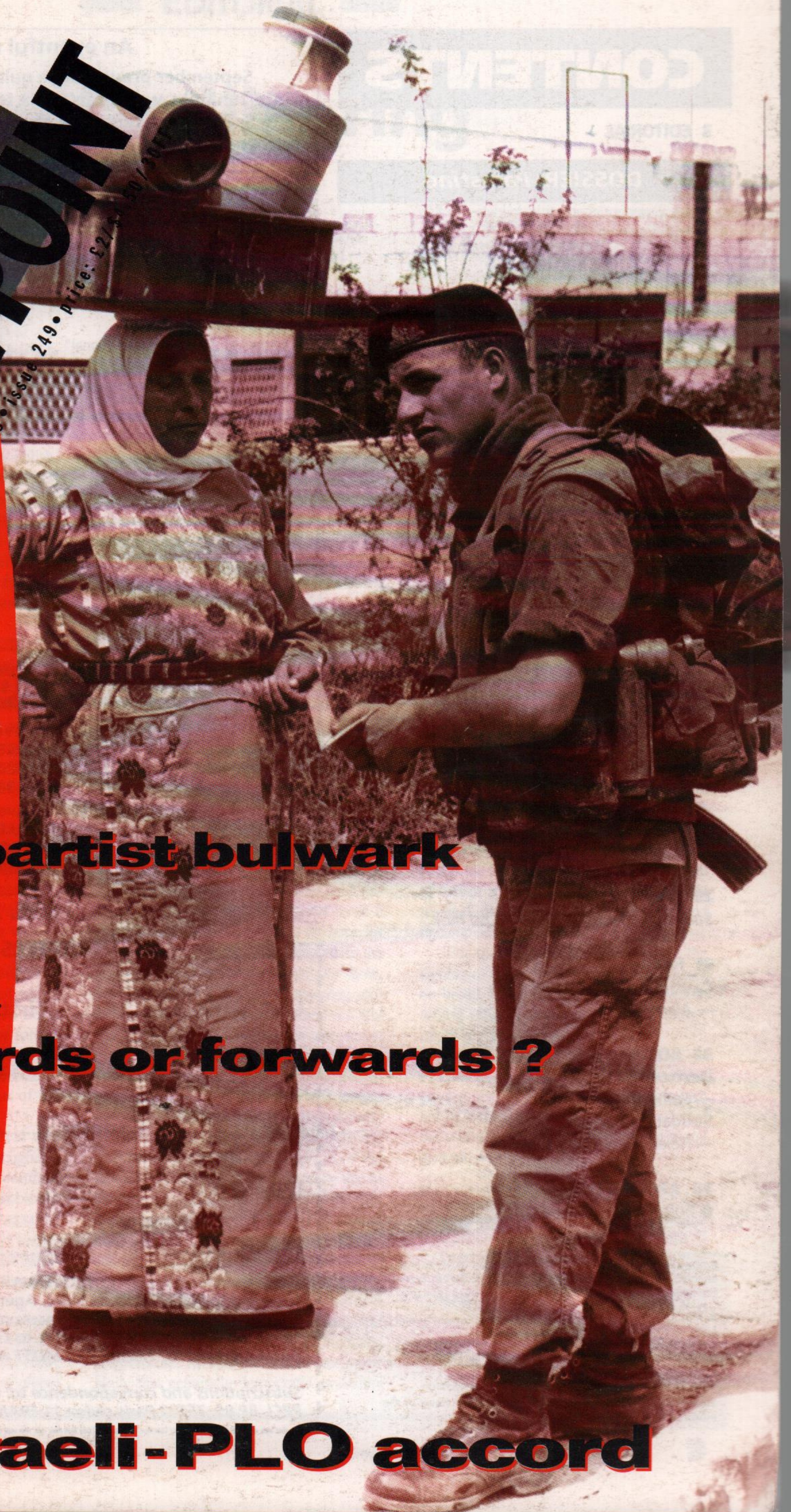


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VIEWPOINT

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Russia :

A Bonapartist bulwark

Social democracy :

Backwards or forwards ?

Dossier :

The Israeli-PLO accord

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An eventful month

September proved to be quite an eventful month. Unfortunately, we weren't able to get everything we would have liked into this issue. The November issue will carry further analysis of events in Russia, on the Middle East peace accords and the elections in Poland. — The Editors ★

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A familiar ring

THE recent signing of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement, under the auspices of the United States, has created a completely understandable impact in the media. However, upon closer inspection, once removed from the Hollywood fanfare, the accords are less original than they appear at first glance.

It should first be recalled that this type of settlement resembles former plans, such as the 1982 Reagan plan and, long before it, the plan developed twenty years previous by a segment of the Israeli establishment, including men like Allon and Peres. This latter plan has been supported by important sections of the army since the beginning of the intifada — those sections who did not want their soldiers getting bogged down in the Gaza Strip in a dead-end situation with dangerous political and moral consequences.¹

The accords signed under the auspices of the head of the White House are essentially made up of those points which did not go through earlier on. This has come about as a result, in the first place, of a regional and international evolution of the relationship of forces unfavourable to the Palestinian liberation struggle, particularly since the Gulf War. In the second place, Israeli leaders have a major additional worry: the growing influence of Islamic fundamentalism supported by countries like Iran and Iraq, which could prove to be an even more formidable adversary than the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) ever was.

It was better to deal with a heavily weakened PLO and an Arafat disposed to making major compromises. Along with a few PLO leaders who feared an even worse deterioration of the relationship of forces, Arafat further accelerated matters with the additional fear that control over the Palestinian movement was slipping out of his hands.

The agreement itself has clear and undeniable problems. Israel has recognised the PLO but has made no future commitment to take up the fundamental problems: a full withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967, the dismantling of Zionist settlements, the sovereignty of an eventual Palestinian state, the future of Jerusalem, the return of refugees and so forth.

It only provides for the establishment of zones of "self-government" in a territory which, from an economic point of view, only interests Israel as a source of cheap

labour — which it will continue to be able to use, in the same way that it can use the territory as a transit zone for Israeli products destined to Arab countries.

We can add that the Israeli army will continue to control the situation in strategic points in the West Bank and will be able to intervene more directly if, according to the government or the settlers, Israeli interests are threatened. The major advantage for Israel is that it will no longer have to get bogged down in the Gaza swamp or in the cities and towns of the West Bank.

"Powerful"

The accords give responsibility for the maintenance of "order" over to the PLO, which has to set up a "powerful police force" (it is significant that the word "powerful" figures explicitly in the text). This police force will have to intervene in cases of unwanted mobilisations and actions against an occupation maintained and "redeployed" under the terms of the accord.

In the economic sphere the situation of the future "autonomous" territories is literally dramatic. The perspective of even a minor improvement is linked to the hope for a major influx of international capital. In the euphoria of the Washington celebrity show, we were treated to a flood of stunning promises — how much of this aid will actually materialise is another question altogether, especially given the world economic situation, the indebtedness of the major imperialist countries, and the risks to which private investors would have to expose themselves.

Indeed, the only serious possibility lies in a massive financial intervention of the Arab oil monarchies. They would do this in the hope of stopping the advance of the fundamentalists, by establishing Palestinian bourgeois layers and creating more tolerable conditions for the masses.

The perspective that is taking shape for the moment is that of the emergence of a political entity that would be a neo-colonial mini-state, or a kind of bantustan or mini-protectorate. Moreover, it does not seem likely that genuinely democratic structures

will be established in the autonomous territories. One need only look at the traditional functioning of the PLO — whose leadership bodies have never had a genuine democratic legitimacy — and the ultra-bureaucratic way in which the accords have been negotiated and imposed. Unbeknownst to other PLO leaders and, worse, to the representatives of the Occupied Territories at the Washington negotiations, there were secret negotiations between the small core of Arafat loyalists and the Rabin-Peres team.

Genuinely democratic structures will only emerge in opposition to the Arafat leadership — linked as it is to the reactionary Arab regimes and, through the new accords, to the Israeli government and American imperialism.

Nevertheless, one question is posed: is it possible that, in spite of the accords and the projects of the Israeli government and Arafat himself, another entirely different dynamic will develop — one which would make the limited autonomy foreseen in the accords the first phase of a process that could radically change the situation?

It goes without saying that everything depends on the eventual development of mass movements, both Palestinian and Israeli. Only powerful mobilisations — with national, democratic and social objectives, and for an equitable and lasting peace between the two peoples, free from all forms of racism and oppression — would be able to break the constraints of the accords and open up new perspectives.

For the moment, we observe that the signing of the accords has had a real impact on broad sectors of the Israeli population, whose attitude towards Zionist ideology might begin to change.

We can also imagine that, insofar as the PLO takes on the "normal" functions of a government, the Palestinian struggle will not be limited to the anti-Zionist dimension but will also take on democratic and social content. ★

In this edition of *IV* we have taken the opportunity to publish the views of three experienced Middle East militants. These articles represent an initial step in our analysis of the Oslo agreement, and its future repercussions.

1. For further elaboration on these points and on the evolution of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, see the articles from 1989 which appeared in *International Viewpoint*, No 156 & 157.

Beyond the *diktat*

3 EDITORIAL

DOSSIER: Palestine

We publish below a transcription of a talk delivered at a meeting in Paris after the signing of the Israeli-PLO peace accords. The speaker has edited the text and added explanatory notes.

SALAH JABER — Paris, 19 September 1993

WE should begin by making two conceptual remarks that merit being repeated in the current debate.

● First, revolutionary Marxists have a certain approach to national struggles. What is this traditional classic approach? It is that of supporting the just struggles of oppressed peoples independent of the nature of their leaderships. To support a struggle does not necessarily mean supporting its leadership. We wage a fight in favour of the emergence of an autonomous organisation of the oppressed classes within the national struggle; we do not hide this, and we do not put the class struggle on the backburner during the national struggle.

We denounce the tendency of national bourgeoisies, even the most nationalist, to never rise above the ceiling of compromise with imperialism, and we support the oppressed classes within the perspective of making the revolution "permanent". These are part of the historic acquisitions of our movement.

● Second, a lot is being said about how what is happening represents a break in the Zionist consensus. This is an analytical error, for there has never been Zionist consensus regarding the size of Israeli territory.¹ Only those who identify with Jabotinski's revisionist Zionism might believe that all currents of Zionism are inherently expansionist and want to create an Israel that stretches from the Nile to the Euphrates.

There is Zionist consensus around the "Jewishness" of the State, around the idea of the "ethnically pure" State that makes the Jewish State a racist State. From this angle, not only is there no split in Zionist consensus, but Peres and Rabin are fully part of this logic, body and soul. Anyone making a mistake about this runs the risk of falling into an array of ideological traps, from caricatures of anti-Zionism to those reeking of anti-semitism.

We support the struggle of the Palestinian people because we believe that the

Zionist State is the product of a colonial operation which was born with the expulsion of 80% of the population from its territory. This was a colonial operation rigged from the beginning, even before the 1948 war, because the 1947 UN partition gave the "Jewish State" areas where Jews were not in the majority or were just barely so.

During the war that followed, they went well beyond the borders of the "partition" and expelled 80% of the Palestinian population of this territory to establish a 90 to 95% ethnically pure State — with a small Arab minority, for tokens and alibis, granted second or third class Israeli citizenship.

We support the struggle of the Palestinian people against Zionism because we think that it is a legitimate struggle. But we approach this struggle as internationalists, that is to say we have our specific view of national questions. We do not share any mysticism about the land, for example. We do not seek to correct one historical injustice by committing another; we understand that Jewish immigration to Palestine is, in large part, a reaction to the racial oppression in the countries of origin, and that an Israeli national entity has been created.

I can't help but chuckle at those who speak of "Arab Jews" and "Palestinian Jews". There is an Israeli nation and this nation currently occupies the position of a racist oppressor. It is this oppression — thus, the Zionist State — that must be destroyed. For Marxists, all bourgeois and oppressive States have to be destroyed; the Zionist State cannot be "de-Zionised", in the same way that the South African State cannot be "de-racialised".² There should be no illusions about a State removed from its socio-economic base. It must be destroyed — but not in the way of an Ahmed Jibril, who dreams of throwing most of the Jews "into the sea".³

The destruction of this State will be the work of the Israeli working class, the strategic transmission belt of this struggle. To believe that the Zionist State can be destroyed from the outside is to be a proponent of holocaust in the region — the State

of Israel is one of the biggest nuclear powers in the world, after the big five. It has at least 100 nuclear heads and we can be sure that any threat of destruction from the outside would end in this kind of apocalypse.

As an internationalist, I cannot personally identify a single square inch of land anywhere on the planet that deserves this. There is enough place under the sun for all nations; but we demand that they co-exist without any form of national oppression.

From this angle, what concrete forms does the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination take? First, it is clearly, at least, the right to self-determination for the population in the territories occupied in 1967. We mustn't forget that the Zionist problem — the Palestinian problem — did not begin in 1967. A majority of Palestinians, more than 60%, live outside Palestine's 1947 borders — that is, outside both Israel and the territories occupied in 1967.

What I call "the partial right to self-determination" refers to the right to self-determination for the Palestinian population in Jordan, where it is in a majority. This notion shouldn't be rejected on the basis of quotations from those Zionists who say that Palestinians need only take power in Jordan and abandon Palestine.

We are for the overthrow of the Jordanian monarchy and for the establishment of a government — not "Palestinian" but Palestinian-Jordanian — of the working masses.

This "partial right" also refers to the right to self-determination for Palestinians everywhere where they are in a majority, including within the 1948 borders of the Israeli State — such as in the Triangle or in Galilee, Israeli regions with a majority Arab population. These regions have every right to secede from the Israeli State and join the Palestinian State — which would clearly be the choice of the majority if it had that right.

Finally, it is the right of those Palesti-

1. At the founding congress of the Zionist movement in Basel in 1897, there was still discussion about the possibility of choosing territory in Africa. The theoretician of modern Zionism, Theodore Herzl, was in favour of a "Jewish State", leaving open the question of its location.

2. A distinction should be made between "dezionisation", acceptable as a programme of democratic struggles in the Israeli State itself, and the idea of a "dezionisation" of the State in the reformist sense, which does not dismantle the State's fundamental structures.

3. Ahmed Jibril is the leader of the Popular Front-General Command (PF-GC), based in Syria.

nian refugees who wish to live on Palestinian soil free from oppression. This doesn't mean going with "the key for the old house left in 1948" to kick out those living there now, if the house is even still there. Once again, there is enough place under the sun for everyone.

The right to live free from oppression is a right that we defend everywhere. That includes the right to immigrate, all the more unretractable for those to whom the land originally belonged. One of the pillars of Zionism is what is known as the "law of return", which says that any Jew — whether a Falasha from Ethiopia or a Jew from South Asia, Russia or Poland — automatically has the right not only to "return" but to immediate Israeli citizenship. However, those who had been there for centuries, and were expelled in 1948, do not have the right to return.

This law of return should be simply turned on its head, without for all that cancelling out the current law. By that, I mean that I am not against the right of Jews who, feeling oppressed where they currently reside, decide to move to another State, whether Israel, the United States or elsewhere.⁴ This is part of a democratic and internationalist vision of the problems of ethnic oppression that exist in the world today.

What was the Zionist dilemma after 1967? The State of Israel never accepted its 1948 borders as being final. This wasn't from a mystical point of view, but from the point of view of the "security" of Israel. It was explained that at the country's narrowest point there were only 14 kilometres between the sea and the border, that this was dangerous, and so forth.

During the June 1967 war, the Israeli State occupied a vast amount of additional territory. But this time the Palestinian population did not flee. It had learned the lessons of 1948, when the Palestinians had left in the belief that they would return keys in hand: "we left, we'll wait until the end of the fighting, and then we'll return." They had learned this lesson and stayed put in 1967.

As a result, Israel ended up with a bone stuck in its throat, one that it was difficult to swallow. This is why there has never been an official annexation of Gaza and the West Bank (except for Jerusalem East) — for the simple reason that annexing these territories and their Palestinian population would mean having to give them Israeli citizenship.

This would radically alter the demographic balance of Israel, and within two decades perhaps there would be an Arab majority given the different growth rates of the Arab and Israeli populations.

Faced with this post-1967 Zionist dilemma, three positions emerged in Israel, two of which are coherent with the third, thoroughly incoherent, sitting on the fence between the two.

The first, coherent position is the extremist and fascist-type solution in the tradition of Jabotinski. This is the "kick them out" solution — what is known as the "transfer" in Israel, a position that was held by people in the Shamir government. For these people, "Judea" and "Samaria" are biblical lands; the demographic problem is solved through expulsion.

The second, incoherent position is that of the Likoud Party. The idea is to hold onto the territories because they are "Judea" and "Samaria", without giving citizenship to the inhabitants, without official annexation, and with the establishment of a kind of apartheid. The historic leader of Likoud, Menachem Begin, recognised the notion of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza. It can be found in black and white in the Camp David Accords that he signed in 1979 — there is nothing new about it.

The third, coherent position is that of the Labour Party, whom I like to call "enlightened Zionists". They say, "we maintain strategic and military control of the Territories through strategically-placed colonies and military bases." There would be checkpoints at all points of entry, thus ensuring the "security" of Israel while unloading the inhabited zones.

To begin with, this was the famous plan of Ygal Allon, Rabin's minister of Foreign Affairs in 1974. So history has more continuity than we thought! He called for withdrawing from the inhabited zones, maintaining military control over the West Bank and Gaza, and attaching the abandoned inhabited zones to Jordan. In this regard, there is an important difference with the present plan.

The Allon plan, still called "the Jordanian option", was formulated after King Hussein crushed the Palestinian resistance in his territory in 1971. After that point, it seemed feasible to formulate such a plan, and that is what Labour did at that time. Traces of this plan can be found in the Camp David Accords and in the plan drawn up by Ronald Reagan, that great liberator of peoples who in September 1982 said, "There has to be a Palestinian entity linked to Jordan in the territories occupied in 1967." Traces can also be found in Bush's policy.

After several unfruitful attempts, the relationship of forces in the Middle East evolved to the detriment of King Hussein, preventing him from going further in this direction. And from 1988, the Intifada

totally shook up the relationship of forces, to the point of provoking fears of the revolt spilling over into Jordan — King Hussein's greatest fear.

In 1988, the Jordanian kingdom therefore officially separated itself from the West Bank, which he had annexed after the 1948 war. The Intifada therefore put an end to the "Jordanian option" as conceived by Allon and his successor and disciple on this question, Shimon Peres.

The Jordanian option — without the Palestinians — died as a result of the Intifada. It was necessary to find something else, to collaborate with the only other leadership, the most "moderate" after King Hussein, the leadership of the PLO. Recognition and Israel negotiations with the PLO are not new; they began very officially at the end of October 1991, when Emperor Bush officially inaugurated the Madrid Conference.

Everyone knew perfectly well that the Palestinian delegation at these negotiations was acting directly on directives from the PLO. It was an unofficial, indirect, recognition. Today, it is official. Rabin and Peres understood that could get more out of an Arafat living in luxurious exile than they could out of delegates from the inside under the pressure of the Intifada.

They chose to go around these delegates and secretly negotiated with Arafat. By the way, you will notice that nobody is talking anymore about the head of the delegation, Haïdar Abdel Chafi from Gaza, who criticised the accords and was not present at the Washington signing, out of a feeling of personal dignity no doubt. Nobody is talking about him anymore; the media have erased him from memory (see box next page).

Another factor combined with the impact of the Intifada and the change of government in Israel: the evolution of the PLO and its principal wing, Fatah. This organisation was founded by a core of militants, including Yasser Arafat himself, from the fundamentalist current, the Muslim Brotherhood, a few of whose members worked in the countries of the Gulf.

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded at a time when fundamentalism was used by the Saudis as a weapon against the Arab nationalist leader, Egyptian president Abdel Nasser. In the beginning, Fatah was a kind of anti-Nasserite springboard, playing a kind of nationalist one-upmanship on Nasser, but with a rightwing Islamic ideology.⁵

4. The great majority of Jews in Russia and Ukraine hope to move to North America. The government of the United States, along with the Zionist government, have slammed this door shut in order to channel them — with the agreement of the Russian government — towards Israel.

Haïdar Abdel letter

Two weeks ago, our national leadership became aware of an accord reached between representatives of the PLO and representatives of the Israeli government at secret meetings held in the Norwegian capital. This accord had been approved by the Israeli government and Arab countries and awaited the approval of the Executive and Central Committees of the PLO.

We have important responsibilities in this crucial period:

- We must sincerely and loyally express our opinion on the substance of this agreement and its eventual inherent dangers.

- Our differences should not lead us to confrontation or to violence, because only our enemies will benefit from that. And this would sow doubt concerning our ability to free ourselves and exercise our independence; I insist again on the importance of reorganising ourselves on a healthy democratic basis.

[...] Israel claims that it is not an occupying force, and the accord does not contradict this. This means that the territories are not occupied but are the object of litigation — but it is important that Israel renounces this claim, that it ceases to set up colonies in the whole of the territories, including in Jerusalem [...] the accord implicitly recognises two distinct entities in the Occupied Territories: the Israeli-colonial settlement entity and the Palestinian entity made up of the Arab towns and villages. The accord gives legitimacy to the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories themselves. There is no mention of the total withdrawal from the Occupied Territories in the framework of the second phase of negotiations, and the withdrawal from territories in Gaza and Jericho is only a re-deployment of the Israeli armed forces to specific zones.

[...] No abstraction can be made of these questions, which were the cause of the impasse at the ten rounds of negotiations.

There will no doubt be those who say that there was no choice, that Israel was pulling strings and will continue to behave as it wishes, given its military might that both we and the Arabs cannot and will not be able to match in the near future — and that therefore the best we can do is to resign ourselves to the “possible” and try to influence it in some way. In a way, this logic is unacceptable and senseless because our acquiescence legitimises that which is unacceptable and illegitimate. And it minimises the importance and urgency of our natural rights to self-determination and to an independent entity, as well as to the defense of our refugee brothers. ★

This organisation has the merit, or the historical advantage, of having been the first to launch the armed struggle, in 1965, with all the psychological impact that has for an oppressed people. Thus, after the 1967 war, in the face of the radicalisation of the Arab masses in reaction to the defeat of the Arab regimes, Saudi Arabia chose to give a place of privilege to Fatah, inundating it with dollars, with an annual budget of tens of millions and then hundreds of millions of dollars. There has never been such a rich and corrupted liberation movement.

The “five star” PLO, as grassroots activists call it, is a reality. Fatah very quickly underwent a bourgeois bureaucratisation, which led to its joining the PLO, an organisation founded in 1964 by the Arab League. At the same time, Fatah joined hands with the Palestinian capitalism of the diaspora and the Palestinian bourgeoisie of the territories occupied in 1967. It became the dominant faction of the PLO, which never had democratic functioning — the composition of its most representative organ is decided at the top. This is officially how it works and not some perversion of democratic centralism — the leadership determines the rank and file.

This organisation had a margin for manoeuvre limited on the one hand by the pressure of the Palestinian masses and on the other by their Arab financial backers. It is within this margin that the Fatah leadership worked. It knew that its strength stemmed from the fact that it was the leadership of the Palestinian struggle, the majority leadership of the Palestinian masses, and that it could represent this struggle. This is why, for a long time, it represented this struggle partially, up to a certain point, to get the support of regimes that are among the most reactionary in the world, including the most reactionary State in the world, Saudi Arabia.

