

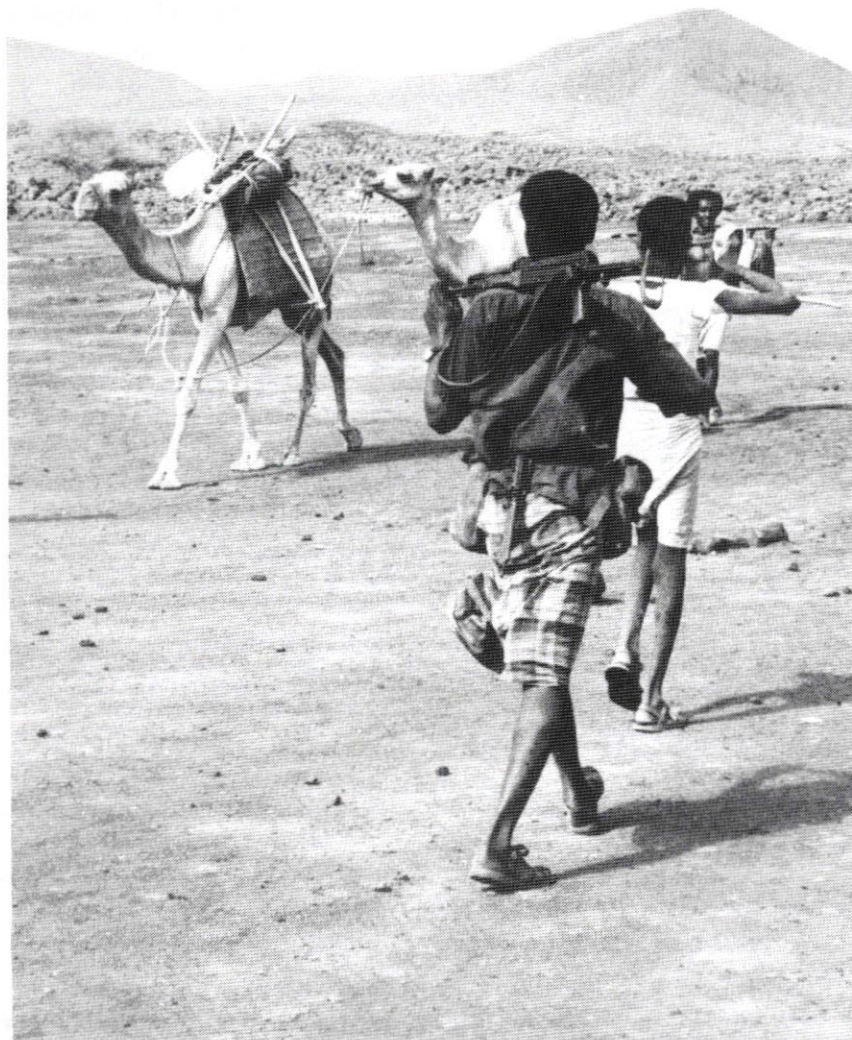
International VIEWPOINT

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International VIEWPOINT

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The Mengistu regime crumbles

SIXTEEN years after the revolution which put an end to the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie, the military regime of Haile Mariam Mengistu is near to collapse. Some months ago the "Shengo" (Ethiopia's parliament) called for a general mobilization and ordered the enrollment of reservists in a final effort to affect the outcome of the civil war ravaging the country.

Recognizing the setbacks suffered by the government army, the Ethiopian president sounded the alarm to his fellow citizens in his address on the occasion of the anniversary of the revolution at the end of September. The military situation is indeed more and more worrying for the authorities.

FRANCIS CAZALS

NO LONGER knowing how to ensure its survival, the Addis Ababa regime has effected a diplomatic turnabout, drawing closer to Israel and converting itself to economic liberalism. Mengistu has thus abandoned any reference to the Soviet model with as much ease as he adopted it in the preceding years. The Workers' Party of Ethiopia has become the Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party, without ceasing to be the sole political formation of the regime. The portraits of Marx and Lenin have disappeared from the Place of the Revolution. And last March the government adopted an economic reform which liberalizes internal commercial exchanges, offers investment facilities to foreign capital and envisages the privatization of certain state enterprises and shops.

For the moment, the principal effect of this reform has been to increase the purchasing price for the agricultural products of the peasants, and to encourage the farmers of the rural belt around the capital to sell their commodities on the urban market, thus increasing supplies a little. But the economic programme has little chance of having any significant real effect outside the capital as long as the civil war — which absorbs half the state budget — lasts.

Government troops are being forced back in the north by the forces of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF),

which has for some decades led a fierce struggle for independence. Last February the Eritrean nationalists took the Red Sea port of Massawa, and since then they have threatened Asmara, the capital of Eritrea. Around 120,000 government soldiers are encircled there, awaiting a possible assault by the Eritrean forces, who regularly bombard the town's airport.

Asmara receives no supplies by land, and only the planes coming from Addis Ababa link it to the outside world. The 200,000 Eritrean civilians in the town, and the 800,000 others in the surrounding small towns which are subject to the EPLF's blockade, are being used by the government forces as a human shield, and are threatened by famine.

Government attempts to hold Eritrean capital

Government troops, fearing the infiltration of EPLF fighters, are preventing all commerce with the areas held by the rebels. The latter seem however divided on what military strategy to adopt. The presence of numerous Eritrean civilians, very many with relatives among the guerrillas, would render any attack on Asmara very costly in terms of civilian losses. But, on the other hand, the military conquest of the Eritrean capital by the EPLF would place the international community before the established fact of an indepen-

dence conquered through armed struggle.

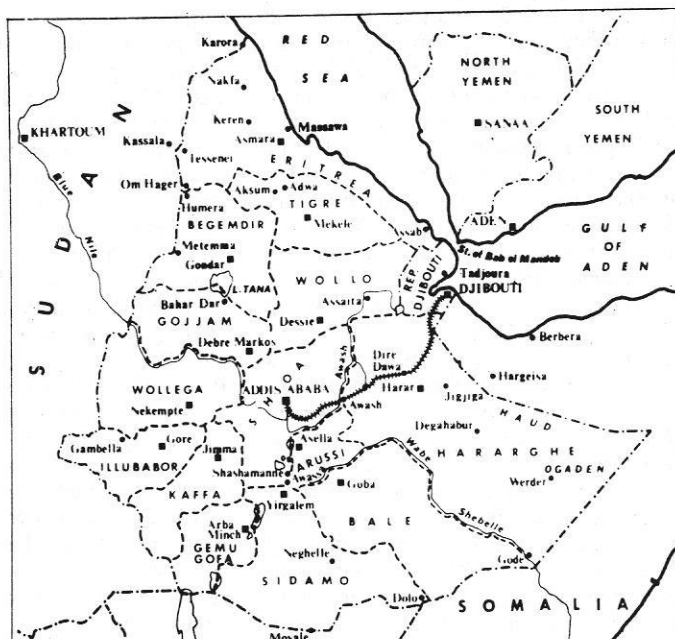
The EPLF faces an additional problem, as a result of the international situation, above all the Gulf crisis. The great powers are less than ever favourable to the idea of Eritrean independence, and still less to the perspective of a military victory of the EPLF. Moreover, Mengistu has joined the anti-Iraqi camp, which inclines the US to a greater indulgence towards its enemy of yesterday. Finally, the divided Arab states are less than ever in a position to offer the EPLF the diplomatic cover it would need in case of an attack against Asmara. The aid which it receives from some Arab countries is exacting a high price today.

Little prospect of serious negotiations

Despite US-Soviet pressure for the resumption of negotiations between the rebels and the government, no common ground is likely to emerge in the short term. The Addis Ababa government — whose minister of foreign affairs, Tesfaye Dinka, met an EPLF delegation in Washington last month, on the insistence of the US state department — will not go beyond the promise of internal autonomy for an Eritrea cut off from the coastal province of Dankalie, where the Red Sea port of Asab is located.

In the absence of a government commitment in favour of a referendum on self-determination, clearly axised on the question of independence for all Eritrea and conducted under the supervision of the UN, the EPLF is maintaining its commitment to the armed struggle. It has recently announced its intention of launching at Asmara "a final and decisive battle" for independence.

In Tigre, the Tigrean People's Libera-



tion Front (TPLF) have liberated a good part of their province. Profiting from the rapid decline in the morale of the government forces, who are often badly trained and forcibly recruited from the peasantry, the Tigrean resistance has extended its field of action further to the south, as far as Shoa, less than 200 kilometers from the Ethiopian capital. In the wake of this, the TPLF has drawn into its ranks some non-Tigrean oppositionists. For its Amhara partisans, it has founded the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM); it has formed, initially from its prisoners of war of Oromo origin, an Oromo People's Democratic Movement (OPDM); and more recently an organization of free officers has been founded.

All these movements remain strictly subordinated to the TPLF, in the context of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). This coalition advocates the overthrow of the Mengistu regime on the basis of a fairly general democratic programme. On the economic plane, the EPRDF seems to have no disagreement with the liberal reforms recently undertaken by the government.

Eulogies for Albania and Stalin

Until recently, some leaders of the Tigrean resistance were still eulogizing the Albanian system and Joseph Stalin. Now, apparently, the movement is seeking to shed the Stalinist and intolerant image created by its original pro-Albanian kernel in the eyes of international opinion.

For some months, the backbone of the EPRDF's strategy has been the proposal for a provisional transitional government, open to all the opposition forces as well as representatives of the current regime — a scenario inspired by recent events in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, in practice, the EPRDF's attitude to the other forces of the opposition has never been totally free of a desire for domination. On the other hand, the Tigrean resistance remains a regionally-based group, which prevents it, in the multi-ethnic context of Ethiopia, from appearing by itself as an alternative for the whole of the Ethiopian people. The nationalist basis of its conceptions limits its attractive power in the other regions of the country, notably amongst the Amharas and the Oromos.

The government uses this to portray the TPLF as a secessionist force and to stir up for its own benefit a "patriotic" reflex in the Amhara milieu. The attempt by the EPRDF to challenge for the leadership of other ethnic and national groups could lead to confrontation with these national and social movements.

Another regional rebellion also exists. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) is active militarily in the west, along the Sudanese frontier, and in the east in

Harargue, with a very nationalist vision of its fight against the Addis Ababa regime, which it characterizes as "colonialist". This anti-Amhara reaction has its roots in the decades of oppression which the Oromos have suffered (despite being in a numerical majority), as much under Haile Selassie's empire as under the Mengistu regime.

Finally, the small Ethiopian opposition groups are also engaged in anti-government military activities, amongst them the members of the formerly ultra-left Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party, today allied to the monarchist partisans of the descendants of the emperor.

On the other hand all civilian opposition has been decimated or forced into exile. Occasionally there have been some sporadic student revolts or army mutinies, but these have been quickly repressed.

On the defensive militarily, the Addis Ababa regime is also being undermined by its Soviet bloc allies who no longer believe in its capacity to consolidate itself militarily, and have even begun to discreetly question its continued existence. All these allies, however, bear a historic responsibility for the reinforcement in power of the military clique in Addis Ababa. Cuban, Soviet and East German advisers have for many years supported, sometimes even in combat, the troops of the Ethiopian regime. These countries have also contributed to the totally false image of the regime which exists abroad.

Not so long ago, *Granma*, the daily newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party, was publishing entire pages of eulogies to the "companion in struggle" and "revolutionary", Mengistu. The CPSU pushed hard for the formation of the ruling Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE), as an instrument of control and supervision of the *kebeles*, the neighbourhood committees born of the revolution.

Soviet bloc support for Ethiopian dictatorship

The East Germans took in hand the training of the regime's political police and contributed to a policy of agricultural collectivization which was to prove a tragic fiasco. Finally, the Cubans and Soviets sacrificed their former support for the Eritrean struggle for independence on the altar of their alliance with Mengistu.

The first to take their distance were the Cubans, who first withdrew their advisers from the zones of combat in Eritrea, then left the country some months ago. East Germany has now disappeared and the USSR has reduced its assistance. The USSR refused to deliver supplies of arms and munitions which were covered by an already signed contract and refused to sign any new arms contracts. Its pilots however remain in command of some Ethiopian planes.

On the diplomatic level the USSR and the US proposed some months ago the holding of a regional conference for peace in this area of Africa. Washington and Moscow are searching for a hypothetical global solution to the entangled conflicts of this region of the world. Each of the states in this region is trying to turn to its profit the internal problems of its neighbours. Sudan supports the Eritreans, whilst Addis Ababa is supporting the SPLA of Colonel Garang which is fighting in southern Sudan. Ethiopia is also aiding the Somali National Movement, which is fighting in the north of Somalia against the regime of Siad Barre. And this list is far from exhaustive.

In November 1989, in a spectacular reversal of previous policy, diplomatic relations were reestablished with Israel as a counterpart to the acceptance by Addis Ababa of the departure of the Falashas (black Ethiopian Jews). Dozens of Israeli military advisers have come to replace the Soviets who have left. According to some reports they have even participated in combat alongside government troops in the region of Asosa, in the west of the country, against the Oromo nationalists of the OLF. There has also been speculation that Israel was taking over the facilities provided for the Soviets in the Dalhak islands off Eritrea. Moreover, Tel Aviv has supplied light arms and bombs to Addis Ababa.

Regional strategy of Israeli state

For Israel, this support for Mengistu adds up to a tactical unity of interests. The regional strategy of the Jewish state has always been to seek allies against what it calls "Arab hegemony in the Red Sea". Today, as in the time of Haile Selassie, this diplomatic option is also being prioritized by Addis Ababa. However, Israel has neither the means nor the desire to aid Mengistu in a manner comparable to that provided by the Soviets over the last ten years.

But this diplomatic and military aid is enough to give some breathing space to the Ethiopian regime. Moreover Mengistu can also hope to profit from his support for the United States in the Gulf conflict. Here, he is characterized above all by a will to outbid other supporters of the imperialist effort. Thus, he has come out in favour of the blockade of Baghdad and has even proposed the sending of an Ethiopian contingent to Saudi Arabia. It seems that these positions have already been rewarded by Saudi financial aid and greater US goodwill.

Ten years after the popular uprising which overthrew the feudal dictatorship of Haile Selassie, this is the sad balance sheet of the petit bourgeois military faction which commandeered and diverted the revolutionary process. Yet, in contrast to other changes of regime in Africa, and

in contrast even to the collapse of the colonial regimes in Mozambique and Angola, the Ethiopian revolution of 1974 brought about a real change in the relations of ownership in the countryside, where an anti-feudal agrarian reform was implemented through a popular mobilization. But the dynamic of the process was directed and utilized by a Jacobin military clique which has progressively stepped into the shoes of the former feudal dignitaries in at least three ways; relations with the peasantry, Amhara chauvinism and the "monarchical" conception of the regime (the maintenance of the empire by force and constraint).

The famine of 1984-85 and the forced displacement of the population marked the defeat of the agrarian policy of the regime which issued from the revolution. They also revealed the complacency and the contempt of the petit-bourgeois and urban leaders for the rural population of their country. It is in many respects reminiscent of the passivity of Haile Selassie before the terrible famine of 1973, which, at the time, constituted the spark for the radicalization of a good part of the civilian intelligentsia and the Ethiopian military. In 1984-85 a similar attitude opened the way to the development of the opposition, notably to the extension of the activities of the Tigrean nationalists.

The new emperor in Addis Adaba

Henceforth, President Mengistu openly took up the themes most favoured by Haile Selassie, in internal policy as well as foreign affairs. The most flagrant betrayal of the regime is its refusal to recognize the right of self determination of the Eritrean people, the only solution which can put an end to the civil war in the north of Ethiopia. On the contrary, Mengistu has pursued the bellicose policies of his predecessor, notably thanks to the military support of the USSR. In foreign policy, the Ethiopian leaders have taken as their own the theme of a besieged Christian Ethiopia surrounded by a hostile Arab environment — a discourse which is music to the ears of Israeli diplomats.

Finally, the shrinkage of the regime around the Amharas goes hand in hand with a concentration of responsibilities in the hands of Mengistu himself and those close to him, such as his half-brother Kassa Kebede, responsible for relations with Israel. Mengistu has constructed a vacuum around himself, notably in the army which he has partially decapitated after a failed coup d'état in May 1989. Dozens of officers were shot some months ago on the direct insistence of the head of state. There is no place for the least dissidence or civil opposition in Addis Ababa. Meanwhile the United States is host to some tens of thousands of Ethiopian refugees, several of them ministers who have

The struggle for Eritrea

ERITREA is a small country about the size of England, stretching along the Red Sea to the north of Ethiopia. It has 3,500,000 inhabitants, for the most part Muslim and Christian. More than three quarters of the population is rural. Eritrea has always had a separate identity to Ethiopia, and its various component kingdoms united in the 8th century under the threat of invasion from the Nilotic powers to the north and Ethiopia to the south. The area around Massawa came under Ottoman control in 1557. From 1869 onwards, Italian colonialism extended its hegemony throughout the country — this was sealed by a frontier agreement with Great Britain and Ethiopia signed in 1903. Following Italy's defeat in the Second World War, a federal union with Ethiopia was imposed by the United Nations and Great Britain in 1952 — this envisaged a continuing autonomy for Eritrea. On November 14, 1962, the Ethiopian army annexed the whole of Eritrean territory, leading to the outbreak of a war of liberation which has continued since then. Whilst initially several opposition groups existed, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, established in 1977, has emerged as the major component of the liberation movement.

