

International VIEWPOINT

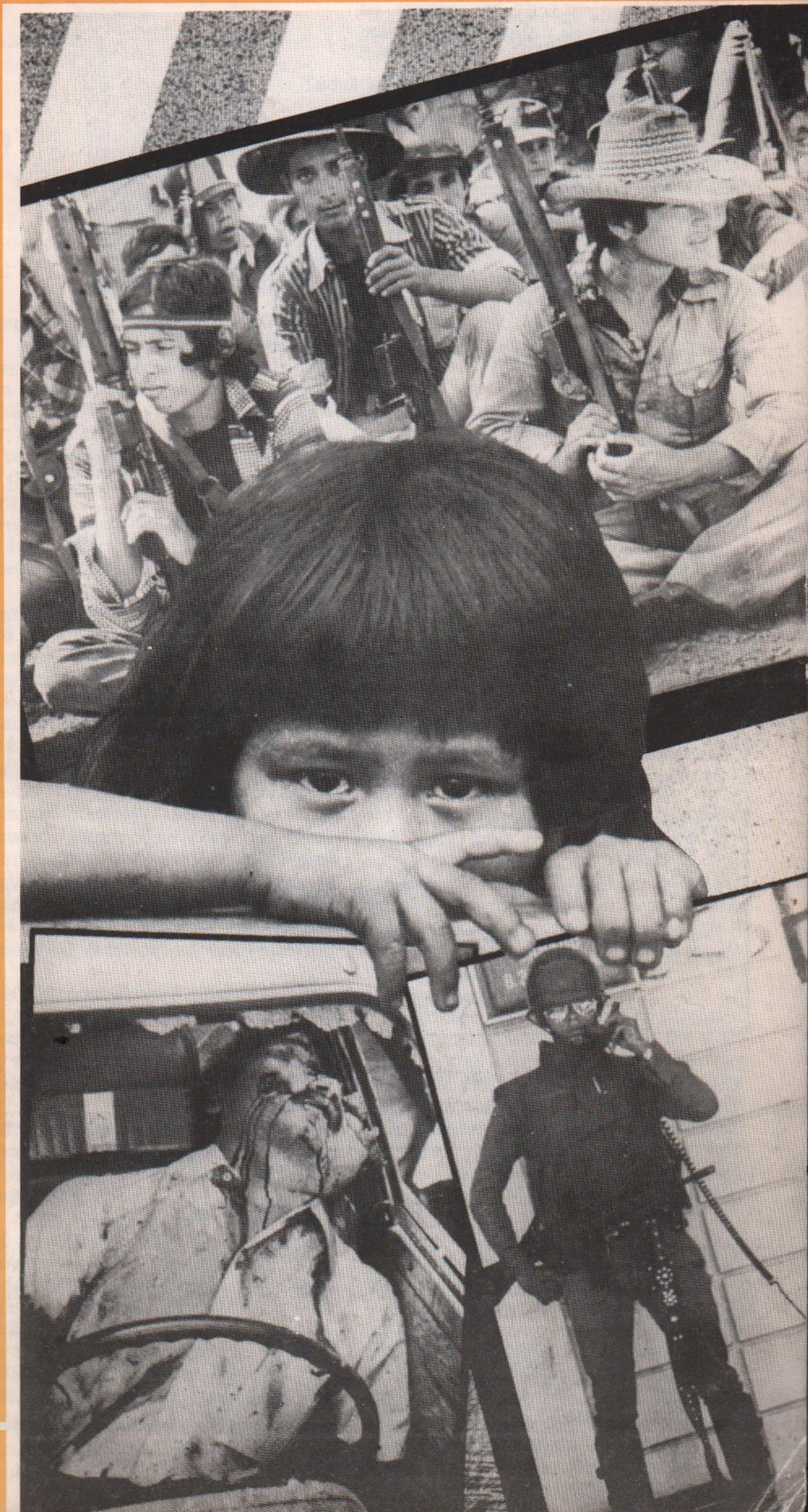
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Advance by Salvador guerrillas

Crisis in Israel

Mass murder
fails to
stop fight
in Guatemala



International Viewpoint

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Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors.

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We think this issue of *International Viewpoint* is a good example of the range of coverage we aim to provide.

The revolutionary process in Central America is one of the most important factors in the world situation today. Here, we bring you analysis of two important countries in the region, plus the latest situation in El Salvador, and its continuing repercussions, and the developing solidarity movement.

The twin themes of opposition to nuclear weapons and the fight against austerity measures continue to dominate politics in Western Europe. In this issue of *IV* we continue our coverage of the developing struggles in different European countries on these questions.

Finally our new 'Around the World' column provides a space for shorter reports of news events and activities of the Fourth International and the solidarity and liberation movements worldwide.

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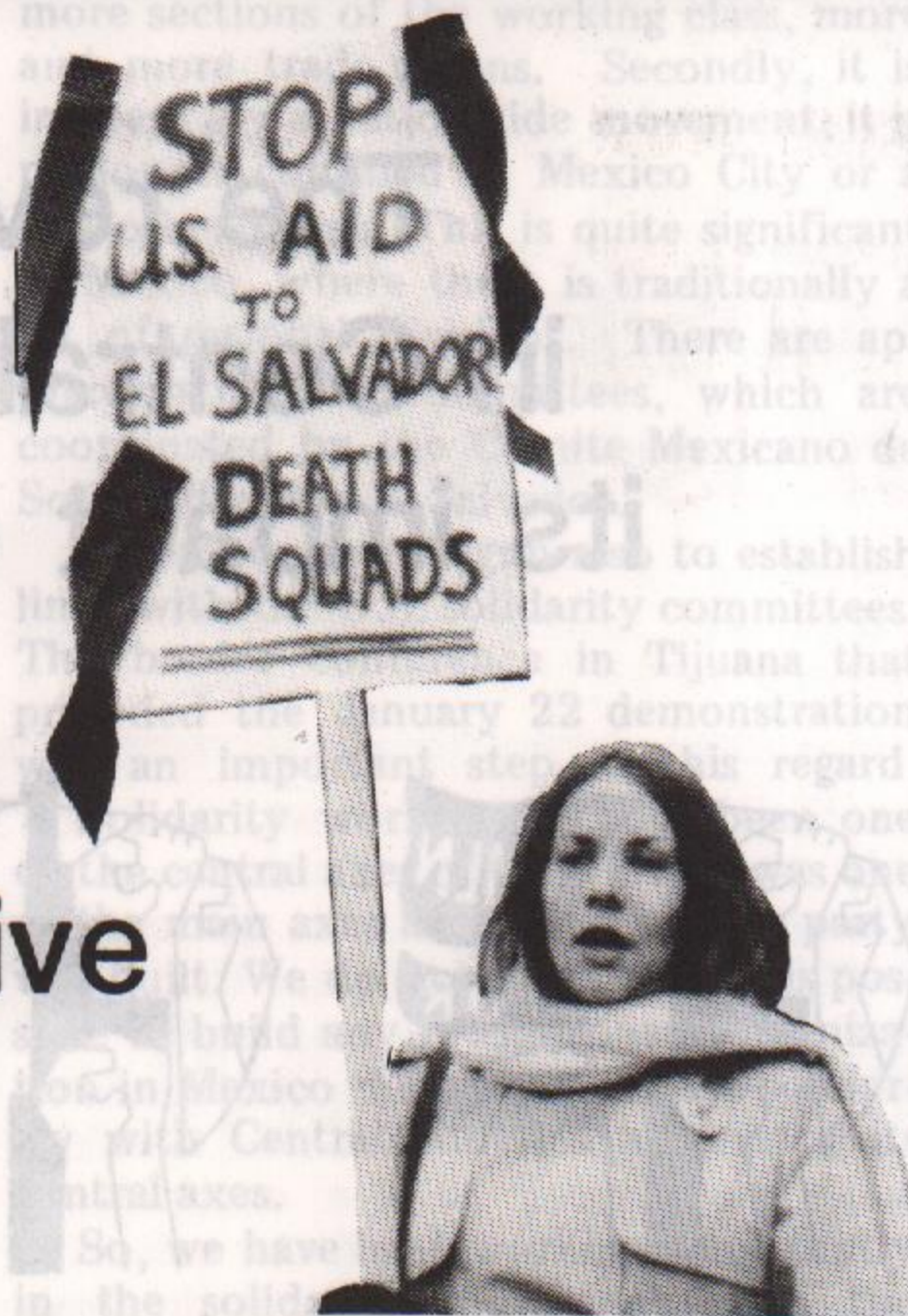
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The results of the latest Salvadoran guerrilla offensive



Gerry FOLEY

The guerrillas' January operations seem to have accomplished something like the Tet offensive in Vietnam — that is, make it clear to world public opinion that the government is losing and that there is no way that the guerrillas can be stopped without some drastic change in the terms of the conflict.

At the height of their offensive, the rebels occupied the small city of Berlin in Usulután province. On February 1, they reportedly destroyed the police station, using 120-mm cannon and firebombs, and then seized the local army base.

The rebels held the town for four days, retiring only in the face of a large-scale counteroffensive by the government armed forces.

The government hit back with everything it had, at enormous political cost. It used the airpower provided by U.S. imperialism to devastate the city from the air, forcing the "moderate" archbishop of San Salvador, Monsignor Arturo Rivera y Damas to sound an alarm.

On February 6, the archbishop called on the government to end "indiscriminate bombings." He said that about 250 civilians had been killed in the bombings, although half the population fled when the fighting started. The army treated Berlin like an enemy city.

An Agence France-Presse dispatch described the results of the bombing as follows:

"Searching through the rubble, crowds of starving and terrorized people are wandering through the streets of a city devastated by aerial bombing. This city...which a few days ago was calm and prosperous, is now nothing but a pile of ruins."

What is more, in the rush to smash the rebels in Berlin, some of the U.S. advisors got too far up front. A sergeant was hit by groundfire while flying over the battle area in a helicopter.

The incident was politically very da-

gaming to Washington. It linked the U.S. directly to a Vietnam-war-style massive terror operation — destroying Berlin to save it. Moreover, this was an operation where Washington's local allies began to look like losers, which also raised memories of a not-too-distant past that the U.S. rulers are anxious to see forgotten.

The fact that the wounded sergeant and two other U.S. officers were immediately shipped home, for overstepping the official rule against U.S. military getting involved in the fighting, points up how carefully the Reagan government has to tread.

Washington as of now is afraid of looking like it is getting involved in an escalation, and in fact the Berlin events placed an additional obstacle in the way of stepped-up U.S. intervention.

In the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings the first week in February, Connecticut senator Christopher Dodd complained that Washington had given nearly a billion dollars in open military aid to El Salvador and: "What do we have to show for it? The military and political situations are not improving at all."

Dodd's remarks were cited in the February 14 issue of the major U.S. magazine *Newsweek*, which went on to comment: "But the amount of U.S. aid that would be needed to make a substantial difference in the Salvadoran government's military performance remains staggering."

The news weekly pointed out that U.S. experts in El Salvador itself were distinctly gloomy:

"This week showed the coming trend in El Salvador,' one frustrated Western observer concluded... 'Next month, it'll be a town bigger than Berlin, maybe two U.S. advisors wounded — or one killed.'"

In this context, it is not surprising that the disclosure by a Latin-American diplomatic source that U.S. officials were working on a plan for negotiating with

the FMLN attracted a good deal of interest.

Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas Enders, proposed a "two-track strategy," according to the Washington Post Service "in which the United States would promote negotiations with left guerrillas there while continuing to support the Salvadoran government's military efforts to suppress the rebels."

The negotiations reportedly would be carried out through a third party, probably the Social Democratic government in Spain.

Enders' proposal was in an internal State Department position paper, and was said to have run into opposition from Reagan's ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick in particular. Kirkpatrick, an aggressive rightist, is one of the key figures for Reagan's foreign policy.

In fact, the incapacity of the Salvadoran military, backed up by Washington, to stop the spread of the guerrilla movement, along with the Reagan administration's inability to rally the necessary support for escalation, seem to represent something of a crisis for the U.S. president's policy of an imperialist counteroffensive against the struggles of colonial peoples. On the other hand, any move to negotiate is almost certain to divide and demoralize the local rulers, who fear granting any measure of democratic rights to the masses.

At the height of the guerrilla offensive, Guillermo Ungo, leader of the Frente Democratico Revolucionario, a component of the FMLN, visited Paris. *Le Monde* of February 9 published an interview with him under the headline: "We Solemnly Reiterate Our Offer of Negotiations."

Ungo told Marcel Niedergang, *Le Monde's* Latin-American expert:

"We are making this offer when our forces are showing on the ground that they have the initiative. We are not making it out of weakness but because we think that it is necessary to give an immediate answer to the growing number of people in our country who want peace." He warned: "If the military balance is broken tomorrow, it could be too late."

Ungo said that the guerrillas' offensive had ushered in a new phase of the war: "The regular army has no offensive capacity. It only reacts, responds to the actions of the guerrilla groups...Equality with the army has not yet been achieved, but we are getting there."

The FDR leader thought Washington would have big difficulties in intervening directly:

"Some diplomats and high-ranking military officers have just said publicly that the recent big American maneuvers in Honduras have at least proved that nothing serious can be done in the region without the United States. This is true in Honduras, where the maneuvers only served to prepare the way for direct U.S. intervention. It is true in El

Salvador, where the army would collapse without the U.S. aid. But is the public in the U.S. ready to lose boys in an armed conflict in Central America?"

The FMLN's respect for democratic and humanitarian values has helped to put it in a politically strong position both inside the country and internationally.

For example, even U.S. experts have had to acknowledge that the FMLN treats captured soldiers well and releases them as soon as possible.

In November, the *Los Angeles Times* quoted a U.S. psychological warfare expert as saying: "These freed men are more dangerous to the army than a 120-millimeter howitzer. They will tell their fellow soldiers they were treated well, which will encourage more to surrender the next time they are surrounded."

In contrast to this, the UN Human Rights Commission report released February 9 pointed out that in 1982, about 5,000 people were murdered in El Salvador, mostly by security forces and rightists. It pointed out that not a single person has ever been convicted of violating human rights by a Salvadoran court.

At obvious pains to find signs of improvement, the authors of an official U.S. report on human rights in El Salvador noted that the counterinsurgency forces "are beginning to take prisoners," although the number "is still very small." That is, with very few exceptions, the army slaughters all resisters they overpower.

In this situation, even the leadership of the AFL-CIO, long closely linked to the U.S. government, and by no means to its more liberal circles, has had to come out against continued aid to the junta. Reviving trade-unionist consciousness in the U.S. is certainly a factor in this, since the junta has suppressed union activity and a good deal of the Salvadoran union movement is on the rebel side.

In this context, the FMLN's proposals for a negotiated settlement based on democracy, without the people's defense forces disarming, highlight the fact that it is the government and its imperialist backers who are afraid to allow the people to organize freely and express themselves.

Such initiatives can help to gain the attention and sympathy of the masses in the larger countries in the region and in the imperialist centers, without which it would be extremely difficult to carry through a successful revolution in El Salvador.

The impact that the Salvadoran struggle has had internationally testifies to its political strengths. The pressures created by a growing revolutionary struggle in a key area for imperialism will continue to pose difficult tests as well as opportunities for the Salvadoran movement. In this sense, the strength of the movement of support for the Salvadoran people can weigh heavily in the outcome.

The revolution in Central America, its impact on Mexico



The following interview was given to Gerry Foley in Paris in early February by Sergio Rodriguez, a leader of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT — Revolutionary Workers Party, Mexican section of the Fourth International). It deals with the gains of the Salvadoran revolutionists and the impact of this on Mexico.

In fact, one of the most important aspects of the Central American struggle is its affect on one of the decisive countries of Latin America, one that is closely linked with Central America, and one that has a 1,500-mile-long common border with the U.S.

Question. What stage do you think the Salvadoran revolution has reached?

Answer. The offensive campaign the Salvadoran army mounted against the guerrillas from June 1981 to June 1982 failed. What is more, it failed despite the growing military aid, training, and technical advice provided by the U.S. That means that the elite units trained in Miami, which were a key element in the counterinsurgency strategy of the imperialists, have not been able to accomplish their objectives. A whole series of attempts to retake areas held by the guerrillas failed.

Parallel to the failure of the military offensive against the guerrillas is a growing crisis of the Salvadoran bourgeoisie. A large part of the Christian Democratic Party has come to the conclusion that the Faribundo Marti Front cannot be defeated militarily and therefore it is necessary to seek a negotiated solution. ARENA, the ultrarightist party of Major d'Aubuisson, however, is certain that negotiating with the guerrillas would mean a development like Nicaragua.

Q. What's been happening in the revolutionary movement itself?

A. It has been getting stronger and more effective. The revolutionaries have been able to restore bases of co-operation, which had been somewhat disrupted. It is no secret that there have

been and continue to be a series of political differences in the front. But a solution seems to be emerging. It is based on two elements.

The first is the formation of a single army, with a single military command. This is a basic need, since the guerrillas are up against a centralized army. There has been considerable progress on this. Formally, the guerrilla forces have been united under a single command, but in practice this process has not been completed.

Secondly, and this is still more positive than the first, the movement is beginning to recover in the urban areas. That is, it is beginning to reestablish its links with the workers and the trade unions, especially in the case of the electrical and a series of fundamental decision-making textile workers. These were lost fundamentally as a result of the crisis connected with the relative failure of the August 1980 strike. The unions were taken over by the military. A large part of the working-class vanguard were either imprisoned or had to flee to the mountains. The workers movement in the urban areas was, therefore, decapitated.

Now, links are beginning to grow between the armed struggle and the revolutionary organizations involved in it and the traditional defense organizations of the workers. This raises the possibility of impelling certain processes of self-organization of the Salvadoran workers, which is essential in order to bring the basic changes in the relationship of forces.

The revolution in El Salvador is not just a military affair but depends on the mass movement and politics. It is not just a question of mobilizing support for the guerrillas but of the masses taking powers into their hands. Making the revolution involves these processes of self-organization and politically and socially weakening the bourgeois state.

Thus, the gains that have been made in

assuring the military unity of the revolutionary forces and in rebuilding the workers movement in the urban areas show that the revolution has not been stagnating but is on the advance. This will become much more clear in the coming months.