This leadership had to remain at the head of the struggle of the Palestinian masses, because it relied on the pressure of these masses. But the more it was cut from its mass base, the less this pressure worked and the more it could take the natural path of its social interests — those of a bourgeoisified bureaucracy, of a State apparatus without a State that wants a territory.

This territory will have to be flooded to stamp out this inferno of Middle East politics, for decades one of the major factors of radicalisation in the region. In 1970-71, in Jordan, there was the decisive step in the bureaucratic degeneration of the Fatah/PLO institution. It had begun well before, but the separation of the bureaucracy from the mass base in Jordan was essential.

The second decisive step was the Beirut evacuation in 1982. The apparatus found itself in exile with its dollars, far from the Palestinian masses. There is no longer a mass base exercising direct pressure on it. After the Gulf War, there was a new change in the relationship of forces — obviously as a consequence of the US-led war, but also because of Arafat's monumental blunder in gambling on Saddam Hussein.

Arafat was then in the position of having to prostrate himself both before his Saudi financial backers — to get them to restart their financing of his bureaucracy — and, to be sure, before the American government, which he has been courting for years. In 1982 he publicly praised Reagan and later did the same for Bush.

According to the American press, he had even planned to publicly hand over his pistol to Bill Clinton, who didn't quite appreciate the idea. But this is an eloquent statement on Arafat's personality.

The current accords are a modified Allon plan. Israel no longer deals with Jordan, going over the heads of the Palestinians. Rabin and Peres negotiated with a PLO leadership which definitely has nothing to do with what this leadership might have been when it represented a leadership of struggle — bourgeois, nationalist, but a leadership of struggle all the same.

The current plan does not call for the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the territories occupied in 1967, but a re-deployment, and the terms have not been chosen lightly. A full military withdrawal from these territories is out of the question. It will remain at a series of strategic points, notably along the Jordan River which is a strategic line for Israel; it will withdraw from the inhabited zones.

This re-deployment had even been requested by the former head of the High Command of the Israeli army, Dan Shomron, who said, “We are playing the role of a police force, and in the process are corrupting our army — our “Haganah”, our glory, which is not a police force. We need only get out of the inhabited zones and let the Palestinians settle things between themselves. We will encircle them. We will control everything. They are not a threat for us because they have no heavy armaments, no missiles.”⁶

Stone-throwing is fine when you have the army in your streets; but if the army is stationed several kilometres away, you need something entirely different from

5. See *International Viewpoint* No 242, February 1993.

6. The first groups of the Haganah were formed in 1920. It is the military wing of official Zionism and was created in 1936.

stones to fight them.

This is the spirit of the current accords, the difference being that the role that King Hussein was supposed to play will be played by the Arafat leadership, which Israel and Washington have understood to be the best option. According to *Newsweek*, for several months now King Hussein has assigned elements of his personal guard to protect Arafat, and that the Israeli Mossad and CIA have contributed to ensuring his safety.

Arafat has become the goose that lays the golden egg, the one who is going to do what is needed. The accords call for a "strong police force", but no army — nothing that can threaten the security of Israel, no missiles or heavy weaponry.

For these policing tasks, Rabin, Peres and Arafat are not relying on the population on the ground. All of a sudden, Israel, which has always refused refugees' right to return to the territories occupied in 1967, has accepted that Arafat will bring Palestinians from the outside. These are troops of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), stationed in Jordan and Egypt, attached to the armies of these two countries — the most conservative, "dumb and disciplined" Palestinian troops.

17,000 troops will be brought in to control Gaza and 4,000 for the small town of Jericho. Arafat does not have confidence in people on the inside — neither does Israel, of course. They are bringing in an army to repress any signs of struggle of those who will consider, and rightly so, that the struggle cannot end like this — those who cannot accept that colonies should remain in place and that the army should remain in territories occupied in 1967.

Of course, this is not to mention the others — the refugees from 1948! Gaza is inhabited overwhelmingly by such refugees, that is people who before 1967 were struggling for their rights even though they were not living under Israeli occupation. There are also a lot of 1948 refugee camps in the West Bank — and let us not forget that important part of the Palestinian people that lives in camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

As for the Jordanian option, it is not entirely buried. Arafat and the PLO have been making official pronouncements in favour of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation for years now. By the way, the choice of Gaza, a nightmare for the Israeli army, is understandable; but why the small town of Jericho? It is not because Arafat has made a tour of the city with a lot of fanfare, but simply because it is the closest Palestinian population centre to the Jordanian border.

Before putting in place an amended Jordanian option, there will first be a test with the two territories. If Arafat's PLO proves capable of controlling the situation, the process will continue; if not, it will be brought to a halt.

Schlomo Gazit, the former head of Mossad, declared in *Newsweek* that he had confidence in the ability of Palestinians around Arafat to control the situation. But Israel has kept the right to pursue people in the Occupied Territories, or to pursue them indirectly through coordination between the Mossad and Shin Beth and the services of the PLO. This coordination has already begun, with troublemakers being singled out alongside the request that the PLO "neutralise" them.

Thus, this is even a worse case than the classic case of "decolonisation" in which a colonial bourgeoisie takes power and sets up a bureaucratic bourgeois State. Here, we are dealing with something more like a bantustan. The PLO will have to act, if only by virtue of the relationship of forces, as an extension of Israeli policy — of Israeli repression by other means. We are going to see one type of repression replaced by another.

The last component of this plan mentioned by Peres in Washington is that of the Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli common market. The State of Israel wants to develop imperialist or sub-imperialist type relations with the Arab hinterland. This already exists partially, with the Israeli merchandise that gets into Arab markets under false pretenses. Soon, this will be done officially, out in the open.

This is a good bet for Israeli capitalism, for the Israeli bourgeoisie, as well as for the Palestinian comprador bourgeoisie, which is represented by Arafat and supported him (see the article by Adel Samara in this issue).

So what position should we take on the accords? Should we be mourning after the signing of the accord? Certainly not. We can reasonably expect that it will create a more favourable dynamic for the class struggle — on the one hand in the Israeli State where it will dampen the "spirit of the ghetto"; on the other, in the Palestinian population, one of the peoples of the region that has never had an autonomous class organisation.

But saying that the accords might improve the conditions for social radicalisation does not mean that we support them. If Carter had defeated Reagan in 1980, that would probably have been better for the class struggle in the United States. But those who go on to deduce that Carter had to be supported against Reagan in the elections are taking an extremely grave qualita-

tive leap.

It is one thing to say that objectively one bourgeois solution is preferable to another, because it is less repressive and so forth. Entirely different is the logic of the lesser evil which makes one support, for example, a moderate capitalist against a fascist. There is nothing to choose from.

In any question of this type, there has to be a common denominator, a common basis, whose presentation can be fine tuned according to the situation. It is abstract internationalism to believe that you can have the same position with the same formulations on both sides of the barricades in a war of national liberation, for example. It is abstract because we do not all have the same tasks, because we do not all face the same problems.

The common basis today should be to say that these accords are the product of a relationship of forces that make them a diktat, because they do not recognise the minimal rights of the Palestinian people — the right to self-determination, the rights of the 1948 refugees and so forth.

It is also to say that it is up to the Palestinian people to decide in a sovereign and democratic way if it is satisfied by these accords, and this goes for the 60% of Palestinians who are not in the current territory of historic Palestine, too. We must assert that we commit ourselves to support the right of Palestinians to continue the struggle against the presence of colonies and the Israeli army in the territories occupied in 1967. This is a just struggle that we will support against all repression, including obviously against the Palestinian bourgeois repression now being prepared.

Beyond what should be said about the accords themselves, everything depends on the political context in which one finds oneself in each country.

Clearly, in the Arab region revolutionaries will have a very critical approach towards the PLO leadership, which is in league with Arab regimes. On the other hand, on the Israeli side, an entirely different tone is necessary.

First and foremost, the accords should be denounced as a Zionist *diktat* with the following argument: it is the right of the Palestinians to eventually support the accords in their majority; but it is our duty to say that it is a diktat that does not recognise the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Anything that goes beyond the common denominator — the denunciation of the accords themselves — changes according to the context in which the struggle has to be carried out. ★

An historic handshake

DOSSIER

THE handshake between President Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is certainly one of those images that symbolises a historic turning point. But history will determine whether this turning point was the beginning of the fulfillment of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination or if, on the contrary, it was the end of hope for the emancipation of this martyred people, scarred and thrown into the four corners of the world.

MICHEL WARSHAWSKY — Jerusalem, 29 September 1993

LISTENING to reporters and so-called "experts", it would seem that this dilemma does not exist; Israelis and Palestinians shake hands today and this will lead to fraternal and peaceful coexistence tomorrow. What a pretty picture! How easy it was! Unfortunately, reality is much more complex, and there are more question marks than causes for optimism.

Everything is happening as if those who only yesterday were ironically denouncing "historic Marxist determinism" and conceptions of "historic inevitability" had, in the time of a CNN clip, returned to the abandoned path charted out by Stalin's disciples.

"The agreement automatically leads to autonomy," they say full of confidence, "and this can end with the creation of an independent Palestinian State in the whole of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

According to them, the virulent denial of Yitzhak Rabin is only a smokescreen aimed at fooling the right or, in the worst case, an error in judgement.

In an agreement that aims to end 100 years of conflict, compromise is necessary, and this compromise is always the at times deformed reflection of the relationship of forces between the different parties.

The very fact that there is an Israeli-Palestinian agreement is the result of the Israeli State's inability to crush the Palestinian national movement and to continue to deny the existence of a Palestinian people with rights over the territory of Palestine.

But it is also a result of the inability of the Palestinian national movement, after a quarter century, to fulfill its right to self-determination by breaking the colonial and racist structures of the Zionist State.

The Israeli-Palestinian agreement is the combined product of the two most important political events of the last ten years in the Middle East: the Intifada and the Gulf War.

The Intifada — the extraordinary uprising of the Palestinian masses of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — succeeded in destroying the status quo that had been established over more than 20 years and in imposing on Israeli public opinion and the international community a discussion on the details of an Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and a solution to the Palestinian question.

It was the Intifada that in 1988 gave the Palestinian National Council the courage to declare the formation of a Palestinian State in territories still occupied by Israel.

It is the new regional and international relationship of forces produced by the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc and the Gulf War that, three years later, has reduced this Palestinian State to negotiate an Autonomous Palestinian Administration.

What is known as the "Madrid formula" is thus the combined product of two factors of unequal weight: the rise of the Palestinian liberation struggle in the Occupied Territories on the one hand and, on the other, the substantial strengthening of American hegemony in the Middle East — with, in particular, Syria coming into the American orbit and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries massively reducing their financial support to the PLO.

The decision that the Executive Committee of the PLO had to make at that point was not easy. "Take it or leave it," was what American Secretary of State James Baker said to Arafat's envoys. In spite of the draconian conditions included in the Madrid formula, Arafat decided that there was no other choice, and that nothing could lead one to believe in an imminent improvement in the relationship of forces. On the contrary, Syria announced it would go to Madrid with or without the Palestinians, the Intifada was on a downturn and Saudi Arabia was cutting off financing.

Draconian is also the word for the conditions laid down by Shamir and accepted by Baker and Egyptian President Mubarak: to negotiate an autonomy status for five years with no guarantee as to what the situation would be after this interim period; no commitment by Israeli on a future withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, whereas the Palestinians had to agree to an immediate ceasefire; no halt to the colonisation process; and the PLO would be disqualified as a negotiating partner, while having the right to designate the delegation from the Occupied Territories.

While the agreement signed in Washington by Shimon Peres and Abu Maazen escapes somewhat the limits imposed at the Madrid Conference, it remains within the framework defined by James Baker: Israel commits itself to withdrawing over nine months from a large part of the Occupied Territories, where an autonomous Palestinian administration will be set up. In exchange for this, the PLO commits itself to do everything to put an end to the struggle inside and outside the Occupied Territories, and to recognising Israel's right to exist.

The concessions made by Abu Maazen and his team in Oslo are significant: they have accepted the principle of autonomy even before agreeing with Israel concerning its content; they have accepted



the presence of settlers on Palestinian territory with an extra-territorial status; they have recognised Israel even though Israel has not committed itself to a withdrawal, even far in the future, from the territories occupied in 1967.

And above all, they have agreed to unburden Israel of the Gaza Strip — the only place where the resistance is effective and has created serious problems for the Israeli government and its army — before getting control of the West Bank, aside from the enclave of Jericho, which Yitzhak Rabin has described with his characteristic vulgarity as a “tiny piece of nothing”.

Aside from the “piece of nothing” that Jericho represents, the only substantial concession made by Israel is the recognition of the PLO.

Nobody can deny that this is a major shift for the Jewish State, which has profound implications for Israeli society.

Through this recognition of the PLO — and this appears throughout the declaration of the Oslo accords — there is also, 50 years late, the recognition of a Palestinian people that has “equal national rights” over the land of Palestine. There is the beginning of the process of re-humanising the Palestinian entity; there is the legitimacy accorded by the Israeli government to Palestinian national symbols and to the combatants and tens of thousands of martyrs for the Palestinian cause.

But the price paid in exchange by the PLO leadership is enormous. The Israeli conception of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been supported, essentially reducing it to a terrorist struggle against the Jewish community of Israel that had no apparent reason and was certainly not justified.

It is for this reason that families of Palestinian martyrs rightly feel deeply offended. They say, “So then, our sons and daughters were nothing more than vulgar terrorists killed by enemy bullets in a struggle that had no meaning and no value?!”

An enormous waste?

Listening to Arafat and his main aide and spokesperson Bassam Abu Sharif, one is tempted to believe that this struggle was an enormous waste, in which Palestinians were killed as a result of a misunderstanding or errors of their leaders or, worse, for having opposed the presence of Jews in Palestine with no reason, except perhaps out of outright racism.

When Arafat and the Algiers Palestinian National Council of 1988 offered Israel a great historic compromise, it

wasn't about erasing the past or rewriting history, but to turn a painful page and to build the future together.

For a real historic compromise between the two peoples of Palestine, the Israeli people and its leaders have to have the courage to examine the distant and recent past with honesty and, if it cannot be repaired, at least ask for forgiveness. Then and only then can Palestinian mothers not forget, but at least turn the page. There can be no historic compromise between the two peoples based on a compromise on history — only an agreement between governments, heavy with misunderstanding and resentment, pregnant with new conflicts.

The PLO that Israel has finally recognised is an organisation without a soul, at the end of its teather. For some of its leaders and founding members, such as Hani el Hassan and Shafik el Hout, it is nothing more than a shadow, an empty corpse. Arafat's gamble — and that of the man who seems more and more to be the number two of the Palestinian leadership, Abu Maazen — is to replace the PLO with a Palestinian State apparatus which, from Jericho to Gaza, would be able to continue to represent and lead the whole Palestinian people.

The example that has more or less been consciously followed is that of the Zionist movement. In the 1930s it replaced the external Zionist leadership with the Histadrut — a pre-State structure in Palestine under the British mandate — which became the decision-making centre in preparation for independence. It is an experience that worked, given that in less than 15 years Zionism created the State of Israel over nearly three quarters of Palestinian territory.

Whether the conditions and the relationship of forces are the same is another matter, over which a significant section of the Palestinian leadership, including in Arafat's own Fatah current, disagrees. Shafiq el Hout, PLO ambassador in Beirut and Mahmud Darwish, cultural minister on the Executive Committee of the PLO, have recently resigned from their posts. Ever since Madrid, Hani el Hassan, a founding member of Fatah and a historic leader of the movement, has been in open disagreement.

The military leaders in Lebanon no longer respect the authority of Tunis, and even Abu Lutf (Farouk Kadoumi), PLO minister of foreign affairs, voted against the agreement and is pursuing his political activity independent of the decisions of the Executive Committee.

To this, of course, should be added the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palesti-

ne (PFLP) and the Democratic Front (DFLP), as well as other smaller organisations that are outside the framework of the PLO.

A striking silence

Palestinians on the outside have shown no enthusiasm for the Oslo accord, which totally ignores them — even though make up the majority of the Palestinian population and, for more than two decades, are the base of the power and representativeness of the PLO. This striking silence is the reason why Arafat's adversaries are accusing him of turning his back on Palestinians on the outside, in the interests of a political entity for the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank.

In so doing, he is said to be destroying the PLO's greatest strength: that of unifying the Palestinian people into one single nation and one single national movement. This is what some have called the Kurdisation of the Palestinians.

Palestinians on the inside are clearly more divided, and the enthusiasm described by western media is exaggerated to say the least. The recognition of the PLO, the imminent withdrawal of Israeli forces, and the right to openly wave the national flag for which so many youth have fallen — without a doubt, all this has provoked an outpouring of spontaneous jubilation. But this is tempered by doubts concerning the appropriateness of Arafat's gamble and the absence of certainty with respect to the outcome of the accord.

“It's better than nothing, and in any case we have no alternative,” is what the inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank are saying to those who take the time to ask them their opinion and who are not satisfied with the euphoric declarations of those in high places and overnight freedom fighters.

The organised opposition to the Oslo accords — the PFLP and DFLP on the one hand and the Islamic opposition (Hamas, Islamic Jihad) on the other — has refused the ceasefire and demands the right to struggle against the Israeli occupation as long as it continues. They have recently formed a National Islamic Front (sic) whose most important goal is to acquire the means to prevent Arafat's Fatah from getting the majority of power and political activity.

Indeed, it is as if Israel recognised not the PLO but Arafat and his party and as if the autonomy wasn't for the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories but for Fatah.

Israeli propaganda and the international media are making a lot of noise about the risks of a civil war launched by the

opposition, in particular by the Islamic fundamentalists. But the fundamentalists have said that they would not spill the blood of their Palestinian brothers; the same can't be said for their adversaries.

Observing the festivities and initial preparations for the autonomous administration, one sees that it is not Free Palestine that is being celebrated, but Arafat and the Fatah. Tens of thousands of Palestinian flags have been printed with the inscription "PLO-Fatah"!

The recruitment services of the new Palestinian police are openly the same as Fatah's recruitment services. Even the currents linked to Fatah in the Palestinian delegation — the People's Party (ex-CP) and the Fida (a dissident faction of the DFLP) — are ignored.

The unofficial list of leaders for the new administration only includes members of Fatah — or former collaborators and pro-Jordanian elements.

The prestigious and highly popular head of the Palestinian delegation in Madrid, co-founder of the PLO and independent left leader, Doctor Haidar Abdel Shafi, has been named sub-director of health services in Gaza (sic).

All the experts have attributed the murder of Abu Shaaban this week in Gaza to Fatah's internal struggles — but it also makes it clear that the new Palestinian administration will not be soft, particularly in relation to its opponents. In any case, the Israeli State will not do anything to facilitate the strengthening of democracy in the autonomous Palestinian territory.

The recognition of the PLO is a real earthquake for the Israeli public. Yesterday's enemies have become legitimate partners. Those who have been dehumanised for more than two decades have become neighbours with whom one must learn to live. The Palestinian flag, for which so many young boys and girls were killed, now floats freely on cars and buildings, including in Jerusalem.

Unlike the fears of Rabin and his entourage, the great majority of the Israeli Jewish population is ready to accept the government's new policy, and sees it as a source of hope — even though this hope is attenuated by the fear that the plan will fail.

As we have repeated several times in our articles, the Israeli people is tired of the occupation and the resistance and, while marking time, continues to feel insecure and wants to put an end to this.

The abstention of Likud deputies Meir Shitrit and Roni Milo during the vote on the accords in the Knesset is symptomatic. The former is very close to the popular base of his party and the latter

hopes to be elected mayor of Tel Aviv. They are both very aware of what their electoral base wants to hear.

Many other Likud deputies wanted to abstain, too, but gave in to the pressure of their party leadership. The Likud leaders have made a suicidal decision: to ally themselves with the religious and messianic far-right in a policy of total rejection of the agreement.

In the right's big demonstrations (up to 100,000 people), there were very few people from Likud's popular electorate. Fundamentalists and rightwing extremist groups were dominant. This explains the disillusioned reaction of the former deputy of the Thiya Party (a settler party shut out from the Knesset in the last elections). She proclaimed, "the people have lost faith. They prefer peace and security (sic) to Eretz Israel."

On the left, there is euphoria. For activists in the Labour Party, Meretz and Peace Now, the occupation is over and the only thing left to do is to strengthen the government and support its initiatives. Only the Peace Bloc — a regroupment of leftwing forces critical of the government that calls for complete withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and the formation of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as the capital — has a different line.

While it has a positive response to the accords, it extends no confidence to the Israeli government and has mobilised for real and immediate changes in the Occupied Territories (the freeing of political detainees, the return of those expelled, and so forth) and to neutralise the settlers and begin the evacuation of colonies.

It is by measuring the degree to which such real changes take place that we will see if the accord is a first step towards total withdrawal from the Occupied Territories — or if it is a collection of methods that allow for a less expensive Israeli control of the Occupied Territories, with the collaboration of a part of the PLO.

In its resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian accords, the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL, section of the Fourth International in the Israeli State) calls them a *diktat* imposed on the Palestinians by the Israelis, on the basis of a particularly bad relationship of forces. It adds that what follows the accords depends on future mobilisations — particularly in the Occupied Territories — which may be facilitated in the new situation.

"It is neither a time for euphoria nor for desperation. We have to read the agreement, but also understand how the Palestinian and Israeli masses are going to experience the new situation." For the

revolutionary left in Israel, in no case should an attempt be made to mobilise against the accord — which in any case would have no practical significance.

On the contrary, we should rely on the desire for peace that exists in the population, to prevent any government attempt to go backward, and to force the government to speed up the rhythms of the accord and go beyond its limits — to create a state of affairs which effectively makes the situation irreversible. This is the meaning of the campaign that the Peace Bloc has launched at the initiative of the RCL for the freeing of all Palestinian political prisoners.

A second task for the left is that of struggling systematically against any attempt to delegitimise anyone that doesn't fall into line with Arafat and the official line of the PLO. The work of educating the majority of Israeli pacifists remains before us; more than ever, they must recognise the right to be, to say, to think what they want, even if they do not conform to what well-intentioned Israelis expect from them.

At the same time, there is a need to promote initiatives that translate, on a popular level, the cooperation that is now being established in the ruling classes: meetings, debates, common initiatives, support to popular committees and so forth.

On this level, everything will depend on the ability of the Palestinian left to emerge from the state of shock in which it finds itself, and to take advantage of the opportunities offered in the new situation — to relaunch popular mobilisation, not on strategic questions like "for or against the accords", but for immediate demands (right to residence, an immediate and to land confiscations, against repression and so on) and in defense of mass participation in the new framework being put in place.

"We are neither pessimistic nor optimistic. We believe that the masses have their piece to say and will say it in one way or another." This conclusion in the RCL resolution summarises the tasks in Israel and Palestine for all those who have fought for an Israeli-Palestinian peace based on equality, mutual respect and cooperation between the peoples.

Now that the elites have decided on the framework that seemed to them to be the most effective and economic, the task is to let the people have their say. They have the means to go beyond the framework that others will try to impose on them. The Israeli right knows it and henceforth is preparing for a strategy of tension. It remains to be seen if the forces of the left will be able to do the same. ★

A Palestinian capitalism?