Traditionally identified with a pragmatic "Marxist-Leninist" outlook, the EPLF has recently been moderating its ideological tone; thus, according to Ali Said Abdallah, EPLF political bureau member responsible for foreign relations, "Our programme is clear; we are for multipartyism and the market economy" (*Le Monde*, May 18, 1990). However, Abdallah did not deny the "left influences" which continued to mark the EPLF's policy, and a *Financial Times* reporter found that "life in the liberated areas has a socialistic flavour"; food and clothing are distributed by the economic departments of EPLF commissions, political education is mandatory for the entire population and "even in the trenches there are no ranks, no saluting" (*FT*, December 1, 1989). ★

demanded political asylum (including, very recently, the vice-minister of foreign affairs).

The dynastic conception of the regime has become such that, when Mengistu confided recently to a meeting that there had been several attempts on his life, he added that in case of his death, his son was ready to take over the reins of power — a hypothesis that the Ethiopian people will be very little inclined to accept.

The fiasco of the Ethiopian regime also constitutes the most flagrant refutation of Soviet theories of states of this type, elevated to the status of revolutionary regimes. It is of course legitimate to pose the question of whether the Ethiopian revolution of 1974, taking account of the

social formation of the country, could give birth to a true socialist, democratic and revolutionary leadership. But nothing obliged the Kremlin to give its support to a repressive and oppressive military regime — nothing, obviously, except its own bureaucratic self-interest.

Today, the Soviet leaders of the *perestroika* era have "discovered" that it was very presumptuous to see in this regime a real point of support for the Soviet Union. This disenchantment allows them to pass easily on to diverse projects of regional negotiations with the United States, to the profit of the latter alone. These are the fruits of a theory and a practice in which the fate of peoples and their social interests are totally ignored. ★

The end of consensus

AT THE end of October 1990, a leadership meeting of the Czech part of Czechoslovakia's ruling Civic Forum/Public against Violence coalition (OF/VPN) elected dogmatic free-marketeer Vaclav Klaus as its new leader. On October 30, the same body, on Klaus' proposal, voted to expel the left-wing Left Alternative and Obroda groups from the Forum on the grounds that they had "departed from the political line of the OF". At the meeting, according to the protocol, Klaus claimed that the "greatest enemy of OF is [leading human rights activist and revolutionary Marxist] Petr Uhl" and that it was necessary to peel off the leftist current. Shortly after Klaus' election, Czechoslovakia was finally granted Most Favoured Nation trading status by the United States.

COLIN MEADE

KLAUS' putsch has been accompanied by the formation of a "Club of the Democratic Right" including over 30 members of the OF's fraction in the Federal parliament and coincides with the discussion in parliament on the so-called "small privatization law", which deals with the change of ownership of small firms, businesses and properties. These are to be sold at public auctions in two rounds, with only Czechoslovak citizens being allowed to take part in the first round. No preferential treatment is given to current employees — a source of considerable discontent amongst said employees in recent months. This goes hand in hand with a bill to organize restitution of properties — excluding agriculture — confiscated after 1955.

This is to be followed by a "large privatization law", to decide the fate of the big state monopolies. The tenth variant of this latter, adopted as a proposal by the government at the start of November, envisages the issuing of "coupons" to every Czechoslovak citizen which can only be used to buy shares. Foreign ownership is to be limited. If the timetable is adhered to, a final version of this law should take effect in Spring next year. Almost a year after the "gentle revolution" put an end to the neo-Stalinist regime that had ruled Czechoslovakia since April 1969, pro-capitalist hardliners have seized the initiative in the struggle over the future of the country.

Vaclav Klaus, described as a "mainstream economist who believes in basic textbook economic thinking" is the finance minister in the Federal government. For months there have been reports in the press about tensions between him

and figures allegedly wishing to pursue a "third way" between full-scale privatization and the imperatives of social protection.

It would be hard to find any leading figure giving explicit support to such a "third way". Nonetheless Klaus' target is the outlook of President Havel and his circle who are considered excessively sensitive to the social costs of capitalist restoration in practice, and thus guilty of "populism". Such populism also consists in refusing to break decisively with those maintaining "vague hopes still linked to socialism in one way or another".¹

A number of prominent figures associated with the moderate viewpoint, notably Valtr Komarek, an economist who came to prominence during the November events, have seen themselves removed from influential positions in Civic Forum in recent weeks, while Klaus beat a close friend of Havel's, Martin Palous, for the leading position in OF.

Discreet but systematic opposition

Klaus' growing authority rests on a discreet but systematic opposition to the style of the team that shot to power after the November revolution. His election to the head of Civic Forum was followed by a series of interviews in the Czechoslovak media — usually with headlines along the lines of "the start of a new epoch" — in which his views on all subjects, from the Slovak crisis to anti-communism to economic policy were solicited, as if the country had a new ruler. In Klaus' view the thinking of the Havel team — many of them long-time

dissidents — is marked by utopianism. He summed up his credo in the main independent daily *Lidové noviny* on June 21, 1990: "The East European revolutions of 1989 did not provide any fundamentally new ideas on key questions concerning politics, economics and the laws of international politics — and I would add that it does not really matter. The important thing is to realize this fact and to accept humbly (both) tested solutions and old truths as soon as possible." According to Pavel Rychetsky, the deputy chair of the Federal Assembly, Klaus' election "is a positive event. I have constantly emphasized the fact that the time of dissidence and of demolishing the state is over"².

In line with this call for stabilization, Klaus is opposed to extreme anti-communism and rising nationalism in Slovakia, both of which threaten to disrupt the state³. He will also, one imagines, be against wasting further time on such chimeras as Foreign Minister Jiri Dienstbier's statement in January that Czechoslovakia would end its involvement in the arms trade "without taking into account what the pragmatists say or whether it will be a blow to the state's coffers"⁴ or the vision of a "pluralist Europe without blocs" outlined by Dienstbier in January and revived by the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly which met in Prague this October (see *IV* 194).

Centre and left unite against right

The attempt to expel Left Alternative and Obroda from Civic Forum has met with considerable resistance. The OF parliamentary fraction has come out against it, and, according to *The Guardian* (London) of November 6, "sizeable numbers of Forum MPs in the Federal and Czech parliaments rebelled against the decision, describing it as an 'undemocratic outrage'".

An Inter-parliamentary Civic Association (ICA) has been formed by OF deputies as a counterweight to Klaus' Club of the Democratic Right, involving figures from beyond those threatened with expulsion, among them the social democrat Rudolf Battek and Valtr Komarek. The ICA states its aim as being to keep the Civic Forum true to its original programme, as a broad democratic social movement, resisting "the artificial ideological division of the OF into right and left."⁵

A spokesman for Left Alternative, Martin Hekrdla, commented: "our thinking is really at odds with what is happening now

1. Interview with Petr Havlik, an advisor to Klaus, in *Mlada fronta*, October 22, 1990.

2. *Respekt*, October 30, 1990.

3. *Newsweek* interview, October 29, 1990.

4. *New York Times*, January 25, 1990.

5. *Svobodné slovo*, November 1, 1990.

6. *Obcanský deník*, November 1, 1990.

7. *Rudé právo*, November 1, 1990.

in Civic Forum, but not with its original condition. I would like to remind people of the OF's election slogan: 'the parties are for their members, we are for everyone'.⁶ And Obroda's Milos Hajek insisted: "insofar as OF turns into a right-wing party, I, as one of the founders of Civic Forum, deny that they will then have the right to the Civic Forum label."⁷

The right wing offensive takes place against a background of sliding public confidence in the governments elected in June, in the Civic Forum movement and in politics in general. An opinion poll published in September found that 29% of people in Bohemia, 32% in Moravia and 43% in Slovakia believed that the changes since last November were more about replacing personnel in the top posts than substantial reform. The poll also revealed that while in January 40% of people had been ready to get involved in public life, this had fallen to 2-4%. Communist party supporters, and supporters of the Slovak nationalists and Moravian regionalist movements, however, retained considerably more interest in taking on political responsibility. Nonetheless the poll also discovered that there "were big hopes in the forthcoming local elections in November. The hope was that these would start a real change in the system."⁸ A subsequent poll found that only 14% of respondents in the Czech Lands (Bohemia and Moravia) had great confidence in the Civic Forum, while some 20% had no confidence at all.⁹

The government team has furthermore antagonized a lot of people by appearing as a club of ex-dissidents, sharing out the top positions amongst themselves. Havel himself is surrounded by advisors — usually personal friends — who form a sort of "second government" outside parliamentary control.

Rule of the ex-dissident commandantes

At this level Klaus' moves can appear

as a step towards clearcut democratic politics against the rule of the ex-dissident commandantes. The vagueness of the Civic Forum's structures — essential to Klaus' victory — is also a characteristic of the elitist libertarianism of the new governing stratum. The non-existence of a defined party structure is a condition for Havel's ability to appear as above day-to-day politics, while in fact directing much of what happens. It seems that in some areas local Civic Forums function as exclusive clubs rather than as an organization that those who want to can join, and according to Petr Uhl, there are only a few hundred or perhaps a few thousand Civic Forum activists at a regional and district level.¹⁰

The OF's media spokesperson, Vladimir Zelezny, furthermore, admits that the student movement which provided much of the impetus behind the November events no longer exists, and there is no OF group at Prague's Charles University.¹¹

Evidently any party or figure who appears to represent the possibility of open discussion and decisive movement — whether towards the "free market" as with Klaus or towards regional or national independence or autonomy, as with the Slovak and Moravian movements — will have the benefit of a widespread feeling that hard decisions are urgently needed.

At the same time, Klaus and the pro-capitalist right feel that they must get down to work to create adequate instruments for the bloody business of turning Czechoslovakia into a normal peripheral capitalist country, with a position in the European pecking order similar to Greece or Portugal. Czechoslovakia is — and remains — one of the most completely nationalized economies in the world, including a lot of out-of-date "smokestack" industry. Any attempt to rationalize this monster without strong powers of control and if necessary veto by those adversely affected, will give a

frightening push to social disintegration.

The privatization assault takes place, furthermore, against a deteriorating economic background, due both to internal and external factors. The East German market has now been closed off, while the supply of oil from the Soviet Union has been cut at a moment when the Gulf crisis has shut off possibilities of finding cheap alternatives. Czechoslovakia will also have been hit by the anti-Iraqi sanctions, since Iraq has big debts with Czechoslovakia.

The rocky road to privatization

Nonetheless, despite the apparent pro-market consensus, the introduction of privatization and its economic prerequisite, free prices, have in fact hardly got underway. Where changes have been made, they have provoked reactions. Proposals for the privatization of shops and restaurants via public auction were met with strikes by workers in these sectors who "pointed out that they would have to bid against black marketeers and former apparatchiks, who were the only Czechoslovaks with sufficient capital to buy small businesses."¹²

Lidové noviny on October 30, reports on the postponement of a strike by Prague transport workers, who wanted to ensure that "privatization" took place in a form favourable to their interests. On November 3, the same paper reports on a miners' strike against plans to close a pit. By November 1, some 900 miners were still occupying the mine. Strikes against price rises and petrol rationing have been threatened in the oil industry. The trade unions have come out in favour of forms of private ownership favouring employees rather than open auctions.

Communist party poses problem for the left

Vaclav Klaus' response to criticism of his programme is that of his political co-thinker, Margaret Thatcher. "There is no alternative (TINA)" as she has been telling the British and anyone else who has cared to listen for over a decade. And it is indeed true that the weakness and disarray of the left is a crucial source of strength for the pro-capitalist right. The Communist Party leader, Vasil Mohorita, recently claimed that the country was entering a period of intense confrontations and proposed that the CP re-establish its factory cells.

8. *Lidové noviny*, October 10, 1990.

9. *Lidové noviny*, October 12, 1990.

10. Interview with Steve Painter, in the Australian socialist weekly, *Direct Action*, November 6, 1990, 1990.

11. Interview with Steve Painter, October 10, 1990.

12. According to Steve Painter, *Direct Action*, October 23, 1990.



"Give back what you have stolen" — "Invest what you have stolen" (from *Lidové noviny*)

Slovak independence movement gathers force

"THE whole Bratislava region is subject to special security arrangements, which, in case of need, may be extended throughout the Western Slovak region" stated Slovak prime minister Vladimir Meciar on October 30. Such remarks show the gravity with which the Czechoslovak authorities view the recent wave of militant nationalism in the Eastern part of the Czechoslovak federation. The most spectacular expression of this mood has been the big demonstrations against the new Slovak language law, which, claimed Slovak nationalists, gave too many rights to the country's Hungarian minority.

Slovakia has undergone a profoundly different historic development from the Czech Lands, and only in 1918 was it united with the latter in a common state — a creation largely of the Czech bourgeoisie. Separatism has always been a powerful force in Slovakia, often linked up with strong pro-Catholicism, with the Czechs being viewed as "atheistic". In the war an independent clerico-fascist Slovak state was formed under German auspices, and, until 1945, resistance to this regime also took place on a Slovak rather than Czechoslovak basis, culminating in the Slovak national uprising of 1944. In recent months attempts have been made to commemorate the leader of the clerico-fascist state, Josef Tiso.

The collapse of the neo-Stalinist regime last November brought down with it the centralizing force of the Communist Party, allowing the federalized state structures to come to the fore. Virtually all parties in Slovakia have since striven to extend the powers of the Slovak government and limit the prerogatives of the Federal government in Prague.

After inter-governmental discussions in the Slovak town of Trenčianske Teplice in August, it was decided that, as of January 1, 1991, the federal government would become a coordinating agency for the Slovak and Czech states, retaining control of defense, policing, foreign policy and structural economic matters such as currency. Soon after, the Slovak National Party and other nationalist groups issued a joint statement demanding a fully independent Slovak state. Since then it appears that the SNP, which won 12% of the vote in the federal elections in June, has been gaining public support.

The Slovak national struggle does not only directly involve relations with the Czechs. For many centuries before 1918, Slovakia formed part of the Hungarian kingdom and some 600,000 Hungarians continue to live in Slovakia. Powerful irredentist moods have been surfacing in Hungary, posing an evident menace to Slovakia. A Slovak commentator, Boris Lazar, in making out a case in favour of the Slovak government ensuring language rights for Slovakia's Hungarians, uses the argument that to deny this would give the Hungarian irredentists 'a trump card' which would be used in the first place against Hungarian democrats, and secondly in the European forum in Strasbourg, when the question of minorities is discussed" (*Lidové noviny* November 7, 1990).

Opposition to the nationalists in Slovakia and in the Czech Lands mainly takes its stand on the fact that it will cut off Slovakia from the West and from the possibility of foreign investment. Thus, as in other East European countries, a polarization is emerging between elitist pro-Western liberals and right-wing populist nationalists. Here also, a "third way" seeking to fully realize national aspirations through international cooperation, offers the only long-term solution. The existing Czechoslovak "post-Stalinist" state — and above all its army and police — cannot be the vehicle of this solution. ★

Such was the outrage that this proposal created — including a 20,000 strong demonstration in Prague — that Mohorita backed down and has now been replaced as party leader. The CP has already lost most of its pre-November membership and suffered a number of

splits by organized currents. It is nonetheless possible that the party will attempt with some success some social demagoguery in the coming period, with the intention of being re-admitted in one form or another to the corridors of power.

Apart from the CP there are a number of currents who refer in one way or another to left-wing ideas and the traditions of the workers' movement, among them the Social Democrats (who are split into two wings, one inside the Civic Forum, the other independent of it), the Democratic Forum current which split from the CP at the start of this year, Obroda, which mainly contains individuals prominent as "reform Communists" in the Prague Spring of 1968, the Left Alternative and the Anarchists. Evidently, developing a policy towards the Communist Party is one of the strategic problems for a viable left in Czechoslovakia, as well as the question of international contacts. Another issue is how to assess present developments in Civic Forum and how to relate the need for an organized left to the desire to create a broad social movement.

Left searches for an "integrating element"

The various left groups and currents have been seeking ways of uniting their efforts. The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, which stayed outside Civic Forum, looking towards the moment when a "modern party structure" would come into existence — via the disintegration of OF — is now putting itself forward as the "integrating element" of the democratic left. Obroda appears to be responding to these overtures.¹³

Elsewhere, Left Alternative and the Czechoslovak Democratic forum are planning to collaborate on the production of a joint newspaper. According to Jiri Koucka in the Left Alternative monthly, *Polarita*, "the hysterical shouting [from the right] about the formation of a left are unfortunately untrue. The democratic left finds itself in a phase of trying to find its own identity and profile. Sporadic attempts at dialogue, and sometimes collaboration, take place in the shadow of fears cast by the dark shape of the Communist Party."¹⁴

Nonetheless, Left Alternative and other such groups are attempting to speak to the needs and feelings of the Czechoslovak workers, supporting for example a Club for Self-managed Popular Enterprises which aims to "put forward a concept for the de-statization and privatization of the national property which is a real alternative to the existing government proposals."¹⁵ Furthermore they have the possibility of drawing on all the formless hopes for radical social change aroused last year, and which are currently being disappointed by an indecisive government whose libertarian utopianism lacks a socialist backbone. As the pollsters cited above noted: "A crisis of Civic Forum is...a crisis of the whole reform process."¹⁶ ★

13. *Lidové noviny*, November 7, 1990.

