). The NASSP's demo and rally had about 4,500 participants. This clearly shows the anti-coalition tendency of the working class. The comparatively large mass base demonstrated by the SLMP is attributable to the apparent stability of the UNP regime. But the government's crisis will soon surface. As the working class moves into struggle in response to rising inflation, the coalition line is bound to gain some momentum. The LSSP, CPSL and the SLMP(V) have already discussed a joint electoral front for the forthcoming local government elections.

The influence of the NASSP is growing in this context. Workers in CPSL controlled unions in large factories such as Hayleys and Mayura Garments are beginning to turn to the NASSP, which was able to muster more workers than the CPSL this May Day. This augurs well for the future.

The NASSP reiterates its commitment to support, without sectarianism, all mass struggles against the pro-imperialist UNP regime, to oppose any anti-working class coalition with any section of the capitalist forces, to fight unrelentingly for the rights of the Tamil speaking people, and to mobilize all democratic forces under the leadership of the working class. These are the tasks of the Sri Lankan left, especially the Trotskyist parties and groups. ★

Towards new political struggles

MUCH REMAINS OBSCURE about the recent violent clashes between the newly elected Romanian government and oppositionists. At this moment it is not possible to verify the conflicting accounts of what happened (for example, whether the siege of the TV center was launched by police provocateurs or not, as representatives of the students have said). But it is possible to take note of the context in which the mid-June events occurred.

LIVIO MAITAN

AS I STRESSED in my commentary on the elections (see *International Viewpoint*, No. 187, June 18, 1990), Romania, along with Bulgaria, is the country in Eastern Europe where there is the greatest continuity with the old regime. The election results simply reflected this situation. They confirmed, at the governmental level also, the hegemony of a front that is very different from the parties or coalitions presently governing Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and East Germany.

The pro-capitalist parties, defeated in elections whose legitimacy, it should be remembered, was recognized by virtually all the international observers, are not ready to sit back and accept this situation. Still less are social groups, such as the student movement, or groups of intellectuals, inspired by a legitimate desire to impose a more consistent democratization, and a more thoroughgoing purge of officials from the Ceausescu epoch, prepared to accept it.

The information available indicates that there are different orientations within the opposition forces. The people who pressed for a prolonged occupation of the University Square and the accompanying demonstrations do not accept the relationship of forces reflected in the elections, hope to change it very rapidly, are escalating their opposition and putting their hopes on confrontations in the short term.

Others, including representatives of the minority parties in the parliament, reportedly have a different perspective. For example, Radu Campeanu, leader of the National Liberal Party, the opposition party, said in an interview after the events: "We are going to play an opposition role. This will be firm and constructive, not systematic opposition. We want to contribute to the development of Romania." (*Il Corriere della sera*, 19 June). Another leader of the same party

explained that things will change quite quickly, and that the opposition will win the next elections.

It seems that there are also differences among the leaders of the ruling front. The newly elected president, Ion Iliescu and the premier, Petre Roman, have made statements differing in tone. What is more, the army and the police reportedly



took a lax attitude or even refused to act (this is the argument the government spokespersons have advanced to justify appealing to the miners).

It is nonetheless true that the government's counterattack has been marked by the use of classical bureaucratic methods. Facing an attack by forces considered hostile, you can legitimately call for demonstrations of your own supporters. But the use of miners as commando groups in repressive actions is an outrageous procedure, linked to an unacceptable notion of the role that should be played by the workers considered most loyal.

For their part, the capitalist governments of Europe and North America are not hiding their desire to have interlocutors in Romania who will help them to

mount their economic and political offensive, by pleading for the introduction of an unrestricted "market economy" and installing a Western-type "democracy." The present situation in Romania, which is far from being stabilized, is by no means a satisfactory one for them. They are doing, and will do everything that they can to contribute, directly or indirectly to changing it.

The events in Romania have prompted a new anti-Communist campaign by the international bourgeois media and led a series of governments to issue indignant condemnations, and even to suspend economic negotiations with Bucharest. The hypocrisy of these actions needs no commentary.

The governments of West Europe and North America would have done much the same if hostile demonstrators had occupied the central squares of their capitals for weeks, including during an election campaign. These "democratic" leaders, who are turning up their noses at the idea of aiding Romania economically, did not hesitate to refloat their business dealings

with China only a year after the Tiananmen massacre.

The fight for democratic rights remains vital in Romania, as in the other countries of East Europe. Thoroughgoing democratization is quite consistent with the needs of the struggle required against any attempt to restore capitalism and against any current that advocates that. In this struggle, a central role belongs to the working class, and in the case of Romania, in the first instance to the miners, who, it should not be forgotten, waged some of the most heroic struggles against the Ceausescu dictatorship. They have to carry out this task, not by clubbing demonstrators, but by forming their own independents unions and parties and their organs of self-organization on a mass scale. ★