

International VIEWPOINT

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Crisis in the Palestinian movement

Instability in India:
the general
election campaign
begins

New mass
opposition
to apartheid



International Viewpoint

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Hassan II's 'national union' shaken by riots

Salah JABER

Only a few days after the bread riots in Tunisia (1), mass explosions shook a series of Moroccan cities for some weeks. This process was touched off in early January by high-school student demonstrations in Marrakesh, which were quickly followed by mobilizations in the poor neighborhoods of this city.

Then the revolt spread to the cities of Nador and El Hoceima on the Mediterranean coast in the northeast of the country, and then, around January 19 and 20, to Tetouan and the main Moroccan cities.

As in 1958 in the Rif, and in 1965 and 1981 in Casablanca, the monarchy launched a savage repression. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of people were killed, hundreds were wounded and hundreds more arrested.

The arrests were not limited to demonstrators but also hit trade-union and political activists. The Socialist Union of People's Forces (USFP), a petty-bourgeois populist organization that thought having a toehold in the government — its first secretary is a minister without portfolio — would protect it against repression was not spared.

Once again the "national union" around the divine-right monarch, Hassan II, in the war of pillage and annexation that he is conducting against the population of the former Spanish Sahara — a "national union" in which are mired not only the bourgeois Istiklal party and the USFP but also the local Stalinist party (the Party for Progress and Socialism) and the radicalized petty-bourgeois March 23 Group — has proved to be very fragile.

People's needs come last

In a country where the World Bank itself estimates that 45 percent of the population live under the threshold of absolute poverty, the government is allotting 40 percent of the state budget for importing arms to fight its dirty war in the Western Sahara. And, to deal with the grave economic crisis hitting the country, the regime has found no better answer than applying the recipes of the IMF that call for cutting social spending!

This has become a classical scenario. After Egypt, Tunisia, and other countries dominated by imperialism, the Moroccan government is trying to force the working people to pay the costs of the economic crisis by taking a major cut in their already meagre real incomes.

By decree, the prices of certain staples and necessities were increased drastically. They went overnight from a local price kept low by state subsidies to the "real" prices determined by the mechanisms of the world market. In this way, the government sought to cut its budget deficit, stem disastrous inflation, in a nutshell to restore financial "health," it being understood that financial health is always achieved at the expense of the population!

On December 27, Hassan II announced the application of the austerity measures, in particular the abolition of the compensation funds that subsidized the prices of necessities. In January, there was an increase in the price of gasoline, and then a stiff hike in the price of the butane gas bottles used in poor households.

Coming on top of various price raises (for soap, candles, etc.), and increases in the price of meat, as well as a wage freeze

that has been in effect for two years, these decisions set the powder keg alight.

However, this way of proceeding is not a phenomenon strictly limited to dependent countries. It is a practice common to all bourgeois governments, that view the population as an abstract category for accounting and not masses of human beings. These governments, whose technocratic hired hands cannot envisage reducing the privileges of the rich they represent, always attack the worst off.

An outburst of desperation

But nowhere else does this policy assume dimensions as dramatic as in the dependent countries, for the simple reason that in these countries the real incomes of a considerable part of the population hover around the level of basic subsistence, that is, just above the threshold of starvation and death.

This is why a simple increase in the price of bread, for example, has been sufficient to touch off bloody uprisings in countries such as Tunisia recently or in Egypt seven years earlier.

Neither the leaders of the imperialist countries nor the dependent bourgeois governments want to face these facts. Instead, they insist on looking for "a foreign hand" pulling the strings of these mass revolts. Thus, Hassan II launched his thunderbolts in all directions, blaming "Marxist Leninists," "Khomeinities" and the "Zionist secret services" for the mass revolts.

Such rebellions, usually spontaneous outbursts of mass exasperation, may force bourgeois governments to retreat. This is what happened in Tunisia, when Bourguiba postponed the increase in the price of bread, and even in Morocco, when Hassan II went back on January 22 on the decisions he had announced earlier. Such revolts can also disrupt the "liberalization" and "national union" operations these governments are conducting in an attempt to get the collaboration of the petty bourgeois and reformist oppositions. But the unorganized nature of these mobilizations also sets limits to them.

More than ever in these times of economic crisis and hunger on a world scale, proletarian revolution is on the agenda in the underdeveloped countries. What other way is there to break free of the imperialist world market that imposes hunger and impoverishment? What other answer is there to soaring national "debts?" Every day they grow, in tempo with the appreciation of the dollar, in which they are generally payable, with the debtor countries being obliged to pay back in real value several times the amounts they borrow? (2)

It is the need for breaking with such a system that justifies the perspective of socialist revolution. No "caricature of a revolution," such as that proposed by the Islamic currents trying to exploit these mobilizations against hunger and destitution, can substitute for a socialist revolution. The orientations proposed by these currents cannot solve problems inherent in the functioning of the capitalist system. The present evolution of the situation in Iran is a good illustration of that. ■

1. See "After the hunger riots — Solidarity with Tunisian people," by Rene Massignon, in *IV*, No 46, January 30, 1984.

2. Thus, the Moroccan foreign debt, which totalled 11 billion dollars in 1983, represented for the same year 90 percent of the Gross National Product of the country. Ten years ago, the foreign debt represented only 17 percent of the GNP.

The impact of the PLO split on West Bank Palestinians

WEST BANK — "In Deishe we flew black flags when it became known that Abu Amar [Yasser Arafat] had had a meeting with Egyptian president Mubarak." Hamdi Faraj is a journalist sentenced to house arrest in the Deishe Palestinian camp near Bethlehem. He is convinced that most Palestinians are against the latest initiative by the chief of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

Raimund LOEW

That does not mean that Hamdi Faraj favors the PLO rebels led by Abu Musa. "In the beginning, a lot of people supported the demands of the opposition for democratizing the PLO. But there is universal condemnation of the violent and military form taken by the differences in the Palestinian resistance. In particular, people condemned the way things led to the siege of Tripoli. We demanded an end to the fighting."

The more politically conscious and left Palestinian activists reproach Arafat for setting out on a confrontation course with Syria a few months before the siege of Tripoli. Arafat's decision to go to visit his fighters in the Bekaa valley this summer, they say, was a deliberate challenge to the Damascus regime.

It was also the loyalist troops that began the hostilities this fall. At the same time, Arafat abandoned his previous tactic of balancing among the powers and put his money on the American card,

a decision that was expressed in his visit to Egypt.

Does that mean that there is sympathy with Syria among Palestinians? Faraj denied this. "It's only that there is no reason to consider Syria more reactionary than the other Arab states. What we won't go along with is confrontation with Syria in the name of collaboration with Egypt and Jordan.

When we discussed the possibility of the PLO chief shifting toward making a deal with King Hussein under the auspices of Washington, Faraj took a stronger position. "We were always with Arafat. But now that is finished. All Palestinians are for the PLO. That is not the same thing as Arafat."

The Palestinians in the occupied areas are still considered the most loyal supporters of Arafat. Has there really been a breach since Tripoli and the Egyptian visit? We put this question to Alexander Flores, a Berliner who teaches cultural history at the Palestinian university of Bir Zeit.

An Arafat supporter running for shelter in the bombing of Tripoli (DR)



Flores made a distinction between the Palestinian masses, the great majority of whom are still for Arafat, and the more politically conscious activists.

"For the ordinary people, Arafat is simply the symbol of the Palestinian national consciousness. They will support anything he does. For the minority of politically educated activists, it is something else again. More and more find it outright absurd to steer a completely pro-American course when the US is on the offensive against the colonial revolution throughout the world.

Among the political activists, Arafat's alliance with the fundamentalist Islamic Unity Movement in Tripoli has not gone unnoticed. One of the first actions of this group, armed by Arafat, was to carry out a massacre of Communists. The Palestinian left is not ready to forgive the PLO chief for that. Tomorrow they themselves could be the victims of such a tactical alliance.

A revolutionary Marxist activist who teaches at Bir Zeit put it this way: "No Palestinian with any touch of Marxism will back Arafat anymore. He has managed to isolate himself profoundly from all the progressive movements in the Arab world without getting anything more from the imperialists or the Arab regimes." But he said that none of the oppositionist forces in the PLO offered an alternative.

Rise of Muslim fundamentalists

The Muslim fundamentalists are, moreover, the only political force among the Palestinians that is now on the offensive. In the most recent student elections at Bir Zeit, they got 520 votes, almost as much as the left (550). The left bloc includes sympathizers of the Palestinian Communist Party and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine led by George Habash. The group close to El Fateh got the majority with 820 votes.

In the Palestinian press, Arafat supporters are strongly dominant. In the office of the Palestinian press service headed by Raymonda Tawil, they have put up a whole list of statements by Palestinian figures hailing the PLO leader's visit to Egypt.

The predominant themes are confidence in his leadership capacities, concern for the unity of the PLO and expectation of gains for the Palestinian cause.

When he raised the accusation that the PLO is now relying entirely on the American card, Ibrahim Karaeen, a member of Raymonda Tawil's staff, said resignedly: "It's the only card we have left." The question is whether you can get anything by playing this card.

All the questions related to this are being discussed in the Jerusalem Palestinian press with a notable openness. It is ironic that despite a severe censorship the West Bank journalists can often mince less words than their colleagues in Jordan and Syria and since last year in Lebanon.

Three big Palestinian dailies are pub-

lished in Jerusalem. There is the conservative and pro-Jordanian *Al Quds*, and two nationalist dailies, *Al Fajr*, and *Ash-Shab*. *Al Fajr* also publishes a very lively and informative English-language weekly.

There is also a weekly close to the El Fateh rebels, *Al Mithak*, and the Palestinian CP's weekly *Al Thalia*. The daily *Ash Shira*, close to Habash's PFLP, was recently banned by the authorities.

The biggest problem the Palestinian press has to cope with is censorship. It is based on the emergency laws decreed during the British mandate and in principle applies to all publications in Israel. In reality, however, it is only the Palestinian press that is affected. Every word published has to be submitted first to the censorship department in the Ministry of Defense. The censors then strike out what they consider objectionable.

The "liberal" occupation

In the Palestinian press service bureau, Ibrahim Karaeen showed us the state in which a manuscript for the weekly magazine *El Awdah* (published in English) came back from the censorship office. On every page there was at least one remark, often whole passages were stricken out. Karaeen said: "The censors are completely arbitrary. There are no clear criteria to determine what is permitted and what is not. Often they strike out reports that have already been broadcast over Israeli radio. Two weeks ago, they banned an article on the sociological aspects of the work of the Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish. A few days later the same article was published without cuts in the monthly magazine *Al Katib*."

Almost all the Palestinian publications are banned from time to time in the occupied territories. They publish in Jerusalem, which is under Israeli law.

Apologists for Israel cite this variety of the Palestinian press as a proof of the liberal character of the Israeli occupation. We asked Alexander Flores for his assessment.

"It is true that the occupation is not as savage as the Nazi occupation in many European countries. But is that something to be proud of? The Palestinians find it degrading, humiliating and brutal. Alongside many so-called liberal aspects, there are also very brutal measures.

"Since 1967, there have been 20,000 cases in which Palestinians have had their homes destroyed or their land taken away. There are also the example of the entire male population of a village being forced to stand three days and nights in the winter rain in the market square because a couple of youths threw some stones. Above all, the threat of Israeli annexation and expulsion of the Arab population continues to hand over the occupied territories." ■

(From the January 1984 issue of *Die Linke*, magazine of the Austrian section of the Fourth International. The text has been slightly abridged.)

The crisis of the PLO

In an article like this, I cannot avoid going into a fairly detailed analysis of the course of the Palestinian resistance movement since its inception in the 1960s. This is all the more necessary because of the confusion that exists in the world revolutionary movement about the present crisis in the PLO.

In fact, the latest episodes in this crisis, both military and political, have managed to throw into disarray all those who have lost sight of the historical context in which this conflict has unfolded.

So, I will begin by recalling the main lines of the context, as well as the major developments in the most recent period.

Salah JABER

Following the defeat of the Arab regimes in The Six Day War with Israel in June 1967, the Palestinian resistance, as an autonomous armed movement of the Palestinian masses, experienced a powerful surge of growth. From the outset, it divided into two main currents. The predominant one was the right-wing nationalist current represented by the leadership of El Fateh. There was also a left nationalist current represented by the Popular Front and the various groups that split from it.

Unable to oppose this mass phenomenon head on, the Arab regimes chose to coopt it. To this end, they inundated the Palestinian resistance movement, which became the PLO in 1969, with a steady flood of millions of dollars. The main beneficiary, of course, was El Fateh, which Saudi Arabia in particular decided to finance to the exclusion of all the other organizations. Thus, by 1969-1970, bureaucratic squandering of money had already reached a level in El Fateh unheard of in any other national liberation movement.

In return for this massive financing by the Arab oil monarchies, the Arafat leadership of El Fateh obliged the entire Palestinian resistance, including by the use of force, to abide by its principle of "noninterference in the internal affairs of the Arab countries."

This policy found its clearest expression in Jordan, where the majority of the population is Palestinian, even without counting those who live on the West Bank, which was occupied by Israel in 1967.

In Jordan in 1968 the Palestinian resistance began to take on the aspect of a counter-state, in the context of dual power evolving rapidly in favor of the PLO. However, the Arafat leadership of El Fateh violently opposed the calls of the Palestinian left for overthrowing the Hashemite monarchy, a traditional ally of imperialism. In the conflicts that proliferated between the Jordanian army and

the Palestinian resistance it imposed a strictly defensive line.

Hussein was fighting to eliminate the Palestinian resistance in Jordan. El Fateh was trying to maintain coexistence with Hussein's regime. The result was that the El Fateh leadership agreed to a number of partial retreats in 1970. It went so far as to accept evacuating its forces from the cities and concentrating them in an isolated area, where the Jordanian army was able to smash them easily in 1971.

The sacrifice of the Palestinian resistance's most devoted fighters in Jordan and the retreat of its leadership to Beirut, the capital of money making and corruption, considerably accelerated the process described by the Lebanese Fourth Internationalists as "the bureaucratic degeneration and bourgeoisification of the PLO-El Fateh." (1)

This social process obviously had to have a political reflection. The political turn was codified when in 1974, the Palestinian National Council, which is called the Palestinian parliament but in reality is an appointed body rigged to assure a comfortable majority for the Arafat leadership of El Fateh, adopted the goal of a ministate on a part of the Palestinian territory. Two years before, the PLO itself had characterized this proposal as liquidationist and contrary to the Palestinian national aim expressed in the formula calling for "the liberation of Palestine," which all of the organizations in the PLO identified with.

In fact, it was natural for the bourgeois state bureaucratic apparatus that the PLO had become to abandon the revolutionary objective of destroying the Zionist state for the more "realistic" solution of negotiating with the Zionists to get a supposedly independent Palestinian ministate in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank that would live alongside Israel and in peaceful coexistence with it. And this ministate was to be set up on

1. *Inprecor* (English edition) No 19, February 1975.

parts of the Palestinian territory that were not even occupied by the Zionists seven years before.

It should be noted that at the time some organizations in the Palestinian resistance grouped around Habash's PFLP, boycotted the PLO leadership and formed the Rejection Front.

Further stage of capitulation

A lot could be said about the role played by the Arafat leadership of El Fateh during the 1975-76 civil war and subsequently. But there is not room for that in this article.

Particularly important in the civil war period were the Palestinian resistance movement's relations with the Syrian regime of Hafez El Assad. Up to 1976, the Assad regime supported the Arafat leadership against the Rejection Front (which was backed by Iraq and Libya).

Assad thought that, from a position of strength, he could get an overall Arab-Israeli settlement in the framework of the Geneva Conference. In 1975, he allied himself with the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon to block Kissinger's policy aimed at getting a separate peace between Egypt and Israel.

This scheme was indeed disrupted in Lebanon. The Ford administration had to deal with the Syrians. The US promised an overall peace settlement in return for the Syrians reestablishing bourgeois order in Lebanon.

The US-Syrian honeymoon did not last very long. Begin's victory in the Israeli elections and then Sadat's visit to the Zionist state in 1977 set in motion a process that was to lead to the Camp David accords. This pushed the Syrians into opposition to American policy in the Middle East. The Syrian-Palestinian alliance was reestablished. The Palestinian resistance regained its unity, in particular since the organizations in the Rejection Front broke with Iraq (which after 1979 began flirting with Saudi Arabia and even

Arafat in Tripoli, North Lebanon(DR)



with Sadat) and made a rapprochement with Syria.

