

international

VIEWPOINT

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Russia :

Unpleasant surprise

Ireland :

The unlikely peace

Dossier :

Debate on Israeli-PLO Accords



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Trade hypocrisy

"GATT has nothing to do with free trade, but rather the liberalisation of trade within certain parameters [...] It is wrong to say that liberalisation is going to make the poor rich as a result of the opportunities offered to them."

It was no lover of protectionism that made these remarks at the end of last November, but Peter Sutherland, the director general of GATT, the very one responsible for steering the so-called Uruguay round through its final stages. In the event, the round was concluded on December 14 amidst a mass media propaganda blitz and an array of chauvinist excesses that were grotesque to say the least.

ALFONSO MORO

THE lords of international capital have waged a holy crusade these last seven years — since 1986, when the Uruguay round of negotiations began — for the dismantling of customs regulations and the elimination of non-tariff barriers to the circulation of merchandise, all in the name of "free trade".

Free trade? We've never been further from it. The USA, Japan and the European Union have taken 80% of world trade for themselves in trade between themselves, while 20% of the world's population is involved in only a miserable 0.9% of world trade. Could things be any more blatant?

To be sure, the last seven years have given rise to real disagreements between the major imperialist powers. In fact, the final product is more of a compromise than an agreement. But this

cannot hide the obvious — the dominant feature remains the current state of crisis of the world economy, initiated in the 1970s, characterised by persistently inadequate conditions for capital valorisation, and by an unresolved question: who will pay the consequences?

In the area of services, an area which offers the best chances for the internal development of a country and for access to the world market, principles such as "intellectual property" have been firmly entrenched. This is nothing more than a measure of exploitation imposed on the poorest countries in fields such as medicine and the manufacture of computers.

The benefits of the agricultural agreement are ambiguous to say the least. At the same time that poor countries are asked to eliminate subsidies

and protectionist measures, and to substitute crops for internal consumption with those meant for export, malnutrition and famine keep on growing.

Spooned on Ricardo's old liberal theory on international trade, the major imperialist powers conducted the negotiations of the decrepit GATT institution in their own inimitable style. This was a hypocritical spectacle in which three large regional blocs, each with their own conductors, shared out the world market amongst themselves — while the great majority of countries, where four fifths of the world population live, participated as silent guests, with no right to speak.

Indeed, they have had to pay their way into a show run largely at their expense. ★

New Year's subscription appeal

AT the beginning of 1994, we here at *International Viewpoint* are forced to take a close look at our current situation and at our future. Our magazine does not pretend to be the best monthly magazine of political, social and economic analysis in the world. For that, we would have to have far greater resources than the measly sums currently at our disposal. We can neither pay people to make expert contributions nor use the talents of specialists among our friends and supporters as much as we would like. In times of economic crisis, paid work takes priority for people who have bills to pay at the end of the month.

Nevertheless, we have been able to maintain — with a slimmed down production team — a constant flow of contributions from friends and supporters that make us the best international Marxist monthly magazine of news and analysis. We are not satisfied with ritual incantations in response to world events, and we try to give food for thought to our readers, many of whom do not necessarily share our point of view but are interested in our reading of world events.

Alas, the survival of *IV* is once again endangered. 1994 is the year that will make or break us. Clearly, our Achilles' heel, as for all the activist press, is finances. One year ago, we were forced to go from fortnightly to monthly publication, and this has enabled us to reduce our costs significantly. But we have to increase revenues before the end of this year or face either reducing the magazine's frequency once again or ceasing publication outright.

Altogether we need 1,200 new subscriptions for our English and French monthlies combined. This is why we are making this appeal in our pages — directly to readers who want our press to survive. We urge you to make a special effort to subscribe (at the solidarity rate if possible), to renew your subscription, and to take out subscriptions for friends and colleagues whom our magazine might interest.

We also send out an appeal to readers who work in institutions with libraries (universities, research institutes, governmental and international institutions) to get these institutions to subscribe. Institutional (multi-reader) subscriptions cost the equivalent of two ordinary subscriptions, and are therefore very precious indeed.

A combined effort in 1994 can help us out of the current slump, and crown the year with success. On that note, the *IV* team extends its best wishes for the New Year. ★

Unpleasant surprise

THE 12 December elections were designed by the Yeltsin administration to give all advantages to the liberals and the President, pushing his proposals for a new, authoritarian constitution. All seemed to be proceeding to plan: several opposition parties had been banned or disqualified, the opposition press curtailed, and television gave massive propaganda for the pro-Yeltsin parties. However, in spite of these conditions, the constitution was agreed by only the smallest possible margin (fifty-seven percent in favour on a turn-out of fifty-three percent — a meagre thirty percent of all eligible voters), while in the parliamentary poll the nationalists, led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and the post-communist alliance of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Agrarian Party, scored a surprise victory.

POUL FUNDER LARSEN — Moscow, 17 December 1993

CONSEQUENTLY the adoption of Yeltsin's constitution in the referendum did not become the expected major victory for the pro-capitalist forces, backed by the West, in their attempts to consolidate an authoritarian Presidential regime in Russia. In a country ridden by economic depression and profound social crisis the elections showed that there is no stability in sight, and that both opposition to the liberal reforms and divisions among Yeltsin's acolytes are on the rise. The spectacular success of the ardent chauvinist Zhirinovskiy also highlights the dangerous rightward shift in Russian politics.

"Yeltsin's victory"

Both the results and the turn-out (down almost twenty percent on the Presidential elections of June 1991) point to the anger and disappointment in Russian society after five years of empty promises and ruinous economic reform. This feeling, already apparent in the April referendum (heralded "Yeltsin's victory" by much of the bourgeois press), showed itself first and foremost in the total humiliation of the pro-Yeltsin blocs (Russia's Choice, the Party of Russian Unity, and Concord), which received little more than twenty percent of the vote.

In spite of their huge resources and last minute attempts to court regional leaders, these parties were wiped out in most of provincial Russia, and did not do impressively well even in the major cities. The liberals' claim to broad support for

their social and economic policies therefore appears to be a weak one.

Furthermore, the pro-Yeltsin forces are now politically quite isolated in the new parliament, since they consistently rejected any talk of a "coalition government" during the campaign in the belief that they would be able to form a government unaided. This was despite the fact that they could not even agree on forming a common platform; instead setting up four heterogeneous blocs and fighting among themselves.

After 12 December the inability of the Yeltsinites to construct a stable ruling party seems as pronounced as ever, in spite of their countless attempts: Democratic Russia, the Movement for Democratic Reform, Democratic Choice, Russia's Choice, and so on. This inability points to the weak social foundations of the restorationist project, and to the heterogeneity of the forces involved.

Different parts of the old *nomenklatura* and new business elites are rallying behind Yeltsin, who is hovering above this fragile alliance; but there is no clear common project, and the various components are more interested in enriching and empowering themselves than in consolidating an alliance for long-term government. In the election campaign this developed to the point where no one denied it when the centrist politician, Arkady Volskiy, talked about "the civil war in the cabinet".

The centrist forces, which had hoped to occupy the void left by Yeltsin's elimination of much of the former opposition

after the attack on Parliament, also made quite a bad showing at the polls. Even if, for example, Volskiy's Civic Union still retains a social influence, through the support it commands among directors in state industry, this was not sufficient to gain any significant number of votes.

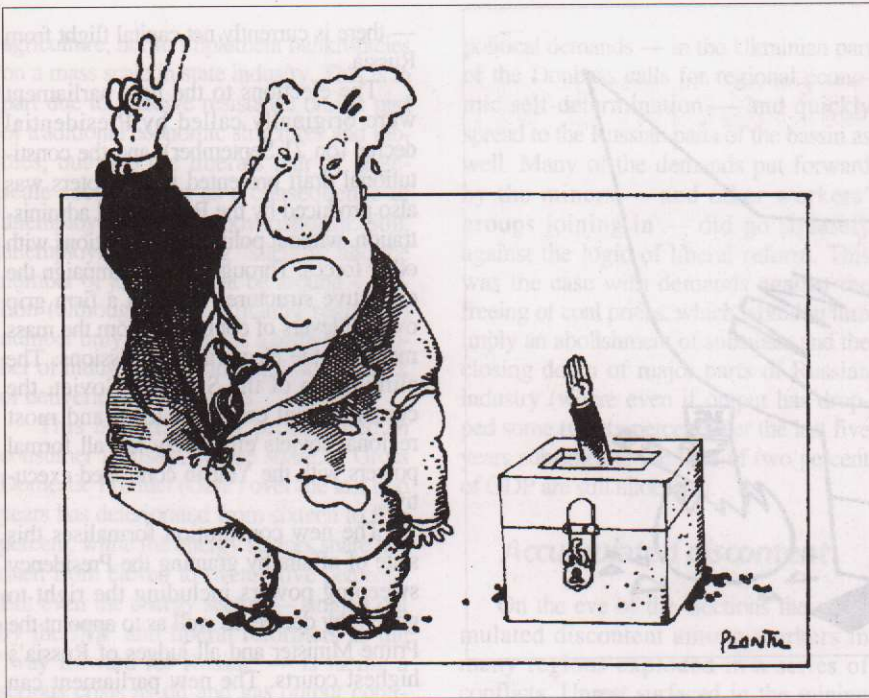
As regards the much hyped liberal-centrist alliance, led by the economic "whiz-kid" Grigor Yavalinsky, it polled less than ten percent of the vote — far from the major break-through which many had expected. In the face of the continuing drop in already abysmal living standards and the global crisis of Russian society the centre-parties and their attempts at promoting the concept of a "socially-oriented market economy" (whatever that might be in the Russian context) were rejected by most voters as too much of the same old thing at a time when people, fed up with Gaidarnomics', have started searching for more radical alternatives.

While the Western press has unilaterally focused on the indeed ominous Zhirinovskiy phenomenon it is worth keeping in mind that three other "slates" which presented themselves in some way as an alternative to the Yeltsin government did quite well in the elections.

The Women of Russia alliance, with links to both the traditional women's organisations and (as with most parties) to new entrepreneurial structures, waged a sober campaign focussing on the disastrous situation of the social services and the general onslaught on women's rights. In a situation where almost seventy-five percent of all unemployed are women, and where women's wages have fallen to around forty percent of male wages (down from seventy percent under the old regime), it is hardly surprising that this slate, although generally failing to offer concrete answers to the issues it raised, managed to gain some eight percent of the vote.¹

The Agrarian Party and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, which are divided rather according to their different spheres of activity and influence rather than by programmatic differences, scored twenty-five percent of the vote. The latter in particular, with its 600 thousand membership and access to the old networks of the *nomenklatura*, as well as

1. Figures on the situation of Russian women from *Izvestiya*, 2 December 1993.



mighty commercial structures (originating from the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union), is no doubt a lasting player in Russian politics. It is however, badly equipped to embody a real alternative to the liberal reforms or the growing nationalism in Russian political life. Indeed the Party's economic programme is less than explicit on the kind of economic regulation it envisages — and the close collaboration of its chairman, Gennady Zhyuganov, with nationalist circles, through the Front for National Salvation (of which he was a co-chairman), does not bode well for its ability to distance itself from the hard-line proposals of, for example, a Zhirinovskiy.

Already by early November an analyst for the Moscow newspaper, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, saw the writing on the wall for the "victorious" liberals who believed that they had freed themselves from all opposition by cracking down on the Supreme Soviet: "The Russian Supreme Soviet had quite a strong social base, and this remains true. They (the Yeltsin camp) claim that this base amounts to no more than twenty percent.

However, opinion polls show that sixty percent of the population want a return to the situation of 1985. This is the result of a major drop in people's living standards. Many people dislike the Americanisation of our life-style, Western cultural expansion, the triumph of consumerist psychology, and the weakness of the State, which is not able to defend its interests nor those of ethnic Russians in the zones of conflict throughout the former USSR. These factors work against the cur-

rent ruling elite."²

Indeed these factors work in favour of those political forces calling for increased intervention and the resurrection of a "strong Russia" in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and internationally. This was no secret to the Yeltsinites, who therefore excluded most slates on the etatist/nationalist wing of Russian politics from the elections. But they did not obstruct the slate of Zhirinovskiy, whose relations with the Yeltsin administration are in reality quite ambiguous.

After his failed bid for the Presidency in 1991 Zhirinovskiy did not clearly stand up against Yeltsin: he participated in the self-styled Constitutional Assembly which Yeltsin created over the summer, did not side with the Supreme Soviet in their struggle with Yeltsin, and, alone among the oppositionists, endorsed Yeltsin's new authoritarian constitution.

No wonder that Yeltsin's influential press-secretary, Kostilov, when asked on election night to comment on Zhirinovskiy's victory, answered that he would not rule out his participation in the government!³

Yeltsin might have perceived Zhirinovskiy as "the lesser evil" among the nationalists; but obviously no one in the Yeltsin camp foresaw the landslide victory for his party. This victory, won with much of the same populist posturing which made Yeltsin the darling of the democrats some four years ago, is not a vote for Zhirinovskiy's programme in full (since this is largely unknown), nor is it a vote for "fascism" — although there are undoubtedly quasi-fascist elements in his rhetoric and

slogans.

It is a vote of protest, drawing on popular anger against the disastrous consequences of liberal reform and reaching out to, for example, many former Communist Party members. In Lithuania and recently Poland, the reformed communist parties have managed to draw this kind of support (and according to opinion polls this could soon happen in Ukraine and Belorussia as well), but due to the specific situation in Russia, and particularly the prevalent mood of nostalgia in relation to the "lost empire", nationalists of the Zhirinovskiy-type are also currently well positioned to benefit.

For national minorities within Russia, Zhirinovskiy's scarcely veiled anti-semitism and jingoism is a disturbing warning of things to come. But he is far from alone in Russia in promoting the policies of "ethnic cleansing" in Russia. During the state of emergency in Moscow from 3 October the liberal city authorities used the opportunity to get rid of tens of thousands of people, primarily from the Caucasian states, who were making a living in Moscow as, for example, as street traders.

Political fragility

Above all, Zhirinovskiy's victory underlines the fragility of the whole political system in Russia today. The absence of real parties, the unclear division of power, the authoritarian yearnings of the ruling elite, the weakness of the political institutions — all this gives strength to populist outfits such as Zhirinovskiy's party.

This is a very dangerous development, particularly if the political struggle which Yeltsin introduced into the army should continue, and if Zhirinovskiy manages to convert his passive support into an organised extreme-right force. This is not presently the case, but the political earthquake of 12 December suggests that it is a possible development which no one can afford to ignore.

While the final composition of the new parliament will not be clear until it convenes in January, it seems safe to assume that there will be a solid majority against shock therapy of the Gaidar-type. Formally the new constitution allows Yeltsin to dissolve the new parliament, should it become too troublesome, as he did with the old one.

However, in reality, this might be difficult both in terms of possible popular reactions and as regards his ability to

2. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 3 November 1993.

3. *Ostankino television*, 12 December 1993.



control the state apparatus. Although Yeltsin retains strong influence among the higher echelons of the "power ministries" (the army, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Security) a breakdown of the election results reveals that the anti-Yeltsin parties have massive support amongst the army rank-and-file.

Further, Yeltsin's drive over recent months to force through a constitution which takes away the rights of national republics within Russia — in order to centralise the Federation which has been consistently weakened over the last years — could soon backfire. The extremely low turn-out in a series of republics (such as, the important Tatarstan) may in turn act as a pretext for regional elites to assert their independence from Moscow, and thereby force the centre into a confrontation in which it is far from certain of winning.

Yeltsin does still have certain room to manoeuvre, particularly if he continues the foreign policy re-orientation which has been quietly under way for some time. Using the sheer economic advantage of Russia to re-establish the traditional, hierarchical relations with the CIS states, and combining this with growing military engagement in the other states (either by "proxy" as in Moldovas Dniestr-province and Abkhazia, or directly, as in western Georgia and Tadjikistan), Yeltsin has managed to re-assert Russian dominance.

This could be one element in a new, increasingly nationalist profile which would play well with the army and the 25 million Russians outside the borders of the Russian Federation. Combined with a certain modification of the economic policies, so as to satisfy the influential direc-

tors and agrarian lobbies, this could be a way for Yeltsin to cut into the support base of the opposition.

However such a re-orientation might very well put Yeltsin on a collision course with the imperialist powers which have been supporting him. Western interests are themselves not unambiguous: security interests, which gave priority to at least some degree of social and national stability in the post-Soviet space (and therefore tend to endorse Russian enforcement of "law and order" in this framework), are in conflict with a certain interest in reducing Russian influence — apparent in Western attempts to curtail Russian armament sales.

"Irrevocable" reforms

At the same time security concerns and economic interests are also interacting in a contradictory fashion: the economic prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) obviously pay little attention to political stability, being aimed at the swiftest possible dismantlement of the old economic structures so as to make the economic reforms "irrevocable".

In most quarters of Russian politics, Western influence now seems to be on the decline, as it is becoming clear that the much hyped "Marshall-plan for Russia" is nothing but a mirage, and that the reality is quite different: while total foreign investments in Russia are at US\$7 billion, Russian enterprises have deposits of some US\$10-15 billion in foreign banks. This suggests that far from approaching annual investments of US\$50 billion — which the Russian government estimates is necessary for the restructuring to succeed

— there is currently net capital flight from Russia.

The elections to the new parliament were originally called by Presidential decree (on 21 September), and the constitutional draft presented to the voters was also produced by the Presidential administration, without political consultations with other forces. Throughout the campaign the executive structures retained a firm grip over all levers of control — from the mass media to the electoral commissions. The elimination of the Supreme Soviet, the constitutional court, all local and most regional soviets effectively left all formal powers with the Yeltsin controlled executive.

The new constitution formalises this state of affairs by granting the Presidency sweeping powers including the right to govern by decree, as well as to appoint the Prime Minister and all judges of Russia's highest courts. The new parliament can only make "decisions" about state spending if the government accepts it, and ministers are not accountable to the elected body.

Furthermore it will be practically impossible for parliament to impeach the President or even amend the constitution, while the President can dissolve the parliament or introduce a state of emergency quite easily. With the Presidential election by all accounts being put off until 1996 (while some liberals are suggesting that 1998 may be more appropriate!) Yeltsin formally remains in a position to ignore the new parliament and govern by decree, as he has been doing for the last three months.⁴

The continuing political and constitutional crisis, which has now lasted two years, is not only an indication of the fragility of political institutions and the degree of disintegration of the State apparatus, but also linked directly to the impasse of neo-liberal economic reform after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the price-shock of January 1992.

The various half-baked reform measures since 1989 have effectively cut industrial production in half, while none of the parameters set up by the IMF for "financial stabilisation" have been met: inflation is expected to reach an annual rate of 12-1300 percent at the end of 1993 and the budget deficit is way above the five percent demanded by the IMF (probably at some fifteen to twenty percent).⁵

The government has not managed to slash subsidies to industrial enterprises and

4. Between 21 September and 15 October 1993 Yeltsin issued 233 decrees.

5. According to *Izvestiya*, 10 December 1993, the drop in industrial production will amount to 16.6% for 1993.

agriculture, nor to implement bankruptcies on a mass scale in state industry. This is in part due to massive resistance on the part of traditional economic structures and lobbies, but also the liberals fear of large-scale social unrest as a consequence of unemployment and impoverishment. Still, unemployment is rising "silently" and the number of jobless might be around 4 million (although those officially registered number only 1 million) as a growing number of industries are closing down for lack of deliveries and/or outlets.

This is particularly pronounced in consumer industry, whose share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the last two years has deteriorated from sixteen to five percent, while the energy sectors share has risen from eleven to twenty-five percent.⁶ But even the energy sector — singled out by the IMF and liberal reformers as the "way forward for Russia" — is facing a serious crisis as oil and gas output continues to drop and enterprises are massively defaulting on their payments.

For wage-earners the consequences have been an overall drop in real wages of perhaps a third; although this has affected the branches and regions in a very uneven fashion. So while the average wage is approximately 70-80 thousand roubles a month (US\$65) many white-collar workers in the "budget sector" (education, health service, and culture) and workers in light and consumer industry take home earnings only slightly above the minimal wage which Yeltsin promised during the election campaign to raise to 14, 620 roubles (US\$12).⁷

Meanwhile the Moscow trade unions estimated December's "minimal consumer basket" at 105,376 roubles, and the poverty level at 42,850 roubles.⁸

No unified response

The attacks on workers' living standards has not produced a unified response, as the logic of the reform has been to split, and speed up differentiation inside, the working class. However, on the local and regional levels there have been a considerable number of strikes — often characterised by the persistence of traditional "corporate" structures unifying workers, management and even local authorities against the centre. In a few cases strike movements have spread across the regions, as was the case with the all-Russian strikes of teachers and health workers in the spring of 1992.

A certain turning-point in workers' struggles took place with the massive strike in Donetsk basin in June 1993.⁹ The strike featured both social, economic and

political demands — in the Ukrainian part of the Donbass calls for regional economic self-determination — and quickly spread to the Russian parts of the basin as well. Many of the demands put forward by the miners — and other workers' groups joining in — did go squarely against the logic of liberal reform. This was the case with demands against the freeing of coal prices, which would in turn imply an abolishment of subsidies and the closing down of major parts of Russian industry (where even if output has dropped some twenty percent over the last five years subsidies to the tune of two percent of GDP are still allocated).