Q. What is the role of the Salvador Communist Party in the struggle?

A. It's hard to say, it is the smallest of the organizations involved, and does not have a very visible role.

Q. What do you think now about the international relationship of forces the Salvadoran revolution has to contend with?

A. A number of external factors have changed. The Reagan government is not as strong as it was at the start of the conflict. The elections held last year in the U.S. demonstrated that. Sections of the capitalist parties themselves do not believe that it is possible to achieve a military solution. The imperialists do not have the same confidence in the political project they are pushing in El Salvador that they had a year ago, or a year and a half ago.

There is also a shift in the attitude of the Latin American bourgeoisies. They are getting more involved in pushing negotiations. Thus, the Mexican government has begun to play more of an independent role. The last proposal for negotiations came out of the meeting in Panama between Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, and Costa Rica. For the first time, such a proposal represented an initiative by the Mexico government, closely linked to the Venezuelan bourgeoisie. Before this, the Mexican government supported proposals by the antigovernment forces in El Salvador.

What the Mexican government is trying to do now is reinforce the idea of a third way, a third option, supposedly a democratic one. This would involve, on the one hand, blocking imperialist intervention, and, on the other, holding back the Central American Revolution. The association between the Mexican and Venezuelan governments is significant. Venezuela is traditionally the political instrument of imperialism in Latin America. Its proposals for negotiation up till now amounted to calling on the revolutionary forces to surrender.

Q. What has been the impact in Mexico of the gains by the Salvadoran revolutionaries?

A. There has been a major growth in the solidarity movement with Central America, not just with Salvador but also with Guatemala. For example, on January 22, the day of action declared by the World Front for Solidarity with El Salvador, there was a demonstration of 20,000 people in Mexico City.

Our party was quite prominent on the march and one of the speakers was a member of the PRT.

There are two very important aspects to the growth of the solidarity move-

ment. First, it is involving more and more sections of the working class, more and more trade unions. Secondly, it is increasingly a nationwide movement; it is no longer confined to Mexico City or a few other places. This is quite significant in Mexico, where there is traditionally a lot of regional divisions. There are approximately 55 committees, which are coordinated by the *Comite Mexicano de Solidaridad con El Salvador*.

Attempts have begun also to establish links with the U.S. solidarity committees. The border conference in Tijuana that preceded the January 22 demonstration was an important step in this regard.

Solidarity work has always been one of the central axes of the PRT. It was one of the main axes around which the party was built. We do not think that it is possible to build any revolutionary organization in Mexico that does not have solidarity with Central America as one of its central axes.

So, we have been working consistently in the solidarity movement from the start. And that means that our positions are understood. Our objective is to build a broad, mass anti-interventionist movement. And we have to advance the idea also of building a movement that can mobilize the masses in Mexico against U.S. imperialism.

This concept of a broad anti-interventionist movement goes hand in hand with the idea of a united-front movement. This means involving not just revolutionists and the left but all sectors that are opposed to U.S. intervention in El Salvador, including sections of the Mexican government itself. We have to take advantage of the contradictory position of the Mexican government. That is what has made it possible to build a really broad movement.

This concept of unity also involves democratic functioning as a means for resolving the differences that can exist in such bodies.

A united anti-interventionist movement is what is necessary to stay the hand of imperialism and stay the escalation of imperialist intervention in Central America. Therefore, it is essential to put the interests of the Central American Revolution above those of any group.

This orientation has been successful in Mexico. It is what has made possible the kind of committee that exists and the role that this committee was able to play in setting up the World Front. Around the world, the Mexican committee appears as the example to follow, the example of how solidarity should be built everywhere.

Q. What sort of progress has the World Front made since it was founded last spring?

A. The journal of the World Front, which is published in Mexico, is very well done. It offers a lot of information.

Moreover, the World Front has been an important instrument for launching coordinated international actions, such as the day of protest on January 22. It

has also built up extensive contacts with governments, religious organizations, and international bodies.

The World Front has to be able to operate in a more centralized way. It is also important that the World Front journal be circulated more widely internationally, translated into English and French. There will be another meeting of the World Front this year to develop a plan of action.

Q. How does the problem of the Central American refugees flocking into the Mexican border state of Chiapas affect the solidarity movement and its relations with the Mexican authorities?

A. There is a growing flood of refugees into Chiapas, mainly Guatemalans but also Salvadorans. We have held two conferences on the question of the refugees, and we have forced the Mexican government to be a bit more careful about human rights.

But the problems are very grave. The refugee camps do not have enough food. Every day five people die of hunger.

We think that the question of these refugees is an important part of solidarity work. Because this is not a normal movement of people but a result of the repression in these countries. So, we include it in our solidarity work. We have managed to get a special committee on the refugees formed, including 41 trade unions and left parties. Its purpose is to defend the refugees and do educational work on this question. In May, there will be another conference in which we will propose a whole program for the refugees.

The landlords in Chiapas have tried to use the refugees against the local peasants. They hired refugees to pick coffee and fruit at very low wages, less than half those of agricultural workers in Mexico. Thus, they tried to create a division between the refugees and the Mexican agricultural workers.

Last year, there was a congress of the main peasant organization in Chiapas, the *Bloque Campesino*, at which resolutions on these questions were passed. One was for solidarity with the Central American Revolution. Another was to make contact with the refugee organizations and propose a common struggle for better wages for agricultural workers, regardless of whether they are Mexican or Central American. It stressed the need for unionizing the workers from Guatemala and El Salvador.

However, the number of refugees has been increasing to such an extent that it is becoming a massive problem. So, we say that the only solution is the victory of the Central American Revolution, that is the only guarantee that they will be able to return to their countries. That is clear in particular, when the Rios Montt regime in Guatemala is conducting a campaign of indiscriminate massacres. In the Quiche region, they have massacred whole villages, accusing the people of being guerrillas. The military think that the poor masses in Guatemala are guerrillas. ■

Political crisis deepens in Israel

Michel WARSCHAWSKY

TEL AVIV — The great majority of the forces opposed to the adventurist policy of Begin and Sharon declared a truce when the commission of inquiry into the massacres of Sabra and Chatila was set up. Publication of this commission's conclusion has now ended this political ceasefire.

What drew the principal attention, and rightly so, was the recommendation made by Judge Kahane and the two other members of the commission that Defense Minister Ariel Sharon resign.

In fact, two months ago, Begin made a hasty statement that he would not abandon anyone, and that if anyone in his government was called to account, he would back them up, resign, call elections, and ask the voters to decide.

But the matter is not so simple. The religious parties in the coalition dominated by Begin's Likud party do not want to hear about early elections. The likelihood is that in any new vote now they would suffer heavy losses. So, they have made it known clearly that, if need be, they will join with the Labor Party to form a new majority coalition.

So, after long hesitation, Begin opted for the easiest and most short-term solution. He asked Sharon to resign. The fact that the ousted defense minister decided to cast his own single dissenting vote against this, showed how clearly Sharon understands that what is being challenged is in fact the whole policy that he has been pursuing for more than half a year, more or less in the name of the government.

What the report of the Kahane commission has done is open up a new crisis within the Zionist establishment, at a time when it was more than ever divided about the course to take toward a war that seems to be going on forever and on which the country's political leaders have never had a firm grip.

The end of the respite created by the formation of the commission is confirmed by the violent confrontation between supporters of Sharon and the forces opposed to the Zionist leadership's present belligerent line.

The hundreds of thousands of demonstrators who gathered in Tel Aviv after the Sabra and Chatila massacres succeeded in placing the Begin government in a dilemma. It could ignore this mass

reaction. But if it did that, it would risk touching off the development of a crisis that could split the government coalition. Or it could defuse the mobilization by a retreat, opening up the way for the formation of an independent commission of inquiry. In that case, it risked being condemned by the commission.

Under the pressure of the minority factions in his government, Begin finally agreed to defer the crisis. In the short term, this was undoubtedly the best option.

As soon as the formation of the Kahane Commission was announced, the Labor Party and Peace Now came out for a truce with the government, so as not to prejudge the conclusion of the commission of inquiry. For the first time in a long time, the government had a free hand to pursue its policy in Lebanon. Without this truce, for example, it would have been very difficult for the Israeli army to carry on its intervention in the Chouff mountains, which is very unpopular among the Israeli masses.

Another factor helping to demobilize the opposition to the Begin government probably was the opening of negotiations between Israel and Lebanon in Khalde and Kiryat Shmonah. The widespread feeling that the war was drawing to an end, and the unwillingness of the Labor Party and Peace Now to create problems for the Israeli team through mass mobilizations and extragovernmental pressures enabled Sharon, who in fact has been directing Israeli policy, to up the ante (demanding Israeli bases in southern Lebanon) and to stall the negotiations, at the cost of increasingly strained relations with the U.S.

It took two months to reach agreement on an agenda for the negotiations. And at this rate, there is every likelihood that the Israeli army will still be in Lebanon on the first anniversary of the June 1982 invasion.

BOGGED DOWN IN AN UNPOPULAR WAR

Nonetheless, the war is growing more and more unpopular. The Israeli army is getting bogged down in Lebanon. Every day, the army press officers have to announce new casualties. They are the result of guerrilla operations mounted by the Lebanese national forces and the Palestinian resistance, which have not

been wiped out, despite all Sharon's boasting.

What is most discrediting the Israeli involvement in the eyes of the Jewish masses is the intervention of the Israeli army on the side of the Phalangists in a religious war that is spreading bloodshed and ruin throughout the Chouff mountains.

"How are you going to explain it to my parents when you have to tell them that I was killed in a feud between the Christians and the Druzes in the Chouff? How are you going to get them to believe that it was for the security of Galilee?" This is what a soldier wrote in a letter to the editors of the weekly *Bama'haneh*, which is published by the armed forces.

The last public opinion poll published by the *Jerusalem Post* in mid-January showed that 20% of those questioned favored a unilateral withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon. Even in the government, a strong minority is demanding that the army at least withdraw from the Chouff.

The fact that the reservists have had to do eighty days military duty this year does not make the Israeli involvement in Lebanon any more popular. Nonetheless, it has to be made very clear that there is a gap between this feeling of weariness at the Israeli army getting bogged down in Lebanon and express opposition to the government that is responsible for this policy. The reason for this apparent paradox is linked to the policy of the Labor Party and its total inability to offer an alternative to the voters.

Taking full advantage of the truce, the Labor Party has not lifted a finger to regain the confidence of the majority of the population by putting forward a general criticism of the Begin-Sharon policy. This is first of all because there is no political alternative the Labor Party can offer that would not challenge the very foundations of the national consensus. Secondly, it does not believe that it can regain the confidence of the population, and not without reason.

Finally, the Labor Party is afraid of new elections that would be another plebiscite for Begin. It prefers to make a demonstration to the smaller government parties of its "seriousness," its "responsibility," and its lack of substantive differences with Likud's policy in order to open the way for these parties joining it to form a new majority when they decide to take their distance from Sharon.

Having given up the fight in advance for winning new elections, the Labor Party has left the voters to Begin. It has chosen to maneuver on ground where it feels more comfortable, wheeling and dealing among the parties.

All this explains why of all the forces that mobilized between July and September against Begin and his dirty war, only the Movement Against the War in Lebanon has continued to carry on systematic agitation against the Israeli involve-

ment in Lebanon. It refused to abide by the political truce, and rejected the illusion that the negotiations between Israel and Lebanon were going to put a quick end to the conflict.

It is significant, on the other hand, that two days after Sharon announced he had an agreement signed by Lebanese president Gemayel in his pocket, some 4,000 people came out for a demonstration called by the Movement Against the War in Lebanon. Moreover, most of them were fresh forces.

CRISIS WITHOUT AN END

Judge Kahane and his colleagues went as far as they could. To be sure, they rejected all the evidence that Israeli soldiers were present in the Sabra and Chatila camps during the massacres. They refused to admit that the Israeli general staff and the Phalangists were in complete agreement about what should be done about the Palestinian refugees in Beirut, that is that it was necessary to "rid the city of all foreign elements."

The commission was unable to acknowledge the fact that the reason the Israeli army saw nothing out of the ordinary in the massacre of women and children was the line of the Begin government. During the war, it was the official policy of the government to portray the Palestinians as "two-legged animals." In short, the Kahane Commission was prepared to acknowledge the indirect responsibility of the Israeli government in the massacres, but not its complicity. That would have meant admitting that the Israeli government and its general staff are guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Nonetheless, the commission of inquiry did not single out a scapegoat in the army, as many expected. It was prepared to raise grave accusations against the government, knowing that this would unleash a serious new political crisis. In this respect, the conclusions of the commission of inquiry coincided with the point of view of a substantial part of the Zionist ruling class — and of the American administration. This is that the team in office today in Israel is too adventurist, and therefore dangerous to the long-term interests of Zionism and imperialism.

In pressing Sharon to resign and in accepting the conclusions of the commission, Begin has chosen to maintain the present coalition and not risk upsetting the pattern of alliances in the ruling class. But this is only a delaying operation.

Over and above Sharon, the Sabra and Chatila massacres condemn the whole policy of the Begin government. Sharon is not altogether wrong in considering himself a scapegoat. And even with him out of the government, it is his policy that would continue to be followed, both as regards Lebanon and the Palestinian question more generally.

But the support for this policy is far

from unanimous not only within the Israeli population but also within the ruling class. The U.S. imperialists, in particular, are going to do everything they can to alter the relationship of forces that exists among the various tendencies in the Zionist bourgeoisie. And this will further increase the polarization within the Israeli masses themselves.

In such a context, it is hardly likely that the government can launch a new military offensive aimed simulta-

neously at carrying on the job that the war could not finish, presenting U.S. imperialism with a *fait accompli*, and defusing the opposition movement that is going to mount again now after the publication of the conclusions of the commission of inquiry.

Moreover, every indication is that far from restoring national unity, a new military adventure could increase still further the polarization that was tragically symbolized by the murderous bombing February 10 of a Peace Now demonstration. ■

Where are the Palestinians of South Lebanon ?

One of the least-known, but certainly not the least horrible, aspects of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon concerns the vast majority of the male Palestinian population in South Lebanon. Anyone who has occasion to travel in the regions of Tyre, Sidon or Nabatieh can only be amazed by the very small number of Palestinian men that they meet.

The refugee camps are almost only populated by women, children, and the elderly. The men have practically all disappeared.

Where are the Palestinians of South Lebanon? Are they still alive? Today, these questions are the main preoccupation of the Palestinian families in the camps, and a series of democratic and humanitarian organisations throughout the world, who are trying to find out what has happened to the male population of the Palestinian camps in South Lebanon.

It is known that in June 1982 the Israeli army arrested and interned nearly 50,000 men in massive roundups. Mainly Palestinians between the ages of eight and ninety, but also a large number of Lebanese, and others from different Arab countries, Bangladesh, Western Europe, and North America. It is important to note that several hundred were medical personnel of the Palestinian Red Crescent and other known humanitarian organisations.

The suffering of these men has been widely reported in the international press. The torture, the blows, the humiliations, the starvation, and also the death of an undetermined number of detainees — which is without a shadow of a doubt more than one hundred.

The Israeli authorities freed all those under 12 years old after the intervention of the International Red Cross, and after their first interrogation. Also released were the seriously wounded, most of the foreigners, and a large number of Lebanese. Since October 1982 the Israelis have released several dozen detainees each week — but have been arresting others, often those who have previously been released.

In January 1983 Israel admitted there were around 6,000 people in the El Ansar camp, and a score, including eleven women, in Israeli prisons. However, the Palestinian Red Crescent and the Committee of the Families of Detainees in Lebanon state that more than 15,000 people have gone missing.

Where have nearly 9,000 Palestinians disappeared to? The evidence of hundreds of freed internees during the last six months all serves to show that about fifteen other internment camps exist, in Lebanon (Ansar B) or in Israel itself, (Meguido, A'hziv, Safed, Atlit) some being able to hold more than 12,000 people (see International Viewpoint, No19, December 13, 1983). Israel has never admitted the existence of these camps, which no-one, not even the Red Cross, has been able to visit. No-one can answer the question: How many prisoners are there in Israeli hands? The second important question is: How many have been turned over to the Phalangists or Haddad's forces? The third question: How many of the internees have died under torture, from the beatings of the guards, of thirst and bad treatment, how many have been killed and secretly buried?

While waiting for answers to these questions, one can only say that today there are between five and ten thousand Palestinians missing. Just like Argentina or Chile.

To the number of missing persons should be added the 6,000 internees whom Israel officially recognises to exist, and who have no legal status, no formal rights, and are in what can only be called actual concentration camps.

The interview we publish below was given to IV correspondent Philomena O'Malley by Leah Tsemel, who is representing the families of more than 6,000 internees before the Israeli authorities, particularly in the High Court of Justice.



Phalangists invade a Palestinian neighbourhood(DR)

Question. How do you come to be representing the Palestinian internees picked up by the Israelis in Lebanon?

Answer. My experience of other, less wideranging, actions by the Israeli army in Lebanon led me to think right from the beginning that Israel was going to take a large number of prisoners. I have previously had to take up the cases of Palestinians and Lebanese picked up in military operations and brought to trial in Israel. But I should say that I was expecting a few hundred at the most, not tens of thousands.

At the beginning of the war, the question of internees was obscured behind a thick smokescreen. Nobody could get any definite information, other than that tens of thousands of men had been taken by the Israelis. At the beginning of July, representatives of several international organisations and support committees for the internees asked me to take on the defence of the internees.

Q. What did you do?

A. Authorisations from the families of the internees began to trickle in, so I was able to take up their cases formally with the authorities. First of all, helped by two other Palestinian lawyers, I tried to get a formal answer from the authorities on their detention. After nearly three months of administrative harassment and false leads I finally got confirmation of their detention by the Israelis, and was refused permission to visit them.

We then decided to appeal to the High Court of Justice, so that it would ask the authorities why our clients were detained, and what was their formal status; and also to get permission to visit them so that we could give them the legal help they needed.

Q. Meanwhile you received other authorisations...

A. The Association of Families of

Internees, in collaboration with other institutions, got more than 5,000 other authorisations sent to me. Some of the people these relate to are certainly at El Ansar...