The "peaceful solution" definitely seemed far away. This, moreover, was the argument always used by the nationalist left in Fateh after 1972 for staying in the framework of this organization dominated by Arafat. That is, that the Arafat leadership was chasing a right-wing utopia, that there was no chance that it could be included in an "American solution."

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was to upset these calculations. In this case also to describe the role played by the Arafat leadership would in itself require more than one article. Let me just point out that from the first days of the siege of Beirut, instead of rejecting in principle the evacuation of the Palestinian fighters demanded by Begin, Sharon, Reagan and Gemayel & Co., this leadership started negotiating with US representative Philip Habib on the conditions of such an evacuation. And it did not even pose concrete conditions, such as guarantees of the inviolability of Beirut and the camps. We saw how little the infamous Habib Plan had to offer in that respect.

Aim of Arafat's negotiations

In fact, what was the subject of the negotiations were the political conditions. Arafat wanted to trade evacuating Beirut for a US-recognized role in the "settlement" of the Palestinian question. It was on this basis that he could say: "We are only leaving Lebanon for Palestine."

It was no mere coincidence that Reagan announced his plan on the very day that the last contingent of PLO fighters left Beirut, on September 1, 1982. A few days later, Hussein called for Jordanian-Palestinian negotiations on the institutional link between his kingdom and a future Palestinian entity on the West Bank and in Gaza, as was proposed by the American plan.

Arafat did not hesitate. He entered into negotiations with Hussein — the principal Arab hangman of the Palestinian people — over a scheme for a Jordanian-Palestinian "confederation" and for a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to participate in negotiations with the United States and Israel, that is, in a Camp David II. He got the Palestinian National Council that met in Algiers in February 1983 to endorse the main lines of this policy, using only slightly ambiguous formulations.

In April, Arafat was about to announce an agreement with Hussein. The El Fateh cadres had been informed of the main lines of the deal. Confronted with warnings from the opposition, however, he had to pull back. But he intended this to be only a temporary retreat.

The nationalist left in Fateh, which resigned itself to evacuating Beirut only with the greatest reluctance and then was able to see in the light of the Sabra and Chatila massacres how much Arafat's promises were worth, could not go on forever accepting the unacceptable.

The pretext that Arafat's line of national betrayal was simply utopian and therefore did not have real effects could not be maintained any longer. For the first time, a framework appeared in which there seemed to be a genuine possibility for applying Arafat's line, that is, the Reagan Plan.

This was all the more unacceptable for the nationalist left because its central nucleus was made up of Palestinian officers and soldiers who deserted from the Jordanian army in 1970 to fight alongside the Palestinian resistance. It is easy to imagine the anger of these fighters against a leadership that thirteen years after Black September had nothing better to offer them than going back under the tutelage of the Hashemite regime! So, the nationalist left led by Abu Musa, Abu Khaled and Abu Saleh warned Arafat against concluding any deal with Hussein.

Moreover, the Syrian regime, offered nothing by the Reagan Plan, which makes no mention of the Golan Heights, the only Arab territory occupied in 1967, except for East Jerusalem, that has been formally annexed by Israel, also warned Arafat against making any deal with Hussein. For obvious reasons, the Syrian regime is strongly opposed to a Camp David II, which would have the effect of leaving it totally isolated in the face of Israel.

This is why the Syrian opposition to the Arafat line of rapprochement with Hussein was expressed with growing force, both directly and through the Saika, once the negotiations between the two parties began. I should also note the opposition by Libya to Arafat, which was consistent with Libyan policy with respect to the United States and the Arab national question.

While it is true that Saika is the instrument of the Syrian regime and Jibril's PFLP-General Command is in the pay of Libya and closely linked to Damascus,

it has to be made clear that making an amalgam between the nationalist left in Fateh and the Syrian regime is a false and tendentious procedure. In fact, Abu Musa and his comrades were the most resolute fighters against the Syrian regime in 1976 when it tried, in concert with Washington, to strangle the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon. Up until 1983 this group had no relations with the Syrian regime, leaving this to the Fateh leadership.

However, after the summer of 1982, the Palestinian resistance no longer controlled any territory in Lebanon. All its forces were operating from areas under Syrian control. Thus, when the dissidents in Fateh constituted themselves as an autonomous force they cannot be reproached for having alliance-type relations with Syria. It is possible, and necessary, however, to criticize the forms given to these relations. I will come back to this. Nonetheless, representing the split in El Fateh as the result of Syrian manipulation is simply a propaganda ploy by Arafat.

Provocation

In fact, this split was not produced by manipulation from Damascus but provoked by Arafat himself, who wanted to cut his connections to the Palestinian left and the Syrian-Libyan axis in order to clear the way for going over to the camp of the Arab reactionary regimes allied with American imperialism.

All the evidence supports this conclusion. A few days after the interruption in his negotiations with Hussein, Arafat proceeded to name people personally loyal to him and known for having deserted the fight in June 1982, to command of Fateh's forces in Lebanon. What is more, he ordered the most prominent leaders of the nationalist left to go into exile in Tunisia.

Both decisions were unacceptable. Abu Musa and his comrades were left with no alternative but rebellion. So, they rejected Arafat's measures and proposed a program of demands, the central planks of which were the following: A democratic congress of El Fateh to define the line of the organization. The demand for an accounting of the finances of El Fateh available to all members of the leadership. Breaking off negotiations with Hussein and rejection of the "Jordanian-Palestinian Confederation." Stepping up the anti-Zionist armed struggle.

It is out of the question that Arafat would risk confronting the left opposition in the sort of democratic congress it called for. He would be at a strong disadvantage on such ground. This is why he chose to push things toward an armed clash by evoking military discipline against the dissidents. In this way, he could cover up the political and organizational issues in the conflict. What is more, Arafat publicly accused the Syrians of having organized the rebellion against him at a time when they were not only not doing that but were showing a con-

ciliatory attitude toward him, following the interruption in his negotiations with Hussein, and had offered to mediate to solve the crisis in El Fateh.

By provoking a fight with the dissidents, Arafat killed two birds with one stone. He cut his ties to a regime opposed to his Jordanian option and at the same time disguised the nature of his conflict with the dissidents in the way best suited to confusing the Palestinian masses, especially on the West Bank. Arafat and his powerful propaganda apparatus presented the conflict with the dissidents, supported by the Syrians, as a struggle against an attempt by the Syrians to impose their dominance, a struggle to defend "the autonomy of Palestinian decision making."



Walid Joumbhatt at the Geneva conference (DR)

All offers of mediation and proposals for stopping the fighting between the two factions in El Fateh and settling their conflict in a democratic way were rejected by Arafat. For example, the mediating commission formed by the Executive Committee of the PLO meeting in Tunis last summer had to suspend its work and issue a communique in October saying that its proposals had been accepted by the dissidents but rejected by Arafat. From his point of view, Arafat had a good enough reason for turning them down, they provided for organizing a democratic debate.

Arafat was determined to go all the way, all the way in breaking with the dissidents and the Syrian-Libyan axis and all the way in lining up with the Arab regimes dependent on American imperialism — Saudi Arabia, Jordan and even Egypt itself!

In September, Arafat went on an Egyptian freighter via Cyprus to Tripoli in northern Lebanon, where the troops still loyal to him had regrouped. In the meantime the great majority of the fighters in the Bekaa valley facing the Zionist

army had rallied to the dissidents. Arafat organized a campaign to wipe out all opposition to this policy in the camps in the Tripoli region and then in the city itself.

The Islamic Unity Movement launched an operation with the support of Arafat's forces to establish total domination over the city. This is a fundamentalist Sunni movement linked to the Muslim Brotherhood and particularly to its Syrian branch, which is armed, trained and financed by El Fateh.

The campaign culminated in October in a full-scale offensive against the Tripoli section of the Lebanese Communist party, which resulted in the deaths of more than fifty Communist Party members. In its communique on these events, the Lebanese Communist Party said that Arafat's troops played the predominant role in what it described as a massacre perpetrated against its members.

At the same time, in the port Arafat was getting shipments of arms and ammunition sent by Mubarak. He was preparing for a battle that was becoming inevitable as a result of his actions, a battle that he deliberately provoked. In so doing he had not the slightest illusion about being able to defeat the majority of the Palestinian forces supported by Syria. His objective was not that but rather to dramatize that he was exerting every effort to present it as a Syrian-Palestinian conflict, covering up its inter-Palestinian character. In that way, he could evacuate his remaining troops to Tunisia, Algeria and North Yemen. There they would be put under the control of the local regimes until he could transfer them to Jordan. Arafat had long since accepted evacuation in principle, and had even discussed the forms with the Gemayel regime (in May 1983, the rebels exposed these dealings).

From this standpoint, it can be said that Arafat got what he was after, that is, victory for his policy and not a military victory.

Negotiating a prisoner exchange with Israel in the midst of the conflict and announcing in besieged Tripoli that his relations with Hussein were reaching the point of total agreement, Arafat got his forces evacuated under the cover of the UN flag and with a French naval escort. From Tripoli to his meeting with Mubarak, it was a direct line, both in terms of navigation and politics!

If Arafat has managed up until today to fool broad masses of people, it is due in part to the political failings of his adversaries, the dissident faction of El Fateh, who alone can rally the Palestinian masses to their cause. The dissident bloc began to take form in May 1983. It was a heterogeneous combination of more or less radical oppositions to the Arafat line. The gamut went from a far left that claimed to be Marxist, represented by Abu Khaled, to opportunists with little concern for principles. Somewhere in the middle were the petty-bourgeois nationalists represented by Abu Musa and a pro-Soviet current represented by Abu Saleh. The political line that predom-

ated was in a direct line of continuity from the origins of El Fateh, opposition to Arafat's "deviation."

Revolutionary Marxists must, of course, support the program of the dissidents against Arafat. But in so doing they also have to criticize the dissidents' political limitations and their errors, and in the first instance the forms taken by their relations with the Syrian regime.

Instead of making a "strategic alliance" with the Syrians on the basis of a wrong and politically short-sighted alliance, the nationalist faction in El Fateh should have kept its distance from Assad, refusing to let him interfere in any way in the conflict with Arafat. It could only have gained from this politically in the eyes of the Palestinian masses far away from the scene of the fighting, in particular on the West Bank. This is by no means an "ultraleftist" criticism. I am not saying that the dissidents should fight the Syrians today, but I am convinced that without too great difficulty they could have kept the Syrians out of their conflict with Arafat.

The dissidents at least could have refused to engage in any battle against Arafat in which troops manipulated by the Syrian regime were involved. They should have stayed out of the fighting in northern Lebanon, as did Habash's PFLP and Hawatmeh's DPLP. (2) In so doing, the dissidents could have avoided the political kick in the teeth they got when the Syrians made a deal with Arafat through the intermediary of the Saudis, without even bothering to consult them. On the basis of this deal, Arafat evacuated his troops from Lebanon, while the dissidents had said from the beginning that they were categorically against any such evacuation and were fighting only to force Arafat to accept their demands. (3)

The failings of the nationalist faction in El Fateh are an additional illustration of the urgent need for building a revolutionary proletarian tendency in the Palestinian resistance. Only such a tendency, equipped with a correct strategic view of the indispensable interaction between the Palestinian struggle and the Arab revolution could conduct the fight of the Palestinians in concert with the struggle for the Arab revolution and keep the tactical alliances the Palestinian resistance has to make within strictly tactical limits, without compromises. The Lebanese Fourth Internationalists in the Revolutionary Communist Group are trying to win the most advanced militants in the fighting Palestinian left to this point of view. ■

2. There are certain shades of political differences between the PFLP, long the radical nationalist wing of the Palestinian resistance, and the pro-Soviet DFLP.

3. Unlike Arafat, the dissidents had approved the proposals by the PFLP and DFLP for ending the fighting in Tripoli. When the Syrian-Saudi agreement was announced, the dissidents' radio station criticized it, as did the PFLP and DFLP. Subsequently, the dissident radio stations directed appeals to Arafat's troops, calling on them to stay in Lebanon and promising to respect their democratic rights.

On the split in the Salvadoran revolutionary movement

In the first week of December 1983, a split occurred in the People's Liberation Forces/Revolutionary People's Bloc (FPL-BPR), the largest component organization of the Salvadoran revolutionary front, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front.

A minority of the FPL-BPR formed a new group called the Revolutionary Workers Movement-Salvador Cayetano Carpio (MOR).

In the second week of September the FPL issued a statement saying that the MOR had split rather than accept the decisions of the Revolutionary Council, the leadership of the FPL, adopted in August, condemning Cayetano Carpio, the main historical leader of the FPL-BPR on a series of counts.

Shortly after the issuance of the FPL statement, a declaration was issued by the FMLN on December 16 endorsing its main points and confirming the MOR's separation from the Salvadoran revolutionary front.

Below we publish the comment on the Mexican section of the Fourth International on the communiques of the FPL and the FMLN, as well as the FMLN communique, which is the most succinct statement of the position of the majority in the Salvadoran revolutionary front, including in the FPL. In our following issue, we will also publish the statement of the FPL in full.

Statement by Mexican Fourth Internationalists

Both the FMLN and the FPL have issued communiques defining their positions with respect to the formation of the Movimiento Obrero Revolucionario (MOR — Revolutionary Workers Movement). These statements not only make sharp criticisms of the MOR but publicly accuse Cayetano Carpio (Marcial) of ordering the murder of Compañera Ana Maria. The Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT, Revolutionary Workers Party) considers it necessary to make clear its disagreements with these communiques.

1. The FMLN has publicized three different versions to explain the terrible murder of Comandante Ana Maria. The first was that the CIA had committed the crime. Then it said that the perpetrator was an FPL leader called Marcelo. Now it says that the one fundamentally responsible for Ana Maria's death was Cayetano Carpio.

The FMLN has publicized two versions to explain the suicide of Compañero Cayetano Carpio. The first was that Carpio committed suicide out of grief at the murder of his long-time comrade Ana Maria. Carpio was hailed as a hero of the revolution and guide of the FMLN. Today it is said that his suicide was an act of cowardice prompted by the discovery of his role in Ana Maria's murder.

2. The FMLN criticizes those who disseminate the "sectarian and dogmatic thought of Cayetano Carpio." The PRT published an editorial in *Bandera Socialista* in which it accepted the first version about the suicide. It ran a sketch of Cayetano Carpio's life, using the biog-

raphy published in the Nicaraguan *Barricada* [the organ of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN]. It published in *La Batalla* [the PRT's theoretical journal] excerpts from Cayetano Carpio's last speech, in which he talked about the party and the sort of unity that has to be built.

We might argue, and in fact we think it is correct to do so, that the fact that the FMLN has put out so many different versions about these events — with a hero being transformed overnight into a sectarian dogmatist — has, to say the least, complicated the task of the left organizations involved in the work of solidarity with the Salvadoran revolution in properly informing the workers and peasants in our countries. But this is only part of the problem, and unfortunately the least important part.

3. The FMLN and FPL communiques characterize Marcial's thought as "sectarian and dogmatic," but they do not explain why, they just assert it. They say that Carpio was against unity. Anybody would wonder, was he for breaking up the FMLN? What specific form of unity was he against? This is just an example. We need more information, in particular the Salvadoran masses need more information. We are convinced that a debate has been going on in the FMLN and that it is not over. It has not been conducted in the best way. This debate is over the general political orientation in El Salvador and not about the role of one or another person.

Because, if it is true, as the FMLN says, that Marcial ordered the murder of Ana Maria, this would mean that political arguments were replaced by violence within the mass movement, and that would obviously make it impossible to carry out a debate.

4. We think that, considering the political positions and what we know, that the debate that was going on was among revolutionists. It is normal in a situation such as the one developing in El Salvador for different ideas and proposals to come forward. In fact, what is reflected in this debate are various levels of mass consciousness. Such a dispute can be resolved in a positive way if there are adequate channels for debating the various positions. The best way to fight factionalism is through democratic discussion, both in the political and in the social organizations.