14. *Polarita*, November 5, 1990.

15. *Polarita*, November 5, 1990.

16. See Footnote 9.

Towards a new identity for Solidarnosc

Introduction

SOLIDARNOSC is going through a profound crisis. The congress which has just taken place in Lower Silesia, the second largest stronghold of the movement in terms of size, bears witness to the fact. The congress elected a replacement for Wladyslaw Frasyniuk, the historic leader of Solidarnosc in the region, who was obliged to resign after having taken over as head of the Civic Movement-Democratic Action (ROAD), the party founded in July 1990 by the partisans of Tadeusz Mazowiecki (see *IV* 191).

Three tendencies put forward candidates to replace Frasyniuk. The first was that of Thomas Wojcik, close to the line of Lech Walesa, leader of the minority of the regional leadership and unsuccessful candidate for the presidency of the trade union at its February congress (when he obtained 20% of the votes, running against Frasyniuk). The second was that of Bogdan Karauda, outgoing vice-president, who portrayed himself as a supporter of Frasyniuk. Finally, there was a rank and file tendency, the Committee of Inter-Enterprise Coordination (MKK), bringing together the trade union commissions of 17 of the most important enterprises in Wroclaw, which presented Zbigniew Sliwinski, leader of Solidarnosc in the "Hydral" steel factory. He was supported by Josef Piniur, another historic leader of Solidarity in the region. On the first ballot, Wojcik received 44% of the votes, Karauda 38% and Sliwinski 18%. On the second, Wojcik won with 57% of the votes against Karauda. Several militants of the MKK were also elected to the posts left vacant in the regional leadership by friends of Frasyniuk who had resigned.

These results indicate the loss of influence of the pro-government current in a region which was until now a fiefdom of ROAD, and the increasing power of the partisans of Lech Walesa. However the appearance inside the MKK of a current for class independence constitutes something new in Solidarnosc. It is too soon to judge whether this is a regional specificity, or the first sign of an overall trade union recomposition. The propositions formulated by the MKK nonetheless merit publicity, for they represent a potential alternative to the current orientation of Solidarnosc. For this reason we are reproducing large extracts from Zbigniew Sliwinski's presentation of his candidacy — *Cyril Smuga*.

DOCUMENT

“TORN between Walesa and Mazowiecki, between support for the programme of Balcerowicz and the aspirations of the workers, we are undergoing a profound identity crisis. On the one hand, Solidarnosc is associated with the economic policy of the government and its effects for the majority of workers. On the other, these same workers expect Solidarnosc to defend their interests. This situation produces a form of schizophrenia inside the trade union and disarray among its militants, torn between their loyalty to our government and that towards the people in the workplaces.

“The choice is clear; either Solidarnosc will take cognizance of its trade union function — which the workers (that is those who have to sell their labour power for a wage, whether it is workers or intellectuals, whether they are employed in a factory or a faculty) need — or Solidarnosc will become a museum piece and the workers will find a new tool, better adapted to the defence of their interests.

“The Committee for Inter-Enterprise Coordination (MKK), which comprises 17 Wroclaw enterprises, was formed in August 1990 to reflect on this subject. We share the conviction that Solidarnosc must become an effective representative of the workers in the face of the new market mechanisms, the transformations in the sphere of property, of unemployment, of the privileged position of the former nomenklatura.

The impact of the Balcerowicz programme

“Our trade union must in particular turn its attention to the Balcerowicz programme. This envisages a fall in industrial production of the order of 10-15%, whereas the real fall between January and May of this year was 30%. Consumer prices were 150% higher in April of this year than in last December whereas salaries have fallen by around 43%. Unemployment at the end of September had already reached 926,400.

“If our trade union does not enter public negotiations with the government around our economic programme, the discussion will take place in the street and Poland will be transformed into a reservoir of cheap labour and a dumping ground for the rest of Europe.

“Inside the regional leadership such a discussion has been lacking. The orientation of the regional leadership has gone counter to the opinion in the workplaces. Wladyslaw Frasyniuk — for whom I feel some sympathy and whom I respect profoundly — has chosen to take on top level responsibilities inside ROAD, an organization which identifies itself with the government and with the programme of Balcerowicz. It does not add up to a personal conflict with Wladyslaw Frasyniuk. It is not a question of ROAD alone. We would have the same situation if the presi-

dent of the regional trade union became the leader of the Alliance of the Centre [Walesa's party]. I desire only that the problem of the identity of Solidarnosc — its place in the new economic and socio-political landscape — is settled on the basis of respect for the principles of internal democracy of the trade union, by a discussion around programme, a regional congress and the election of leaders.

"Our region could become the nucleus around which a new identity for Solidarnosc is formed. The tradition of the years 1980-81 and the fact that during the state of emergency we were one of the strongest and best-organized zones, the fact that throughout this period the continuity of the enterprise structures of Solidarnosc was preserved in our region — all this could help us today to find new solutions.

"The regional leadership must bring together all the initiatives arising from inside the workplaces. We must renew the practice of 1980-81, that of weekly meetings of the regional leadership with the representatives of the biggest enterprises of the region and of regular meetings of the regional leaders with the trade union commissions and the workers inside the enterprises.

Need for regular internal information

"The union must have a genuine system of internal information. It is scandalous that there has not been in our region a serious trade union bulletin to provide an efficient system of circulating information between all the enterprises of the region.

"With all the esteem that I have for the people employed by the executive of the trade union, I think that they cannot replace the leadership of the union. The transfer of decision-making from the elected structures towards the executive structures is a sign of bureaucratization and evidence of the grave crisis of Solidarnosc.

"The organization of the work inside the region and of its leadership does not however constitute a goal in itself. It must serve the defence of the interests of the workers. To this end, the regional leadership must establish commissions charged with the analysis of the economic, social and political situation of the workers inside the enterprises, both public and private.

"The regional leadership must be capable of helping each enterprise, from the point of view of its employees, in the face of the economic changes underway — privatization, bankruptcy of enterprises and unemployment. We must immediately undertake the calculation of the cost of living so as to dispose of our own data on the pauperisation of the society. We must seek to establish contacts with trade unions in the foreign enterprises which install themselves in Poland, so as to know the differences in the costs of

labour, the behaviour of these firms towards the workers and the trade unions in other countries and particularly in the third world, so as to judge whether what is taking place is the transfer to our country of ecologically damaging production inadmissible elsewhere.

"If the workers are to be able to respond in the face of the market transformations, they must have access to information. The agencies of the regional leadership charged with these problems must employ the best specialists and dispose of modern data processing means, like banks of computerized data on the changes in the structure of the regional economy, of its ownership, allowing them to monitor job vacancies, unemployment, professional illness, the situation of youth and the old, the ecological situation, and so on. We can count on the help of the western trade unions who sympathize with our activity for the implementation of such a project.

Rebuild unity of workers and intellectuals

"This activity will not be possible without the help of specialists or more generally intellectuals. I do not believe that inside Solidarnosc a division between workers and intellectuals is possible. We were together in the strikes and in the prisons, in the struggle for a freer and more just world. It is unacceptable that our roads should separate today.

"The regional leadership will certainly obtain the help of the scientific milieu and of intellectuals to organize a Centre of Socio-Professional Research of our trade union.

"The branches are, together with the workplaces, the principal terrain of trade union activity. It is necessary then to do everything so that inside Solidarnosc the diverse representations of the branches can organize themselves and present the tactic they have agreed on throughout the union. But to abandon our current structure in exchange for a vertical branch structure would be contrary to our ten-year old tradition and would put in jeopardy the principal characteristic of Solidarnosc — the defence of the weaker branches by the stronger. The maintenance of our unity will depend on the strength of the union and the role which it will be capable of playing in the future.

"The Womens' Commissions of Solidarnosc must play an important role in the activity of the regional leadership. Women are, aside from youth and old people, the most threatened social group today. The Womens' Commissions can dynamise the work of our union and offer it new horizons.

"We must address ourselves to the new generation of workers, apprentices and students, and find a common language with the youth who are absent from our ranks although they were the most active

in the struggle for the legalization of Solidarnosc during these last years. We must, as often as possible, support the initiatives of the youth, for example in obtaining a cultural centre for the alternative youth movements, or a meeting place for the associations of conscientious objectors.

Confront chauvinism and anti-semitism

"We must inspire ourselves with the ethos of Solidarnosc and the traditional values of our movement to confront chauvinism, anti-semitism and racism. We do not have the right to close our eyes to these phenomena. On this terrain we should seek unity of action with all those who, like us, defend tolerance, including the strictly political organizations.

"We have to develop cooperation with foreign trade union organizations, including direct enterprise links. We must bring our support to the independent trade union movement which is forming in central and eastern Europe and, in particular, establish privileged links with the trade unions of the regions of Germany and Czechoslovakia bordering us, so as to undertake in the future common ecological and economic projects. We must show our trade unionist fraternity towards those who, throughout the whole world, struggle for trade union and political rights. The same fraternity which the world showed towards our struggle after December 13, 1981.

"It adds up only to a minimum programme, to a presentation of the problems that confront Solidarnosc. I hope that our trade union will find enough strength to renew itself in the new economic and socio-political landscape of our country, that it will forge an identity that will allow it to represent with dignity the interests of the workers. It is with this hope that I take part in the congress of Solidarnosc in Lower Silesia." ★



Political footwork in a system in crisis

"Achievements" of October

IN RESPONSE to the independence-minded governments of the republics and the liberal opposition, who opposed celebrating the anniversary of the October revolution, the official Soviet press published many articles defending the legacy of the revolution.

One of the more notable was the front-page article in *Pravda* of October 23 by two academics, P. Volobuev and G. Ioffe. They cited the defense of the Bolshevik government by the Czarist general Brusilov: "And here is the testimony of a noted, non-socialist general, A. A. Brusilov:

"The revolution was a necessity for Russia....The Bolsheviks in many respects were right. They rooted out the decayed Russian aristocracy, and took away the wealth accumulated over many years by the industrialists and landowners at the expense of the Russian people. *The Bolsheviks, finally, saved the territorial integrity of Russia.*" [Our emphasis.]

This idea that the Soviet Union was a restored Russian empire led in fact to a section of the counterrevolution going over to supporting the Soviet state. Together with an irrationalist current in the Bolshevik milieu they became known as "national Bolsheviks." Their influence reached a height during the war with Poland. It is one of the sources of Stalinist social chauvinism. ★

Byelorussian nationalists

WHILE the growth of the Ukrainian national democratic movement has been a constant preoccupation of *Pravda* in recent months, in the last weeks the Soviet CP daily has started raising an alarm about the Byelorussians.

In its November 6 issue, it reported: "According to *Zycie Warszawy* [the Polish prestige daily], at the end of October in the Polish city of Biela Wieza in the county of Bialystock, a meeting took place between leaders of the People's Front of Byelorussia and Byelorussian emigres from the USA, England, Poland and other countries.

Plans were discussed for forming an independent state on the territory of Byelorussia.

One of the leaders of the Byelorussian nationalists in Poland, Ianovich, pointed out in *Zycie Warszawy*, "None of the Soviet republics alone is able to achieve independence. The idea has ripened of forming a Baltic to the Black Sea union involving Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Byelorussia and Ukraine. The condition

for achieving this objective is the break up of the USSR and the democratization of Russia.

"But the achievement of this goal is being blocked by the West, which fears a sudden shift in the balance of forces in the world that could lead to unforeseeable consequences."

The November 12 issue carried a short story under the headline, "Is this consolidation?" which reported a statement by the Byelorussian CP Bureau on a demonstration held by the People's Front on November 7:

"Noted in particular was the clear anti-government, anti-Communist character of the march and meeting held by the People's Front in Minsk. The tensest moment was the incident at the monument of V. I. Lenin. A leader of the Byelorussian People's Front, Zeenon Poznyak, demanded that a group of ten persons be allowed to go up to the base of the statue to place objects that he considered characterized the 73-year history of the country.

"When this permission was not given, a few hundred people tried by force to break through the police lines around the monument. Despite quite sharp resistance, a few succeeded. On the statue of the chief of the revolution and the founder of the state, national [Byelorussian] flags were placed....

"The Bureau of the CP of Byelorussia considers that the government of the republic should make a principled assessment of who facilitated the carrying out of this anti-Soviet action."

The Byelorussian CP and government remain among the last bastions of unreconstructed Stalinism. But the People's Front won important victories in Minsk in the last elections and has been growing rapidly. ★

Private Property

A LEGAL EXPERT, Dr. E. Sukhanov, offers a weighty defense of private property in the November 5 issue of *Pravda* — the private property of the Communist Party, that is.

The introduction to the piece says, "Recently, defense of the right of ownership has become especially timely."

The problem, Sukhanov explained, is the growth of demands for nationalizing the CP's property, and this after the government has taken such important steps toward establishing a "state based on laws" in which the rights of owners would be guaranteed.

"As is well known, the Law on Ownership in the USSR went into force on June

1 of this year. For the first time in our legislation it provided for clear legal defense of owners from direct interference of government organs in the sphere of their property.

"It clearly distinguished cases of illegal violation of the rights of owners (including by government bodies) and cases when ownership is limited on legal grounds, in both cases offering owners the appropriate rights to defend their property interests.

"In the first category are cases when the right of ownership is violated as a result of actions contrary to laws of government administrative bodies (from ministries or departments to the administrations or the office of the executive committee of a local soviet) or a local government organ (a local Soviet of People's Deputies and lower bodies).

"Very unfortunately, such illegal acts are now occurring not infrequently, and in this regard the distinction between the authority of government organs and the government and judicial authorities is being totally ignored.

"For example, not long ago *Moscow News* (see, for example, No. 43, October 28, 1990) reported that the Yaroslavl city soviet had adopted a resolution calling for an 'inventory' of the party's property. The Kemerovo district soviet [center of the miners' movement] set up a 'Commission to Make An Inventory of the Property of the CPSU.' In Donetsk [another center of the miners' movement], a strike rally 'demanded nationalization' of the party's property.

"It is clear that all resolutions of the bodies named (leaving aside the resolutions of rallies, which have no legal value)...are subordinate to the law, including the law on property.

"When such government organs adopt normative or individual resolutions conflicting with the law or going beyond their mandate and violating the rights of property owners, for example by declaring 'exclusive ownership' by the local soviet of property or natural resources on its territory, or 'nationalizing' the property of specific owners, such results will be declared invalid on the complaint of the owner or persons whose rights have been violated (page 34 of the Law on Property).

"Moreover, all losses suffered by owners as a result of the adoption of such resolutions is to be compensated for fully from the means at the disposal of the corresponding government body or administration". Sukhanov explained that Gorbachev's directive [ukaze] of October

12 established that property could only be taken away from its owner by court order.

"Considering the unfortunately widespread disrespect for the law in our society, the legal nihilism displayed even by local government bodies, the president's directive also called on the law-enforcing organs, not only to firmly stop any illegal confiscation of property, but to take measures of a preventative character by putting under protection property threatened with illegal confiscation...."

"It is to be hoped that the thoroughgoing implementation of the demands in the directive will create firm guarantees of stability of economic and legal property relations, make it possible in fact to consolidate the legal order, and thereby to assure an important precondition for real transition to a civilized market economy and a state based on laws." ★

How to fight the nomenklatura

THE INDEPENDENT Lithuanian Communist Party [which represents the bulk of the old CP in the republic] is energetically trying to shift the onus of bureaucracy and authoritarianism onto Sajudis and the government it controls.

For example, the October 25 issue of its daily, *Tiesa*, offers a long article by the secretary of the party's Central Committee, Gediminas Kirkilas, subtitled: "Why create a new nomenklatura under the cover of fighting the nomenklatura?"

Kirkilas writes: "It is symptomatic that after the announcement of the decisions of the Sixth Plenum of the LKP [Lithuanian CP], the senseless and incorrect stance against the party was reinforced.

"This is strange, because if our opponents have a sound mind and concern for Lithuania, they could easily understand that at our [upcoming] special congress, we will finally remove our "Communist badge," both the ideology and political practice of Marxism-Leninism, settle accounts with our past and become a real parliamentary party that will no longer represent in Lithuania 'the possibility of restoring a pro-Communist regime'."

The LKP, moreover, no longer had anything to do with the nomenklatura:

"It has to be clarified what the nomenklatura is....The LKP Central Committee system of confirming nomenklatura cadres ceased functioning in the middle of last year....I suspect that now the parliamentary majority is trying to form a nomenklatura, because the department heads are being chosen from 'reliable' people because...the criterion of competence is not being given the most weight."