WITH the signing of the "Gaza-Jericho first" agreement, the historic struggle between the Arab national project and the Zionist-imperialist project linked to the commercial-comprador Arab bourgeoisie has taken a new turn — both on the class front and that of the national struggle. While politically centred on the Palestinian question, this concerns the whole Arab nation.

ADEL SAMARA* — Ramallah, September 17, 1993

A CENTRAL Palestinian political current has renounced the Palestinian cause. This could signal the end of polarisation around this question. In other words, the Palestinian cause could lose its usual importance and be scaled down to the size of the Palestinian people itself.

This stage has been characterised by the popular initiative of the intifada, which was subsequently co-opted and tamed by the PLO's rightwing leadership (the Tunis leadership), which has sought to deny the intifada its own culture, leadership and economy. They wanted to submit the intifada to the needs of the project of Palestinian capitalism — integrated with and dependent on the world capitalist project in the Arab region.

There is nothing surprising about the fact that capitalism is harvesting the fruits of the national and popular class struggle. However, there is something specifically Palestinian about what has happened. Capitalism has been able to renounce the national rights of a people under the cover of representing that same people — without provoking a mass explosion!

This abrupt turn poses a series of questions. What future for the PLO after the signing of the accord? What is the tactic of the left? What is the future of Palestinian national rights? What will a future map of the region look like?

Ever since the mid-1960s, the PLO has had the slogan of armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine, which earned it real popularity, obvious after the defeat of June 1967, and which made it appear as a force fighting the Israeli occupation.

At that time, there was a relationship between the substance of the PLO and its form, which represented the hopes for liberation of different classes within the Palestinian people. But years of struggle convinced the pragmatique bourgeois

wing of the leadership that it would not be possible to achieve liberation with its scanty resources. This led to a series of programmatic and tactical changes which led to a total modification of strategy, symbolised today by the limited autonomy of Gaza and Jericho.

Different social layers left and joined the PLO during this period. The leadership first of all represented the ideology of refugees and their aspiration to return — the aspiration of peasants thrown off their land, proletarianised by force and not by industrialisation, and wanting to return to their property.

Maximising profit

But it came to represent the interests and ambitions of Palestinian capitalism, more specifically of its comprador-commercial layers who sought the best conditions for maximising profits. They cared little about the conditions in which these profits were made — at the expense or not of the national property. The scope of this capitalism is much more narrow than that of a traditional national bourgeoisie linked to production, whose goal is real independence. Palestinian capitalism's development is deformed, and it has adapted to its handicap. It is therefore not a candidate for productive investment and, as a result, will not wage a struggle for the protection of its national market.

As such, the PLO changed and adapted to the Israeli conception of the Palestinians. Israel was looking for an alternative Palestinian leadership, which did not have the PLO's objectives of securing self-determination and the right to return for refugees, and which accepted that Israel should be the "only legitimate" force of control over the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories.

This is what the Tunis leadership has accepted. How was this possible? The

negotiations provide a key for understanding this. The Palestinian negotiators represented the interests of three factions of Palestinian capitalism and two kinds of intellectuals.

Firstly, they represented the bureaucratic capitalism of the PLO leadership. This is a layer represented by the upper bureaucratic apparatus of the PLO, which controls practically all that the leadership collected from emigrés and the oil nations in the name of the struggle against Israel.

This faction exercised power over the Palestinians, and invested overseas — without the need for a state. As for the struggle, it has known since the September 1970 massacres in Jordan that it would eventually be overtaken by the Israel-USA solution.¹

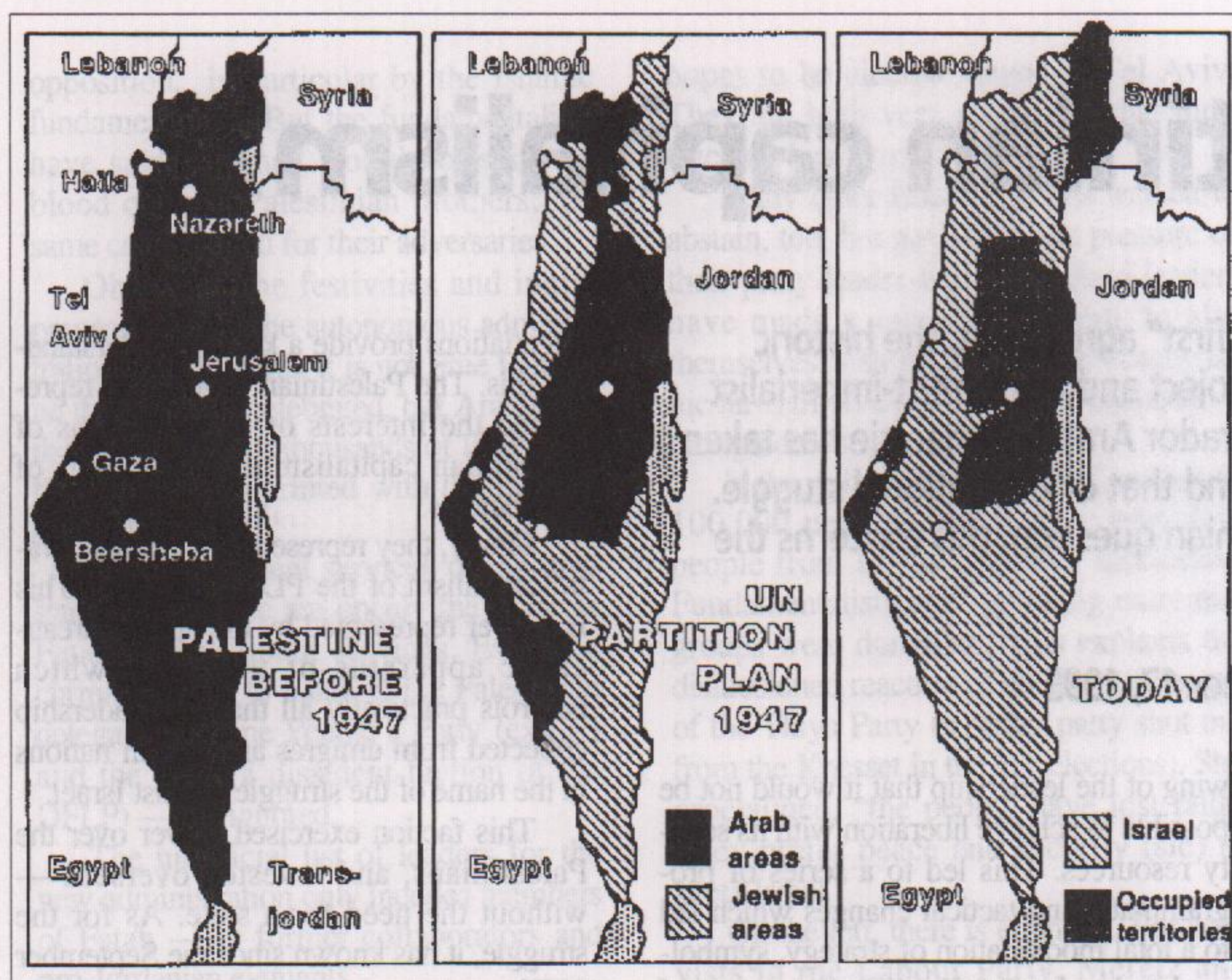
Secondly, the financial capitalism of the Palestinian diaspora. This is a capitalism of entrepreneurs, services and middlemen. It has enriched itself in these areas, but without independence to be sure. It is a genuinely cosmopolitan capitalism and is the Palestinian expression of the essence of global financial capitalism; "national" and "geography" have no meaning for it. It is only concerned about possible profits. In other words, the financial capital transferred from the periphery to the centre loses its national identity and takes on the identity of the imperialist centre. For this reason, no doubt, the financial capital of the diaspora has not made any investment in the Occupied Territories. And any moves in that direction only began after the Madrid Conference.²

The loyalty of this capitalist layer is measured according to the size of its bank accounts and not by the acres of land lost during the Israeli occupation of Jaffa in 1948.

Thirdly, the capitalism of sub-contractors in the Occupied Territories. This dependent fraction enriched itself under the occupation, without independence. It has worked in joint ventures (with Israeli capital) since 1967. It has the greatest interest in solidifying direct links with the occupier, since it was the first to establish common projects with it.

Fourthly, there are the westernised intellectuals disappointed by the left in the

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Occupied Territories. The culture of this group is founded on its adoption of capitalist bourgeois ideology, particularly in regard to private enterprise in the economic sphere. Its subordination to the most vile forms of Eurocentrism — which considers other peoples, particularly Arabs, as culturally backward — gives it an inferiority complex in relation to Israelis and the west in general.

This is why they have accepted the recognition of Israel, with all the concessions in the area of Palestinian rights that this entails, and why they are the sponsors of the PLO's joining of hands with the American administration. The main component of the delegation at the peace talks, they are now the zealous proponents of "Gaza-Jericho". We can add the intellectuals of the Communist Party (pro-Moscow) who suddenly discovered that the American option was inescapable and accepted it in the most pathetic manner.

In this sense, the negotiations started in Madrid are nothing but a never-ending capitalist conference, with the goal of organising the circulation of capital in the region, by freeing up trade on a regional level and orienting investment decisions towards sub-contracting, export industries, the purchase of Arab oil and the opening of Arab markets to products from imperialist countries, including Israel.

In this context, Palestinian capitalism has found a place — or rather a minor role — as have the other Arab bourgeoisies and the bourgeoisies of Israel and western countries in general.

It should be pointed out that there is no

real link between the Palestinian capitalist project and the fall of the USSR, since the USSR never supported the Palestinian National Charter. Rather, we are seeing the maturing of the interests of Palestinian capital, for a dependent integration into the regional capitalist structure and into the structures of the periphery with the imperialist centre.

The Tunis leadership has not really invested in the Occupied Territories, and even less so during the intifada. It does not want the Palestinians to be able to be economically self-reliant, which would have made it possible for them to refuse liquidationist projects. Moreover, the Israelis have put pressure on the Palestinian people, imposing an economic blockade with the argument that the oil monarchies had suspended their aid to the Tunis leadership. This has left the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories in an asphyxiating economic impasse, to which has been added an unprecedented level of repression — accepted by most Arab and western regimes.

The "Gaza-Jericho" accord fundamentally means that the Palestinians will fall under the hegemony and sovereignty of Israel, as an ethnic minority. It seeks to erase the political and national dimension of the Palestinian cause, through the pursuit of George Shultz's formula: "to improve living conditions in the Occupied Territories".³ This means that the current PLO has to be transformed into a political party representing a national minority in Israel and that it has to abandon its status as the representative of the Palestinian

people's national rights. Through the elimination of the Palestinian question, the whole region can come under American hegemony.

If the nature of capital in the region is taken into account, the economic scenario will develop in the following way:

First, the separation between Palestinian and Israeli inhabitants will be accentuated in the demographic and racial sense, in order to preserve the "purely Jewish" state.

During the transitional phase (or phases), an organic link will be established between the economy of the Occupied Territories and the Israeli economy, which will make economic separation impossible or contradictory with the interests of social classes and forces within the Palestinian people.

A transit economy

This process has already begun. Indeed, during the most recent blockade, the Occupied Territories were consuming Israeli products, while the Palestinian work force was not allowed to enter Israel. In future, Gaza and Jericho will be two "doorways" into Arab markets. This means that the economy of Palestinian territories will be compartmentalised and will become a series of transit zones oriented toward Arab economies. It will be a mere transit economy.

We can sketch out the Israeli economic stand in the negotiations on the basis of a specific form of the division of labour.

Firstly, Israel will continue to develop hi-tech petrochemical and electronic industries and will be the technological centre of the region. The labour and capital will only be from Israel and the imperialist countries.

Secondly, Israel will put into place a series of traditional industries in three zones. This has already begun. There will be industrial zones with joint Palestinian capital in pre-1967 Israel. There will be industrial zones with joint Palestinian capital in the towns of the West Bank and Gaza. And there will be industrial zones (not only traditional) in the Israeli towns of the West Bank and Gaza. All these industries will essentially rely on cheap Palestinian (and perhaps Arab) labour.

Israel will play a role in the construction of factories in the Occupied Territories. It will provide their buildings, machinery, capital, administration and markets.

Thirdly, the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories will be used as propaganda, interlocutors, and commercial and tourist agents in the building of links between Israel and the Arab countries. In this sense,

the Occupied Territories will become a collection of cantons dependent on Israel, and their principal role will be that of transit agents for the export of Israeli goods to Arab countries. This means that those cantons labelled "self-governing" (or non-independent Palestinian states) will be used as instruments of control, particularly in the economic sphere.

In the area of security, these cantons will become local Palestinian administrations military dependent on the Israeli administration. And there will inevitably be a common security policy between the leaders of these cantons and the Israeli authorities — based on opposition to negotiation and all struggles against Israel.

In spite of Israeli state repression and the economic blockade of the Occupied Territories, the Palestinian popular masses turned against Madrid and the negotiators in the last three rounds. The successful military operations of the Islamic movement turned popular opinion against the negotiations. This explains the need to make progress in the talks, so that the reins of control remain firmly in the hands of the Tunis leadership, all the more so since the negotiating partners know very well that never has the time been so ripe to push through a solution — given that the capacity for popular resistance is currently at its lowest point.

Until now, rejection of the "Gaza-Jericho" accord has not taking the form of confrontation. This can be explained by the desperate conditions of the population, as well as by the absence of an alternative programme for mobilisation against the right, a programme which should have been developed since 1982 at least.

All these weaknesses taken together have meant that the accord has not produced an explosion against the current solution. I don't think such an explosion is likely in the current circumstances, unless that confrontations spark the fires of civil war between the opponents and the Palestinian and Israeli architects of the agreement.

The current solution means that the struggle between the Arab national project and the Zionist imperialist project will henceforth take on very different characteristics. Whereas before the Palestinian leadership and the cause itself were the driving forces of this struggle, now the leadership has closed this chapter and become part of the imperialist-Zionist-Arab comprador axis.

Only in this context will the Arab-Israeli conflict assume its true dimensions. Only in this situation will we see a direct confrontation between an unaltered Zionist project and the Arab peoples, whereas

before the conflict was between Israel and the armies of the Arab regimes.

In this new period, it will be up to Israel to perpetuate the paralysis of Arab economic development, to fight democracy, national culture and the aspiration towards Arab unity. In short, Israel will have to, as a result of its unchanged Zionist structure, prevent all progress of the Arab nation.

Before, the Zionist state fulfilled this role through the use of military force and was faced with armies. Now it will be faced with the peoples themselves, and this is an important feature of the coming period. Israel will support any Arab regime to forbid democracy and perpetuate dependence.

Further expansion

Its determination to bring in millions of Jewish immigrants from various countries in the world (including Afghanistan and Pakistan) necessarily implies geographic expansion, well beyond the borders of the West Bank and Gaza.

With the domination of the periphery-type capitalist mode of production, the national question will no longer be a justification for subjecting wage labour to capital. Each class (as a class or as a fraction of a class) will confront the other, as much in the Arab countries as in Israel. A new natural space will be created for social struggles, in the place of the national struggle.

But perhaps it would be more correct to say that the Arab nation will be the theatre of a transformation of relations between the social struggle within and the national struggle against Israel — led by the impoverished classes both against Israel and the Arab regimes. This means that the Arab bourgeoisies will continue to represent the bourgeois version of Arab nationalism, with the impoverished masses representing the potential nationalism that has yet to play out its role.

Recent events indicate that this hidden Arab nationalism will take the road of class confrontation with the bourgeoisies in power and national confrontation with Israeli capitalism, which itself will largely replace imperialism as the main obstacle to Arab and Palestinian development.

The Palestinian left has had no programme since 1987 — that is, since the Popular Front returned to the Executive Committee of the PLO, partially under pressure from Moscow.⁴ From that time, the left has rallied to the programme of the right as a recalcitrant ally — always complaining but never prepared to elaborate its own political programme.

The left rallied to the programme of the Palestinian state, as it is understood by the right — the recognition of Israel, its role in the region and its appropriation of Palestinian land. From that time, the left's specificity has been eroded and it has ended up being a component of the PLO, which is not a nationalist united front but an institution controlled by the right.

The left had many opportunities to assert its own identity and to develop an alternative programme — for example, at the time of the Fatah split in 1982, the 1985 Arafat-Hussein agreement, or even recently during the Madrid Conference.⁵ But these events did not lead to the crystallisation of a clear leftwing position.

While a clear leftwing position is necessary today, it would not bring immediate results. The left must insist on the following points:

- The signatories of the Gaza-Jericho accord do not represent the Palestinian people and each signatory only represents him or herself. None of them were elected or mandated.

- More importantly, the left should understand that confrontations in the future will not be nurtured by nationalist or sentimental reactions. It must develop a social, economic and political programme and not be satisfied with a mere programme of national liberation.

- The left must fight for the rights of the working class, for the protection of the small peasantry, and set up democratic institutions of civil society.

- Only the left can fight for women's rights and women's liberation.

The struggle that awaits the left will be long and the defeat of the last 50 years is not simply an accident, but a total defeat. The will to recover is not enough; unrelenting work will be required.

Against the normalisation

We can add that the possible alliance between national radical forces, revolutionary communists and radical Muslims in the Arab region has to bring together popular national classes under the call for a total boycott, thus economic, of the new Israeli-Palestinian alliance.

The form and characteristics that the struggle will take on in the region will not become clear unless the Arab ruling classes are integrated into this new Israeli-American-Palestinian alliance. But an Arab national front against the normalisation is already on the order of the day. ★

A Bonapartist bulwark

"I think so far they've done quite well", the *International Herald Tribune* quoted US President Clinton as saying. The West has unashamedly backed Boris Yeltsin's unconstitutional actions. This is certainly hypocrisy but it is not unexpected. But is Yeltsin perhaps too dependent on Western backing? His advantage though, is that the opposition is factionalised and heterogenous. Our correspondent reports.

POUL FUNDER LARSEN — Moscow, 27 September 1993

ON 21 September Boris Yeltsin, in dissolving the Russian Supreme Soviet and suspending the Constitutional Court, pulled off the coup d'état that his supporters had been calling for since August 1991, and which he stopped inches short of launching in March of this year.¹ According to the Yeltsinites this "presidential rule", where the decrees of the President over-rule any law and elected body, will be terminated by December, when elections to a new parliament with two chambers are to be held. However, as the daily *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* remarked in an editorial on 23 September: "It is only in fairy tales that democracy returns after three hours of *de facto* dictatorship. It will take much more time, because if you dissolve one parliament, then what can stop you from dissolving another one — for example, the one to be elected on 3 December."

Yeltsin is trying to retain a facade of legality — as large-scale repression would imperil the unilateral western support for his moves, and might provoke further unrest in the armed forces and the regions — but censorship is implemented ruthlessly in the broadcast media, which have reverted to their pre-glasnost state, and one of the leading opposition papers, *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, has already been closed down.²

A major shake-up in the state apparatus is underway, as functionaries and elected bodies loyal to the parliament are suspended and replaced.

The Federation of Independent Russian Trade Unions (FNPR — the former "official" trade unions) has also come under attack from Yeltsin. The FNPR issued a strong statement against the coup d'état, and its chair Igor Klochkov told the newspaper *Trud* on 23 September: "We have called on the Moscow trade unions to organise actions of protest, including

strikes. It is necessary to stop the enterprises and take to the streets to defend the White House." All the trade union's telephone lines were subsequently cut and the government is rumoured to be preparing a decree on a six month "moratorium" on strikes and trade union activities.

Tatters

Though Yeltsin has emerged stronger than expected from the first round of skirmishes it would be wrong to exaggerate the strength of his position. With the economic reform in tatters — a continuing abysmal drop in production, a sky-rocketing budget deficit far exceeding the targets set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and inflation at thirty percent a month — Yeltsin had hoped to use his self-proclaimed "victory" in the April referendum to wrestle significant concessions from other political players at the centre and in the regions. But neither the more or less impromptu "constituent assembly" convened in June and July on Yeltsin's initiative, nor the recent attempt to win over the regions by setting up a "federation council" (a quasi-parliament for the regional elites), yielded any clear results.

It was when faced by these economic and political fiascos that Yeltsin decided to dissolve the parliament. However no ingenious political manoeuvres can make the contradictions, inherent in the forced transition from a bureaucratised command economy to some kind of Hobbesian "free market", disappear. No decree can transform the Russian state apparatus — deeply factionalised and rooted as it is in the Soviet past — into a workable bourgeois state overnight.

This — and not any mysterious deficiency in Yeltsin's character — is the reason why the "democrats" could not use the momentum gained in August 1991 to achieve a decisive breakthrough for their

reform — and the reason why Yeltsin will face new serious obstacles when he tries to cash in on the political gains that he has made in the last few days, no matter how impressive they may look on paper.

These contradictions make themselves felt at the very heart of the Yeltsinite alliance: inside the government there is already a rapidly developing conflict between, on the one hand, the "conciliators" (including Prime Minister Chernomyroin and Yeltsin's adviser on regional affairs Sergei Shakhrai), who want a compromise with the regions, the industrialists, and the moderate opposition in parliament — and on the other, the die-hard monetarists (including Gaidar and Finance Minister Fyodorov). The strategy proposed by the latter group would include a wage freeze in state industry, total price liberalisation, implementation of large-scale bankruptcies in state industry, a cut in social spending and subsidies — and the "appropriate" political measures, of an authoritarian nature, to counteract social and political protest.³

While the various pro-liberal currents have been able to use the presidency as a rallying point and a Bonapartist bulwark for their interests, the opposition has not succeeded in developing any coherent organisational alternative or political programme, which can appeal to broad layers of working people. It remains divided into dozens of endlessly bickering parliamentary factions, fronts and parties, many of which come across as dubious in their commitment to democracy, as they harbour a strong nostalgia for the Soviet past and have made no break with the logic (or even the structures) of the bureaucratic apparatus. Moreover, the credentials of the parliament in resisting the liberal reform are far from impressive: after all, it endorsed Yeltsin and his policies for a long period, opened the flood-gates for the neo-liberal Gaidar reforms in the fall of 1992, and enthusiastically accepted Chernomyroin, who is now firmly behind Yeltsin, as prime minister less than a year ago.

1. See *International Viewpoint*, No 244, April 1993.

2. Concerning the complicity of the West. Several Russian papers have reported on consultations between the Yeltsinites and the US administration prior to Yeltsin's move. Khasgulatov cited such reports in his speech to a conference of Soviets on 18 September.

3. The financial markets in Moscow reacted strongly negative to Yeltsin's move as the rouble lost twenty-five percent in value to the dollar in two days (one dollar = 1300 roubles).

It is no surprise that this opposition has been unable to wage a determined and consistent fight against the coup d'etat. The trade unions have, overall, acted in a somewhat more determined fashion. But they have been unable to reach their membership base and motivate it for political action.

Meanwhile, the whole leftwing, from the Congress of Democratic Left Forces and the Party of Labour to the various small anarchist and Marxist groups, has come out against Yeltsin. However, due to an acute lack of organisational resources they have been forced to channel most of their efforts through the structures of either the parliament or the trade unions. Many Moscow leftwingers have participated actively in the pickets around the White House, where tens of thousands of people have been convening every day to discuss, listen to news and speeches, and if necessary defend the parliament.

In spite of the dominant Stalinist and nationalist currents (with their large constituencies of pensioners) this permanent picket has attracted many new activists, including quite a few younger people and many women, attending not out of support for the conservatives, but simply to protest against the Yeltsin regime.