Accumulated discontent

On the eve of the elections the accumulated discontent among workers in many regions exploded in a series of conflicts. Unrest surfaced in the mining regions, when the Vorkuta miners went on strike in November, and the Independent Miners Union threatened to call an all-Russian strike for December. In the event mostly miners from the northern regions of Vorkuta and Norilsk participated.

Together with the miners economic and social demands were also explicitly political demands for a boycott of the constitutional referendum and a boycott of slates featuring cabinet ministers. In a parallel development workers from the gas industry (and other branches) in the western Siberian region of Nadym went on strike on 22 November.

The strike, which involved tens of thousands of workers, was only suspended on 2 December, after the State company Gasprom gave in to all the strike demands, which had become more and more radical and threatened to spread to other regions. In this strike demands for a boycott of the constitutional referendum and for the resignation of the government were also growing.¹⁰

For the left this could be the source of some hope after an election campaign, where most, if not all, leftwing forces were marginalised. The centre-left Socialist Workers' Party (of Roy Medvedev and Lyudmilla Vartazrova) was seen by many as the possible centre piece in a leftwing alliance with progressive trade unionists.

However, this hope soon faded as the main trade union federation, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FNPR), capitulated to Yeltsin after the events of 3-4 October, and the Socialist Workers' Party started seeking other running mates; including moderate nationalist forces of the Renaissance Union and the

Cossacks Union. Eventually their attempts to launch a common bloc failed, but by then the manoeuvres had ruined any ideas of a leftwing alternative for the elections.

Most of the radical communist groups — the rump Russian Communist Workers' Party, the Russian Communist Party, and the Union of Communists — called for a boycott, whereas the small Party of Labour, which had no possibility of playing an independent role in the campaign, took a more ambiguous position. On the one hand it criticised the elections and the new pseudo-parliament, on the other, prominent figures from the Party were featured on different slates, for example the industrialist Civic Union.

During the election campaign the most positive initiative with leftwing backing — through transcending the narrow circles of the organised left — was undoubtedly that of the Movement in Defence of Democracy in Russia. This movement was launched immediately after the October massacre by a group of Moscow intellectuals, like former dissidents Gleb Pavlovsky, Pjotr Abovin-Egides, and Aleksander Buzgalin from the Party of Labour.¹¹

The founding conference of the movement — many of whose members called for a boycott — was held on 27 November and attracted broad layers of oppositional intellectuals, including many former dissidents. A demonstration in central Moscow on the eve of the elections (10 December) drew more than five-hundred people, which bodes well for the future of a movement, whose potential is far from exhausted with the elections. On the contrary, the adoption of Yeltsin's authoritarian constitution and the meteoric rise of Zhirinovskiy pose a serious danger for the future of even the most rudimentary democracy in Russia.

Litmus test

It is a main task for the workers movement to fight against this renewed authoritarianism, and it will be a litmus test for the Russian left if it is able to inspire, and intervene in, this struggle. ★

6. See *The Economist*, 11 December 1993.

7. In a related move, the government tried to appease another important group in the electorate by promising (on 11 December!) an 80% increase in pensions.

8. *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 14 December 1993.

9. For an analysis of this strike see *Russian Labour Review*, no. 2/1993, pp. 4-6.

10. See *Izvestiya*, 2 & 3 December 1993. Associated Free Press reported on 19 November that only 1.2% of all candidates for the elections were blue-collar workers (whereas 22% were businessmen).

11. For the declaration of the movement see *International Viewpoint*, no. 250, p.9.

Republicans in a fix

SINN FEIN is finding difficulty in formulating a response to the declaration signed on 15 December by the British Prime Minister, John Major, and the Irish Taoiseach (Premier), Albert Reynolds. Its initial response was that it would "study" the document. Later it added that it wanted some "clarifications" by the Republic of Ireland's government. By contrast, the independent West Belfast paper, *Andersontown News*, ran the following headline about the latest "peace" message from the British and Irish states: "Peace hopes dashed by flawed Downing Street declaration." The Taoiseach enjoyed an ecstatic reception on his return to the Dublin Dáil (Parliament) but the *Andersontown News* called Reynolds "a forelock tugging spailpín,¹ beating his breast in front of his master while promising to do better in the future." John Meehan, writing in a personal capacity, examines the stakes.

JOHN MEEHAN — Dublin, 24 December 1993

SINN FEIN is finding difficulty in formulating a response to the declaration signed on 15 December by the British Prime Minister, John Major, and the Irish Taoiseach (Premier), Albert Reynolds. Its initial response was that it would "study" the document. Later it added that it wanted some "clarifications" by the Republic of Ireland's government.

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Since April 1993, Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams has been involved in talks with John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party. Sinn Féin believed that peace and political progress were in sight as a result the "Hume-Adams initiative". But Hume has warmly welcomed the Reynolds-Major declaration, and Sinn Féin is now isolated.

The declaration states that "The Taoiseach ...acknowledges the presence in the Constitution of the Republic of elements which are deeply resented by Northern Unionists ...in the event of an overall settlement, the Irish government will, as part of a balanced constitutional accommodation, put forward and support proposals for

change in the Irish Constitution which would fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland."

Throughout 1993 a number of "peace talks" have taken place, in both Northern Ireland and the Republic. Everybody wants "peace" — or so it is claimed. According to the Dublin establishment this is true of firstly:

- The British and the Republic of Ireland governments (a statelet which Irish Fourth Internationalists have traditionally called the "twenty-six counties" in order to indicate that it covers only part of Ireland).

- and secondly the leaders of the main parties in Northern Ireland (called the "six counties") — the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP, a bourgeois nationalist party in the six counties), the two main Unionist parties (the Ulster Unionist Party — UUP and the Democratic Unionist Party — DUP), and the Alliance Party (a Unionist party which claims a degree of support from both sides of the sectarian divide). These parties are frequently referred to by the British and Irish States as the "constitutional parties", although Sinn Féin is itself a legal party.

This leaves the "men of violence". These are usually equated with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and its political wing, Sinn Féin. While sometimes, Unionist paramilitaries are also included there is no reference to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC — Northern Ireland's sectarian police force) and the Royal Irish Regiment (RIR — formerly the Ulster Defence Regiment, a regiment of the British Army recruited mainly from the Loyalist com-

munity) nor of course the occupying forces of the British army..

This view is disseminated by the Irish media with the encourage of the Dublin government.

The Dublin establishment appears more than ready to discard its former nationalist ideology in relation to the partition of Ireland.

The Dublin government's professed solution to the partition of Ireland is to achieve Unity by winning the consent of a majority within the six counties. However, there is presently an inbuilt Unionist majority in Northern Ireland. Although a significant achievement of the revolutionary upsurge by the oppressed Catholic minority, which began in 1968 as a struggle for civil rights was, in 1972, to destroy direct government by the Unionists, the Dublin establishment, in close co-operation with the British government, has ever since attempted to resurrect some form of local administration.

These schemes have always involved an attempt to persuade the SDLP to "power-share" with the Unionists. The first attempt, following "the Sunningdale Agreement", was brought down in 1974 by a reactionary by Unionist workers. "Power-sharing" had lasted a mere five months, and the Unionists who participated in this experiment lost all political power.

The UUP, led by James Molyneux, and the DUP, led by Ian Paisley, supported the 1974 strike. They have not in any genuine sense changed their position and anyone who doubts the sectarian capacity of the Unionists need only look to their record in local councils.

John Hume and the SDLP may speak of "uniting people", two traditions or a period of post-nationalism, but they cannot countenance local government run by the likes of Molyneux and Paisley.

Throughout 1992 Hume participated in talks with the Unionist parties, which were convened by the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Patrick Mayhew, but would not sign an agreement.

This generated a growing volume of protest from the Dublin establishment. The Irish media increasingly portrayed all four "constitutional parties" as unreasonable, and John Hume in particular was subjected

1. Spailpín or Spalpeen: an Irish expression which describes someone who is trouble or mean.



to especially negative coverage. Eventually, Hume's proposal for the government of Northern Ireland were "leaked".

Hume had proposed that Northern Ireland be governed by six commissioners. Three would be elected from the Northern Ireland under a system of proportional representation — the likely result being one from the SDLP (Hume), one from the UUP (Molyneux), and one from the DUP (Paisley). The other three commissioners would be appointed by the Irish and British government's and the European Commission.

Hume knew that his proposal was completely unrealistic. It was made as a way as a way to spin out talks and avoid having to sign local power to the Unionists. Unlike the Dublin government, the SDLP has to contend with the fact that Sinn Féin has the support of around thirty-five percent of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, and to have done so would have meant a huge loss in support.

The "men of violence"

Hume's talks with the other "constitutional parties" came to an end in April 1993 when he began openly negotiating with Sinn Féin. These talks with the "men of violence" caused apoplexy in some sections of the Dublin establishment, most notably the Independent group of newspapers owned by multi-millionaire and Heinz supremo Tony O'Reilly.

In 1972 spokespersons for the IRA were banned from the broadcast media in the Republic. This was subsequently extended to include Sinn Féin. Hume's negotiations with Sinn Féin President, Gerry Adams, made the censorship practised by the Republic difficult to defend.

More far-sighted supporters of the Dublin establishment publicly defended the SDLP leader, including former Taoiseach, Garret Fitzgerald, and the all-Ireland head of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Cahal Daly. Even more significantly the

British government did not join the Unionist chorus of protest and it later transpired that the British government had initiated secret negotiations with Sinn Féin and the IRA in February 1993, two months before Hume announced that talks has been taking place.

In this context mention should also be made of the visit to West Belfast, also in 1993, by the Republic's President, Mary Robinson, when she had a very public handshake with Gerry Adams. Apparently, Robinson's gesture, which was out of character with her generally pro-Unionist policies, was opposed by Dick Spring, Tánaiste (Deputy Premier), Minister for Foreign Affairs, and also leader of the Labour Party.

There was further evidence of uneasiness about Hume's manoeuvres on the part of the Dublin establishment when he presented the proposals which he had worked out with Gerry Adams to the Dublin government, for later presentation to the British government. Rather than allow Sinn Féin and the Republican movement any credit, the Dublin government set out to "remove Gerry Adams' fingerprints" from any documented negotiations which it might have with the British government.

Even so, Reynolds was publicly lectured by Major for being too accommodating to Sinn Féin — although all this time the British were having secret negotiations of their own with Sinn Féin. As Major stated that it would "turn his stomach" to talk to the IRA and 22 November Mayhew stated: "Nobody has been authorised to talk or negotiate on behalf of the British government with Sinn Fein or any other terrorist organisation", similar denials from the Dublin government can be viewed sceptically.

On the surface the tactical differences among Sinn Féin's opponents gave Adams plenty of scope for advancing his political agenda. However, Sinn Féin has been suffering from deep political and military confusion. While publicly talk has

been of peace, a Unionist assassination campaign has ravaged Nationalist communities in Northern Ireland.

The pressure generated in the Republican movement led to the notorious Shankill atrocity on 23 October, when an IRA attack on Ulster Defence Association headquarters, early on a Saturday afternoon, led to the destruction of a fish shop, the death of eight civilians and Thomas Bigley, the IRA volunteer carrying the bomb.

In the following week thirteen Catholic civilians were murdered, culminating in the gruesome massacre at the village of Greysteel in County Derry, when Unionist assassins entered a pub and opened fire on the customers as they drank, causing seven people to die. Gerry Adams wants Britain to "join the ranks of the persuaders" and convince the Unionists that their best interests lie in a united Ireland, but this same British government as revealed during the 1992 trial of Brian Nelson, has helped to re-arm the Unionist paramilitaries.

Sinn Féin spokespersons in the city of Derry have stated that a British withdrawal could take place over a thirty-year period, tending towards the Hume position of winning the "consent" of the Unionists.

Irish history has shown that "unity by consent" is impossible. Both Northern Ireland and the Republic were designed as sectarian states. Any prospect of winning a majority in Northern Ireland would provoke a sectarian reaction, just as the attempt to free the whole of Ireland from British rule was broken by the 1921 partition.

None of this means that the solution lies in an intensified military campaign — on the contrary. Some sacred cows have deservedly gone to slaughter during this process, for example, never "talking to terrorists". The public attacks on John Hume generated a lot of public revulsion in the Republic, which has re-opened up debate around partition.

But the Sinn Féin leadership has made some serious political mistakes, especially in relation to the argument of securing unity by "consent". There can be some sympathy with a leadership which realises that twenty-five years of armed struggle has led to little progress. But progress will not be made by way of political concessions to imperialism.

The Republican leadership did not foresee the mess it would get into with the publication on 15 December of the Major-Reynolds "Peace Declaration". ★

2. Brian Nelson was a former British security agent working in Northern Ireland.

The unlikely peace

A famous wall mural from Belfast in the early 1980s shows three women fighters. The caption says, "IRA, PLO, ANC One Struggle". Given the accommodation between the PLO and the Israelis, the ANC with the apartheid regime and now the discussions between the IRA and the British government, the mural takes on a whole new significance. Sinn Fein has invoked the Israeli and South African agreements as reasons why the British government should enter into discussions with it.

DAVID COEN — 22 December 1993

FEW were surprised at the revelation in November that the British government, despite many denials, had been negotiating with the IRA for at least the previous eight months. The surprise may have been the terms on which the IRA appear willing to call a ceasefire — terms which fall well short of British withdrawal, merely calling for a statement by the British asserting the right of the Irish people to self-determination. Or, at least that was the position following the talks between Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and John Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party which ended in October.

The real negotiations are between London and Dublin. Dublin is attempting to negotiate an IRA ceasefire in return for a mild declaration by the British that they have no "selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland" and a statement on self-determination which is subject to the veto of the Unionist minority in Ireland. Not only is it prepared to accept the Unionist veto, it will also delete from the constitution of the Republic Articles 2 and 3 which assert that the national territory comprises the whole island of Ireland. The Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will continue; that is, Britain will continue to rule a part of Ireland, this time with the express agreement and cooperation of the Dublin government.

Whatever the outcome of the talks, it seems the Republicans have been boxed in. Massive public expectations of peace could make it extremely hard for the IRA to reject proposals endorsed by Dublin and by John Hume. The greatest danger of all is evident in a casual remark made by British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd. "It might not matter," he said, "if a Dublin-London agreement couldn't be sold to the IRA."

The hidden British agenda is obviously to split the "pan-nationalist alliance" in which Sinn Fein places so much faith, and to draw Dublin and the Social Democratic and Labour Party into a combined repression of the Republicans.

To understand the implosion of nationalist politics in Ireland, and therefore the dangers of Sinn Fein's political strategy, requires some understanding of the political economy of the southern State over the past 40 years. In a way, this is also the history of the Fianna Fail party, which has politically dominated the State since Eamon De Valera first formed a government in 1932.

The attempt to build a stable capitalist State in the 26 counties has failed — it shares at least this much in common with the Unionist statelet in the north. Up to the late 1950s, it attempted development behind high tariff barriers, basing itself on the old Sinn Fein policy of self-sufficiency.

When this policy was squeezed by a budget deficit and an IMF-enforced opening of the economy in post-war Europe, the Fianna Fail government reoriented itself towards a new policy, that of development through foreign investment and export-led growth. This policy had some success even after the 1974 crisis. By the late 1970s budget deficits were once again a major problem; at one stage per capita debt was the highest in the world.

The history of the south over the past 20 years might well be titled, "Fianna Fail discovers the European Economic Community (EEC)".¹ To sustain its long hold on power it required finances for job creation and patronage. When the 1974 world crisis finally hit in the late 1970s, the EEC became the main source, having the added advantage of apparently lessening dependence on Britain. The massive inflow of

European Union (EU) funds through the Common Agricultural Policy and Structural Funds have led to a political reorientation of the whole southern ruling class, away from traditional nationalism towards strong support for European unity.

Despite relatively high growth, a surplus in the balance of trade and low inflation, it is estimated that a third of the population lives on or below the poverty line. Between 1986 and 1990 when Gross Domestic Product grew by more than 20%, 136,000 people left the country. In the last 20 years of the 20th century, it is projected that 500,000 will leave.²

In the early 1980s the national question — which the hunger strikes and associated mass protests brought to a critical point — threatened to fuse with the economic crisis and shake the State to its foundations. But the national question was never made to seem relevant to the struggles of the working class and the moment passed.

Crisis of confidence

The combined effects of economic stagnation and increased dependence on the EU has nevertheless led to a severe crisis of confidence among the southern ruling class. There were no official celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the 1916 insurrection, the beginning of the war which drove the British out of most of the country — a big contrast with the 50th anniversary in 1966.

The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement was a clear indication of where the Dublin capitalist class perceived its main interests — in stemming the rise of Sinn Fein following the hunger strikes of 1981 and bolstering the SDLP, aided of course by considerable sums from the USA. It also involved Dublin in guaranteeing partition and laid the groundwork for the present deal.

In every decade since Partition in 1921 there has been a military uprising against

1. Fianna Fail ("the Soldiers of Destiny") was founded by Eamon De Valera in 1926. They formed a government for the first time in 1932, and ruled for all but ten years of the period up to 1990. Closely tied to the Catholic Church, their base includes small farmers and the urban petty bourgeoisie, though they have consistently won most working class votes for their populist job creation policies.

2. During the Great Famine, between 1845 and 1850 one million left. Half a million — one fifth of the population — applied for Donnelly visas to the USA in 1990.

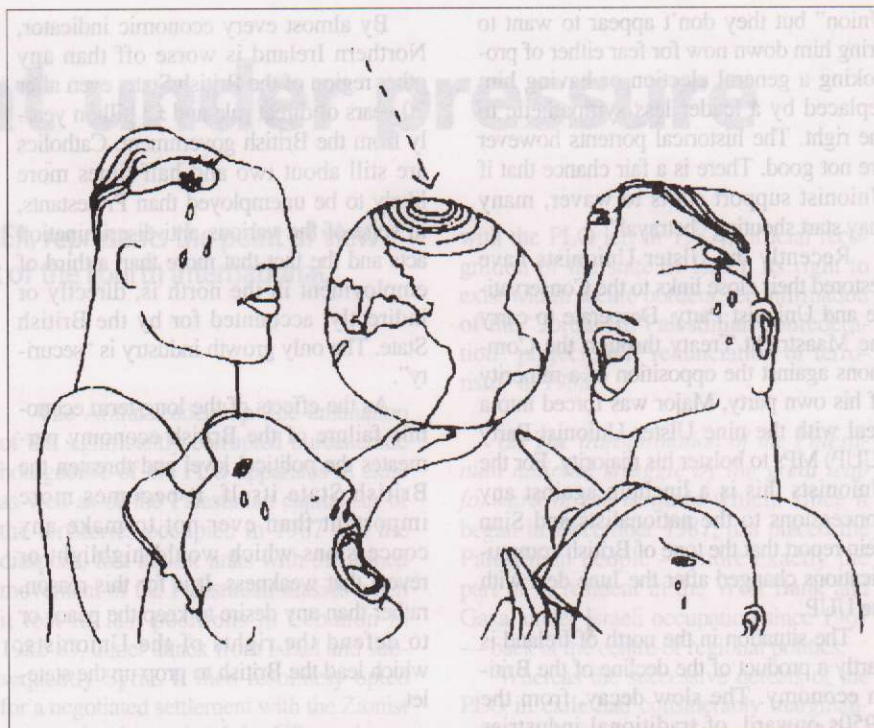
what Charles Haughey called a "failed political entity" — the Six County statelet. Both the IRA and the British recognised early in the present phase that a decisive military victory by either side was impossible. Traditionally the IRA has been distrustful of politics and considered the military campaign as the "cutting edge" against the British. However, it was this lack of a political strategy which in the end proved decisive.

Whatever the bravery, resourcefulness and determination of the IRA fighters, they can't drive the British out through military means alone; recognition of that is one of the reasons for the current talks. A correct political strategy would have involved attempting to mobilise sufficient forces in Ireland (and Britain) which could achieve that. The military campaign too often clashed with the needs of politics, especially when civilians were killed or injured.

Sinn Fein never developed a socialist programme for the whole island, which would appeal to workers in the south as well as to loyalist workers. On social questions, such as divorce, contraception and abortion, the republicans allow themselves to be portrayed as conservative and backward nationalists and, while they were closely involved in the campaign against drug pushing in working class areas of Dublin, they didn't offer a rounded-out solution to the crisis which would appeal to working people, the unemployed and emigrants. Their share of the vote in recent general elections in the south never rose above 2%.

The worst mistake was the failure to challenge Fianna Fail because they assumed that, in the end, Fianna Fail, or at least its base, was on their side. A leading Sinn Fein member spoke in London recently of the "nationalist family", presumably embracing everyone from the IRA to Fianna Fail and sections of the Catholic Church. The implication of this kind of thinking is that family members look after each other and that betrayal by the prime minister, Albert Reynolds, would be unthinkable.