Kirkilas admonished the government not to repeat mistakes of the Bolsheviks, such as driving away intellectuals, of whom there were many in the ranks of the LKP, or turning on their former allies in the fight for reform:

"Let us not repeat the path of the Rus-

sian revolution of 1917. While it was necessary to overthrow the czar, the Bolsheviks allied themselves with others. But after that they turned first of all against their closest allies. While Sajudis needed the cover of Communists, they needed Just. Marcinkevicius, B. Genzelis and V. Bubnys and many others. Now they are practically enemies of the people."

Kirkilas even seemed to oppose the idea of a party press in general. "An ideological press, no matter what it may be — Soviet or Populist [a reference to the pre-war ruling party] — forces people into conformism, adaptation."

The article was directed mainly at calls for removing the old bureaucrats. It cited a reference by A. Maldeikienius in *Lietuvos Ryte* to the purge carried out by 'JS occupation authorities in Japan.

Kirkilas' answer to such demands was the following: "There is only one way to fight the nomenklatura. It is the market, independence in managerial and economic initiative."

In other words, forget about workers democracy. That might lead to a lamentable loss of "qualified" cadres. ★

Red bourgeoisie

TO PROVE its new pluralist convictions, *Pravda* regularly runs a "discussion sheet." The one in the October 31 issue for the first time gave space to currents outside the Communist Party, publicizing their conferences.

Another first was an article by V. Bakulin, which took up the question of "reconversion" of the nomenklatura:

"Today the question of ownership of the means of production is again coming to the center of attention. If after October this property was taken away from the bourgeoisie and transferred into the hands of the proletarian government, in the 1920s and especially the 1930s the rights of administering it and in part using it were usurped by the nomenklatura. Today, in the conditions of *perestroika*, when the question has actually been raised of turning over government property (to one degree or another and in different forms) into the hands of the workers, a new Soviet bourgeoisie is trying to get hold of it.

"Our new bourgeoisie has a fair bit of political experience, since one of its components is the very same nomenklatura, ousted from its managerial chairs by *perestroika*". ★

Latvian front at a turning point?

IN THE PAPER of the creative unions, the launch pad of the national democratic movement,

Zigrids Dzedulis drew a fairly grey picture of the Latvian Popular Front's Third Congress on October 6. His article was published in the October 13 issue of *Literatura un Maksla*, subtitled "A subjective reflection on the LTF's [Latvian Tautas Frontas, Latvian Popular Front] congress." He wrote that the gathering "clearly reflected the exhaustion and apathy of the section of society that three years ago founded the organization singing folksongs and waving banners."

The problem was that nothing fundamental had changed.

"Everyone expected radical measures from the parliament and the government — radical action and quick results. The Latvians are expecting action that will enable them to survive, to protect themselves from Russification and extinction.

"But the government, which does not have its own army, border guards, or reliable security installations, which does not control its territory, harbors, airports, only partially the means of production and what is produced and whose economy is subjected to an indirect blockade, is practically incapable of fulfilling such expectations.

"In this situation, the government is obliged to take steps that are unpopular with the people. It is said that since the elections, the LTF has lost about 50,000 votes.

"In the history books we have read about dual power in Russia. But it seems that there is multiple power today in Latvia — the army, the MVD, the neo-Stalinist wing of the Latvian CP Central Committee, the general managers of the industrial enterprises subordinated to the USSR and the Mafioso network of trade officials, who increase political chaos, consciously foster interethnic hatred and deliberately plunder the national economy."

Political debate has been developing in the Latvian front in the face of such difficulties.

It remains to be seen if the options were further clarified at its latest congress. ★



Sweeping privatizations planned

DRASTIC price raises on November 1 represent a decisive turning point for the regime that emerged from the overthrow of Ceaucescu. Freeing of prices and accelerated privatization, together with devaluation of the national currency, were announced by the premier, Petre Roman, in his report to parliament on October 18. It is hardly a coincidence that only a week before this, the minister for economic guidance, Eugen Dijmarescu, declared that the government intended to remove the managements elected by the workers in the wake of the revolution and to replace them with its own appointees.

GERRY FOLEY

UNLIKE the other regimes in East Europe and the USSR, the Romanian government had promised that it would not carry out socially painful forms of "marketization." For one thing, the Romanian revolution occurred after the effects of the market reforms in Poland had become clear.

The Romanian leaders declared that since the entire Romanian population had participated in the uprising, they could not condemn Romanians to unemployment. In fact, the fight against Ceaucescu had opened the way for the development of independent unions and organizations in the workplace.

The "neo-Communist" government (that is, the regime made up of people who had been reformers in Ceaucescu's CP) used fears of "marketization" to mobilize workers against students and others who called for its overthrow in the name of anti-Communism. In fact, the students and the free-enterprise opposition had no chance of ousting the regime, serving at most as transmission belt for the pressure of Western governments. Now the government faces a potentially much more potent opposition.

Miners against students and price rises

Symptomatically, the Jiu Valley miners, who served as an auxiliary police for the regime in June against the students, have expressed strong disapproval of the price raises. (*Le Monde*, November 11, 1990.) The Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which has been close to the government, has also protested strongly.

In an TV special November 3, Roman debated representatives of five trade-union confederations, arguing that it was necessary to convince the IMF and the

World Bank that Romania was "solvent."

The government's fundamental argument is that there has been a disastrous decline in the economy since the revolution, and therefore it has no choice but to privatize. In its October 18 report to parliament, Roman said that in the first nine months of this year, industrial production dropped by 27.7% and exports by 46%. The latter figure is probably largely a result of the diversion of food exports to the domestic market after the revolution.

The price rises are scheduled to take effect between November 1, 1990, and the end of 1991. The first category is goods supplied by at least three businesses or manufacturers. They were freed on November 1. The second category, energy, fuel and rents will stay fixed until the end of 1991.

Progressive freeing of prices planned

Controls on prices of necessities, including foodstuffs, were loosened on November 1. They are to be allowed to rise to a price ceiling that is to take account of higher production costs. It is not clear how much the prices for such goods will go up, but there are estimates that they may rise by more than 100 percent.

Between November 1, 1990, and October 31, 1991, workers and pensioners are supposed to get compensation from the state for higher living costs. By the end of 1991, price controls are to be ended for the second and third categories.

Also on November 1, the national currency, the leu, was devalued by 66.7%, from 20 to 35 lei per dollar. It had previously devalued in January from 16 to 20 per dollar. The black-market rate is around 100 to the dollar. The leu is sup-

posed to become convertible in January 1991, which must involve a drastic decline in its value. An inflation rate of 300 to 400 percent is expected in 1991.

Roman's declared objective is to privatize 50% of the economy within three years. Starting in January, it will be possible to set up private enterprises. Within six months, all state enterprises are supposed to be transformed either into autonomous administrations or commercial companies. Starting in March 1991 foreign investors will be able to hold a majority of the stock, or even 100 percent, if they create enterprises.

The Romanian government and the Western press present the opposition to these measures as coming from case-hardened bureaucrats of the old regime. But so far the open fight against them has come from the trade-unions and other independent forces. A significant section of the bureaucracy at least should be able to find niches in a marketized system. For one thing, marketization gives the rulers a way out of being held directly responsible for the suffering of the population expected during the winter.

The minister of reforms, Adrian Severin, has said that in factory management, "We need people who have no vestige of socialist solutions in their minds."²

In a sense, the government is right that it has no alternative to privatization. The bureaucracy has proved its incapacity to develop the economy. Democratic workers' organization would mean the rapid elimination of the bureaucracy root and branch, if it were organized on a national level. On the other hand, important sections of the bureaucracy can live quite a long while with a process of privatization and probably find niches within it.

Dramatic decline in industrial production

The decline in industrial production that Roman cited in his report is typical of countries in turmoil. The problem is what is the long-run solution. The experiences in the USSR and the East Europe show that the suffering of the population will be increased rather than mitigated by privatization. Judging from the protests against the price rises, Romanian workers understand that. The difficulty is that there is no political organization in Romania that represents their political interests, which could develop an alternative economic plan.

The "neo-Communist" government has now revealed its true nature as the expression of a fundamentally anti-socialist, anti-working class bureaucracy, a conspiracy of thieves who see their future in collusion with the well-established and more successful thieves who rule in the capitalist countries. ★

1. See article by José-Alian Fralon in *Le Monde* of October 5, 1990.

Europe: a fortress against recession?

THE American economy is clearly in recession, but can the unification of Germany pull Europe free from the effects? In the following article, first published in the November 2, 1990 issue of the Swiss revolutionary Marxist fortnightly *La Brèche*, Charles-Andre Udry describes the costs and implications of unification for the German and world economies. This article is the second instalment of a series on the world economy — the first, dealing with the American economy, was published in IV 194.

CHARLES-ANDRE UDRY

EVERY day brings sombre new reports on the state of the US economy¹. The apparent glimmer of encouragement in the news that Gross Domestic Product grew by slightly more than the predicted 0.8% in the third quarter of this year overlooks a number of facts. In fact, this "growth" is the result of increasing stocks, that is to say, of the impossibility of selling what has been produced owing to the weakness of demand. In order to get rid of these stocks, lower orders will be placed, production cut and jobs abolished.

And in fact, in recent weeks we have been told that orders by American firms fell by 1.7% in September, the third drop in four months; the number of registered unemployed at the end of September had risen by 400,000 as a weekly average, the highest level since 1985 (when the rate of unemployment officially reached 7% of the active population); that preliminary results for firms in the third quarter of 1990 reveal that 50% of them are seeing a serious fall off in profits; that housing sales declined by 8% in comparison with August; that General Motors is expecting to suspend production in 11 of its 28 plants in November and that "this Christmas will be one of the most wintry since the 1981 recession, with buyers looking for cheaper goods and buying everyday items rather than luxuries."²

Indeed, during the budget debate, the Democrats retreated on a plan for a special tax on fur coats costing less than \$10,000 so as not to upset their electorate.

Banks face mounting problems

The banks have more and more problems, giving rise to the Black Friday of October 26. There are bad loans to the

Third World, and to bought up and indebted enterprises. And then there is the crisis in the property and construction markets, with the repossession of properties which are now worth much less than the credits originally extended. Furthermore, consumers are having increasing difficulty in meeting their debts.

Anyone with several credit cards is able to get hold of an advance of some \$50,000. Credit card lending by banks has been the object of intense competition. Personal loans have risen from \$300bn in 1980 to \$795bn in 1990.³

Impact of US recession on world economy

This raises the question of what impact the US recession — which looks set to be serious, quite long and accompanied by financial catastrophes — will have on the rest of the world economy, including on Europe and Japan. One part of the answer lies in a simple fact; in 1988 the USA imported goods worth \$459.6bn — that is, 15.4% of the total of world imports and 16.6% of imports of manufactured goods⁴. It is the world's number one importing country. In 1987 they were in second place, behind the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), for the import of "commercial services" (dispatch, carrying services, travel and so on) which are related to the import of goods.

The USA has been pulling the world economy along, fuelled by credit, over the past eight years.⁵ Thus, as George Melloan notes: "an American recession is equivalent to a world recession or at least to reduced world growth" above all through the reduction of American demand.⁶ This depends of course on the size and duration of the recession, as well as on the internal dynamic of key

economies such as the FRG and Japan. This is the other part of the question. *A priori*, a decoupling or desynchronization⁷ between the American recession and the economy of the newly reunified Germany and Japan appears the most likely scenario for the year to come.

The international environment is fluid — made thus both by the Gulf Crisis but more fundamentally by the effects of the gigantic economic shifts between the USA, FRG/Europe and Japan, against a backdrop of the opening up of Eastern Europe and increasingly strict control of the South. There is a weak link in the system, the American financial system, which has the potential to accelerate the onset of an international economic crisis of immeasurable dimensions. Economists known for their sober judgement are adopting tones which would make even the most unreconstructed catastrophist Marxists hesitate. Philippe Lefournier of *Expansion* magazine, in a long article entitled "Capitalism faces its real challenges", writes: "The US is facing the oil shock in a situation of structural weakness that calls into question the functioning of capitalism.

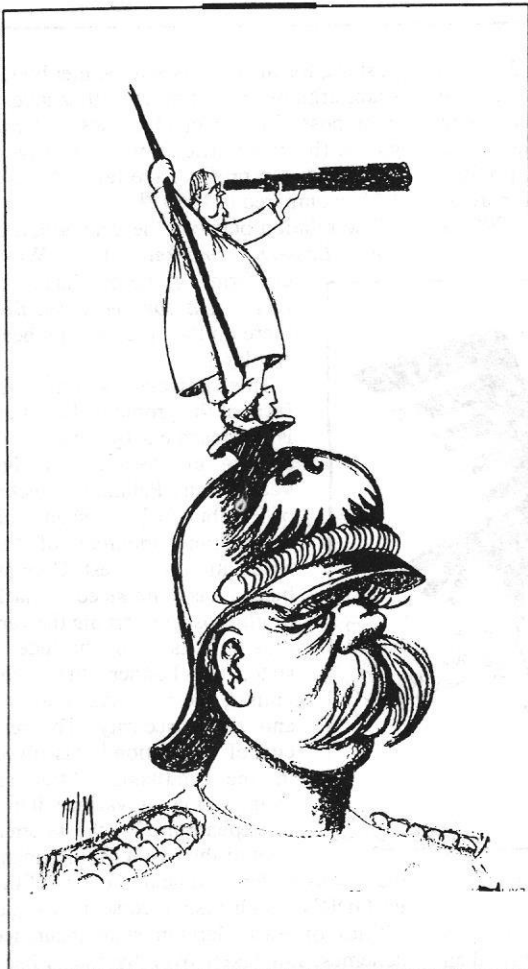
"A financial crisis with unforeseeable consequences is likely, because this is a crisis not *in* the system but *of* the system....As in 1929. This is the real challenge for capitalism....The system is being led off the rails by the dominant economy within it. Can it save itself?"⁸

What flows in can flow out

The "borrowed" growth of the US economy was thanks to the Japanese, German and other surpluses. The money that flowed to the USA could flow back in the other direction if there is bad news in America, such as a fall in the dollar, or an attractive rise in Japanese or German interest rates. This would add a massive stock market crash onto the mounting wave of bankruptcies.

The synchronized falls in the world's stock markets — two in the past three years — have revealed the tensions in the money world. There is a financial system which is closely integrated and plugged in 24 hours a day on the one hand. On the other, there is no global control over this system. Furthermore tensions between the three main economic blocs — USA/Canada/Mexico, Japan and its economic satellites, and FRG/Europe — will grow if there is an economic slowdown or

1. See the article by C-A Udry in IV 194.
2. *Business Week* (BW) November 5, 1990 and October 29, 1990. *The Wall Street Journal* (TWSJ), October 30, 1990 and October 24, 1990.
3. *Sunday Times*, October 28, 1990 and *International Herald Tribune* (IHT), October 22, 1990.
4. GATT, "Le Commerce International 1988-89" Vol. II p.3 and p.40.
5. See my article in *La Brèche*, November 13, 1987, just after the 1987 stock market crash.
6. TWSJ, October 23, 1990.
7. *La Brèche*, June 29, 1990.
8. *L'Expansion*, October 18-30, 1990.



recession. And this will take place at a time when the two "superpowers", the USA and USSR, are on their way, through different kinds of economic crisis, to losing their superpower status.

The other unknown in the situation is the volatility of the oil price, which has been amplified by the Nymex futures market set up in 1983. Here, prices are set according to the predictions of the operators, such as whether there will be war in the Gulf, rather than the real state of supply and demand⁹.

A war or a prolonged crisis would tend to push up the oil price and stimulate inflation. This would affect the results of firms and drive up interest rates, thus holding back investment by squeezing profits. Nor is there any good reason for lower interest rates, given the weight of the American deficit, the general financial instability, which makes lenders more demanding, and the flow of capital towards the East.

However the oil price unknown is far less dangerous than the prospect of an implosion of the American financial system and a "segmentation" of the world financial network.

Then there is a third unknown visible on the horizon, which is already giving rise to unease in some economic institutes. How will the West German economy absorb the shock of unification in the coming two years and what effects will this have on the economies of countries

that are closely tied to Germany?

One of the characteristics of the period of growth seen in a number of European countries and in Japan since 1984-85 has been a significant resumption of productive investment, even if this has been overshadowed by financial speculation¹⁰. This investment has been stimulated by the recovery in the profitability of firms, and helped since 1987-88 by accelerated modernization of the productive apparatus (computerization/communications) as well as by the enlargement of productive capacities given the perspective of European unification and increasingly fierce competition on the world market. In 1989, investments rose by 6.7% in real terms in the European Community¹¹.

This has contributed to a slight fall in registered unemployment in the EC — down from 10.8% in 1985, to 9.7% in 1988 and 9% in 1989. Predictions of further falls this winter, which were still being made in June, are now how-

ever in question. Most affected by unemployment are women (except in the UK), and those under 25 (except in the FRG), although there are big differences between countries. There is, nonetheless, one general characteristic: the duration of unemployment has continually grown since 1974. Thus in the FRG, 39.3% of the unemployed had been out of work for more than a year in 1983, but the figure was 46.7% in 1988. In France the figure rose from 42% in 1983 to 43.9% in 1990, in Italy from 57.7% in 1983 to 69% in 1988.¹²

Reorganization of work process

Throughout Europe the organization of the work process is tending towards flexibility, part-time work, temporary work, subcontracting and so on. However, the forms in which the demand for flexibility is applied to the workforce differ depending on the relation of social and trade union forces and the contractual rules already established. At the same time bottlenecks appear in the labour market due to the lack of qualified workers given the rapid pace of technological change.