Threat

The "Latin Americanisation" of Russian social and political life over the last few years is evident in the pauperisation of whole layers of society, rampant inflation, lawlessness, and the permanently lingering threat of a coup d'etat. This process has advanced yet another step with the grotesque "dual power" of two Presidents denying each others legitimacy, two governments, two rival powers struggling in nearly all regions, and, in some months, possibly two parliaments. The political commentators in Moscow are now discussing whether the development will proceed in accordance with the "Chilean" scenario, beloved by many liberals, or the "Tadjik" and "Azerbadjani" model of armed insurrection and civil war, which some of the more sinister conservatives consider to be an option. For the time being the latter development is unlikely, but it will eventually be decided in the regions — where the confrontation at the centre is reproducing itself, centrifugal forces gain renewed momentum inside the repressive apparatus — in a struggle where Yeltsin is far from certain to prevail in the medium term.

In spite of the real threat of the re-establishment of an authoritarian regime the current situation could act as a catalyst for

some positive developments inside the opposition: faced with the impossibility of a lasting compromise within the apparatus (an aspiration expressed in Khasbulatov's slogan of "a government of national reconciliation"), and given the obvious limitations of the programmes of both centrists and the nationalist-Stalinist alliance, a wing of the opposition, for example trade unionists and some Communists, will look for alternatives.

Revolutionary socialists must participate actively in the broad campaigns of civil disobedience and strikes against Yeltsin, stressing that without a popular mobi-

lisation, overcoming the current apathy among working people, the fight is doomed.

A major task in the coming months will be to fight for an effective boycott of the phoney December elections for Yeltsin's so-called parliament, designed to give the liberals an easy win and lend legitimacy to a continued Presidential dictatorship.⁴ ★

4. One of the ingenious details in the design of this pseudo-parliament is that half of the members of its "federal chamber" will be the heads of regional administrations appointed by the president!



Party of Labour leader comments on situation

ON the Lenin Prospect, a mile and a half from the White House, there is hectic activity in the headquarters of the Russian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FNPR), the former "official" trade unions that are now going through a contradictory process of restructuring.

The FNPR was one of the first organisations to condemn Yeltsin's coup d'etat.

Alexander Buzgalin from the Party of Labour believes the role of the FNPR has been positive, but adds: "Even though the leadership expresses quite radical positions the bulk of trade union functionaries remain passive, and the calls for action have not reached the enterprises." Indeed very few workers collectives at the factories have heeded the call for strike action (as was also the case in August 1991). Most workers do not seem to be prepared to go on strike either in defence of the parliament or for Yeltsin.

The widespread passivity in the population is a striking contrast to the frantic struggle going on between, and within, the different parts of the state apparatus. In almost all regions the soviets have sided with the parliament (in Moscow for example, thirty out of thirty-three local councils have condemned the coup), while the regional administrations are generally giving support to Yeltsin.

These divisions point to the profound crisis of the Russian state as a whole — a crisis accelerated by the failure of the liberal economic reform.

Both the opposition and the Yeltsinite camp are divided into dozens of rival groups and factions. Alexander Buzgalin draws a critical balance-sheet of the opposition's struggle against Yeltsin: "Most of these people come out of the apparatus, the old structures, and they are not ready to work in an informal way, which is necessary now. Moreover, the parliament has not proved itself a consistent opponent of liberal reform in the past, and it has not won the necessary broad support among the population."

"The price we are now paying for this is the terrible apathy of the people. However, we have to fight with the resources available to us. One main task is to organise a boycott of the so-called elections Yeltsin has decreed for December. These elections will be a farce as the liberals are controlling the media and the state apparatus, which they can use as their electoral machine. And anyway, if Yeltsin is not satisfied with the outcome he can just dissolve the parliament again. The risk of an authoritarian turn in the situation is very acute", Buzgalin concludes.— PFL ★

Labour: apeing the US Democrats?

Introduction

The following selection of articles — on Britain, France, and New Zealand — examine and analyse the crisis of modern social democracy in specific countries. They are, therefore, only parts of a much wider picture.

However, each of the three countries are illustrative of the different forms that the crisis has taken.

● In Britain, the organic link between the trade union movement and the Labour Party is under threat. **Phil Hearse** explains why, and what the repercussions might be if this link were to be detrimentally altered or broken altogether.

● In France, amidst scandal and an image of growing incompetence in government, the Socialist Party (PS) was almost wiped off the map in elections earlier this year. **Jacques Kergoat**, in returning to many of the debates of the 1970s and 1980s, examines the background to the party's failure and what its future may hold.

● In New Zealand, the rightward drift of the Labour Party developed to the extent that a split occurred and the New Labour Party (NLP) was formed. A number of trade unions have also disaffiliated from the old party and some have begun to build links with the new. **Kia Kaha & Geoff Pearce** and briefly cast a critical eye over the NLP itself.

In a fourth, associated article, we ask what the effects of the crisis of the social democratic project have been on the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). **Roland Wood** suggests that the repercussions for many of the ICFTU's affiliates are clear to see but that the effects on the organisation as a whole are quite negligible. This is particularly so now that it enjoys a dominant position worldwide. The ICFTU continues to dance to its own tune — and it expects the newer, more militant federations in the developing countries to dance to this tune as well. — **Gerrard Macklin** ★

The hey-day of the "Bennite left" in the British Labour Party has long since past. Since 1979 the party has lost four elections. The response of the party leadership has been to move further and further to the right. Many "Bennites" either moved with the leadership or left the party completely. Our correspondent examines the current state of the party, in particular the debates about the party's trade union links and the spectre of "Clintonisation".

PHIL HEARSE — London, 21 September 1993

TWELVE years ago the British Labour Party was in the throes of the most sustained left-wing upsurge in its history. The left's standard-bearer, Tony Benn, came within half a percentage point of winning the deputy leadership of the party, while Labour conferences routinely passed sweeping radical policies.

Today it is going through another turmoil, this time through an assault from so-called "modernisers", who want to break the party from its historic links with the trade unions and deepen the decade-long process of shifting the party to the right.

The form of the struggle now is quite different to the previous battle. For today's modernisers are not rank-and-filers conducting nationwide campaigns inside the structures of the trade unions and Labour "constituencies":¹ they are, in the main, leading members of the party, including the leader John Smith, in alliance with some of the most rightwing union leaders. Ranged against them are some of the most powerful, and not necessarily very leftwing union leaders.

In truth, the lack of fierce debate inside the Labour constituencies is not very surprising: after four electoral defeats in a row since 1979, each of which have been met by the party leadership launching new attacks on the left, the local structures of the party have withered. Individual membership, estimated at 240 thousand (compared with 1 million in 1951) is at its lowest post-war point, probably down by 100 thousand in a decade — and those who have left are disproportionately the left wingers.

The "modernisation" process is wrapped around with mystification. Its proponents argue the necessity to create a "modern" mass-membership social

democratic party on the "European" model. In reality the party is being prepared for a coalitionist alliance with the Liberal Democrats, Britain's third party. This would represent an historic development, especially given the traditional hostility to coalitions with right wing parties which existed inside the Labour party for historical reasons.²

Viable

The drift towards coalitionism is an index of the ideological collapse of what is probably, after the German SPD, the world's strongest social democratic party. Underlying this collapse is a deep-rooted fear among the Labour and trade union bureaucracy that Labour is no longer a viable governmental party because of changes in the social structure and ideological outlook of broad sectors of the working class, especially in the south of England: this question is discussed below.

The central proposal of the Labour leadership and the most aggressive modernisers, around home affairs spokesperson Tony Blair and economics spokesperson Gordon Brown, is to base voting for party leader and selection of parliamentary candidates on a "one member, one vote" system among individual

1. The Labour Party is organised on the basis of geographical "constituencies" which correspond to electoral areas: one constituency elects one MP. Each constituency is divided into four or five branches, which in turn correspond to electoral areas for the election of local government councillors.

2. In 1931 the Labour leader Ramsey MacDonald took the majority of Labour MPs into a government coalition with the Conservatives to form a "national government". The national government enacted huge reductions in unemployment benefit and other social benefits as a result of the world slump. MacDonald and the other MPs were expelled from the Labour Party: Labour was reduced to a parliamentary rump, and the Conservative party was in power until 1945. For decades "Ramsey MacDonald" has been a swear word in Labour mythology.

members. At first this proposal caused massive confusion, because apparently it was a step in the direction of greater democracy. The trade union "block vote" system at annual conferences has traditionally given the rightwing the ability to wield millions of votes "on behalf" of the huge affiliated trade union membership. The total vote of the constituency parties is 650 thousand, whereas the unions cast more than 6 million votes, with rarely any democratic accountability in how the block vote is cast.³

However, the block vote is the apex of a system which links the trade unions with the Labour Party from top to bottom: thus the local trade union branches attend Labour constituency meetings, both to participate in political debate and to cast votes on disputed matters, including the selection of parliamentary candidates. This whole system is now under threat. The left traditionally has not opposed the block vote, but argued for its democratisation, a system whereby how the block vote is cast is subject to debate and discussion within unions.

In addition to breaking the block vote, the Labour leadership has made a series of constitutional reforms which radically reduce the power of Labour's national conference to make policy. Put together with the end of the block vote, this would mean policy making being protected from the decisive say of both the union affiliated members and the individual party members.



The power and weight of British social democracy has been intimately linked with the achievements of the 1945-51 Labour government. This comprised the nationalisation of public utilities and some major industries like coal and steel, with the construction of the welfare state, including some of the most advanced social provisions anywhere in the world — the crowning point of which was the National Health Service, with its ideal of universal and free health provision.

Burdens

Now, after fourteen years of Thatcherite government, these gains are in the process of being destroyed. The "mixed economy" is all but gone, after the waves of 1980s privatisation. The welfare state is severely buffeted, but still much more than vestigial. And, with the high levels of unemployment and the ageing population, universal benefits (unemployment benefit, child support benefit, disability benefit, and especially the health service) impose huge burdens on British capitalism. The £50 million budget deficit is closely linked to rising welfare costs. It is not just ideological wickedness which drives the Tories to attack the welfare system, but the fiscal crisis of the state.⁴

Labour's ideological crisis derives from its inability and unwillingness to defend its old ideology of Keynesianism and welfarism. Although traditionally a party which shunned high theory, social democracy in Britain actually developed a substantial theorisation of "democratic socialism" being incarnated in the defence and extension of the Keynesian welfare consensus: this was the work of the late Anthony Crosland, in his famous book 'The Future of Socialism' (1956). Crosland took the post-war changes in capitalism to be irreversible, and postulated the impossibility of the Conservative party acting as a party of social counter-revolution.⁵ In particular he took the progressive taxation system to be cast in stone. His classically reformist text represented the optimism and self-confidence of post-war social democracy at the onset of the long economic boom: its lack of historical perspective is pathetically obvious today.

Now the Labour leadership challenges both the ideology of universal welfare benefits and the mixed economy. Its economic policy is based on the soundness of markets; and it has established a "Commission on Social Justice", the function of which is to find complicated reasons why the welfare benefits system has to be severely modified.

The collapse of the basics of social democratic ideology, common to all the major social democratic parties, including now the Swedish and German parties, is however only part of the alarming charge to the right. Chief "moderniser" Tony Blair is responsible for two innovations which are symptomatic: the championing of "family values" and attempts to outflank the Conservatives to the right on the question of "law and order". On family values Labour differs from the Conservatives in insisting that only a high-growth economy will create the social context for the "stabilisation" of the family. But the basic ideology of the pervasively progressive character of the traditional nuclear family, and its role in solving the problems of drugs and youth crime, is not challenged. This is particularly inappropriate in a society in which there are millions of single parents and only a minority living in the traditional nuclear family.⁶

Tony Blair has recently taken to delivering long lectures on "individual responsibility", going a long way to meeting the ideology of the rightwing of the Tory party, which of course insists that crime, drugs and social disorder are the result of malign individuals, lack of discipline at school, the allegedly catastrophic ideological effects of the 1960s, the collapse of organised religion, etc, etc.

Without a strong ideology to hold onto Labour is naturally bereft of a strong basis for its opposition to the Tories. Its one really distinguishing policy is the call for state investment in training and education, identifying Britain's economic decline in a "lack of skills". During the 1992 election the electorate was highly sceptical of Labour's claim that investment in training would rapidly reverse economic decline; a scepticism which was of course very realistic.

3. Trade unions affiliate members to the party on the basis of those who pay the "political levy" on their trade union subscriptions. But union members have to "opt-out" of paying this rather than "opting-in": it is certain that over the years many Liberal and Conservative voters have been "affiliated" to the Labour Party in this way.

4. Especially in the light of the huge income tax reductions made by the Conservatives in the late 1980s. In 1988 and 1989 the state budget was in positive as a result of the mini-boom, and substantial sums were actually paid to the national debt!

5. The ideology of mainstream British conservatism has undergone a radical shift since the 1950s of course. The extent to which the British New Right has worked out ideology is often underestimated; this is not just a matter of importing the theories of Milton Friedman and von Hayek, but a much deeper theorisation of the nature of society and history. For critical interpretations see: Andrew Gamble, 'The Free Economy and the Strong State', MacMillan 1988; Edgar Wilson, 'A Very British Miracle', Pluto 1992.

6. This is because of the high numbers of both young adults and elderly people who live on their own; the high number of single parent families is a function of the rate of divorce, and different familial structures in parts of the ethnic minority population.

John Major's Conservatives have recently undergone huge electoral defeats in two parliamentary by-elections. In Newbury and Christchurch on the south coast, the Liberal Democrats achieved massive swings away from the Tories to win the seats. In both constituencies Labour received pathetic votes. There are of course special factors. Tactical voting by Labour voters to defeat the Tories in rural areas which Labour couldn't win was very marked. Both these areas are deep in the Tories southern England heartland. Nonetheless the absolute level of the Labour vote indicated a deep problem: in Christchurch the Liberal democrats won 33,000 votes, the Tories 16,000 and Labour just 1500.

Outside of London and a couple of other urban constituencies, there are no Labour MPs in the south of England, which of course is the population and economic centre of Britain. Labour MPs represent largely inner-London, the industrial north, Wales and above all Scotland (Labour has fifty-one out of seventy-two seats there). This has raised both the immediate pragmatic debate about whether Labour can ever again win a parliamentary majority on its own — especially as its own bastions are over-represented in terms of parliamentary seats, an over-representation which will gradually disappear as a result of constituency boundary changes; and also a deeper debate about whether Labour and traditional Labourist ideology is based on social layers, workers in traditional manual industry and the public sector, both highly unionised, which are in decline.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s there was a stormy debate in the Labour Party about whether "affluent" workers would abandon Labour. This debate was settled in real life: a strong and assertive working class increased its level of trade union organisation and the level of Labour voting remained more-or-less constant until the mid-1970s. Increases in living standards in themselves did not shake class allegiances. But the social changes in Britain are now much more fundamental than thirty years ago.

Traditional industries have declined, giving way to service industries and low-employment high-tech industries. Working class housing estates have been broken up, as local authority housing has given way to high levels of home ownership. The level of trade unionisation has declined, both as a result of unemployment and the failure of the major unions to even attempt to make inroads into new industries. The consensus in academic

political science is that this has led to a "de-alignment" of class allegiances in party loyalty at elections, and the emergence of a pragmatic electorate which assesses voting preferences on immediate perceived personal advantages. Labour is highly vulnerable from these pragmatic voters because it is perceived as a party of high personal taxation. And all this affects the south of England disproportionately as the area of greatest prosperity.

Collectivist values

There is some truth in this account. It is foolish to deny major changes in the social structure of the working class, and the decline of knee-jerk automatic loyalty to Labour in important sections of the working class (although forty percent of the working class has always voted Conservative!). On the other hand, every opinion poll without fail records the alarming persistence (alarming for proponents of the Thatcherite revolution) of collectivist values and "social democratic" ideology in the overwhelming majority of the population. This includes massive loyalty to the welfare state, the health service, state-provided pensions, national investment in education, public utilities and so forth; as well, it must be noted, as substantial majorities for liberal social policies on issues like abortion and lesbian and gay rights.⁷

At a surface level, then, this would seem to reflect a huge audience for the (perceived) ideology of Labour, an ideology it is rapidly ditching.

But there is an evident contrast between ideological majorities and votes for Labour; and the reasons are not hard to find. After numerous Labour governments there is little confidence that Labour will actually provide public services and social welfare provision. Health service workers are perhaps the group most universally hostile to the Tories in the whole of society; but opinion polls during the last general election found generalised scepticism about whether anything would change under Labour. This is reinforced by the experience of people with Labour local authorities. It also has to be said that while there is much scepticism among them about privatisation, nationalised industries were often unpopular with their end-users, and Labour is seen as having no alternative to either bureaucratic nationalisation or the logic of the market.

And then there is the practical question of assessment of each individual's personal fate under Labour. Millions of people believed during the 1992 election



that nothing much would change, that they would have to pay higher taxes, and the economy would do no better and probably worse under Labour. Even so, 11 million people voted Labour. How many of them did with great expectations of a new dawn and sincere ideological conviction, rather than a gut hatred of the Tories, is open to question.

Pragmatic voting calculations cannot be separated from the generalised organisational and ideological crisis of the labour movement. Lower levels of unionisation diminish the opportunity for the unions to be a decisive factor in mobilising votes for Labour and undermine collective loyalties.

While conceding some of the social factors which undermine the Labour vote in the south of England, this has to be put in the perspective of still 8 million trade unionists and 6 million affiliated to the Labour Party. In this context, even from the narrow perspective of the self-preservation of the labour bureaucracy, the present course of the Labour leadership is disastrous. Instead of turning towards a campaign of trade unionisation, a fight to organise the unemployed, and the resurrection of even a limited Keynesian welfare state ideology, the Labour leadership takes the opposite course, demobilising its existing base, and failing to make gains in new layers, or layers which have abandoned Labour. It is the course of a collective suicide foretold.

Labour's present self-destructive course is a massive victory for the British bourgeoisie. The early 1980s "Bennite"

7. The two issues on which public opinion is overwhelmingly reactionary are immigration controls and crime, with crushing majorities in favour of capital punishment.

revolt in the Labour Party sent shock waves through the British "establishment". Contrary to simplistic theories that the union "block vote" is inherently rightwing, it was indeed the ability of the Bennites to make substantial gains at the base of the unions which made them such a potent force inside the Labour Party. The prospect of a radical leftwing Labour Party coming to power, backed by trade union strength, signalled potential disaster for the bourgeoisie. Again, contrary to simplistic theories, the bourgeoisie is highly interested and not at all agnostic about the political complexion of the Labour Party. The lesson of the crushing 1983 electoral defeat for Labour, in the wake of the Malvinas war, and with the most gigantic media anti-Labour mobilisation this century, was simple: the bourgeoisie sent the signal that Labour must make itself again "fit to govern". This is of course an endless game: the bourgeoisie demands Labour makes radical changes, but every shift to the right is "not quite enough" (even though the *Financial Times* did back Labour in 1992!).

Deliberate

It is a conscious and deliberate policy of the most politically active sections of the bourgeoisie to break Labour from the trade unions, and not "just" to defeat its leftwing. The reasons for this, which is after all a change in the mainstream bourgeois view since the 1960s, has to be sought in the predicament of British capitalism and the potential reorganisation of the party system which is in view.

Britain will not reverse its comparative economic decline, whatever the conjunctural fluctuations (if the British economy seems to be growing faster than the rest of Europe today, this is fundamentally a result of the short-term effects of re-unification on the German economy). Thus the welfare-Keynesian post-war consensus is unsustainable, and the welfare state must be finally dismantled; and a major British party in any way committed to it is unacceptable to the bourgeoisie. Moreover, the "corporatist" mechanisms of integrating the union bosses are, after the experience of the 1970s, also unacceptable to the bourgeoisie.⁸ All this points to an effort to smash up the Labour Party as a party based on the organised working class, which means breaking the links with the unions.

Moreover, this fits into the project of creating a viable alternative government to the Tories. After fourteen years of Tory rule, theories of Britain being a

"one-party state" abound. This is very simplistic. All the more sensible sections of bourgeois public opinion see the need for a viable alternative governmental team, if only in case of electoral accident. And the idea of a Liberal-Labour coalition is much more acceptable than that of another Labour government. Making Labour a party capable of doing coalition deals also means breaking its organised links with the unions.

Labour's turmoil has immediately raised the issue of whether it will cease to be a bourgeois workers' party and become a party like the US Democrats, a simple capitalist party. Strict analogies with the US Democrats are not very useful, given the adherence of a substantial portion of the American ruling class to the party, an unlikely fate for Labour. Labour of course is already a bourgeois party politically, and always has been, contrary to the mythology of (declining) sections of the Labour left: Tony Benn recently stated "Labour has never been a socialist party".⁹ But the basic answer to the question is that it could become a simple bourgeois party, but there is still an enormous gap between what the Labour Party is today and that possible future.

In the first instance, a change in the form of organised links with the unions, although very significant and utterly symbolic, would not in itself be decisive. The German SPD does not have these kind of organic links, although of course the trade unions are very influential in the higher bodies of the party.

The leaders of the Transport Workers and the GMB, the largest and third largest unions respectively, are locked in a bitter battle with Smith over this issue. This reflects an instinct for survival: the trade union bosses may not have the influence with government they had in the 1970s, but at least they have an important say in one of the two major parties. They fear being completely politically sidelined by Smith's proposals. And, this is vitally important, it is the trade unions which fund the Labour Party, which in the absence of a real mass membership, is decisive.

More fundamentally, despite the predominance of class-collaborationist "new realism", the British trade unions, with the exception of an important groups of rightwing unions based on the engineering union, the fourth largest, has not collapsed into business unionism of the typical US type.

Despite organisational decline and ideological chaos, the British Labour Party is still a very different kind of party

to the French, Spanish and, especially, Italian Socialist Parties. Any upturn in the class struggle can rapidly send shock waves into the party. The social base of the "modernisers" is extremely weak, reflecting an extremely narrow part of the labour bureaucracy.

Over the spring and summer months this year, most of the major trade union conferences rejected, out of hand, Smith's proposals to change the organised links with Labour. At the conference of the Transport Workers, Britain's largest union, the proposals were rejected almost unanimously despite a personal appearance by Smith to put his case.

"Fixer"

John Edmonds, leader of the GMB general workers union, a staunch rightwing loyalist and "fixer" throughout the 1980s, has been forced into extraordinary attacks on Smith, for "ditching our traditional values" and failing to put up sustained opposition to the Tory attacks on the working class. Even on this specific issue of the trade union link, there are long and bitter battles ahead.

Labour is in historic crisis because the social and economic basis of its ideology has collapsed. If the working class goes down to bigger and bigger defeats, if there is no end to economic crisis in Britain and internationally, if the welfare state is utterly crushed, if there is no sustained re-mobilisation of the workers, if no new left wing is built, if all this happens in the context of unending defeats for the working class internationally — then obviously Labour could collapse into being just another bourgeois party. It would be a foolish person who concluded that there are no straws in the wind, and that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. It would be an equally foolish person who mistook straws in the wind for an actual tornado. An historic defeat which is a long way from occurring is an historic defeat which can be prevented. ★



8. The period of the greatest influence of the unions with the government, the 1975-79 "social contract" with the Wilson-Callaghan government, was also a period of sustained industrial militancy, culminating in the "winter of discontent" in 1978-79.