The signs of capitulation have been there for a long time. Former Fianna Fail leader Haughey's silence on the hunger strikes, his implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (which he opposed while in opposition), his changes in the extradition law to placate the British, his inaction in the Birmingham 6, Guildford 4 and other such cases were sufficient warning that, despite his republican reputation, he would not confront the British. Haughey was willing when necessary to make republican noises but that was only to distract



attention from the economic crisis. Because they didn't address this issue, Sinn Fein was treated as being irrelevant to the concerns of the working class.

As a tactic to break out of political isolation, the so-called "pan-nationalist alliance" might have some merit. As a strategy it is a disaster which has led Sinn Fein to entrust the Dublin government to negotiate with the British on its behalf. The class interests of the Dublin government are totally opposed to those of the working class people in the nationalist areas in the north.

Bad omens for Britain

The omens for the British are not particularly good either. From the 1921 partition settlement, imposed under threat of force, to 1969 they operated with a hands off approach — apart from the 1949 Government of Ireland Act which, in response to the south's decision to leave the Commonwealth and become a republic, wrote its claim to Northern Ireland into law. Only when it became clear in 1969 that the six county state could no longer police the insurgent nationalists did the British reluctantly send in troops.

Policy towards Ireland is now dictated by a number of key considerations. Firstly, military defeat is unthinkable. There are uncomfortable parallels with Portugal after its retreat from Africa. Secondly, while the end of the Cold War means that the strategic reasons for occupation are less important, any retreat could be treated as weakness and therefore imperil Britain's standing as a military power. Thirdly, while

the economic reasons for staying are in fact negative, holding the six counties enables the British to exert a degree of control over the whole island. Before leaving they would need to ensure that the bourgeoisie, north and south, could provide a stable capitalist government. While they might be able to support one rugby team, the ruling classes in Dublin and Belfast are too weak, divided and backward to have any chance of success.

Historically, Ireland has also functioned as a cat's paw in British politics. From Randolph Churchill's threat of the "Orange Card" against Gladstone's Liberals in 1886 to Tory encouragement of an army mutiny in 1912 for the same purpose, to the 1921 partition settlement and the 1974 Sunningdale Agreement brought down by a Loyalist strike, the threat or the actual use of Unionist violence has often weighed much more heavily than their numerical or political significance to the British State would seem to allow.

In the more recent past there are suggestions that the question of Northern Ireland has been used as a lever inside the Tory Party itself. Fred Holroyd and Colin Wallace, both of whom worked for Military Intelligence in the north of Ireland during the 1970s, suggest that sections of the Secret Services plotted against Ted Heath and Harold Wilson. According to this theory, Heath's replacement by Margaret Thatcher was partly engineered in Northern Ireland.

Current British Prime Minister John Major's position is also precarious. The anti-Maastricht Tory right-wing has been grumbling over his "betrayal of the

Union" but they don't appear to want to bring him down now for fear either of provoking a general election or having him replaced by a leader less sympathetic to the right. The historical portents however are not good. There is a fair chance that if Unionist support starts to waver, many may start shouting "betrayal".

Recently the Ulster Unionists have restored their close links to the Conservative and Unionist Party. Desperate to carry the Maastricht Treaty through the Commons against the opposition of a minority of his own party, Major was forced into a deal with the nine Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) MPs to bolster his majority. For the Unionists this is a linchpin against any concessions to the nationalists and Sinn Fein report that the tone of British communications changed after the June deal with the UUP.

The situation in the north of Ireland is partly a product of the decline of the British economy. The slow decay, from the 1950s onward, of traditional industries associated with the Empire was fundamental to the demise of the six-county State. Shipbuilding and textile industries began to disappear. The economic crisis began to affect employment prospects, especially for Protestants. Like their counterparts in the south, the Unionist ruling class began to fear the political consequences and in 1965 began discussions with Dublin on improving economic links and seeking to attract foreign investment. But by then it was too late.

Increasingly unable to deliver the traditional concessions to the Loyalist work force and caught between the need to start integrating the Catholic middle class and the weight of the bigotry it had fostered for so long, by 1969 it had lost the ability to sustain itself militarily — hence the intervention of the British. In 1972, following Bloody Sunday, the Stormont government was abolished.

By almost every economic indicator, Northern Ireland is worse off than any other region of the British State, even after 20 years of direct rule and £3 billion yearly from the British government. Catholics are still about two and half times more likely to be unemployed than Protestants, in spite of the various anti-discrimination acts and the fact that more than a third of employment in the north is, directly or indirectly, accounted for by the British State. The only growth industry is "security".

As the effects of the long-term economic failure of the British economy permeates the political level and threaten the British State itself, it becomes more important than ever not to make any concessions which would highlight or reveal that weakness. It is for this reason, rather than any desire to keep the peace or to defend the rights of the Unionists, which lead the British to prop up the statelet.

Institutional crises

The question of Ireland continually inserts itself into the institutional crises which feed off economic decline. Several key institutions such as the monarchy and the Church of England face problems of legitimacy unprecedented for at least a century. The cases of the Birmingham 6 and Guildford 4 have exposed the legal and judicial systems to almost overwhelming criticism. "British justice" is as doubtful as a concept as in its application; nonetheless, it had a certain ideological force now seriously undermined by a string of wrongful convictions in Irish cases.

Historically, the splits in the British ruling class have been over Free Trade and Ireland. The latest could be over European Union. The attitude to European Union of a significant minority on the Tory right-

wing threatens once again to split the ruling class. Great Britain, a former imperial power with substantial overseas interests, is being forced to negotiate its way into a subordinate role in a European alliance dominated by German capitalism.

One of the first actions of the new Thatcher government in 1979 was to lift exchange controls. A massive outflow followed — £50 billion during the Thatcher period. The effect was to further decouple British capital from the State, to further weaken its claims to world power status and accelerate the drive to regional blocks such as the European Union.

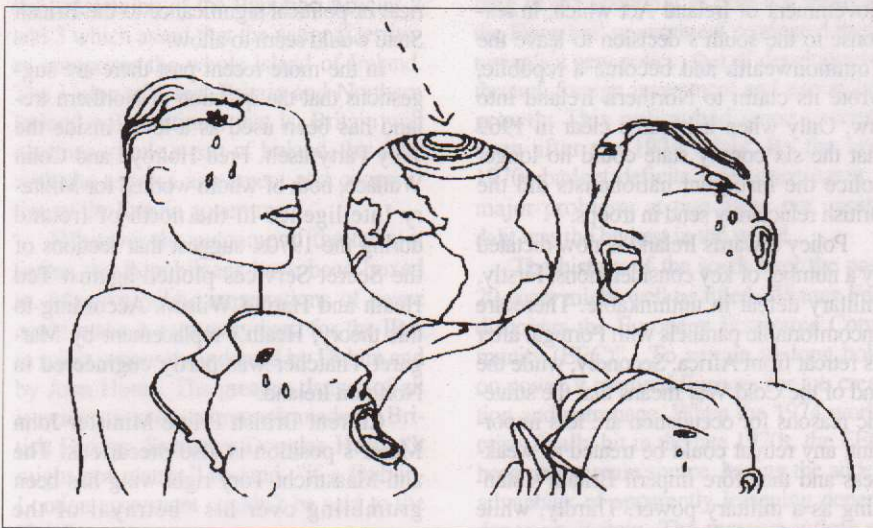
The Tory right-wing, which takes its bearings from Thatcher, was (and is) always more attuned politically to smaller, provincial and UK-based capital, anti-foreigner, anti-Welfare and in favour of low taxation. It is precisely these forces which have historically been most fervently unionist. SDLP leader John Hume's proposed "Europe of the Regions" solution to the problem of Northern Ireland, possibly the most rational from the point of view of the ruling class, was ruled out of court by this section of the Conservative Party.

The Major-Reynolds statement of 15 December is designed in Major's case to strengthen the Union splitting the nationalists. It is based on the recognition that without the support of Dublin and the moderate nationalists of Hume's SDLP, the British cannot defeat the Republicans. Reynolds fervently shares this desire but thinks the British are too unskillful to achieve it. Hence the complex and ambiguous document which emerged from their talks which promises much but contains little.

It is easy to envisage a situation in which the IRA agrees to a ceasefire as a response to this document, because of war weariness and the realisation that rejection could mean even further isolation and massive repression, aided by the south.

But the Loyalists may be an even greater threat to the Major-Reynolds project. A bloody provocation which bounces the IRA into rejection and therefore isolation would suit their purposes. If, on the other hand, the IRA accepts, then the Loyalists may come to believe that a weak Tory government is susceptible to pressure, especially from their friends on the Tory right-wing. The prospect is therefore for instability and war as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland continues its slow disintegration.

There may be a settlement in Ireland. But it is very unlikely that there will be peace. ★



A retreat under pressure

THE text below, drafted by SALAH JABER, represents the point of view of the Bureau of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

DOCUMENT

1.

THE HISTORIC CONTEXT OF THE ACCORDS

THE Accords signed in Washington on 13 September 1993 by the Arafat leadership of the PLO and the Zionist government of Rabin and Peres, under the patronage of Bill Clinton, are the product of three evolutions, summarized below in *chronological order*.

(1) *The culmination of the long process of political retreat by the PLO leadership under the joint pressures of the Zionist state, American (US) imperialism, the reactionary Arab governments, and Moscow — as much under Brezhnev, then Gorbachev, as under Yeltsin.*

The Arafat leadership (the emanation of the significantly corrupted bureaucratic bourgeoisie of the PLO apparatus in exile as well as of the Palestinian capitalism of the territories occupied in 1967 and the diaspora) lost its last links with the armed movement of the Palestinian masses when it lost its last positions in Lebanon in 1982-83, under attack from Israel and subsequently Syria. It then resolutely opted for a negotiated settlement with the Zionist state under the aegis of the US, as shown by: praise for the "Reagan plan" in 1982; reconciliation with King Hussein of Jordan, then the Egyptian regime of Hosni Mubarrak in 1983; the accord with the Jordanian monarchy and the break with the PLO left in 1985 (the accord was unilaterally annulled by the King in 1986, which led the Arafat leadership to reconcile itself

with the PLO left in 1987); official recognition of the state of Israel, its right to exist within secure borders, reconfirmation of the "Jordanian-Palestinian confederation" project and "renunciation of terrorism" in 1988.

(2) *The transformation of the Palestinian national struggle by the great leap forward of the intifada which, since it began in December 1987, has placed the Palestinian people — more exactly the part of it, resident in the West Bank and Gaza, under Israeli occupation since 1967 — back at the centre of regional politics.*

Whereas the successive defeats of the PLO in exile had considerably marginalised its role in Arab politics by 1987, the spontaneous outbreak of the intifada, sparked by accumulated frustrations strengthened in a single blow the Palestinian factor in the Middle Eastern political equation, more than at any time since the massacres in Jordan in 1970. King Hussein drew the necessary conclusion, and officially renounced his claim to recover the West Bank, which had been annexed to his royal kingdom since the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. The plans to settle the regional conflicts which sought to by-pass the Palestinian people by negotiating directly with Jordan — in particular the Allon plan put forward by the Israeli Labour Party since the massacres in Jordan in 1970 and reactivated by Shimon Peres in 1986, following his return to office in the Zionist coalition government — became henceforth impossible to pursue without replacing the Jordanian negotiating partner by the Arafat leadership of the PLO, the only Palestinian interlocutor credible both in terms of political representativeness and disposition to participate in a regional Pax Americana.

The Reagan administration reacted accordingly, demanding new political concessions from the Arafat leadership in 1988, before beginning an official dialogue with it. Nonetheless, this first official attempt came up against an impasse: its conditions of progress foundered as much on the Israeli side — very quickly, when from November 1988 the Zionist right once again governed alone, under the leadership of Shamir — as on the Arab-Palestinian side, faced with Likud's rejectionism. Arafat decided to gamble on Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which had emerged

Introduction

THE Accords signed in Washington on 13 September 1993, between the Israeli government and the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, has stimulated huge debate in the Palestinian solidarity movement, reflecting in part the debate amongst the Palestinian people themselves. The terms of debate have tended to vary according to the political framework in which it is happening. Those who contribute to *International Viewpoint*, and who have in common a radical critique of the Zionist State as one which is racist and oppressive, as well as firmly supporting the rights of the Palestinian people, in no way view the Washington Accords as reparation for the discrimination suffered by the Palestinian people.

However, the "Dis-Accord" does raise two questions which cannot be ignored: Firstly, should the Arafat leadership be condemned for having signed the Accords (although modifying the form of condemnation according to the political context) or should there be regarded as extenuating circumstances? Secondly, should the Accords be viewed as a first step towards progress, in a common struggle with the the Arafat leadership itself, or as a restrictive framework as a result of which the only role left for the leadership is as a repressor for the Palestinian people, as proxy for the occupying authorities, failing which the Accords will be annulled?

This debate is of clearly contrasted points of view. In relation to other debates, it has the advantage that before long it will be brought to an end by ongoing events. It is a fascinating and passionate debate: for this reason we have decided that it should be covered in this month's dossier ranging from the position of the Bureau of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, set out by **Salah Jaber**, to the different point of view held by the majority of the Revolutionary Communist League (the section of the Fourth International in the Israeli State), as expressed by **Sergio Yahni** and **Michel Warszawsky**, to that of the minority of that section, which is presented in the name of **Tikva Honig-Parnass** and which is close to that of the Bureau. We want to show, in this way, that the debate does not divide us along "ethnic lines", but only in terms of the different political assessments made by comrades who share the same internationalist aspirations. ★

militarily strengthened from its war with Iran. Henceforth, Baghdad became the principal base of political-military support for the PLO leadership, compensating for Gorbachev's abdication of any pretence of providing a counterweight to US pressure.

(3) *The transformation of the relation of forces in the Middle East represented by the Gulf War of 1991, and the confirmation of Moscow's alignment with Washington's policy in this region of the world.* The destruction of Iraq was seen by the Palestinian people, and not without reason, as a defeat for their cause; not because it was correct to gamble on the ferocious bourgeois dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, but in the sense that the crushing of Iraq radically transformed the balance of regional military strength to the benefit of Israel. This transformation was not however the work of the Zionist army — which this time did not have the means to do the job on its own, as in 1948, 1967 and 1973 — but the army of the United States itself. For Washington, it was imperative to seal the confirmation of its military supremacy in the Middle East by the establishment of a "new regional order", a vital element in the "new world order" proclaimed by Bush.

For the first time in history, conditions seemed propitious to the establishment of a global Pax Americana in this region of the world: US hegemony was stronger and less contested than ever, the traditional Soviet rival having become complicit; of the two bastions of Arab nationalism after the defection of Egypt, one, Iraq, had been crushed and the other, Syria, had been "turned" and had joined the camp of Washington's allies; Arafat was weaker and more isolated than at any time, and hence ready for all kinds of compromises. Paradoxically, the principal obstacle to the Pax Americana became henceforth the Zionist right itself, in the form of the Shamir regime.

In the hope of obtaining the \$10 billion loan which he said was necessary to absorb the flood of Jewish refugees from the USSR, Shamir agreed to take part in the negotiations inaugurated with great pomp by Bush in Madrid in October 1991. For the first time, all the official parties of the Israeli-Arab conflict were represented, including the Arafat leadership of the PLO which was in reality directing the Palestinian delegation — even if the humiliating conditions adopted for pure form (no representatives from exile, or from east Jerusalem) imposed by Shamir were respected. Nonetheless, the negotiations became bogged down very quickly because of the obstinacy of the Zionist right. The

result was the most spectacular strong-arm tactics in the history of Israeli-US relations, with obvious disagreement between the godfather and his godchild, and refusal to agree to the loan demanded without a political counterpart.

2. THE IMMEDIATE PRELIMINARIES TO THE ACCORDS

US pressure, the perspective of a break between the world's greatest power and its Zionist protege at a time when the Israeli socio-economic situation was ceaselessly deteriorating, was a determinant factor in the narrow victory obtained by the party of Rabin and Peres in the Israeli general elections of June 1992. The return of this team to power opened the road to the Pax Americana blocked by Shamir. In 1987-88, Rabin and Peres — supported by the upper crust of the Zionist military establishment — had already placed the question of "territorial compromise" at the centre of their political campaign. For these two so-called Labour leaders, faithful to the Allon plan, Israel was obliged to choose between "land" on the one hand, and the "Jewishness" of the "democratic" state (sic) on the other; the two other options seemed to them impossible to maintain in the long term, inasmuch as they risked damaging irretrievably the support of the imperialist countries, and the resident Jewish communities, for the Zionist state — support on which this state is structurally dependent.

The violent "cold" expulsion of the Palestinians was unthinkable, except for the crazies of the quasi-fascist Zionist far right, represented in Shamir's government (the problem for the Zionists is that the Palestinians in 1967 had learned the lesson of 1948 and remained in their territory). The annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was thus impossible, because the granting of Israeli citizenship to the inhabitants of these territories, which would be implied by international law, would radically transform the ethnic composition of the state of Israel, putting its nature as a "Jewish state" in peril. Moreover, Likud's option, that of rampant annexation without granting citizenship, would perpetuate a situation of apartheid which — beyond the fact that it tarnished the "democratic" image of the Zionist state — became increasingly perilous with the radicalisation of the struggle of the Palestinians under occupation and their very much higher rate of population growth in comparison to the Israelis (immigration excepted). Under the Camp David accords

between Begin and Sadat under Carter's patronage, Likud itself had been committed, since 1979, to the perspective of Palestinian administrative autonomy in the territories occupied in 1967, without for all that admitting the principle of "territorial compromise". For Begin, and all the more Shamir, Israel should keep these territories, re-baptised "Judea and Samaria", while conceding a sort of status of extra-territoriality to their Palestinian inhabitants: a kind of symbolic, juridical expulsion.

For Rabin/Peres and the enlightened Zionists, Israel had every interest in "exchanging land for peace". Of course, for them this did not amount to the total return of the 1967 territories, and still less the return of a part of the 1948 territories (where the Triangle and the Galilee are still mainly Arab) and the abolition of the racist laws preventing the Palestinians from returning or living where they wish on the land from which they have been expelled and enjoying a full equality of rights with all inhabitants, without any discrimination — the only historic compromise capable of leading to a genuine peace between the Israeli people and the Palestinian people as a whole. What is then at stake for the enlightened Zionists, in the context of the Allon plan, is solely *partial* withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967; withdrawal from the zones of Palestinian population, except for east Jerusalem, annexed by Labour in 1967, with the maintenance of the Zionist settlements in all the strategic parts of the territories (notably along the Jordan — the majority of the settlements in the West Bank were established under Labour) and permanent deployment of the army to ensure the control of these territories and to filter human and material exchanges between the Palestinian zones and the Arab environment. In exchange for this caricature of "territorial compromise" the Zionist-racist state demanded the recognition of its legitimacy by its Arab neighbours, their commitment to preserve the security of its frontiers and the "normalisation" of their relations with it, that is, essentially — beyond the diplomatic forms, certainly not unimportant — the opening of Arab markets to Israeli commodities and capital (indeed the influx of Arab capital into Israeli banks).

The historic evolutions described above have, at the same time, conferred on this plan an urgency which it never previously enjoyed and imposed an amendment to the initial version put forward by Ygael Allon, supported by Rabin and Peres:

— *the intifada has considerably increased the urgency of an Israeli with-*

drawal from the Palestinian-populated zones of the West Bank and Gaza. By forcing the Zionist army to permanently repress street demonstrations with a strong participation by women and children, the intifada has brought about a veritable "moral gangrene" in the ranks of an army for whom ideological mobilisation — the conviction of fighting for "the survival of Israel" — has always been a factor of the first order in its efficiency. In this sense, the intifada has been inspired by the lessons of the Lebanese resistance to the Zionist occupation, the first case in the history of the state of Israel where it had to withdraw from an Arab territory without having realised its objectives or imposed its conditions, the population of Israel having lost any motivation to stay in Lebanon faced with a growing mass movement and a military guerilla force sufficiently efficient to nourish growing political pressure for withdrawal. From 1988 onwards, the elite of the Zionist military establishment was arguing for withdrawal from Gaza and the Palestinian populated zones of the West Bank, even under the form of a unilateral, non-negotiated withdrawal, since in any case the army would keep these territories in its vice, so as to prevent any threat to the security of Israel and the Zionist settlements, while freeing itself of the exhausting task of controlling the civilian population.

Certainly, as all observers have not failed to notice, the intifada, from 1989 onwards, then following the Gulf War, had experienced an overall decline and showed signs of exhaustion, without for all that ceasing and without ever returning to the pre-1987 situation. Nothing however authorised anyone in Israel to claim that the situation was on the road to becoming "normalised". Indeed, the intifada added a new dimension to its struggle, in obvious progression since the Gulf War, namely the resurgence of violent actions, individual or organized, led by Palestinians against the Zionist settlers, against the army of occupation, indeed on the official territory of the state of Israel. It goes without saying that these violent actions (many carried out without firearms) are not of the nature or the density to threaten the "security of the state of Israel", in the same way that the Lebanese guerillas could not *militarily* vanquish the Zionist army. But these actions were, and remain, of a level sufficient to create a feeling of insecurity among the Israeli population, and in particular its sectors in contact with the Palestinian people, the colonists and the army of course, but also the Israelis in contact with Palestinian workhands exploited in the South African manner.