5. The MOR represents Marcial's positions. We think that its place is in the FMLN and not outside it. We do not consider them counterrevolutionaries or agents of the CIA, since they have not committed any counterrevolutionary act. What is more, the press has reported repressive actions by the government against the MOR, and so we are obliged to offer it our solidarity.

It is true that the MOR has broken with the FPL. But to be a counterrevolutionary today in El Salvador you would have to go over to the side of the government and the imperialists. The companions of the MOR have not done that.

So, we are convinced that the best place for revolutionists is the FMLN, since we remained convinced that the FMLN is the vanguard of the Salvadoran revolution, we think that the MOR should be in the FMLN.

6. The FMLN has accused Cayetano Carpio of murdering Ana Maria. Carpio, however, is one of the best known leaders of the FMLN. Therefore, the evidence for this accusation should be presented to the entire revolutionary movement. Charges of such gravity cannot be made without proof.

However, if the accusation made is true, we would have to say that this is not the first time such a thing has happened, either in the world or in El Salvador. We repudiate such methods not only because we have been the target of them but because we are convinced that they lead to the destruction of the revolutionary vanguard. Recent examples such as the split in the New Jewel Movement in Grenada and the murder of its leader, Maurice Bishop, show us how disastrous the consequences of these methods can be. Revolutionists cannot allow violence to become the basis of relations among the organizations of the mass movement.

For this reason, we are convinced that workers democracy is not some sort of luxury that should be left to workers in the imperialist countries. We do not think that workers democracy is something that you can decide arbitrarily when to apply and when not to apply. After what has happened in El Salvador and Grenada, that is more evident than ever.

7. We reaffirm our commitment to the Salvadoran revolution and to its vanguard, the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional and the Frente Democratico Revolucionario. We will

continue to support the revolutionary democratic program and fight for greater solidarity. Yankee imperialism, which bears the main responsibility for the travail that the Salvadoran masses are going through, is more intent on war than ever. It is the duty of all of us to defeat this No. 1 common enemy. We understand the difficulties the FMLN has in confronting such a powerful enemy. But we are certain that sooner or later the Sal-

vadoran people will emerge victorious and take control of their own fate by building a new society in which there is no exploitation or oppression. ■

*Political Committee of the
Partido Revolucionario de los
Trabajadores
Mexico City
January 23, 1984*

Statement by FMLN

The General Command of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front — in the name of all its member organizations, its leaders, combatants and political and mass structures — addresses the Salvadoran people, the brother peoples of Central America and other peoples of the world to indicate its full support to the People's Liberation Forces (FPL) in the face of the emergence of a group that is trying to divide the FPL's ranks and oppose the FMLN. This group is raising the image of Salvador Cayetano Carpio (Marcial), the murderer of the beloved and lamented Commander Melida Anaya Montes (Ana Maria). Carpio's crime and subsequent suicide were unanimously condemned and then courageously exposed to our people and world opinion by the Seventh Plenum of the Revolutionary Council of the FPL, which brought together representatives of the FPL's ranks and is the FPL's highest authority. This exposure of the facts benefits true revolutionaries who are faithful to the truth, to their ideas and principles, and are faithful to their unshakeable commitment to the workers and to the people in general.

Salvador Cayetano Carpio, Marcial, caused temporary damage to the process of the unity of all the Salvadoran revolutionary forces in the FMLN. His corrosive sectarianism even transcended the borders of our country, affecting the cohesion and confidence of the international solidarity movement toward our struggle. But the maturity of the leaders of all our organizations, including the other leaders of the FPL, made it possible for the FMLN to preserve its unity, which is the primary element for the advancement and victory of the Salvadoran revolution.

Comrade Ana Maria made decisive contributions to the defense of unity, particularly in the most tense moments of strife, and as a result she brought upon herself the hatred of Marcial, who finally took her life. Ana Maria died as a martyr for the unity of the FMLN, and the Salvadoran people will always honor her memory. Marcial cannot break up the desire for unity of the organizations in the FMLN as a whole, nor the desire for unity of the People's Liberation Forces in particular.

The murder of Ana Maria, committed under his orders, and his subsequent cow-

ardly suicide were desperate acts at the moment of his political and moral isolation and defeat. The last lines he wrote before taking his life were his final attempt to embitter the revolutionary ranks, to sow lack of confidence and confusion among them. But he failed in this attempt as well.

Today the FMLN is more united and solid than ever. Its present increased capacity to make more rapid advances in the military and political spheres as shown during the campaign called "Independence, Liberty and Democracy for El Salvador" and "Yankees Out of Grenada and Central America," is based on a greater degree of coordination and cooperation among its forces and a higher level of morale and combative enthusiasm. These are the fruits of the consolidation of our unity.

The martyrdom of Ana Maria struck at our hearts and brought us closer together. The suicide of Marcial and the knowledge of his crime aroused in us feelings of loathing and indignation, but also brought us closer together.

Only a small group, contaminated by fanaticism, remained confused. Today they turn up, scattered in various countries, raising the name of Salvador Cayetano Carpio, and are linked to the emergence of the so-called Revolutionary Workers Movement (MOR). There are also some equally fanatical individuals who are enemies of unity and will try to channel economic aid from brother peoples toward the MOR so that it can survive. It will not take long for the CIA to dress in sheep's clothing and use its money to give a shot of oxygen to this group, and its existence will permit the CIA to step up its propaganda about a supposed split in the FMLN.

The deformations in Salvador Cayetano Carpio's ideological and personal character, his chauvinist ambitions, his unhealthy self-glorification, his aberrant conduct in the last years of his life, were already analyzed and made public by the FPL. This analysis contains valuable lessons that enrich our revolutionary thinking, and from which all the revolutionary movements of our continent can benefit.

The vile and cruel murder of Ana Maria by Salvador Cayetano Carpio, and his cowardly suicide, cannot be justified in the name of revolutionary ideas. In-

voking the name of the working class and peasants in order to try to sanction the murder and legitimize his poisonous sectarianism is an offense to the working people who fight and spill their blood inspired by the highest ideals of justice and national and social liberation.

Only the enemies of the Salvadoran people and their revolution can gain from such arguments.

We categorically assert that in El Salvador there are not and cannot be revolutionaries outside of or against the FMLN, precisely because under its leadership the revolution is advancing and winning.

Anyone who truly wants the victory of the revolution must not cast aspersions on the FMLN, but rather must aid it, or that person is not revolutionary.

Powerless to halt the revolution through use of its puppets, Yankee imperialism, led by Reagan, is preparing to invade us and step up the destruction and the genocide. At a time like this, those who put an obstacle in the FMLN's path and seek to weaken it with pseudo-revolutionary allegations place themselves on the side of the enemies of the Salvadoran people and nation and are consciously or unconsciously acting as counterrevolutionaries.

The "MOR" is not and cannot be a revolutionary grouping. Instead it is a group acting blindly, led by individuals whom Salvador Cayetano Carpio backed. Like him, they moved away from the revolution and, we would like to believe, unconsciously, are playing into the hands

of Yankee imperialism, the genocidal dictatorship and its puppet army, although in reality it is too late to salvage the rule of these butchers.

The obvious and incontrovertible truth of the advance of the revolution led by the FMLN has rendered this type of obstacle ineffective. And we already see, and we will see even more, propaganda from the enemies of the Salvadoran people around this question. They will put out all kinds of false versions and supposed eyewitness accounts. They will circulate Carpio's most insidious writings against unity. But none of this will stop our advance toward the victory of the revolution.

In our country, where the people have close knowledge of the butchers and their lies, only an insignificant number of people will be confused. No one should be confused outside the country either. The only ones who will aid these maneuvers are those who, from shortsightedness and sectarianism, have ended up opposing revolutionary unity in their own countries, as well as the enemies of the revolution disguised as revolutionaries who are on the CIA's payroll.

Finally, we Salvadoran revolutionaries, loyal to the principles that govern those who give their all to the cause of the people, want to reiterate that we are not afraid that the people and the world should clearly know our problems and our errors. Revolutionary truth and the capacity to recognize our mistakes and criticize ourselves before the people are

the reaffirmation of our capacity as a vanguard and is also something that fully strengthens the people's confidence that the FMLN is made up of people of a new type, forged with new values that will in the future be the guarantee of our exercise of people's democracy.

That is why the FMLN fully backs the explanations, motivated by revolutionary truth, that the FPL has provided the people. We fully support the procedure and the steps taken by the comrades in the struggle against the deviations in the thinking of Salvador Cayetano Carpio, and in the thinking of those who are now trying to damage our people's struggle whether through naivete, lack of understanding, or because they too have been afflicted by the unhealthy sectarianism of Marcial.

The FMLN joins in the FPL's appeal made to those who retain their revolutionary sense of honor but are confused by these disturbing events and support this hopeless and useless effort to uphold the image of Salvador Cayetano Carpio. They should rethink what they are doing and step back from it. Salvador Cayetano Carpio's image was destroyed by his own blind personal vanity, his ambition for authority and fame, and the unforgivable murder of Comrade Melida Anaya Montes, the unforgettable Commander Ana Maria.

The enemy wants to confuse the people by saying that there are divisions and internal battles inside the FMLN. But through purging the sectarian thinking of Marcial, and through the heroic example of Ana Maria and her sacrifice for the unity of our forces, we can reaffirm that, contrary to what our enemies say, today we are more united than before. Today we are delivering more shattering blows. Today as well, the position we put forward to the international community is a single one. Today we can demonstrate and prove in practice the need to advance further toward the unity so urgently called for by our people, the international solidarity movement, and the democratic and revolutionary forces.

If the enemy of our forces should detect any divisions among us, it will only be a division of labor and combat missions in order to insure that the forceful and crushing blows that await them have the greatest possible coordination, cohesion, effectiveness and scope.

Higher forms of unity are being worked out in the FMLN. Little by little the reasons for the existence of different revolutionary organizations are disappearing. The eagerly awaited objective of integrating all revolutionaries into a single party is already clearly looming on the victorious horizon toward which we are marching. ■

Unity in the fight, until final victory!

Commanders: Leonel Gonzalez
Roberto Roca
Schafik Jorge Handal
Ferinan Cienfuegos
Joaquin Villalobos
El Salvador
December 16, 1983

FMLN fighters in Villa El Triunfo in eastern Salvador (DR)



Congress (I) and the endemic instability of the political system

General elections in India are not scheduled until the end of this year. But there is the possibility that Mrs Gandhi will change her mind and call a snap election — in any event the Indian political scene is dominated by the prospect of the election.

This article looks at the overall political situation in India as it has developed since Independence and the particular role of Mrs Gandhi and her party, the Congress (Indira), in that. A future article will look more closely at the possible outcome of the election.

M. NAVID

The Indian bourgeoisie needs a Congress (I) victory in the next elections. These are scheduled for December 1984/January 1985. However, they could still be held earlier than that, despite all Mrs. Gandhi's protestations to the contrary.

For the bourgeoisie, the bigger the Congress (I) majority the better, but this will not resolve the central problem of the Indian state — the endemic instability of political rule and the crisis of bourgeois political leadership. But the Indira Congress is still the only 'national' party of sorts in the country. Its victory offers the best chance of limiting the impact of this continuing problem.

But there are crises and crises. There are qualitatively different sorts of pressures on the Indian bourgeois democratic state.

First there is the increase in confrontations between the oppressed classes — the workers and landless peasants — and their class enemies. These have taken the form of both direct confrontations in society and conflicts with the state. Both the depth and frequency of such struggles has increased since the late 1960s.

For example, between 1967-72 there was the Naxalite upsurge, followed by the all-India railway strike in 1974. The organised urban proletariat flexed their muscles in the 77-day strike by 125,000 Bangalore public sector workers and the strike by 225,000 textile workers in Bombay that lasted for more than one year.

Conflicts in the ruling bloc

The growing army of landless in the countryside — around 30 per cent of the population — have become ever more militant. This has very often taken the form of caste conflicts between the 'untouchables' who form a majority of the landless and the 'middle or backward caste' kulaks, or 'forward caste' farmers.

These conflicts however have not been the greatest source of pressure on the

Indian bourgeois democracy. The crucial weakness has been the bourgeois political leadership's inability to deal with the conflicts within the ruling bloc: The conflicts between fractions of capital, the demands imposed by the educated unemployed in the ranks of the lower petty bourgeoisie, the activity of the emerging 'intermediate' classes and castes.

These intermediate classes comprise on the one hand the millions of aspiring capitalist farmers. There is no precise estimate of their numbers but this category probably includes anything from 10 to 15 million families who belong to the 'backward' or 'middle' castes. On the other hand are the even greater numbers of traders and self-employed in the urban areas, including the small towns. Both these 'intermediate categories' have grown and prospered, relatively speaking, because of the specific form of capitalist development in India which has allowed rentier and commercial profits to be generated. (1)

These have been the dominant forces at work in a context where the rising expectations and growing politicisation — partly due to the institutionalisation of the electoral process at all levels — of every section of Indian society has led to an enormous increase in conflicting demands and pressures on the structure of the Indian state. The operation of these forces has been expressed in one way or another in all the 'high points' of endemic instability dating from the mid to late sixties — the break up of the old post-Nehru undivided Congress in 1969, the Nav Nirman Gujarat movement of 1973-74, the JP movement of 1974-75, the declaration of the Emergency in June 1975, Mrs Gandhi's search for electoral legitimacy in 1977, the rise and fall of the Janata Party and government, the second split of Congress in 1978, the emergence of Congress (I) in 1980, the institutionalisation of kulak power especially at the level of state governments, the various struggles between the states and the Centre [central government]

over a myriad of issues, the Assam and Punjab agitations.

This record of turmoil over the last 15 years easily matches and possibly outstrips that for any other country. Scan any national newspaper in India on any given day and confirm the obvious — India is one of the most violent societies in the world. Yet democracy and governance of a sort prevail. The American economist John Kenneth Galbraith, former ambassador to India, called it an example of 'functioning anarchy'. An apt description if not analysis.

There have been any number of predictions about the inevitable collapse of Indian bourgeois democracy and the equally inevitable drift towards an authoritarian form of bourgeois democratic state rule. There is enough evidence of the decay of bourgeois democratic institutions, shown for example in the growing institutionalisation of corruption, to lend weight to these gloomy forecasts. Nonetheless, a bourgeois democratic framework survives and shows every sign of continuing to do so, however mutated or mutilated its organs might be.

Even the 'Emergency' is best seen as an aberration. Not in the sense that it was accidental — although the timing was. Mrs Gandhi was forced, after the decision of the Allahabad High Court that she was guilty of electoral malpractice, to declare the Emergency in June 1975 to avoid carrying out the clear implication of the court decision, that she should step down. But the coming of the state of emergency was also a logical culmination of deeply rooted trends in the body politic.

The role of the Congress party

It was an 'aberration' because it failed to solve the problem of endemic political instability. The Emergency was not only directed against the working class, as was soon revealed in anti-working-class legislation. It also attempted to freeze the relationship of forces within the ruling bloc, and deny the emerging intermediate castes and classes an effective voice. This is why the Emergency also seemed to be

1. The Polish Marxist economist Michael Kalecki first coined the term 'intermediate classes' in his 1964 paper published in *Selected Essays on the Economic Growth of the Socialist and Mixed Economy* (Cambridge University Press 1972). The Kalecki thesis as adapted to India by K. N. Raj and others emphasised the importance of the lower middle class and rich peasantry which performed the role of the ruling class in 'intermediate regimes', which use the public sector (state capitalism) as the main instrument for economic development. Given the vast bulk of the population in India is between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, the concept of 'intermediate classes' who derive their income from property and their own working of the means of production is obviously very relevant.

India as an 'intermediate' regime is a much weaker and frankly dubious thesis. The Indian state does not represent an alliance of the lower middle class with the rich peasantry, attempts to form such an alliance have been unsuccessful. Even before Independence India had a significant and economically powerful industrial bourgeoisie.

directed against the so-called right such as the RSS, opponents like Morarji Desai and others belonging to those Congress factions opposed to Mrs Gandhi, and the representative of the Northern kulak lobby Charan Singh. The hostility of these forces to the Emergency was therefore genuine.