9. Eric Heffer memorial lecture 1992.

Twelve long years

IF there is a country today where the failure of social democracy and its record in government are particularly striking, it is France. This doesn't mean that we should be satisfied with simplistic statements. It would be wrong, for example, to say that the social democrats pursued the same course as the right, or that nothing they did merits our consideration. Without a doubt, there are some grey areas here and there. But, taken altogether, the balance sheet is devastating.

JACQUES KERGOAT — Paris, 13 September 1993

RARELY have so many good intentions been so quickly turned into their opposite. The return to full employment — and the 2.5 million jobs that were supposed to be created within five years — turned into three million unemployed. The “regular” and “substantial” increase of salaries and buying power turned into stagnation and retreat. The implementation of the sliding scale of wages became the de-indexation of salaries. Social inequalities deepened, racism and social exclusion developed, references to class struggle became praise for enterprise culture, and the “anti-imperialist” speech at Cancun ended up as support for American policy during the Gulf War.¹

How was all this possible? It is not particularly reasonable to imagine that all the leaders of the Socialist Party acted like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde — promoting a “break with capitalism” in their Sunday speeches, while in reality seeking to fulfill as far as possible the wishes of the capitalists and preparing to exploit to the fullest the country's working people. History does not have any room for these kinds of fairy tales.

To be sure, the Socialists had a few outright cynics in their ranks. But most of them came to power with a will to improve the lot of the masses, and convinced that this is how they would leave their mark in history.

It is fashionable on the left to blame the programme on which they were elected — François Mitterrand's 101 proposals, which can be traced back to the “Socialist Plan” and its pregenitor, the Common Programme.² The criticisms made of this programme vary in nature. For some, it yielded to demagoguery and a “revolutionist” approach, which is not false. For others, it was fundamentally a thoroughly reformist programme which didn't appreciate the scope of

changes that had to be made, which is undeniably true. And still for others, the programme was a prisoner of a national and statist logic that did not take into consideration the globalisation of the economy, which isn't wrong either.

It is actually difficult to have a full debate about the programme, for one simple reason: it was never applied. If it had been, though, we would have quickly seen that, in spite of all its limits, its dynamic would have posed very real questions about social transformation. And it is not certain that if the Socialists had a programme that took into account the changes underway in the world — the limits of productivism and the new problems associated with the globalisation of the economy — they would have applied it any more diligently.

The other explanation put forward has to do with external constraints. It goes without saying that they existed. But it in no way logically follows that it was not possible to take them on, nor that a policy different from that applied was impossible.³ We would do well to remember that among those who today insist on the globalisation of the economy can be found people who, in 1982-83, were in favour of protectionist measures.

And we have to challenge the idea that “external constraints” affected all areas and all possible decisions: the exchange rate of the German mark did not necessarily mean that the Socialists had to renounce the “public and secular national education system” that they had talked so much about.⁴

Then there is a third explanation: the absence of forces in society willing to mobilise for major changes. We are shown an idyllic image of Socialist leaders profoundly convinced of the need to go forward towards a break with capitalism, and desperately contemplating a rank and file which refused to support their efforts, which was

in no hurry to mobilise, and which didn't genuinely want any real changes. In other words, it was the shortcomings of those they once called “the actors for change” that acted as a break on the transforming zeal of the Socialist leaders.

In this view, the 1981 vote is characterised more as “anti-Giscard” than as “pro-Mitterrand”.⁵ The whole experience is belittled; it is said that, after all, it was an election and not a revolution.⁶ While this is certainly true, such a limited description bears little resemblance to what actually happened.

First of all, because François Mitterrand's election was not the result of a more or less discreet shift of fractions of the anti-Giscard petty bourgeoisie: workers made up 80% of those who voted for Chirac in the first round and for Mitterrand in the second.⁷ The desire for change can even be seen in this electorate; 40% said they voted for Mitterrand not out of anti-Giscard sentiment but because they wanted “big changes in society”.

It is true that Mitterrand's electorate had to deal first with the break-up of the Union of the Left and then with the break-up of union unity and the repercussions this had on struggles.⁸ But it is an exaggeration to

1. Cancun, Mexico was the site of a summit on international cooperation and development in October 1981. At the summit, President Mitterrand made a strongly anti-imperialist speech, alluding to the beginning of US intervention in Nicaragua.

2. The Common Programme was a programme for a left government alternative signed in 1972. It brought together the Socialists, the Communist Party (PCF) and the Movement of Left Radicals (MRG) in the Union of the Left.

3. At a time when it seemed that Mitterrand understood this, he wrote, “There are two ways to respond to a social demand. The first is to list all the problems in order to justify letting it fall by the wayside. The second is to consider that it is a question of justice and that if one takes into account all the obstacles, it is with the intention of getting over them.” ‘Ici et maintenant’, Fayard 1980.

4. It is also possible to nuance the statement which says that once the decision to abdicate in the area of economic reforms was taken any initiative in other areas was impossible. See Serge Halimi, ‘Sisyphus est fatigué’, Laffont, 1993.

5. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing was president from 1974-1981, and the leader of the right-wing French Democratic Union (UDF). Mitterrand won the 1981 presidential elections and arranged new elections for the lower house, the National Assembly, in which the Socialists won an absolute majority of seats.

6. Georges Ross, Stanley Hoffman, Sylvia Malzacher, ‘The Mitterrand Experiment’, Oxford University Press, 1987.

7. Jacques Chirac ran for the presidency in the first round of the 1981 elections for the right-wing Rally for the Republic (RPR). In the second round, he was criticised for “dividing the right”, since he did not clearly call for a pro-Giscard vote against Mitterrand. Chirac is now mayor of Paris and a likely candidate for the next presidential elections.

8. The Union of the Left collapsed in 1977, just before the 1978 legislative elections.

argue that the "deliberate demobilisation of the mass movements" meant that the left's social base could no longer be an agent for a policy of change.⁹

The most active elements of this social base had understood that if in the short-term change could no longer be won through struggle, it was possible to get it through the ballot box. This did not reflect a retreat, but rather a compulsory detour. Socialist leaders can therefore not be excused in the name of the supposed passivity of their social base; they were the ones who, once in power, consciously made it passive. Indeed, the roots of such a disastrous balance can be found in two different areas.

The first has to do with the relationship that the Socialists had with the State. This discussion can be wound up rather quickly. We need merely recall that the State, in societies where it was put in place by the bourgeoisie, is a system built to preserve the existing order and not to change it — and this is all the moreso with the "strong state" set up by General De Gaulle.

If the nature of this State is not fundamentally changed — what, in less prudish times, was simply called a revolution — it turns against those who are unfortunate enough to try to make it do things for which it was not conceived. And this seems to have been largely confirmed by the Socialist experience.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to examine how the Socialists approached the question of the State. The "Socialist Plan" had not ignored this question. It said, "the working class movement has always seen the State as an instrument of class domination and as an agent of the perpetration of this domination within society itself."¹⁰ There was a waning gap between what they said and the reality of the exercise of power.

Did the Socialists feel that their winning the government meant that thereafter another class would dominate and that the State that served one class very well could, unchanged, serve another? We cannot say. That said, they did approach the State as a neutral entity — and as an effective one, like a toy that was all the more fascinating given how long they had been denied access to it. And in general they approached it with respect, with the modesty and deference of a neophyte.

How many times did we hear that in the ministerial team of 1981 only Gaston Deferre had been a minister, and that the others had no experience of State. So if there were any swifts and swerves, this was not because of the instrument, of its defects and resistance, but rather the inexperience of its users — who, moreover, didn't hesitate to make public confessions, excusing themselves before the State.

Without a doubt, the State itself found the newcomers quite amusing. For a whole seven years, really? What do they know about the files? Files and knowledge about dossiers are always the last refuge for the recalcitrant State employee.

Table manners

The resistance of the State certainly was an irritant for some people. We remember the radio interview with Louis Mermaz, on the evening of the Valence congress in 1981, in which he denounced the campaign against the "boorish and ignorant bearded teachers" that were preparing to take up their posts in the State. He said, "our table manners are just as good as anyone else's".¹¹

This was welcome irony, but it also revealed the nature of the ambitions at play: the quest for recognition from the State. Combativeness was dissolved in the admission that, after all, they were just like the others, and just as worthy of being in the State with all its rules and splendour.

There are certainly loyal officials, imbued with the spirit of public service. For all that, though, it doesn't follow that they are the best placed to formulate reforms, to carry them forward and implement them. Moreover, there are openly hostile officials, discreetly hostile officials and officials who simply prefer their peace and quiet to change, and who are quick to evoke the "unrealistic" and "irresponsible" nature of projects.

Once you decide not to touch this micro-milieu and to be accepted by it, you pay a price. You pay the price of complicity and jokes about the pre-1981 programme, a programme developed at a time when the "realities of state" were unknown; the price of broken promises, which are "soft" to begin with and become more and more tangible thereafter.

All this needed a theoretical dressing, furnished by the idea of the "culture of government", which offered the supplementary advantage of enabling its proponents to taunt the oldtimers and fuddy-duddies who hung on to the "culture of opposition".

Once this was done, the Socialists were not happy to silently tolerate the nebulous State into which they had been forced to enter. They set about using it with great relish.

Mitterrand explained that, before him, the constitution of the Fifth Republic was a threat to democratic freedoms and that, after him, it would be so once again — but that he could accommodate it, thereby cynically justifying his practices.¹²

However, they had planned on reforming a bit. They had put their ideas in black and white in the "Socialist Plan for the

1980s": a five-year mandate; changes in article 11 (on referenda) and article 19 (decisions without parliamentary endorsement); abrogation of article 16; real proportional representation and abrogation of block votes.¹³

But in reality the Socialists — that is, the best among them — saw the State as an area of reforms like any other, and therefore felt that it was not very urgent in the eyes of the masses. They behaved as if they did not know — or no longer knew — that the State was the instrument for implementing reforms, and that it was first necessary to reform it to enable it to carry out this task.

And that is what the best among them thought. When the unchanged State proved to be no good at all for reforms, they gave up and the others invaded the scene. This latter group understood full well what they could get in exchange for dutifully serving the State: the GLAM planes, the R25s, and a whole array of perks. In all this, money was merely an additional facility, one of the jokers in the pack of cards they had been offered.¹⁴

The vague desire to reform the State vanished into thin air. It was not time that they lacked — they had twelve long years. But now, on the eve of his imminent departure, Mitterrand is making some noises about reforming the monarchist constitution of the Fifth Republic — after having made abundant use of it over the last twelve years. The reality, however, is that the Socialists did not want to change in the slightest way the State and the Gaullist constitution that they had so denounced. Having refused to change the State, the State changed them.

The second factor that can explain the Socialists' balance sheet has to do with their relationship to the "social movements". In 1974, the Socialist Party adopted these on self-management. In the Socialist Plan for the 1981 presidential elections there is still talk about "the wondrous democratic gamble" and the "self-managing socialism of tomorrow".

9. Denis Berger and Henri Maler seem to share this thesis, 'Bâisseurs de ruines', *Futur antérieur*, n°17, 1992-1993).

10. 'Projet socialiste pour la France des années 80', *Club socialiste du Livre*, 1980.

11. Former minister and speaker of the National Assembly, Louis Mermaz has been Mitterrand's political ally for more than 40 years.

12. In 1958, during the political crisis that surrounded the beginning of the war in Algeria, Charles De Gaulle came out of his self-imposed retirement, dissolved the post-war Fourth Republic and formed the Fifth Republic, based on an authoritarian constitution that gives ultimate power to the President.

13. Article 16 authorises the President to dissolve Parliament and assume full powers. The block vote refers to the time when one member of a party could vote for his whole parliamentary group in the National Assembly.

14. GLAM planes are the jets available to government members, which have often been used for holidays. R25s are the luxury Renault cars provided to each National Assembly deputy.

To be sure, the reference to self-management does not figure in Mitterrand's 101 proposals; and it never really had anything to do with his political image. But people still remembered the theme of his previous campaign: "They want to hang onto power, we want to give it to you."

In the party itself, the Rocard current had described anti-statism, self-management and links with social movements as the standard bearers of the "second left". Jean-Pierre Chevènement's CERES current continuously argued for coordination between the movement from below and the movement from above. Even Pierre Mauroy, once installed as prime minister, did not hesitate to call for the mobilisation of the "actors for change".¹⁵

These declared good intentions were never put into practice. The various Socialist governments never tried to mobilise the "actors for change". Most of the time they chose either to ignore them or to render them passive by explaining to them that they should let the government do what it had to, have confidence in it and not bother it with stormy demonstrations. They would even call on the social movements to applaud dutifully once government proposals were announced.

Clandestine ringleaders

And when these actors for change genuinely mobilised, the Socialists in power saw this as a plot initiated by a constantly changing set of clandestine ringleaders.¹⁶ The hostility was blatant in some cases, particularly when there were mobilisations against openly harmful government projects, a list which stretches from the conflict with steelworkers to the "affaire des délocalisations" in 1992.¹⁷

In many other cases the government could have chosen to call for mass mobilisation, but instead chose to oppose, discredit and break it.

The police water cannons used against striking nurses will go down as the symbol of this political approach. The "actors for change" were often left with the feeling that not only were they not needed, but also that the change they wanted was not — or was no longer — what the Socialists in power wanted.

Why, then, did the Socialists choose not to call for mass mobilisation? There are certainly a number of reasons. But the main one is that they felt that such mobilisation ran the danger of taking them beyond their minor reforms and initial goals. And this in turn would lead to the kind of confrontation with the ruling classes that they did not want, so convinced were they that they would lose and thereby squander the small

gains that they were so energetically seeking.

In the event, they did not make any small gains either. The result in terms of government measures is well known. But the result is also a decaying, bitter and untrusting social movements. The result is also a Socialist Party that could no longer be the relay for these social movements, an intermediary between them and the government, which itself was thoroughly corrupted by the State.

It is for this reason that the CERES is trading "the break with capitalism" for a respectable republican identity. It is in this context that the technocratic wing of the Rocard movement in the Socialist Party is swallowing up the self-management wing.

It is more difficult to see how the Mitterrandists are changing and to figure out which of their previous convictions they would have to abandon. But they have already started to openly practice the politics of the "second left" — which they previously criticised, at least for the most distressing elements of its "economic realism". As prime minister, Fabius was already carrying out Rocard-type policies, and Rocard's "Big Bang" speech at Montlouis charts out the "USA-type Democratic Party" path already promoted by Fabius.¹⁸

Today, the Socialist Party could go in several different directions. The most probable is a return to a loose federal structure that brings together the Socialist Party's currents and its close allies.

The second solution is that of building a social democracy *à la française*. While it isn't possible to establish in France the conditions that exist in the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries, something more authentically social democratic could exist — a clear party identity linked to the unions, the social movements and so on. But the leaders who would be most likely carry such a project forward — Lionel Jospin and Mauroy — are hardly in a political position to do so.

The third possibility is that of the disappearance of the Socialist Party as a party linked to the workers' movement and its transformation into a formation akin to the American Democratic Party — that is, Rocard's proposal from his "Big Bang" speech.

The proposal is a coherent one. It is first explained that society in general, and the working class in particular, is no longer centred on the workplace. There follows the conclusion that there are no longer social classes since these classes were rightly defined as a function of their relationship to the productive forces.

Thus, there is no working class and the very notion of a working class movement is

an archaic one. From this fact, it flows that the idea of a party linked to the working class movement is obsolete along with the notion of social transformation embodied in the socialist project.

The future belongs to a bi-polar management of society: on the one hand, those who favour a humane and social management of capitalism; on the other, those who favour a harsher management. The building of an alliance "for a humane and social management of capitalism" will be the result of a fusion between a party like the Socialist Party and a section of the right — those who Rocard labels the "social centrists", essentially the Christian Democracy current.

It is easy enough to see the dramatic consequences of such a proposal. That said, it is very unlikely that it will see the light of day in the current circumstances, not only because of divergences within the Socialists, but above all because the "social centrists" — heavily involved in the current right wing government of Prime Minister Eduard Balladur — have no reason to get involved in such an adventure.

But it would be wrong to see Rocard's "Big Bang" project as a mere tactical manoeuvre linked to the next presidential elections, which have to be held before 1995. It is a real project for the reorganisation of French society which will rise again — and which will have to be fought. ★

15. Michel Rocard was a leader in the late 1960s of the Unified Socialist Party (PSU), a leftwing party with revolutionary pretensions. Along with about one third of the PSU, he joined Mitterrand's Socialists in 1974. He was prime minister from 1988 to 1991.

Jean Pierre Chevènement was a leader of the left-wing CERES current in the PS, later known as the Socialism and Republic current. He was minister of education and then minister of defense, a post he quit at the beginning of the Gulf War in 1991. In 1992, he founded the Citizens Movement in the PS, which, against the majority of the PS, campaigned for a leftwing "no" in the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty for European Union. After the March elections, the Citizens Movement broke from the Socialists.

Pierre Mauroy is a pillar of Mitterrand's historic current, and hails from the Socialists' working class bastion in Lille in the north of the country. He was the first prime minister after the PS victory and remained so until 1984, at which time he was replaced by the young technocrat Laurent Fabius.

16. Islamic fundamentalists were blamed for the Flins strike of highly-skilled workers; Communists were blamed for the steelworkers conflict; "terrorists" from the Autonomie movement were held responsible for the first actions in defense of housing rights; Trotskyists were blamed for the nurses' strike; and the leaders of Gauche Socialiste — a Socialist Party current itself linked to the leadership — were blamed during demonstrations organised by high school students.

17. The 1982-83 conflict with the steelworkers took place as the French steel industry was "rationalised" — virtually shutting it down — in the face of the continental restructuring of the industry. This had devastating results in the working class strongholds of the north and the Lorraine region.

18. In the run-up to the March 1993 legislative elections, Rocard delivered a highly publicised speech to the PS faithful in which he called for a "big bang", which was to initiate a process of political realignment regrouping the forces of the left and centre.

Backwards or forwards?

ON 1 May 1989 the NewLabour Party was formed. Few branches of the "old" New Zealand Labour Party were unaffected. In some areas entire local committees defected to the new party, including most of the NZLP's local and regional officials. The root cause of this split was the defence of traditional social democratic values by the "new" party following the clear abandonment of these values by the "old". A general election is due this November.

KIA KAHA & GEOFF PEARCE* — Christchurch, 30 August 1993

THE formation of the NewLabour Party (NLP) in 1989, and its defence of the traditional social democratic project, is no small matter. Social democracy had not only been highly successful but was also widely accepted in New Zealand. A consensus had been established, the origins of which lay with a "social contract" that had been struck as early as the 1930s.

The 1933 Coalition government tried to start public works schemes but was blocked by the six trading banks which refused to make money available. To escape the clutches of private bankers, Minister of Finance Coates created a Reserve Bank and transferred the gold reserves of the commercial banks to it. In 1934, on the advice of leading economists of the day, Coates passed the Agricultural (Emergency Powers) Act; giving government powers to plan and control agriculture and marketing, housing and health and the development of industry.

This split the ruling industrialist/farmer political alliance. Big business formed a separate (Democrat) party. Labour won farmers' support by promising guaranteed export prices and, thereby, the 1935 election. The achievement of the first Labour government of 1935-49 was to implement the Coates package. So while much of the ground for reforms had been laid by the Coalition government the Labour Party (NZLP) took the credit. The "contract" involved agreement that the state would manage the national economy to obtain and preserve full employment; that trade unionism was compulsory;¹ and that the government would establish a minimum standard of living for all New Zealanders.

The long-term achievement was near total acceptance of these reforms as the basis for social progress — for a social contract between the classes. By 1949 the (conservative) National Party too, had for-

mally and publicly committed itself to the "social contract".

Although only Labour was affiliated to the Socialist (second) International, for the entire period from the end of the War until 1980, Labour and National were, in essence, both social democratic parties. There main argument at election time was which party could mix and manage the economy best. In the language of the Stalinists, Labour took the left and National took the right face of social democracy. Once National had accepted the social contract, a large part of the electorate accepted National as the "natural party of power". Except for one brief term, 1957-59,² National kept Labour out office from 1949 to 1972.

Muldoon

From around 1968, and under pressure from the GATT, World Bank and IMF, National's Minister of Finance, Robert Muldoon, began to cut tariff barriers. The economy was slowing and unemployment rose bringing the third Labour government to power in 1972. This government tried to stimulate the economy by increased spending (most notably with the introduction of tertiary student bursaries, benefits for single parents, a scheme making accident compensation available to all accident victims regardless of cause of injury or fault). But additional spending stimulated price increases — not growth. To curb inflation, the government fixed wages, prices, rents, interest and profit and foreign exchange levels.

Orthodoxy then had it that inflation was caused either by wage pull or wage push; that is to say, it was due to the power of organised labour. For its 1975 election campaign National employed an American agency which produced television ads featuring Hanna Barbara-type "red-army Cosack caricatures". The object was to foster the belief that Labour was under the thumb

of the unions who were, in turn, henchmen for Moscow.

National had not rejected social democracy. On the contrary, they believed they could solve inflationary problems because they could take a firm line with the unions where Labour could not. Furthermore, Robert Muldoon, now shadow prime minister, was an economic wizard who would fine-tune the levers to restore the health of the national economy.

Returned to power, National released profits from regulation but squeezed other incomes. Muldoon kept the unions quiet by threatening to end compulsory unionism.

In the wake of defeat, David Lange and other Labour Members of Parliament (MPs) from the "new generation" (in the main, those who rose to prominence in the 1972 swing to Labour) recommended that the NZLP should break from the Labour mould and transform itself into the Social Democratic Party following the lines of the British model.³

However, when unemployment rose over one percent for the first time since the War, National actually reverted to the Coalition-Labour reforms of the 1930s: guaranteed minimum prices to farmers and a massive public works programme (called "Think Big"). But economic wizardry did not work.

In an attempt to control incomes more tightly, Muldoon was drawn ever more into conflict with interest group leaders. When controls failed (growth averaged 0.7 percent during the years 1975-1984), Muldoon and his supporters came to be associated with an abrasive style of work and arbitrary, capricious, use of power. In 1981, National scrapped home — with 38.78 percent of the vote (Labour with 39.01 percent was beaten by the electoral system). But this government was only able to struggle on to 1984 when Muldoon was forced to call an early election, which Labour won.

* The article has been adapted from extensive material that was provided by the authors.

1. All workers were required to join the union unless they could prove to a panel they had a conscientious objection to unionism (in which case union dues were paid to an approved charity).

2. This was a period of international economic downturn. When the situation "normalised" National could again form the government.

3. In 1981 a significant section of the rightwing of the British Labour Party split to form the Social Democratic Party. This was at the height of the left upsurge in the party.



Labour set about crafting a legitimacy for the notion that self-interest, profit and greed are the only proper and practical motivating and organising forces for a successful nation. Of course, all this was antithetical to many long serving Labour Party members and many quit; membership declined from over seventy-thousand in the mid 1970s to around six-thousand in 1988. Others consoled themselves with the idea that a change in direction was needed to keep National out of power. The MPs promoted the idea that Labour should replace National as "the natural party of power".

This fourth Labour government was an icon of, and rose and fell with, the "yuppies". It was the October 1987 stockmarket crash that burst the bubble. Everything had rested on the stockmarket boom. In New Zealand the boom coincided with, on the one hand, the deliberate iconisation of business and entrepreneurs and, on the other, deregulation of business practices. Almost every better than average suburb or community established a share club — to participate in the enrichment process. These and other small investors pushed up marginal prices and the appearance was given that instant fortunes were being created daily. Deregulated bankers rushed to advance credit to the share owners.