Q. It is a heavy responsibility to represent thousands of internees...

A. Legal action is only one aspect of the defence of Palestinian and Lebanese internees. The essential point of the defence campaign is not our work as lawyers. It is above all a political campaign in Israel and worldwide. We don't need lawyers to say that the conditions of detention at Ansar and very likely elsewhere are atrocious. There is plenty of evidence for this.

The main problem is that local and international public opinion does not even know of the existence of thousands of internees. The primary task of all those who know what is happening at Ansar should be to publish the facts, the dozens of eyewitness reports, to demand independent commissions of inquiry, to demand that their government raise the problem with the Israeli authorities. It's a case of actual concentration camps, and missing persons.

Q. Do you have information on this question of missing persons?

A. All that I can say is while Israel admits holding 6,000 people, the families state that more than 15,000 people taken by the Israelis have not returned. Where are they? Israel admits the existence of El Ansar. We have plenty of information on a whole series of other camps, including in Israel itself. In South Lebanon the rumour is that the Israelis sent back some of the detainees to the Phalangist militias and to Haddad. After the massacres at Beirut everyone knows what that means...

Q. What are the main points of your legal action in the High Court?

A. First of all to get a formal status for the internees. Nobody in fact knows on what basis the Israelis are holding prisoner these thousands of people; as prisoners of war, civilian detainees? If they are civilians, the Fourth Geneva Convention, concerning the protection of civil rights, should be applied. If they are being held as prisoners of war, the Third Convention should be applied. Israel is applying neither one nor the other. There is obvious violation of international rights.

The fact is that during the session of the High Court the Prosecutor was even hesitant to admit that Israel had invaded Lebanon and occupied part of its territory. The argument by which Israel applies clauses included in the Convention, while refusing to recognise that this same Convention applies to the internees, is not only intolerable but factually false. The fact that neither the families nor the lawyers can visit the detainees, the fact that some of them have been transferred to Israel and so on, are in contradiction to the Fourth Convention.

Q. What is the next stage?

A. Obviously, everything depends on the verdict of the Court, which has given the state sixty days to reply to our case. If we receive permission to see the internees we could at least know who is being held by the Israeli army, take up the most urgent cases, and get some of them freed.

But our actions as lawyers only have meaning if they are within the context of a big political campaign in support of the internees. Only international solidarity can effectively defend the Palestinian detainees, and win the only just demand, from the point of view of right and justice: the release of the internees and closing down the concentration camps in Lebanon and Israel. ■

New elections in Portugal

- Bourgeois stabilization breaking down

New parliamentary elections will be held in Portugal on April 25. The defeat of the ruling bourgeois coalition, the Alliance Democratica (AD) in the December 12 municipal elections made the dissolution of the parliament almost inevitable.

Obviously, in Portugal where bourgeois institutions remain

weak, and politics and the relationship of class forces continue to be shaped by the prerevolutionary crisis the country experienced in 1974-75, these elections will not be a routine event. In particular, they come in the context a crisis of the bourgeois reconsolidation and a new rise of the left, which has clearly regained majority support in the country.

Francisco LOUCA

LISBON — "After two years in government, we have lost 600,000 votes, because in those two years the government accumulated a bad record, especially as regards the economy. If we had had parliamentary elections, the Democratic Alliance (AD) would have lost its absolute majority and the Socialist Party would have become the biggest party in the country. There would be a left majority again, and we would probably have a government based on a coalition between the SP and the Social Democratic Party (PSD)."

This is the balance sheet of the December 12, 1982, municipal elections made by no less than the deputy prime minister, Freitas do Amaral, the chairman of the Social Democratic Center (CDS), the second largest bourgeois party. The results totally justify his assessment.

In 1980, after being in government a year, the AD (a coalition of bourgeois parties including the PSD and the CDS) won a significant victory. At a million votes, the CP's electoral score stagnated. The SP remained well below its 1975 and 1976 results, paying the price for the policy of austerity and repression that it conducted when it was in the government.

Since then, division has increased in the workers movement. The SP went through a grave crisis in connection with the discussion of the presidential candidacy of General Ramalho Eanes. Its general secretary, Mario Soares, "suspended himself" in protest against the SP supporting the president who dismissed him from his post of premier.

The strained relations between the SP and the CP have grown more strained. The SP has gone to the point of rejecting any meeting with the CP leadership. And it supported the government when the police special task force opened fire on a May Day rally of the Portuguese General Confederation of Labor (CGTP) in Oporto, the country's second largest city, killing two workers.

But at the same time, the government and the right-wing coalition were rapidly

breaking down. At the origin of this process was the glaring failure of the political scheme worked out by the late charismatic leader of the PSD, Sa Carneiro. This plan included the following elements:

* The AD was supposed to win a big parliamentary majority, in order to create a sharp polarization between the government and the CP, to weaken the SP and force it to participate in a thoroughgoing revision of the constitution.

In fact, the 1976 constitution, which was used by the governments presided over by Mario Soares as a basic instrument for defending private property (the beginning of the attacks on the agrarian reform, reorganization of the armed forces), also grants certain rights to the workers (such as workers control). These have been and remain an obstacle to stepping up exploitation, a policy of austerity and increasing unemployment. The AD did not succeed in abolishing all these rights in the new constitution.

* The AD was supposed to win the presidential elections by supporting the candidacy of General Soares Carneiro, a former head of a concentration camp in Angola during the colonial war. But President Ramalho Eanes, backed by the reformist parties and large sections of the bourgeoisie, won the presidential

elections in the first round. This increased the disorientation in the AD that followed Sa Carneiro's death in a plane accident on the eve of the elections.

* The AD was supposed to become a permanent right bloc and change the election laws so as to assure that it could retain control of political power. But the laws it proposed were not passed.

Finally, a counterattack by the workers movement started to take form, reflected by the two 24-hour general strikes called by the CGTP in 1982 and the positions taken against the government by the smaller labor confederation, the General Workers Union (UGT), which is influenced by the SP.

The 1982 municipal elections dealt a mortal blow to the AD, which lost more than a half million votes and fell more than 10% behind the combined vote for the workers parties. The left took around thirty municipalities away from the AD. It now holds the majority on the city councils of Lisbon and Oporto and the chair of the Coimbra city council.

The SP is the main gainer from the defeat of the AD. But the CP is holding its ground. In more than 90% of the city councils it controls, it got an absolute majority. It increased its lead over the SP in the Lisbon district, which will elect

'Workers and peasants united in the struggle against capitalism' (DR)



56 out of 246 parliamentary deputies.

Following these returns, the crisis of the AD snowballed. The chairman of the PSD, Pinto Balsemao, resigned the post of premier and proposed a decorative non-entity, Vitor Crespo, to replace him.

Freitas do Amaral, refusing to participate in such a government, resigned from his party. For two weeks, there was an incredible chronicle of meetings, accusations, proposals and counterproposals.

The majority of the bourgeois leaders had to admit that the AD was incapable of forming a new government and that special elections were inevitable. Moreover, they had to recognize that these elections would produce a new majority.

But at the end of the day, the CDS and the PSD reached an agreement for forming a new government, which President Eanes may reject and then call new elections.

NEW POLITICAL OPERATIONS

One thing is certain. Now even more discredited than they were in December 1982, the bourgeois parties will run separately. And the SP will top the poll. In this new situation, several operations loom.

One is by Mario Soares. Despite his immobilism, his conciliation with the right, and the fact that the leadership of the UGT has been divided evenly for the past three years between the SP and the AD, Soares can be put in a good position by the AD electoral defeat. He could be called on to form a government after the elections. His scheme is for a government alliance with the PSD. He wants to lay the ground work for running for president in 1986.

Another is by Freitas do Amaral. In leaving the CDS and the government he was also getting in position to run for president. He hopes to come to the fore as the only strong candidate of a right that is divided and without an alternative. A part of the PSD seems ready now to back him.

Finally, there is General Eanes' operation. He wants to create a situation favorable for the setting up of a new party combining a section of the Socialist Party, of the AD, and even drawing in a section of the CP voters. This could emerge as a possibility in the event of a "center" government (that is, a SP-PSD one) becoming discredited.

As can be seen, everyone is betting on the end of the AD. Vitor Crespo, who has been pointed to as a possible premier, would be at best a temporary "trustee" encharged with taking some immediate, drastic economic measures.

After the increase in the price of gasoline (which is already the highest in Europe) the introduction of a new budget will set the stage for some brutal blows. In fact, the 1983 budget has not yet been approved, which gives an idea of the political disequilibria and their economic and financial consequences.

The crisis of the AD points to the opening of a new political stage in Por-

tugal. In 1974-75, the country went through a prerevolutionary crisis. In 1975-79, it was presided over by a class-collaborationist government. In 1979-82, for the first time the AD as a purely bourgeois bloc was able to run the country on the basis of a slight electoral majority.

Now we are going back into a period of governmental instability, of permanent political crisis, with the feature that the breakup of the AD portends not only its

defeat in the coming elections but also splits in all of its component parties.

The most effective ways to take advantage of the crisis of the right, to deepen it, and to fight for a workers government are to advance the political, economic, and social demands of the workers movement both before and during the election campaign and to strive for working-class unity in mobilizations and in parliament. ■

In Gijon, The first general strike under Spain's new SP government

The main organizing force in the January 25 general strike in the city of Gijon, in Asturias, a province in the far northwest of Spain, was the Corriente de Izquierdas, a left split from the Communist Party. Asturias is one of the historic bastions of the CP, and it has one of the most radical traditions in Spain. It is also an old industrial area that is now being allowed to run down.

The origin of the Corriente de Izquierdas was the break of Luis Redondo, general secretary of the Gijon Executive of the Workers Commissions, the CP-controlled labor confederation, from the Communist Party in 1978. Redondo and about 200 militants broke with the CP in opposition to its policy of consensus. They maintained their influence in the union and pursued a militant line.

The existence of such a strong militant grouping in the union posed a serious threat to the CP leadership. The group around Redondo and thousands of other activists were, therefore, bureaucratically expelled from the Workers Commissions. The expelled activists formed the Corriente de Izquierdas, which has considerable strength in the factory councils that are elected by the workforce as a whole.

The following articles are from the February 4 issue of Combate, weekly paper of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), section of the Fourth International for the Spanish state. They give the report and assessment of the strike by the LCR in Asturias.

Emilio BRANA

There was the atmosphere of a general strike. The day before, the bakers had produced bread for two days. The sanitation service warned that the garbage would not be picked up. The entire population knew that January 25 was the day. Previous days of action had been focused on protesting the deindustrialization of Gijon.

The general strike was on the front page of all the newspapers. *El Comercio*, the conservative local paper, did not see any reason to condemn the action. But that was not the way the Asturian Federation of Employers saw it. They raised a big outcry about how absurd it was to fight unemployment with strikes.

At 7:00 a.m. there was virtually no activity in the city. There were no buses. The workers in the main plants went to gather in their workplaces on foot or in private cars.

At 8:30 a.m., the national radio

reported that the strike was total. All big industry was shut down, along with textiles, the banks, transport, stores, hotels, and services.

The kiosks opened from 5:00 p.m. to midnight only to sell newspapers, not even tobacco. The gas stations served only ambulances and emergency cases. The day before, 250 taxi drivers decided in an assembly to provide service only in emergency cases and without accepting payment. Radio Gijon stayed on the air to give strike news. The movie houses did not open in the afternoon.

Police surveillance was more discreet but no less intense than on previous occasions. Along with the usual cars and paddy waggons, there were camouflaged vehicles combing the city.

Beginning at 9:30, the neighborhoods started to empty. The neighborhoods associations had called for forming three big columns — in La Calzada, La Urgisa, and El Coto. Each of these feeder marches were joined by people

from the neighborhood and workers from the local factories. They were to reach the Plaza del Humedal at noon.

By 11:00 a.m., the largest group was on its way from La Calzada. It numbered in the thousands. There were groups of workers from big plants and work places such as Crady, Avello, and Astilleros (shipyard workers). A group of unemployed youth carried signs demanding the right to a future.

The concentration in La Urgisa was headed up by workers from the Moreda plant. It also attracted neighborhood people, and marched toward the center of the city.

At 11:07, you could hear on the CB band: "G 8 to V Zero. We're heading down Fernandez Ladreda. A hundred to two hundred people."

"V Zero to G 8. Make sure nothing moves. If you have to knock over some furniture, OK."

youth called on the municipal police to join the strike. "The city police should join the general strike!"

11:33. "V Zero to G1 we heard they grabbed three wheels. Is that right? Over."

"G 8 says that it is twelve. TWELVE. Over."

On the Plaza del Humedal there wasn't room for one person more. The demonstration was headed by the leaders of all the trade unions — the USO, the UGT, the Workers Commissions, the CNT, and CNT (Valencia Committee) and the Corriente Sindical de Izquierdas. All the union locals were present. The city was covered with posters for the strike. On the dot of noon (V Zero had found out that the number of buses blocked at the ALSAS garage was twelve), the march started for the plaza. Everybody was there, except, to be sure, the leaders and public officials of the PSOE

spirit: They shouted: "Where is the 'change?'"

The city government, in which the left has a majority, supported the struggle, at least verbally. The standing committee was suspended. The mayor greeted the crowd, praising its civic spirit. He assured the people that "Spaniards have elected a government that represents their interests better and which is already taking steps to divide the sacrifices more fairly." (Our emphasis.)

In its call for the strike, the Bloque de la Izquierda Asturiana (The Asturian Left Bloc) said: "We must demand that the Socialist Party government take measures against the banks that are forcing plants to close, abandoning them or decapitalizing them without any concern for the loss of jobs. We also have to demand that it cut the workday and impose controls on overtime and moonlighting..."

"We cannot let anyone remain in-



A contingent of young school students demand 'Today without unemployment, tomorrow with work' (DR)

Only three businesses were operating in Gijon — the transport company ALSA, the municipal police, and the local football club training ground.

11:10. "V Zero to G 8. The Alsas family seems to be having problems. Could we grab just one vehicle in the garage? Over."

"G 8 to V Zero. I have already taken steps."

11:15. "G 8 here. They've grabbed ten or twelve Alsas. Over."

"Give me the number of vehicles, not of wheels."

The column headed by the Moreda workshops reached Marques de San Esteban street, shouting, "We will win, we will win." The companeros from La Calzada were waiting in front of the offices of the Corriente Sindical de Izquierdas (the Trade-Union Left). More than 25,000 persons moved to the start of the big demonstration. Unemployed

(the ruling Socialist party).

More than a hundred thousand people marched through the streets of Gijon demanding solutions. It was the biggest demonstration in memory in Asturias. This was the first general strike that had to face the new SP government, the "government of change."

The march reached its destination before the last contingents had moved a step. The Plaza Mayor (main square) was filled to overflowing. The adjacent streets were also filled. When the speakers began to address the crowd, there was still a section of the march 500 meters long outside the plaza; there was no room for them.

All the educational institutions supported the strike. The young students came out massively on the march and give it real force. The workers from the Moreda workshops quickly caught the

different to the deindustrilization of Asturias. For this purpose, we must unite the struggles in all the crisis-hit industries..."

The spirit of unity has been a key factor in the mobilizations since the December 29 day of action. "Que demasiao, que demasiao, que todos los currantes nos hemos juntao!" ("We have had enough, people of all opinions are united!" in the Asturian dialect.)

The rally concluded with the reading of a joint communique from the confederations that called the action.

Now Don Rafel Fernandez, the chairman of the Asturian regional authority could see that what he called "the anarchistic currents doomed to extinction" are standing shoulder to shoulder with the workers. It was not their fault, if there were no leaders from the government party at the demonstration.

The fight to stop Cruise missiles in Italy



Dave HAYES

The anti-missiles movement in Italy has found a new spurt of activity centring around opposition to the proposed Cruise missile site at Comiso, Sicily.

On December 18, the long march from Milan to the site ended. Along the route it had been welcomed by actions at Piacenza, Parma, Florence, and Rome. The arrival of the march was greeted with a Sicily-wide demonstration. A further protest demonstration from Catania across the island to Comiso was organised by the international peace camp at Magliocco airport near the site on December 23.

E.P. Thompson, one of the standard-bearers of the British and European peace movements, toured Sicily during December. He particularly called on the Italian labour movement to involve itself in opposition to the proposed siting of the US Cruise missiles at Comiso. Other protest actions included a hunger-strike by Cagnes, a Sicilian Communist Party leader, and Italian, British, German, and Dutch peace movement activists.

The most significant development is the call of a group of independent left Senators for a referendum to be organised on the proposed siting of missiles at Comiso.

CP MANOEUVRES TO CONTROL PEACE MOVEMENT

The anti-war movement had taken off in Italy with the monster demonstration of 250,000 in Rome on October 24, 1981. Instrumental in the success of this demonstration was the decision of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to become active on the question.

The PCI had its own reasons for this movement. One was the possibility that strength and breadth of the peace movements in northern Europe might develop outside its control. Moreover, since the end of the 'historic compromise' that the PCI made with Christian Democracy in the late 1970s, the party had been isolated and in a state of paralysis.

The anti-missiles movement offered it a way out of this. In addition, the movement offered an opportunity to put the rabidly pro-NATO Socialist Party in difficulties.

The Communist Party did not openly reject the proposed deployment of the missiles, but called for suspension of their installation to allow further negotiations. They collected one million signatures in support of this proposition.

Throughout 1982, the movement marked time. Although the demonstration against Reagan on June 5, 1982, was big — 150,000 people — it did not reach the scale of the October 1981 demonstration. The PCI was worried about the fate of the shaky Spadolini government; it was anxious to avoid early elections.

TWO LINES IN THE ANTI-MISSILES MOVEMENT

However, the question of the Comiso site was posed even more sharply, as construction work was now underway. Two divergent currents appeared within the movement. All were agreed that national demonstrations, whatever their size, were inadequate. On one side was the current around the PCI, in which the centrist PDUP plays an important role. These forces work 'from the top' through the October 24 Committee in Rome, a grouping of political leaders and personalities. They orient toward the labour movement, but attempt to tone down any anti-imperialist dynamic, anything that goes beyond their vague calls for peace and negotiations between the two 'super-powers'. For example, the June 5 demonstration attempted to lay the blame for the arms race equally at the doors of Washington and Moscow. The PCI leaders put their faith in the ability of the European powers to put pressure on the two 'super-powers' to negotiate. They accept Italian membership of NATO, claiming it is necessary to accept the 'reality' of NATO's existence.