The slight decline in unemployment and a series of "good years" have seen a reappearance of wage militancy, both in the private and, even more strongly, in the public sector. It is thus hardly surprising that, at the first sign of a change in the economic climate and with specific sec-

tors — cars, electronics — facing difficulties, the bosses are launching a campaign for new austerity measures and are making big cutbacks. Thus Fiat has put 70,000 workers on short time and Philips is planning 15,000 redundancies.

Such sackings by the thousand are a foretaste of the brutal reorganizations that will take place with an economic slowdown and the redeployment of European production in the medium term (the single market and the East). A new phase of deregulation is about to begin, in a climate of intense inter-imperialist competition.

But let us return to Germany. Before the unification, West Germany was the world's biggest exporter of goods — with a total value of \$323.4bn or 11.2% of world trade in 1988, compared to \$321.6bn for the USA and \$264.9bn in Japan. It was the second biggest importer (\$250.6bn or 8.4% of total world imports)¹³. Thus, in 1989, West Germany received 15.4% of France's exports, 11.96% of exports of the UK, 16.98% from Italy, 18.76% from Belgium/Luxembourg, 25.86% from the Netherlands, 34.42% from Austria, 20.52% from Switzerland, 12.70% from Sweden and 5.79% from Japan¹⁴. The German locomotive cannot pull the European train by itself, but on the other hand, its principal European partners will have no chance of making it through the coming storms unscathed.

West German capital keeps East Germany for itself

The five new Länder of what was once East Germany, Sachsen, Thüringen (the two most industrialized), Sachsen-Anhalt, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern — were not an important market for West European exports. Here, Austria was in the lead with 1.3% of total imports. Thus it is the overall dynamic of the unified German state which matters for the "European partners" rather than that in the ex-GDR with its 15 million inhabitants. Certainly, there are opportunities in the East, but it is West German firms, operating as a mafia (according to Carlo Benedetti, the boss of the Italian firm Olivetti) who are going to exploit them.

In the current electoral climate in Germany, there are strongly divergent opinions on the situation being put forward. After the rousing declarations from the Kohl government and his finance minister Theo Waigel, the five main German economic institutes have come out with a much more sober assessment, predicting

9. See IV 194.

10. See *La Brèche*, June 29, 1990 on the reasons for the unexpected continuation of the boom after the 1987 crash.

11. Economic Forecast of the European Commission, June 11, 1990.

12. OECD, "Perspectives de l'emploi" July 1990.

13. GATT, op. cit.

14. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 24, 1990.

a growth rate of 1.5% for 1991. No one knows precisely how the various aspects of unification are going to work themselves out. Every day brings new surprises, usually in the form of bills for billions of D-marks — including one for DM18bn due to a technical error during monetary unification.

For the moment, the last survey by the DIHT (Deutscher Industrie-und-Handelstag) finds business confidence holding up. The survey is entitled "In the West an uninterrupted boom, in the East, the principle is still hope."¹⁵ Investment intentions remain as high as in autumn 1989. There is a weakening in the construction sector, but the openings in the five Länder are real and not just prospective. West German eco-business is also looking forward to good times, all the more so in that state and state-supported credit will be important in the depollution of the ex-GDR. While at the moment all this is still on the drawing board, West German industry, which has made this field its own, could see its international position strengthened.

Consumption plays a driving role in this part of the cycle — its high point. For example, despite a rise in mortgage interest rates, the demand for house building is growing strongly. In the first nine months of 1990, growth is 53% up on the corresponding period last year. It is estimated that some 300,000 new houses will be built in 1990 as against 239,000 in 1989¹⁶. Since 1987 a total of 800,000 houses have been built.

Boom in West German car sales

Another leading sector for demand is cars. While stagnation and even decline are afflicting the European motor industry, the German producers are stepping up production. 60% of consumer credit — which rose overall by 9% in 1989 — is for the purchase of cars.¹⁷ The net growth of number of cars sold in the ex-GDR since the start of 1990 is 150,000, on monthly average. The one for one swap of GDR-marks for D-Marks has played an important role in this increase in purchasing power for consumer goods. Many of the cars being bought in the ex-GDR are secondhand, coming from West Germany and also Switzerland. But this makes room for sales of new cars in the West. There the overall growth is expected to amount to 1 million cars in 1990.¹⁸

Demand in the East does not represent an especially extensive market for a productive apparatus with a global reach and does not immediately require investments

in the five Länder. Consumer durables can easily be sent eastwards from the West, where the productive capacities of the existing plants can be adjusted to meet the extra demand. In fact, productive capacity is being used to an increasingly high degree — 89.9% in 1990 as

pushing for the expenses to be met by the state, arguing that there are other investment possibilities (for Mercedes in Portugal) or financial difficulties (Volkswagen, whose pre-tax profits have fallen by DM 1.1bn compared to 1989)²¹.

The relation between the occupation of the Eastern market by Western firms on the one hand and investment for reconstruction there on the other has not been resolved.

This, however, is only one facet of the problem. The other is represented by the social cost of unification over five years. Hans Fahning, director of Hamburg's Landesbank and a longtime member of the association of West German banks, has denounced the lack of glasnost concerning the various deficits — of the federal state, the Länder, the communes, the railways, the post and social security. The real cost of unification is dissolved in the confusion. After an examination of various items of expenditure — the internal debt of the ex-GDR, the financial needs of the Treuhand, the debt of the ex-GDR's health insurance schemes, liabilities of East German state insurance schemes, not taken over by the Allianz group — Fahning arrived at a figure of DM 100bn²².



against 89.5% in 1989, 87.4% in 1988 and 84.5% in 1987¹⁹.

Large-scale investment in the East is going to take place more slowly than originally envisaged by the Treuhandanstalt, the body charged with privatizing the 8,000 big East German firms. According to Detlev Rohwedder, the Treuhand's boss, "this big salad is worth DM 600bn"²⁰. But, it seems, nobody wants to buy this salad. The machinery is obsolete and would in any case only duplicate productive capacities existing in the West. The interest payments on debt are prohibitive — DM 10bn. Refitting the plants in a way that would meet West German environmental standards would be very expensive. Furthermore wages are not low enough to attract investors, since, in order to keep people from flocking out of the ex-GDR, wages there have been set at 70% of Western levels.

In addition, the ex-GDR's traditional East European markets will shrink drastically as of the end of 1990. Prices of East German goods will thereafter be costed in DMs, at a time when the weaker US dollar is becoming more attractive. East German motorbikes will be replaced by Asian mopeds. Gorbachev meanwhile has just received two important credits allowing him to purchase goods in Spain (\$1bn, of which half is for the import of consumer durables to be paid in three years) and in France (10bn francs, a part of which is to pay debts and the other to buy grain, and goods and services).

After dragging their feet for a time, Mercedes, BASF and Volkswagen have signed important agreements with the Treuhand. But these three giants are

Burgeoning state budget deficit

The official federal budget deficit is expected to reach DM 66.8bn. This is not an enormous sum, taking into account Germany's wealth. However, this figure leaves out most of the debt resulting from the unification. According to *Die Zeit*²³, the deficit will reach DM 100bn. At this rhythm of growth, the Federal public debt, estimated at DM 557bn in 1990 on the basis of the figure of DM66.8bn for this year, will reach DM1000bn in four years.

According to a study by Morgan Stanley, quoted by Klaus von Dohnanyi²⁴, the social costs of unification — unemployment and sickness, old age and housing benefits — for the ex-GDR will reach DM 50bn a year for the next four years while reconstruction will cost DM130-160bn each year for ten years.

Let us look at the problem of unemployment. On the basis of a growth rate of 1.5% in 1991, the various institutes come up with a figure of 3.7 million unemployed in East Germany and 2 million in the West. Other estimates have arrived at a total figure of 5.2 million unemployed²⁵. How is such a wave of unemployment to be paid for, at a time when public debt is growing at an unprecedented rate? There seems little alternative to

an increase in taxes and social charges. This is certainly Hans Fahning's conclusion. Such rises will hold back consumption after a time. At the same time, inflationary pressures, due to a deteriorating relation between debt and savings — even if this remains high — will appear and interest rates will rise, in an international climate that also pushes interest rates upwards. Some firms have big capacities for self-financing, but others will be in difficulties, as was seen with Nixdorf computers, which was saved by Siemens. Investments will be held back.

The unification operation will in the coming years modify the place of the Greater Germany as an exporter of capital, whether by limiting the surplus of capital or by making it an importer of capital. It is hard to assess the consequences of this change.

Does Kohl have an economic plan?

There may be another surprise in the pipeline. Kohl has certainly had a clear political plan which he has carried out effectively. However it is not clear that there is any five year economic plan to back it up, even if there is no reason to doubt the final successful outcome of the unification.

However, in the short term we may well find that the DIHT's survey for 1991 will elicit rather less enthusiastic responses than this year. In a darkening international climate and with a high DM, Germany may see its exports to its main trading partners — France, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, the USA, Belgium and Switzerland — fall, all the more so in that recession has already set in in the USA, Canada, Britain, Italy, Spain and Sweden and even France has been heard to sneeze.

You would need a crystal ball to predict how the international and domestic factors will work themselves out in Germany. The most likely hypothesis is that the desynchronization between the German-led bloc, the USA and Japan will continue for another year, barring a massive financial collapse on Wall Street. But what is not clear is whether the world economy can reorganize itself around the German/European and Japan/Asia poles without a new global recession. To see more clearly it is necessary to view the situation from the Japanese angle, as we will do in our next issue. ★

15. *Handelsblatt*, October 31, 1990, p.27.

16. *Ibid.*, October 30 1990.

17. *Die Welt*, October 23, 1990, declaration of the construction minister, Gerda Hasselfeldt.

18. *Handelsblatt*, October 30, 1990.

19. *Der Spiegel*, no. 44, 1990, p. 29.

20. *Ibid.*, no. 43, 1990, p. 152.

21. *Les Echos*, October 29, 1990.

22. *Handelsblatt*, October 30, 1990.

23. *Die Zeit*, October 19, 1990.

24. *Der Spiegel*, no. 42, 1990, p. 244.

25. *TWSJ*, October 23, 1990, and *Handelsblatt*, October 26-27, 1990.

Emperors and constitutions

ALTHOUGH the Gulf crisis has shown the fundamental unity of the imperialist states in slapping down any challenge to their authority from the dependent countries, it has also thrown a spotlight on long-simmering tensions between them. The debate over German and Japanese participation in the Gulf war effort should be seen in this context. In Japan, the debate is taking place against the backdrop of a continued drive by ruling class circles to rehabilitate the imperial/chauvinist tradition of the pre-World War 2 period. The ceremonies for the inauguration of the new Japanese Emperor, Akihito, held on November 12, take on a special significance in the light of this.

BERNARD GIBBONS

THE coalition "Down with Glorification of the Emperor System! Joint Action against the Accession Ceremonies (*Sokui-no-Rei* and *Daijosai*)", supported by, among others, the Japanese Trotskyists of the Japan Revolutionary Communist League, was organized in April 1990 with the aim of stopping the *Sokui-no-Rei* and the *Daijosai*, the two major Shinto ceremonies held by the Japanese state for Akihito, the new Tenno (the special Japanese term reserved for the Emperor — it means "heavenly sovereign"). The *Sokui-no-Rei* took place on November 12; the *Daijosai* is scheduled for two weeks later.

In all, it is estimated that the ceremonies will cost some \$15 million. In the *Sokui-no-Rei* ceremony, the new Tenno declares that the peoples of the world must obey him, "the son of the gods" and recognize their subordinate relationship to him.

In the *Daijosai*, Akihito joins the spirit of his ancestor, the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, thereby becoming a "living god" and absolute ruler, then forces the Japanese people to swear allegiance to him, as their forebears did, and receives tribute from them as proof of submission.

The coalition says that "through these ceremonies Akihito, like his father, Hirohito, seeks to confirm himself as 'son of the gods' and as the supreme ruler not only of the people of Japan but of every area of the world". The coalition points out that the ceremonies have the aim of restoring Shinto as Japan's state religion

and sanctifying the lineage of the Tenno's family, thereby legitimizing discrimination. Whilst the main opposition parties, including the Socialists and Communists, have skirted the issue (although they boycotted the ceremonies), the coalition has brought the Japanese far left together with several Christian and traditional Buddhist organizations, as well as the Buraku-min, an oppressed minority people.

Tacit recognition of chauvinism and fanaticism

Mass meetings and rallies were held in Tokyo, on November 12 against the *Sokui-no-Rei* and planned for November 22 and 23 against the *Daijosai* — with protests in many other Japanese cities. A national caravan campaign against the chauvinist rituals was launched on October 10.

The coalition is asking for international support and an international boycott of ceremonies which it says imply "tacit recognition of the chauvinistic, racist and fanatic ideology of Tennoism....we are sure that if people outside Japan understood the real meaning of these ceremonies they would never want their leaders to attend the *Sokui-no-Rei*".

The ceremonies are indicative of the Japanese ruling class's desire to mark a break with Japan's post-1945 history. The Tenno system and the state religion of Shinto provided the ideological basis for Japanese aggression against neighboring countries in the 1930s and 1940s. After the 1945 defeat, both the wartime emper-



or Hirohito and the Tenno system survived in the framework of the so-called "symbolic Tenno system", which involved Hirohito's renunciation of his divine status, and the removal of Shinto as the state religion.

Akihito's accession takes place in the context of the desire of a significant section of the Japanese ruling class to bring Japan's military capacities into line with its enormous economic power (Japan's low level of military expenditure was of course a significant factor in the development of this power, providing it with a comparative advantage in relation to other imperialist states). The Japanese military has been deeply involved in the preparation of these ceremonies.

Decline in support for Prime Minister

The proposal of Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu to send members of the Japanese Self-Defence Force (as the armed forces are known) to the Gulf (in a "non-combat" role, under the guise of a "UN Peace Cooperation Corps") has run into considerable opposition and brought about a sharp drop in his personal standing in the opinion polls. Article 9 of Japan's US-dictated 1947 Constitution unilaterally renounces war and the use of force, and rules out the maintenance of an army or other "war potential" on its territory.

Whilst this article indicated the desire of the United States to bring to heel its imperialist rival in the Pacific, it reflected a very real pacifist and anti-militarist sentiment amongst the Japanese masses, who had suffered terribly in a war foisted upon them by the militarist clique which had seized power in the 1920s.

Indeed, it was the Americans themselves who urged on and facilitated Japanese rearmament in the context of the Communist victory in China and the Korean war.

In 1948, only a year after the constitution was adopted, Washington was urging the creation of a Japanese paramilitary force. A "reserve guard" was created in 1950, composed of about 75,000 men (many, former officers of the imperial army) — this was charged with assuring "internal security" during the anti-Communist purge then being vigorously

pursued in Japan. This reserve guard formed the nucleus of what became in 1954 the Self-Defence Force. From the 1960s onwards Japanese rightists have agitated for a revision of article 9.

The force of the article had already been severely weakened by the security treaty with the US signed in 1951 (renewed, despite very fierce popular opposition, in 1960) as well as Japan's active role as a base for the US war effort in Korea and Vietnam. The military budget has grown by an average of 6% per year since 1961 and has now passed beyond the psychologically important threshold of 1% of GNP. Japan's armed forces are now 250,000 strong, and military expenditure is running at \$25-30 billion per year.

Strong pressure from the US government for a Japanese commitment to the crusade in the Gulf has come in a situation where Japanese-US relations are already strained because of the 2/1 trade imbalance between the two countries. Kaifu's initial response to this pressure was to send money to fund the war effort, but it took weeks to establish governmental consensus on a contribution of \$4 billion — there are sharp cleavages within Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party on how to respond to US pressure.

The proposal that troops be sent met a wave of parliamentary and public opposition (a poll published in the daily newspaper *Asahi* showed 78% of Japanese people opposed to the sending of troops abroad, as against 15% in favour. 54% were opposed even to the sending of unarmed civilian units. (See IV 194). There were strong protests also from Japan's neighbours, particularly China and South Korea.

Important victory for peace movement

On Tuesday November 6, the proposal was finally withdrawn — the government recognized that it had no chance of passage in the upper house, where the combined opposition parties hold a majority, and many doubted its chances of getting through the lower house, where the LDP is in the majority.

The chauvinist offensive of the Japanese ruling class is by no means over — the government now plans to draw up new legislation to enable Japan to participate in future UN authorized "peacekeeping" activities. But whatever lies ahead, the defeat of Kaifu's proposal is a significant victory for the anti-militarist majority within Japanese society, and it has provided a major fillip for the international movement against the war by showing that mass opposition can bring results.