Stocks and shares soared higher in New Zealand than they did in any other OECD country. They also fell lower (the index "rebounding" to half the 1987 high point on 23 August 1993). Fortunes disappeared more quickly than they arose. Labour spent over 1 billion dollars to bail out the Bank of New Zealand, the Rural Bank and the Development Finance Corporation for credit advanced on inflated share and property prices. No one worried about business practices during the boom — it was enough to show a paper profit on annual accounts. In the collapse it turned out not only profits were paper — the entire asset base of many investment companies disappeared. Yesterday's heroes be-

came today's villains — and quite a number of them are able to dwell on the justice of that in their prison cells.

By the time of the 1990 election, Labour was the most unpopular government in the history of polling. Twenty-five percent of eligible voters were so thoroughly alienated by the political process that they never bothered to vote at all (traditionally New Zealand has a high voter turnout — the previous low was eighty-nine percent in 1987). Labour is so thoroughly linked to the turn from social democracy that free market economics is known in New Zealand as "Rogernomics"; after Roger Douglas — Labour's Minister of Finance.

National's 1990 campaign manifesto was a promise to create the "decent" society and to learn from Labour's mistakes. Muldoon had been replaced as leader and National fielded a lot of new candidates, including many women. Some of the candidates said that they became involved in politics because they were worried about what was happening to workers under Labour — one stood as a workers' candidate against Labour; "party of the big bosses".

An American professor, who visited New Zealand recently, portrayed the build-up to this year's election in the following way:

- One voice says press on urgently with the (so-called) reform programme;
- another says let's stop for a breather and a cup of tea; and
- the other says let's turn around and go back to where we came from.

Both National and Labour believe that the social democratic doctrine that politics can "over-determine" economics was shattered by "the failure of Keynesianism". National will press on quickly to remove all market regulation, Labour will slow things down. The Alliance and New Zealand First (see below) will go back (they say forward) to social democracy.

However, the professor missed out the increasing number of people who have given up on politics. "If all politicians are corrupt", they reason "then what is the point in choosing between them?" The arrogant disregard for promises made to the electorate in the 1980s confirmed to many the duplicity of all politicians. The proportion of eligible voters who did not cast a vote swelled from five percent in the 1960s to twenty-five percent in 1990 under these pressures. All evidence suggests that the figure will grow in 1993.

Whilst people may see social democracy as a failure it is clear they do not think that the free market has lived up to its promises either. Most commentators accept that as much as twenty percent of the New Zealand workforce has gone to Australia and yet 420 thousand New Zealanders are unemployed (twenty-six percent of the workforce in New Zealand). After ten years of austerity, state debt quadrupled and thirty percent of state income goes to pay interest. Advocates of unregulated capitalism worry that New Zealanders are on the verge of deciding it too has failed the "crucial experiment".

Polls reveal that between twenty-five and thirty-three percent of New Zealanders are disaffected by the economic and social policies since 1984. Disaffection combines with widespread disillusionment about alternatives: either as credible possibilities or because the people who sponsor them are marginal in the political process. Furthermore, governments and lobby groups have for the last ten years assailed New Zealanders with the "TINA" message — "There Is No Alternative".

However, not everyone in either the National or the Labour party gave up on social democracy easily. There have been significant splits from both parties (in this article we are concerned primarily in the emergence of the NLP).

"Captured"

Labour activists put the betrayal of social democracy down to capture by the MPs. There is some truth in this. Without exception the parliamentarians who "captured" the NZLP were formed by the pressures of the 1960s, and the loss of office in 1975 was a formative experience. But there are other factors involved, such as the role of leadership, passage of generations and self-interest.

The dialectic between social movements and the optimistic feeling of the 1960s that things could and should be different is well known. Today however, most New Zealanders are caught up in the cold facts of economic survival. Even those who

gain materially from "reforms" suffer under the stress. Their jobs are insecure and, thereby, their prosperity may be transitory.

The dialectic between Labour and the social movements was that the Party incorporated many of the radical ideas, which were then given legitimacy when the Party defended and took them into its programme. Some popular leaders were drawn from the movements into the Party. But by the time Labour turned its back on social democracy (and of course the movements too) these former leaders had become "comfortable" and life on the political margins was no longer attractive.

State violence

The last major social explosion, against the 1981 South African Springbok rugby tour, occurred twelve years ago. The struggle certainly produced results — on the one hand, a similar tour would have been inconceivable after the protests; and on the other, it exposed in a naked way the degree to which the state will use violence to stifle opposition.

But 1981 was the last nation-wide victory won through militant opposition. There have of course been rallies and marches since then, most notably over education, public health and industrial relations laws. Some workers have courageously defended jobs and conditions. But in the best of cases, when they were not pushed back, the government was still able to strengthen the hand of the bosses — taking the shine from any small victories.

The rich and powerful have rolled right over us for a decade. We cannot point to one single clear victory. This is taking its toll. Most New Zealanders have decided that they can either live with the model of development or they are too dispirited to even think about an alternative, let alone fight for one.

And yet, as if in the same breath, many people cannot recall a time when there has been a greater need for an alternative to the current model of social and economic development. Unfortunately they cannot recall a time when so few people were prepared to oppose injustice, oppression and exploitation either.

Against this background, the formation of the NewLabour Party (NLP) must have appeared foolhardy. Nonetheless, the party has established a political space for itself in a comparatively short period of time, growing to equal the NZLP in size. Moreover, it clearly shows that there still exists a significant political constituency for traditional social democratic values.

The central driving force behind the new party was Member of Parliament (MP) Jim Anderton, who had become disillusioned with Labour's policies and practices. Anderton met with the Labour Economic Network, a group which had been propounding alternative economic policies to those of the Labour government. Together they put out feelers for a "true Labour Socialist Party" with the aim of representing the people at the bottom of the ladder.

Anderton's moves intersected with those of a small but important layer of union activists. Matt McCarten, a prominent Maori activist and former secretary of the Trades Council of the Labour Party, is now President of the NLP. But union involvement has remained largely at the level of individual activity. The response of the trade unions as a whole (and of the social movements too), has been disappointing.

This is despite the fact that over the last five years a number of unions have dropped their affiliation to the NZLP. There have continued to be material pressures to retain preferential links with the "old" party rather than to begin to build afresh with the "new". Matt McCarten himself came under enormous pressure in his job with the Hotel Workers' Union in Auckland. Other prominent unionists have often been bluntly told that they must either resign from their job or from the NLP. In cases where membership of the NLP is retained it is made very clear that it must remain low-profile.

However, some unions have entered into discussions with the NLP and have asked for help on various issues. This "working relationship" will surely develop but a further obstacle to the direct involvement of the unions actually lies in the NLP's structures. It is not possible for a union to affiliate, although it is argued that if the members of a union, group or society were to all agree on joining the NLP the problem of affiliation would not exist since they would, in effect, create their own branch within the party.

While, as we have noted, the NLP has a political constituency its poor base in organised movements had to be addressed. The formation of the Alliance was, largely, the answer.

The NLP quickly built links with the Maori movement, Mana Motuhake. Towards the end of 1991 the Alliance was broadened to include the Greens and two smaller parties, the Liberals and the Democrats. While the Alliance is structured to allow for equal representation of all member parties, regardless of size, on decision making committees, it is clear that the NLP

is politically and organisationally dominant. Anderton is President and McCarten is Chair of the Alliance. The election programme clearly has the NLP stamp across it.

The Alliance began to capture the imagination of those who were opposed or concerned to the turn to market-led policies. As recently as this summer the Alliance was ahead of both National and the NZLP in opinion polls. The prospect, and the threat,⁴ of an Alliance government, led by the NLP, appeared a real one. The party had, it seemed, created a new mass movement on which to base itself, and thereby circumventing its initial weaknesses.

But the political situation, and the loyalties of voters, in the lead-up to this year's election are volatile and fluid.

The National party has undergone a split, led by Winston Peters. This new party, called New Zealand First, represents those who want to defend the National interpretation of the traditional social democratic project.

Support falls

Inevitably, New Zealand First has taken a lot of its support from National but its emergence has also had a detrimental effect on the level of support for the Alliance. New Zealand First currently enjoys thirteen percent in polls, while the Alliance has fallen back to twelve percent and the NZLP and National each have a hard-core following of twenty to twenty-five percent. Polls have indicated though that a combination of New Zealand First and the Alliance would have absolute majority support. While attempts were made, this further broadening of the "alliance" has so far failed.

And herein lies the NLP's conundrum. The defence (and they would add "renewal") of the traditional social democratic project, even in a moderate form, can today appear quite radical. But how does the NLP differentiate itself when another new party claims the same ideological ground. It remains to be seen if they can actually use the wide consensus for important and progressive social values as a base from which to map a genuine alternative to not only the madness of the "free market" but also the abundant failures of traditional social democracy. ★

4. Mc Carten, in a speech published this summer by the American socialist journal *Independent Politics*, indicates that an Alliance government would come under enormous international pressure, and particularly from the United States.

Taming the new unions

Since the collapse of Stalinism the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), formed by "non-communist" unions in 1949, has been basking in triumphalism while at the same time declaring that it has turned over a new leaf. Their aim has been to integrate the newer, militant national federations that have emerged in a number of developing countries. We examine the background to the ICFTU's change of heart and whether it is genuine.

ROLAND WOOD — 20 September 1993

INTERNATIONAL contact and solidarity between unions has a long tradition, but the creation of international union organisations is a relatively recent development. It was in 1945, in the aftermath of the War, that the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) was formed. For four years there was a period of fragile unity in one international body, before the political tensions between East and West resulted in a split.

In 1949, under pressure from the American Federation of Labour (AFL/CIO), "non-communist" unions broke away to form the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).¹ In many respects the international union movement was the first battlefield of the cold war.

Mineworkers

When in May 1983, the British National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) broke from the ICFTU's Miners International Federation (MIF)² to prepare the formation of the International Miners Organisation (IMO), it was hailed by supporters as the first crack in "cold war" trade unionism. The London *Financial Times* commented that it breached "for the first time in over thirty years the Iron Curtain which has separated federations of unions in the communist (sic) countries and their allies from the bulk of those operating in the market economies in other parts of the world."³

While the ICFTU never had any real reason to feel threatened — the IMO was, after all, only a sectoral organisation — it was clear that there were moments when they worried. In March 1985, prior to the first conference of the IMO in September of that year, the British Transport &

General Workers Union (TGWU) hosted a conference of Ford unions. The meeting was bitterly opposed by the ICFTU's International Metalworkers Federation for involving Communist-affiliated unions from European Ford plants. NUM leader Arthur Scargill was known to have made approaches concerning the affiliation of the TGWU's power station, oil and chemical workers to the IMO.

Clearly, if this had been achieved the lasting impact of the NUM's initiative — the unification of forces on a non-aligned basis — would be greater than it is. It only required maybe one or two other national unions to be drawn into the IMO for some real impetus for change to have been generated. Rather, the NUM remained alone in leaving the MIF, and while the WFTU unions disbanded their own miners federation to join the IMO, the new organisation did not really expand beyond that initial base.

What was of lasting significance however, was the emergent centrality of the new, militant union federations in the developing world: the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the Brazilian CUT, the Philippines First of May Movement (KMU), the Korean Congress of Trade Unions (KCTU), and the continental wide Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU). We examine the importance of the "new" federations below.

A number of these federations constituent unions, for example the South African NUM, were quickly seen as a major ingredient for the future if the IMO was to grow. Their importance had also been recognised by the ICFTU although, of course, for different reasons. But despite the non-aligned status of the IMO and, given the influence of the Scargill leadership, the more radical orientation overall,

these unions continued to keep their distance.⁴ While the "new" unions preferred, and for good reasons, to remain neutral, they had often developed relations with specific ICFTU-linked International Trade Secretariats.⁵ The International Metalworkers Federation for one, had made it very clear that no affiliate could keep its membership if it joined the IMO.

If the divisions in the international trade union movement were to be brought to an end it was to be on the ICFTU's terms, and on their terms alone. This clearly implied defeat of the WFTU. In the case of the IMO — and indeed anybody else that was foolish enough to jump the gun in the belief that the divisions were wrong on principle — the ICFTU attitude was akin to advocating infanticide: they wanted the IMO strangled at birth.

Reconciliation?

Following the collapse of Stalinism, the WFTU plunged into a predictable crisis. The organisation searched for a new role and orientation. The old ideological confrontation with imperialism was buried. Instead, it was argued that the trade union movement should be depoliticised. At its twelfth congress in November 1990 it began to invite the ICFTU (and the Christian World Congress of Labour) to consider reconciliation, co-operation and "greater unity". Lack of co-ordination between the international organisations in the past was put down to "obstacles set by the Transnational Corporations (TNC's)".

The ICFTU was not interested. Their then General Secretary, John Vanderveken, said in reply that: "Our greatest asset in Eastern Europe is (that) we never collaborated in any way with those who sided with their oppressors...." The implication was clear. The WFTU has all but collapsed.

1. The smaller Christian World Confederation of Labour is not examined in this article.

2. The MIF is an International Trade Secretariat (ITS) linked to the ICFTU. These Secretariats group together national unions which cover particular industries.

3. Cited in *International Labour Reports*, No 13, January/February 1986.

4. Third world unions that did join the IMO, such as the Cubans, Vietnamese and Nicaraguans, were previously affiliated to the WFTU miners federation.

5. It is not essential that a member of an ITS is actually an affiliate of the ICFTU.

But is the ICFTU really in any position to claim some ideological victory?

Perhaps not victory, but while social democracy now appears bereft and impotent the ICFTU has, to a large extent, escaped from being enveloped in the same crisis. This is so despite the impact of this crisis on many of the ICFTU's constituent federations, particularly those from countries where there had appeared to be a stable social democratic culture or consensus. So how has the ICFTU escaped these pressures?

Class-collaboration

The reasons lie in the ICFTU's organisational character and its ideological framework — class-collaboration par excellence.

The ICFTU has never been a movement. Rather, it is an organisation of union leaderships — based in the West and dominated by the West. This is not a semantic point because it tells us much about the ICFTU's *raison d'être*.

Despite a membership of 113 million it receives only one percent of each constituent federations funds, amounting to approximately £7 million a year. This does not compare well with, for example Greenpeace, who with 4.3 million members receive £110 million.⁶ But the axis of the ICFTU's work has never been found in well co-ordinated international campaigns; on the contrary, they have always preferred to discreetly lobby government and international financial institutions, particularly in relation to development projects in the Third World and particularly if there is any money in the offing. In the past, the ICFTU was dependent on such funding for some forty percent of its total income.⁷

"Development" clearly meant the development of capitalism. A creed was elaborated:

- The nation-state had the capacity to develop and protect national economies — a clearly ridiculous idea now, given the emergence of new trading blocs, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, alongside the established ones.

- The State would be willing to help unions gain access to international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

- These institutions would be willing to meet workers needs.

This ideological framework owed much to the social democratic and liberal Keynesian consensus that was prevalent in the post-war period. Although that consensus began to crumble the ICFTU

continued to hold to the above assumptions.

From the 1960s to the 1970s, when industrial output in almost all Third World countries grew rapidly, the ICFTU became mesmerised. They became integral to the process of "development"; playing the role of adviser; regulating and ideologically shaping the indigenous union movement in accordance with the requirements of the regime that, whatever opponents may have said about its faults, was believed to be leading the nation into happiness and prosperity.

The results of this practice have become almost legendary among internationalists and union militants. It is now openly admitted that financial assistance, even when it was directed at State-sponsored unions, went into the pockets of dictators such as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines and Papa Doc Duvalier of Haiti.

Change began to occur, at least at face value, from the early 1980s. The ICFTU could not fail to recognise that the "new" federations were not only militant but growing; and they were growing in opposition to union federations that were often sponsored by the State, affiliated to the ICFTU or in receipt of their aid.

The possibility of smashing the "new" federations was unlikely. The ICFTU had little option other than to attempt to tame and capture the "new" unions. But given their past record how was this to be achieved?

They were not about to perform somersaults and declare support for the methods and political practice of the "new" unions. Rather, they proceeded to correct, and openly admit too, the worst excesses of their past, emphasising in particular the fight against dictatorship, the principle of independence from the State,⁸ the centrality of democratic rights in developing countries, but without rejecting the central tenets of their ideological framework.



But, as we have noted, many of these unions were formed and grew in opposition to that ideological framework. The ICFTU's change of heart in relation to specific issues was not unwelcome, but it was rightly seen as largely cosmetic. Scepticism, and on occasions, hostility to the ICFTU remained.

Nonetheless, links were formed, in the main direct and bilateral, principally with national federations that constituted the so-called progressive wing of the ICFTU: the Dutch, Swedish, Danish and Norwegian federations. The progressives had long argued that the "new" unions should join with them to change the ICFTU from within.

Respect and integrity

What was essential for the "new" federations was that solidarity and links were based on mutual respect and integrity. Of particular importance was the space and time this allowed for a strong and stable federation to be built by the militants themselves rather than professional advisers from the West. Furthermore, it allowed the "new" federations to build links with each other, which led to the unofficial establishment of an "actively non-aligned" current within the international trade union movement.

It may seem a little cruel to suggest it, but the ICFTU was able to take advantage of the progressives' independent activity. All forms of aid and assistance had to be reported to the ICFTU through their regional co-ordinating structures, for example the Southern Africa Co-ordinating Committee. This combination of bilateral solidarity by the progressives with co-ordination through the ICFTU structures by the "conservatives" helped to contain pressures acting on both wings of the bureaucracy, since both were able to claim credit for the solidarity.

The clear advantage though lay with the conservative wing since they were able to point to the work of the progressives as an example of real changes and of their plurality. The present ICFTU General Secretary was recently quoted as saying that he was a progressive too. Specifically referring to COSATU he said: "If they believe they can make us more progressive, they are welcome."⁹

6. Cited by P Waterman in *South Africa Labour Bulletin*, Vol 17 No 3, May/June 1993.

7. *Ibid.*

8. The ICFTU has claimed that this has always been their view while at the same time now admitting that it was not the case in practice. They also believe that unions should be independent from all political parties.

9. 'The ICFTU in South Africa', *South Africa Labour Bulletin*, Vol 17 No 1, January 1993.

Furthermore the progressives' limited bargaining power inside the ICFTU, based on specific conditions, has been significantly reduced.

Whereas previously they had considerable resources at their disposal, inherited from a long period of social democratic consensus in their countries, this is no longer the case. (The recent victory of the Norwegian Labour party notwithstanding.)

What was important for the ICFTU was that the progressives had initiated a dialogue, agreement had been found which formed the basis for joint work, and an opening had been created in which the ICFTU's ideological seeds could be planted.

"Bureaucratic"

This is not to say that affiliation immediately means capitulation to the ICFTU or that it is inevitable. The Brazilian CUT, which affiliated to the ICFTU in 1992, was as recently as its Congress in September 1991 still opposed to affiliation. Delegates argued that membership would mean associating with "bureaucratic" unions in the West, and worse, with "business" unions in the United States. It was proposed that the CUT should remain "actively non-aligned".

While the CUT may have already been on the verge of being worn down by the ICFTU's persistent courtship, it would be ridiculous to assume that they will immediately or easily give up their views, activity and campaigns — a political practice that has amounted to a strident opposition to the external debt, austerity programmes and structural adjustment policies. The CUT remains a federation that is starkly opposed to the ICFTU's ideological framework.

But CUT affiliation still represents a defeat. Affiliation heralded a new crack but this time in the "actively non-aligned" trade union movement.

We should note however that the CUT was at a disadvantage in at least two respects, in comparison with, for example, COSATU:

- Throughout the 1980s South Africa was a permanent feature of solidarity work in the West. Much has been written on this and we do not need to elaborate other than to stress how this helped COSATU to build a highly respected independent profile.

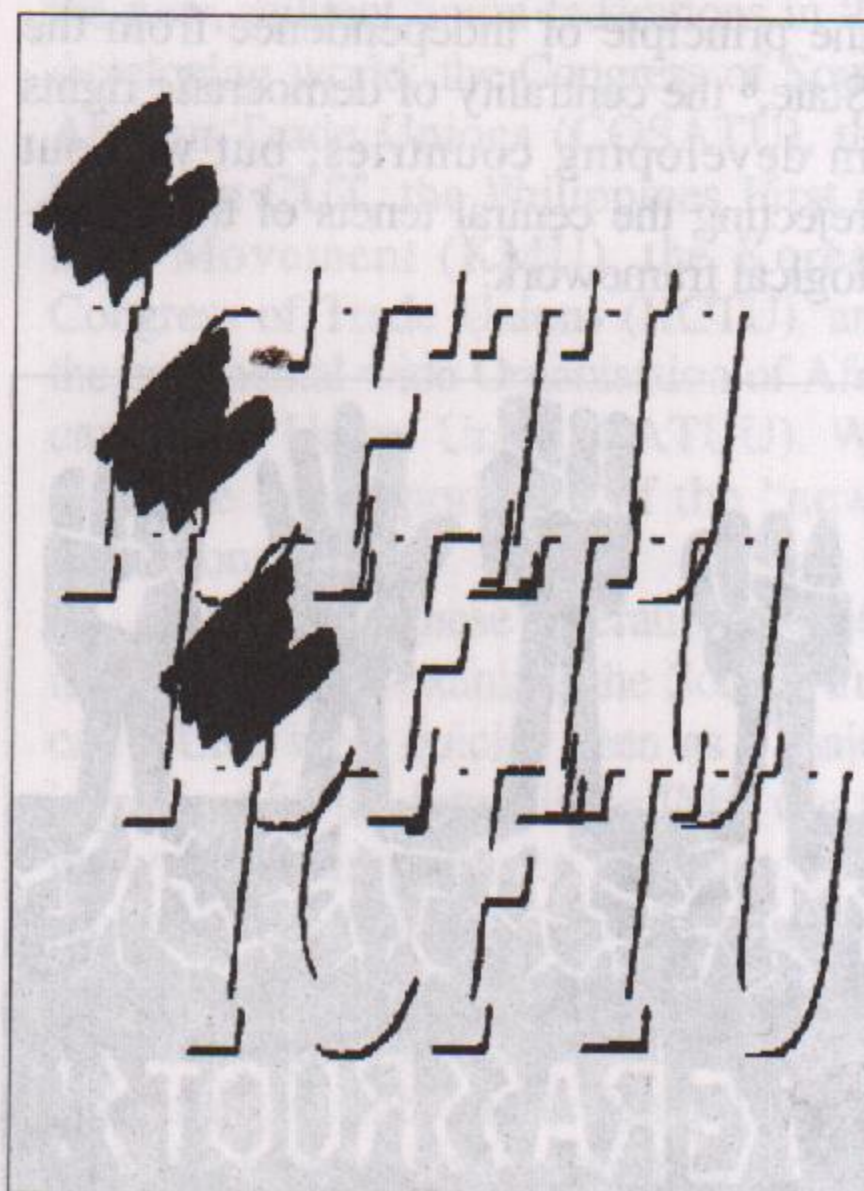
- Not without its problems, the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), has begun to emerge as a strong continental wide federation, independent of the ICFTU (although some

member unions are ICFTU affiliates), and as a powerful tool for South-South solidarity, challenging the domination of the North/West federations over trade union activity. There is nothing comparable with the OATUU in Latin America.