This hardening of the forms of struggle of the intifada, completely predictable precisely because of the relative exhaustion of the street demonstrations and the growing Israeli response to stone throwing with murderous volleys of fire, has been principally the work of a current which has been ceaselessly growing since the beginning of the intifada among the Palestinians of the 1967 territories: the Muslim fundamentalist current whose majority expression is the Movement of Islamic Resistance, Hamas. In Palestine, as in most other cases of Islamic fundamentalist resurgence, this current feeds on the frustration of the masses, faced with an increasingly intolerable oppression, while the historic bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalism has become manifest (in Palestine, the successive surrenders of the Arafat leadership) and the left is either negligible (in most cases) or politically incapable of building an alternative leadership to the bourgeois leadership, on a historic scale (the Palestinian case). Thus the growth of the fundamentalist current, in very many cases if not the majority, is not *first and foremost* the expression of a shift to the right in society, unlike the rise of fascism in Europe, which many cite to establish false analogies and justify their support for the dictatorships of bourgeois nationalist origin. This growth — and this is clear in the Palestinian case — can represent firstly the expression of a radicalisation of the national and democratic struggle, *disorientated and deformed* for the aforesaid historical reasons, in the same way as the struggle of the Iranian masses against the Shah. It remains true, of course, that fundamentalist hegemony on a mass movement born in these conditions is of such a nature as to orientate it in the sense of a reactionary regression of forms of consciousness, combined with an obscurantist and sexist repression inside the movement itself. The resurgence of violent actions advocated and claimed by the Palestinian fundamentalists and the growth of their current among the population made it the "bete noire" of Yitzhak Rabin. The latter thought he had delivered a great blow in expelling 415 of them to South Lebanon in December 1992; he in fact committed a great blunder, handing a considerable political and media coup to their movement. Rabin had counted on the isolation of the fundamentalists, who rejected with vehemence the "peace negotiations" organized by Washington and violently criticized the Arafat leadership of the PLO. He learnt the natural and predictable lesson that Israeli repression of this current, aimed at weakening it organisationally, strengthened it politically. The les-

son of Jordan was again underlined; the intervention of the Zionist army on the other side of the Jordan in April 1968 (the battle of Karameh) had galvanised those who it sought to dissuade from continuing their combat; only the action of the Jordanian army itself brought to an end the armed movement of the Palestinian masses. This same lesson was repeated in Lebanon where an Arab army, that of Syria, was more efficient in cutting the throat of the movement of the Palestinian masses than the multiple Israeli interventions.

In one sense, the Jordanian lesson of 1970 was at the source of the Allon plan, as indicated above. This plan sought to charge the Hashemite monarchy with the repressive control of the Palestinian populated zones of the West Bank. However, since the intifada, this "Jordanian option", as it was called, had become obsolete. Given that the Likud itself had accepted to negotiate in a quasi-direct manner with the PLO leadership, this new "option", the Arafat option, could be envisaged by Rabin-Peres without too many political risks. They ensured that Israeli law was in conformity with their action, by the abolition of the criminalisation of contacts with the PLO. They engaged in indirect, then direct, but always secret, negotiations with the Arafat leadership which led to the Washington Accords.

3. THE WASHINGTON ACCORDS

The only new element in the Oslo-Washington process in relation to the historic project of the Rabin-Peres leadership is the fact that it was carried out directly with the leadership of the PLO, rather than with King Hussein or representatives of the Palestinians of the occupied territories. To believe that the Accords represent a break with the "Zionist consensus" on Israeli sovereignty over the territories occupied in 1967 is to misunderstand the nature of that consensus, which never rested on the "Greater Israel" of the Zionist ultras, nor even the "Judea and Samaria" of the Likud and the mystics. The debate provoked by Rabin and Peres in 1988 on "territorial compromise" in continuity with the Allon plan is the demonstration of it. There was, on the contrary, an undeniable "Zionist consensus" on the question of direct negotiations with the PLO — though Shimon Peres, in particular, has taken care in latter years, above all since the beginning of direct negotiations between Washington and the PLO leadership in 1988, to transform the absolute refusal

of dialogue into a refusal conditional on the concessions demanded of the latter, concessions equivalent to a total renunciation of its entire historic identity and all that which allowed it to be perceived as the incarnation of Palestinian national struggle.

Rabin-Peres chose to break this consensus, instead of contenting themselves to deal with the delegation of Palestinians from the occupied territories in the negotiations organized by the United States. To assess the historic meaning of this decision, leading to the recognition of the PLO as the "representative of the Palestinian people" — without succumbing to the formidable media intoxication excited by the Accords on the theme of a "peace" which strongly resembles the "new world order" — it is necessary to examine the considerations which lay behind the Israeli rejection. The problem was no longer the fundamental programme of the PLO seeking the destruction of the Zionist state; this had been true for a long time and without any possible ambiguity since the end of 1988. The PLO leadership had progressively abandoned the Palestinian national charter of 1968 to postulate a negotiated settlement with the state of Israel, offering to recognise it and coexist in peace with it in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 leading to the creation of an "independent and sovereign Palestinian state", a state of all the Palestinians including the refugees. This latter demand has become, for several years now, the object of Palestinian national consensus, the sole objective common to all the territorial factions and all the political tendencies of the Palestinian people — a transitional programme very much more realistic than the maximalist objective of the "liberation of Palestine".

This consensus had nonetheless been recently de facto broken by the Arafat leadership of the PLO, when it accepted negotiations in the framework of the "Madrid conference" on "Palestinian autonomy" envisaged in the Israeli-Egyptian Camp David accords which the PLO had violently denounced at the time they were adopted. The objective of the independent and sovereign Palestinian state was however maintained in official discourse. If the Israeli government of Shamir still refused to negotiate directly with the Arafat leadership, it is because it estimated that this was equivalent to a recognition of Palestinian rights in the diaspora. It was the refusal to recognise these rights which, since the programmatic adaptation of the PLO, became the fundamental reason for the Zionist consensus over non-recognition.

Under the Camp David accords signed by Begin himself, the Israeli government has already for fifteen years recognized not only the "existence" of the Palestinians in the territories occupied in 1967, but also their right to administrative autonomy followed, after a transitory period of five years, by the right to be consulted on their future. However, what the Zionist establishment, of all tendencies, has always refused to recognise, is the rights of the Palestinian refugees, of the majority of the Palestinian people forced into exile by Zionism, and whose very existence is a permanent reminder of the historic injustice which is at the basis of the state of Israel and of the "Palestinian problem" well before 1967.

The recognition by Rabin of the PLO as "representative of the Palestinian people" would have been an event of a formidable historic significance if it had this meaning; if it was a recognition of the *rights of the Palestinian people as a whole*. But the truth is that Rabin has not recognised the PLO as it was and as the Zionist establishment has always refused to recognise it. *What Rabin has recognised is the PLO moulded to his conditions and those of Peres, to an extent beyond which either had ever been able to hope. That is, not only a PLO leadership which recognises in advance the legitimacy of the state of Israel, a Zionist-racist state founded on the expulsion and the bloody oppression of the Palestinian people, without mentioning the neighbouring populations — this, let us recall again, was already the case officially since 1988. But also, and above this, a PLO leadership which agreed to sign "peace" accords which rank among the most unjust and humiliating in the history of capitulations, which not only sanction the partition of the territory occupied between the occupier (army and settlements) and the indigenous population, but also deny the right of the territories which will be evacuated to dispose of the attributes of sovereignty, beginning with a national army, and even to be called a state (only "self-government"), neither recognising any of the rights of the 1948 refugees, the great majority of Palestinians, not even the right to return to the territory of "self-government" in the West Bank and Gaza. Even in the case of the 1967 refugees (those who left the territories in 1967 fleeing the Zionist invasion), only a section of them will be allowed to return, on the basis of lists agreed by the occupation authorities.*

One could certainly prolong this list of infamous conditions set down by the Washington Accords: "the structure, the powers and the responsibilities of the

Palestinian authority" and even its "electoral system" are subject to the prior approval of the Zionist government; water resources are to be shared, prisoners are not mentioned, and so on. Nonetheless, what has already been cited is sufficient to amply characterise them for what they are, as has been done already by a very broad spectrum of Palestinian forces from the fundamentalists to the far left (including the most moderate bourgeois nationalists who, up until the Accords, were still part of the PLO establishment, indeed among its highest leadership). This undeniable fact is a striking demonstration that *the most serious "rupture of consensus" occasioned by these accords is the rupture of the Palestinian national consensus* — very much more serious, massive and profound than any division inside Israeli society. On the Israeli side, the debate opposes Zionists equally attached to the "Jewishness" of the state and its security, who disagree on the best way of ensuring its long term preservation. On the Palestinian side, the debate is between the partisans of an essentially collaborationist capitulation and those who reject this capitulation, with the common denominator being the sentiment of an injured national dignity and of elementary rights trampled under foot. This explains the well known fact that the negotiations have been led on the Palestinian side by an Arafat leadership working behind the back of its own partners in the official leadership of the PLO — of which only a minority (eight out of eighteen) finally approved the accords — and of the delegation of Palestinians from the interior to the public negotiations (who had nonetheless been chosen by Arafat) who, feeling themselves short-circuited, had threatened to resign shortly before the conclusion of the Accords.

In exchange for this new look Allon plan, the PLO leadership has committed itself to halting the intifada, and to renouncing "terrorism and all other acts of violence" (a unilateral engagement which, given the everyday Zionist violence which is a thousand times more serious, is unspeakable). It commits itself to keep "order" in the territories which will be ceded to it, through a "powerful police force" which the Accords envisage for this end. In the military and political context created by the Accords, this order will be imposed essentially against the opponents of the agreement — those who will seek to go beyond its infamous limits and to pursue the struggle for the dismantling of the Zionist settlements and the total withdrawal of the Israeli army from the territories occupied in 1967, as well as for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and its

majority in forced exile. In other words, *in accordance with Zionist objectives since the Allon plan, a repressive Arab force — Palestinian, and no longer Jordanian — will be charged with suppressing the Palestinians of the territories, by proxy of the Israeli army and under its strict control* (the latter reserves for itself a "right of pursuit").

4. THE "SELF-GOVERNMENT" OF THE PLO

When Yasser Arafat boasted publicly of having proved his ability to maintain order in the Lebanon, he stresses the principal consideration which had led the Zionist government to negotiate directly with him. Since the new look Allon plan would be realised with the participation of a Palestinian authority, rather than with the Jordanian monarchy, the Rabin-Peres government quickly understood that it would obtain very much more from the Arafat leadership of the PLO installed in Tunis and confronted with the problem of maintenance of its enormous bureaucratic apparatus, than it would ever obtain from the representatives of the interior subjected to the daily pressure of a mass movement in struggle. This obvious calculation has proved itself well-founded.

Moreover, the Rabin-Peres government knows that the Arafat leadership has "proved itself in Lebanon". It knows that for the task of repression by proxy of any inclination to pursue the Palestinian national struggle — which is the principle task devolved to the apparatus of Palestinian "self-government" agreed by the Zionist occupation — no internal leadership had the bureaucratic repressive qualifications, the human and material means, the necessary prestige and the disposition to carry out the task which characterised the Arafat leadership.

This mistrust of the Palestinians of the interior and this confidence in the Arafat apparatus, which was publicly proclaimed by the heads of the Israeli repressive services, is perfectly illustrated by the only exception which they have allowed to the principle of the non-return of the Palestinian refugees; namely, Arafat and the gentlemen of his apparatus (excluding the opponents of the Accords) will be admitted to the territories surrendered by the Israeli army along with the soldiers of the Egyptian and Jordanian units of the PLA (Palestine Liberation army) attached to the regular armies of these two countries since the creation of the PLO and the PLA by the Arab League in 1964 (it is even specified that they must be holders of Egyptian

or Jordanian documents and "trained as police"! The very designation of these units, to the exclusion of other formations of the PLA (Syrian and Iraqi) is very eloquent. Already, this hard core of the future Palestinian police has undergone an intensive training under the Egyptian and Jordanian armed forces so as to be ready to assume the task which is attributed to it. It is also significant that a priority form of aid from the imperialist powers to the Palestinian "authority" is to endow it with means of repression; thus, Delors declared following his meeting with Arafat at the beginning of November that the European Union was going to make emergency deliveries of arms, vehicles and helicopters to the Palestinian police!

Moreover, the Jordanian option of the Allon plan has not been abandoned, but only replaced by the *Jordanian-Palestinian option* laid out in the 1982 Reagan plan. The PLO has for a long time situated itself in the framework of this latter plan by adopting the principle of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. This project is at the heart of the Washington Accords; if the choice of Gaza as first stage is easily explained by the great difficulties of the Israeli occupation in controlling this very heavily populated area (in great part consisting of the refugees of 1948) the choice of the town of Jericho is only explained by the proximity of the Jordanian frontier (the Allenby bridge). The headquarters of "Palestinian self-government" will thus be in direct osmosis with the Jordanian state. For Rabin-Peres, the Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian "regional structure", conceived as a common market, will be the Trojan horse of the economic penetration of the Arab hinterland by Israeli sub-imperialism. According to this schema, the comprador bourgeoisies, Palestinian and Jordanian-Palestinian, will become the active agents of this penetration. A reserve of cheap labour could also be exploited on the spot by Israeli capital, without the security tasks inherent in the import of Arab labour to the Israeli populated territories.

In sum, the "Palestinian self-government" of the Arafat leadership will be an extreme case of indirect colonial administration, closer to a "puppet" government than the neo-colonial governments emerging from decolonisation. It will be thus, or it will not be; the Zionist government has decided to proceed by stages, beginning with Gaza and Jericho, to test the efficiency of the Arafat apparatus in the repressive task which has been allocated to it. If this apparatus proves itself incapable of fulfilling this task, the Washington Accords will be thrown in the dustbin.

Thus, the Israeli sword of Damocles will be permanently sharpened, and will certainly form the major pretext of the Palestinian police repression; such is the infernal logic of any collaborationist regime with an occupying power.

And this is by far the worst aspect of the participation of the Arafat leadership in the Washington Accords. It is necessary to avoid the sophisms of the "lesser evil" and the relationship of forces, invoked as a justification for all capitulations (above all when those who suffer the occupation are "short-circuited" by the bureaucrats in gilded exile in Tunis). In the framework of the relationship of forces existing since 1967 between the state of Israel and the fragmented Palestinian people, in the absence of any Arab and international support capable of changing this relationship, it was not possible, on all the evidence, to obtain a complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Zionist army from the territories occupied in 1967. It was not possible, in other words, to realise the correct transitional objective, however illusory, of the independent and sovereign Palestinian state, in the true sense of these words and not in the caricatural and demagogic interpretation which Arafat has given them today.

The immediate realistic objective was that of an unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli army from the Palestinian agglomerations formulated by the leadership of the intifada in the course of its first months of existence. The pressure of the Palestinian struggle under its different forms could reasonably culminate in this result, on the condition that this struggle was not sabotaged by sowing the illusion of the realisation of Palestinian objectives by the diplomatic path, through the good offices of Washington. If the intifada has been in decline, this is not uniquely for objective reasons, but also, indeed above all, for reasons of leadership. The Tunis leadership had done everything to re-establish its hegemony over a movement which had freed itself from it in its first months. Certainly, the Palestinian self-administration which would thus have been created would not have been entirely sovereign and would have been limited to the very territories that the Israeli army now envisages withdrawal from. But it would not have had to recognise the legitimacy of the Zionist state, and still less that of the presence of its settlements and its army in the territories occupied in 1967; it would not have had to engage itself in a proxy contract to strangle the Palestinian national struggle against the continuing occupation. The refugees would no more have been authorised to return to the territories than

they are by the Washington Accords; but this would have concerned all the Palestinians in exile, without any exception being made for the bureaucratic and military repressive apparatuses.

Indeed, it is difficult to argue that a self-administration of the Palestinians of the interior, with the experience of the forms of self-organisation from below born out of the early days of the intifada, would not have been very much more in correspondence with the well understood interests of the Palestinian masses, than a "self-government" whose spinal column is the repressive bourgeois apparatus of the exile, still more corrupted and repressive than was the Algerian "army of the frontiers" led by Boumedienne which was entrusted with aborting the revolutionary potential emerging from Algerian independence. The Israeli army is going to withdraw from the Palestinian agglomerations of the West Bank and Gaza, and it is all the better for the masses which have directly suffered occupation for over a quarter of a century. But any pursuit of the Palestinian national struggle, and any social radicalisation of this struggle, will henceforth confront a Palestinian police which has yet to demonstrate that it will be less repressive than the Israeli army, in the long if not the short term: all the more so in that it will act in co-ordination with the Jordanian and Israeli repressive apparatuses.

5. WHAT PERSPECTIVES OF STRUGGLE?

The problem which today confronts the Palestinian masses of the West Bank and Gaza is not that of the struggle against the Washington Accords, in the sense of a struggle against their application. In the absence of an immediate alternative, it would be absurd to define the tasks in these terms. What is at stake is *to go beyond the constrictive framework of these Accords; it amounts first and foremost to pursuing the struggle in all legitimate forms (with the exception of any violence against unarmed civilians) against the continuing occupation, against the presence of the army and the Zionist settlements in the territories occupied in 1967, against the Israeli stranglehold on the resources of these territories, against the penetration of Israeli commodities and capital — in the perspective of the independent Palestinian state.* It will amount above all to a struggle for the revolutionary replacement of the Palestinian repressive bourgeois apparatus by a self-organisation of the Palestinian masses, re-establishing the tradition of the

first year of the intifada.

For the Palestinians in exile, in particular the Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, the dream of liberation and a return to Palestine must not serve as a pretext for a passive attitude towards the existing regimes, oppressors of the Palestinian people as much as the indigenous populations. The strategic interests of the Palestinian people demand the revolutionary overthrow of the oppressor Arab regimes, in joint struggle with all those who suffer their oppression. In particular, the immediate interests of the great majority of Palestinian people who live on the two banks of the Jordan — and who are in the majority in Jordan itself — is to break the chain which stifles them at its weakest point, the Jordanian monarchy, and to once again transform Jordan into the regional epicentre of the anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist struggle which it was between 1967 and 1970. In other words, it is necessary to replace the confederation envisaged by Arafat and King Hussein by a *revolutionary re-unification of the two banks of the Jordan.*

This orientation of struggle demands the emergence of a proletarian leadership of the Palestinian struggle, of an autonomous movement of the Palestinian labouring masses in close symbiosis with the struggles of the exploited classes and the oppressed masses in the countries of exile. It is from this point of view that the balance sheet and the choices of the exile leaderships of the Palestinian left must be judged. Their incapacity to affirm themselves as an alternative leadership to that of Arafat for the movement of the Palestinian masses is certainly due to the fact that they have never been able to formulate a class programme combining the social, democratic and national dimensions; that they have not been able to thwart the successive recuperations of the mass movement by the Arafat leadership, and act resolutely for a democratic reorganization of the representative institutions of the Palestinian struggle; that they have constantly compromised themselves with regimes, that of Damascus in particular, justly hated by the Palestinian masses; in short, they have acted within the narrow limits of a petty bourgeois nationalism, certainly radically anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist, but not anti-capitalist.

The choice now made by these leaderships to constitute a "Islamic, Democratic and National front" with the organizations subordinate to Damascus, as well as with the fundamentalist movement, can only hamper the objective that they assign themselves: leading the struggle of the Palestinian masses. On the one hand, it

displays a great political myopia, as well as with the organisations controlled by Damascus, which are totally dominated in the eyes of the masses, and subject to the good will of a regime which is itself negotiating an accord with the Zionist state under US guidance. On the other, it is to play the game of the fundamentalists to accept ideological compromises with them in the name of the united front, and to abdicate the pressing task of an implacable ideological struggle against their eminently reactionary social programme. Alliances on the ground, in Palestine, against the Zionist occupation and every other form of future repression, can certainly not be ruled out with the fundamentalist movement, which has become an unavoidable component of this struggle. But if it is necessary to "strike together" on precise objectives with this movement, it is no less necessary to "march separately", that is not to mix banners and not to put a damper on the ideological struggle against the religious fanaticism, obscurantism and sexism of the fundamentalists.

The current choices of the leaderships in exile of the Palestinian left are not of a nature to facilitate the indispensable construction of an Israeli movement of struggle for the complete withdrawal of the Zionist army from the territories occupied in 1967 and the dismantling of the settlements which they protect. They are still less likely to facilitate the construction of an Israeli anti-Zionist radical left, a condition of the first order for the breaking of the Israeli working class from Zionism, without which the dismantling of the Zionist state and the de-Zionisation of Israeli society are unthinkable. This is all the more regrettable when one could reasonably hope that the psychological shock of the Washington Accords could favour the development of a critical reflection on Zionism among the workers and youth of the state of Israel.