The alternative within the movement

is the 'direct action' forces, including the Radical Party and League of Conscientious Objectors. Although not necessarily disagreeing on the shared responsibility of the USA and USSR for the missiles, they are impatient for direct action to prevent their deployment. These forces have been instrumental in setting up the international peace camp at Magliocco airport. This current is reluctant to prioritise national initiatives aimed at drawing in the organised labour movement, and displays a degree of 'anti-partyism', which is partly a reaction to the caution and lack of perspectives of the PCI. For example, the march from Catania to Comiso only mobilised about 700 to 800 people, half of whom were from other countries. Despite their willingness to act on the missiles these forces have failed to mobilise the labour movement.

A network of peace committees exists, but their unilateral and anti-imperialist stand causes the main political forces on the left to prefer national bodies like the October 24 Committee. Thus, aside from Sicily, because of Comiso, and the Venice area, for specific historical reasons, these committees are not very representative and have weak links with the labour movement. Nevertheless, many rank and file PCI militants particularly the youth, work in them on a clear anti-imperialist basis.

THE POSITION OF THE ITALIAN FOURTH INTERNATIONALISTS

The Lega Comunista Rivoluzionaria (LCR — Italian section of the Fourth International), which is active in the movement, argues against two complementary dangers. The first is to counterpose the real necessity of involving the workers movement to the need for active mass-based committees, and consequently to refuse to propose actions until the top leaders move.

The other danger is to fall into the illusion that the actions of the peace movement as such can inspire people to bring about a political victory without invol-

ving the decisive weight of the labour movement.

The LCR supports all initiatives aimed at building the movement — even where there are illusions in direct action tactics such as the peace camp. But the Lega argues that the key task is to build a central national mass campaign to stop the installation of the missiles in Comiso. Calls by the PCI and the others for 'peace' and negotiations are diversionary. Serious action would be to win the labour movement to support for stopping work on construction of the site.

A REFERENDUM ON THE MISSILES

The initiative of the independent left parliamentarists to try and get parliament to call a referendum on the issue is important. Every opinion poll shows that the answer in such a referendum would be a resounding 'No' to the missiles. However, the referendum motion requires the support of an absolute majority of the parliamentary representatives. It is unlikely that Fanfani and his government would placidly accept such a test of opinion.

The LCR argues that this is an even stronger reason to back the referendum proposal by building on the one million signatures already collected to accumulate millions more. This type of nationally-organised action would strengthen the chances of success for the parliamentary proposal, and help to reinforce the peace movement itself.

Italian demonstrator makes sure Reagan gets the message(DR)



The LCR and other forces like the PDUP are discussing this proposal for a mass campaign for signatures with the senators. But the PCI, which could easily collect as many as eight million signatures (given its two-million membership), is distinctly lukewarm on this proposal. It does not want to enter into that sort of confrontation with the government, or imperialism, as is indicated by its recent acceptance of a social pact to dampen down the huge explosion of workers militancy against the government itself (*International Viewpoint* No 23, February 7, 1983).

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BURIES REFERENDUM PROPOSAL

At the National Assembly of Peace Committees on January 22/23, 1983, the PCI did not openly oppose this proposal, but managed to get it buried in a shopping list of other demands. The Communist Party newspaper *Unita* reported in its January 24 issue that the meeting, attended by 700 representatives from the committees, had agreed on the following points:

—The peace movement is against the division of the world into blocs, but does not call for Italy's withdrawal from NATO.

—It supports the right of all peoples to self-determination.

—It condemns the Soviet invasion of Af-

ghanistan and repression in Poland. —It affirms that the movement for peace is independent of all parties, will ask the relevant authorities for permanent offices in every city, and chooses Comiso as the headquarters for the movement and the presiding committee.

—The peace movement decides to organise a march on Geneva to put pressure on the participants in the negotiations on Euromissiles.

—It supports the referendum proposed by the independent left senators.

—The movement calls for a demonstration in Rome on April 5 when parliament discusses the military budget.

—It notes that October 23 is World Peace Day.

—The movement calls for a demonstration at Comiso on April 30, the first anniversary of the assassination of the anti-missile and anti-Mafia activists Pio La Torre and Rosario di Salva by the Mafia.

COMISO — A EUROPEAN-WIDE DECISION

E.P. Thompson pointed out during his Sicily tour that the decision on Comiso is important for the whole of the European peace movement. The construction of the base would give a lead to the other European governments presently hesitating under the pressure of public opinion.

Italy plays a particular role in the US plans to provide logistical support for its Rapid Deployment Force in Europe, outlined at the December NATO meeting in Brussels. It has a specific role as a strike force and back-up on the southern flank of NATO. Concretely, this means defence of imperialist interests in the oil-producing region of the Middle East, and in North Africa, and countering a supposed Moscow military buildup in the Mediterranean.

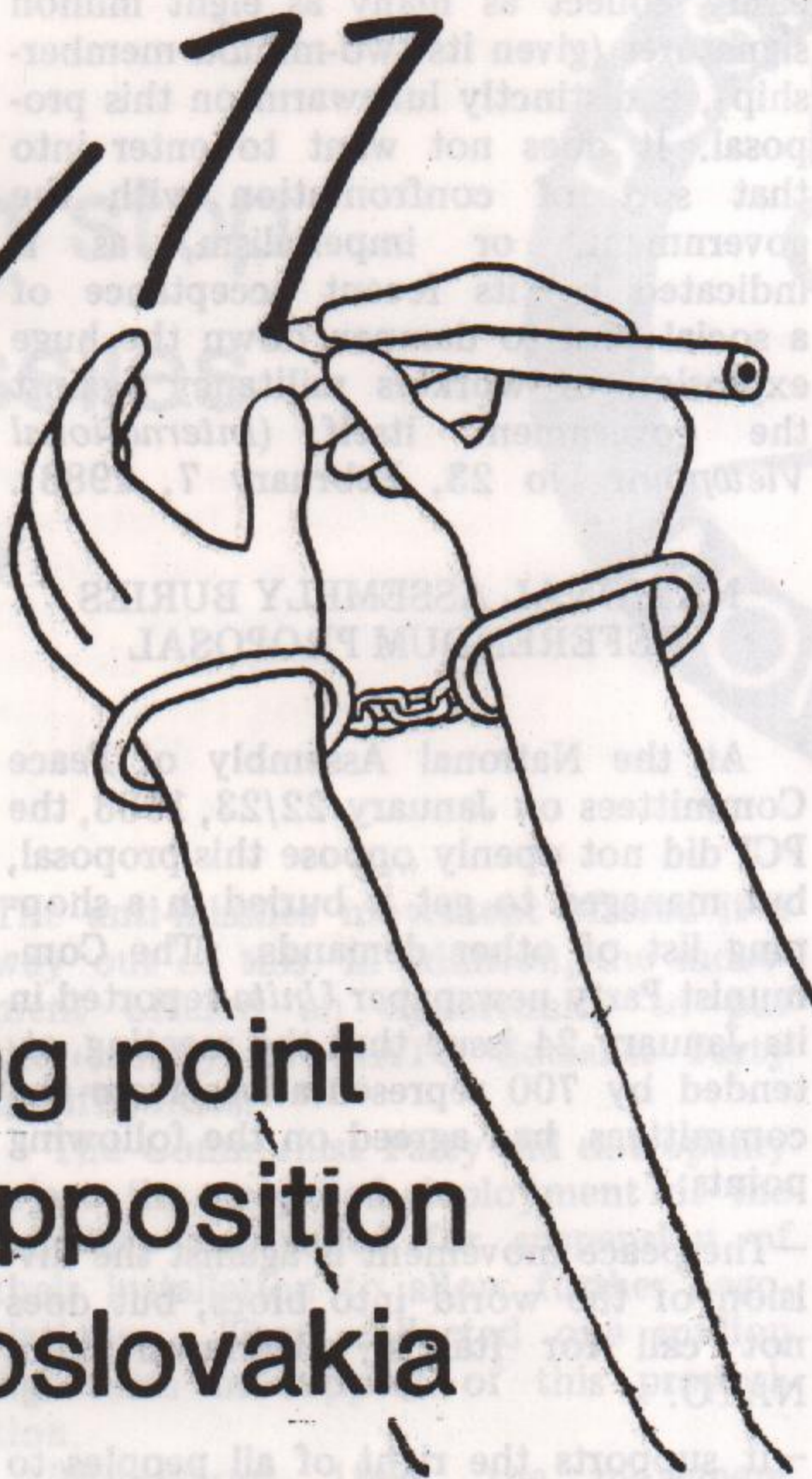
The new importance of Italy as a junior partner of US imperialism is shown in its participation in the international Interposition Force in Lebanon, and the increase in arms spending. This has grown at a faster rate than inflation for the last five years — with a special emphasis on rapid-intervention military material.

The fight against the missiles is a direct opposition to the Fanfani government which is fully committed to its imperialist role, and backed to the hilt by a buoyant Italian arms industry — the fourth largest world exporter of heavy armament systems.

An anti-war movement in Italy cannot be built simply by earnest non-partisan appeals for peace and negotiations. The LCR and the youth groups in solidarity with it raise the slogan 'jobs not bombs'. They point out the connection between the proposed new cuts in social spending and the attack on automatic cost-of-living increases with the rise in arms spending. And they put the fight against the missiles within the context of the international struggle against the imperialist war drive.

STEFAN
LEWIS

Charta 77



A turning point for the opposition in Czechoslovakia

Anna LIBERA

The fact that the repression of oppositionists in Czechoslovakia has not been on the front pages of the international papers for some time does not at all mean that the Husak regime has stopped persecuting people who think differently from it.

To the contrary, the recent reports that historic oppositionist figures such as Karel Bartosek and Karel Kyncl have emigrated, that the Charter 77 spokesman Ladislav Lys has been arrested are reminders that the Czechoslovak government is still waging unrelenting war against those who still oppose the normalization 14 years after it was imposed. It might even be said that the regime tightened the screws in the aftermath of the Polish events and following the appearances of new opposition nuclei that openly identified with the struggle of Solidarnosc.

MORE SYSTEMATIC AND EFFECTIVE REPRESSION

In October 1979, five leaders of the VONS (Committee to Defend Persons Unjustly Accused) — Vaclav Havel, Petr Uhl, Jiri Dienstbier, Otta Bednarova, and Vaclav Benda — were given heavy sentences. But this was not the crest of the wave of repression that for ten years has swept over everyone and every group that has tried to uphold the spirit and ideas of the Prague Spring. It seems rather that it was a harbinger of a new more systematic

political repression. The new repression leaves no stone unturned. It aims at silencing every dissident voice in the country, and not just directly political oppositionists.

To these ends, every means is being used — multiplying trials, longer sentences, systematic recourse to the harshest prison regime, introducing the practice of house arrest, harassment of prisoners, a war of nerves against oppositionists still free (cat-and-mouse jailings, threats, physical violence; forced exile, or refusal to issue passports). A few examples indicate the breadth of this repression and its effect.

In November 1979, following the trial of the Vons "Five," Albert Cerny, an actor and a member of VONS, as well as a signer of Charter 77, was sentenced to three and a half years in prison.

In April 1980, a young worker, Petr Cibulka, who was due to be released after two years in prison, had six months of maximum security imprisonment added to his term. This represented the start of a new practice by the authorities.

Rudolf Battek, a spokesman of Charter 77, and a former deputy to the Czechoslovak National Assembly, was arrested in April 1980 and sentenced a year later to seven and a half years in prison. On appeal, his sentence was reduced to five and a half years imprisonment and three years probation. This was also an innovation. Probation had previously been reserved for common-law convicts. (1)

The case of Battek, who has connections with the Second International and is

defended by the main Socialist Party leaders around the world, shows the determination of the Prague authorities not to let themselves be influenced by international solidarity campaigns on behalf of their victims.

MULTIPLYING TRIALS

The numerous protests against the sentences meted out to Battek (the harshest since the Stalinist trials of the 1950s) did not give the authorities any pause, as is shown by the increasing number of trials in the last two years.

In July 1981, Jiri Gruntorad, a young worker signer of Charter 77, was sentenced to four years in prison and three years probation. In the same period, Thomas Petrivy, the organizer of the meeting between Charter 77 and the Polish KOR in August 1978, was sentenced to two years in prison.

Vaclav Umlang, a miner, was sentenced to three years for protesting against the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and criticizing the deficiencies of mines in Czechoslovakia.

A leader of the VONS, Jan Litomisky was sentenced in October 1981 to three years in prison and two years probation. At the same time, four young people were sentenced to terms of six to eighteen months for hanging hostile banners on public buildings on the occasion of the Czechoslovak Communist Party congress.

In November 1981, Edward Kalinowski, a Polish Solidarnosc activist, was arrested while trying to bring 176 copies of the opposition journals *Svedetevi* and *Listy* into the country. He was sentenced to 16 months in prison.

A young conscientious objector, Jan Hrabina, was sentenced to two and a half years in prison. The reason given for this harsh penalty was "the great danger that pacifist ideas represent to society in the present context." Hrabina had explained that his refusal to serve in the armed forces was motivated, among other things, by unwillingness to participate in any intervention by Warsaw Pact forces against the Polish workers.

In May 1982, Petr Pospichal, a young worker doing his military service was sentenced to two and a half years in a maximum security prison for having defended Charter 77's activity in his barracks.

In July 1982, harsh sentences were handed down against the young people involved in running an unofficial cultural magazine, *Okno* ("Window"). Ivan Jirous (who had already served a term of four years) was sentenced to three and a half years in a maximum security prison.

1. Probation involves the following obligations: 1) You have to supply the institution keeping watch over you with full information to your resources, and offer proof on demand; 2) You have to report regularly to this institution and it decides how often; 3) You have to admit representatives of this institution to your home at any time; 4) You have to give prior notice of any change of residence.

and two years parole. Frantisek Starek was given two and a half years maximum security imprisonment and two years parole. And Michael Hytek and Milan Frick got respectively 18 and 15 months in prison.

Besides these cases, which are only a few examples (2), eighteen leading opposition figures were charged following the arrest of two young French people in May 1981, who were caught transporting clandestine literature. (3) Eight of them have been kept in prison for a year, apparently in preparation for a big show trial. But the Czechoslovak government postponed this under pressure from the Austrian government, which made the release of these oppositionists a condition for welcoming Gustav Husak to Vienna last fall.

The Czechoslovak regime has been not content with merely putting the Charter 77 and VONS leaders in prison. Inside the prison walls, it continues to harass them and threaten them with extending their sentences (such a threat currently hangs over the head of Petr Uhl). It subjects them to every kind of humiliation, with the avowed objective of demoralizing them and discouraging them from resuming their activities after they get out.

The daily lives of the prisoners are filled with such harassment. For example, the dramatist Vaclav Havel has been forbidden to write. Obstacles have been put in the way of Petr Uhl having contact with his wife and children. Uhl is allowed only a one-hour visit every six months, and he has just had the right taken away to write a letter to his seven-year-old son once a month.

The harassment of the Charter 77 signers who remain free has made any kind of activity more and more difficult. That, together with the constant threat of being sent back to prison, has led many oppositionists to choose exile. This includes both historic opposition figures, such as Bartosek, Mlynarik, and Kyncl, and young activists such as Jan and Jiri Bednar or Zina Freundova.

In the last two years, the repression has spread to Catholic circles. This reflects the determination of the authorities to crush a source of opposition strongly stimulated by the Polish events. This determination seems to have been reinforced by the Vatican's decision to ban priests from participating in political organizations. In the East European countries in general and in Czechoslovakia in particular, this means breaking with the Catholic organizations that are appendages of the regime.

At the beginning of 1982, a new very sweeping repressive operation was launched in connection with an investigation of the distribution of leaflets expressing solidarity with the Polish workers in their fight against the state of war declaration. In a communique, the VONS pointed out that the four young workers arrested and charged — Jan and Josef Wunsch, Jitka Tumova, and Vaclav

Soukup — did not belong to the Charter 77 milieu.

The authorities want to change the initial charge — agitation (Article 100 of the penal code) into "subversion against the republic" (Article 98), which would enable them to impose heavier penalties. It seems that the authorities want to come down very quickly against this new opposition nucleus, which was acting under the direct influence of the Polish events and rejecting the legalistic approach adopted by Charter 77.

Despite these arrests, this current of oppositionists, represented by the Revolutionary Action Group and the Organizing Committee for Free Trade Unions, continued their activity over 1982, opening up a new phase in the fight against the normalizers.

A NEW DIRECTION FOR THE OPPOSITION

The appearance of critical documents even within the Charter 77 group seems to confirm that the opposition has reached a turning point. The effectiveness of the repression outlined above has highlighted the limitations of courageous appeals addressed to a government that continually shows utter disregard for its own laws.

A long document giving a critical analysis of the activity of Charter 77 — while not denying the courage of the activists or the positive aspects of their work — circulated in 1982 among oppositionists. (4) The author (or authors) concentrate essentially on pointing out the weaknesses of activity that never took up the problems of Czechoslovak society as a whole but rather those of a relatively restricted group of intellectuals.

The almost exclusive concentration on freedom of expression, however important the demand, the document argues, did not enable the opposition to link up with broad social layers discontented with the regime. It helped to make Charter 77 an "ideological and cultural opposition." Thus, it was unable to break out of the isolation in which it was confined at the start, largely by the regime's repressive campaign.

According to the document, the mode of functioning of Charter 77 itself increased its isolation: "The opposition resembles a kind of 'foreign body,' when it is not an outright sect in which special habits and stereotyped forms of thought and behavior prevail that are not always comprehensible to 'outsiders.'"

The rigorous moral sense of the oppositionists, which rightly inspires admiration, can turn against them, the document goes on to explain, because it deprives them of "any possibility for having an effect on ordinary people." Who, in order to survive, are obliged to make compromises every day with the normalized society.

Such attitudes did not prepare the oppositionists to confront the new situation produced by growing economic difficul-

ties: "The deepening of the economic crisis and the political crisis in our country," the document says, "is sooner or later going to generate rising discontent. It is difficult to predict the ways in which this will be expressed....If there is a properly functioning opposition movement at that point, its time will have come. It will begin by helping to give rational form to the collective consciousness and to focus the general will, and this will eventually put it in the leadership of a mass movement...We do not have to go far to find examples of this." In fact, Poland is not far away!