The emphasis of the ICFTU's recruitment is shifting again, predictably to Eastern Europe where Poland's Solidarnosc and the Czech CKOS are already affiliates. This has created some urgency in tying up loose ends with the "new" federations. The Brazilian CUT has affiliated. The Korean CTU has applied for affiliation but was being opposed by the official union federation, an ICFTU affiliate. COSATU is also an obvious target and at the end of 1992 the ICFTU sent its biggest delegation to South Africa.

But COSATU is also a target of other "non-aligned" unions and federations, particularly from Asia, in so far as they are appealing to COSATU to only join the ICFTU if certain conditions are met.

In a statement published in the *South Africa Labour Bulletin* of May/June of this year worker leaders from a number of unions in Asia and the Pacific outlined the ICFTU's failure to translate their new found loyalty to democratic and independent unions into practice. By way of example they pointed to the fact that the ICFTU's International Executive Committee was to consider the request for affiliation from the Indonesian SPSI, fully supported by the ICFTU's Asia Pacific Regional Organisation. The militaristic, state-sponsored SPSI was formed following the 1965 coup and the suppression of independent unions. That the ICFTU leadership could even contemplate the affiliation of such an organisation speaks volumes on the lack of real change in their orientation and character.



The statement, naturally, voiced the specific concerns of militants and their unions in Asia. The Asian unions can see the direction events are moving in — the de facto unification of the international trade union movement. The unwritten message was clear enough: the break-up of the "actively non-aligned" and its integration into the ICFTU must, at this stage, go no further. Otherwise, unification will have been achieved on the ICFTU leadership's terms and that would constitute a defeat for much of what the "new" federations have represented and fought for.

Prior to the Brazilian CUT affiliating the most important "actively non-aligned" unions — principally the CUT, COSATU, OATUU, the Philippines KMU and the South Korean KTUC — held a potentially powerful bargaining position. The logical development from "active non-alignment" would have been towards a worker-controlled internationalism involving an open campaign for the establishment of a single, unified, democratic and accountable international organisation.

Resources

But the possibility of such an initiative was always limited. While the bonds between the "new" federations were becoming stronger, particularly between COSATU and the CUT, there was a consistent problem about the time and resources that could be allocated to international work.

This problem is unlikely to disappear. COSATU and the CUT are both currently pre-occupied with what the immediate future will hold in their own countries following proposed elections next year.

Even in the light of these problems, with the forced retreat of the progressives — the "new" federations' most likely allies, at least with regard to democratisation of ICFTU structures — it seems sorely inadequate to propose that the most that can be achieved in the face of the ICFTU's triumphant steamroller is that affiliation should not occur until some genuine change has been squeezed out of the ICFTU bureaucracy.

Mass, militant and independent unionism will remain a central feature in the developing countries, but unless it becomes a central feature of the workers movements of the North/West too, there is the danger that this unionism could become internationally isolated or open to being neutered by the ICFTU. ★

Saam mou everywhere

In his second article, based on interviews with workers at a sofa factory in southern China, Ossi Rask reveals the plight of those who are caught up in — and often at the receiving end of — the dash for profit. The author travelled to China during the summer.

OSSI RASK — Stockholm, 17 August 1993

A CHING does not want to continue his job at the sofa-factory in Sai Heung. He will quit in August after only four months.

"There is nothing for me to do here", he says when we enter his department.

Some thirty workers make the sofas ready for sale in Hong Kong. Swiftly and with skill they wrap the foam-rubber to fit inside the wooden frame. The leather covering is fixed with a stapling gun.

We are inside the Peoples Republic of China. Sai Heung lies ten kilometres outside its bigger neighbour, Shenzhen, close to the Hong Kong border.

Shenzhen is a Special Economic Zone (SEZ). But in the southern province of Canton the difference between a SEZ and any other area is no longer clear; at least if you are a capitalist.

Seething

The whole of south-eastern China is seething with private business. Everywhere, the authorities say that they want to make it easy for you. It is better of course, if you have contacts; even better if you have relatives in the Party.

However, if you are one of the millions of Chinese on exodus from the countryside and towns, to the south to find a job, then you will notice the difference. You must show your work permit and identity-card to enter Shenzhen or some ten other SEZs in Canton.

On our way out of Shenzhen we drove straight across the borderline between the SEZ and the rest of the province. But on our way back, some days later, the border had become more like a customs point. Everyone must leave the bus and show their documents.

"The Party-line is steady for one hundred years!", a huge picture of Deng Hsiao Ping declares.

It was in Shenzhen that a riot took place in August last year when the second

stockmarket opened in China. Half-a-million people made a pilgrimage to this city, bribing their way across the border, only to discover that the lottery tickets, of which one in ten gave the right to buy shares, were already "sold out".

"Down with corruption!" This was the slogan that appeared on the home-made banners carried by the rioting crowd — an echo from Beijing 1989.

A Ching lives in Hong Kong. This is the second sofa-factory in mainland China where he has borne the title "technician". He did not stay long at the other factory either. The other place was a ramshackle house. "They treated the workers like dogs", he says with disgust.

At his present factory there is a high ceiling and bright light to work in. But what is A Ching's role? It seems a long time since any of the workers required any "technical advice". A Ching is a foreman with nothing to do. Foremen are not usually so honest as to admit this. Certainly, they do not quit for this reason.

The factory has had a new manager since January — Chinese, from the province of Fukkien on the east coast who is now living in Hong Kong. He has asked A Ching to stay. He reasons that it is much better to have someone from Hong Kong as foreman.

A Ching's wage is around \$HK 12 thousand. This is a good wage considering the cost of living in Hong Kong. It compares with the average earnings of a well-paid white-collar worker, more than double what a factory worker in Hong Kong earns — and twenty-one times more than what the best paid workers in his department at the factory earn. And of course, their wages are in yuan.

Chuen is in his twenties. He takes a short break to answer our questions. His piece-meal wages are fourteen yuan per sofa. If it is a month with a lot of work he will earn around eight-hundred yuan. Working hours are normally from eight in the morning to six in the evening with two

hours for lunch. They then continue from seven in the evening until eleven at night. The last four hours are counted as overtime with a fifty percent addition to the wages.

How many days a week?

"Seven days. But at the moment there are not many orders. Therefore we work six days and not always twelve hours."

Chuen works with a boy, perhaps fifteen-years old. He is new and has a starting wage of 250 yuan. We carefully ask Chuen if he has heard about trade unions. No, he has not. A Ching, who has been listening, smiles: "No, no. In this town a trade union would never work. If we put up a notice for vacancies at the factory gate we would have fifty applications within two hours.

Upstairs, where they sew the leather for the sofas, the workers are almost all women. At the most they earn around 500 yuan a month. "Our work is more simple", Bing says. She smiles, a little embarrassed, when we do not agree.

She points to the fact that their work takes a shorter amount of time than the other departments. Sometimes they only work six hours a day. Otherwise the other departments would not be able to keep up with their pace.

Relatives

Almost all of the hundred workers at the sofa-factory have come from other provinces. We understand after a while that the manager recruited several relatives in Fukkien, paying them more than the other workers. Bing is one such relative. She has just returned from a month's maternity leave and has now been working at the factory for six years. The annual holiday is normally about ten days around the Chinese New Year.

Her mother-in-law is taking care of the baby. Bing's companion is working at another factory in Sai Heung. They will soon return to Fukkien.

"Are there not any jobs back home?", we ask.

"Oh yes. There are many textile-factories in Fukkien. The wages are similar to Sai Heung, but we wanted to see the SEZ. It is so famous. We wanted to experience the prosperity of the Canton province for ourselves. Many people want to come here just to see how things are."

A woman sits in the back of the large room and tears foam rubber in to small pieces to be used as filling for pillows. She is almost the only older worker we have seen on our visit. Everyone else is about thirty — or younger. All of the hundred workers, except four, are from outside of Sai Heung. It has been stipulated that companies funded by foreign capital must employ some people from the local area. These employees are appointed by the local authorities. The site manager is said to be one of the four. He is, however, from north-eastern China. He is a former high-ranking officer in the Peoples' Liberation Army and, presumably, one of the 45 million Party members. That is A Ching's guess.

Perhaps he is. Perhaps not. If he is, it means the local bureaucracy can keep a eye on the factory.

We bump into him on our way out. He is supervising work at a machine cutting the foam-rubber. Our presence had not been announced beforehand and he is clearly irritated. But we are escorted by A Ching, so everything is okay.

Control

In China today, a lot of things are escaping the control of the Party. The new private companies are nothing like the state-owned. There are no Party cells. At hundreds and hundreds of new foreign owned companies there are no longer small workteams, "units", each and every-one of them with a political secretary and a group leader.

Is there any control needed now? People seem to put their hearts into their work.

We try to touch upon some more sensitive subjects with one of the men in the sewing department: "Couldn't the workers strike to improve their wages?" His wage is four hundred yuan a month. He has, he says, heard about strikes but thinks it would not be easy to succeed.

In the evening we invite some of the workers to a restaurant nearby. Three, we thought, or it will be too expensive. Eleven turn up! To our relief more than a dozen people can eat a meal with ten dishes for two-hundred and thirty-five yuan (\$HK 170). To our new friends though, this must seem insane — to spend half a months wages on one meal. No one shows or tells us what they think.

A discussion begins in which a lot more is said now they are away from the factory floor.

"Yes, there are strikes in Sai Heung, from time to time", says Chuen. "Some months ago our department was on strike.

We demanded that there should be a new contract for piece-meal work. The sofas should be worth sixteen yuan instead of fourteen. Yes, we should have demanded more but we never thought it would be approved."

Six workers were chosen to go and speak with the management. The answer was no.

"We went on strike for one day. Management called Hong Kong."

The manager decided to sack the six — and sacked they were. The strike finished with no results.

"The demand was correct", says Wu. He says this despite being one of the manager's relatives and a foreman in one of the other departments (his wage is a thousand yuan a month). He probably wants to mark out where he stands. "There are strikes now and again, but it is difficult to win. There are too many people looking for jobs."

But what do all the people who come here do if they cannot find a job?

"They stay for a few weeks and then they must go home."

"Some have killed themselves", someone else adds.

That morning, travelling out of Shenzhen, we had seen people hard-at-work on road projects. The sheds where they stay are close by. The children play outside and the washing hangs out to dry.

They are "saam mou", says Jiu who is travelling with us. *Saam mou* means "three have not". They have no identity card, work permit or money.

"They work for five yuan a day — may be less. They are not allowed to be here in Shenzhen but the authorities turn a blind eye." Yet on a long red banner, hanging from a viaduct the Party proclaims: "We shall rinse Shenzhen clean of the *saam mou*!"

Jiu explains: "As you know, what they say is one thing — what they do is another."

On the outskirts of Shenzhen the *saam mou* are everywhere. Grey squatter shacks in groups of ten. Sometimes, only four poles and a tarpaulin. At one place there are a hundred houses — a small village with a main street and even a market too. Just as it should be!

On our way back from Sai Heung our eyes have accustomed and we begin to see more. On the edge of a building site, in the centre of Shenzhen, with modern hotels as neighbours, several hundred metres of pavement just disappear under a continual row of shacks, with corrugated iron as roofs. We can glimpse bunk-beds through the door-holes. Are there five, ten or twenty-thousand *saam mou* in Shenzhen?

Our friends in Sai Heung are better off. This evening they are in a good mood. They have worked at the factory for between one and three years. When they explain to us who they are the new proletarians state that: "I raise pigs", "I grow rice", "I am a student". The student, for the moment, does not have the money to continue his studies. The others, for the moment, find that it does not pay to work back home. They seem to look upon the factory as a station in life — a transition between two places.

"We have to follow the road of the western countries", is the opinion of a "china-seller" from Hunan.

And will you be rich? As promised by Deng Hsiao Ping?

"The one who lives will see", a young woman answers coyly.

When we ask if this is really socialism — do the workers really have the power to decide? — they fall silent.

Hawkish

"I don't think you should ask any political questions", a hawkish A Ching says. We look at the other guests in the restaurant. They have been looking at us, listening. No "political" questions, but strangely it is alright to talk loudly about strikes, unions, wages and the new manager.

"He is a lot worse", Chuen says. "In January he changed the notice to quit from seven days to nothing."

"And the subsidies for lunch have been reduced from seventy five to fifty yuan per month." Food is at least three yuan per day.

And if you rent an apartment?

"That costs three-hundred yuan. Only businessmen from Hong Kong can afford that. They usually have an extra wife in Sai Heung and live with them when they are here."

Does the wife in Hong Kong know that?!

"Of course not!"

We pay the bill and make our way towards the workers dormitory. The only light outside comes from the street-kitchens and small shops. On the pedestrians viaduct over the mainstreet, where heavy lorries are roaring by in the dark at speeds that seem tremendous, people are assembling in groups for a chat.

A Ching asks us to be excused, goes into a barber shop and sits in front of the mirror.

"He has his hair cut three times a week."

Someone explains that this is one good way of meeting a woman. No-one seems to think there is anything funny about this.

Cautious protest continues

The dormitory building we visit is four-storeys high. From a dark stairway each floor has a long balcony where washing is hung out. It is open to the street on one side and on the other you enter rooms no more than twenty metres-square. There are up to five bunk beds (ten people) in each room. Behind the beds is a little pantry with cold water and a gas stove. There is no air-conditioning but for three fans in the ceiling.

For several months now, Wu has been trying to get an extra fan installed. "But nothing happens." He shows us where he thinks they should put it. The temperature in southern China during the summer can be between twenty-five and thirty-five centigrade.

Men and women live apart, even if they are married. The women's rooms look nicer. It is only when you look into the men's rooms that you notice that the floors are bare cement.

Two weeks after our visit to Sai Heung a workers' dormitory in Shenzhen collapsed. The building fell to pieces during a night of heavy rain. Seventeen workers were killed, ten were seriously injured.

Injured workers complained that they had to pay for their own food at the hospital and that the employer did not even come to visit them. An Associated Press report published in the bourgeois *Hong Kong Standard* was succinct: "It was the latest of several such accidents in recent months in southern China, where safety standards have been pushed aside in the rush to make money."

Everybody though is friendly. A boy — he is not shy — wants to join in the discussions. He is nine and still at school.

And what do you want to be when you grow up?

"A businessman", he replies with a happy grin. ★



Introduction

AS the following eyewitness report shows, the 3 July agreement between President Aristide and General Cedras has not led to a decrease in repression. On the contrary.

The ten-point agreement sets Aristide's return to Haiti for 30 October. Between now and then, a number of steps are to be taken: the nomination of a new prime minister and a new government, the suspension of international sanctions and the renewal of international cooperation. Provision was made for the following noteworthy measures: the sending of UN personnel to "modernise" the army and create a new police force; amnesty for those behind the coup d'etat; the dismissal of Cedras from the army, and the nomination of a new army high command.

Since the new prime minister, the businessman Robert Malval, took his post on 2 September, and since the lifting of the embargo that followed, events have taken a dramatic turn in Port-au-Prince. President Aristide, whose return may be in doubt, has even spoken of a "second coup d'etat".

Malval, who has labelled his policy that of "national reconciliation", has called "exiles on the outside" to return to Haiti "without exception". Duvalierist leaders have quickly taken up the invitation, and this has only strengthened the determination of the police force's civilian auxiliaries (the "attachés") to hamper the functioning of the government and parliament.

There has been a big increase in political assassinations. They have taken over state radio and television and are preventing ministers from carrying out their functions. Some have gone into hiding. The army are totally involved in these actions. Is this only an attempt to establish the worst possible relationship of forces for President Aristide and his supporters on the eve of their return to the country?

Or, has the army — or perhaps certain sections of the American administration — decided to prevent him from returning? The coming weeks will provide answers to these questions. —

Arthur Mahon ★

The author, who is a member of the editorial board of the US socialist journal *Against the Current*, and teaches at the University of Michigan, traveled to Haiti in July of this year, on behalf of the Washington Office on Haiti as part of a civilian-observer delegation to investigate human rights abuses.

ALAN WALD — 10 August 1993

IN HIS 1937 appreciation of Jack London's novel 'The Iron Heel' (1907), Leon Trotsky lauded the artist's "prophetic vision" of the authoritarian social order that would come to pass in Europe during the rise of fascism. The exiled Russian revolutionary was particularly struck by London's audacious use of "hyperbole" to bring "the tendencies rooted in capitalism: of oppression, cruelty, bestiality, betrayal, to their extreme expression."¹ Trotsky might have revised his judgement that characterised London's vision as "hyperbole" had he lived to see Haiti under the boot of oppression after the reactionary coup of 30 September 1991, when Lt. General Raoul Cedras overthrew democratically-elected Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The majority of the population, over eighty percent, of this extraordinary country, the setting of CLR James's classic history 'The Black Jacobins' (1938), now lingers in a netherworld of bare subsistence. Once "the greatest colony in the world",² and subsequently brutalised, raped and tortured by the French Empire, United States (US) imperialism (marines occupied the country from 1915 to 1934), and Haiti's own neo-colonial bourgeoisie, the island nation is the poorest country in the western hemisphere with an average annual income of four hundred dollars, an average life span of fifty-five years, and an infant mortality rate of eleven percent.³

1. Trotsky's remarks were written on 16 October 1937 and first appeared in print in *New Internationalist*, April 1945; they are reprinted in Paul N Siegel, ed., 'Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art' (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), pp 221-224.

2. CLR James, 'The Black Jacobins' (New York: Vintage, 1989), p ix.

3. An excellent and recent brochure that excerpts crucial scholarly research and historical material on Haiti, is available as 'Haiti: A Look at the Reality', published by the Quixote Center, PO Box 5206, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

When the coup smashed the dreams and achievements of the seven month period under the leadership of Aristide and the Lavalas movement (*lavalas* means "the flood" and is the term for Aristide's supporters), much of the population receded to a state of demoralised torpor.⁴ The worst slums, such as Cité Soleil in Port-au-Prince, are no longer sites of public clean-up campaigns but are heaped with rubbish as if to make a kind of public statement about the futility of any efforts toward improvement under the present regime.⁵ Our delegation visited the orphanage founded by Aristide, La Fanmi Se Lavi, fire-bombed at the time of the coup (three children were killed, two wounded); it now stands as a gutted hulk, harassment from neighbouring *attachés* (pro-military goons) having forced most of the children to return to the streets.

Manifestations of overt protest still occasionally break out, however, in the form of small demonstrations, on the street or in churches, although they are almost always repressed with clubs and gunfire. But the population usually acts cautiously. Gatherings of more than three people are likely to be regarded as suspect, so organisations function underground and a significant amount of political communication takes place through the structures of the *ti legliz*, the people's wing of the Catholic Church.

Life and death

The country itself is divided into nine departments with over five hundred units, each of the latter with its own section chief, most often a brutal thug who holds the power of life and death over the population in his district, especially the rural areas where most of the people live. Under Aristide there were efforts to create a functioning justice system, change the military and police leadership (a seven thousand-person combined force serves both purposes) by promoting officers committed to democracy, to improve prison conditions, and even dismantle the hated section chiefs. Since the coup such progress has been reversed, returning the country to conditions reminiscent of the worst days of the Duvalier dictatorship.

In the office of the beleaguered Peace and Justice Commission in (downtown) Port-au-Prince, we were told of more than three hundred thousand people living in hiding. Two of the targets of repression were present. The younger man was a school director accused of being a "ring leader" of Aristide supporters by the local section chief. He was beaten and driven from his home. The second was an elderly

peasant, similarly accused, who was ordered by the police to turn his land over to a stranger. The stranger simply announced that he was a previously unknown son of the peasant's father, now come to claim his rightful inheritance. When the peasant asked for proof, the stranger pulled out a weapon.

Students at the state university in Port-au-Prince, reeling from the effects of mass expulsions of themselves and their professors, were hesitant to meet with our delegation for fear that their identities might become disclosed to the police. Some of the purged faculty are drifting toward an alternative university, Quisqueya, a private institution with four hundred enrolled. We visited those who founded the institution in October 1990, mostly disgruntled professors from the Agricultural Programme at the state university. Others, such as a pro-Aristide professor of history with whom we met, continue to teach students off campus.

Umbrella

The situation on the other side of the island is even worse. In a rural town near Cap-Haïtien, we discreetly linked up with fifteen peasant leaders following a Sunday morning mass, in a room near the church arranged by the priest. Photographs and tape-recordings were not allowed. There an umbrella organisation comprised of fifty-five groups (numbering between twenty-five and fifty members each) of women, youth, peasants, and co-operatives with a shared vision, was formed in 1990, after the resignation of General Avril. In the Aristide period, they succeeded in replacing the old section chief with a man they trusted, and the region even began to obtain good judges. Corruption diminished and wages of the peasants increased fifteen to twenty-eight gourds a day. Then came the coup. The old section chief returned and new judges began to be appointed. Many activists went into hiding, where they remain. Thirty young activists tried to flee the country in a boat and were drowned.

In this town, the list of police and army abuses was endless. A young girl who refused to sleep with an associate of the section chief was killed, and no action was taken. The chief had a peasant activist arrested, beaten, and held nine months in jail. Another was promised freedom if he paid six hundred dollars; to raise the amount he was forced to sell his possessions. Two cousins were arrested and extorted for over one thousand dollars to gain freedom. Cattle belonging to peasants was illegally killed and sold. A pro-Arist-

ide peasant was given the wrong papers for his cow, which was then confiscated. A woman activist was taken to a barracks and raped by ten men; the section chief then took payment from the rapists and let them go.

Members of a teachers union, the Federation of Associations of Teachers of the North and North-East (FAENNE), based in Cap-Haïtien, told our delegation similar stories. The organisation was founded in 1986, after Jean-Claude Duvalier fled the country into exile in France, and is comprised of twenty-six associations of teachers, mainly in secondary schools. During the Lavalas period six new public schools were opened in seven months. Following the coup the private sector and Tonton Macoute (para-military rightwing bands) began to move against the Lavalas supporters, forcing leaders and activists in the popular organisations into hiding. Teachers were arrested, beaten and tortured. Forty-two members of the FAENNE in one high school were summarily sacked. One director of a primary school was struck seventy times and could not sit down for seven months. Another barely escaped and spent nine months in hiding. Students were killed and disappeared. One of the persecuted teachers with whom we spoke had applied for political asylum in the US, but, after several months, received back only a letter from the US State Department denying his request.

No interest

The next day we took a copy of this letter to the Cap-Haïtien office of the US Catholic Conference, the organisation contracted by the US government to process such applications. The young attorney there from the US showed no interest in reconsidering the case, but mainly insisted that he had received much satisfaction from the "success stories" — although the teachers with whom we spoke claimed that they were unaware that any of their beleaguered colleagues had actually received an immigration visa.