It is to this end that Israeli revolutionaries will work. With all militants committed to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and particularly those of the imperialist countries, they will continue to support the Palestinian national struggle against the Zionist government and any other oppressor, independently of the nature of the leaderships of these struggles. But they will privilege in their support all that which permits the Palestinian struggle to advance on the road of class radicalisation and of internationalism. ★

The struggle will not end

THE following text, submitted in the names of SERGIO YAHNI and MICHEL WARSHAWSKY, represents the point of view of the majority of the Revolutionary Communist League, the section of the Fourth International in the Israeli State.

DOCUMENT

WITH the signing of the Oslo Accord (or Washington Accord), something happened in the Middle East, and whatever our assessment of the situation used to be, it is not going to be identical to the reality we knew prior to the Israeli-Palestinian agreement. It is too early to determine what will be the fate of the new order, and it is certainly too early to assess what the socio-political picture is going to look like in one or two years time. However, we do know that there are those who are in error, and who foster errors, when they claim that they know what will be the fate of the Palestinians, the Occupied Territories and of the State of Israel, following the documents that were signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO): there are too many unknown factors, mainly the political, institutional reactions of the peoples, the sectors and the classes. Even so, we have no other choice than to try and assess the agreement and the different options it opens up, and, based on this assessment, determine a policy which puts the needs of the people first, alongside their ability to act in order to fulfil them.

1. The assessment of the Accord

1.1 The Accord that was signed by Shimon Peres and Abu Mazen in Washington is not a good agreement, and does not do justice to the Palestine people. Abu Mazen himself will agree, without any difficulty, with this view. The Accord was dictated to the PLO leadership by Israel and Egypt, because the balance of forces have deteriorated since 1990. Even though it diverged in many ways from the Madrid formula, that was agreed on the eve of the Madrid Conference, it provided the framework for the

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Washington. In this respect, we have to relate to the Oslo Accord as part of our overall reaction to the Madrid Conference.

1.2 The Madrid Conference was the result of two developments, one positive and one negative: (a) the Intifada, which put an end to twenty-five years of status quo in the Occupied Territories, and forced Israel, the countries in the region, and the international community to put the question of the occupation and Palestinian nationality on the international agenda; (b) the Gulf War, that emphasised and gave expression to the regional balance of forces, in favour of the American imperialism and its allies, and against the Palestinian national movement.

The combination of these two political developments put the Palestinian question on the agenda of the "New Order" in the region, but in a very limited way: taking the PLO out of the process, overlooking Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, and dropping the issue of self-determination.

The Palestinian national movement faced one choice only: to accept the formula that was dictated by Shamir and Baker, and to open negotiations with Israel under monstrous conditions, or, reject it and pay the price of conflict with most Arab governments. After weighing up the consequences, the PLO leadership accepted the American dictate.

1.3 The talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians did not go anywhere in the last year for three main reasons: the Israeli refusal to commit to a limited autonomy period as only a stage towards permanent withdrawal and fulfilment of Palestinian rights to self-determination, and the limited interpretation given by the Israeli delegation to "autonomy". However, despite these great conflicts,

the Labour-Meretz government was interested in coming to an agreement as a result of the situation in the Occupied Territories and, especially, in the Gaza Strip which had turned into a second Lebanon during the years of the Intifada. The idea of "Gaza First" was an expression of the will, and the need, to remove the Israeli Defence Force from the Gaza morass, without giving up on the other issues.

1.4 The Oslo Accord is an Israeli victory, mainly because it is based on a Palestinian agreement to the idea of Gaza First. What did each side gain and give in order to reach this agreement?

The Government of Israel agreed to three concessions: in addition to Gaza First, it added the small territory of Jericho; it gave more substance to the meaning of autonomy, and gave more authority to the self-governing Palestinian area; and it dramatically turned-around from its previous policy of refusing to recognise the PLO. Even though the accepted assessment is that the PLO is only a shadow of its former self, compared with the 1970s and 1980s, and that it has lost a lot of its significance. However, there is no way that its reduced standing can undermine the process, and the symbolic and political meaning of an Israeli recognition of an organisation that still represents the majority of the Arab Palestinian people.

In compensation of the acknowledgement, and with the alibi of Jericho, the PLO leadership agreed, with a small majority, to free Israel from Gaza, without any guarantees from the Rabin government, that after autonomy it will agree to a full withdrawal and to the establishment of a Palestinian State. Moreover, without any conclusions to major questions, such as — what will be the authority of Palestinian self-government? In addition, the PLO leadership agreed to a one sided normalisation, and the end to the fighting, while the key questions that deal with the occupation, self-government, the settlements and the refugees, were not solved and are still on the agenda for discussion.

There is no symmetry between the concessions that were made by Israel and the concessions that were made by the PLO leadership, and Itzak Rabin can

in justice be praised that in exchange for "pennies" he got a great deal more from the PLO.

1.5 Among Israel's most significant achievements is the Palestinian willingness to normalisation and cease-fire, and this is before the basic problems of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been solved. Problems such as the Right of Return were not solved, the occupation is still intact, and so what we have here is a one-sided normalisation; lack of symmetry and equality. There is nothing between this "normalisation" and a historical compromise.

1.6 The normalisation that the government of Israel seeks is not solely in the relations between Palestinians and Israelis, but mainly in the regional arena. The Oslo Accord is an important factor in Israel's attempt to establish its economic status in the area, to open new markets, and to use it as a jumping board to international "membership" of the area. In contrast to what is seen on the surface, the main part of the Oslo Accord is not that part which establishes Israeli control over the Palestinian economy, (because this control exists even more strongly during the occupation). Rather, it is meant to use the Israeli-Palestinian economic co-operation in order to tie regional markets to Israeli capitalism.

2. Our stand towards the Accord

2.1 Against determinism

Most political interpreters, from both sides, who are involved in this subject, are giving us a one dimensional interpretation of the agreement and mainly of its future implementation: on the one side, the PLO leadership and the Israeli Peace Camp and the Israeli rightwing who believe that the agreement is leading unavoidably to the establishment of a Palestinian State (which they recognise as the fulfilment of the Palestinian peoples' right to self-determination); on the other side you have the Palestinian opposition, who are leaning on the publicised arguments of the Israeli establishment, and who state that this agreement cannot lead to a Palestinian State but that it will in fact end in a national disaster of the order of 1948.

We are rejecting this deterministic approach. Agreements express the basic balance of power, but the way in which they are applied depends on the balances of power at each stage of the process.

The Oslo Accord can create a situation in which the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories are in a better condition to campaign for their rights. The Oslo Accord arouses in Israeli society a sense of willingness towards substantial concessions, far above those that are in the Accords. Everything depends on the level of politicisation within the Palestinian masses, and to a lesser extent within the Israeli masses.

2.2 To activate, not to denounce

If there were political forces supported by the masses, and not just small groups detached from the masses, these forces could have disrupted the process even using terrorist activities. Then the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL) would have fought with them against this agreement, and for a better one. This could have also been a sign that there is an alternative, because the masses do not usually campaign except in cases where there is a perspective with which they can identify. Therefore, we have to assume that the PLO leadership would have abstained from accepting the monstrous conditions imposed by the Israeli government. Today there is no enlightened force that can disrupt the agreement, and there is no political perspective that can be placed in front of the masses. The option of disrupting the agreement does not stand, mainly because of the limited forces at the disposal of the RCL.

The RCL is not an organisation of political interpreters, nor is it an organisation of judges of history. Therefore our job is not to denounce the agreement, but to do everything in our power in order to create those conditions that will enable the Palestinians to defend their rights, and to navigate this new agreement towards their interests. This is our main task within the Israeli population, and this is what we can offer to the enlightened Palestinian forces who agree with our negative assessment of the agreement, and like us put the rights of the masses at the top of their agenda.

2.3 Our public task is not to denounce the agreement, but to express lack of confidence in the Rabin government and its readiness to truly act towards an Israeli-Palestinian peace based on a full withdrawal, equality and fulfilment of self-determination. In other words, we have to lean on the support that we get from large parts of the Israeli public towards the agreement, and to clarify to the more politically aware the specific terms, which without them, the agree-

ment will not be enough to create a true peace, and to recruit them to this task.

Among the most important terms are our assessments that there is a great need to dismantle the settlements and to defuse the settlers, the need to establish Palestinian sovereignty in east Jerusalem, and to change radically the terms of the occupation (to dismantle the undercover units, to stop the hunt for "wanted" people, to release prisoners, to bring back the deportees, to drastically ease the issuing of licences, to change the policy towards family re-unification, and so forth).

The fulfilment of these terms will not only drastically improve the state of the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories and strengthen their self confidence, but will also shake the timetable of the agreement and its boundaries. Our slogans should be: "A fulfilment of the Accord means breaking its boundaries", and, "Peace is too important to leave in the hands of the government. We will not let Rabin lose the chances for peace."

2.4 Our other task is to convince the public, and first of all the more aware part of the public, that a true peace is peace between people, and not a lame agreement between leaderships.

Peace between peoples is much more binding than that which can be concluded between leaderships: it demands equality, it demands truth. Arafat and Rabin can sign an agreement that is based on blatant inequality, on humiliation and on erasing the past, but a true peace requires the exact opposite: mutual respect, facing the roots of the problems, willingness to accept responsibility of past crimes, and trying to fix whatever needs fixing without reference to balance of power.

This task obligates us to conduct a non-stop war with the racist and paternalistic approach of the ideologists and politicians from the Zionist left that are fulfilling once more the task of pioneers in the dissemination of racist poison to the public, and are aiming to recruit the public to support the agreement out of a sense of Israeli paternalism, emptying the vision of peace of its essence.

In opposition to this approach, which sees peace as an instrument for obtaining security and to ensure a Jewish majority, we present peace as a goal and a vision of co-existence based on equality and merging into the region; we give the word "peace" positive content, and present it as a qualitative step forward, and not as a return to the ideas of a "beautiful

small Israel", which is closed to the Arab world — the askenazi one, the undefeatable one. Against the strong wish of the Zionist left to use peace for reconstruction of the national consensus and national unity within which the differences between classes are being undermined, as well as the ethnic and cultural uniqueness, we see in peace a new era in which we need to create new points of contact and unity, a strong alliance of all those that have been left out of decision making and the distribution of wealth — Israelis and Palestinians as one.

3. The Palestinian arena

3.1 The Palestinian people and the Palestinian nation are not in agreement in the way in which they assess the Israeli-Palestinian agreement. As we said before, only a few look upon it as a good agreement. Large numbers see it as a bad agreement, which was better off not born at all. This argument is not only between the Hamas and the PLO, or between Fatah and other movements. This argument divides Fatah itself from top to bottom, when central PLO figures from Mahmoud Darwish to Khaled and Hani El-Hassan are standing against Yasser Arafat's gamble.¹ There is a reason to believe that outside of the Occupied Territories only a minority of the Palestinians are in favour of the agreement that was signed Abu Mazen.

The argument is not only about the chances of the agreement or the danger to the future of the Occupied Territories, but it is also about the future of the PLO and the Palestinian national struggle. Many Palestinians are afraid that the meaning of the agreement is atomisation of the Palestinian people, to localise national questions without a unifying framework, without a united strategy, and without one national perspective.

In the Occupied Territories it seems that the majority is pro-Arafat, but in contrast to the Israeli and international media it is not overall enthusiasm, but more of a no choice acceptance joined with hope and great fears. The Hamas, especially in the Gaza strip, has succeeded in expressing opposition on the street, but it was not as great as could have been expected. The secular organisations that oppose the agreement are almost nowhere to be seen. It looks like the opposition, religious and secular, is confused and cannot find a way to translate its rejection into an alternative strategy.

3.2 There is a dialectic relationship between the monopoly of Fatah on the street and the confusion that typifies the PLO sectors that oppose the agreement. On the face of it, it looks as if the Popular and Democratic Fronts have abandoned not only the street, but also all the national symbols: the flag, the joy of independence, the PLO as a symbol and as an organisation (boycotting the Central Council). As a result Fatah and the Shabiba can rule the street and appropriate the flag and the PLO. This monopoly only increases the alienation between the rejectionist organisations and the "street", and increase, in this respect, their isolation from the masses.

In this situation Fatah activists feel that the State in the making is theirs, and push even their partners in the negotiations, the Peoples' Party and Fida, into a corner.² Acts of violence, mostly verbal, were typical of the celebration of the agreement; they were celebrating their rule more than their freedom. The flow towards the police recruitment agency, which are in fact Fatah agencies and not national agencies, is only one expression of this phenomenon which is raising great fears amongst many Palestinians, including within Fatah itself. It looks as if all the other organisations are standing still. This is also true of the popular organisations, the unions, the women's movement, the voluntary organisations and so forth.

The firm connections that were developed during the last months between Palestinian capitalists and Israeli and foreign capitalists, at a time when nothing was done to express the needs and interests of the workers and the unemployed, is also a reason for concern among the Palestinian public and its avant-garde.

3.3 Is it really that the choice is between complete support for Arafat and the agreement he signed, and disappearing completely from the public eye? Is it a fact that beyond critical interpretation of the agreement there is nothing that we can do or offer to the Palestinian masses? To these questions, the Palestinian leftwing organisations should answer quickly, if they want to keep a role in their society.

With all the humility that is required from us as an organisation that is not a part of what is happening in the Occupied Territories — even though it took a big part in expressing unlimited solidarity with the national Palestinian struggle and cultivated strong friendly relations with a large number of activists from all

national sectors — we see it as our duty to say to our Palestinian friends: "Do not drift away from the masses! Do not neglect the street! Even if you are right in your assessment of the Accord, the last word will always be that of the Palestinian masses, and they will establish whether they are moving towards independence or towards doom. They will determine whether the occupation will continue, even with a change of face, or whether the struggle for liberation will deepen. They will determine whether you will have a democratic society or a tyranny. They will determine whether the police and the capitalists will lead the future Palestinian society, or whether it will be led by the popular organisations."

Whatever the assessment will be, whatever the chances and risks, the role of revolutionaries is to act, and to activate the masses around their interests in order to minimise the risks, and increase the chances. This struggle does not begin from point zero: a people which gave birth to, and maintained a five-year Intifada; which gave birth under occupation and oppression to unions, popular committees, women's movements and various volunteer organisations — such people are not impotent if they are presented perspectives on struggle.

As opposed to the most pessimistic forecasts the Accord opens up new horizons to popular political and social activities. Would it not be easier today to organise the political prisoners and their families in a mass struggle for amnesty? Would it not be easier today to organise thousands of families that suffer from citizenship problems in a struggle towards an immediate change in rules and regulations that prohibit family reunifications? Would it not be easier today to organise a struggle against the building of new Jewish neighbourhoods within the heart of Arab Jerusalem? Why would you not act so that people would go out onto the street and demand solutions to problems that affect all Palestinians regardless of their stand on the Accord?

This and more: is it not possible to organise all the unions around a core of claims that will assure the place and the rights of workers within the autonomous area? Is it not possible to organise the

1. Mahmoud Darwish is a famous Palestinian poet. Khaled and Hani El-Hassan were founding members of Fatah, the leading current in the PLO. All three were members of the PLO leadership.

2. The Peoples' Party is the former Communist Party and Fida is a split from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

women's organisations, and the human rights within the autonomy? If the PLO leadership will join with these organisations in supporting their demands — that would be great; and if not, these struggles will strengthen the masses in the struggle to protect their interests, with regard to the nascent Palestinian authority.

3.4 We do not know if this massive campaign will be able to radically change the framework of the Accord, or even parts of it. It is likely that if the campaign is bigger, it will make the PLO leadership more careful and less willing to make concessions, or damage the democratic rights of the masses. The best option is of course that the campaign will establish, once more, the place of the masses in the centre of the political arena, and will enable them to determine the essence of Accord in line with their own interests. A lesser option is to achieve the partial gains within the negotiations with Israel and within the character of the self-governing authority that will be created. The worst case would be if the balance of power is bad. Then the campaign will have achieved nothing, but will have served as a self-defence lesson for the people in their relations with the new authorities. It will uncover the nature of the ruling class, and will form a political opposition around a concrete core that the people can identify with.

3.5 The Palestinian masses need a political leadership that is armed with two very important strategic components: a policy of a unified front and a transitional programme.

A transitional programme is a collection of demands which you fight for (release of prisoners, democratic institutions, disarmament of the settlers or, if not, organising armed citizens' militias) and which answers the needs of a large of the masses, without them necessarily agreeing to our political assessment. What is important is that the demands are considered achievable, right and relevant to the masses.

This transitional programme has to be a part of a national democratic programme, which has at its centre the demand for a legislative body within the autonomy. It should be a representative body drawn from all the existing political currents in the Occupied Territories.

The policy of the united front: the condition for success in this struggle is the ability to unify the "customers" of the different claims, without connection

to their political alignments or to their political assessments. In this we mean that the appeal should be to all organisations, including those that are connected to Fatah, to the unions, to the women's organisations, and so forth. Only a policy of a united front on the democratic claims could bring mass support in the present process, and bring the PLO leadership to open its eyes to this self-organisation. Only this kind of policy could recruit to the struggle the thousands of democrats within Fatah and the rest of the organisations that support the Accord, mainly among the working class and women.

4. Tasks

4.1 The first task for RCL activists is to work against all the boundaries that stand in the way of the fulfilment of the Accord within the framework of an enlightened interpretation. A battle against the settlements, to free all prisoners, against the annexation of Arab Jerusalem, for a radical change in the relationship between Israel and the occupied Palestinian population.

These battles can unify those who see in the Accord a break through and those who see in it an Israeli dictate and a Palestinian surrender. To both groups we say: "Whatever your assessment of the Accord, if no-one deals with the settlers and the settlements, if the hunt for the wanted is not stopped, if all the Palestinian prisoners are not freed, this Accord is doomed; let us act together to demand that the government acts on these issues, because without these steps there will never be peace between Israelis and Palestinians."

As long as the occupation continues — and the Accord's supporters agree that it will continue for the next few years even if it will change somewhat — our duty is to fight against every violation of human rights, both in the territories under direct occupation and within the autonomous area. These tasks will continue to be carried out with our friends in Gush Salom (the Peace Block) and with all the other parts of the peace movement that are ready to take part.

4.2 Our second task, and it is a unique one for the RCL, is in the dissemination of information: to reveal the internal limitations of the Accord and what has to be done in order to give content to a true Israeli-Palestinian peace. Peace demands a brave look backwards and a readiness to understand

what those "hundred years of conflict" were, what the reasons that gave birth to it were, and what the characteristics of the Israeli-Palestinian relations were during those hundred years. To raise the topic of expropriation of land and deportations, the right of return, and the right to self-determination.

Peace requires a brave look forward, with a vision of a different relationship between peoples; relations that are built on equality, on an attempt to correct injustices, a readiness to merge into the Arab region — not as the beach-head of the West, but as partners with equal rights and obligations.

In this mission we will need to meet head-on without compromise the paternalistic attitudes, the racism and the narrow-mindedness of the Zionist left, to stand against the values of separation and ethnic cleansing, to stand for the values of partnership, solidarity and co-existence. In these aspects we have to absolutely reject any attempt to compare between the settlers and the Israeli Palestinians, between robbers with blood on their hands and local inhabitants whose right to live here is unconditional.

4.3 More than ever there is an importance to the Israeli-Palestinian partnership. Both police forces and the capitalists are building for themselves a joint future, and together determining our future. To their side and against them we have to create a partnership between peoples, women, human rights organisations, workers and activists. For this task we do not set any limits: every co-operation that will enable us to advance human and peoples' rights will be blessed, and first of all with the PLO. In this sense we have to compliment the activity of Fatah towards systematic co-operation with the radical branch of the Israeli peace camp and reject the refusal of the Palestinian leftwing fronts to cultivate links with the Israeli forces that are fighting against the occupation.

Our support for the Arab Palestinian struggle for self-determination and their right to build an independent State is not conditional on the class of its leaders. We will support the PLO as long as there is an occupation and as long as the PLO leads the Palestinian people in its struggle against the occupation. At the same time, our support of the PLO is a critical support, and we are not blind to the attempts of its leadership to merge into the American "New Order", including the price of its being turned into the arm that will oppress the Palestinians on behalf of the Zionists.

Despite this, we should not relate to them as enemies and conduct future potential battles at the expense of the present battles. The PLO signed a bad Accord with Israel, but it did so as the representative of an oppressed people and it will have to fight for a long time to reach its goals: the goals which made it the representative of the Palestinian people.

The forecasts that the Palestinian Authority will be an oppressive one are forecasts, even if they are well based. Today the occupation is not over, the Palestinian people are not free yet, and the PLO occupation is not over, the Palestinian people are not free yet, and the PLO and its leadership represent it in the battlefield that is mainly a diplomatic and political one facing the Israeli occupation authorities.

4.4 The RCL will be very active against the attempt by the authorities, or from within the peace camp, to turn a blind eye to supporters of the Accord on the Palestinian side "removing" opponents, secular or religious. This turning of a "blind eye" does not assist the Israeli peace camp nor the PLO in advancing the peace, on the contrary, it will strengthen those who believe that peace can be imposed — an attitude whose end product is to bury the hope for peace between Israelis and Palestinians for long generations.