Further information on opposition to accession ceremonies from; Information Center on Imperial Succession, United Church of Christ, Nishi-Waseda 2-3-18, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan. ★

HOW many of your members have been detained since the wave of protests and general strike that was coordinated by Chun No Hyep in April/May?

Kim Sang Bock: There are currently 450 workers imprisoned by the government for engaging in strike action and about 100 workers in hiding. These are predominantly leading activists in Chun No Hyep who were singled out by government forces for arrest when they stormed into factories and shipyards to crush the strikes.

● What is the present situation as regards on-going industrial disputes?

KSB: One place of particular concern to us at the moment is the Samsung shipyard. Samsung is the second largest company in Korea and its management, supported by the government, actively prohibits free trade union activity. They even went to the lengths of setting up a ghost union in order to try to undermine workers' attempts to establish their own democratic Minjung union.

When workers persisted in their efforts to build an independent union they incurred such heavy repression from the police and management that one worker committed suicide in protest at the absence of democratic rights. We would be grateful if labour movement activists could give their full support to such initiatives.

Kim Kyung Eun: In Seoul alone eight unions are at the moment taking action against the lock-out. These are mainly women workers, like the 600 on strike at the Nau Precision Company which makes VATEL cordless phones. In this particular case the women organized a go slow in protest at the 7% pay offer. The capitalists retaliated by announcing the close down of the company, while at the same time hiring scabs and bribing some striking workers to continue production.

Every day the striking workers go to picket at the factories and everyday they are arrested by the special riot police task force and by hired thugs known as Kusudey who work alongside the police. They are then usually forced onto buses and driven to clearings a couple of miles outside of Seoul where they are released. In the very hot weather we have recently seen police shutting workers in buses with locked windows, and leaving them there for two to three hours in the glaring sun.

● Many people have been amazed at Chun No Hyep's ability to coordinate such a large wave of strikes and protests just two months after its formation. How do you propose to maintain the momentum until the next series of wage settlements?

KKE: We always knew that the govern-

Union activists speak

SINCE 1987, when the military dictatorship of Chun Do Wan fell and a massive democratic movement arose among the youth, South Korea has seen a succession of strike waves. These struggles have led to a significant rise in wages and consumption and a general rise in the living standards of South Korean workers. It has also led to major developments in the organization of the Korean workers' movement.

The most important of these has been the birth of an independent trade union, Chun No Hyep, which has been playing a leading role in these struggles despite fierce repression from the bosses and the state (see IV 184). We publish below an interview with two leaders of Chun No Hyep, Kim Sang Bok, member of the unions Policy Planning Office and Kim Kyung Eun, vice-secretary of the regional council of Seoul. The interviews were conducted in July for IV by Paul Field.

ment and the capitalist class would do everything in their powers to destroy a national organization of democratic unions in the first six months after its formation.

Our intention was therefore to defend the movement through struggle. The strike at the Hyundai shipyard in Ulsan and within the Korean broadcasting system followed by the three day general strike in 200 factories or more across Korea succeeded in breaking the deadlock and demonstrated the ability of the workers to organize mass action.

In the second six months of our existence we are hoping to raise workers' consciousness about wider issues such as housing, job security, and the appalling work conditions that cause thousands of industrial accidents every year. We also hope to consolidate the base of KAGTU. At the moment we are in effect a national council of regional trade unions whereas our aim is to become a national federation of industrial unions.

● **How does KAGTU continue to function with so many of its leading activists in prison or in hiding?**

KSB: The situation is very difficult. However, it is true to say that every new struggle is producing new leaders, while at the same time we are relying upon support and solidarity from the rest of the democratic movement, most notably from the student movement and the progressive Minjung theology wing of the church.

● **KAGTU was set up earlier this year by Minju democratic unions**

established during and after the 1987 strike wave mainly because the pro-government Federation of Korean Trade Unions failed to defend the interests of the workers. What has the relationship between the two organizations been since your formation?

KSB: Our basic position has always been to call for the maximum unity of the working class. In the three years between the struggle for democracy in 1987 and the foundation of Chun No Hyep we consistently fought within the FKTU to make it accountable to its members but at every turn we came up against the bureaucratic leadership that dominates and in turn subordinates the union to the government.

Nevertheless, the fact that every union is forced by law to affiliate to FKTU means that there are many activists in the FKTU with whom we work very closely. Moreover the fact that it is illegal to give money to our organization has meant that there are many unions that while remaining part of the FKTU look to us for leadership.

As far as working with the FKTU nationally is concerned we called upon them to jointly sponsor the May Day celebrations and to assist in organizing the funeral of the worker who died at the Samsung shipyard, but they refused. As an organization that has been instrumental in defusing the workers struggle and in forcing them to accept the will of the employers they obviously see the development of a new national democratic union movement based on working class

struggle as a threat to them and the present system.

● **Has any consideration been given to the possibility of setting up a political party linked to Chun No Hyep?**

KSB: There has been some talk within other parts of the democratic movement about setting up a People's Party. Officially there have been no pronouncements by Chun No Hyep concerning this, although in principle there are differences of opinion within Chun No Hyep over the usefulness of such a development.

For example, should we be spending some of our time and energy trying to form such a party, or should we concentrate all of our time upon the important business of strengthening and consolidating the base of our union movement as we are at the moment. What do you think?

If a legal political party was formed that, while proposing to defend the workers was at the same time very much part of the present system, and was opposed to anything that fundamentally challenged it, like the Labour Party in Britain, should we support it?

● **The clandestine conditions that KAGTU are being forced to operate under are not the most conducive for the maintenance of internal democracy. Other progressive democratic unions, such as Solidarnosc in Poland, found that when they went underground their internal democratic activity was restricted. What steps are being taken to preserve accountability within Chun No Hyep?**

KSB: Even those leaders that are in hiding at the moment are still in regular contact with the rank-and-file membership. Unlike the FKTU we are organized from the bottom up. Our very formation came as the result of three years of activity by independent unions who felt there was a need to coordinate action on a national basis. The reason we have been successful in mobilizing workers is that it is our membership, the workers themselves, who make the decisions.

In each of the unions workers participate in the running of the union through a number of sub-committees that cover a range of issues including organization, strikes and women's issues. We were borne out of the undemocratic way in which the unions and the government exercise control and the workers need to empower themselves. Our continued growth depends on maintaining the vitality of our internal democracy.

● **Are you confident about the future?**

KSB: We are sure of victory. Whatever the state and the capitalists do, they cannot defeat the workers. We will remain true to the banner of Chun No Hyep. ★

The growing isolation of the "great leader"

ON OCTOBER 1, 1990, the Soviet and South Korean authorities announced, through a joint declaration issued in New York, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. A discreet but effective foreign policy offensive had already permitted the South Korean regime to re-establish official relations with East European countries, even before the events of autumn 1989 there.

ENZO TRAVERSO

THE FACT THAT this announcement was made in New York indicates the role played by the US in the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and South Korea. Since the meeting between the South Korean president Roh Tae Woo and Gorbachev in San Francisco during the Soviet leaders' visit to the US last April, the news had been awaited. It comes at the end of a period of increasing trade and other contacts which started with the onset of *perestroika* and accelerated after the fall of Chun Do Wan's military dictatorship in 1987.

The economic reforms in the USSR open up an enormous market for South Korean industry, which, at the end of three decades of spectacular and uninterrupted growth, is beginning to encounter serious difficulties. The Soviet market offers the possibility of reviving South Korean exports, notably of cars, televisions and word processors. South Korea's commercial offensive is not only aimed towards the USSR and Eastern Europe. China, with which Seoul has long had significant trade, is also a target.

Evidently all this is very worrying for North Korea, which is increasingly isolated and facing growing economic problems. After the fall of Romania's Ceausescu and East Germany's Honecker, North Korea's "great leader" Kim Il Sung — who had announced a few years previously his intention of abdicating in favour of his son, Kim Jong Il — must have felt nervous. But this has only made the tension between North Korea and its ex-allies in Eastern Europe more intense.

After the announcement of the re-establishment of relations between South Korea and the Soviet Union, the Pyongyang regime reacted by issuing for the first time an open and blunt condemnation of the Soviet "new course". Accord-

ing to an editorial in the regime's official journal, *Rodong Sinmun*, reprinted in the English language weekly, *Pyongyang Times*, on October 6, the link-up between Seoul and Moscow was the result of *perestroika*, which was leading the Soviet Union towards "ruin, chaos and confusion". Today's Soviet Union, continues the editorial, is not that of the past. It has degenerated and changed its nature. "For this reason it seeks new friends, more in tune with

its changed nature." Gorbachev has thus "sold the dignity and honour of a socialist power" and betrayed "the interests and trust of an ally" in exchange for a few million dollars.

Economic dependence on Soviet trade

It is not yet possible to say whether such talk is simply momentary anger or the signal of a break between Pyongyang and its historic ally. Certainly a break with the USSR would carry a high cost for the North Korean economy. In 1986 the Soviet Union took in 51.4% of North Korean exports and provided 60.5% of its imports. However, even if there is no formal diplomatic break, it is clear that the terms of Soviet-North Korean economic relations are fundamentally changing. The Soviet Union has already announced its intention of ceasing cheap oil sales to North Korea and trading only on the basis of world market prices.

Meanwhile the countries of the ex-Soviet bloc no longer intend to have "privileged relations" with Pyongyang. This means a 20% fall in North Korean exports this year (see *The Economist*, August 25, 1990). The risk of ending up in a situation of almost total international isolation — with the support of China, Vietnam and Cuba — must be worrying for Kim Il Sung. The problem of isolation is compounded by a growing gap between the economic performance of the two parts of Korea. With twice the population, the South has a gross national product three times that of the North. Pyongyang faces complete marginalization.

This is the context of the resumption of negotiations between the two Korean governments on the question of reunification. In fact, the meetings are not really

about reunification. Kim Il Sung has not ruled out the option of a federation that would not call into question the different social natures of the two states, but he has put as the prior condition for any negotiation the withdrawal of the American military contingent of 43,000 troops stationed in the South. The South's government presently considers this inadmissible, declaring itself ready to get rid of 7,000 of the troops as a proof of "goodwill".

The summit meeting between Yon Hyong Muk and Kang Young Hoon, the prime ministers of North and South Korea respectively, has been greeted in the international press as proof of a change of climate, without any evidence of real change in inter-Korean relations. These meetings might perhaps lead to a certain relaxation, which in itself would be a step forward, given the current total absence of dialogue and communication between the two countries. The re-establishment of postal relations and even a limited exchange of visits between citizens of the two states would be an enormous relief for the thousands of Korean families torn apart by the war.

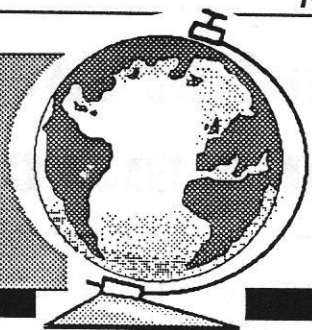
The last meeting between a few divided families took place in 1985 at the frontier post of Pan Moun Jon, under Red Cross auspices, after which all relations were broken off. When, last September, the idea of a temporary opening of the frontiers was floated for a few days, 61,355 South Korean citizens immediately put their names down for a trip to the North (*Newsweek*, August 27, 1990).

Pressure of public opinion in the South

Pyongyang has been confronted by an imperative need to break out of its international isolation, while Seoul has to deal with growing pressure from public opinion, which has never ceased to consider reunification as a fundamental and unavoidable issue. The unification of Germany has put the Korean national question back on the agenda. Certainly, the South Korean leadership is dreaming of a German-style annexation of the North. But the political conditions for such an operation do not (at least as yet) exist. Despite its difficulties, Kim Il Sung's regime has not reached the level of disintegration of the twilight years of Honecker's GDR. The country's isolation and the grip of the regime's Stalinist structures have effectively sealed the country off from external influences.

Unlike the GDR, where most of the population was able to watch West German television, North Korean citizens are not affected by South Korean media and no intellectual dissidence has been able to appear. Kim Il Sung's regime, despite its extreme personality cult, remains the inheritor of a national liberation struggle, with its sufferings and sacrifices that remain alive in the population's memory.

AROUND THE WORLD



HAITI

A "candidate of the people"

GENERAL elections are due to take place in Haiti on December 16, 1990, if the army and the followers of the former dictator Duvalier do not prevent them by violence, as they did in 1987. On October 14, the Duvalierists created a party and announced that they had "come out of their hiding place". Three days later, Duvalier's former chief torturer and minister of the interior, Roger Lafontant, announced his candidacy for the post of

president of the republic.

The next day, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, liberation theologian and today a popular hero, took up the challenge and declared himself "the candidate of the people".

He intends by this gesture to unleash a "tidal wave" so as to bar the way to the Tontons-Macoutes either by way of the elections, or, if fair elections do not take place, outside of them. His candidacy has excited great enthusiasm. In a few days, some hundreds of thousands of people have inscribed themselves on the electoral lists.

In South Korea, the demand for reunification has an anti-government and anti-imperialist edge. The civil war, which broke out in 1945 after 35 years of Japanese colonial domination, left the country ravaged. The division at the 38th parallel, after a bloody conflict that threatened to lead to a third world war, left the South in a state of semi-colonial dependence on the United States. For this reason democratic and leftist militants in the South have an ambivalent attitude to the North. Censorship, vulgar anti-Communism and the lies of the South's military regimes have resulted in the North Korean regime seeming less repulsive than it in fact is.

The Northern state is often viewed, if not as a model, given the total lack of democracy, at least as an example of national pride and national independence in the face of their own authoritarian and corrupt government, under the thumb of imperialism.

For the South Korean ruling class, reunification would be a way of enlarging their industrial base and making Korea, with its 60 million inhabitants, the second capitalist power in Asia, after Japan. For the workers, students and exploited masses of the South, it would represent above all a continuation of the national liberation struggle. Thus comparisons between Germany and Korea must be entered upon with caution. The division of Germany was the result of the defeat of an imperialist power in the Second World War, while the division of Korea perpetuated a condition of national oppression inherited from colonialism.

This is the background to the courageous journey of a young leftist militant, Im Suk Yong, to Pyongyang, and the

heavy penalty he incurred (see IV 180). However, it is becoming increasingly clear that this national liberation struggle does not have an ally in the North Korea regime. The latter's aim, despite the official propaganda, is not reunification — which it would accept only under its own control, which is not on the cards — but the maintenance of its own bureaucratic power.

Renewal of relations with Japan

Another consequence of its international isolation has been Pyongyang's attempts to renew relations with Japan. Only relatively minor obstacles to this seem to remain, given that Japan has expressed its readiness to pay compensation of \$4.8bn for the period of colonial domination, between 1910 and 1945 (*The Economist*, August 25, 1990). North Korea is the only country with which Tokyo has no diplomatic relations, despite the presence of a large Korean community in Japan, whose sympathies are divided between Seoul and Pyongyang.

Recent visits by delegations of the Japanese Socialist Party and (ruling) Liberal Democratic Party to North Korea are a sign of a desire for reconciliation in Tokyo, and even, within certain limits, the possibility of economic aid. But this will not be enough to get Kim Il Sung's Stalinist dynasty out of its isolation, fill the growing economic gap with the South, or halt its slow decline. If echoes from the Beijing spring and Soviet *glasnost* reach Pyongyang, the North Korean regime may see its own end coming. ★

The candidacy of Father Aristide undermines the projects of both the Duvalierists and the US imperialists, who have had, for some time, their own favoured candidate on the lists. The Duvalierists, who have attempted to assassinate Father Aristide several times since 1986, could well embark on a new orgy of bloodshed in the coming weeks. ★

INDONESIA

Free union formed

ACCORDING to a report in the *Financial Times* (November 15, 1990), "a group of workers and human rights activists in Indonesia have formed an independent trade union, which, under the name Setia Kawan (Solidarity), aims to challenge the monopoly of the country's one officially sanctioned union."

The union plans to campaign for better wages and working conditions through a union "free from the influence of industry, employers and the government." Asked about the danger of repelling foreign capital currently attracted to the country through cheap wages, the organizers commented that cheap labour meant "disaster for the workers". The union claims 5,000 members and plans to hold a congress at the start of December to adopt statutes and elect leaders. ★



U S S R

The Fourth International in the Soviet press

THE September 11 issue of the Moscow weekly *New Times* published a long interview with Ernest Mandel of the Fourth International. This is the first time that the readers of this weekly, which is published in 8 languages, and Soviet readers in general, have been given a positive view of the Fourth International.

Under the headline "We are revolutionaries", Mandel analyzed the strategy of the Fourth International in the three sectors of the world revolution, including the strategy of political revolution in the bureaucratized workers' states.

Mandel reiterated the nuanced analysis which he has developed over some years of the changes underway in the Soviet Union (in simplified form; "yes" to *glasnost*, "no" to all that which, in *perestroika*, implies the deterioration of the standard of living of the working class).