But externalness of Charter 77 to the society did not facilitate contacts with the elements that were beginning to become discontented "within the structures." In conclusion, the document lays out a general line of action that could enable the opposition to prepare for its new tasks. That is, to analyze the social and political problems of Czechoslovak society and develop links with people who work "within the structures" (the plants, the unions, the party).

A similar conclusion seems to have been drawn by young workers not linked to Charter 77 or to the VONS. Back in the spring of 1981, they made known their intention to intervene in the official unions to press them to do their job of defending the workers' interests. In April 1981, they addressed a letter indicating this to the Czechoslovak trade-union congress (the Revolutionary Union Movement, ROH) and formed the Organizing Committee for Free Unions.

Drawing the lessons of the repression that hit the members of Charter 77 and the VONS, they decided to remain anonymous. Given their weakness, they opted for systematic work at the base of the official unions.

Inspired by the Polish workers movement, the Organizing Committee for Free Trade Unions tried to popularize the example of its struggle in Czechoslovakia and build solidarity with it. In this way, it renewed an internationalist approach that had been long forgotten.

This reorientation of the Czechoslovak opposition reflected both in the document criticizing Charter 77 and in the activity of the Organizing Committee for Free Trade Unions is taking place under difficult conditions. The repression within the country and the evolution of the situation in Poland do not make the task of the oppositionists easy. They need our solidarity more than ever. ■

2. A new pamphlet providing the full list of the VONS communiques on repression can be obtained from the Comite du 5 Janvier pour une Tchecoslovaquie libre et socialiste, c/o Veronique Chabrol, 277, rue de Vaugirard, Paris 75015.

3. This includes the following persons: Jaromir Horec, Eva Kanturkova, Karel Kyncl, Jan Mlynarik, Jan Ruml, Jiri Ruml, Jirina Siklova, Milan Simecka — all of whom are in prison; and Jiri Hajek, Ivan Havel, Olga Havlova, Karel Holmel, Josef Jablonicky, Zdenek Jrinsky, Majmir Klausky, Miroslav Kusy, Jaroslav Meznik, and Jiri Mueller, who are free.

4. For the text of this document, see the Paris magazine *L'Alternative*, No.18, September/October 1982.

Open letter to Solidarnosc

The following statement by the Organizing Committee for Free Unions was addressed to Solidarnosc in Warsaw. It was distributed on November 7 in Prague and Plzen.

Dear Friends,

We send our greetings in these days when you are preparing for a day of strikes and demonstrations to protest against the removal of Solidarnosc's legal status. In a short period, this organization won the sympathy and respect of a large part of the Polish people and freedom-loving progressives all over the world....

Just as in your country, the normalizers here advocate material incentives as opposed to the principles of your movement. They promise a better standard of living and prosperity as a substitute for a truly democratic and free development of society on both the economic and cultural levels.

From our own experience we know what their "consolidation" and "normalization" amounts to. At best, it means stagnation, but more often decline and ruin.

A truly positive and hopeful development of a society such as ours can only be inaugurated and consolidated by relaxing the bureaucratic obstacles and rigid relationships. And this has to go hand in hand with strong activity and commitment by all honest and creative citizens.

Such a development began to take form in Czechoslovakia in 1968 through a movement for reform. In the case of your movement for a self-managed society, it has assumed completely unprecedented proportions.

Dear friends, let us join our efforts for a free and independent Poland and Czechoslovakia! All freedom-loving Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks must seek, not only by their words but above all by their deeds, by persistent social and cultural work, to bring closer the day of the rebirth!

To your day of strikes and your protest demonstration against the delegalization of Solidarnosc, we add our own action, which corresponds to the limited possibilities in our situation. We are with you!

What "normalization" means

Marie ANDERS

"The price hikes have heightened the social contradictions," it was noted in a February 1982 Charter 77 document on the economic crisis in Czechoslovakia. The drastic increases in January for meat, fish, rice, tobacco products, and other vital consumer goods were deeply felt.

But the decisive role is being played by creeping price rises called "innovations." That is, old products are offered in somewhat new packaging at much higher prices, if they are available at all.

For example, in the case of the increase in the price of meat products, the poorer grades became relatively much less expensive. They disappeared totally from the shops (and turned up again in factory canteens and in the military bases).

For two years, all energy used by schools, factories, and offices has been rationed. Anyone who exceeds the quota (and it is very hard not to) is fined.

A liter of gas costs the equivalent of 36 schillings (more than 2 US dollars), translated into Austrian terms. Textiles are three to four times more expensive than in Austria. The same goes for shoes,

and household appliances such as washing machines and TV sets.

Although the cost of living is steadily rising in Czechoslovakia, there was no increase in wages this year. The average wage is 2,700 crowns a month. The basic vacation is two weeks. (Only after 15 years in a job do you get the right to four weeks of vacation).

So far the price increases have not produced anything like the sort of reaction that we saw in 1980 in Poland. The effects of the 1968 capitulation are still evident. The majority of the Czechoslovak population continues to be marked by confusion, demoralization, and a feeling of powerlessness.

So, it is not surprising that a lot of people are turning to "personal solutions." The minds of most are turned toward weekend places in the country, cars, and quiet murmuring against the party bosses. People live by their wits are often personal advantages, which are often simply the necessities of life.

A lot of the economic planners must also be living by their wits. For example, twice the amount of concrete needed was provided for in the plan for the Jaslovske Bohunice atomic reactor. It is well known

that concrete is much sought after by the builders of country retreats, and that they like to filch the "people's" concrete from public building projects.

By expelling all critical elements from the party after 1968, the Husak leadership created the basis for what was originally the biggest opposition in Eastern Europe. In the post-1968 period, the Socialist Movement of Czechoslovak Citizens tried to organize active resistance to the "normalization" policy.

But by the mid-1970s, it was clear that the constant repression was having an effect. It was only after the signing of the Helsinki treaty in 1975 that new openings appeared. The importance of this agreement was that it gave the opposition the opportunity to make legal demands for freedom of information, the press, and assembly, which have explosively revolutionary implications in the conditions of bureaucratic dictatorship.

With the founding of Charter 77, the opposition made an attempt to break out of the ghetto existence to which it had been confined. In the East European states, the winning of human rights is one of the preconditions for major social changes, such demands have central importance.

In a short time, Charter 77, which concentrated on protesting violations of human and civil rights, managed to collect thousands of signatures and begin to penetrate into wider and wider strata of the population.

So, it is no wonder that the authorities stepped up every sort of repression and harassment of the dissidents. After the show trial in October 1979 against six members of the Committee to Defend the Unjustly Persecuted, activists were continually arrested, forced to go into exile, and "involved" in accidents, blackmailed, and threatened. For example recently Alena Lisova, wife of Charter spokesman Lis was warned that her children would be kidnapped. Such cases are innumerable. Lis mentioned only a few in his letter to Charter 77:

† An assault on Charter 77 spokesperson Zdena Tominova in front of her house, resulting in a brain concussion.

† A mugging of Zina Freundova, a member of the committee of those assigned to speak for Charter 77, in her home, resulting in serious contusions and shock.

† An attempt to throw Charter 77 spokesperson Anna Marvanova onto the subway tracks.

† Several night time attacks on Charter 77 signer Stanislav Adamek. He was dragged off into the woods, beaten, and warned that he would be run over and thrown into the Macocha gorge.

† Theft of the car of Charter 77 spokesperson Rudolf Battek.

† The burning of the car of the son of Charter 77 spokesperson Maria Hromadkova.

† The illegal arrest of the minor son of Jiri Dienstbier. ■

From *Die Linke*, magazine of the Austrian section of the Fourth International.

The world economic crisis comes to Australia

Jonathan WEST

SYDNEY — The Australian ruling class entered the current world recession with the naive belief that an investment boom in the economy's resource sectors — particularly mining — would insulate it from the world crisis.

As late as July 21, 1980, the *Australian Financial Review* thought it possible to exclaim in an editorial:

"Australia is in the grip of investment fever. Fired with the bullish statements from Federal politicians, the nation has leapt from the sheep's back to that of the Organisation of Petroleum-Exporting Countries and is riding off into a new era of prosperity."

However, this dream was shattered in the second half of 1982.

Investment fell off a trickle. Unemployment skyrocketed and is now equal to the levels in many other imperialist countries. From an official figure in June 1982 of just over 6 per cent, by the year's end, unemployment had jumped to almost 10 per cent. In 1983 it will go much higher.

The resource developments are no longer shielding the economy from the world downturn.

The much-trumpeted Australian resources boom was based upon substantial investment in the production of minerals and energy-producing raw materials like coal and oil. However, as the world recession deepened, demand for these products fell. Prices for the raw-material exports of Australia dropped off sharply in late 1981 and early 1982. With this in mind, and a perspective of long-term world stagnation, the big corporations cancelled or postponed many of their most important projects.

The inflow of investment between 1980 and 1982 had been sufficient to postpone the impact of the recession. Increased orders for manufacturing companies supplying the raw-materials developments, plus the increased demand resulting from such large amounts of money entering the economy, masked the underlying weakness of Australian industry.

But the real crisis of Australian industry is now becoming more evident everyday. And working people here are being forced to pay the price.

Because Australia has a relatively small population and domestic market in comparison to other imperialist countries —

its population is just over 15 million — Australian capitalism has been able to develop a secondary-industry base only under heavy tariff and quota protection. Australia has one of the most protected economies in the capitalist world. The resulting lack of competition has produced an outdated and inefficient, and therefore uncompetitive, industry.

Without the shield of a boom in the primary sector, Australian industry is now entering a longterm structural crisis. It cannot compete with the products of more advanced industries from other imperialist countries such as Japan and Western Europe. It has to maintain the high tariff barriers to survive, yet so long as these remain high, it has no incentive to upgrade its outdated technology.

The attempts of the Australian ruling class to make working people pay for the crisis produced important changes in Australian politics in 1982.

The employers launched in quick succession a series of co-ordinated attempts to win back concessions they had been forced to concede during the short-lived resources boom.

One of the key gains for Australian workers had been the widespread introduction, after a sustained fight by workers in most major industries, of a shorter workweek. In many industries weekly working hours were reduced from 40 to 38, and in the sectors where the most determined campaigns had been waged, weekly hours were reduced to 35.

The employers responded to this when the crisis hit by either renegeing on the agreements altogether, or with the introduction of a four-day week with loss of one day's pay. This form of short week became particularly common in 1982 throughout the metal industry, in direct contravention of the court-sanctioned legal awards for those workers.

In other areas, however, the employers responded with the more usual practice of mass lay-offs. Particularly hard hit were workers in the steel industry, which in 1982 entered its worst crisis since the Great Depression. Unemployment in steel industry-based cities such as Wollongong is now close to the 1930s levels, with figures of around 25 per cent out of work.

Escalating this offensive late in the year, the Liberal/National coalition government of Malcolm Fraser announced that it favored a 12-month wage

freeze. With inflation currently running at around 12 per cent, a year's wage freeze would mean an across-the-board cut of 12 per cent in workers' wages.

However, because the Australian constitution does not give the federal government the power to institute controls over wages or prices, the federal government had to win agreement for its plan from the six state governments, the three most important of which are headed by the Labor Party.

After initially denouncing the scheme as a "gimmick" and a "fraud," and demanding that it be implemented only in conjunction with a price freeze, the Labor state premiers agreed to legislate for a six-month freeze.

This stance was opposed for a time by national Labor Party leader Bill Hayden, but he also soon changed his position under pressure from business circles.

As Australia's powerful oil industry workers, backed by the Australian Council of Trade Unions, prepared to go into action in January this year to win wage rises, Hayden stated to the press regarding the wage freeze:

"I hope to the maximum extent possible that the trade union movement will try and make this gimmick work."

The rapidity with which the Labor Party leaders reversed their opposition to the wage freeze highlighted the response of the official labor movement leadership to the crisis.

Rather than leading and inspiring a *working-class* response to the crisis, the Labor Party and union leaders have put themselves forward as "responsible managers" of the system.

They have accepted that the way to deal with the crisis is to reduce wages so that profits will rise.

The ALP parliamentarians share the basic outlook of the major capitalist party in Australia, the Liberal Party, concerning the causes of the crisis and what to do about it. They agree that workers should bear the burden. Their "answer" to the recession is the same as that of the trade union bureaucrats: Cut real wages, shore up profits through protectionist measures and government handouts, and wait for events in the world economy to restore capitalist prosperity.

The ALP leaders no longer speak of socialism, even in the remote future; now mere reforms within the framework of

capitalism have taken on the status of a "maximum" program for some long-distant epoch.

Central to the Labor leaders' program for managing the capitalist crisis is a "prices and incomes policy" — a social contract between a future Labor government and the trade union movement in which workers sign away their right to use their union strength to fight for increases in the living standards in return for vague promises of taxation reform and other social reforms.

The explicit aim of the social contract is to raise capitalist profitability, and the Labor leaders have been selling this scheme to the employers as a more painless way of reducing wages and managing the crisis than the Liberals' reliance on the demoralising effects of unemployment in conjunction with ever-tighter anti-union laws.

However, because working people see little difference between the policies of the two major parties — the Liberals and Labor — and because both are telling them profits must be restored as the basis of any return to prosperity, Labor has gained little ground electorally. With national elections due later this year, opinion polls show that at present Labor would not win, and in December last year the party made no headway in a by-election for a seat it was widely expected to win from the Liberals.

Nor is the right-wing of the Labor leadership alone in pushing for a social contract.

Key to winning the acquiescence of the trade union movement was the support of the Labor Party "left" and the Communist Party.

The Communist Party has a major influence in the leadership of the Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights' Union, Australia's largest union, and this union concluded an agreement with metal industry employers in late 1981 for a six-month period of no strikes in return for inadequate wage rises. This agreement was widely seen as a trial run for the social contract. The ideal was to convince big business that if the metalworkers, traditionally one of the most militant sectors of Australian workers could be "tamed" by a social contract-type agreement, then the scheme could work on a national scale.

Metalworkers' union leader and Communist Party national committee member Laurie Carmichael toured the country supporting the idea of an "agreement" between the unions and the Labor Party.

When the actual scheme was announced he maintained some criticism, but urged its adoption as a "step forward."

But as 1983 opens, there are increasing signs that Australian working people will not sit idly by while their livelihoods are slashed by the capitalist offensive, even if that offensive has the support of the official leaderships of the Labor Party and trade unions.

Workers in the oil and building industries have already indicated that

they will not accept the freeze and will use their considerable industrial muscle to break through it.

The oil industry workers have the official endorsement of the Australian Council of Trade Unions executive, although the executive is trying to keep the claim bogged down in lengthy legalistic machinations in the arbitration courts.

Australian workers are not beaten or demoralised.

If the oil workers are able to defeat the wage freeze, they will set an example that is likely to be taken up by many other sectors. 1983 could be a very hot year for an Australian ruling class already reeling under the sudden impact of a crisis to which they believed themselves to be immune. ■

Guatemala — despite the massacres the struggle continues

'The women were raped and the people herded into the churches, then tortured and massacred. Children were smashed against the ground or else taken by the feet and their heads crushed against the tree trunks and then their still warm brains eaten. Occasionally the soldiers get the children to play and then throw a grenade into the middle of the group....Many are cut up and killed with machetes....Soldiers take out the still throbbing livers from their victims and eat them as if they were some sort of delicacy'. (Report published at the end of 1982 by Bishops See of San Cristobal de las Casas — Le Monde, February 4, 1983.)

'Rios Montt is a man of great integrity faced with a challenge from guerrillas armed and supported from those outside Guatemala...Rios Montt is getting a "bum rap." ' (Reagan, during his December 82 trip to Guatemala, Le Monde, December 8, 1982.)

Guatemala has the largest population and economy of all the Central American states and, according to a former US secretary of State, the outcome of the guerrilla war there 'has much more important consequences in terms of dangers for the interests of the United States than the war in Salvador'. (Inprecor, No 127, May 31, 1982).

After Reagan's recent trip to Guatemala the official embargo on military aid imposed by Carter in 1977 was lifted. Spare parts for helicopters — vital equipment in counter-insurgency operations — are already on their way.

Some of the 'authoritative' press claim that Rios Montt's regime has the guerrillas on the run. Has the Reagan administration and the Guatemalan military junta stabilised one of the key countries in the Central America cauldron?

Dave HAYES

Since the 1954 CIA-organised overthrow of the 'reformist' Arbenz government, Guatemala has had series of military regimes. An initial guerrilla resistance led by Yon Sosa and Turcos Lima got started in 1962, but was stamped out by brutal repression in 1967.

To date, more than 50,000 people have been killed by these repressive regimes. But, with the formation of the Central American Common Market and the exploitation of nickel and oil resources, the economy grew significantly. There was a certain industrial development.

Army commanders amassed personal fortunes through state-aided development projects, particularly in the north. Displacement of the inhabitants in those areas meant massacres of the Indians, who constitute more than half of Guatemala's population.

However, by 1982 this relative stabi-

lity was being severely undermined. First, the economic boom ended. The Central American Common Market, broke up. And the world recession set in (GNP rose by 7.4% in 1976, by 3.5% in 1980, in 1981 by 1%; and in 1982, it is expected to drop by 3.5%).

This crisis was aggravated by poor capitalist management of the economy, resulting from the scramble by various corrupt army cliques to corner various markets and projects. At the same time, the spread of the resistance frightened off both local and foreign investment.

THE GUERRILLA RESISTANCE

The second factor in the breakdown of stability is that the revolutionary forces learned some lessons from the defeat of the 1962-67 guerrilla struggle. They came to understand that systematic mass work, particularly among the poorest, Indian majority in the *altiplano* (the highlands in the centre of the coun-

try) and alongside the militant Christian 'local communities', was essential to build the basis for a successful people's war.

Victory in Nicaragua and the upsurge in El Salvador gave a new fillip to what was the longest tradition of guerrilla struggle in Central America.

In February 1982, the revolutionary groups — the EGP (Guerrilla Army of the Poor), ORPA (Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms), the FAR (Revolutionary Armed Forces), and the PGT-Nucleo Dirigente (Leadership Nucleus of the Guatemalan Workers Party, a faction of the CP) formed a united revolutionary front called the URNG (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union).