4.5 In addition we have to build in Israel, in co-operation with the Palestinian left, an alliance of all those forces that never considered the end of the occupation as their sole goal, but saw it as part of an overall battle to free humanity from all kinds of oppression and exploitation, to free the region from imperialism and to free humanity from fear of extinction. We did not fight against the occupation only so that the Palestinian flag can fly above the Temple Mount mosques: we did not fight so that the Palestinian authorities will continue the work of the Israeli or the Jordanian authorities; we did not act so that capitalists will be able to gain more at the expense of workers from both peoples.

We fought so that on the historical Palestinian land there would be established a democratic secular bi-national society whose borders will be as symbolic as possible, and that the two peoples, the Arab Palestinians and the Jewish Israeli will be able to live in co-operation, solidarity, full equality, and in mutual respect.

We fought, long before others, not only for national independence but also for democracy, the dignity of men and women, their freedom and well being. This struggle will not end with a signature on an Accord, not even when the occupation ends. The vision of peace and the vision of socialism is one to us, and there is a lot that needs to be done until that vision is fulfilled. ★



"Bantustan" in the making

DOSSIER

THE text below, submitted under the name of TIKVA HONIG-PARNASS, defends the views of the minority in the Revolutionary Communist League, section of the Fourth International in the Israeli State.

DOCUMENT

THE Accord, which began with the Madrid Conference, is a product of power relations, both international and regional, and also among the currents within the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) itself, which favoured those willing to accept the conditions of surrender dictated to them by the United States of America (USA) and Israel. The entrenchment of USA's hegemony, following the Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, which led to Syria entering the USA's sphere of influence and the huge cuts in Saudi Arabian financial support, came together to strengthen the PLO's more compromising components and the class strata they represent. They came to the conclusion that there was no hope in fulfilling their interests for an independent political entity and that anyway their interests as capitalists can be fulfilled by integrating themselves into the "New World Order". The meaning of this integration: to accept the USA-Israeli solution for ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, including the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in their countries of residence. The assumption behind this "solution" is that it will also bring the Arab-Israeli conflict to an end — solutions which are vital conditions for stabilising the reactionary Arab regimes and for the continuation of imperialistic control over the Middle East's oil and other natural resources.

The Madrid Conference, and the agreement that followed it, also had the aim of terminating the Intifada. The Intifada was not just a struggle for political independence in the territories that were occupied in 1967. It also inscribed on its banner the aspirations for the national liberation of the whole Palestinian people and the re-unification in their homeland. These were the goals which the PLO established in order to give them organisational and political expression and also that of popular

struggle. Most of the Palestinian political currents therefore supported it, and so did we when we struggled for Israel to recognise the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The Intifada inspired hope in the hearts of the two million Palestinian refugees in Arab countries, and reinforced their resolve to refuse to be integrated into them. In this way, the Intifada had the potential of strengthening the fermenting power among the Arab masses, and also of strengthening the national movements and their resistance to the regimes exploiting them and the wealth in their countries.

The Intifada also succeeded in undermining the status quo that existed for twenty years in the Occupied Territories since 1967 — which caused the Israeli political and military establishment to come to the conclusion that it is no longer possible to maintain a situation of non-annexation and non-retreat, rather a political solution must be arrived at, that will grant a degree of sovereignty to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.

It is true that the mass-based Intifada of the first two years subsided, and not just because of the brutal Israeli repression or a simple "tiring of the masses". PLO-Tunis bears great responsibility for this because it opposed and prevented support for a long-term strategy of popular resistance whose goal would be to build an organisational, economic and political infrastructure in order to attain complete separation from the occupation's institutions. In place of the mass-based Intifada came military units' actions against soldiers and settlers, which were directly and substantially backed by hundreds of Palestinians, and won the moral support of most of the public. Still, in the Gaza Strip the mass confrontations with the army went on, particularly in the refugee camps. Therefore, a release from the burden of Gaza became an explicit Israeli interest, even

for most of the Likud members. Moreover, most of the security establishment in Israel reached the conclusion that it is impossible to liquidate the Intifada, by military means. The mass exit into the streets following the political prisoners' hunger strike only confirmed this notion for them — namely, that the Intifada can rise up again anew at any moment if the direct Israeli occupation continues. Hamas' strengthening in reaction to despair in the face of oppression reinforced this feeling.

In the months preceding the Accord, it was already clear to the Israeli government that its attempts to strengthen the Palestinian delegation and to weaken the opposition to the Madrid process had come to naught. There were signs that the leftist fronts' (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine) call for a "national dialogue" regarding the PLO's democratisation, the Accord and the Intifada was winning the support of parties like the Communist Party and public figures like Haider Abdel Shafi and others from within Fatah. Arafat has lost much of his authority in the Occupied Territories, including among members of Fatah itself, and in the eyes of thousands of Palestinian fighters in the camps in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. The PLO's disintegration accelerated and Rabin needed to decide quickly between the "dead horse" — the delegation — and the "half-dead horse" — Arafat, and chose the latter to sign the autonomy agreement with him. Arafat was also willing to compromise on the same minimum that he forbade members of the delegation to retreat from during the ten rounds of discussions, out of fear of an additional deterioration in Israeli-Palestinian relations and a total loss of control over the Palestinian national movement.

The Accord — The Declaration of Principles

There are two parts to the Accord. The first discusses the declarations concerning mutual recognition between the sides and on the condition of Israel's recognition of the PLO. This introduction constitutes the framework and it is the condition (again, Israel's) for the

second part, which includes the details for the "Gaza and Jericho First" plan.

A. The mutual recognition between the PLO and Israel

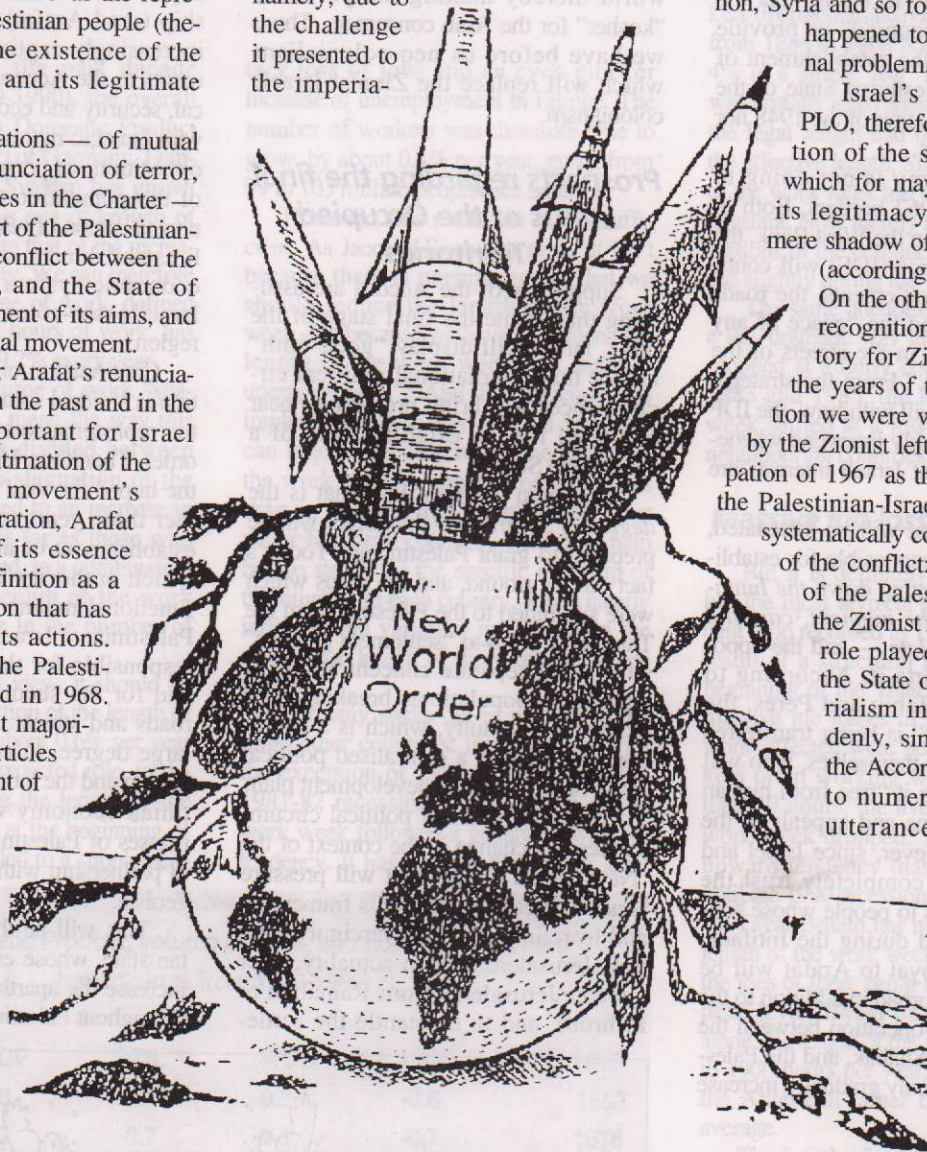
The PLO recognises the right of Israel to exist in peace and security, declares its renunciation of the use of terror and violence, and promises to punish anyone who trespasses on this commitment, and also to erase the articles in the Palestinian Charter opposing Israel's existence. In exchange, Israel recognises the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people (thereby recognising the existence of the Palestinian people and its legitimate "political rights").

The three declarations — of mutual recognition, the renunciation of terror, and erasing the articles in the Charter — touches the very heart of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as a conflict between the Zionist movement, and the State of Israel as the embodiment of its aims, and the Palestinian national movement.

Therefore, Yasser Arafat's renunciation of "terrorism", in the past and in the future, is most important for Israel because it is a de-legitimation of the Palestinian national movement's struggle. In his declaration, Arafat stripped the PLO of its essence and agreed to its definition as a "terrorist" organisation that has no justification for its actions. Likewise regarding the Palestinian Charter amended in 1968. Relinquishing the vast majority of the Charter's articles is like a relinquishment of the organisation's quasi-constitution which reflected its general strategy, even if the emphasis on mass struggle had been transferred over the years to the political-diplomatic arena. The Charter remained the relational framework for judging and evaluating changes in policies that were mostly approved by an artificial majority in the PLO institutions.

As *Matzpen*¹ explained (in the pamphlet 'Our Position Towards the PLO'), Fatah's conception of the "Armed Popular Struggle", which had been adopted by the PLO, was that "the recruitment and the independent organisation of the Palestinian people for the liberation of their homeland, and (the removal of) the

Palestinian issue from the hands of the Arab countries (will mean) that their liberation will be based on their desire to fight by all available means against any power that tries to block their road to national liberation." From the notion of "armed struggle" stemmed the strategic necessity of the revolutionary struggle against the Zionist State, against imperialist control in the region and against the Arab regimes. So we reasoned, together with progressive forces in the whole world, our support for of the PLO; namely, due to the challenge it presented to the imperia-



list order in the region and its being an igniter of national movements there, while working against the institutions of the colonialist Zionist regime responsible for dispossession, occupation and wars, while serving as a bridgehead for imperialism in the region.

In these three declarations the PLO wiped out, with one blow, the whole justification for using any available means in its struggle. In this way, including signing the Accord and postponing the

discussion on the "Right of Return", despite strong opposition by some leaders in Fatah itself, the PLO relinquished another aspect of its character: its claim to represent the whole of the Palestinian people, including the refugees and the Arabs in Israel, to whom the PLO continued, until recently, to pay lip service. By doing so, the PLO hammered the last nail into the coffin of the Palestinian national movement, and split the Palestinian national problem into local problems of Palestinians in Lebanon, Syria and so forth, similar to what happened to the Kurdish national problem.

Israel's recognition of the PLO, therefore, is not recognition of the same organisation which for many years had denied its legitimacy, but rather of "a mere shadow of that organisation" (according to Shimon Peres). On the other hand, the PLO's recognition of Israel is a victory for Zionism. During all the years of the Israeli occupation we were witnesses to efforts by the Zionist left to view the occupation of 1967 as the main reason for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, while systematically concealing the roots of the conflict: the dispossession of the Palestinian people by the Zionist movement and the role played by Zionism and the State of Israel for imperialism in the region. Suddenly, since the signing of the Accord, we are witness to numerous articles and utterances calling the

conflict by its real name — "the conflict between Zionism and the Palestinian national movement." We are witness to a national sigh of relief over the end of *that* conflict — which depended on the recognition by the Palestinian national movement of Zionism's righteous path and on the Palestinian national movement absolving it of blame as a colonialist movement of dispossession. The PLO supplied this recognition, of which Zionism had need, as is deduced from the "renunciation of terror".

1. *Matzpen* is the Hebrew language paper of the RCL.

B. The Accord — "Gaza-Jericho First"

As was said, the main questions were postponed to the stage of discussions that will supposedly take place in another two or three years on the final status of the Territories, at which the Palestinians will be free to raise any issue and Israel will be under no obligation to accept their demands. This applies to the settlements and Jerusalem, to Israel's commitments to a general withdrawal, and of course the Accord does not in any way recognise that the Territories are "occupied" or provide any guarantee for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State or the right of return — neither of the 1948 nor of the 1967 refugees.

The Israeli army is not going to withdraw to the 1967 borders. Both in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) will continue to guard the settlements, the roads leading to them and the "peace of any Jew moving about in the streets of the occupied territories." From the strategic points to which it will withdraw, the IDF will be able to quickly intervene whenever it perceives that Israeli interests are threatened.

In the areas that will be evacuated, the PLO will be responsible for establishing order, for putting down the *Intifada* — which, at the moment, can and also needs to escalate — and the opposition that supports it. According to declarations by Rabin and Peres, the IDF's "dirty work" is being transferred to the Palestinians themselves, who will be able to perform it "free from human rights organisations and appeals to the high court." However, since Israel and the PLO cannot completely trust the local police forces to people whose solidarity was forged during the Intifada, military forces loyal to Arafat will be brought in from abroad in addition to the local recruits. Co-operation between the Israeli police, the Shabak, and the Palestinian police will only gradually increase with time.

The Accord's economic aspect — neo-colonialism

The goal of the economic accords is to preserve the Palestinian's dependence on Israel. Until now the two economies relationships were a classic example of the colonialist division of labour: the centre sells its industrial products and the periphery sells its labour. Various arrangements in the Accord ensure this "co-ordination", among others, by "joint

projects" built on Palestinian labour, Israeli knowledge and financing from the major capitalist countries.

All of the promises about the opening up of possibilities for economic development are a smokescreen, when the major natural resources — the land and the water — remain under Israeli control. The Palestinian economy is also designated the additional objective of being a reservoir of cheap labour, that it is to be a sub-contractor for Israeli companies which will export to the Arab world thereby making the products "kosher" for the Arab consumers. Thus, we have before us neo-colonialism which will replace the Zionist Israeli colonialism.

Prospects regarding the final status of the Occupied Territories

Supporters of the Accord are assuming that, come the final stage of the talks, Israel will display "good faith" and/or that international political circumstances will bring pressure to bear on Israel for the establishment of a Palestinian State.

The main question is: What is the degree of sovereignty that Israel will be prepared to grant Palestinians? Today's fact on the ground, and the maps which were submitted to the Palestinians in the Taba talks point to "settlement clusters" which will separate concentrations of Palestinian populations, breaking their territorial continuity, which is a condition for building a centralised political entity or a centralised development plan.

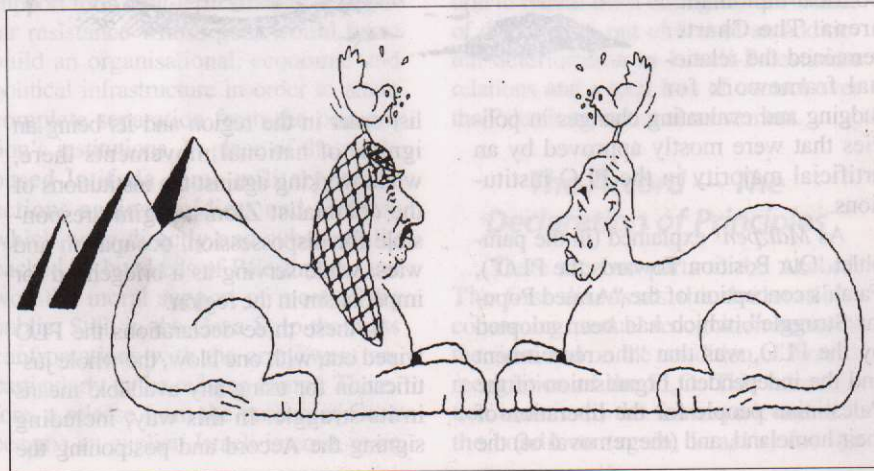
What international political circumstances can change in the context of the "New World Order" that will pressure Israel to break the Accord's framework and to relinquish its sovereignty over East Jerusalem and, in actuality, over Greater Jerusalem (from Ramallah to Hebron), and to dismantle the settle-

ments? What can change the power relations between Israel and the Palestinians, when the Palestinian leadership itself opened the door for the normalisation of relations between Israel and the Arab countries, thereby decreasing their chances of pressuring Israel and the United States? The dismantling of the Palestinian refugees' influence, and to a weakening of the Palestinian leftist fronts power in Diaspora, who represented the refugees' interests in the PLO.

What can be the prospect for change in power relations when the PLO leadership (read Arafat) every-day become increasingly captive to their commitments to the Accord: to establish political, security and economic co-ordination with Israel, to repress the Intifada and the opposition, to persuade various sectors of the population to participate in the normalisation of relations with the Israeli establishment, and to create a joint economic system that will facilitate Israel's neo-colonialist control in the region.

Continuation of the indirect occupation is an ideal solution for Israel and for the representatives of the region's new order. Therefore, Israel's "good faith" or the hoped for vital pressure will in another three years result, at most, in the establishment of a Palestinian entity in which authority will be divided in a functional manner between Israelis and Palestinians: Israel will continue to be responsible for the settlement clusters and for the security of its citizens in roads and streets. It will continue, to a large degree, to control the bridges to Jordan and the land, water and the Palestinian economy while exploiting the masses of Palestinian workers, this time in partnership with the Palestinian bourgeoisie.

This will be the Palestinian Bantustan state, whose establishment will only increase the apartheid that already exists throughout Palestine. ★



The new employment order

IN most European countries, the call for a reduction in the length of the work week is front and centre. This article provides a brief examination of the major developments in this field over the past decade.¹

MAXIME DURAND — 10 December 1993

OVER the past decade (1979-1990), the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Germany, France, Italy, Britain and Sweden has grown by 2.2% per year. This rate of growth of production is lower than that of the increase in hourly productivity. We can therefore observe that the volume of work, defined as the total number of hours of work, has slightly decreased, by 0.2% every year.

How was this volume of work "shared"? By sharing, we mean the way this volume of work was divided between working people. The stagnation of the volume of work first led to an increase in unemployment and, as far as those who have a job are concerned, to a combination of reduction of the length of the work week and an increase in the number of workers.

From this point of view, it should be observed that the reduction of the length of the work week — by about 0.6% per year — in part played the expected role, in the sense that maintaining the length of the work week at its level at the beginning of the 1980s would have led to a supplementary

loss of jobs and an even quicker increase of unemployment in Europe. The number of workers was therefore able to grow, by about 0.4% per year, going from 99 to 103 million people (see table 1).

However, this reduction was insufficient. As Jacques Rigaudiat said, "it isn't because there is unemployment that we should reduce the length of the work week. It's because we haven't reduced the length of the work week that there is unemployment."³ And this reduction was implemented in a very unequal way. We can ignore Sweden, where the length of the work week is about three hours less than in France, and examine the four major European countries. One can't help but be struck by the specific make-up of the situation in each country, which clearly indicates the variation in policies in the area of the length of the work week (see table 1).

Germany sticks out in relation to the three other countries, insofar as — with the exception of 1983-84, following the 1981-82 recession — the length of the work week followed a general downward tendency. It has reached the French level

once again after having crossed paths with it in 1981-82. But these two trajectories obviously do not have the same meaning. In France, with the adoption of the 39-hour work week and the fifth paid week of holidays, the annual number of hours worked dropped massively in 1982, going from 1886 to 1808 hours, a drop of about 4% in a single year. But this movement was brutally interrupted, primarily because the legal length had become the same as the effective length. Since 1983, the length of the work week has essentially remained constant. Now merely affected by the fluctuations of the conjuncture, it even increased slightly during the 1988-90 upturn.

The same phenomenon can be seen in a less dramatic way in Italy. After having dropped at a fairly constant rate between 1983 and 1985, the length of the work week settled at a lower rate than in the neighbouring countries.

Massive job losses in industry

But it is definitely Great Britain that has the most atypical profile. The significant drop recorded in 1980 and 1981 is the result of a structural adjustment. At the beginning of the Thatcher era, there were massive job losses in industry. Since the worst affected were poorly qualified workers often working weeks much longer than 40 hours, the average length of the work week dropped. Then there was an upward tendency that did not level off until the 1990 recession.

Great Britain has no legislation on the length of the work week and is opposed to the idea of there being any on a pan-European level. Based on full-time workers alone, the length of the work week goes up to 1900 hours per year, which is closer to the American rather than the European average.