The journalist who introduced the interview underlined that, for Soviet readers who have not read Mandel until now, and to whom Trotskyist ideas had been presented as "notoriously reactionary", this

interview would provoke astonishment, if not shock. The journalist explained "The principal discovery that an impartial reader would make.... is that one has the impression that Mandel has especially borrowed his themes from diverse representatives of the political tendencies in the USSR, to make a sort of synthesis of them, attributing to the finished product the name of the ideology of contemporary Trotskyism". But this interpretation comes up against an incontestable fact — this so-called synthesis was developed well before the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev in power! ★

PORTUGAL

Seventh Congress of PSR

THE seventh Congress of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR — Portuguese section of the Fourth International) took place in Lisbon October 5-7 in the presence of 80 delegates and numerous guests, notably delegations from the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), the Socialist Youth, the Popular Democratic Movement (MDP), the Association of the Captains of April, the José Afonso Association, the two principal trade union federations, and numerous personalities.

The large number of delegates confirmed the growth of the PSR's work, notably in new regions and new sectors. Nearly half the participants were youth (the average age at the Congress was 27) and the majority had been in the PSR for less than three years.

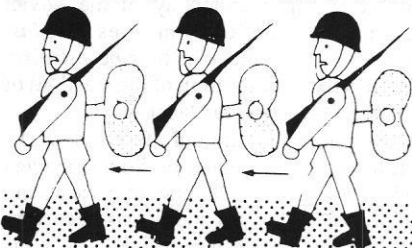
The new Central Committee contains a lot of new faces — it includes an important youth representation and even a militant whose political history began in 1961 in the prison cells of the dictator Salazar.

The conference balance sheet showed that nearly 60 public meetings have been held in the past two years, attended by more than 15,000 people, around the big campaigns led by the PSR (anti-racism, anti-militarism, denunciation of the neo-fascist gangs and in response to the murder of PSR leader José Carvalho — see IV 173 and 174) — the PSR also made an analysis of its electoral campaigns.

The Congress reviewed the campaign it led around the trial of the assassins of José Carvalho, and approved the creation of an anti-fascist information centre.

Finally, the members of the PSR defined their plan of activities for the next two years. ★

TROPA NÃO



End of Althusser's long march

THERE is a sort of journalistic embarrassment surrounding the death of Louis Althusser, a homage granted with a bad conscience. It seems that all that is left to remember of this defender of "theoretical anti-humanism" is his human gentleness and his qualities as a teacher. The personal drama — the killing of his wife in a fit of depression — is recalled with prurient fascination, but his work is discreetly dismissed.

DANIEL BENSARD

HOWEVER, frankness shows more respect than "making allowances". Like most novice Communists in the 1960s, we read Althusser with passionate interest, pencil in hand, underlining and annotating. Even so, in the pre-1968 [French Trotskyist] JCR (Jeunesses Communistes Révolutionnaires), there were not many Althusserians.

In 1968 Ernest Mandel published his "Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx", a polemical alternative reading of Marx, criticizing Althusser's notion of an "epistemological rupture" between the young and old Marx in the light of the *Grundrisse*. In 1975, we published a collection of articles entitled, simply, *Contre Althusser* (Against Althusser). In other words we were against him, perhaps to the point of excess.

Althusser bathed Marxism in the acid of his "epistemological rupture", with the intention of establishing its stature as a science. In so doing, he freed theory from the nagging interference of day to day politics. He freed us from the period of Cold War "armed philosophers". "We were philosophers without works, who made every work into politics."

Althusser emancipates theory

Henceforth, Althusser declared, "theoretical practice is its own criterion, containing within itself definite rules for evaluating the quality of its own product, that is to say the scientificity of the products of scientific practice." For Communist students in conflict with the totem of the party, such an emancipation of theory gave the signal for effective freedom of thought.

Althusser granted Marxism a new scientific dignity. In the introduction to his book *For Marx*, he spoke of the frustration of the Communist intellectual per-

ceived as a mercenary petitioner. "There was no way out for a philosopher. If he spoke or wrote philosophy at the behest of the party, he was reduced to commentaries or to small variations for internal use on well-known quotations. We had no audience outside our own circles."

Marxism was to gain the precious recognition of academia. This was a godsend for the rising generation, caught up in the big expansion of higher education. Servants of an all-powerful, since true, science, these intellectuals were freed from guilt towards the "party of the working class".

Now they were themselves producers, since, so the master taught them, it would henceforth be necessary to "conceive of understanding as production." They were to have, at one and the same time, the technocratic power of this science and the good conscience of supporting the cause.

Theory liberated from practice

In this way, Althusser appeared as a liberator. Here was theory liberated from practice. To the point where the philosopher were to shut themselves up in their ivory towers and break off all relations with practice.

This ratified the relations between the revolutionary pretensions of this theoretical renovation and the actual policy pursued by the French Communist Party in 1968. In this armed peace between theory and practice, policy remained under the control of the politicians of the party leadership.

With the goal of elevating Marxism to academic dignity, Althusser invited us to enter into a dialogue with psychoanalysis, linguistics, and structural anthropology. At the same time, it was the cursed union of historical materialism and dialectical materialism, distantly descended from Bukharin's "Popular Manual of Marxist Sociology" — well demolished by Gram-

sci in the Prison Notebooks, given official status by Stalin in his immortal "Dialectical and Historical Materialism" — that enabled the marriage of Stalinist positivism ("Marxism-Leninism") and the positivist traditions of French academia.

Since "the knowledge of history is no more historical than the knowledge of sugar is sugary" history can be summed up in terms of profit and loss.

Althusser polemicized particularly against the "theoretical leftism" of Lukacs and Gramsci, accused of "confusing under the heading of historical materialism two distinct disciplines, on the one hand the theory of history, on the other, dialectical materialism."

On the one hand a distinct science of history, on the other "a science of the distinction between truth and falsehood". Between these two, politics remained in the competence of the party.

Intervention into student crisis

Ultimately, the lifting of the burden of guilt from the shoulders of the intellectuals had its counterpart in Althusser's 1963 text on student problems.

This was a direct intervention into a crisis in the Union of Communist Students, which still sends a shiver down the spine: "All discussions between Communists are scientific discussions. This is the basis on which the Marxist-Leninist concept of criticism and self-criticism rests. The right to criticism and the duty of self-criticism have one and the same principle — the real acceptance of Marxist-Leninist science and its consequences."

The distinction drawn between the technical and social divisions of labour gave a "Marxist" justification — besides its pedagogical function — of the existing university and mandarinal order, on the condition that in the material taught "the permanent dividing line between the technical and social division of labour, the most constant and profound class divide" between "true science" and "pure ideology" was established.

Such an approach could lead both to complete submission before the verdicts of this true science or to purely mental rebellions against everything that could be labelled false bourgeois science. And this at a time when the very concept of science itself needed a hard critical look.

It is the texts Althusser wrote before his

self-criticism and evolution in the 1970s that made of "Althusserianism" a school or current of thought.

In the political world, Althusser inevitably came up against the wall of Stalinism. He treated it as a product of a "theoretical deviation" rather than a formidable historical counter-revolution, equipped with all the thoroughly non-conceptual weight of purges and labour camps.

In his 1973 *Reply to John Lewis*, the positive side of Stalin was still allowed to prevail over the negative: "Stalin cannot, for clear and strong reasons, be reduced to the deviation that we associate with his name... He had other historical merits. He realized that it was necessary to renounce

For him "the only left critique of the Stalinist deviation" was the "silent but active critique accomplished by the Chinese revolution".

In this scenario, the Stalinist tanks in Prague and Budapest, the Hitler/ Stalin pact and the camps were chicken feed.

Theoretical errors based on philosophical deviations

Althusser had equipped himself in advance with a justification for this lasting blindness.

The "theoretical deviations that have led to the great historical failures of the proletariat" were "at bottom" philosophical deviations.

"We are now near to understanding why they submerged even those who denounced them — in a certain sense they were inevitable in function of the inevitable backwardness of Marxist philosophy itself."

How happy is philosophy, that can turn up in the twilight after the battle and contemplate the ruins, after the poor politico has had to wade all day long in the mud and blood!

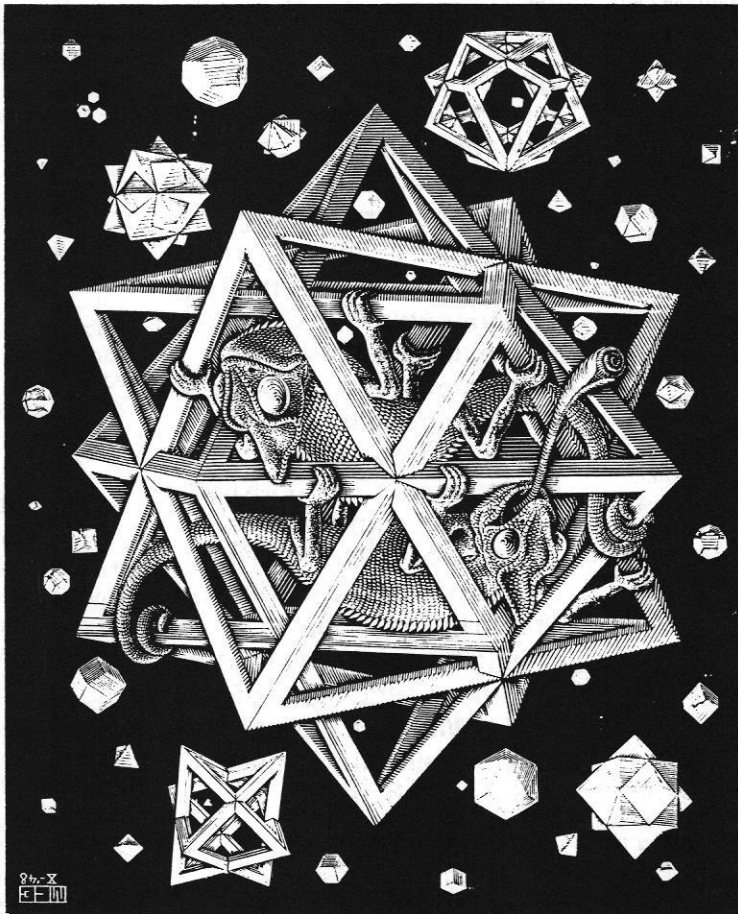
It would be illusory to suggest that the present can ever be fully understood, but even so, all the liquidated dissidents and oppositionists attest to the fact that the history that happened was not the only possible one, and that Stalinism was never obligatory.

What cannot go on any longer in the Communist Party appeared later, in 1978.

As late as 1976, Althusser was saluting the 22nd Congress of the French Communist Party as "a decisive event".

He was critical of the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat as well as the party's internal regime, but welcomed the strategic innovations (this was the high tide of Eurocommunism) and categorically rejected the notion of the right to organize tendencies. What could not be allowed to last had already lasted far too long.

Armed with the sharp scalpel of science, Althusser thought that he could dismiss history. But history struck back. Yet, paradoxically, Althusser's work now seems to have gained a quite new subversive import. In the present period, to "read *Capital*" with and against Althusser remains the point of departure for our reasoned rebellion. ★



belief in the imminent miracle of the world revolution and thus undertake the construction of socialism in one country. He drew all the consequences from this — to defend this country at all costs as the rearguard of all socialism in the world, and to make of it, besieged by imperialism, a fortress that could not be captured.

"To this end it was necessary to give priority to heavy industry, which produced the tanks of Stalingrad, which served the Soviet people in their heroic life-and-death struggle to free the world from Nazism. This is also our history. And through the caricatures and even tragedies of this history, millions of Communists learned the principles of Leninism, even if Stalin taught them as dogmas".

A new face for the king

ALTHOUGH the area covered by the Kingdom of Jordan never represented a source of natural wealth for imperialism, between 1921 and 1957 British colonialism provided the finance and training for the setting up a central government.² From 1958 to 1967, London was replaced in this role by US imperialism, and after the 1967 defeat by the Gulf oil states. In 1971-74, the isolation of the Jordanian regime in the region which resulted from its crushing of the Palestinian movement on its territory brought an increase in aid from the United States.

This "capacity" of the regime to find new paymasters in accordance with the circumstances cannot cover up its underlying integration into imperialist policy, whatever margin for maneuver it may have. This dependence influences the Jordanian social formation. Chronic deficits in the budget and trade balance are financed by foreign aid and subsidies, which make possible a hypertrophy of the state bureaucracy in relation to the productive sectors.

Thus, a third of all jobs are accounted for by the state, military and administrative apparatuses. Industry accounts for only 8 per cent. The majority of workers and technicians emigrate to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. In 1979, 15 per cent of the economically active population were unemployed. From the standpoint of its imperialist and Arab pro-Western paymasters, Jordan is an important "producer" and "exporter" of military-political services.

The special character of Jordan's integration into imperialist policy rests on the need to produce such services, in order to gain foreign financing of the state apparatuses, whose size increases at the expense of investments in the productive sectors. The lack of commodity production in turn engenders a chronic economic crisis, with the deficit being made up by foreign aid.

The recession that has prevailed since 1982 is linked to a decline in aid from the pro-Western oil states.³ The regime could have avoided this, if it had managed to replace ruined Lebanon as the commercial and technical intermediary between the imperialist countries and the Arab oil states.⁴ In line with falling oil revenues, the drop in the second half of the 1980s in emigrant remittances from Jordanian workers in the Gulf states led to a shrinking of the state's foreign currency resources, which are essential for imports and for making up the deficit in the balance of trade (which amounts to more than half of the GNP).⁵ Two-thirds of

WHEN Iraq invaded Kuwait, the Jordanian regime, already in a sharp political and economic crisis aggravated by the *intifada*, was trying to reorganize political life in the kingdom. Through a national pact, it was trying to assure the opposition's collaboration in getting the masses to pay the bill for the crisis. The Gulf events offered King Hussein the opportunity to regain some credibility by taking advantage of his special relationship with Saddam Hussein. He set himself up as "mediator" between Iraq and the imperialist powers, pleading energetically for a settlement of the Iraq-Kuwait conflict within an Arab framework¹. The following article is based on one in Arabic by Omar Salem, which is to be published in the upcoming issue of *Al-Mitraqa*, a journal of Fourth Internationalists in the Arab region.

LUIZA MARIA

GNP is accounted for by the government apparatus, as against 24 per cent for industry and 2 per cent for agriculture.

In 1988, foreign debt rose to \$11.5 billion and interest on it exceeded a third of the annual state budget.⁶ This crisis, along with the breaking of links with the West Bank, brought on a drop in the value of the Jordanian dinar and inflation. So, jittery businessmen changed their dinars for foreign currency (especially dollars). The emigrant workers stopped their remittances of dollars and Saudi rials, and figures in the regime plunged into black market currency speculation.

Following the cessation of payments on the debt, the ending of imperialist financing brought a halt to the ongoing projects. Foreign currency reserves fell to the point that the government, headed by

Rifai, was forced to sell off a third of the country's gold holdings.

Aware of the link between the crisis and the practices of the regime's dignitaries, Jordanians started to make fun of the king and his courtiers, starting with the premier, Rifai. They became distrustful of the whole top echelon of the state apparatus.⁷

On April 17, the press reported a program of structural reforms decided on jointly by the government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as a rise of 30% in the prices of petroleum products. On a stop off in London on the way to Washington, the king and Rifai announced that legislative elections would be held.

A clash between truck drivers and police in the south of the country gave the signal for an explosion of anger by the population. Armed confrontations took place, as the uprising spread to the center and north of the country. The army arrested dozens of demonstrators in Amman, Zarqa, Irbid and other cities.

Government undertakes political reorganization

Fourteen demonstrators were killed. But the uprising forced the king to return precipitously from the United States to respond to the crowds that were demanding the ouster of the Rifai government. It was dismissed. Aware of the erosion of its social base, the regime undertook a political reorganization. A transitional government was formed by Zeid Ben Shaker, with the task of preparing the legislative elections. It was this leadership that

1. See the two interviews with King Hussein by British and US TV, which were published in the Jordanian press on August 5 and 6.

2. British aid to Jordan represented 33% of the latter's budget in 1922, and rose to 73% in 1946.

3. The resolutions of the Baghdad summit in 1987 included aid for the Jordanian regime to the tune of \$1.2 billion a year for a duration of 10 years. Since 1982, the regime has got less than half that.

4. This explains the concentration of capitalist investment in the equipment and service sectors. This amounts to nearly three quarters of total investment, while in 1986 and 1987 13% of investment was in industry and 1% in agriculture.

5. Remittances from emigrant workers were successively 475, 400, 400 and 317 million Jordanian dinars from 1984 to 1987.

6. The payment of interest on the debt declined after the rescheduling decided on in 1989 in agreement with the IMF. In 1992, when payments are to resume, interest on the debt will amount to more than half of GNP.

7. There was a popular outcry against the bribes paid to the king and the chief of the army in the arms deals with France and Great Britain; the involvement of the king and his head of cabinet, also director of Royal Air Jordan, in pillaging this company; and the "gifts" received by the crown prince, who is director of the national bank.

launched the vague notion of a "national pact."

The electoral code in force until the 1980s divided up the seats among regions, clans and tribes. Moreover, Article 18 banned candidacies by persons belonging to unrecognized parties, while the only organization recognized by the regime was the Islamic fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood.