During 1981, revolutionary military and political activity increased. It spread to 19 of the 22 departments of Guatemala, and some military experts were giving the regime only about two years to survive.

Thirdly, the crisis of bourgeois leadership, already severe because of the rise of the resistance and the state of the economy, was made worse by the way President Lucas Garcia's clique took over more and more of the economy and state apparatus. Traditional bourgeois sectors and the other army cliques were in open war against Lucas Garcia and among themselves.

In this context the March 1982 elections resolved nothing since the Lucas Garcia group flagrantly stuffed the ballot boxes. Amidst a general outcry from the other bourgeois parties (no real opposition of popular forces could participate in the elections), a group of intermediate ('young') officers seized the initiative and installed a triumvirate that included Rios Montt.

Contrary to some observers' analysis these officers did not represent a 'reformist project'. Their main concern was the Lucas Garcia's regime's lack of a coherent political and military strategy to defeat



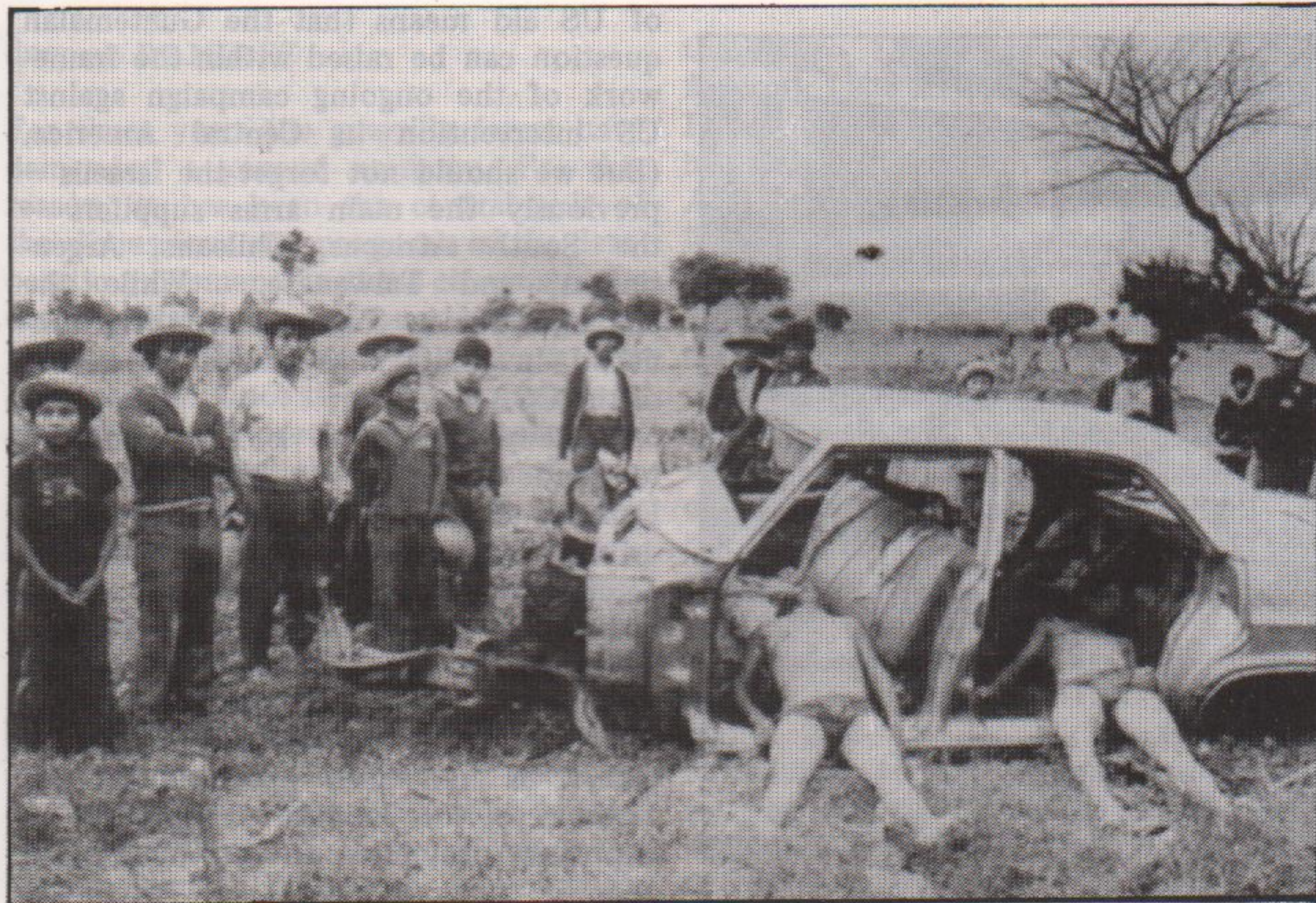
the revolutionary forces. In this respect, their interests coincided with those of US imperialism. This is despite the fact that the coup went against Washington's line of combining a facade of elections with aid for offensives against the guerrillas, who were supposed to be 'backed by foreign powers and unwilling to abide by constitutional democracy'. Stephen Bosworth, deputy undersecretary of state for inter-American affairs, even said publicly:

'The military coup d'etat can put an end to the political paralysis which exists in the country'. (*Inforpress*, May 6, 1982.)

THE PROJECT OF THE NEW REGIME

The strategy of the new regime was to launch a more coherent counter-insurgency campaign, combining repression with political and ideological measures.

Victims of a death squadron (DR)



Its objectives were the following: to destroy the revolutionaries' social base, to build greater support for the regime in the countryside and the towns, to break the international isolation of the regime, and to lay the groundwork for a restoration of direct American military aid.

The general aim was to draw the bourgeoisie and the middle classes (and even the less organised masses) behind the junta's national reconstruction project.

The 'anti-corruption' campaign is a key part of this. The police service and administration in Guatemala City were 'reorganised'. For a few months the 'death squads' were encouraged to leave fewer corpses in the city streets. But in practice the operation involved removing the Lucas Garcia clique from key political and administrative posts. Only a small number of people were arrested, and all were later released.

In fact this demagogic campaign is a handy cover for Rios Montt — now that he has eased out the other two junta members — to build up today his own clientalist base.

Martial law was imposed shortly after the coup and is regularly renewed. Thus, with the political parties also suspended, the Rios Montt group has a free hand for militarising and centralising all political and civic life under its control. This puts it in a good position for any future elections. In exchange for official American aid, there was an unwritten agreement to call elections. Rios Montt has announced he will issue a decree on elections on the March 23, 1983, anniversary of his coup.

RIOS MONTT, MAN OF GOD

The regime is relying on a specific, if bizarre, ideological instrument. Rios Montt is a member of the 'El Verbo' (The Word) protestant evangelical sect (linked

to Gospel Outreach in the US). He projects himself as a man of god fighting for moral order against corruption and atheistic communism.

Such US-based sects arrived in force after the 1976 earthquake — to aid with reconstruction. Since then they claim to have converted 22% of the population. They have vast financial resources. Over and above the extent to which the CIA directly works with them, they generally have an anti-Communist, conservative ideology. One of Rios Montt's religious confessors has stated, for example: "The Evangelist recognises the need for firm authority for the sake of protecting the innocent and establishing law and order". (Quoted in the Paris daily *Liberation*, December 6, 1982).

'BEANS AND GUNS'

Copied from US policy employed in Vietnam, the 'beans and guns' policy calls for the neutralisation or destruction of rural villages suspected of being sympathetic to the guerrillas. Within the framework of this policy the largely Indian rural population is being massacred and their homes, animals, and crops burned. After that, aided by Protestant sects and more recently by Guatemala's National Reconstruction Committee (CRN), the army returns to the area, herding the survivors into 'model villages'.

These villages which were known as 'strategic hamlets' in Vietnam, are actually glorified concentration camps, where people are forced to collaborate with the army in return for food. This collaboration includes participation in peasant 'militias' (to 'defend' the villages against guerrillas) as well as the reconstruction of villages destroyed by the army.

It is estimated that as part of this plan 5,000 people, essentially Indians, have been massacred since March 1982. Thousands fled to the more inaccessible mountains. But the revolutionary organisations cannot provide food for, or protect, such

Demonstration against repression (DR)



large numbers. Therefore, most are forced to return to these 'model villages'.

RESISTANCE REORGANISES AND FIGHTS ON

Given the denunciation of the genocide in the world press in the last six months, the reality of the resistance itself has been a little submerged. Some observers have gone further... "it (the regime) has come close to eliminating the country's guerrilla movement as a serious political threat". (*Economist*, December 18, 1982).

It is obvious that, faced with the scale of the counter-insurgency campaign, the revolutionary organisations had to make a considerable effort to adjust their logistic structures. Such vast movements of people implied big organisational changes. The mass organisations and revolutionary groups have to take greater precautions in conditions where the people are held hostage in these model villages and are constantly being threatened with reprisals. The army has not directly defeated the armed resistance in open battle. The resistance is still intact.

Total press censorship under martial law means that foreign correspondents cannot easily get information about army losses. The revolutionary organisations can often get news of losses inflicted on the army only some weeks after the events.

The January issue of *Solidarite Guatemala* published in Paris, estimates 500 army losses in October — indicating that after a certain lull rebel military actions are still possible in most of the country. New fronts have been opened up by the EGP (in a new zone), the FAR (in the centre of the *altiplano*) and the ORPA (in the capital where it has been traditionally weak).

According to *Inforpress* (No.525-7, January 1983) there was more than one officially recognised action in the first fortnight of 1983, and on January 14 soldiers were killed in one clash.

The regime has made much of the

'calm' in the capital. On January 20, three police stations in three different zones of the city were attacked and two other actions took place. The death squads are now daily leaving their victims' corpses in the capital. Anti-subversive military tribunals executed four EGP militants on September 4, and today ten more militants are threatened with execution.

THE STRENGTH OF THE RESISTANCE

The revolutionary forces are well enough implanted on a national scale to withstand such large scale attacks. The declaration by the faction of the PGT (the Guatemalan CP), which had previously rejected the people's war strategy, that they want to join the URNG further strengthens revolutionary unity.

The revolutionary forces are strongest outside the cities, but have not yet established zones similar to those held by the FMLN in El Salvador. The struggle will be long, but a victory in El Salvador would help bring it closer in Guatemala.

THE NEED FOR SOLIDARITY

A barrage of official reports have blasted the Guatemalan regime in the last six months — from Amnesty International, the US National Council of Churches, the American Watch Committees, and others. The United Nations adopted a resolution condemning the regime on December 17, 1982 (by 79 votes for, 16 against, and 45 abstentions).

The Permanent Tribunal of the Peoples recently held an investigation of the repression in Guatemala and issued a report condemning the government.

Emergency action is necessary to save the lives of the ten militants currently threatened with death sentences.

In addition to building protests against repression, it is important to build a movement against imperialist intervention. The recent official renewal of US aid means that the Guatemalan question can be raised within the framework of the ongoing campaign against US intervention in Central America. (But we should not forget the Israelis — previously the main arms suppliers — the South Africans, Chileans, Argentinians, and Taiwanese. While the embargo was in force, all of them funnelled in military assistance on behalf of the US.)

Equally important is the campaign to send direct aid to the URNG. In Europe, the front has launched a fund drive in support of its struggle. It desperately needs more resources to better defend the people against the regime.

Finally, a political campaign to get the labour movement and governments to recognise the URNG as a 'belligerent party', as had been proposed by the Tribunal of the Peoples' would offer an important protection to the Guatemalan people.

The Amnesty law in Colombia — what it means



Socorro Ramirez addresses a local neighbourhood meeting(DR)

The amnesty law introduced in Colombia on November 19, 1982, is undoubtedly the broadest in scope in the whole history of the country. Under this law more than 500 political prisoners have been released. There has been an end to searches for, and sentences against, 'the perpetrators, the accomplices, or those who conceal the facts about political offences...such as rebellion, sedition, riots, and all the related acts so as to facilitate or encourage the perpetration of these acts, or to conceal them' (articles 1 and 2 of the law 35/82). This also applies to those who have been fighting arms in hand who have not been arrested.

However, some restrictions have been included in the law. Excluded are 'homicides perpetrated outside combat — when they have been accompanied by ill-treatment, or against a defenceless victim, or one in an disadvantageous situation, where that was exploited' (article 3). The law also gives the president the power through budgetary adjustments to order 'civic-military actions' by the armed forces in the regions affected by violence, and to re-organise the national police force.

The Partido Socialista Revolucionario (PSR — Revolutionary Socialist Party, Colombian section of the Fourth International) considers that this law, despite its numerous negative aspects, is a democratic gain for the Colombian people. In the following article, Socorro Ramirez, a leader of the PSR, explains their attitude.

Socorro RAMIREZ

For three years the guerrilla forces have demanded a general amnesty. For this reason, it has been the central axis of the discussions and proposals of the democratic movement. In these circumstances the position taken by the guerrilla group M-19 (April 19 Movement) seems incomprehensible. Once the law was approved, and they had previously supported it, they put forward a whole series of maximalist conditions, virtually amounting to demanding the revolution, as a prerequisite for accepting these measures.

The pro-Soviet Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have called for the demilitarisation of the war zones, and welcomed the law. Other guerrilla organisations have taken a position against the law. These were the Castroist National Liberation Army (ELN); the Maoist People's Liberation Army (ELP);

the Pedro Leon Arboleda, a dissident faction of the EPL; and the Workers Self Defence (ADO). The ELN for example has stated that it will continue fighting. Although the law does not demand that they lay down their arms, or that they personally give themselves up, there are at most only one hundred guerrilla fighters who have accepted it.

Unhappily, this law, although it is big advance, has not been accompanied by social reforms to deal with the problems of poverty, the monopoly of the land by the rich landowners, unemployment, the problems that give rise to permanent violence.

Presidential decrees have established programmes of public works, offers of credit, jobs, and grants. But these offer no solution to the key problems, which can be solved only by a democratic agrarian reform. Such a reform would not simply have to distribute land to the poor

peasants who need it to work. It would have to take on rich landowners and give deeds to the indigenous population recognising their right to the lands that have been stolen from them.

Nor has the amnesty law been backed up by the political measures needed to facilitate its application. One such measure is stopping the activities of the MAS (1), which is responsible for the assassination of workers leaders, which has threatened fighters and created an atmosphere of terror.

There has been neither a truce nor a halt to military operations, nor demilitarisation, — that is to say a withdrawal of the army — from the peasant regions. This, however, is essential to guarantee the rights of those who accept the amnesty.

IS THIS A DEMOCRATIC OPENING?

The change in style, the right to protest, the lifting of the state of siege, the amnesty law, are all gains of a struggle for democratic rights that has gone on several years now. But they do not represent a true democratic opening-up. Many citizens continue to 'disappear'. Despite much effort, nobody can find out where they are, nor can anyone guarantee that they are still alive.

Many workers have been killed during the strikes that took place recently to the west of Antioquia, demanding a lowering in prices of the public services. These rises have just been imposed by the World Bank on the government as a condition for getting international credits.

No political reform has been drawn up that would guarantee rights to minorities by granting legal possibilities for opposition. If it is considered necessary to integrate into civilian life those who have taken up arms, then it is also necessary to abolish the private preserves of the bourgeois two-party system that have been built on the basis of a monopoly of national political life.(2)

This would require a series of measures such as the PSR has proposed. For example, that the government's rule should be limited to codifying the rights of political parties; it must not assure the power to regulate how they function.

All citizens, including the illiterates, should be able to participate in elections. The opposition particularly needs to be allowed permanent access to radio and television. There should be a 'fourth power' to oversee electoral questions; a commission representing all political points of view. The system for granting legal status to parties should be modern-

1. MAS — Muerte a los secuestradores, Death to the kidnapers. A paramilitary group financed by the Colombian mafia to oppose kidnappings of personalities. Has close links with the police.
2. Bourgeois bipartism: traditional bourgeois political system which alternates power between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party.

Declaration of the Executive Committee of the Colombian PSR

The amnesty law is a democratic victory for the Colombian people. It is the result of three years of struggle for human rights, for amnesty, and political liberties. Thanks to this law more than a hundred of our compatriots can return to their country; at least three hundred political prisoners will be released; and many people persecuted for their political opinions will benefit from it. Furthermore, it will open the doors to a dialogue between the government and the insurgent guerrilla forces. The first steps toward this should be a truce between the opposing parties, as requested by the Commission for Peace; and most, fundamentally, a withdrawal of the army from the rural zones; and the dismantling of the paramilitary organisations.

It is evident that there are negative aspects to this law. It is not a completely general amnesty. It does not reform the Penal Code. And it grants, in an absurd and unconstitutional way, the right for the government to reorganise the police force, and continue its civic-military campaigns. But, at the same time, it amounts to progress. And we who have fought, as a revolutionary opposition, to achieve this gain recognise what it represents.

The amnesty, this is crystal clear, is only an important demand for a measure of political democracy; it is not a social revolution. Revolution is not a demand, it is not negotiable. It is a mass process that has to be organised and carried through to a successful conclusion.

What is important today is to make sure the law is applied, through street mobilisations, through holding the Third Forum for Human Rights. We have to fight for the amnesty in the universities, in the workplaces. We have to fight for an emergency economic plan which would create a massive number of jobs; for democratic agrarian and urban reform; for real nationalisation of the national and foreign big monopolies; for effective political guarantees to the opposition so that they can participate in the debates and socio-political processes; for respect for the lives of opponents, and their access to radio and television. A law providing for rights for opposition political parties is necessary, as well as the abolition of Article 28 of the national constitution.

We reiterate that the overall solution to the crisis in the country requires the calling of a people's constituent assembly, as the permanent framework for adopting adequate social, political and economic solutions.

Executive Committee of the Partido Socialista Revolucionario
Colombian section of the Fourth International
Bogota, November 1982.

ised, the present one is completely fraudulent and out of date.

The proposals we are making are part of the social and economic reforms necessary to achieve real national independence. These would allow for democratic reorganisation that can deal with the crisis of the state from top to bottom. Only a democratic sovereign constituent assembly, directly representing the interests of the workers and the people, can achieve this objective. This proposal, which is part and parcel of our programme, has been defended, publicised, and reaffirmed in many meetings, forums, congresses, mobilisations, and commissions, since the foundation of the PSR. This is why it meets with a certain response today, as an alternative to the capitalist projects for dealing with the crisis.