The length of work is actually a difficult notion to measure, and this is often because of national specificities. One of the main sources of difficulty is part-time work. We can see that part-time work is

Table 1

Gross Domestic Product, volume of work, and number of workers
(growth in % from 1979-1989)

	GDP	VOL	WOR	LEN	HRS
Germany	1.9	-0.1	0.5	-0.6	1663
France	2.3	-0.7	0.1	-0.7	1678
Italy	2.4	0.1	0.4	-0.3	1727
Britain	2.3	-0.2	0.5	-0.7	1638
Sweden	2.0	0.9	0.7	+0.2	1480
Average	2.2	-0.2	0.4	-0.6	1665

GDP = Gross Domestic Product

VOL = Volume of work

WOR = Number of workers

LEN = Annual length of work

HRS = Average total of hours worked in 1990

Source: OCDE, Marchand²

1. This article is largely based on a study done by Michel Husson, "Le volume de travail et son partage", *Revue de l'IRE* No. 11, 1993. See also, "Europe: la durée du travail", *Chronique Internationale IRES* No. 18, September 1992.

2. Olivier Marchand, "Une comparaison internationale des temps de travail", *Futuribles*, No. 165-166, May-June 1992.

3. Jacques Rigaudiat, "Réduire le temps de travail", Syros, 1993.

unequally spread out within the EEC. In Italy, 5.2% of employees work part-time; in Holland the figure is 30.9%; and the EEC average is 13.7%. The more part-time work there is, the more its average length decreases in relation to that of a full-time worker (see table 2).

The inclusion of part-time work statistics distorts international comparisons. As such, the average length of the work week remains greater than 40 hours for full-time workers in the EEC. This average only drops to 38 hours when part-time work is taken into account. The closeness of France and Britain is particularly revealing — these two countries appear to have work weeks of the same length and are close to the EEC average. In reality, they are two very different cases, if part-time work is taken into account. A full-time worker works 43.6 hours per week in Britain, whereas this figure is 39.9 for France.

With the exception of Sweden, part-time work has grown considerably throughout Western Europe. The rate of growth of part-time employment between 1979 and 1989 is on average 2.4% per year for the five countries under consideration — while total employment only grew by 1.1%.

This rate of growth changes a lot from one country to the next. France has seen the fastest growth — between 1979 and 1990 part-time employment went from

Table 2
Length of work week in 1989 (in hours)

	FUL	PAR	AVE	PAR%
Germany	40.3	20.7	37.7	13.0
Belgium	38.1	20.4	36.0	11.7
France	39.9	21.9	37.7	12.2
Italy	38.6	24.9	37.9	5.2
Holland	39.1	16.5	32.1	30.9
Britain	43.6	17.3	37.7	22.6
EEC	40.6	19.2	37.6	13.7

FUL = Full-time workers PAR = Part-time workers
 AVE = Average of full-time and part-time workers
 PAR% = Percentage of workforce that is part-time

Source: Marchand 1992

8.2% to 12% of the total. In 1990, 24% of women in the job market had part-time jobs, compared to 17% in 1979. Generally speaking, part-time work affects women — in a ratio that goes from 65% of all part-time work in Italy to 91% of all part-time work in Germany (see table 3).

Along with the rise in part-time work, there is another significant tendency: the proportion of women in the workplace has increased in all the countries under consideration — surpassing the general increase

in employment from 2% to 4%. In order to understand how these two tendencies are combined, it suffices to examine the division of the volume of work between women and men. This gives a more accurate idea of women's role in salaried economic activity, which is not properly reflected by a simple tallying of the number of women in the workforce.

Women's contribution is significantly lower. In France, women occupy 42.3% of jobs but do only 36.7% of total hours worked. These figures are respectively 40.7% and 33.2% for all the five Western European countries taken together. However, this does not change the fact that women's participation in the workforce has grown.

Women and part-time employment

The role played by the rise of women's part-time employment in the sharing out of the volume of work and in the reduction of average length of the work week has been a striking feature of the last decade. Its significance is better demonstrated through an examination of job creation between 1979 and 1989 — coupled with the understanding that there are clear variations that originate in numerous individual histories of entry onto the labour market, departure into retirement or unemployment, shifts from full-time to part-time work, and so forth.

We can observe that the gender statistics for the four million net jobs created between 1979 and 1989 in the five countries under consideration are in no way comparable to those of the population already employed (see table 4). This job creation was only carried out following upon the destruction of 732,000 jobs

Table 3
Women in the workforce and part-time employment (in %)

	PAR% 1979	PAR%1989	WOM%1989
Germany	11.4	13.2	90.5
Austria	7.2	8.8	88.8
Belgium	6.0	10.2	89.6
Denmark	22.7	23.7	79.4
Spain	—	4.8	77.2
France	8.2	12.0	83.1
Greece	—	5.5	65.7
Ireland	5.1	8.1	68.2
Italy	5.3	5.7	64.7
Norway	25.3	26.6	81.8
Holland	16.6	33.2	70.4
Portugal	7.8	5.9	69.8
Britain	16.4	21.8	87.0
Sweden	23.6	23.2	83.7
EEC	9.6	13.2	82.9

PAR%1979 = Part-time employment as % of total in 1979

PAR%1989 = Part-time employment as % of total in 1989

WOM%1989 = % of part-time work force composed of women in 1989

Source: OECD

employing men, more than compensated by the creation of 4.7 million jobs for women.

In Europe, the rise in the number of women employed has been accompanied by an absolute decline in the number of jobs held by men. A more detailed examination shows that France and Britain are largely at the source of this phenomenon. Over the ten years under examination, these two countries respectively eliminated 5.9% and 1.7% of male employment. Only Germany has bucked the trend, and has managed to create male employment.

The second important statistic is that 83% of jobs created in Europe are part-time jobs. This largely overlaps the preceding figures, insofar as part-time work and women's work are two closely linked phenomena. Once again, France and Britain occupy a special place; the number of full-time jobs dropped in these two countries between 1979 and 1989. In France, 649,000 full-time jobs were lost (3.2% of the total) and 334,000 (1.6% of the total) were lost in Britain. In Germany, part-time employment makes up half of the jobs created, but plays only a secondary role in Italy and Sweden.

We can develop an even more synthetic vision of the sexual division of the volume of work by examining total hours worked. Between 1979 and 1989, the

volume of male work dropped by 6.5 billion hours — a figure largely reflecting the elimination of full-time jobs. At the same time, the volume of salaried work carried out by women grew by 3.3 billion hours — but two thirds of this figure concerns part-time work.

Once again, it is in Britain and, above all, in France that these figures are the most striking. In France, the volume of work dropped by 2.7 billion hours, corresponding essentially to the elimination of male jobs. 250 million additional hours were created for women, corresponding to fewer than 140,000 full-time jobs. Suffice it to say that in France women in the workplace — whose number grew by 900,000 over this period — had to be satisfied with the "sharing" of a volume of work growing at a snail's pace. And this was only possible because 81.5% of new employment for women were part-time jobs.

The extreme case of France in this domain clearly demonstrates the central ambiguity of the evolution of women's employment in Europe. On one hand, the growth of unemployment has not claimed women's employment as a variable for adjustment; the aspiration of women to work has remained sufficiently strong that a "return to domestic life" has not played this role. But in exchange for this favorable evolution, part-time employment has played a central part in job-creation for women.

A detailed examination of the statistical balance sheet of the last decade underlines the absolute necessity of a reduction of the work week. This balance sheet shows that European capitalism does not have the necessary growth potential for the creation of enough jobs to fight unemployment.

But above all, it can be seen that women's part-time work has played a key role, much more important in practice than what one might imagine — and this poses the need for an alternative in very clear terms. The continuation of current trends would tend inexorably to polarise the active population around three axes: growing unemployment; full-time male employment; and part-time women's employment — obviously, with all the intermediary positions of unstable employment.

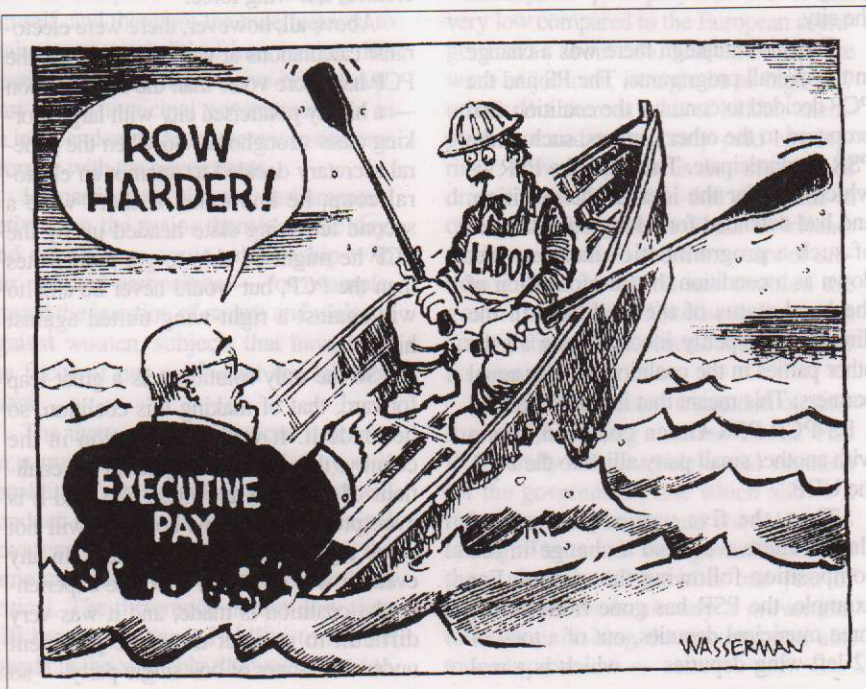
Alternative vision for Europe

A massive reduction of the length of the work week charts an alternative course, since it aims to provide employment for all, women and men — at the same time aligning the situation of one gender with the other. Here we have an all-round social and feminist demand, inspired by a profound aspiration for equality — and which would be the pillar of an alternative vision for Europe. ★

Table 4

Changes in the work force between 1979 and 1989
(thousands)

	Total employment			Part-time employment		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Germany	1443	405	1037	699	69	630
France	116	-791	907	765	26	739
Italy	775	-98	874	83	-32	114
Britain	1326	-260	1586	1660	478	1183
Sweden	286	11	275	60	35	24
Total	3946	-732	4679	3267	576	2691



A left alliance in Lisbon

THE right-wing Social Democratic Party (PSD), which has held the majority in parliament for eight years, lost in the municipal elections of December 12. On the national level, the Socialist Party (PS) outflanked the PSD by 4%. While the PS won in 127 municipalities, the PSD took 116, the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) 49, and 13 went to a small right-wing party.

International Viewpoint spoke with Francisco Louça, a representative of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR, Portuguese section of the Fourth International), about the election results. The PSR itself was part of a left-wing slate which ran 634 candidates in the 15 biggest cities. Out of the 32 elected in Lisbon, three were from the PSR.

INTERVIEW — 23 December 1993

THE "Por Lisboa" (For Lisbon) coalition received 60% of the votes in Lisbon. Can you tell us about its political composition, about the process that led to the single slate, and about the campaign's programme?

Let me begin with the history of this coalition. This is the second time it has run in elections; it won the municipal elections in Lisbon in 1989 following a debate within the PS. The municipality of Lisbon, the country's main urban centre, is decisive from an electoral point of view. It had been dominated for 12 years by the right-wing, and there was a debate within the left, especially in the PS, on how a winning ticket could be put together. The PS General Secretary Jorge Sampaio decided to run himself as the candidate and proposed the idea of a coalition to the PCP.

That was quite innovative because in general the PS refused — and continues to do so everywhere but in Lisbon — any kind of electoral alliance with the PCP. But this was a pre-condition because together the PCP and the PS had enough votes to defeat the right-wing coalition. Four years later, the coalition was made between the PS, the PCP and a small allied party actually created by the PCP, the Greens.

Four years ago, the PSR proposed that it be a central player in the slate and ran a candidate for the municipal assembly; he was elected and for four years he was in the municipal assembly. There was a

debate about the four years, on the programme, on the composition of the coalition itself, and on the kind of campaign to run.

There was a balance sheet of the four years in municipal government. It was spelled out that a rectification had to be made in the direction of developing the social mobilisation around the major problems. The first four years were devoted to the work of changing the global priorities set out by the right-wing, and to emergency works. Now we know that we should have begun to organise more around social priorities such as public transport, and reorganise in a thoroughgoing fashion the relationship of transit to the city.

For this campaign there was a change in the overall programme. The PS and the PCP decided to continue the coalition, and proposed to the other partners, such as the PSR, to participate. That said, the PSR — which was for the idea of the coalition, and had defended for a long time the idea of such a programmatic change — set down as a condition the transformation of the legal status of the coalition, in the direction of openly incorporating all the other parties in the coalition as fully equal partners. This meant that it would become a PS-PCP-PSR-Green coalition, along with another small party allied to the PCP, the UDP.

Thus, the five parties put forward slates. There was also a change in the composition following the victory. For example, the PSR has gone from one to three municipal deputies, out of a total of 32 left-wing deputies — which is a real

improvement in the relationship of forces.

The third change — the first being that of the coalition's composition, the second that of the programme — was in the campaign itself. The entire campaign was coordinated by the five coalition partners, including the contact meetings with the population. It was a really dynamic campaign, reflecting the evolution I have described.

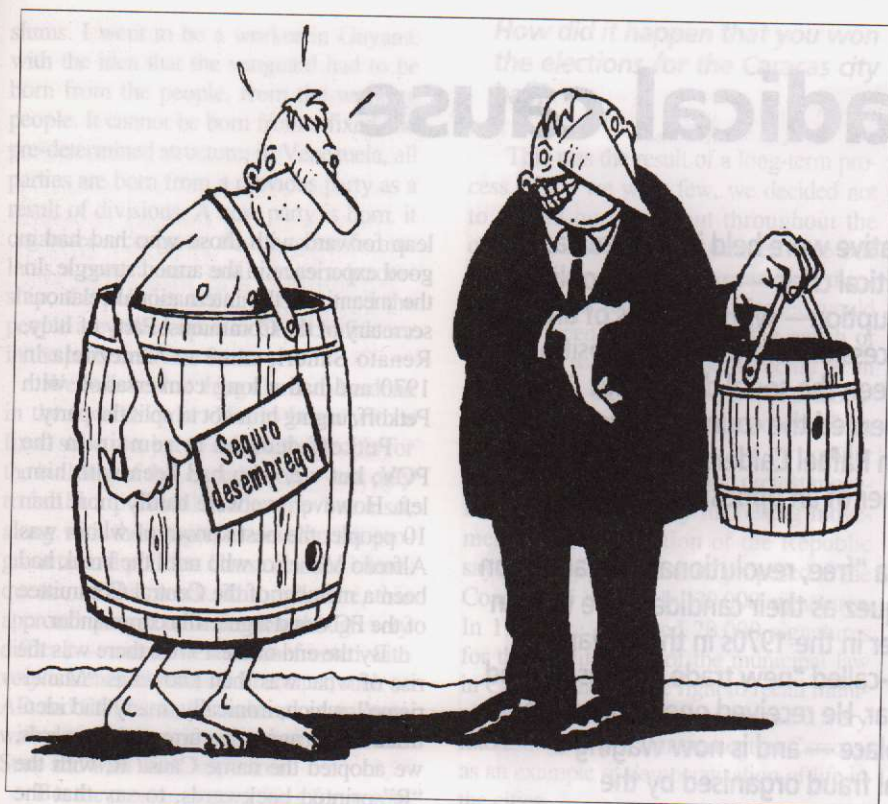
Just imagine that the right-wing, which lost the last elections with 45 to 47% of the vote, now has only 25%, against the left's 60%.

How do you explain the existence of this coalition, which is a rather unique case in all of Europe?

Yes, it is a unique case — in Portugal, too. The PS general secretary was in a very difficult situation in 1989. He was being marginalised within the party. He is a leader with origins in a far-left organisation, one of the main far-left organisations in Portugal, where he was a member until 1975. He is someone who had very strong ties with the left, and the intellectual core of the party was more favourable to alliances with other sectors of the left, and was not very open to the classical social democratic notion of the PS and social democracy being the only acceptable and credible left-wing force.

Above all, however, there were electoral calculations at work. Until 1989, the PCP had more votes than the PS in Lisbon — a highly politicised city with large working class strongholds. So when the general secretary decided to attempt an electoral coup, he knew that if there were a second left-wing slate headed up by the PCP he might be able to get more votes than the PCP, but would never be able to win against a right-wing united against him.

So the only solution was a great leap forward, that of making this coalition, so he made it. It was an exception in the country; they had never gone in for coalitions of this type anywhere else, and it is even probable that this coalition will not come together again in the future. In any event, it was clear that after one experience the coalition is made, and it was very difficult to re-elect the same president under the banner of one single party — so



it was almost unavoidable that the coalition would come together for a second time.

What do the three PSR deputies plan on doing?

We already have a significant amount of experience in the municipal assembly; the deputy we had for four years intervened generally on budgetary questions, on the main problems, and in the big political debates in the assembly that meets every week. He had the very democratic right to form an independent parliamentary group himself, and therefore the time required to make a serious political intervention. His general approach was to give critical support to the municipal government, but in an independent fashion; there was no compromise with the government.

He carried out his own parliamentary activity on the major themes of the day, and which have some relationship with our political campaigns — for example, around the question of racism and violence against women, subjects that have been the focus of our work over the last few years.

The three new deputies can intervene on a much wider scale, and they will constitute a parliamentary group that will conduct its relations with the municipal government in the same way, along the same criteria — that is, autonomous and critical. The difference is that now they will have an enhanced ability to set the agenda in the assembly discussions, and to

formulate resolutions touching on subjects related to political campaigns led by the PSR in its extra-parliamentary work, which themselves determine our political intervention in the assembly.

Restructuring is planned in various sectors, such as shipbuilding, steel, the national airline, and so forth. Can you briefly discuss the social and trade union situation in Portugal?

Portugal is a specific case in Europe. Formally, the unemployment rate is still very low compared to the European average. It was about 5%, and now with the wave of job cuts, it might be as high as 7 or 8%. But there is a lot of hidden unemployment and very poorly paid employment. However, there is not the kind of dramatic social tension that one finds in other countries, such as Spain or Ireland. And there has been about six years of economic growth, which has enabled the government to redistribute revenues among the middle classes and the petty bourgeoisie.

All this has created a situation of pressure on the working class movement. This is generally a favourable social situation for the government, one which allows it room for manoeuvre and for initiative-taking. The small change indicated by these elections is that after one year of recession there is already a movement towards punishing the government and towards protest.

We all know that the response on the level of the different sectors to the restructuring is always very difficult when there is the threat of unemployment hanging over an enterprise, when the sector in question is in the process of shutting down. Strikes don't really represent much of a threat to the bosses in such cases.

So there is a need for a social mobilisation, and the trade unions are too weak to organise it. The social movement which does, however, have the ability to act is the student movement. The government has had an absolute majority for eight years, and the right-wing had great influence within youth. But they are in the process of quickly losing that influence among youth, with a huge student movement developing around the question of student fees and conditions for study. There are massive demonstrations in the country of a kind that hasn't been seen for a long time, and which took place even during the election campaign. The student movement constitutes a very important radicalisation, which has also influenced the working class movement and the whole social situation in the country.

Prime Minister Mario Soares replaced four of his ministers ten days before the elections. There is a growing crisis within the government. Is he about to dissolve the national assembly and call new elections?

No, the ministers that were replaced were in those sectors affected by the social mobilisation. In the health sector there was a doctors' strike on the same day that the minister was replaced. And of course there was the minister of education who was a casualty of the major demonstrations I mentioned. Then there was the finance minister, who was made the fall guy for the recession.

Soares planned to take serious measures to address the economic woes. But now, after the municipal elections, he has quickly backtracked. After all, in spite of the defeat suffered in the big cities, the ruling PSD only fell the PS by some 3 to 4.5%. So it is actually a very small difference, which does not justify bringing the anticipated general elections forward. It is even possible that the dramatisation of the situation by the government will make a PSD victory inevitable.

The left must develop an entirely different strategy, based on social mobilisation and the organisation of public debates — to reorient those social sectors looking for new solutions. ★

A radical cause

ON December 5, presidential and legislative were held in Venezuela. This took place in the middle of a major political crisis — a president obliged to step down following charges of corruption— with rumours of an impending coup d'etat, an economic recession and the decomposition of the traditional two-party system (between the social democratic AD and the social-Christian COPEI) that has governed the country for years. Officially, the old conservative politician Rafael Caldera (founder of the COPEI) was the winner, under the banner of an opposition force, the *Convergencia* alliance.

Causa Radical, that defines itself as a “free, revolutionary organisation of working people”, ran Andres Velasquez as their candidate. He was an electrical worker and trade union leader in the 1970s in the Guyana region, one of main initiators of the so-called “new trade unionism”, and now the governor in the state of Bolivar. He received one third of the total votes cast — giving him second place — and is now waging a campaign against the massive electoral fraud organised by the traditional parties and the electoral authorities, who are trying to say he finished in last place.