Those sections of the church who have chosen to ally with, and lead the life of the people, are oppressed as well. The persecution extends to Europeans as well as native Haitians. In another rural area out-

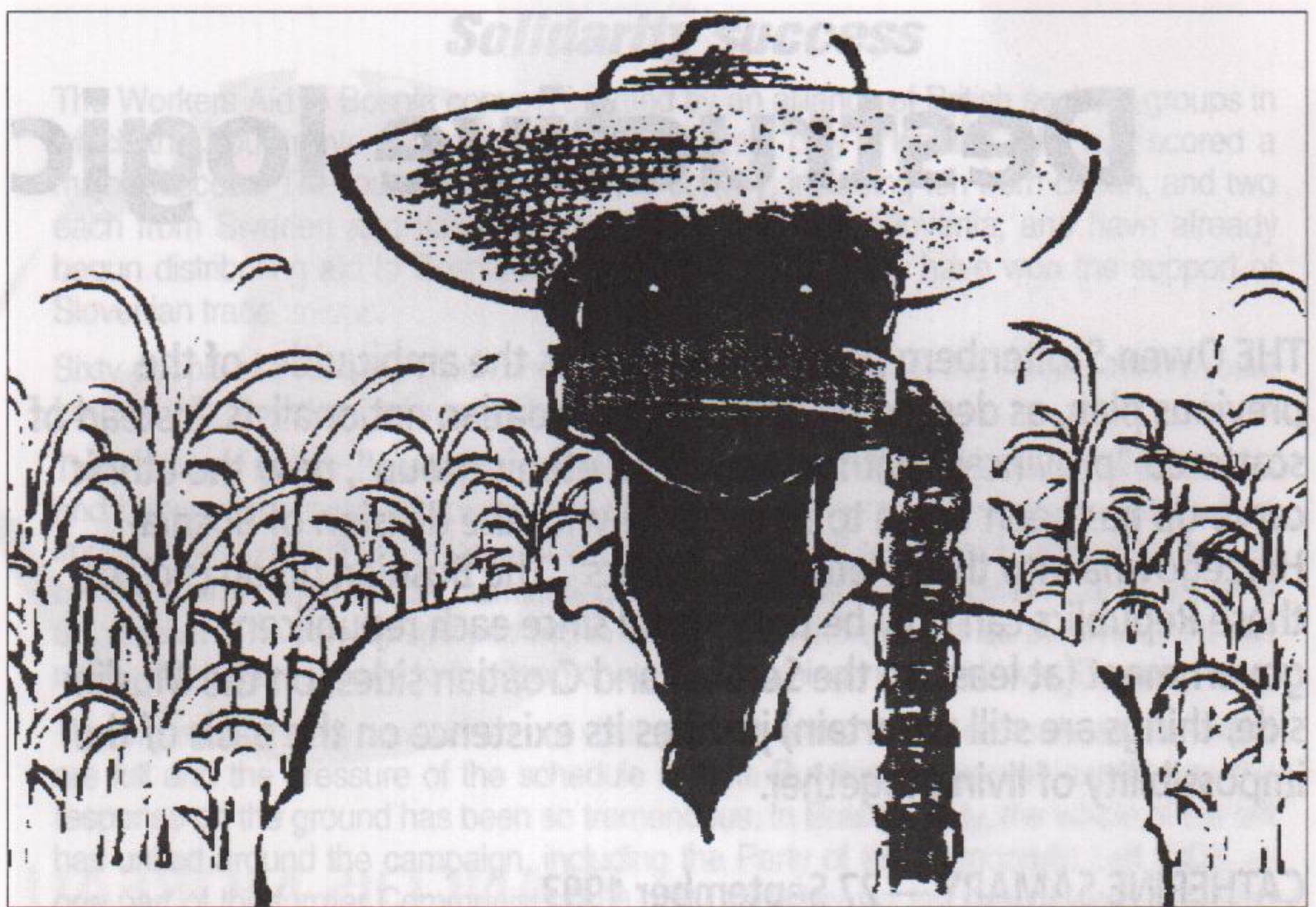
4. Analyses of the coup and its consequences can be found in the following reports by Arthur Mahon in *International Viewpoint*: 'Night of the generals', No 215, 28 October 1991; 'One year after the coup', No 236, 12 October 1992; 'The people and the President', No 243, March 1993. An informative critique of the Clinton administration's policy toward Haiti appears in 'An interview with Cecelia Green: Haiti, Clinton and the movement', *Against the Current*, No 44, March/April 1993.

5. This is the opinion of George Packer in 'Choke hold on Haiti', *Dissent*, summer 1993.

side of Cap-Haïtien we visited the modest compound where Father Marcel, a fifty-year-old Belgian priest who came to Haiti in 1989, formerly resided. A nun described how Marcel had assisted the peasants in building roads and improving their fishing practices. Following the coup, the police began to target him and on 9 November 1991, fired guns into his bedroom. Fortunately Marcel was not at home, but out caring for a sick peasant. Driving back to his home, Marcel passed the police in his jeep and saw that their guns were out. He refused to respond to their demand that he stop, leading them on a wild chase through the backwoods roads that he had come to know so well. Finally, he manoeuvred them into a ravine where they crashed, dumping their guns and hand-grenades among the trees. Marcel lived clandestinely for a period while the police wrecked his home, smashing his typewriter and mimeograph machine. When Marcel was finally captured, they pulled his beard and made him sit for three days on a bench in a military barrack. He was released only on condition of leaving the country.

Missions

Since February 1993, the Organisation of American States and the United Nations (OAS-UN) have placed Missions throughout the country to monitor human rights.⁶ A variety of personnel from various countries have been hired a six-thousand dollars a month (72 thousand dollars a year, worth two and a half times that much in current Haitian dollars) to staff the missions. At Cap-Haïtien we visited the Mission, located in the centre of town between the Mayor's office and the Ministry of the Interior. In our interview with a dozen staff members, who had been there varying lengths of time, we were stunned to discover that no one had ever heard of the Teacher's Union or of its repression. "No one has come in here with that information", a young University of Wisconsin graduate explained to us. When we pointed out that many of the teachers were in hiding, and that one had even fled to the Dominican Republic, she replied: "Well, we can't go to the Dominican Republic to find them, can we?" Acknowledging that the location of the Mission, so near the authorities, might intimidate some of the persecuted from stopping by, members of the Mission pointed out that they did make forays into the region. What about the peasants' organisation that we had met?, we asked. Its leaders had claimed that the OAS-UN Mission met with the police in their region, but had failed to show up to a meeting with their representatives, who



were ready and waiting. Members of the Mission confirmed that this had occurred, but offered no explanation as to why the situation had not been remedied in subsequent weeks.

Prisoners

Later, we met with a local Cap-Haïtien group called Friends of the Prisoners. This had been founded in 1976 by a French nun whose brother had been jailed in France, and who decided to organise to obtain the right of prisoners to attend mass and participate in a choir, and also for the Friends to deliver gifts of food to the incarcerated. Under Aristide, the delegations of Friends actually began to receive assistance from the state and were allowed in the cells. After the coup, however, the situation deteriorated horrendously so that prisoners were sometimes so crowded into cells that they could only sleep in shifts, dead bodies were left to decay in cells, and food so sparse that the prisoners devised a rotating system involving fast days for some that would allow others to eat more substantial meals. When asked if the Friends had reported such conditions to the OAS-UN Mission, members of the group were horrified. They knew from experience that, due to the "neutrality" of the Mission, complaints would be checked with the police, which would lead to the persecution of the Friends themselves. Referring to a case that we later confirmed at the OAS-UN Mission at Port-au-Prince, the Friends described a visit by the Cap-Haïtien Mission to a prison where a prisoner did complain of conditions, only to be beaten nearly to death upon their departure.

Under such circumstances, it was hardly surprising that few of the Haitians

we met put any faith in the Accord signed by Cedras and Aristide on Governor's Island, New York, in early July. "How can anyone make the army respect any agreements?", one of the Friends of the Prisoners asked. Among the glaring inadequacies of the Accord are its failure to address the illegal parliamentary election of January 1993 that gave a majority to anti-Aristide forces, and the apparent amnesty it gives to the murderous coup-leaders and supporters.⁷ Still, what hope exists among the people we interviewed is pinned on the return of Aristide and the inspiration to struggle that may be provided by his presence in the presidential post. "To this end," one of the members of the peasant's organisation said, "the population will gladly suffer the effects of any embargo or boycott of Haiti," even when they know that the rich are escaping the effects (some may even be prospering from it), and "even if it drives us back to age of the donkey." ★

6. On 3 June 1993, the International Civilian Mission of the UN and the OAS issued a fifteen-page Interim Report covering 9 February to 31 May 1993. It is available from the UN.

7. The Quixote Center, the address of which is given in note 3 above, has also published an excellent critique of the Accord, 'The Challenges Ahead'.

Grassroots newsletter

A newsletter is now being issued every two weeks by supporters of the grassroots democratic movement, available for a subscription of \$18 a year.

Haiti Info, Haitian Information Bureau, c/o Lynx Air, Box 407139, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33340, USA.

Destructive logic unfurls

THE Owen-Stoltenberg peace plan removes the ambiguities of the previous plan, as desired by Serbian and Croatian nationalists. Instead of scattered "provinces" with a "dominant ethnic group", now the ethnic carve-up has been taken to its extreme with the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into three "ethnic Republics". The Bosnian union (sic!) of these Republics can only be provisional since each republican government (at least on the Serbian and Croatian sides; on the Muslim side, things are still uncertain) justifies its existence on the basis of the impossibility of living together.

CATHERINE SAMARY — 27 September 1993

THIS "union" will not bring an end to the war; none of these States is homogenous. Even with two million refugees and displaced persons, even after the "ethnic cleansing" already carried out, no territory is homogenous.

Each community will see its co-nationals sacrificed for having had the misfortune of not wanting or not being able to be "on the inside" of the correct borders. Everywhere, the existence of enclaves of oppressed minorities will be generalised. It is these enclaves that we will have to defend, everywhere.

While the "Bosnians", in the sense of a community that is mixed and proud to be so, are the big losers in this plan, it will in no way stabilise the situation in the neighbouring republics — with the heightened risks of a Balkan explosion and the formation of a Palestine in the heart of Europe.

The Bosnian parliament (now missing several dozen of its Serbian and Croatian deputies) began sitting on September 28 to examine the latest proposals. Alija Izetbegovic said he was ready to accept the Owen-Stoltenberg plan on condition that the "Muslim State" has an access to the sea and that NATO and the United States (rather than the UN) ensure the application of the accords, particularly the protection of the "enclaves" under siege. Sarajevo would have the status of an open city placed under UN protection; and Mostar would be placed under the control of the EEC.

At the end of August, Radovan Karadzic, leader of the "Serbian republic" of Bosnia, accepted the plan that would set up the three "ethnic States", in spite of the fact that 20% of territory would be returned to the Muslim part. But we can expect

that in practice the Serbian militia and population in these territories will refuse to come under the control of those who were their victims during the ethnic cleansing.

In the end, the Muslim offensive that accompanied their demand for an access to the sea will work to the advantage of the Serbian part, even though Karadzic has rejected any idea of renegotiation. Through an acceptance of changes that are unfavourable to the Croatian part, which now controls the coastal region, the Serbians will get their own access to the sea.

In comparison with the Vance-Owen plan which they signed with great enthusiasm, the Croats of "Herzeg-Bosna" lose a significant part of their territory.

For months, the Muslims of "Herzeg-Bosna" had been removed from all positions of responsibility and placed under the military control of the Croatian HVO. But the fiction of the alliance was broken during the violent "ethnic cleansing" of Mostar. From that point on, the Bosnian military offensive had the objective of acquiring territory for the rump "Muslim State", to the detriment primarily of its former Croatian ally.

The Greater Serbia project is the "big winner" of this pseudo peace plan — but not the Serbian people. While the "deputies" of the Bosnian Serbian republic may have celebrated the recognition of their State, the territory itself is already living in synch with Serbia — that is, in synch with its currency and its economic collapse.¹

Trafficking and corruption are widespread. This explains the rebellion of Serbian officers which recently shook Karadzic's grip. He has been on television recently praising the "justice" of the officers' demands; but he adds that they threatened to "throw into doubt everything we

have won with our State." We can only hope that this is the case.

But the recognition of the Bosnian Serbian State will perhaps accentuate separatist demands in Kosovo; but also in Croatia, where the Serbs of Krajina will want their own State to be recognised. This is all the more the case since the recent signing by Izetbegovic and Karadzic of an accord that recognises the Bosnian Serbian State's right to separate following a referendum in two years' time; in this arrangement, the "Muslim" State would hang onto international representation.

This agreement provoked great panic on the Croatian side. Will all the haggling between Milosevic and Tudjman lead to the loss of the Croatian Krajina in exchange for Herzeg-Bosna? Many Croats do not accept this (even if, unfortunately, they do not denounce ethnic purification in Croatia and would be ready to "settle" the question of Krajina by force).

The Anti-War Centre of Zagreb has courageously organised meetings against the Serbian-Croatian carve-up and aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There was no shortage of insults and death threats. The headline of a trashy article that appeared in the August 19 edition of *Slavonski* magazine read, "Serbs, leftists, feminists and homosexuals are making war on war".

For the first time, in the beginning of September, a semi-independent newspaper in Rijeka, *Novi List*, gave column space to the Croats of central Bosnia. Under the headline "They have betrayed central Bosnia", one of them, a member of the Christian Democratic Party, accuses Tudjman and Mate Boban of being responsible for the Muslim offensive. "Mate Boban is not the representative of all the Croats [of Bosnia]", he adds, referring to Stjepan Kljucic as the only legitimate Croatian deputy.

But Kljucic was excluded at the same time from Tudjman's HDZ party and from the Bosnian presidency — when Boban's Herzeg-Bosna was being set up in July 1992. Herzeg-Bosna refused to accept the "bad Croatian" refugees from central Bosnia.

While there are victims in all the communities sacrificed by their military leaders' hunger for power and territory, the

1. New bills of 10 billion dinars have just been issued in Belgrade. Each one is only worth a few dollars.

Bosnian Muslims, Islamicised Slavs, only had Bosnia-Herzegovina for a State. Many among them, in the cities, were members of small non-nationalist parties in whose ranks could be found Serbs and Croats who considered themselves "Bosnian".

But the weakness of and divisions inside these parties have been dramatic, reflecting the generalised decomposition of socialist initiatives of solidarity across ex-Yugoslavia and internationally. In response to the war, they have selected to give critical support Izetbegovic and join his government.

This means that there was no independent "Bosnian" force to publicly express an alternative orientation based on the mobilisation of the effected populations. The Bosnian government was fully oriented towards the hope that foreign intervention would save a Bosnia-Herzegovina recognised by the UN.

The destructive logic of building States on an exclusive ethnic basis will continue to unfurl. The nature of the Muslim rump State remains ambiguous, but many Sarajevo residents say they are happy to be under the protection of the UN — including as protection against the growing dangers of fundamentalist outbursts. These dangers can only increase given new dramatic developments in the misalliance with the Croats.

Raids by Croatian police on refugee camps in the middle of the night have created a collective psychosis. Muslims' identification papers are torn up and then they are driven out for being "without papers".

In Serbia, the hundreds of thousands of Serbian refugees are used as a pressure base for the carrying out of an apartheid policy of "Serbification" of Kosovo, where Serbs are offered the jobs of laid off Albanians along with many other material privileges. The same thing is happening in Vojvodina, where Seselj's militia are being supported against the Hungarians and Croats.

These measures have to be resisted in all the republics of ex-Yugoslavia and across Europe. They are making refugees of new immigrants facing racist exclusion fed by omnipresent unemployment. The fight for asylum rights must also be part of the campaign against the failure of the so-called "international community" and "European community" in ex-Yugoslavia. Defiance of all these governments should strengthen the prospects of a long-term European solidarity campaign oriented towards the unions, and community, women and youth organisations.

The first "Workers' Aid" convoy — symbolically targeting the workers of

Solidarity success

The Workers Aid to Bosnia convoy, initiated by an alliance of British socialist groups in which the Fourth International's British supporters play a leading role, has scored a major success. The fourteen trucks on the convoy, including ten from Britain, and two each from Sweden and Italy have arrived in Jesenica, Slovenia, and have already begun distributing aid to Bosnian refugees in Croatia. They have won the support of Slovenian trade unions.

Sixty people are now with the convoy, including supporters of the Fourth International from Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium and Italy.

The Workers' Aid for Bosnia campaign defends the right of multi-ethnic Bosnia to exist and brings a message of solidarity to the people of Bosnia. The convoy has had an important impact both in Britain and the rest of Europe. It set off for France after its successful tour through Britain culminating in a visit to the Trades Union Congress on 9 September. The convoy split into two in order to visit more countries but even so it has not been able to respond to the flood of requests coming in from all over Europe.

The organisers even considered not visiting some of the towns on route as the lorries are full and the pressure of the schedule is tight. But this option was avoided as the response on the ground has been so tremendous. In Brescia, Italy, the whole of the left has united around the campaign, including the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS — one part of the former Communist party). Fifty trade unions are giving support, having organised their own lorries to join the convoy.

Morale was high and as the convoy travelled through Europe the teams became better organised and more cohesive. So far the convoy has collected over £70 thousand in cash and tens of thousands of pounds worth of material aid. The convoy has agreed to take in two-thousand tons of goods collected by British Muslim Aid following agreement that it would be distributed to all the people in Tuzla — Muslim, Serb and Croat.

In Paris, the Communist party (PCF) gave the campaign a free stall at its annual Humanité fete and 25 thousand leaflets were distributed. The General Confederation of Workers (CGT) allowed the campaign to collect at their conference, something which is unprecedented. The Mayor of Montreuil (on the southern edge of Paris) has donated a permanent warehouse to store aid.

Negotiations and plans are currently being made to set-up a similar warehouse in Berlin. Members of Workers' Aid have also established a permanent office, warehouse and bank account in Jesenica, Slovenia.

Two juggernauts from Scandinavia joined the convoy in Berlin on 15 September. These two vehicles toured Denmark and Sweden collecting £18 thousand in addition to filling the lorries with essential goods.

In Courtrai, Belgium the northern leg of the convoy held a very successful press conference and appeared on national television. In Hungary, the National Miners Union and the Socialist party have agreed to support the convoy and a series of events have been organised. The convoy route currently covers the following cities: Lille, Liege, Courtrai, Antwerp, Oberhausen, Hamburg, Cologne, Berlin, Vienna, Graz, Paris, Charleroi, Nancy, Strasbourg, Basel, Geneva, and Brescia.

At the same time Irish Solidarity with Bosnia is organising support for the convoy. Irish postal workers have managed to get information distributed by the Post Office and members of the National Union of Journalists have persuaded RTE (Ireland's radio and television station) to stop describing Bosnia as a "Muslim" state but to refer to it as "multi-ethnic Bosnia".

Politically the campaign has huge significance. The co-operation of the French Communist party, support from the Hungarian Socialist party and from the Italian PDS in Brescia for a convoy which not only brings material aid but carries a political message of support for the "multi-ethnic state of Bosnia" and solidarity with its people, is a remarkable breakthrough for a campaign launched by small organisations in Britain.

The significance of the convoy lies in its conscious attempt to rebuild workers' internationalism. Discussions are under way about the possibility of making Workers' Aid a permanent framework for international solidarity. A major conference of Workers' Aid will take place in Manchester on 30/31 October — the second day being devoted to an international meeting of supporters. The convoy project will continue so long as the war in ex-Yugoslavia does. — **Helen Shaw** ★

Tuzla, where the Bosnian multi-ethnic resistance was strongest — has not yet reached its destination. But it has reached its

goal: that of finally beginning to break the passivity and paralysis of the working class movement. ★

POLAND

THE results of the elections of 19 September are a striking rejection of the political elites with roots in Solidarnosc and have deepened the political crisis that plagues the young Polish bourgeois democracy. Provisional results point to a clear victory for the parties (SLD and PSL) with origins in the former regime, a breakthrough for the left (SLD and UP), a defeat for the parties linked to the outgoing government and the collapse of the Catholic right.

The results for the Diet (the parliament) are the following (in percentage of votes cast and number of deputies): SLD (post-Stalinist left) 20.41% and 171; PSL (post-Stalinist peasant party) 15.4% and 132; UD (post-Solidarnosc liberals) 10.59% and 74; UP (post-Solidarnosc left) 7.28% and 41; KPN (nationalist and populist right) 5.77% and 22; BBWR (bloc built on President Walesa's initiative) 5.41% and 16; German minority 4 seats (not subjected to the 5% minimum).

The electoral alliance of Catholic traditionalists received 6.37%, and is thus shut out from the Diet from not having obtained the 8% minimum required for coalitions. Other parties, including the ultra-liberal former Prime Minister Bielecki's KLD and the Solidarity slate were shut out, having failed to obtain the 5% minimum for parties.

As such, voters have clearly rejected both the neo-liberal policy of capitalist restoration and attempts to impose the dictates of the Catholic Church. The election of parties that more or less defended social gains clearly denotes the hope for an alternative path of social and economic development that can guarantee both political democracy and social justice.

These aspirations come into contradiction with the programmes of both the victors and the vanquished. Indeed, all parties swear by the "continuation of reforms" and respect for the dictates of the market. All are pinning their hopes on an agreement with the IMF. Finally, given the level of social discontent, the political apparatuses are hesitating to take up their governmental responsibilities.

The formation of a new government will be a laborious procedure — and this new government may soon find itself at loggerheads with the working classes, who are hoping for a quick improvement in their living conditions. — **Jan Malewski** ★



FRANÇOIS MOREAU (1956-1993)

OUR friend and comrade François Moreau (known to many as Hébert) passed away on September 3, at the age of 37, after a short struggle with Kaposi's sarcoma, one of the worst AIDS-related illnesses.

François was active in the Québec Trotskyist movement, in the Fourth International, from 1975 onwards. From 1977, he played a key role in the writing, editing and production of our various publications, *Lutte ouvrière*, *Combat socialiste*, *Gauche socialiste* and *La Gauche*.

From 1979 he was a member of the central leadership of the section of the Fourth International in the Canadian State, and participated in the leadership and decision-making bodies of the International. He was a member of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International.

A trained economist and professor at the University of Ottawa, François was a rare being: a professional intellectual devoted body and soul to the building of a revolutionary Marxist workers organisation. Aside from his writings for the party, François was the author of three books on the Québec economy and many contributions to specialised journals and collective works.

At the time of his death, he was working on an even more ambitious project: a concrete analysis, with figures, of unequal exchange in the era of imperialist decay.

Even in his most theoretical writings, François was in no way an impartial university intellectual floating above the fray. His goal was always, as Marx said, "to wither away the flowers that hide humankind's chains, not to deprive

humankind of flowers but to make it see that it is in chains."

François played an invaluable role in the formulation of the line and political intervention of the section of the Fourth International in the Canadian State, *Gauche socialiste/Socialist Challenge*. Those that were active with him know just how untiring he was in the concrete struggle.

But he took greatest pleasure in his unflagging work of political and economic study with his comrades. François took all the time in the world to work with his union comrades on the concrete analysis of their local, of the employer's policies and of the approach of the union leadership.

For his youth comrades, François not only did presentations on the history and traditions of the revolutionary workers' movement, he also worked on a complete understanding of the exclusion of contemporary youth from both the labour market and the educational system.

He also calculated child care needs precisely and criticised government, employer and union policies in the area of equality — doing everything he could to make sure that women comrades could take their rightful place in the revolutionary Marxist organisation.

This past summer, François didn't want people talking about his illness, not because he was ashamed, far from it, but because he feared that it would demoralise his comrades. He was very aware of the fact that the working class and social movements are going through a very difficult period of defensive struggles and defeats.

But François was wrong to worry about his comrades. He has left us the wealth of his writings; but above all he has left us the example of his life — an inspiring alternative to the careerist individualism that has claimed so many of his generation. *La Gauche* ★