THE PSR AND THE COMMISSION FOR PEACE

As regards the Commission for Peace appointed by President Belisario Betancur, we have stated our position publicly and disseminated it widely. As I said when the commission was set up on September 23, 1982, the fact that my name was included in the list of members of this commission is 'a recognition of the work

done for amnesty, demilitarisation, human rights, and social demands for which I have fought on behalf of the PSR and the democratic left. In no case can my nomination — backed by my party — be interpreted as support to the present government.

'Our participation is aimed at allowing us to put forward social, economic, and political proposals that can promote the fight for a democratic amnesty — bring about genuine negotiations between the parties engaged in military confrontation, that is, the state and the guerrillas.

'A true amnesty would not only have to be far-reaching, but also accompanied by a series of political and social measures. I think that a priority would be to have a broad workers mobilisation to defend and extend the democratic rights of working people, while supporting the general amnesty. Such a mobilisation is needed to force an immediate answer about the fate of the 'disappeared'; demilitarisation of the rural areas; and to press for an inquiry into the paramilitary groups such as the MAS and to stop their activities.'

This is why we have accepted nomination to this top-level commission. We do not consider it as a place for negotiation behind the backs of the popular mobilisations, but as a platform and

support for democratic, trade-union and popular struggles. This is why we have travelled all over the country to tell people, and to call on them to mobilise. This is the only guarantee that exists for obtaining the fulfillment of the demands and proposals that we have just mentioned.

THE FAILURE OF THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM

The bankruptcy of the inter-American system is still more obvious since the Malvinas war. Colombia announced its participation in the Non-Aligned Movement.

At the time of Reagan's visit to Bogota last December President Betancur made criticisms of the United States' policy in Latin America. He declared himself in favour of an organisation of American states (OAS) including the USA and Cuba.

The speeches of the Colombian Chancellor to the General Assembly of the United Nations, and to the leadership of the OAS, were marked by 'Third-Worldist' language. But this is an example of trying to have it both ways. It's a language of threats and criticisms aimed at negotiating the best prices for Colombian goods in the international market and getting new loans. It is a way of trying to establish a leading role in Latin America, without, however, re-establishing relations with Cuba.

IS BETANCUR A GUARANTOR OF PEACE AND AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST?

In Belisario Betancur, we by no means have an anti-imperialist democrat. The populist speeches and the changed style that he has assumed with such ease since August 7, 1982, the date of his entry into office, have excited certain expectations, and provoked some confusion.

The size of Betancur's electoral victory, and the sympathetic response that it evoked in the country contributed to this. For the bourgeoisie it was a clever cosmetic operation, designed to adjust for, and incorporate into the institutional structure, new social realities that exist within the country and internationally.

We are confronted with a bipartisan regime, which involves the two traditional parties — the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party — in the government's plans and projects.

The position of the Alianza Nacional Popular (ANAPO — National People's Alliance, extreme-right) and of Christian Democracy are of secondary importance, because they have no significant influence on fundamental political decisions.

As for the left and the workers movement, they are invited to participate in discussions and actions whose framework has long been defined by the parliamentary majority and the government, which are just the same. The contradictions which exist between different factions of the bourgeoisie are only the reflection of a tug of war over administra-

tive posts, or are the after-effects of the recent election campaign.

Will the workers movement and the left be able to take advantage of this short breathing-space? Will they be able through mobilisation and struggle for clear demands to win a broadening of democratic and trade-union liberties, that can open up opportunities for working-class political action and organisation?

The economic policy of the president shows most clearly the real interests that he represents and is defending. Confronted with the world recession, the budgetary deficit, the drop in industrial and agro-industrial production, increasing inflation, the spectacular financial bankruptcy of the regime and of the enterprises, he is upholding the interests of the big bourgeoisie. He is following a pro-imperialist policy. He has promised the bosses all sorts of help; such as lowering the taxes on the income of big capital. At the same time, he is increasing the indirect taxes on products, of which the burden falls mainly on workers. He has offered a wide range of incentives to the large car and textile companies, as well as to big agricultural producers.

But for the people, who are in extreme poverty, the only measures proposed involve appeals to sacrifice; to accept a wage-freeze, at a level insufficient to meet a rocketing cost of living; an increase in the cost of public services; or the privatisation of some public services.

The bankruptcy of finance companies like the Colombia Group, associated with the National Bank — following the collapse of the State Bank — was mopped up by nationalisation measures decreed in the name of the 'Economy Emergency'. The state has taken over the losses and swindles of the private gankers, like those of the savings companies, in order to save the credibility of the financial system.

After a long period of downturn, during which democratic freedoms were pushed aside by military terror, there



PSR contingent at an electoral meeting in Cali, February 1982 (DR)

are certain indications that the mass movement is starting to revive, and demand rapid solutions to problems that have become acute. But this has not yet led to confrontation with the government, or to disillusionment with it, since it has made a lot of promises that have not yet been exposed.

The civic strikes, the strikes in the factories, the demonstrations for wage increases, against the MAS, or in solidarity with the people of El Salvador, Palestine, and Poland, and even the protest against Reagan's visit to Colombia, have succeeded so far only in involving vanguard militants. A youth congress, which drew in different organisations and sectors from many areas of the country, started to pose the question of unity between workers and students.

An Assembly of Independent Trade-Unionists, which is not federated to any of the four workers centrals that exist, involving over 1,000 participants, analysed the national situation, and that of the workers and popular movements. Within this the PSR argued for trade-union unity, and for participation in the struggle for democratic rights and liberties,

opposing the sectarian and divisive positions of the Maoists and Stalinists. The results were very positive, and Jose Arnulfo Bayona, a leader of the PSR and the Colombian Federation of Education, was elected a member of the national co-ordinating committee.

OUR PRIORITY TASKS

We are preparing the third Forum on Human Rights (scheduled for February 1983) to involve democratic and trade-union sectors, on themes such as the right to life, against the MAS murderers; for democratic opportunity, and peace. This will facilitate, furthermore, the struggle for the political conditions necessary for the amnesty law to be applied.

The fight for dismantling the present financial and banking system, through nationalisation, is a central one for the trade-union movement. An emergency plan is necessary in order to recover our natural wealth; and we have to mobilise for higher wage and job security. To make progress towards a single trade-union federation we must have a signature campaign for unity between the Confederation of Colombian Workers (CSTC — a class-struggle federation controlled by the Colombian Communist Party) with those trades unions independent from the bosses or the government. The amnesty should be applied in the workplaces to those who have been sacked for their political positions, or because of their trade-union responsibilities. They must be reinstated in their places of work or study, in factories or universities.

Participation in the Non-Aligned Movement on the basis of respect for the autonomy and the national sovereignty of Colombia, must lead Colombia out of the Yankee orbit, and to opposition to Reagan's adventurist wars against the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean. Relations with Cuba must be re-established, and relations with Nicaragua improved.

These are some of the primary tasks for revolutionary socialists in Colombia.

Reagan's visit to Colombia

Large demonstrations of discontent took place in several cities in the country at the time of Ronald Reagan's visit to Colombia, on December 3, 1982. At the National University of Bogota students took to the streets and confronted the police.

This is the second time in the history of the country that a 'gringo' (North American) president has come to 'converse' with the Colombian bourgeoisie. This time it was in response to a pressing invitation from the new president, Belisario Betancur.

On the eve of the US president's arrival two political organisations called for a demonstration to make a public protest against the visit: namely the Colombian Communist Party (CCP) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR — Colombian section of the Fourth International). The demonstration succeeded in breaking the police lines and reaching its target. North American flags and an effigy of Reagan were then burnt.

A discordant note came from the Socialist Workers Party, PST, Colombian group of the Workers International League, led by Nahuel Moreno. This group refused to be part of this popular mobilisation and held their own meeting on the day of the visit. This meeting was rapidly dispersed by the police, and had no impact on Colombian public opinion.

Successes and good prospects for the Australian Fourth Internationalists

Australia has the reputation in English-speaking countries of being one of the last frontiers, one of the last countries of unlimited horizons and opportunities. In fact, it has been one of the last hit by the international capitalist crisis.

But as another article in this issue describes, Australia's special position in the world also includes some particularly sharp structural problems, which are now combining with the world economic crisis. The Australian labor movement also has one

Jonathan WEST

SYDNEY — The Socialist Workers Party held its largest-ever national conference here from January 5 to 11. With almost 300 people in attendance, the conference was able to record some important successes for the party over the last two years and chart an ambitious course for the coming year.

The theme of the conference was optimism: optimism about the party's prospects and about the struggles of workers in Australia and around the world.

In the last two years the SWP has grown significantly. In 1981 it grew by 16 per cent and in 1982 by 35 per cent.

The party's optimism reflects new openings for socialists in the Australian class struggle.

Since the SWP took the decision several years ago to base itself in the industrial working class, the overwhelming majority of its members have been industrial workers. This has also been the party's major area of work.

In his report to the conference on the political resolution "The capitalist recession and the fight for socialism", SWP national secretary Jim Percy made the assessment that Australian workers were becoming more open to radical ideas and socialist solutions as a result of the deepening crisis.

He stressed that the party should throw itself into this opening and take every opportunity to link up with working-class forces moving into action, and to help them see the way forward.

The reason Australian workers are not engaging in the determined fight needed to defeat the bosses is not that they have been beaten, but that they do not yet have confidence in their unions to win. The primary reason for this is the timidity of the class-collaborationist official leadership of the trade unions and Labor Party.

Much discussion at the conference centred on new work for the party that opened up in the trade unions after the

party reassessed its view of this work last year.

Whereas in the past the party held the view that revolutionaries should seek to take leadership positions in the trade unions only after a significant rise in the consciousness of workers, in September of last year, the party leadership decided that this view had been incorrect and that revolutionaries should participate actively in the trade unions, up to and including struggles for control of the union apparatus itself.

These struggles can be important in helping point the way forward for workers in the fight to defend their living standards against the capitalist offensive. By removing the conservative leaderships wherever possible, they can also push aside a major obstacle to workers' mobilisation.

The conference adopted a resolution entitled "Revolutionary strategy and tactics in the trade unions" that outlined this new approach.

Discussion after the report on this document to the conference by National Executive member Sue Reilly centred on SWP members' participation in struggles and union election campaigns in the car and steel industries, and on the railways.

In the steel industry, SWP members joined with a group of steelworkers called the Militant Action Campaign in an attempt to overturn the right-wing leadership of the main steel union, the Federated Ironworkers' Association. The campaign received an average of around 20 per cent of steelworkers' votes in the national union ballot late last year.

In the car industry, SWP members were able to link up with the shop-steward leaders of one of the most important strikes over the last few years, the six-week strike in 1981 at the Melbourne Ford plant.

These shop stewards mounted a challenge to the bureaucratic leadership of the auto workers' union that received a significant percentage of the vote, even though much of its base

of the more militant traditions in the English-speaking world.

The Australian section of the Fourth International, the Socialist Workers Party, is a young section, formed out of the youth radicalization of the 1960s and the anti-Vietnam war movement. But in recent years, its activity has been centered in the trade-union movement. The following article, by an SWP activist, describes the successes of the SWP in establishing itself in the Labor movement in particular.

had been ruled ineligible on a union-rules technicality. SWP members participated in this challenge, including in one case as a candidate.

The conference also assessed the party's work in the growing anti-war movement demanding an end to nuclear weapons. It resolved that the party should step up its participation and fight to have the movement adopt an anti-imperialist, class-struggle approach, including demands to break all ties with the U.S. war machine, and oppose the wars imperialism is waging today against liberation movements in the semicolonial countries.

To help the party take advantage of the new receptiveness of Australian working people to socialist ideas, the conference also decided to run 8 candidates in this year's federal election. This will be the largest-ever socialist election campaign for the House of Representatives (lower house of parliament) in this country's history and will cover one-third of the federal constituencies including all major centres of the industrial working class.

To finance this and other expansion projects, including the purchase of a new three-storey building for the Melbourne branch, the conference decided to launch the biggest fund appeal in the party's history: for 80,000 Australian dollars.

A feature of the conference was its internationalism. Special talks were presented on the class struggle in the United States, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Sri Lanka, and Hong Kong, by guests from those countries.

One of the highlights of the conference was to have been three talks by Pedro Camejo, a fraternal member of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International. However, Camejo was prevented from attending the conference by the Australian immigration authorities, who delayed granting him a visa until it was too late for him to fulfill his speaking commitments.

The conference decided to campaign

against this undemocratic exclusion and, if possible, tour Camejo later this year.

As well as considering the Australian political situation and mapping out an ambitious schedule of activities for the coming year, the conference also included rich discussions on big international issues such as the Cuban, Grenadian, and Central American revolutions, and Poland labor-movement solidarity tasks.

The final report to the conference was on the theme "Building an international revolutionary leadership," by National Executive member Larry Douglas.

The report traced the history of the Marxist movement's attempts to build a world party of socialist revolution through the first three internationals, focussing on the methods employed by Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders to build the Communist International.

He explained that Leon Trotsky used essentially the same method in his attempt to build a fourth world organisation of revolutionary parties:

"The problem facing the Trotskyist movement in the 1930s was similar to that confronting us today: how to link up with new class-struggle forces that could transform our small cadre organisations into mass revolutionary working-class organisations."

Douglas described how most of Trotsky's energy from 1933 onwards was devoted to turning the International Left Opposition outwards towards mass work in the labor movement.

This was the approach needed to win over those working-class forces that under the impact of the capitalist crisis were breaking from the influence of Social Democracy and Stalinism.

"Trotsky didn't approach this task by insisting on full agreement with the program of the International Left Opposition and excluding those who disagreed with any particular aspect.

"He began by distinguishing between hopeless centrists and reformists and all those that were even potentially revolutionary. He sought to unite those forces — whatever their origin — that were being increasingly forced by events to adopt clear class-struggle positions in practice."

Trotsky had learnt this method of party building from Lenin.

In building the Third International, the Bolsheviks sought to involve a wide range of revolutionary working-class forces, among them the anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World and the Shop Stewards Movement in Britain.

"It is true," Douglas said, "that when the Fourth International was finally founded in 1938 it consisted only of Trotskyists. But that was not from choice. It was the result of the fact that the massive defeats suffered by the working class internationally meant that the pressures bearing down on leftward-moving currents were too strong to enable them to come all the way over to a consistent revolutionary position."

The position today, however, is

dramatically different. For the first time since the years 1917-23, there exists a country in which state power is in the hands of a revolutionary internationalist leadership that consciously uses that state power to aid the extension of the world revolution.

This revolutionary current and the central role it is playing in world politics today means that enormous steps forward are being made in the single most important task facing the world working class: rebuilding the kind of revolutionary leadership that is needed for victory.

Douglas summed up:

"How to take advantage of such historic opportunities, to link up with revolutionary working-class currents that will emerge increasingly from the new

rise of the world class struggle, is at the heart of the discussion we are having in the Fourth International today.

"Our job is to approach these new revolutionary currents with the same openness, honesty, enthusiasm, and confidence with which Lenin and Trotsky before us set out to build the Third and Fourth Internationals.

"The issue is not whether we are to form a new international party today with other revolutionary currents. This is not on the immediate agenda. The issue is whether we orient ourselves today so that we will be marching on the road to a new mass Leninist International."

The conference concluded by expressing the party's willingness to take that path. ■

Tom Kerry, faithful to the end, faithful to the future

The following message was sent by Ernest Mandel for the United Secretariat of the Fourth International to the memorial meeting held in New York on January 19 for Tom Kerry, longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States, the American Trotskyist organization. Tom Kerry was a head of the SWP fraction in the maritime unions from the late 1930s until the early 1950s. He was one of the central national leaders of the party from the mid-1950s until the mid-1970s when he retired. He was 81 when he died and remained politically active to the last.

In the name of the Fourth International, I want to express our feelings of deepest sorrow on the death of Tom Kerry.

Tom symbolized for the entire International the exemplary generation of founders and builders of American Trotskyism who worked under the leadership of James Cannon and the guidance of Trotsky himself.

This was a generation who knew how to combine ironhard firmness in the defense of our program with tactical flexibility in intervening in the mass struggles of the working class and its allies. They knew how to firmly root the party both in the American working class and in the world revolution, in the fight for independent working-class action and in internationalism. These principles were the foundations of their theory and practice.

To these principles Tom remained faithful all his life, up till the last moment. For these principles we shall continue to fight in order to achieve the victory for socialism throughout the world.

Tom Kerry's generation, as well as the following one, had to fight in extremely difficult circumstances, which were the result of great historical defeats for the world working class. But they did not fight in vain. The tide has turned.

For several decades revolution has been on the rise and not receding; the proletariat and its allies are advancing, not falling back. Together with its class, the Fourth International has broken out of isolation and in many countries is advancing too. It is already a recognized part of the labor movement, of the class struggles that are unfolding now. Tomorrow, it will lead revolutions.

I am certain that I am expressing Tom Kerry's spirit when I say to you in utmost confidence: The future belongs to us, to the revolutionary Marxist program, to the Transitional Program. In fact, this program is the concentrated expression of the interests of the world working class.

In every new upsurge of the class struggle, in every new advance of the revolution, the best, the most conscious fighters come to the same programmatic conclusions on the basis of their own experience.

No power on earth can stop that growing convergence. No power on earth can stop the building of the Fourth International.

Victory to the American working class!

Victory to the working class of the world!

Long live the Socialist Workers Party of the United States!

Long live the Fourth International!



AROUND THE WORLD



SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS OF LCR ITALY

The Lega Comunista Rivoluzionaria (LCR — Italian Section of the Fourth International) reported in Bandiera Rossa January 16, 1983 on two successful meetings of its members and sympathizers, in Sicily, and Turin.

On January 5 the LCR held a conference in the Sicilian town of Campobello di Mazza on the theme '1983 in Italian and International Politics'.

The leftwing town council in the centre of Trapani province gave permission for the conference to be held in the town hall. The conference was built through distribution of leaflets, postering the walls, and sending loudspeaker convoys into the country streets.