The difficulty of resolving the problem of political instability through the introduction of a long-term authoritarian system was, in fact, recognised by Mrs Gandhi herself. Apart from the drastic decision to enforce compulsory sterilisation in the northern states, the Emergency period was relatively mild, and bears no comparison to the usual variants found in the Third World. In the southern states Mrs Gandhi's popularity was undimmed.

What is more, Mrs Gandhi not only held genuinely free general elections in 1977, but accepted their verdict quietly. The spectacle of a purely electoral transition from an authoritarian form of bourgeois rule, however mild, to a democratic form has no historical parallel.

No sense can therefore be made of India's recent past or its future evolution without grasping the *specificity* of Indian bourgeois democracy. Without doing so, the site of the central crisis cannot be even approximately located. While parliament is the central democratic institution in Britain the centre of gravity of the Indian political system since Independence has been the Congress party. The crisis of bourgeois political leadership expresses above all the collapse of the old Congress, and the inability, indeed impossibility, of finding a replacement capable of fulfilling its historically independent role.

To understand the old Congress requires understanding the nature of the national movement that overthrew the British Raj.

The Congress that lasted in some essential forms until the mid-1960s and the death of Nehru was a massive coalition of interests of different classes, castes, religions, regions, etc., that recognised that their specific needs could not be fulfilled unless the stultifying structure of the colonial state was dismantled. The prolonged character of the Indian national movement (bearing comparison with those of Vietnam or China) and the steadily increasing hegemonisation of it by the Congress party made that party and its leadership the *primary instrument of mediation* not only externally with respect to the British but also internally among the different constituent parts.

Its successful mediation with the British led to a peaceful transfer of political power which disguised the dramatic shift in class power from the imperialist bourgeoisie to the Indian industrial bourgeoisie. This shift was all the more disguised by the considerable autonomy of the Congress itself from this class. Successful mediation within the Congress ensured relatively harmonious political rule for just under two decades after 1947.



Neither Congress (I) nor the Janata party can solve India's economic problems (DR)

The piecemeal character of the prolonged transition from colonial rule to full independence involved periodic compromises over a series of escalating demands, which systematically shifted more and more administrative power to the Congress. (2) By the time of Independence in 1947 Congress had virtually become a parallel government. The formal transfer of power at the apex of these two structures thus caused no serious administrative upheavals in the immediate post-Independence period.

The long timespan involved in this gradual accumulation of powers also allowed Congress to constantly test and develop a complex and sophisticated organisation with an established hierarchy of leaders, most of whom had gained some measure of respect and authority from their participation in the national movement. This structure of Congress in general ensured that central decisions were carried out as well as allowing for local representation and initiative and for grievances and information to filter upwards.

Thus, in the post-Independence period, Congress naturally enough became the instrument of mediation par excellence. The virtual indentification of party and state administration gave enormous powers of patronage to the Congress with which to carry out its mediating role. Without such a close relationship originating in the national move-

ment, the implementation of government policies in the countryside would have been impossible in the pre-plan period, or in the first three five-year plan periods. Other parties, such as the Swatantra party of the monopoly bourgeoisie, were seen even by the class interests they represented as, at best, secondary vehicles for putting on the pressure for concessions in the real arena of battle: Congress. The eventual demise of formations like the Swatantra party did not therefore occasion any surprise.

Another crucial factor in sustaining Congress hegemony and the stability of the political order was the relationship between the dominant classes of the countryside and the Congress.

A thin layer at the top were wedded to the Congress which, despite all its rhetoric and struggle for partial reforms, was careful never to encourage rural class antagonism. It sought instead to defuse tensions wherever possible through limited distribution of largesse. However, the dynamic of capitalist transformation of Indian agriculture, which the Indian state found itself obliged to support through the abolition of the Zamindari Act and the promotion of the 'green revo-

2. Professor Bipan Chandra, Marxist historian of the national movement at the Centre for Historical Studies Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, called this a strategy of P-C-P: Pressure-Compromise-Pressure.

lution', had its own dynamic which increasingly undermined Congress hegemony.

It did this by aiding the development of a rural elite layer — the kulaks — with much more well-defined aims and a much more aggressive attitude to the rural oppressed whose expectations were also rising. The kulak farmers who were producing more and more of a marketable surplus on essentially family-sized farms were increasing their economic power in a society becoming increasingly dependent on food markets.

This layer, particularly in the north where the 'green revolution' first took hold, began to turn away from the Congress and look for other vehicles of political expression. The Bharatiya Kranti Dal and Bharatiya Lok Dal were the forerunners of Charan Singh's Lok Dal of today. In Punjab the Akali party today is the primary political instrument of the emergent Jat peasantry, (see *International Viewpoint* No 35, August 1, 1983).

Changing social base

While the rise of the kulaks was one important factor in the decline of Congress there were others. Once Independence was achieved nationalism was no longer a unifying ideology. Something else had to replace it. The Congress credo of 'democratic socialism' attempted to fill the ideological vacuum. It could do so only for a limited period. With 'patriotic sacrifice' no longer a restraint and electoral politics institutionalised there was bound to be a tremendous rise in the expectations of all sections of society.

Since the electoral support of Congress also rested substantially on some of the poorest sections of society, their aspirations were bound to increase. As long as a reasonable level of growth was maintained — for example in the first two five-year plan periods — the demands could be met. But, by the mid-1960s, expectations had passed beyond the critical point where they could realistically be met, and a decline in overall economic growth rates set in. The economic cake was not growing fast enough and its divisions and distribution were becoming increasingly difficult.

As long as the public sector was expanding at a fast rate, jobs were being created in the bureaucracy. When this expansion tapered off in the mid-1960s an explosive new ingredient was added to the social stew — an increasing reservoir of urban semi-literates (the products of Indian mass education do not by and large deserve any other label). The integration of this strata into various political parties was inevitable as was its growing significance. This layer joined the Communist Party of India-Marxist in West Bengal, the AIADMK and DMK in Tamil Nadu or the communalist Bharatiya Janata Party and its parent body the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh primarily based in the urban petty bourgeoisie, as well as the Congress party and its various breakaway rump groups.

Within the Congress party the 'respected' leaders of a bygone era succumbed to their mortal fate and the post-Independence social and economic developments systematically undermined the position of the English speaking upper middle class, which had played a disproportionately influential role in the political life of the country. They were the principal standard bearers of the liberal democratic ethos that accompanied the foundation of Indian bourgeois democracy. Congress politics were increasingly vitiated by the commercialisation of all values and the open struggle for the spoils of office and patronage.

Already by the last few years of Nehru's life — he died in 1964 — the character of the Congress party had changed substantially although no one seemed to recognise it at the time. People like Pratap Singh Kairon from the Punjab, Bakshi Ghulam Ahmed of Kashmir and Biji Patnaik of Orissa were appointed chief ministers in their respective states. They were generally contemptuous of western liberal norms or the old 'Congress culture'. Though much was made of Mrs Gandhi's style of functioning at the time that she split the party in 1969 over the question of who should be the presidential nominee — and it is true that she is not of the national movement generation — it is wrong to blame her for the collapse of the old Congress so starkly symbolised by the split. Her emergence in a sense parallels the emergence of the Labour left in Britain. It is essentially the decline of Labourism that explains the rise of the left and not the other way about. Similarly, it was the decline of the old Congress that explained the rise of Mrs. Gandhi, and not the other way around as her opponents have argued. She also set out to establish, because she had to, a new kind of Congress party with a much more clearly defined social base.

The Nehru Congress had also relied to a large extent on the support of the 'core minorities'; the scheduled castes/scheduled tribes (some 22 per cent of the population, now around 110 and 45 million respectively) and India's Muslims (now around 85 million or 12-13 per cent of the population). These groups tended to vote en bloc for the Congress. With some support from other sections of the electorate, a minority vote was sufficient to ensure Congress domination in the Lok Sabha (People's Chamber) and therefore at the Centre.

After the 1967 elections when Congress rule was overturned in a number of states as a result of the growing power of the emerging 'intermediate classes', Mrs Gandhi based her support much more consciously within the 'core minorities' and among the 'forward' castes now threatened by the 'intermediate' castes and classes. Although she made subsequent attempts to win the support of the kulaks and urban traders — the caste Hindu vote — this was, by comparison, always an unstable source of support. The electoral configuration may have been sufficient to generally assure Mrs

Gandhi and the new Congress that they would be governing from the Centre. What it could not do was assure her an easy passage while in power.

The outline can be sketched. The capitalisation of Indian agriculture had enormous consequences for the political system. The establishment of the public sector in the essential infrastructure of heavy industry, power and transport, provided jobs for those churned out by the mass education system. This functioned like an inverted pyramid. Weak at the primary level, disproportionately and progressively larger at secondary and college level, the general quality of such mass education factories was and is abysmal.

On the industrial front large, small and middle capital have prospered. They are not in fundamental conflict with each other. The operations of small and middle-sized firms are often ancillary to the big ones. They all depend on the public sector for input and to purchase their output.

The backwardness of Indian capitalist development has been reflected in the growth rather than the decline of a rentier and trading class. The emergence of a black market was unavoidable given the massive dependence of private capital on the state, and on regulations to protect the home market from outside competition and to balance the various claims of different sections of capital. The black economy is generally estimated to be around one quarter of the size of the real, accountable economy. And the unevenness of Indian economic growth has ensured that unemployment and inflation remain permanent problems.

Economic demands central

The new 'intermediate' classes in the urban and rural areas have emerged as a result of these economic developments. A link between black money and the financing of political parties has been established. There is also a growth of the lumpen proletariat and their increasing participation in politics. The ideological vacuum created by the decline of the old liberal ethos associated with the Congress of Nehru and Gandhi and the establishment of Westminster-style parliamentary democracy with American additions, has been filled by an increasing commercialisation of values. This shift in Congress ideology, indeed of political values in general, goes along with the decline in the economic and social standing of the English-speaking professionals and intelligentsia who staffed parliament and the middle and upper levels of the civilian bureaucracy and education system. Two-thirds of all MPs are now members of the rural elite, unlike the time when by and large professionals like lawyers and teachers represented even rural interests. The Indian political environment is vastly different from what it was a decade and a half ago.

Almost every social movement since the Naxalite upsurge has been related in

its initial stages directly or indirectly to economic grievances, in particular the problem of unemployment and inflation. Some, like the Gujarat-JP movement, starting from the issue of high prices, developed a dynamic that led to the raising of directly political demands such as the dissolution of the Gujarat state legislature and the replacement of the Indian regime at the Centre. Others, like the struggle over the reservation of job and educational opportunities — a crucial issue for the scheduled castes and Muslims and from the opposite point of view for the growing ranks of the urban petty bourgeoisie — are obviously motivated by the fear of unemployment. (3) Even the prolonged Assam agitation against the influx of 'foreigners' from Bangladesh is only comprehensible in the context of recognition of the regime's social and economic exploitation by non-Assamese Indians such as the Marwaris and Punjabis, the limited employment opportunities for the Assamese petty bourgeoisie — including the students who are spearheading the agitation, the pressure on the land of the Assamese subsistence farmers created by the influx, and the background of cultural chauvinism established by the earlier Bengali migrants who have been settled in Assam for a long time.

Can Congress (I) deliver the goods?

The agitation by farmers and kulaks in various states of India — Lok Dal in the north, the Sharad Joshi non-party ('Bharat' vs. India or country vs. town) movement for higher milk and onion prices in Maharashtra — i.e. focusing on the unequal exchange between prices of agricultural products and manufactured goods obscuring rural class divisions — the struggle for cheaper government-supplied inputs (water rates for irrigation) in Karnataka, the Narainswamy Naidu cotton lobby in Tamil Nadu. These have all been inspired by the search for higher profits through lower input costs and higher prices for their marketable output.

In a situation where inflation continues unabated, wage claims and the demand for a higher Dearness Allowance (i.e. price-indexed wage rises) have been the overwhelmingly most frequent cause of strikes, go-slows, and stoppages by the industrial workforce. In the historic Bombay textile strike the workers demanded recognition of their own union, the Maharashtra Girni Kamgar Union led by Datta Samant, instead of the deeply hated and thoroughly discredited employers union the Congress-dominated Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sabha (see *International Viewpoint* 21 January 1983). This was a profoundly political demand for the first time challenging state legislation and the power of the state to impose it. Nevertheless, this demand was raised because it was an essential precondition to securing the high wage increase that was the workers main concern.

Even caste and communal conflicts in the rural areas are invariably a reflec-

tion of the pressures and demands created by social and economic changes which are unacceptable to some dominant group or the other. For example, the influx of Gulf money, and the heavy demand for the skills and products of Muslim artisanal classes has transformed their relationship to the local Hindu elite. Envy and ostentatious displays of new found wealth, often taking religious forms, lead to communal anger and clashes.

The Akali party agitation in Punjab is in substantial measure the struggle of the Sikh Jat peasantry (30 per cent of the population in Punjab) for political power to secure further state and national government largesse. Sikhs comprise 52 per cent and Hindus 48 per cent of the population. Thus the struggle can only be generalised to include the urban and non-Jat Sikhs by playing upon certain genuinely felt and legitimate cultural, religious and political grievances.

There are two important lessons to be drawn from the history of such movements. Indian economic growth in the future will bring such movements again. Unemployment and periods of high inflation cannot be eliminated. Plenty of economic grievances will remain. What is surprising is that social movements have not developed around the question of corruption itself, although it has certainly led to electoral disenchantment and has been a major factor in the internal decay of the bourgeois democratic institutions.

The second point to note is that even where many of these movements have been satisfied in the end, this has not strengthened the mediating role of the ruling Congress. Indeed, the methods of pacifying and struggle have further delegitimised the ruling Congress (I).

It has become increasingly clear to activists that only by raising the stakes, increasing the scope of the movement and threatening political alliances with opposition parties or rival factions within Congress (I) do they stand a chance of achieving some of their demands.

Structural decline of the system

Struggles, thus, far from being contained within the Congress party, have moved outside its framework. In the last two years there has been a growth of organisations outside the traditional party framework, which have spearheaded these sorts of social movements. The Sharad Joshi movement and the student-led Assam movement are two examples. However, it is still too early to describe this tendency as a definite trend. But, the central point remains — it is fighting against the Congress (I) rather than merely within it that best ensures some degree of success — although of course factional divisions can also be utilised. Should the Centre prove intransigent, as in the case of Assam, the price that Congress (I) has to pay for its partial victories is a decline in its popularity.

While Congress is the central institution of the bourgeois democratic system

the other structures like the legislature, the judiciary, the press, the administrative bureaucracy and the coercive apparatus, etc. have not been unimportant. Being imported structures their implantation is weak. But they have functioned and survived for 36 years. That fact alone has given them certain roots. But, while the early period of post-Independence harmony was a factor in aiding their consolidation, the subsequent period of instability has been both the cause and effect of their decay and transformation. The rate of decline and transformation has been uneven in the different structures. With no parliamentary tradition to speak of, the legislatures have become bodies for rubber-stamping the directives of the executive at both state and central level. Serious debate of any quality is non-existent, the antics of the legislators without a parallel in the whole world. The capacity of parliamentary committees to play a watchdog role is very low, and sinking lower as parliamentarians and parliamentary skills become increasingly defunct.

The civilian bureaucracy, once the pride of the Indian state, has become a hotbed of intrigue. Political interference in promotions and transfers (particularly during Sanjay Gandhi's reign) has played havoc with the morale of civil servants. Its much vaunted 'independence' and self-confidence vis-a-vis the ruling party and its leaders is a thing of the past, although it still compares favourably to the administrative apparatuses of most other Third World countries.

The judiciary and the English-language 'national' press have, in contrast, suffered less from the depredations wrought by political manoeuvring, corruption and the general commercialisation of values. They have certainly not been immune from these forces but, in a situation where selective erosion of democratic rights has been more frequent, they have played more of a front line role in the preservation of the liberal democratic ethos and the norms of public conduct associated with it, and in sustaining the 'desirable' relationship between the various branches of the state. But their battle is, in important respects, a losing one.

In the case of the judiciary the status of the Indian constitution as one of the most remarkably liberal documents of its kind has afforded jurists and lawyers the scope to use it as a reference for preserving and extending the content and application of 'democratic rights'. With a weak legislature, the courts have played more of a role in checking the unbridled accumulation of power by the executive. Increasing this accumulation of power would require a modification of the constitution. This would lay the foundation for a battle with the judiciary over

3. The reservation of 20 per cent of the places in the education system and public sector jobs for the 'scheduled castes and tribes' — the Untouchables in the Hindu caste system — IV.

the validity of constitutional amendments and interpretations. It is the Supreme Court that has sought to establish the 'basic structure' of the constitution.