The origins and experience of the *Causa Radical* are interesting from several points of view. It is one of the organisations of the Latin American left that, without abandoning its revolutionary principles, is building a political party that seeks to carry out its activities with society's dispossessed — and not only in their name — and has posted some good results.

In the following interview, the general secretary of *Causa Radical*, Pablo Medina, provides a general overview of the organisation. The interview was conducted by Emir Sader and originally appeared in the April-May 1993 issue of the Latin American journal *América Libre*.

INTERVIEW

WHAT are the origins of *Causa Radical*?

Its origins are in the end of the 1960s, when a series of national and international factors coincided. On the national level, there was the fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), where a balance sheet of the armed struggle was made. It should be recalled that at the beginning of the 1960s a process of armed struggle unfurled, which ended in a complete fiasco. It was necessary to analyse this, but the discussion on the armed struggle led to another one on the political instrument, the party. It wasn't the armed struggle as such that had to be discussed, but the political actors and the political subject —

in our case, the PCV — that had demonstrated their inability to lead the struggle, both in the legal sphere and in the armed sphere. The discussion was centred on the structure of the party and the programme; we participated in this discussion.

To begin with, there were three currents in the party: the right-wing, linked to Moscow, led by legendary figures such as Jesus Faria and Gustavo Machado; a centrist current, led by the general secretary of the party at the time, Pompeyo Marquez, who is now a leading member of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), and whose proposal at the time was to arrive at the Congress united and leave it united; and there was a current led by Teodoro Petkoff, which mainly argued not for the renewal of the PCV but for a break from it, hoping for a qualitative

leap forward with those who had had a good experience in the armed struggle. In the meantime, the international relations secretary of the Communist Party of Italy, Renato Sandri, came to Venezuela in 1970 and had a long conversation with Petkoff, urging him not to split the party.

Petkoff decided to remain in the PCV; but we, who had been with him, left. However, we were hardly more than 10 people, the best known of whom was Alfredo Maneiro, who until the break had been a member of the Central Committee of the PCV and a guerrilla commander.

By the end of the 1970s, there was the rise of what was then known as “Maneirismo”, which, ironically, many had identified as the agnostic current. Afterwards, we adopted the name *Causa R*, with the “R” printed backwards, to say that the country was the wrong way around. When it came to registering for the elections, we called the group *Causa Radical*.

But coming back to the time of our birth, in January 1971, there was pressure from the Soviets to expel Petkoff from the PCV. The MAS was then born as a result of pressure from the right of the PCV and not through its own initiative. First it was called the Venezuelan Communist Force and then Movement Toward Socialism.

We were at the founding congress of the MAS, simply to state our position — which included the conviction that the MAS was going to reproduce the vices and errors of the PCV in its own ranks.

Internationally, our emergence onto the scene was related to the situation at the time — the Cultural Revolution in China, May 68 in France, the invasion of Czechoslovakia — which decisively influenced changes in the Venezuelan left.

Was the group already called *Causa R*?

No, in the beginning we thought about organising a movement that would be called Venezuela 83. In that year, Venezuela took back all the oil enterprises that had been in American hands; it was also the bicentenary of Bolivar's birth. The idea was to organise a mass movement that would lead to the building of a political organisation. The original 12 spread out to do work at the University of Caracas and in the

slums. I went to be a worker in Guyana, with the idea that the vanguard had to be born from the people, from the working people. It cannot be born from a fixed and pre-determined structure; in Venezuela, all parties are born from a previous party as a result of divisions. A new party is born, it organises a congress, this congress formulates a programme and names a leadership; the policies are drawn up, and the people are called upon to have confidence in the party and vote for it.

We believe that things have to be done in the reverse order. Not to begin with a fixed structure, but to call on the people for the building of this organisation — not only to build a political leadership but also, along with the people, to develop the programme and policies. Causa R is the consequence of that work. Through time, this approach proved to be feasible though very difficult — since we were confronted with very entrenched political structures, such as AD and COPEI, and a trade union structure with deep roots, with armed gangs, in the State and with work inspectors.

But the most important thing for us was developing our own political proposals. Over time, we never brandished the call for socialism in Venezuela. Firstly, because the MAS had taken this task on itself. Second, because it didn't seem a viable option; and in Venezuela, alongside the armed struggle there developed very strong anti-communist sentiments in the media, and the masses were affected by this.

This does not mean that the masses in Venezuela are reactionary. They have always sought change and this change has always been associated with democracy. Our challenge was to take over the issue of democracy from the right-wing, because democracy is not a reactionary issue but one for working people.

We began our struggle to take this banner out of the hands of the AD and COPEI in the trade union sphere. We proposed universal suffrage and a secret ballot for the election of executive committee of the trade union centre. We called for respect for trade union elections, for daily information sessions for workers on contract negotiations, and for financial accountability and honesty.

All this saw us displace the AD and the COPEI in the trade unions. We began a new trade unionism. AD is now synonymous with trade union dictatorship and corruption. Over the last few years, we have displaced them in the major trade unions, and we have taken on the political banner of radical democracy, the transformation of the State and service to workers and the people.

How did it happen that you won the elections for the Caracas city hall?

This was the result of a long-term process. Since we were few, we decided not to spread ourselves out throughout the country, but rather to concentrate our forces in a few areas. We created the theory of the four legs. The popular leg would be developed in Caracas, in the parish of Catia; and we thought that this could be an example for the rest of the popular movement in Venezuela. We created Pro Catia Causa R and organised a lot of popular activities: sporting activities, protest movements. We built a very interesting movement. The Constitution of the Republic says that legislation can be proposed to the Congress if backed by 20,000 signatures. In 1976, we collected 20,000 signatures for the modification of the municipal law in Caracas and for the right to recall municipal councillors. This generated a very interesting people's movement in Caracas, as an example of democratisation of life in the cities.

We also set up the movement of the Casa del Agua Mansa for intellectuals. In one year we managed to stir up intellectual activity. We called on this sector to make a commitment, declaring that there would be no change without the intellectuals, alongside the working people. Intellectuals act as a beacon to point out the problems in the country, using their ability to see beyond the viewpoint of the rest of society.

But the majority of intellectuals in Venezuela sold out in the 1970s. During the armed struggle, many intellectuals were heavily committed; but in the 1970s the oil boom neutralised and bought most of them out. Workers and the people stayed on without the support of the intellectuals.

The other leg was in the university. We established a movement and a publication called *PRAG*, which was very important in the Central University of Venezuela and served as a model for the rest of the university movement.

But when this movement retreated at the end of the 1970s, Causa R also retreated. We are linked to the movements; when the movements disappear, Causa R is greatly weakened.

The next foot was in the working class, and this all began with the publication *El Matancero*. Founded in 1972, this publication has now printed more than 500 issues. Though it was quite a modest effort to begin with, it was converted into a substitute for the trade union. It was a kind of voice for the workers. For several years it

was a clandestine publication — there was a repressive situation on the trade union front, and the trade union dictators were trying to find us and get us dismissed. On 15 February 1972 I began to work at SIDOR, in the field of electric ovens, a very difficult department. Already at the end of the first year, we had brought together an initial group. We succeeded in forcing the holding of a trade union election; we got someone elected. From that point, we were able to organise the workers, elect departmental delegates and democratise the life of the unions and the life of the workers.

In seven years we completely won over the union, that is in 1979. From that year until 1981 we created a model of what a trade union should be — with writing courses so the workers could put together publications, courses in industrial safety, cooking classes, and so forth. The life of the trade union was democratised; assemblies were held at the factory gates and in the union offices. Publications were printed, and there was a lot of debate. This type of trade union life had an impact in the country, above all in the Guyana region.

After 1981, AD-COPEI intervened in this trade union for seven years. They set up a dictatorship, because they had to kill the trade union and that whole radical experiment. 3,000 workers were fired during those years; the entire leadership team was sacked, as were all the delegates. There were a few deaths and others were detained — all with the objective of beheading the social vanguard. Nevertheless, after seven years there were new elections; in spite of the fact that the AD-COPEI had 3,000 of their members in the factory, we swept the elections. We gave them a real drubbing. The work carried out in this trade union later served as a reference, and won over other trade unions — leading to the creation of a new trade unionism, which was distinct, democratic, popular and revolutionary.

In 1989, there were municipal and gubernatorial elections. In 1988 there had been presidential elections, in which we ran Andres Velazquez as the candidate of the working people of Venezuela. Broadly speaking, in Venezuela out of ten million voters, six million are workers.

We had no money. We would show up at a factory with a megaphone and Andres would speak. We got 120,000 votes and three parliamentary deputies. We concentrated our efforts in the state of Bolívar, with the idea of winning there. We came third but it was a step forward. And one year later, in the gubernatorial elections, we won in Bolívar — with



Andres Velazquez.

We wanted this government to be a model for the country. Indeed, it was a reference point for many in the area of democracy, for efficiency and honesty. We had to continuously mobilise a lot of people, because we had only two deputies. It was a difficult struggle and the whole country was watching closely. In the end, the Bolivar government came through with flying colours.

In this period, there was a debate in Causa R; in the following gubernatorial and municipal elections we had to win in other important regions, to give us a real national profile. By majority decision, we decided to concentrate on the state of Carabobo; there are many workers there, it is in the centre of the country, and Causa R has a solid structure there.

But the idea didn't catch on; it didn't acquire a mass dimension. So we had to take a step backwards; and we saw that two of our three deputies had been elected in Miranda and Caracas, which are linked and form one and the same metropolitan area. So we decided to concentrate our efforts there.

With great anticipation, we began promoting the leadership of Aristobulo Isturiz, who had been president of the teachers' trade union. In 1987, we were with Andres Velazquez, and spoke with Aristobulo to get him to align himself with Causa R.

We launched a plan to democratise the city, a plan of democratic struggle. We decided that, since Causa R was small, we would become a propaganda and agitation team, and divide up into brigades. This gave rise to a real force, that rose in the social and economic malaise and the political crisis.

As a result, the victory in Caracas was no surprise. We had foreseen it months beforehand. We realised that the outgoing mayor was Black — like Aristobulo — but he was AD-COPEI, so the people voted against Perez.

In Caracas, we launched the struggle against the Perez package of economic measures. Given the combative population, and the context of major political events, this helped us a lot, and added to the credibility that Causa R already enjoyed.

Winning Caracas was always a central objective. In the last century, Bolivar always tried to take Caracas from the interior. All the movements of the last century — independence, the federal war in 1860, armed movements — always converged on Caracas. But never had there been a movement such as that of 6 December 1992, which was born from the people itself.

In 1958, when Perez Jimenez fell, there was an agreement between all the political parties, the Church and the army to descend into the streets. But never has

there been a change like last year, when the people surged into the streets on their own initiative.

Last year there were some rather serious events in the country. There was the military rebellion in February, another one in November, and municipal elections in December.

There were three coups: two military and one civilian.

How do you characterise these attempted military coups?

The Armed Forces in Venezuela (FFAA) are nationalist in character. They are educated in the ideas of Bolivar, in the defense of national sovereignty. Unlike other Latin American countries, these FFAA are popular in nature. Nearly 100% of officers are people with popular origins — sons of workers, from poor families. They have direct contact with the problems of the workers.

Haven't Venezuela's armed forces gone through a process of indoctrination, with the ideology of national security in the period of the guerrilla war?

This was the case in 1960s, with the impact of the Cuban revolution and the armed struggle in Venezuela. Clearly, there were confrontations with the army. Nevertheless, it should be recalled that the armed struggle in the mountains was preceded by events in the military — in 1960-61, forces from the navy in Carupano and Puerto Cabello were looking for a change. And whenever there were confrontations with the army, it showed itself to be very vulnerable to popular ideas — to ideas for democratic change, for a change in the interests of the Venezuelan people.

The February 4 coup attempt was related to the tremendous corruption that had developed. Ministers of Defense had been detained for corruption. In this period, the Movimiento Bolivariano was born, and they carried out the February 4 attempted coup.

There was a very significant event at that time. Aristide was removed in Haiti. President Carlos Andres Perez planned to send a sizeable section of the armed forces there, including the Bolivarianos. They feared that they were going to be killed. This information has never been revealed in Venezuela.

Near the end of 1991, there was a debate in Venezuela concerning the San

Pedro Alejandrino map that Perez had negotiated and signed with the Colombian government. There were unclear agreements concerning integration of territory lying between the two countries. In his previous government, Perez gave up the eastern slope of the Ocas Mountains, which contain open air coal mines; these are now being explored by multinational companies. If it went to the Colombian people, that would be alright; but everything was for the multinationals and the Colombian oligarchies.

This greatly disturbed sections of the armed forces. And this debate around the agreements with Colombia was the final detonator of the February 4 activities.

This Movement has a programme; it planned to establish a civilian-military government, to detain the president of the republic and political leaders and place them before the courts, and organise elections. Nobody claimed to know the names of the civilians in question.

There was sympathy for the Movement. Perez has not been able to solve the problems raised by them. He set up a consultative council composed of well-known figures in Venezuela. The council presented him with a list of proposed measures, which he completely ignored. The whole exercise had just been a manoeuvre to gain time.

The government closed off all channels of negotiation and agreement. In Venezuela, the idea of a referendum on revoking his mandate was very popular; and the president would have had the right to defend himself.

We promoted the idea of the referendum, in the belief that it would stabilise the country somewhat and give the political decision to the people. We did a trial referendum. 160,000 voted in Caracas and about 600,000 in the whole country. There weren't more because it was a working day, and we didn't have the resources to organise more widespread voting. Two to three million Venezuelans could have voted.

90 percent of the votes were against Perez. A few days later in parliament, AD and COPEI denounced the referendum and thereby unmasked themselves. They proved that they feared the people, that they feared democracy and that they weren't really democrats.

Did Causa R establish direct ties with the Bolivariano Movement?

In prison. I went there directly to speak with them, with Hugo Chavez, a few days after they were detained. They

were still incommunicado. I was the first to speak with them, to ask about the reasons for their coup attempt.

Perez said that they were going to kill him, and opened up a debate on February 4 itself — an historic debate that was broadcast on national television. A very well-known AD senator declared, "Death to the architects of the coup!"

Caldera made a big speech, saying he was not convinced that they wanted to kill the president. This speech quickly made him a prime suspect of the inquiry. Aristobulo spoke after him, giving a speech that made a tremendous impact in the country.

This changed the situation in the country. It is strange that while Perez was able to score a military victory, on the same day he suffered a political defeat. And this is why the political instability continued.

Perez engaged in his old tactics of manoeuvre. He called on the COPEI to join the cabinet, in the search for stability. COPEI and its general secretary Eduardo Fernandez had to resign three months later.

The MAS supported the suspension of constitutional guarantees on 4 February; they were to enter the government with four ministers, including Pompeyo Marquez. They were all ready to go, but there was a big debate in the MAS and they had to make a retreat. They realised that supporting the government was not going to pay any dividends.

What is the situation in the run up to the December 1993 elections?

AD is very worn out. We say that it is in its death agony. It has nothing to offer Venezuela, in political and economic terms. It certainly is not the party of change, although at one time it was, in the mid-1940s. It is a very corrupt party, tired out and bureaucratised. Its leaders have their bank accounts abroad, and have houses abroad, too; they are ready to leave the country.

On 4 February and 27 November, many of them sought asylum in foreign embassies for a few nights. In the 3 December 1992 elections, AD won the gubernatorial elections in three small states. Afterwards, through force they got three more; now, through fraud in the courts, they are getting two more.

In those states there are big mobilisations in support of the genuine governor, with drums and saucopans. 40 to 50,000 people join in these actions. And, nevertheless, the Supreme Court is ignoring the election results. Even with all this, AD does not have any candidates and has no

platform for the coming elections.

If the elections take place — and this is not guaranteed — the future of the country is very uncertain. COPEI is divided. On one hand, Caldera — who is for all intents and purposes the founder of this organisation — has practically split away and aligned himself with the MAS, which, having previously opposed him, is now throwing its support behind him. Caldera has evolved. It seems that the MAS has not. COPEI is not going to support Caldera.

In some states in the east, and in Caracas and Mirindas, Causa R is ahead with Andres Velazquez. The tendency is for Caldera's support to drop and for there to be a social, political and ideological confrontation — because, whoever the COPEI candidate is, they have said they will privatise basic industry and open up the country to international banks.

For the first time, they are not hiding ideology. And we will openly be with the workers and the people. There is going to be a very interesting confrontation, and it is not excluded that we will emerge victorious, that there will be a people's victory.

This feeling of possible victory can already be felt in the streets. And this is generating political instability — for which AD is preparing itself. They have armed gangs, mercenaries. There are police groups with lists of people to be assassinated; even the attorney general of the Republic has said as much.

It appears that I myself am on the top of their list. This is all designed to generate a climate of terror and fear, to muzzle the opposition and thereby prepare a fraud.

Causa R considers itself a political party of the social movements. How does this work in practice?

Causa R is a new political organisation with neither the style nor the organisational conceptions of parties in Venezuela. We define it as a free revolutionary party of working people. "Free" because in the party people have real freedom. "Revolutionary" because we want a change, a transformation of structures in Venezuela. And "of working people" because we believe that the working class is the most advanced class — not only factory workers, but working people in the broad sense. They have an ideal of justice and a democratic ideal, more advanced than those of other social classes. ★

THIRD WORLD DEBT

MORE than 900 people gathered in Brussels on December 4 to participate in the third annual meeting of the Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt (CADTM). This time, the event was organised around the theme, "necessary solidarity between peoples."

Guests from left-wing parties and movements from the five continents spoke at the meeting. They came from 15 different countries. The main guests included Joaquim Sorino from the leadership of the Brazilian PT, the Moroccan dissident Abraham Serfaty, Susan George, the French author and anti-fascist activist Gilles Perrault, Ernest Mandel, Michel Chussadovsky, Amadou Guiro from Senegal, the Egyptian writer Nawal el Saadawi, Vasudeva Nanaykara (Sri Lankan member of parliament and a leader of the NSSP, Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International), Andrez Kolganov from the Russian Party of Labour, Adam Novak from the Czech Republic, Amelir Tejada (Cuba) and Ernesto Herrera from Uruguay.

A number of different subjects were taken up, including the ways in which the IMF and the World Bank hide behind those implementing their policies, the ways to struggle for the cancellation of the Third World debt, humanitarian intervention, women's oppression, the link between debt servicing and environmental decay, restrictions on the right to asylum in Europe, and the potential for deepgoing changes in the event of a PT victory in the Brazilian elections later this year.

Participants agreed on the need for a new, revived internationalism and proposed to support counter-protests organised on the occasion of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Bretton Woods agreement and the founding of the IMF and the World Bank. There will be a big media campaign around this anniversary in October 1994 in Madrid. Participants also spoke of the need to organise international activities of support to the Brazilian people in the event of a PT victory.

The conference, an initiative of the CADTM, was supported by a large number of NGOs, trade unions, and political parties (including the POS, Belgian section of the Fourth International).

If you wish to contact the CADTM, or to subscribe to their quarterly journal, please write to 29, rue Plantin 1070 Brussels, Belgium. Or you can call (32) 2-5234023 or fax (32) 2-5226127. ★



EL SALVADOR

THE following letter was sent to the national leadership of the Salvadoran FMLN, following the assassination of José Mario López:

"It is with great sadness and indignation that we received the news of the assassination of comrade José Mario López (Comandante Venancio Salvatierra) — member of the political committees of the Farabundo Martí Party for National Liberation (FMLN) and the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC) — by a goon squad in the pay of the ARENA government and the most retrograde interests of the Salvadoran ruling oligarchy.

The assassination of Comandante Venancio is a major and irreparable loss for the forces of the revolutionary left in El Salvador and on an international level — and is added to the long list of crimes that the so-called "death squads" have committed against central activists and leaders of the FMLN since peace accords were signed by the FMLN and the Salvadoran government in January 1992.

With this new crime, the government of Alfredo Cristiani and El Salva-

dor's power elite have made their reading of the peace accords clear for all — to intimidate the same Salvadoran population which for years resisted the brutality of the war, and to slowly kill off the historic leadership of the FMLN.

Our sadness and indignation are all the more profound given that many comrades of the Fourth International had the chance to know and personally work with Mario López — an exemplary activist devoted to the cause of the liberation of the exploited and oppressed not only in El Salvador, "America's tiny thumb", but also of all the dispossessed of Latin America.

In the space of a few minutes a band of criminals, who clearly knew whom they were attacking, was able to do what 12 years of civil war could not. We join with you in your rejection of the ARENA government's crude version of events, which treats the assassination as a non-political killing — as it did the killings of Commandantes Francisco Velis and Heleno Hernán. At that time we added our voices to those calling for a full investigation into these crimes, for the punishment of those who masterminded and carried them out, and for the complete dismantling of the illegal paramilitary structures that the Salvadoran oligarchy, its government and imperialism seek to maintain.

Please accept our message of solidarity, and the redoubled commitment of members of the Fourth International to stand shoulder to shoulder with the dispossessed of El Salvador and their political vanguard, the FMLN."

Faternally, Ernest Mandel, for the Bureau of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. ★