Over 50 people attended, including the Mayor, comrade Fazzoni of the Italian Communist Party; the secretary of the trades council, comrade Gullo; several local government employees; and representatives of the Communist Party (PCI), the Socialist Party (PSI), the Party of Proletarian Unity (PdUP), and the Social Democratic Party of Italy (PSDI).

The conference was opened by Gaspare Bono, secretary of the local LCR branch and Communist mayor from 1957-60. He recalled the seventeen years of LCR activity in Campobello, and the main initiatives and struggles in which it was involved, despite its sparse organised forces.

Comrade Bono particularly mentioned the recent successful battle through which Campobello has won a leftwing administration, rather than a shoddy compromise with the Christian Democrats.

Edgardo Pellegrini, head of the Southern Commission of the LCR, gave the main talk. He outlined the main points the Italian Trotskyists' analysis of the international and national situation. Demands were put forward that challenge the policy of austerity and rearmament; and would which create the conditions for an effective struggle to bring down the Fanfani government, and replace it with a government of workers parties, which would provide an anti-capitalist solution to the crisis.

A national meeting of the *Rivoluzione* youth groups took place in Turin on December 19, 1982. More than one hundred young people attended.

The meeting was prepared by an ex-

tensive campaign of propaganda and internal discussion in the groups. It represented the culmination of the political work of the groups since last September. In particular, it provided an opportunity to see how many signatures had been collected for the petition demanding that work be stopped on the Comiso missile site. This petition is being circulated by the Genova solidarity committee and the international peace camp fully involved in this initiative, have collected 10,000 signatures. Moreover, it is significant that the committees for peace in Genova and Brescia are directly involved in the campaign for signatures.

The most useful and interesting part of the meeting was the debates that took place within the three commis-

sions that met in the morning, on Poland, Central America, and school reform. A general assembly took place in the afternoon. This was addressed by comrade Ollivier of the *Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire* from France, and Lidia Cirillo of the LCR.

The assembly adopted a motion outlining the main forthcoming activities of the *Rivoluzione* groups. These are the fight against youth unemployment, through participation in the 'March for Jobs' planned for February by the CGIL, CISL, and UIL union federations; and relaunching the campaign against rearmament by supporting the proposal of the independent left for a referendum against the siting of Cruise missiles at Comiso.

QUEBEC WORKERS CONFRONT GOVERNMENT

Since January 26 some 110,000 public sector workers in Quebec have been joining an illegal general strike.

The strike is in response to a unilateral government decision at the end of December to stop all negotiations with the government employees unions and impose decrees outlawing strike action for three years and imposing cuts in wages and working conditions to last until the end of 1985.

The wage cuts would affect the majority of the workers, with 200,000 of the 320,000 public sector workers suffering cuts of 19.5%. Wage rises would be kept below rises in the consumer price index and the scheduled wage rise of 2.8% due at the end of December has been cancelled. For teachers, and other workers who fear mass redundancies, the reversal of job security and working conditions agreements is a central issue.

The strike was called by the Common Front, formed by three trade-union federations organising teachers, hospital workers, and provincial government workers, to fight against their employer, the Quebec government. Of the 320,000 public sector workers 210,000 are members of unions in the Common Front.

On January 29 forty thousand public sector workers demonstrated in Montreal in a high-spirited and militant show of opposition to the government. The crowd reflected the composition of the workforce — 90% French-speaking and two-thirds women. Despite freezing temperatures they danced through the streets singing militant songs to traditional tunes, 'Where are the special laws against the big bankers who close the factories, throwing people into the streets?'

The provincial government has con-

ducted a virulent campaign against the strikers. The daily newspapers have carried full-page advertisements defending the government's refusal to negotiate with the strikers. The front page headline of the Montreal daily *La Presse* declared on January 29 'In the Face of the Illegal Strike, Quebec will be Merciless'.

The anti-striker campaign is mainly directed at the hospital workers. On January 31 this section of workers went out on strike. That afternoon their union leadership announced it had reached a tentative agreement with the government and suspended the strike. This agreement was then rejected by a 72% vote of the 800-member union federal council.

The hospital workers now have to decide now to continue their strike. On February 3 the Quebec Prime Minister Rene Levesque announced that a special package of strike-breaking legislation was being prepared. This would include: elimination of automatic deduction of union dues from wages, leading to crippling financial problems for the unions; loss of seniority and job security after three days on strike; punishing fines of one day's pay for each day on strike, after a return to work.

The vicious attacks take place in a context where only since 1972 have health-care standards and educational levels in Quebec begun to approach those in English Canada. Yet, when the federal government in Ottawa cut 1.2 billion dollars from transfer payments to the provinces in March 1982, Quebec took the biggest cuts. A factor that the provincial government is using to justify its present measures.

The recession has hit hardest in French

Canada. The unemployment rate is the highest in Canada, and the Quebecois people have suffered for years from discrimination by the English Canada and US firms that dominate the economy.

However, the tradition of nationalist struggles has contributed to the Quebec workers winning major gains they are determined to preserve, while the gov-

ernment and employers are fighting to defeat working-class militancy here to put a damper on struggles across Canada. Growing support in English Canada for the determination of the Common Front workers demonstrates that, like the government, workers realise that what happens in Quebec will point the way for other Canadian workers. ■

WATERWORKERS CHALLENGE THATCHER

Some seven million people in Britain are presently being told to boil all water before using it. 38,500 homes are without water at all. One electricity generating station has had to close down. These are the effects of a national strike by the 29,000 manual water workers in Britain, now into its fourth week.

This strike is a direct result of the Thatcher government's desire to defeat the unions. The government imposed a ceiling of 4% per year on wage rises in the public sector for 1982-83. In fact, almost no section of the public sector has been forced to keep to this — except the waterworkers.

The waterworkers, who earn a basic £82 for a 39-hour week, put in a 15% claim to bring them into line with the gas and electricity workers, as well as a one-hour reduction in the workweek, and a fifth week of holiday. The employers, the water board, were prepared to offer 6%. But the government intervened to tell them to only offer 4%. The waterworkers rejected this overwhelmingly and voted to take national strike action.

After the successes of the government against the miners, railway workers, and health workers, Thatcher hoped to add a new scalp to her belt. And, at the same time, to continue to weaken the unions, particularly in their public sector strongholds. This strike has given her a pretext for threatening to break the existing national agreements with the unions,

The Tory government and the bourgeois press, almost completely anti-union, are conducting a hysterical campaign against the strikers. They are accusing this 'minority' of 'flooding British streets with sewage'.

Thatcher urged the strikers to 'respect "a puritan work ethic" instead of attempting to deprive the community of one of life's essentials' (*The Guardian*, January 29). She is confident that the 'Falklands spirit' will protect her. Just in case moral appeals and her public opinion ratings are not sufficient the army will be called in to ensure water supplies.

The Tory Employment Secretary Norman Tebbit, currently responsible for getting anti-union laws through parliament attacked the 'undemocratic' working of the main union involved. He claimed that they had failed to get the required two-thirds support for strike action. However, even the national

press had to report 90% opposition among the waterworkers to the 'improved' offer.

Victory for the waterworkers will depend on the extent to which they win support from the other unions. The manual workers have already been joined by the skilled electricians from the industry. Winning support also means being able to stop the Trades Union Congress (TUC — single national union federation) or their own leadership agreeing to a sell-out, as they did over the health workers or the railway workers.

The waterworkers have considerably more muscle than the healthworkers in being able to hit the government where it hurts — in industry. In the southwest two major industrial estates have had to be closed down. But for the time being the major industrial water-users, like British Steel, have been little affected as they have independent supplies from their own reservoirs, serviced by their own employees. However Imperial Chemicals (ICI), which uses 40 million gallons a day, has had to reduce production and warned that it may have to close plants shortly.

The Labour Party officially has done little to support the waterworkers, preferring to blame the government for interfering, and demanding that the water board be left to negotiate, than to give full support to the strikers.

The waterworkers have not been cowed however. In several major regions they have refused to even give emergency cover, mending burst water mains for example. In South Wales workers have occupied plants to prevent the management and white-collar personnel fulfilling the strikers functions.

Leftwing activists from the Labour Party and the left groups, including the Socialist League, the British section of the Fourth International have been working to build solidarity for the waterworkers. Unlike the Labour Party leadership who fear that support for militant action will weaken their chance in the general election that is widely expected this year, the left is convinced that Labour will cut down the ten per cent lead that Thatcher has in the opinion polls at the moment by supporting and building the fightback against the Tories, and giving new confidence to the workers. ■

SALVADOR SOLIDARITY

— Stop the US war drive in Central America!

— Support the Central-American peoples' liberation struggle!

Under these slogans anti-imperialist activists all over Sweden waged a two-week solidarity campaign in the latter half of January.

The campaign was centralised by the Central-American Co-ordinating Committee. There are local committees in at least 24 Swedish cities, and the co-ordination is supported by a wide range of political organisations, anti-war coalition, and solidarity committees.

The campaign reached its climax on 22 January — the 51st anniversary of the popular revolt in El Salvador that was drowned in blood by imperialism and Salvadoran reactionaries.

Some 700 people marched to the US embassy in Stockholm. A pre-march rally was addressed by a representative of Radio Venceremos in El Salvador, and Gabriel Lara, the FDR/FMLN representative in Sweden.

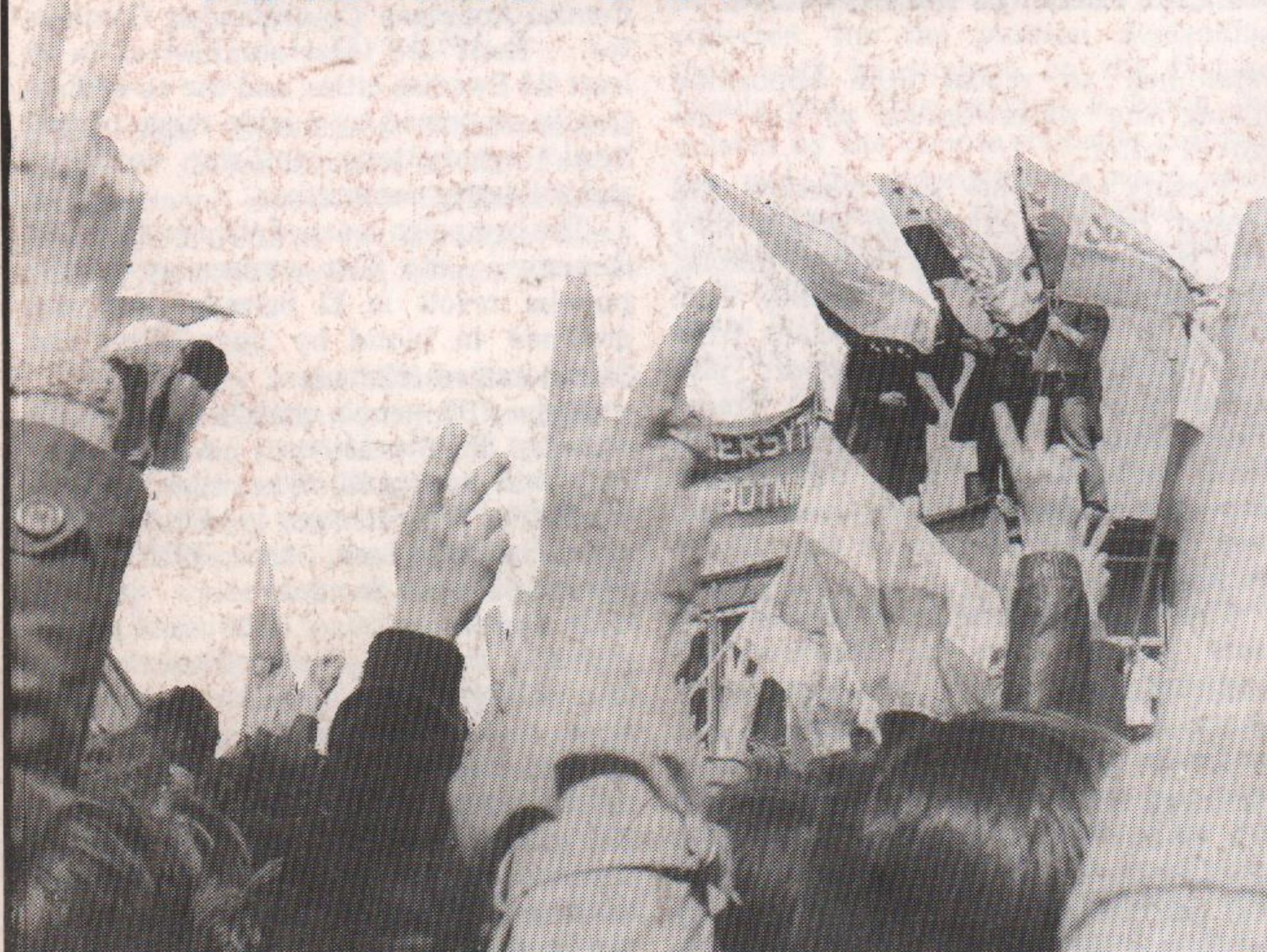
In Gothenburg over a thousand people gathered to hear Ruben Cuenca from the FDR/FMLN. Other demonstrations took place in the northern city of Lulea where 150 marched, in Uppsala to the north of Stockholm where some 200 demonstrated, and in Sundsvall. Trade-union organisations gave their backing to a number of the demonstrations.

Other activities included exhibitions, films, theatre, musical evenings, and reports by activists who have recently visited Central America, or from the large number of Latin American refugees in Sweden. The two-week campaign broadened the solidarity movement in Sweden, and created a wider audience for future initiatives.

In Britain solidarity activists are planning a labour movement conference on El Salvador for May 14. This conference aims to bring together trade-union and Labour Party representatives to plan a campaign to win over the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party to full and active support for the right of self-determination for the Salvadoran people, in opposition to the Thatcher government's slavish support for US policy of counter-revolutionary intervention.

The conference will be addressed by representatives of the FDR/FMLN and Judith Hart, a prominent Labour MP who was central in campaigning against the Malvinas war. The conference has already been supported by a number of national, local, and regional union bodies including the national leaderships of the Mineworkers Union; the Transport and General Workers, the biggest union in Britain; the main union among government employees; one of the main print unions, and the agricultural workers. ■

FREEDOM FOR ROMASZEWSKI AND HIS COMRADES



Cyril SMUGA

On Monday 24 January the trial started of one of the main organisers of Radio Solidarnosc in Warsaw, which was set up in April 1982. The main charges against the ten militants on trial are under the following provisions: Article 282 of the Penal Code (public incitement to disobedience) which carries a sentence of up to ten years in prison and article 46 (continuing unauthorized trade-union activities) and 48 (spreading false information) of the state-of-war decree of December 13, 1981. These penal clauses carry sentences of between three and ten years in prison.

Access to the public gallery of the Military Tribunal in Warsaw, where this 'public' trial is taking place, has been closed to journalists 'for lack of space'. Only the correspondents from the official Polish press agencies have been allowed in.

The two main accused, Zbigniew and Irena Romaszewski, are longtime activists for workers rights. After the brutal crushing of the Radom and URSUS strikes against price rises in June 1976, they were among the first to set up a network of material and legal aid for the persecuted workers and their families.

This network led, three months later, to the establishment of the KOR, Workers Defence Committee. Zbigniew Romas-

zewski officially became a member of this in 1977, when his activity of making contacts with the workers attracted the attention of the police.

He then, together with his wife Irena, set up the KOR Intervention Bureau, which took on the task of listing and publicising violations of legality and cases of persecution of workers coming to the aid of victims of repression.

Zbigniew Romaszewski was also to take advantage at this time of a trip to the USSR to make contacts, in the name of the KOR, with the 'Helsinki' group in Moscow, and with the dissident mathematician Andrei Sakharov.

Arrested in August 1980, after the start of the strike in the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk, Romaszewski was freed by the agreement signed on August 31, 1980, between the strikers and the bureaucracy. He and his wife then participated in the formation of Solidarnosc in the Warsaw region, where he became a member of the praesidium.

The Romaszewskis then organised the Intervention Commission for Solidarnosc in the region. This was responsible for helping the factory sections cut through the juridical red tape in which the bureaucracy tried to tie them up.

During the first national Solidarnosc congress Romaszewski was elected to the

national leadership of the trade union.

On December 13, 1981, Zbigniew and Irena escaped internment, but their 20-year old daughter was interned. In the underground they worked to give the trade union a mass voice. The historic radio broadcast on the eve of the 1982 May Day demonstration was the first fruit of this work.

A member of the clandestine regional executive committee of Solidarnosc, Romaszewski was among those, within the leadership, who emphasised the need to strengthen the underground structures by developing interenterprise co-ordination committees.

Against the advice of the majority of the union leadership, the Radio Solidarnosc activists backed the call of the Workers Interenterprises Committee (MRKS) for a demonstration on May Day. They were, in part, responsible for the well-known success of the action.

Following this success Romaszewski became the chief propagandist for a general strike. In an interview published last June in the clandestine Solidarnosc weekly in Warsaw, *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, he explained:

'We have to prepare a general strike... It must be a general strike of the whole country with active defence of the enterprises. In Warsaw the active strike will involve twenty to thirty factories and the others will support them by a stay-at-home strike. The demonstrations and processions will further occupy a part of the repressive forces. If the situation gets really serious, in my opinion the authorities cannot count on the army or even on the police.

'If one single battalion refuses to fire... That was what happened in February 1917 when one little unit of Cossacks went over to the side of the demonstrators, and at the end of a month there was no longer a czar.'

Because of the political and organisational role that he played in the resistance, Romaszewski and his comrades became the most wanted people in Warsaw. After several fruitless attempts the police arrested some of them in July 1982, then the others on August 31. This trial will be, for the authorities, the opportunity to revenge itself on some exemplary militants.

On the day the trial opened, 'Radio Solidarnosc' restarted regular broadcasts after several months of silence. It has called on the population of Warsaw to support the accused by gathering outside the seat of the Military Tribunal during the trial, and sending postcards to Romaszewski and his comrades in the prison where they are being held: Zaklad Karny, Warszawa, ul. Rakowiecka, Poland.

All workers everywhere should respond to this appeal by writing to the defendants.

— Freedom for Romaszewski and his comrades!

— Freedom for all political prisoners in Poland!

— Solidarnosc lives on and will live!