The Indian constitution — unlike the United Kingdom or the United States — does allow the courts to play, or attempt to play, an equal role with the executive and legislature in building a welfare state. The activist role of the judiciary that is, as it were, written in to the constitution has only been seized upon in the post-Emergency period. The most significant form of this judicial activism has been public interest litigation. The concept of *locus standi* is so liberal that anyone can raise any issue on behalf of any oppressed group or individual through a mere letter to the Supreme Court that will serve as a writ petition.

In a context where the laws and the courts are heavily weighted in favour of the privileged, where corruption and political manipulation is on the rise, where legal arrangements outside the big towns are extremely scanty, where the mechanism, for giving legal aid or free advice are almost non-existent, this direct access to the Supreme Court is the one major source of legal defence that exists for the oppressed classes. The scale of public interest legislation is now much greater than anywhere in the western world.

To say that this judicial activism should be related to social activism is a truism. This is beginning to happen. Grassroots activist organisations are increasingly recognising the virtues of using the bourgeois democratic system as a complement to direct class struggle. A small but growing band of left-inclined lawyers (three of the Supreme Court judges are avowed sympathisers of Marx) believe it is important to carry the class struggle into the structures of the state that is, subverting the legal system to some radical ends through a creative and original application of constitutional directives.

This is still very much a minority tendency within the trend towards judicial activism and public interest legislation. The dominant tendency sees this activism, properly controlled and moderated of course, as one of the few methods of preserving the traditional principles of a liberal democratic order. None of this must be taken to mean that the Indian judiciary stands as an unshakeable bulwark against the further overall decay or transformation of Indian bourgeois democracy. Conservative judges and conservative judgements are the norm. But the judiciary does have relatively greater internal resources with which to fight internal and external pressures.

The decline of the English-language 'national' press parallels the decline of the English-speaking, western-oriented middle class. As it is, this press does not play a significant role in mass ideological persuasion. Here the regional language and vernacular papers are of greater import. Being small, weak, and often econ-

omically dependent on government advertising revenues and financial handouts, they are much more susceptible to direct political manipulation and repression. It is true that during the Emergency the larger English-language press, with a few notable exceptions, did not acquit itself honourably.

But that experience of generalised press censorship, which caught most papers by surprise, has left its mark. Thus, when the Bihar state government sought to pass its infamous press bill in late 1982, ostensibly to guard against the 'yellow press', with powers draconian enough to curb basic press freedoms, there was a nationwide agitation by all sections of the press in which the big English-language monopoly-owned papers played a leading role. It was successful in eventually getting the government to scrap the bill.

Police revolts

There is also a built-in limit to the decline of the English-language press. English will remain the lingua franca of the highest levels of officialdom, especially at the Centre. It remains the language of political and economic transactions at the highest level. It is the integrative factor between north and south, east and west.

The status of Hindi has improved. Its acceptability has increased as a result of natural pressure of an integrated and expanding market economy. But no aspiring national party or organisation would dare to *impose* Hindi as a substitute for English, especially in the south.

Perhaps most worrying for the Indian ruling bloc has been the developments within the coercive state apparatuses, particularly the police and paramilitary security forces. The professional armed forces have witnessed important changes — a greater proportion of officers recruited from lower middle-class families that have been buffeted by the winds of economic misfortune, a decline in the prestige of an armed forces career in comparison to the avenues presented by executive and managerial careers in business, especially in the private sector, growing political interference in promotions and transfers, thus fuelling discontent in the officer caste — but these developments have not yet reached the state where murmurings of discontent are translated into action.

This is not the case with the police and security forces. In 1979 a series of revolts broke out in the Punjab police force and in the para-military Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). The reasons were essentially the same: bad working conditions and low pay, political interference in transfers and promotions, senior officers misusing their powers with respect to junior and non-officer categories, and the recruitment of better educated constables and soldiers, more likely to express their grievances against what they perceive as injustices.

In the specific case of the police force there is also the effect of political fac-

tion fighting and party/opposition clashes within state governments. These factions consciously seek to utilise divisions and grievances within the police force for their own ends. The call for police associations and unions by one section within the Bombay police was supported by the former Congress (I) Maharashtra chief minister, A.R. Antulay, when he was in power.

The politicisation of the upper levels of the police has gone hand in hand with the criminalisation of politics and the criminalisation of the police itself. The topmost smugglers in the country are powerful financial patrons of parties and factions within them. They are largely immune from the reach of the law. The link between them, the politicians and state administrators and the upper echelons of the police have created a very high level of frustration within the ranks of the police.

The lower ranks of the police are frustrated by the existence of corruption because of their inability to benefit proportionately from the 'spoils' that are available. It would be a mistake to attribute a high level of consciousness to the agitators within the police. But their specific demands for the right to form their own unions and associations are important in themselves, just as their demands for better housing, pay and allowances mirror the demands of the urban workforce as a whole.

The Bombay police agitation in August 1982 was simply the most dramatic and serious expression of this growing frustration. On August 15, Independence Day, police belonging to the newly formed association the Maharashtra Rajya Police Karamchari Parishad (MRPKP) wore black badges in symbolic protest against the government's concern over their longstanding and often expressed grievances.

This act of defiance by a wing of the coercive apparatus caused deep concern in the Centre. It decided to act swiftly and harshly to nip such insubordination in the bud. A few days later army battalions, under cover of darkness, moved silently and swiftly to take over the city's police armouries, round up the leaders of the MRPKP, and surround the housing colonies where the police constables live.

What was expected to be a successful relatively non-violent pre-emptive action turned out to be something quite different. The city, already under strain from the months-long textile strike, already seething with the frustrations of life in a metropolis where basic municipal services are on the verge of breaking down, exploded. Policemen fought back with rifles, bullets and stones. Textile workers looted grain shops in their need for food, as well as the houses of hated leaders of the RMMS. The army became the focus of bitter anger. In some of the city areas an alliance was forged on the streets between the police and textile workers, with lumpens taking advantage of the general chaos to go on a rampage of loot-

ing and violence. The responsibility for this was unjustly pinned on the textile workers and policemen.

It took three days and nights for the army to establish an uneasy calm. Official estimates of the number of dead (ten) and injured were very much on the low side. Close to one hundred people were killed, and more injured. In due course the essential demands of the police were granted, but the root causes of their discontent were left untouched.

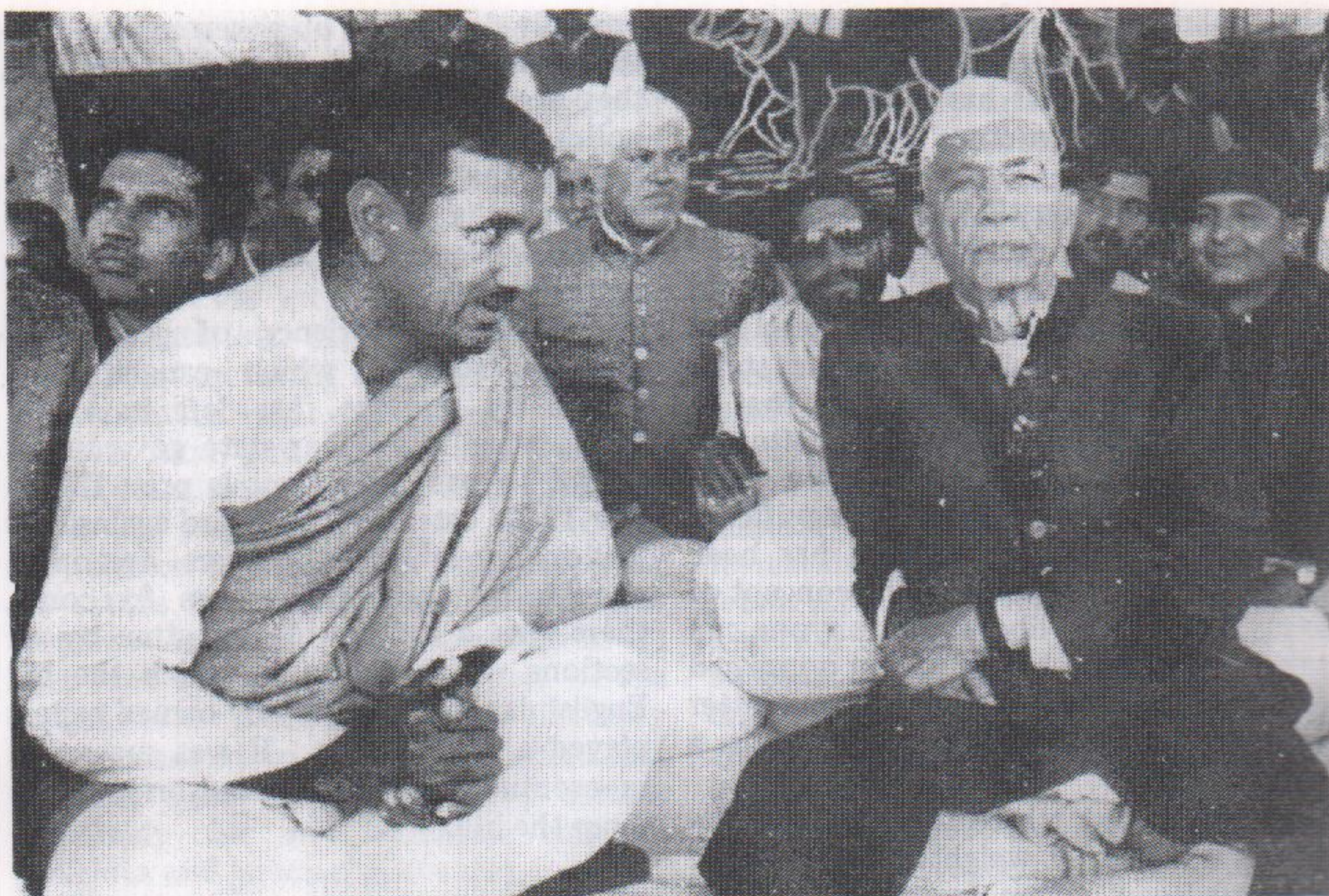
A strong bourgeois democratic set up should be able to rely on its coercive apparatus. One of the dangers of endemic political instability is most expressed here. Attempts by one fraction of capital or one section of the ruling class to alter the relationship of forces in its favour must be made within the rules of the game. These rules specify that inter-bourgeois conflicts must not be resolved in a manner which threatens the whole structure itself. Yet this is precisely what Jayaprakash Narayan did in his famous movement in 1974-75. One of Mrs Gandhi's bitterest complaints was that J. P. called on the army to intervene in his favour and oust her. It did not respond, but the fact that J. P. should even make such a call constituted, in her view, an extremely dangerous and unacceptable departure from the rules of the game. In her own mind at least, it was one of the principal factors justifying the establishment of the Emergency to 'save the country from chaos and total breakdown'.

The decline of the old Congress and of consensus politics has also meant the elevation of Mrs Gandhi as an individual. The 'national' character of Congress (I) no longer lies in it being the inheritor of old Congress traditions or of the aura associated with the past and the national movement. It is above all the mass and genuinely national character of Mrs Gandhi's personal electoral popularity. This is a reality clearly recognised by Mrs Gandhi herself.

Although the Election Commission ruled that only the Congress (I) among the welter of different Congress parties, (O), (S), (J), etc. could lay claim to the title of Indian National Congress, Mrs Gandhi has preferred to keep her party's name as Congress (I).

Whatever her own predilections for concentration of authority in her own hands, her major problem for the last decade has been to sustain the 'national' character of the party, to assure a more stable foundation for such an all-India party than her own much publicised and played up 'charisma'. The dangers of the present situation are quite obvious. The absence of an accepted leadership structure and representative elections at various levels (there have been no organisational elections in Congress (I) for over ten years) means that the top team of the party, Mrs Gandhi, her son Rajiv and a handful, if that many, of her closest cronies, have no real control over the regional and local units of the party.

Given her undisputed role as the only



Charan Singh (left) represents the newly-strong peasantry in the north (DR)

cement and only national asset of the party, no faction or individual dares to challenge Mrs Gandhi openly. They do not need to. While paying formal respect to her in the most abjectly cringing manner — a widespread practice in the party — they can bypass or ignore her directives in practice.

While Mrs Gandhi possesses powers of ultimate sanction and discipline, and can dismiss chief ministers at her bidding, it is impossible for her to directly intervene at every level within the party. Factionalism flourishes as never before as the grab for the spoils of power becomes the paramount objective of political activity.

This inability to control the Congress means that Mrs Gandhi's own personal popularity is rendered somewhat more tenuous. She can do little to check the behaviour of the party, Congress (I) state governments, the district committee or Congress (I)-dominated village panchayats, although she dominates the party and is seen to do so. The absence of a cohesive structure also means that there are no buffers between herself and local discontents in the party.

The need for a stable, coherently organised, widely dispersed and deeply rooted political organisation is strongly felt by the most perceptive defenders of the Indian state and bourgeois rule. Though the Congress (I) is far from being such an organisation, the industrial bourgeoisie is loyal to it for two reasons.

Any party at the Centre enjoys enormous respect and authority because of the great financial dependence of the industrial bourgeoisie on centrally-controlled credit organised through the nationalised banking system, the government controls on trade and public sector supplies and purchases.

Thus, the same bourgeoisie which backed Mrs Gandhi during the Emergency, swung en bloc to the Janata party when it came to power at the Centre, as this party then controlled the crucial levers of financial and administrative

power. Admittedly, the Janata's bias in favour of the 'intermediate castes/classes' was more pronounced than in the case of the Congress (I) because of the presence of the Lok Dal and Jana Sangh parties within its ranks, but this was not a marked difference. Professor Raj Krishna, a senior member of the planning commission under the Janata party government, has already pointed out the remarkable similarity in the plan proposals and budgets of both the post-Emergency Janata and the Congress government formed after the 1980 elections. (4)

But, only a year after the Janata government took office, very important sections of the industrial bourgeoisie began to swing over to support for Mrs Gandhi's party. It was becoming increasingly clear that the infighting in the Janata party was reaching dangerous proportions, and that Mrs Gandhi represented better prospects for a more stable political order and had a greater capacity to strike compromises and bargains between different sections of the ruling bloc which could be accepted. A genuine unification of the Janata party to make it more than a loose coalition of interests would have required the peasant castes represented in the party to accept a non-peasant central leadership, which Charan Singh, the leader of Lok Dal, was reluctant to do.

Those sectors of the industrial bourgeoisie that turned back to Mrs Gandhi were vindicated when the Janata collapsed and the Congress (I) swept back to power in January 1980 with over two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha, and just as impressive victories in the state legislative assembly elections that followed shortly afterwards.

Thus it is not the economic or social programme of the Congress (I) or its foreign policies that distinguish it from its bourgeois opponents when banded together in a coalition. Indeed, there is now an ideological consensus about the Indian economy — it is clearly capitalist.

4. Raj Krishna, 'The Budget and the Plan', *Indian Express*, August 7, 1980.

The days of much noise about the 'mixed economy' are over and such voices have become increasingly irrelevant since the industrial infrastructure of state-sponsored 'core' industries was established. It was not the presumably more pro-Western Janata but the supposedly more pro-Soviet Congress (I) that negotiated a 5.8 billion dollar loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and sought to modify its foreign policy conflicts with the US through initiatives such as the much-vaunted state visit by Mrs Gandhi in 1982.

Today different parties may have differences about the degree to which government controls should be lifted, or the extent to which the private sector should be encouraged or about the increase in procurement prices that should be offered to the kulak peasants. But the essential economic perspective is common: To encourage market forces; increase the relative strength of the private sector; restrict the power of the unions; encourage greater production for the market through offers of higher procurement prices and lower input prices and through credit support for greater mechanisation, capitalisation and commercialisation of agriculture; reduce corporate taxes; encourage the growth of the share market; maintain the strength of the public sector and modernise parts of it; provide higher remuneration to the managerial and technical professions and limit the growth of the black economy but also learn to live with it.