Zeid Ben Shaker's government amended the code on the eve of the fall 1989 legislative elections. The number of seats was increased from 60 to 80, and the electoral districts were drawn to favor rural areas and those inhabited by people of Jordanian origin, at the expense of the urban areas and those with big concentrations of Palestinians.

The Muslim Brothers have enjoyed considerable freedom of organization and action in Jordan for 40 years. The regime has followed this course since its inception in order to bar the way to Communism and Arab nationalism. This orientation reached its height in 1980, when the government of Mudar Badran (the present head of government) nearly came to blows with the Syrian regime. Despite some frictions with the monarchy, the Muslim Brothers have continued to use the mosques as platforms, and their press is legal.

The Muslim brothers fielded 35 candidates, won 22 seats, and helped to bring in allies belonging to other religious currents. Their election campaign included nationalist slogans, such as "Liberate Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan", opposed to a peaceful settlement with Israel. They also raised democratic demands that chimed in with those of the other parties — changing the constitution, abolishing the emergency laws and martial law, and so on.

The success of the Muslim Brothers (27.5%) and the other religious currents (12.5%) was a result also of regional considerations in the choice of their candidates. All the Palestinian deputies elected, with a single exception, came from the ranks of the fundamentalists. In all, the Islamic constellation won 32 seats — 22 for the Muslim Brothers, eight for the independents and two for the House of the Koran Movement. The independent Islamics got four ministerial posts in the new Badran government.

The left parties — the Jordanian Communist Party, the Democratic People's Party (DPP — linked to the Democratic

Front faction of the PLO led by Nayef Hawatmeh), George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the nationalist factions, including the various wings of the Baath (Iraqi, Syrian and left Baathists) — did not go beyond the population's immediate demands, and their slogans were often confused with those of the fundamentalists.

Left fails to agree minimum program

Incapable of rallying around a minimum program, they suffered from the redrawing of election districts, the brevity of the campaign and the population's lack of interest in the elections. Each of the three main left parties got a seat. The independent left candidates got three seats, and the nationalist movement, five.



The National Bloc, made up of candidates favorable to the regime, got the majority in parliament.

It was the Muslim Brothers' success that led to the naming of Mudar Badran, their ally in the confrontation with the Syrian government in 1980, as head of government. The installation of this former chief of intelligence (1969-1970) and former head of government (1976-1984), a well-known champion of repression, was supposed to inaugurate a phase of democratic change.

Starting immediately after its installation, the new government has introduced a series of measures in parliament widening general freedoms — a "freezing" of martial law with a view to abolishing it (the notion of a "freeze" does not appear in the constitution), the release of hundreds of political prisoners, restitution of several thousand passports confiscated under the previous Badran government

and abolition of the Rifai government's decrees restricting the freedoms of trade unions and the press. Thus, getting the jump on the parliamentary left, which abstained at the time of the vote, Badran got a majority and took up the task of establishing the National Pact.

For a long time, the left parties have not called for changing the constitution. Adapting to the monarchy, they agreed to take part in a royal commission to draw up the Pact that was set up in April 1990. Issa Madanat (a deputy and member of the Political Bureau of the CP) and Dhib Murji (a deputy and member of the Popular Front) justified their participation by explaining that the Pact "will remove the obstacles that have blocked political action by the masses" and "cancel out the negative aspects of the regime's previous policies."⁸

As for Tayssir Zibri, general secretary of the DPP, he said that if there was to be any dispute, it should not be over the principle of the Pact but over its form,⁹ and that there was "agreement on the plan for a serious and positive course...to get out of the political and economic crisis."¹⁰ He declared himself ready to abandon a part of his organization's program, if necessary, in order to seek a "common denominator." This policy of compromise with the monarchy has become the common denominator of all the left parties.

The demonstrations against the massacre of Palestinians in Rishon-le-Zion in May 1990 were only supported by a few individuals on the left, in their personal capacity. The CP went so far as to organize committees to "calm the masses," as in Zarqa. The opposition got governmental thanks where it managed to channel the mobilizations. It offered its apologies where it failed to do so.

Finally, the latest episode of this shameful story is that the CP, the Popular Front, and the DPP sent a telegram to the Arab heads of state meeting in June 1990 in Baghdad, imploring them to aid the Jordanian regime financially so that it could "stand up to Israel and support the *intifada*." In these circumstances, the Gulf crisis has enabled the king to play a role on the international scene without tarnishing his new reputation as a "democrat" and his recently refurbished "nationalist" escutch-

8. Speech by Issa Madanat to the Royal Commission, published in the Jordanian newspaper *Ash-Shaab*, May 20, 1990.

9. *Ash-Shaab*, June 3, 1990.

10. *Ash-Shaab*, March 31, 1990.

eon. He has posed as a mediator for settling the Iraqi-Kuwaiti conflict within an Arab framework. The Arab solution, while accepting imperialist domination in the region, rejects resorting to military operations. It calls for maintaining some limited but essential gains for Iraq — its freedom of access to the Gulf (through territorial concessions) and payment of compensation to Baghdad for the losses inflicted on its oil business by the Gulf emirates. It takes up the call of Yasser Arafat and King Hussein for an international conference to settle the Palestinian problem. Hussein's version of the "Arab solution" also proposes the setting up of an Arab investment fund to promote development in the region while guaranteeing stability.

The Jordanian regime's policy is explained by its fear of the upsets that would inevitably result from an armed confrontation between the United States and Iraq. Its opposition to a military solution, and its turn to the reformist left and the fundamentalist movement are creating illusions among the population. In fact, contrary to what many imagine in Jordan, King Hussein has not broken with the imperialists. He has supported all the UN Security Council resolutions on Iraq. He endorsed the Saudis' right to appeal for US forces to protect them from Iraq. When the king held back from condemning the invasion of Kuwait, the press, the left and the fundamentalists drew the conclusion that he was supporting Iraq. When he proposed an "Arab option", evoking the dangers that would arise from a military option in the region, his courtiers presented him as an "anti-imperialist." And when he supported the UN Security Council resolutions, the same people justified his choice. Respect for international law on this question, they said, called for doing the same on the Palestinian question.

With some popular sections getting ideas about arming themselves, the king tried to get ahead of them by calling for a "people's army" (that is, the training of civilians by the royal army). On the other hand, increases in the prices of necessities, supposedly because of the needs of the struggle, were got through with the support of the left. Imperialist pressures to get the king to line up clearly against Baghdad have increased, along with promises of compensation for the losses incurred by the interruption of exports to Iraq. The king has won some real victories domestically. He has been able to pull the wool over the eyes of the mass movement, as attested by the appearance of his portrait alongside that of Saddam Hussein in the demonstrations that have taken place in Jordan but also on the West Bank. This is a new coronation for the sovereign, but this time he is disguised as a "left-wing monarch," who has made his peace with George Habash and Nayef Hawatmeh at the Congress of Arab Popular Forces in Amman in September 1990. ★

George Habash on war and peace in the Middle East

ON SEPTEMBER 15, 1990 the Congress of Arab Popular Forces took place in the Jordanian capital of Amman. The sole common theme of this vast meeting of groups with very different outlooks was opposition to Western intervention in the region. After being banned for 20 years, this meeting saw the return of the leaders of the left of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to Jordan. Under pressure from a growing mass movement of both Palestinians and Jordanians, Jordan's King Hussein has been forced to open up the flood-gates of political self-expression in the kingdom.

The very fact that George Habash, the head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), was present shows the change in the atmosphere in Jordan over the past months. Since the start of the crisis, Dr. Habash has been distinguished by an uncritical attitude of support for "the people and army of Iraq and to the Iraqi political leadership and our brother Saddam Hussein." Such uncritical support is all the more surprising in that it comes after a decade of embittered relations between the PFLP and the Iraqi regime. George Habash's long speech to the Congress, of which extracts are printed below, also raises other issues — (*Salah Jaber*).

DOCUMENT

“ IT would be a big mistake to treat the Gulf crisis lightly or in a sentimental fashion. It is useful — and I say this from a point of view of total support to our Iraqi brothers — to state certain things directly — our enemy, that is the US administration, has won a battle in its "cold war", led since the end of the Second World War, against the socialist bloc and the Soviet Union.

It is preparing to act in a world with a sole pole, dominated by the United States, rather than a multi-polar or bipolar world. This new fact must be integrated in our analyses.

We must also take into account the difficulty of the battle that we are leading in the current world situation. The changes at a world level over the past year mean that the national liberation forces of the whole world are from now on compelled to count above all on themselves...

After having benefited from these changes, after having won the "cold war", with the collapse of some of the socialist regimes and the inability of the Soviet Union to aid the national liberation forc-

es, the United States dares to speak of a "new world order".

I do not know if you have read or heard the recent speech of George Bush a few days ago in which he speaks of this.

For the first time the American administration speaks of a "new world order" based on an agreement between the two great powers. If you look at this speech, you will clearly see how the US intends to organize the new international situation. Woe to all those Third World countries which cannot be milked....

Prepared for war or settlement

If the American administration wants war at any price, we are ready for it. And if there is any possibility of a political settling of accounts that would permit Iraq, as well as the Palestinian cause and the Arab nation to realize certain of their objectives, I say that we can take this road....The initiative taken by Iraq [the proposal to exchange Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait for Israeli withdrawal from

the Occupied Territories] has opened a door for us that will allow us to present our case to the whole world....What does this initiative say?

It says that if the US administration is attached to international legality, then this legality, embodied in UN resolution 194, has recognized the right of the Palestinian people to return to Palestine. But this has not taken place. I am myself from the town of Lod, but I certainly am not living there. There is another UN resolution (3236) which recognizes our right to self-determination and another (3276) our right to set up a state.

And, if someone were to point out that these are only resolutions of the General Assembly, there are also Security Council resolutions — thanks to the *Intifada* the Security Council has adopted resolutions 605, 607, and 608 which speak, at least, of the application of the Geneva convention. But despite all this, the US has not moved. There have been no threats, no fleet dispatched and no blockade imposed [on Israel].

International legality is two way process

We now dispose of an argument in the face of the world, and the US administration in the first place. We can say to them: "Understand us; if you want to sort out the Gulf question on the basis of international legality, we also have something to say on this question."

We are all ready to sit around a negotiating table to discuss all the questions of the Middle East in the light of international legality. But if you want to separate these questions, we are not idiots. We do not accept that the Americans act only on their own account.

We say that we will accept international law if the United Nations intends to seriously apply its resolutions. That includes those relating to Israeli withdrawal from the south of Lebanon and the occupied territories, as well as resolution 660, on Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

They must all be applied; otherwise we will allow ourselves to say that we have our Arab revolutionary legitimacy". ★



The Gulf and the intifada

IN THE BAQAA Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan, the Palestinian Marxist researcher Khaled Ayed spoke on September 16 for the celebration of the 1,000th day of the *intifada*. The talk was on the effects of the Gulf crisis on the Palestinian struggle. The following are major excerpts.

DOCUMENT

“ THE IMPACT of the Gulf events on the *intifada* has been really enormous. This has been reflected concretely, as we have seen recently, by an intensification and spread of the confrontations. They have spread to all of Palestine, including the territories occupied in 1948.

It has to be noted, however, that in spite of this escalation of the *intifada*, media coverage has declined. The reason for this should not be sought in the new conditions of the confrontation, as they would have us believe, but in a deliberate attitude of the media toward the crisis.

It should be stressed, in fact, that the *intifada*'s reaction to the confrontation underway in the Gulf was in accord with its nature. It is a call to fight, to intensify the struggle against the camp of our enemies — imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction.

This not a question of applauding a leader-symbol nor a call to step up diplomatic efforts to defuse the crisis. It is rather a call for confrontation expressed in the slogans of the *intifada*, not support for the settlement between Saddam and the United States that the Arab governments want.

Crisis has economic costs for Palestinians

Moreover, the crisis has had direct economic consequences for the *intifada*. They came from the decline of emigrants' remittances to their families in the occupied territories, and the decline in the financial aid given by the oil states to the PLO.

The scope of these effects is obvious if you realize that nearly 650,000 Palestinians depend for their existence on jobs in the Gulf states, and that emigrant remit-

tances amount to nearly a third of the GNP of the territories of the *intifada*.

According to some estimates, the oil states have already expelled a quarter of a million Palestinians, including 41,295 from Saudi Arabia, 5,100 from Qatar, 3,630 from Oman and 5,850 from Dubai (according to Shafer Saad, general secretary of the West Bank confederation of unions, in *Ash-Shaab* of September 11, 1990).

It is an ill wind, however, that blows no one any good. These negative effects can have positive consequences. They can increase the return of the emigrants to Palestine in the face of the immigration of Soviet Jews and their settlement as colonists.

They reinforce the idea of self-reliance, the return to the land, the creation of cooperative projects for industrial or craft development, and thus consolidate the basis of the new economy of the *intifada*.

Radical reform of PLO necessary

Moreover, the economic effects of the crisis make necessary a radical financial and administrative reform of the PLO, in the framework of a democratic reform, or even transformation, of its institutions. Such a reform must be aimed at eliminating the parasitic institutions and apparatuses that gobble up the PLO's resources, and at getting rid of corruption and patronage.

It is also necessary to remove the filthy rich bureaucratic layer that enjoys huge privileges, such as villas, luxury cars and staggering travel expenses, involving stays at first-class hotels — in a word, the layer that lives like oil sheikhs.

It is this same parasitic layer that maintains the closest relations with the worst Arab reactionaries in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. It is one of the bases for a policy of seeking a deal to settle the Palestinian question. It lives from peddling this merchandise, which has become greatly devalued today.

The events underway in the Gulf region and the confrontation with the enemy camp of imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction have dealt a decisive blow to the logic of a peaceful Arab-Palestinian settlement. This scheme had long been tottering under the blows of the *intifada* and the effects of the shattering of the illusion that a settlement could be reached with the Labour [Maariv] doves.

That hope faded after the formation of a "hawk" government led by Shamir and including Sharon, Levy, Neuman and oth-

Save Dessie Ellis!

HIS APPEAL turned down by the Irish High Court, Dessie Ellis was extradited to Britain on November 14. He was in his 36th day of a hunger strike, had been hospitalized and was suffering increasing difficulties with his sight. An AFP dispatch noted that this is "the first extradition of its type since 1987, when the European Convention on Terrorism was signed." The danger therefore exists that this extradition will open the way for others.

Ellis, a 37-year old Irish republican who has served nearly nine years in prison, is accused of complicity in explosions in Britain that took place, in fact, while he was jailed or under surveillance of the Irish political police. He is being charged under the conspiracy laws. Ellis has announced that he is determined to die rather than be buried alive in a British prison and be subjected to the mistreatment other Irish prisoners have suffered. It is important to protest the extradition of Ellis and his trial in England by every means possible. **Messages of support and reports of protests should be sent to An Phoblacht, 58 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, Ireland. ★**

Continued from previous page

er champions of what they call the territorial integrity of Eretz Israel [the Land of Israel]. The settlement policy and logic were also rebuffed by the Americans, as shown by the interruption of that dialogue of the deaf wrongly called the American-Palestinian dialogue.

The situation created by the Atlantic imperialists' invasion of the Arabian peninsula has undermined the very foundations of the peace initiative and strategy adopted by the Palestinian National Council in Algiers in 1988.

The Camp David Egyptian regime of Mubarak can no longer be counted on as a mediator of an accord with Washington, as those who conceived this initiative thought.

In turn, Washington, is no longer even thinking of demanding new concessions from the PLO leadership and still less of making demands or putting pressure on the state of Israel for the negotiations with the Palestinians that the champions of the peace initiative hoped to see held in Cairo.

As for the Zionist entity, it is now concentrating its efforts on three objectives — integrating hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union, trying to put an end to the *intifada* and watching the events in Jordan and getting ready to confront them.

With these concerns, Israel is not even interested any more in the diplomatic maneuvers connected with the settlement game". ★

School students rebel against education cuts

DEMONSTRATIONS involving hundreds of thousands of school students took place throughout France on Monday November 12 demanding adequate resources for their schools. The movement, which started in the working class suburbs around Paris, has been growing since mid-October. Coordination is mainly in the hands of two ad hoc committees — one associated with a left faction in the Socialist Party, the other controlled by the Jeunesses Communistes (Communist party youth).

The students' central demand is for an increase in the national education budget to provide more teachers, smaller classes and repairs to schools. Behind this demand lies the fear of ending up unemployed or in insecure employment. Indeed, since 1986, of the 640,000-700,000 school-leavers arriving on the

job market, only some 400,000 had found a job six months later. At the same time, the stated desire of the Socialist government that "80% of the pupils should reach the baccalauréat [the French matriculation examina-

tion] stage" has led to growing resentment, given the substantial differences between the means at the disposal of schools in the richer inner-city areas compared to the suburbs. Thus selection continues in a different way.

The government, with president Mitterrand playing an active role, has been attempting to give an appearance of being interested in a "dialogue" with the school students without giving away too much in real terms. Promises of a more democratic regime in schools have been made, while the (inadequate) sum of four and a half billion additional francs has been given to regional authorities to use, if they wish, on education.

The movement has won considerable public support, including from teachers' unions as well as parents' associations at local level. ★

NOTEBOOKS

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