Where the Congress (I) scores over the opposition is that there quite simply exists no 'national' alternative to it, nor any party or combination of parties that can secure the electoral allegiance of such a cross section of the Indian public, Mr Chandrasekhar, leader of the Janata party and one of the few politicians with a 'clean' image, started in mid-1983 on a 4,000 kilometre padyatra (journey on foot) from the southern tip of India to the capital, covering thousands of villages.

The considerable enthusiasm with which he was generally received testified to the strength of the personal factor in Indian politics. It temporarily raised the stock of Chandrasekhar as a politician who could have a 'national' following like Mrs Gandhi. While he has this potential he is far from attaining the stature of the Congress (I) leader. The effect of the headline-catching walk has worn off.

The Congress (I) advantage is rooted, above all, in the personal popularity of Mrs Gandhi and what counts in the Congress (I) is loyalty to a person not to an ideology. It is difficult to explain the source of her appeal. A 'towering individual' is perhaps a symbol of overcoming the fragmentation and divisions of Indian society. The Hindu psyche, the desire for order and subordination to a single source of authority, may be as plausible an explanation as more explicitly social or economic ones.

This is not Bonapartism. It is difficult to say what it is. But it provides a

clue as to why it has become so necessary for the survival of Congress as a 'national' entity that it must promise a person of similar stature as an eventual replacement for Mrs Gandhi. The cult of Sanjay Gandhi previously and now of his brother Rajiv has been deliberately fostered and played up. Given that it is impossible to revive the old-style Congress this seems the only way to retain a 'national' party.

Can Congress last without Mrs Gandhi?

No effort has been spared to build up Mrs Gandhi's sons. The All-India Congress Committee (AICC) conference in Bombay in October 1983 was partly to prepare the ground for Rajiv's rise to national status. He is nominally one of the general secretaries of Congress (I) but is in actual fact the second most powerful person in India today.

The more perceptive defenders of a powerful and stable Indian state are prepared to go along with the development of the Rajiv cult. The question is not the 'anti-democratic' and 'dynastic' or 'immoral' nature of the exercise, but whether Rajiv can succeed in becoming a second Mrs Gandhi, and thus help to preserve a stable or, more accurately, less unstable than otherwise bourgeois democratic order. When all is said and done, some form of functioning democratic system remains a far better arrangement than an authoritarian set up for the Indian bourgeoisie to tackle the non-economic ethnic, cultural, and linguistic clashes and differences that exist.

The difficulty of 'reorganising' the Congress (I) in any meaningful sense has led Mrs Gandhi to ask in a well publicised aside, 'Where is the Congress party that I should reorganise...why do I need the party? I can depend on the administrative machinery for managing the affairs of the country.' She is so wary of promoting the power of local Congress chieftans that the only 'reorganisation' she would accept is that carried out by those she trusts most — first Sanjay and now Rajiv Gandhi.

It was during the Emergency that Sanjay Gandhi first took up the task of creating a new kind of mass-based Congress organisation.

Using the Youth Congress (I) as his main instrument, he introduced at the top level a coterie of prep school-type idlers who had neither integrity nor ideological commitment of any kind. Motivated by contempt for the old Congress culture, for liberal democratic values, this coterie was complemented by an even larger layer of middle level organisers who were lumpens from a less affluent and educated background. They certainly showed themselves to be loyal to their leader and ruthless as they pursued schemes like razing the slums to the ground. Efficient, dynamic or revitalising, they were not. In fact, outside the urban areas their influence was limited. The existence of this much-vaunted 'new brigade' was so fragile that it did not

survive the death of its leader, Sanjay Gandhi, in an aeroplane crash in June 1980.

It is now Rajiv Gandhi's turn. He is trying to set up a new organisational structure using the Youth Congress (I), the Congress-controlled National Students Union of India, and its social work organisation the Seva Dal. His aim is the same as his brother's but the approach and inclinations are different. He wants to professionalise the workings of the Youth Congress and Seva Dal. To this end he has recruited 434 Youth Congress co-ordinators aged between 25 and 28, all of whom are university graduates. (5) They go through a rigorous six-week training schedule and then are sent in pairs to Congress (I) districts, on a pay of 500 rupees a month, where local Congress members of parliament or state legislatures are expected to put them up and provide transport. Their job is to provide information on the actual state of affairs in the district and the degree to which the 20 Point Programme has been applied. This programme of unexceptionable and mainly unattainable populist demands is what serves as ideology for this new force whose trade mark is 'competence' and 'professional working methods'.

Similarly 372 Seva Dal instructors were trained in a two-week session and each of them is supposed to raise a force of 20,000 people which in turn will raise 700,000 people who can act as vote mobilisers for the elections.

This gigantic effort to bypass the official parent body rather than transform it is a charade doomed to failure. What grassroots support that exists is channelled through the local Congress (I) stalwarts. The kind of mobilisation that Rajiv Gandhi wants to institutionalise, like his brother before him, is not possible without the help of the pradesh, district and panchayat Congress committees, where the lumpens reign supreme. The same holds for the Youth Congress committees at this level, and no amount of flirting with 'co-ordinators' at the top can change it.

Rajiv Gandhi's version of a 'new brigade' is at best only superimposed onto a system of links and alliances that carries on as usual. A system that works on patronage and monied favours. As long as he continues on such lines and does not directly challenge the power of 17 Congress (I) chief ministers and over 400 state ministers, each with their own vested interest groups and lobbies, he will be tolerated. But, for the existing party structure to be genuinely revamped, these forces would have to die a political death. The chance of such a confrontation — which would push these forces to fight back in every way they could, including joining up with the opposition — is frankly very remote. The crucial problem of endemic political instability remains unresolvable. ■

Mass response to new racist Constitution

The new constitution adopted by parliament in September was put to the vote in a referendum of white voters, the only South Africans with the right to vote in this racist republic. Some 2.7 million are registered to vote in a total white population of more than 4 million.

The proposed new constitution, destined to replace that of 1909 inherited from British colonial rule, projects a presidential system, and the partial and separate involvement of representatives of the 'Indian' population of one million, and the 'Coloured' population of three million state institutions, through separate parliaments in a three-chamber political structure dominated by whites, while continuing the total exclusion of the 25 million 'Africans'. (1)

This new constitution aims to break up the formation of a common front for mobilising non-whites. It attacks nothing in the racist conceptions that form the very basis of apartheid. The proposed new Koornhof laws concerning the residence conditions for blacks in 'white zones' testify to the maintaining in essence of the policy of segregation, although the racist government would like to stabilise a layer of black workers in the white zone to satisfy capitalist industry's need for a workforce. (See box)

The November 2 referendum approved the constitutional proposals of the ruling National Party (in power since 1948) by a majority of 65.96 per cent. However, this figure is not without ambiguities. In the general election of April 1981 the National Party received 57 per cent of the votes and an overwhelming majority of parliamentary seats, 131 of 165. The split of the most conservative wing in March 1982 took 17 parliamentary members. This new current, as the Conservative Party, called for rejection of the government's proposals. (2)

During the referendum the prime minister Pieter

Nathan PALMER

The November 2 constitutional referendum took place in an economic climate rendered gloomy by the repercussions of the international recession. For specific reasons, this has come late to the Republic of South Africa (RSA) by comparison with the rest of the industrialised capitalist world. This gap comes from the role of gold, of which the RSA is the primary producer in the capitalist world, with 75 per cent of its production. As the tried and tested commodity for speculators — particularly since the break-up of the international monetary system established at Bretton Woods — gold for a time protected the South African economy from the crisis.

The maintenance, at least partially, of imperialist investments on the one hand, which rose in 1981 to more than 30 thousand million rand — practically half of their total in Black Africa (3) — and the

role of the armament sector on the other, have also delayed the onset of the crisis. (4) These specific elements could also lead to an earlier economic upturn. In fact, there is no exact synchronisation between the economic evolution of the RSA and the imperialist countries on which it depends.

Inflation has dropped slightly, but in June it still reached 12.4 per cent. The South African Reserve Bank glimpses signs of a recovery, linked to the beginning of the upturn in the United States. The balance of payments was in deficit by 7,100 million rand, equivalent to 9 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, in the first quarter of 1982. By the last quarter of the year it had achieved a surplus of 1,100 million. But the rate of utilisation of productive capacity remained unchanged. The employers organisation for the metal industry (SEIFSA) stated that there was 'no manufacturing recovery yet. Capacity levels remain at some 30 per cent below normal produc-



Botha succeeded in gaining some of the votes of the traditional supporters of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) a formation that represents the sections of employers regarded as 'liberal', mostly English-speaking, the best known of whom, magnate Harry Oppenheimer, called for a 'no' vote for the governmental proposals.

The fundamental ambiguity in these results is in the exact significance for the white community of the vote for the new constitution. Should this be seen as the acceptance, by a part of the liberal electorate, of a first breach in the fortress of apartheid? Or more simply a reaffirmation of the determination to exclude some 25 million 'Africans' from all political rights while giving limited rights to 3 million 'Coloureds' and 1 million 'Indians'? Or is it a combination of the two?

There is a symmetrical ambiguity about the meaning of the 'no' vote. Are these 33.3 per cent of the white electors opposed to the reforms as too many or too few? Or is this again a combination of these two reactions?

These results allow Botha to present himself in the eyes of the white community as the only solution because there is no other credible alternative to ensure their continuing interests, and to promote his policies as the only ones that can prevent unity among the blacks of Southern Africa as a whole and an uprising that would destroy the racist regime.

This meets the needs of those imperialists who were pressuring him to adapt the apartheid system to current economic reality and to their interests. The satisfaction of the White House at the results bears witness to this.

tion levels with no turnaround seen until the first quarter of 1984.' (5)

Perhaps this is what made the financial supplement of the *Cape Sunday Times* splash the headline 'For the average South African the worst is yet to come' on August 21, 1983. For this newspaper, the financial situation of the

1. At birth every individual is classified according to the official racial categories, white, Indian, Coloured or African. The term 'black', used by the opponents of apartheid, groups all three of the latter categories and thus has a political content.

2. The extreme right parties, the Hertzige Nasionale Party (HNP) and the Conservative Party on the one side, and the Progressive Federal Party and the other liberal organisations on the other, each represent about 20 per cent of the electorate.

3. *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1981*. 1 US dollar equals 1.2 rand.

4. Defence spending in the 1982-83 budget totalled 2.668 billion rand — representing 24.33 per cent of the budget, and 3.36 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1982*.

5. *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, September 5, 1983.

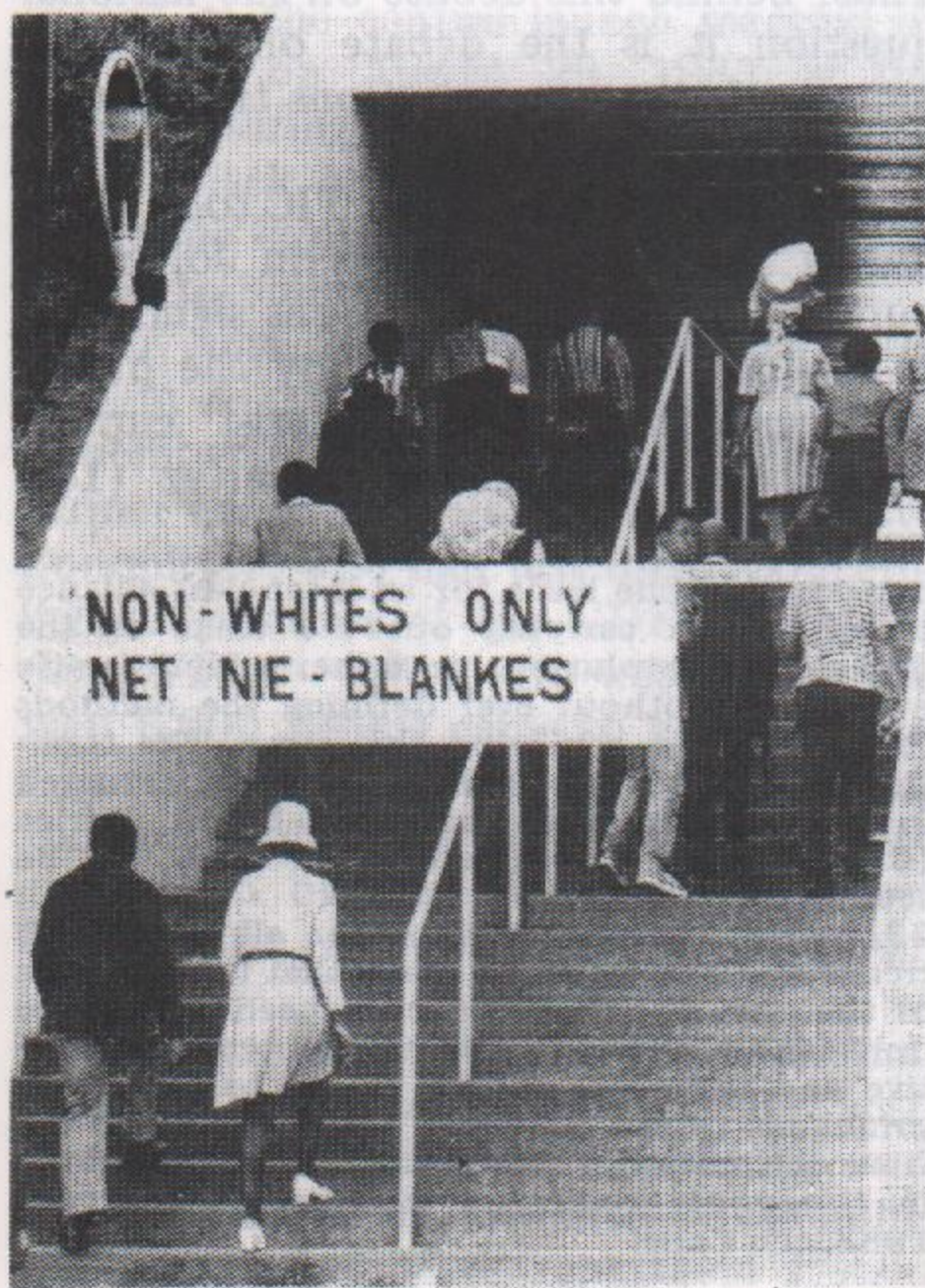
ordinary person, which already worsened by 50 per cent in 1982, is going to get worse because of governmental policy that has allowed 'consumers to believe that economic conditions have really improved'.

In this economic context there has been a significant growth in unemployment. Official statistics give the grossly falsified figure of 469,000 unemployed among the black population, and a more realistic figure of 18,177 white unemployed. These figures illustrate flagrant inequality because they represent 9 per cent of the economically active black population, and 0.3 per cent for whites, that is thirty times less, while the white working population is only 3.5 times smaller than the black.

Some 7 million blacks live and work in mining or urban zones among which are included the townships such as Soweto, which has more than one million inhabitants. These employment statistics are thus deliberate and gross falsifications because they exclude all the black South Africans arbitrarily attached to the bantustans, the pseudo-independent black states — Transkei, Venda Bophuthatswana, Ciskei — in which the rate of unemployment is much higher.

These official statistics are so un-serious that many specialists in their own estimates use a margin of between 1.5 and 3 million unemployed, that is 13 to 27 per cent of the active population. The most worrying statistic is that given by the director of the economic research office at Steelentbosh University, Attie de Vries, who states that unemployment grew by 66 per cent between 1981 and 1982.

Thus, there is nothing at all surprising in the fact that job loss has been at the root of many disputes in the sectors most hit by unemployment (metalworkers, textiles, cars, etc.) which are also the sectors in which the independent trade-union movement has grown most over the last few years. (6) There is a two-fold test of strength between the independent



unions and the employers. While the employers want to adapt their production equipment to the needs of the economic crisis, the union movement is confronted with a real test after several years of uninterrupted growth and development. This context of social confrontation is moreover one of the objective factors pushing the independent unions along the road to united action and the formation of a single workers confederation. However, to achieve this objective would mean that the present differences on the type of federation and its method of functioning would have to be overcome. (7)

Confronted with the government's proposals on a new constitution, the independent unions showed determined opposition.

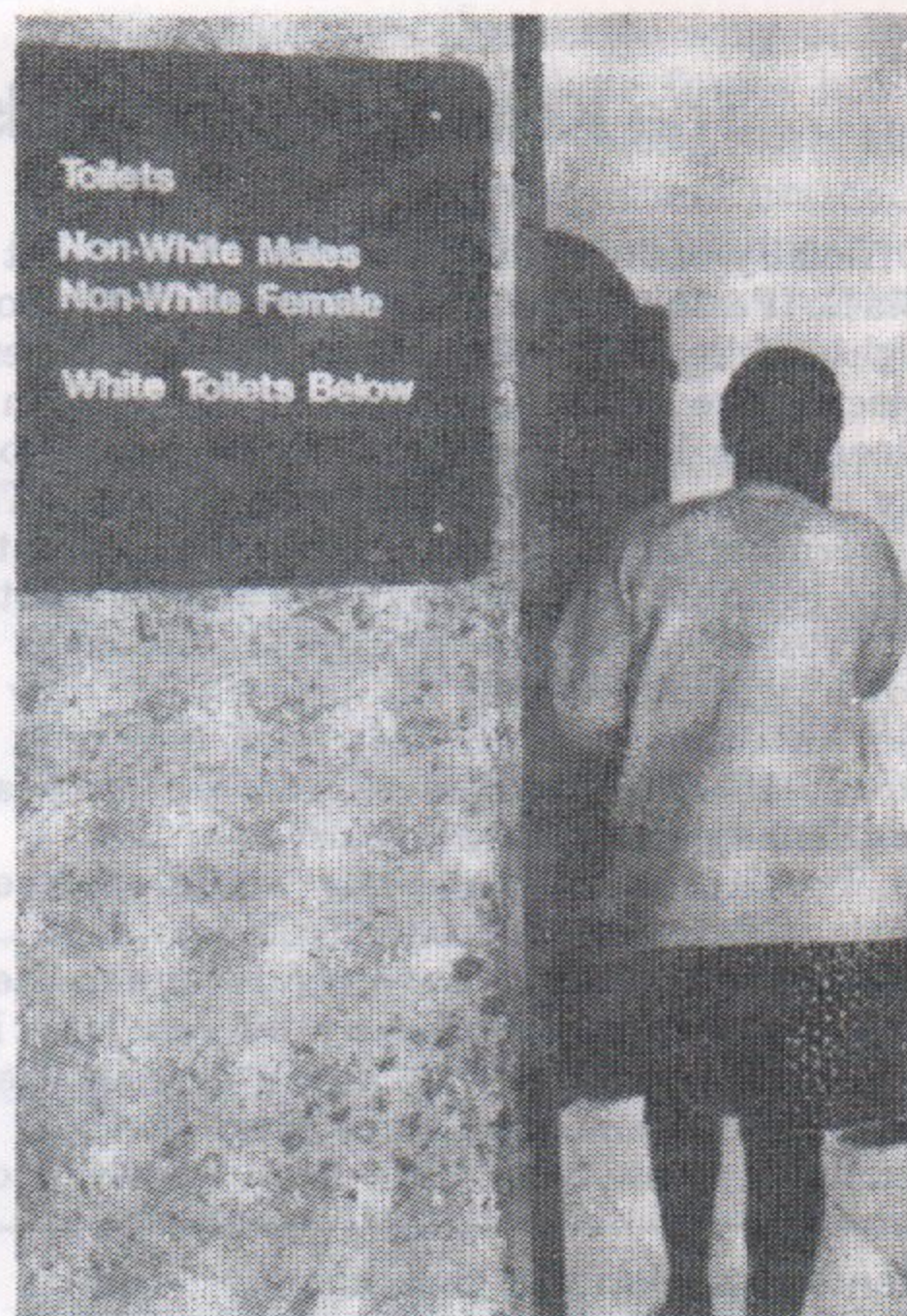
It was not possible to create unanimity amongst the white electorate on the proposal to create a President's Council (PC — see box). Imitating the type of publicity campaign that accompanied the victory of Margaret Thatcher in Britain, the National Party used full-page advertisements in the press to call for a 'yes' vote in the referendum, with such ingenious slogans as 'South Africa against South Africa? November 2 is the most critical day in South African history'. Moreover, this brought on accusations that the National Party was using public funds for a campaign whose estimated cost was 3 million rand.

Coloureds, Indians reject proposals

The PFP concentrated on an oppositional parliamentary campaign rather than mobilising its electoral base. This primarily English-speaking party represents certain sections of the big financial and industrial bourgeoisie. In the first rank of these is Harry Oppenheimer who still controls, although he is no longer president of, the giant Anglo-American group which alone holds 56 per cent of the stock quoted on the Johannesburg stock exchange. (8) The PFP which proposes simply modifying the apartheid system, refuses to recognise the right to universal suffrage, summed up in the slogan 'One man, one vote'. It thus contented itself with denouncing the aspects of the government's proposal that it judged 'repugnant', that is the excessive powers given to the president of the president's council, and through him to the National Party, in these structures of continuing racial segregation.

This battle was also limited by the adoption of a guillotine motion by the parliamentary group of the National Party, fixing a limit to the parliamentary debate on this question. That means that certain controversial points in the constitutional changes proposed by Pieter Botha's government were adopted without debate. Such a procedure had not been adopted since 1963.

In addition, some of the English-speaking press of South Africa which usually share the opinions of the PFP were opposed to its call for a 'no' vote.



The *Financial Mail*, the *Sunday Times* and *Finance Week* called for a vote for the 'New Deal' proposals of Pieter Botha. Even within the PFP electorate a majority said in July that they intended to vote 'yes', and the referendum results clearly demonstrated this shift in voting patterns. (9) However, the PFP could not give up its opposition to the proposals without risking complete capitulation to the National Party.

As for the extreme-right formations, Jaap Marais' Herstigte National Party (HNP) considered the proposed constitution as the 'starting point' for a black majority government, while Andries Treurnicht, the former National Party MP, suspended in March 1982, and now leader of the Conservative Party, accused the National Party of wanting to deny the right to self-determination of the whites.

The prime minister's attempt to woo sections of the Coloured and Indian populations to associate themselves with his projects achieved only a limited success. In fact, it provoked active opposition on a scale unprecedented since the 1950s. Only the Reverend Alan Hendrickse's 'Coloured' Labour Party decided at its January 4, 1983, conference to accept the government's proposals. This confirmed its definitive break with the rest of the oppressed masses who were then left in no doubt as to its collaborationist nature.

This could only stimulate mobilisation, particularly in the local and resi-

6. Cf *International Viewpoint*, No 8, June 7, 1982.

7. Cf *International Viewpoint*, No 31, May 30, 1983.

8. Robin McGregor's study *Who Owns Whom?* reveals that seven companies control 80 per cent of the stock quoted on the Johannesburg stock exchange: Anglo-American, Sanlam, Barlow Rand, Anglo-Vaal, Rembrand, Liberty and Old Mutual.

9. According to the poll carried out for the Afrikaans journal *Rapport*, and cited in the *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, September 2, 1983, 46.2 per cent 'yes' against 43.8 per cent 'no'.

The Koornhof proposals on right of residence for blacks in 'white' zones

Officially called the 'Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill', the Koornhof proposals concern blacks' right of residence in urban zones. Twenty-five per cent of blacks live in urban areas and between October 1976 and December 1981, 8 million of these lost South African nationality and were given that of a bantustan. These laws signify new governmental arrangements falsely presented as a loosening of segregationist legislation in the area of right of residence.

Present legislation recognises the right of blacks to stay in town without having to prove that they have accommodation. For this they have to have been born and lived all their lives in town, to have worked there for ten years or to have had a residence permit for 15 years.

The Koornhof proposals would replace these categories by that of Permanent Urban Resident (PUR) which takes in all the people who already have rights under the conditions outlined above and those who have a 90-year lease in a township, if they are citizens of the RSA or an 'independent' bantustan, South African citizens who have lived in town for 10 years (which excludes those who have been deprived of South African na-

tionality) and finally, persons born in towns whose parents are classified as PUR.

For other blacks, the majority, it is illegal to be in town at night, even in a private dwelling, between 10 pm and 5 am without authorisation and without accommodation. During the day they can be in an urban area but not look for work. For that they have to go to the employment office in the area in which they live. This decreases the supply of jobs because the authorities want to encourage the employment of workers classified PUR only. They can ask for a visitors permit for a period of no longer than 14 days per year.

The sanctions against those contravening the laws are:

- for authorising a non-PUR to reside under one's roof a 500 rand fine or 6 months in prison and 20 rand per day of continuing contravention;
- identical sentences for those illegally in an urban zone between 10 pm and 5 am or looking for work there;
- giving work to a person in an irregular situation is punishable by a 5,000 rand fine or 12 months in prison.

dents associations, religious or student groups of the Cape region — a favoured residential zone for Coloureds — who came together around total rejection of Botha and the National Party's proposals.

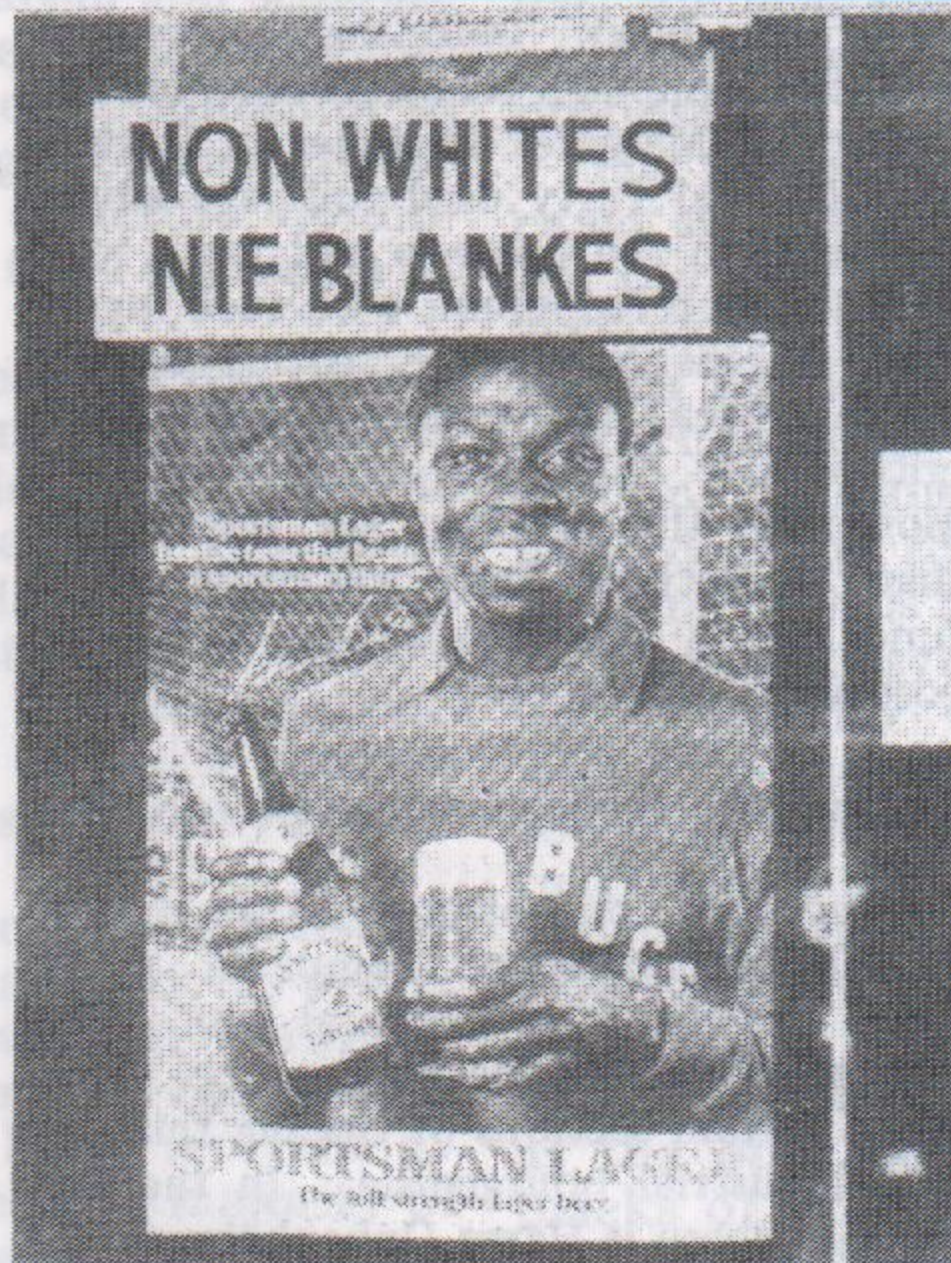
This movement developed mainly at the initiative of local associations such as the Federation of Civic Associations and the Cape Housing Action Committee (CAHAC). According to the *FRA Civic News* the Federation has organised several mass meetings to protest against the President's Council proposals: 'Rejecting the proposals as racist because they functioned within the Group Areas Act and racial classification, and undemocratic because of the qualified franchise, it urged people to boycott any elections and referenda designed to implement the proposals. It put forward as a non-negotiable demand a full franchise for all South Africans and one undivided South Africa nation with no homelands.' (10)

CAHAC stated that it 'rejected the PC proposals on the grounds that they did not abolish the Group Areas Act, they excluded Africans, they advocated a qualified franchise and that the central government would be concentrated in the hands of a few people in the executive. It saw the PC proposals as a reaction by the government to the growing unity among Coloured, Indians and African people. It demanded a unitary system with one man-one vote.' (11)

'All rights here and now'

The 'Indian' community also rapidly demonstrated its opposition to the government's proposals. During the election for the South African Indian Council (SAIC) the rebuff was clear. This collaborationist structure created in 1964, was at the start composed only of members appointed by the racist regime. In 1974 its membership was increased to 30, half of whom were to be elected by local Indian authorities.

Thus, those who supported collaboration with the apartheid regime elected each other. Since 1978, the government has concocted a new reform intended to



give a semblance of credibility to this structure, in order to set up the future 'Indian' parliamentary chamber. Every person classified as 'Indian' over 18 years old, and permanently resident in South Africa, including in the homelands, is legally obliged to register as an elector. Official sources estimate that 80 per cent had done so at the beginning of 1981.

In 1982, representatives were to be elected for Natal (the main residence zone for 'Indians'), Transvaal and the Cape. Opposition to this new masquerade brought about the formation of the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee (TASC)

around members of the former Transvaal Indian Congress — a member of the Congress Alliance and signatory of the Freedom Charter proposed by the African National Congress. (12)

A big electoral boycott campaign was launched which was very successful — average participation in the vote was less than 20 per cent. While the rate did reach 40 per cent in one Natal constituency it fell to 1.75 per cent in the Fordsburg constituency in Transvaal, a member of SAIC since 1968. The TASC campaign also allowed supporters of the Congress Alliance to re-form the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC).

Supporters of non-racialism often criticise the decision to continue using organisations defined according to the racial criteria established by the apartheid system. They refuse to divide the oppressed into 'Coloured', 'Indian', or 'African' and favour bringing together the black masses, in the sense of the non-white masses. On the other hand, within the organisations based on the apartheid system's criteria of racial distinction, petty-bourgeois layers have greater weight. Thus, behind this debate on the national question it is the debate on the class nature of these organisations that is well and truly taking shape.

The new launch of the TIC took place during the TASC congress in Johannesburg in January 1983. It was significant in several respects. First, by the public reaffirmation of the 'Charterist' current defending the Freedom Charter (13).

10. *FRA Civic News* volume 1, number 7 Athlone, June-August 1982, quoted in *Survey* ...1982.

11. An unpublished working paper by CAHA quoted in *Survey*...1982.

12. The Freedom Charter was adopted on June 26, 1955, by the People's Congress, that is the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, the South African Congress of Trade Unions and the Congress of Democrats thus comprising the three organisations representing the non-white 'peoples', the trade union that is linked to them and an organisation of liberal whites. The Charter constitutes a democratic platform around axes such as the abolition of restrictions on the ownership of land for racial reasons, stating that all land should be redistributed among those who work it. This was

conceived as the basis for an inter-class alliance charged with carrying out the tasks of the democratic revolution, or rather a 'democratic evolution', without ever defining the methods to be used in achieving this aim. The traditional ideas of the Stalinist current incarnated in the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) which is dominant in the ANC, can be seen in this.

13. '[We] hereby declare for all South Africans and the world to know that the struggles of the past 25 years have convinced us that the only viable alternative to the present exploitative and repressive system is one based on the principles of the Freedom Charter.' From the final declaration of the TASC congress, quoted in *Grassroots* volume 4, number 1, February 1983, the Cape.

Second, by the greater prominence of sections of the churches in general, and the Dutch Reformed Church for Coloured (NGS) in particular, who had until then kept aloof from organisations opposing apartheid. Finally, by the call for the formation of a United Democratic Front (UDF) against the government's constitutional proposals.

The structure of the Reformed Church remains faithful to the structures of apartheid. The main one, the Dutch Reformed Church, has branches (known as Daughter Churches until 1982) in the manner of the integrated trade unions. These were the NGS mission for the 'Coloureds', the Reformed Church of Africa (RCA) for the 'Indians', and the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa (NGKA) for the 'Africans'.

One of the main figures of the NGS and, as will be seen, of the UDF, is Allan Boesak, director of the Bellville Mission on the Cape. He was one of the founders of the Alliance of the Black Reformed Christians of Africa on October 27, 1981, at Hammanskraal. This alliance was to serve as a stepping stone for his election, in August the following year at Ottawa, as president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and where he would denounce apartheid as a heresy against the Evangelists. The NGS decided to affiliate to the South African Council of Churches (SACC), whose secretary is Bishop Desmond Tutu, although it is a minority within it.

But Allan Boesak is not content with battles with the ecclesiastical hierarchy. He also occupies a key position in the alliance and the structures advocated by the 'Charterist' current. During the TASC congress, denouncing the decision of the Coloured Labour Party, he called for rejection of the government's proposals to install a President's Council, and concluded his speech with words, 'All, here, and now', signifying the demand for 'All of our rights for all South Africans, here in a united South Africa, and now is the time.' (14)

This was also the conclusion of his speech at the central launch meeting of the UDF on August 20, 1983, at the Cape. During his remarks he criticised those 'black or white who depend upon economic exploitation and human degradation to build their empires'. (15)

On June 25 Allan Boesak also took part in a tribute paid to Canon Calata, a member of the ANC since 1930 and a former member of its National Executive Committee, who had just died. Concerning his presence at the UDF launch the *Cape Times* wrote, 'He was clearly the man 6,000 people came to hear and see. Although he is one of the UDF patrons and not a member of the executive, he appears to be one of the major forces behind the anti-government grouping.' (16)

The change in position by this branch of one of the most reactionary and anti-Communist churches demonstrates two things. First of all, the crisis of the political domination of the apartheid system

and all the institutions organised according to its principles. Secondly, the desire of certain specific social sectors not of the working class to have an effect on the broad movement that is developing, and not remain marginal to the development of political opposition.

The project TASC developed in January 1983 — to create an umbrella body of local organisations intervening in all sectors of the mass movement — was outlined in the following terms: 'To fight the PC proposals, our people must come together in a broad front. A front means the coming together of all organisations in our communities. To become part of this front, organisations must believe in

do not constitute the active wing of the UDF the presence of these forces has a particular significance. Along with the weight of the Churches, their presence gives the UDF a hybrid social nature.

The big coverage given to the creation of the UDF by the liberal English-speaking press has relegated the initiative of the National Forum Committee held in May at Hammanskraal near Johannesburg to second place. This assembly was initiated by the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) (18) and personalities such as Bishop Desmond Tutu and Neville Alexander. The NFC, whose manifesto is substantially more radical than that of the UDF, is to hold its next conven-

The new constitutional proposals

The constitutional arrangements submitted for the approval of the white electorate in the November 2 referendum included:

- A president of the Republic who would combine the functions of head of state and head of government. The president would be elected by an electoral college of 50 whites, 25 Coloured and 13 Indians appointed from among the majority parties in Parliament, and all members of the President's Council. The president chooses the cabinet, formed by 25 members of the President's Council. The president is not responsible to Parliament and can dissolve it.

- The cabinet is composed of parliamentarians and non-parliamentarians who govern with the president and deal with major laws.

- The President's Council decides what is in the competence of Parliament and what is only within the competence of the president and his council. The council will play an arbitrating role. Its decisions are final and beyond the courts. Its composition will be 42 per cent 'president's men'. Among the parliamentarians will be 33 per cent whites, 17 per cent Coloureds and 8 per cent Indians.

- Parliament will have three separate chambers: the white House of Assembly (divided between the National Party, the Conservative Party and the FPF), a Coloured House of Representatives (with particularly the Labour Party represented) and an Indian House of Deputies. These two last chambers replace respectively the Coloured Representative Council and the South African Indian Council. The president is responsible for black affairs.

creating a non-racial South Africa; they must accept the need to unite in struggle with all South Africans, irrespective of race, who believe in the struggle for a free South Africa.' (17)

Launch of the UDF

The high point of this initiative was a rally of several thousand people at the Cape addressed by Archie Gumede, son of a former president of the ANC and president of the Free Nelson Mandela Committee (ANC leader in life imprisonment), as well as Allan Boesak. Archie Gumede was elected president of the UDF together with Oscar Mpetha (released on bail) and Albertine Sidulu (wife of another ANC leader imprisoned with Mandela). The other speakers were Thozamile Gqwetha (president of the South African Allied Workers Union — SAAWU), Helen Joseph, former secretary of the South African Women's Federation, and representatives of the Islamic Judiciary Council and the Natal Indian Congress.

Among the other organisations participating in the UDF, the white students organisation NUSAS, and the groups representing 'Coloured' sections such as the Western Cape Traders Association should be mentioned. Even though they

tion at Easter 1984. (19)

However, the show of strength in the launch of the UDF and the press coverage it got should not give the impression that all the mass organisations in the Republic of South Africa are already united behind its banner. There are still many associations, particularly in the Cape region, such as those close to the FRA or to the South Africa Council of Sport (SACOS) that are organised on a non-racial basis and are opposed to the regime, which have remained outside this movement.

But one also notices the absence, most importantly at the national level, of the non-racial and independent workers union organisations. Apart from the SAAWU, whose membership has been eroded by the severe repression, particularly from the Ciskei authorities, only the

14. *Grassroots* id.

15. *Cape Times*, August 23, 1983.

16. *Cape Times*, August 22, 1983.

17. *Grassroots* id.

18. The political heirs of part of the black consciousness movement, a section of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) has evolved towards a class understanding of oppression in the Republic of South Africa. It is the only political organisation of the black consciousness tradition that has a national implantation.

19. 'Our struggle for national liberation is directed against the system of racial capitalism which holds the people of Azania in bondage for the benefit of the small minority of white capitalists and their allies, the white workers and the reactionary sections of the black middle class.'

Council of Unions in South Africa (CUSA) at a national level is participating in the UDF, while it also supports the NFC.

This union organisation had 40,000 members in 1982, and is approaching 100,000 today, thanks to the growth of the miners union. Thus two thirds of the independent union movement remain outside the UDF, such as the most powerful organisation, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), that had more than 100,000 members in 1982 and presently has around 120,000. The UDF has decided to form a delegation to have talks with FOSATU.

The FOSATU made public its position on the UDF, adopted at its central committee meeting on October 15/16, 1983. It explained its reasons for non-affiliation to the UDF as follows: 'FOSATU has decided that it will not affiliate to the UDF. FOSATU believes that the unity of purpose created within worker-controlled organisations whose class base and purpose are clear would be lost within an organisation such as the UDF. The UDF represents a variety of class interests with no clear constitutional structure within which the majority of citizens can control the organisation. The UDF does however have a progressive policy as regards the political oppression of the majority of South Africans and for this reason FOSATU welcomes and supports its opposition to the proposed constitution.'

In fact, FOSATU waged its own campaign against the referendum, centred on

the demand 'One man, one vote'. This campaign particularly took the form of the mass distribution and wearing of stickers on this theme by the workers in the enterprises where the federation is implanted, and a systematic appeal to the managements of these workplaces, charging them to state clearly their positions on the referendum and to reveal whether they had given financial support to the referendum campaign.

Despite the defection of the majority of the union movement the launch of the UDF remained, in the eyes of its creators, a spectacular success. Official sources estimated that the cost of the launch was 120,000 rand.

The National Party did not have much to say on the creation of the UDF. Chris Heunis, minister for constitutional development and planning, refused to make any comment. (20) The remarks of the leader of the NP parliamentary group were mainly directed at Treurnicht's Conservative Party as well as the PFP — 'The Conservative Party and the PFP had a new bed-mate in the shape of the UDF in their struggle against the proposed constitution.' (21)

The PFP's welcome was less lukewarm. Van Zyl Slabbert, leader of the opposition, called it 'A very important and significant development' which the government would ignore "at its and South Africa's peril". The quick and spontaneous mobilisation of the interests of close to a million people clearly demonstrated "an incredible gap" in the country's political structure.' (22)

The national television network SABC was challenged by Alex Boraine, president of the PFP executive, 'The coming into being of the UDF is the most important development in South Africa since the 1950s. But the silence of SABC was deafening. Its bias is not only breathtaking, but it is also dangerous. The SABC continues to lull the whites of South Africa into a false sense of security. It is making the same tragic mistake made by the media in the days of change in Rhodesia [Zimbabwe]. Then there was a deliberate attempt to withhold all the truth from ordinary people.' (23) Alex Boraine also challenged the government over the manoeuvres aimed at sabotaging the UDF's rally, the distribution of fake leaflets for example.

Many leaders of the UDF could take these remarks as their own. However, this does not mean at all that the black masses of Southern Africa identify the UDF with the liberal white sectors who represent the modernising sections of the employers. For the black masses who are looking for a united framework for mobilising against apartheid the UDF appears on the contrary as an enormous hope. The militant nature of the different UDF gatherings testifies to this.

But the very nature of the unity achieved within the UDF by the character of its components and the absence of the majority of the independent trade-union movement of the black workers, immediately restricts the ability of this coalition to respond to the expectations of the oppressed masses. This is all the more so insofar as the basis of this body is limited to the struggle against the government's constitutional arrangements, which have now been approved by the majority of the white electorate and thus passed into reality. The question which is thus posed is the ability of the UDF to constitute a credible alternative to the regime and the effect of this unity on the mobilisations to come.

The internal dynamic of the system of capitalist and national exploitation based on racial discrimination puts out of the question any possibility of negotiating a parliamentary transfer of power.

The transition in Zimbabwe that the Lancaster House agreement made possible is quite unthinkable in this form in the Republic of South Africa, where the economic structure and the development of the movement are different. Proclaiming yourself an organising force for democratic aims does not answer all the questions of the revolution in Southern Africa.

Even from the ANC's point of view, which remains the principal popular political opposition force behind the UDF, the question of definition is decisive. In the ANC's journal *Sechaba* in October 1983 it was explained that, 'The UDF mobilises all people into one mass movement and co-ordinates community resis-

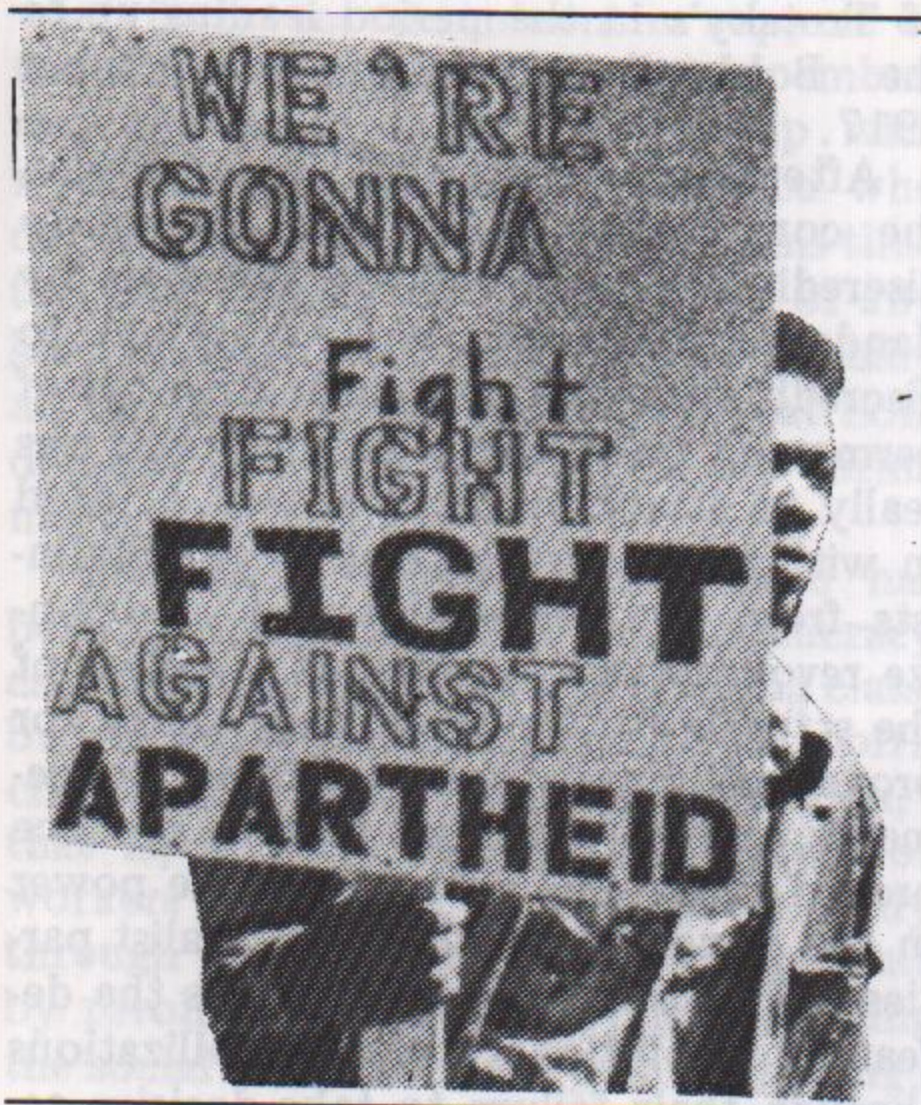


20. *Cape Times*, August 22, 1983.

21. *Idem*, August 27, 1983.

22. *Idem*, August 22, 1983.

23. *Idem*, August 23, 1983.



tance, but it does not purport to be a substitute movement for the accredited people's movement.'

At present the ANC has a real influence in the mass movement. This is as much through the historic figures of certain of its leaders, under whose auspices, official or not, the UDF was created, as through its members activity in the unions or community and other associations. The armed struggle, which essentially takes the form of attacks in the urban zone, helps to strengthen the idea that the ANC is active everywhere and thus is behind everything which moves. However, its strategic orientation is still articulated around its relations with the 'democrats' and thus in part with the white liberals. The alliance formed between sections of the Church and the supporters of the Freedom Charter within the UDF is one response to the growth of the mass movement. The future relations of the UDF with the trade-union movement remain one of the unknown elements in the situation. There could be a rush to influence this latter at the time when the question of trade-union unity is to be discussed. (24)

The UDF remains a coalition at the top and not an organisation based on individual membership. It is looking to unify the mass movement under its own leadership without giving any clear perspectives for mobilisation. The question of the future of the UDF and its popularity among the black masses remains linked to its ability to achieve this unification in a lasting fashion. Its immediate perspectives are around continuing the mobilisation against the government's constitutional proposals, but the UDF is not the only force at work in this struggle. ■

24. The declaration of the ANC's executive committee welcoming the launch of the UDF took the opportunity to criticise 'those who, while posing as socialists, champions of the working class and defenders of black pride, seek to divide the people and divert them from the pursuit of the goals enshrined in the Freedom Charter. Through their activities, these elements share a hatred for the Charter and for mass united action no less virulent than that displayed by the Pretoria regime.'

DOCUMENT

New organization of American revolutionaries: Why Socialist Action formed... Who we are, what we stand for

We publish below major extracts from an article that appeared in the first issue of *Socialist Action*, a new monthly journal published in the United States, sponsored by an organization with the same name.

This organization was initiated by American Fourth Internationalists who were expelled from the Socialist Workers Party, the organization in solidarity with the Fourth International in the USA.

At its October 1983 meeting, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International decided to continue to regard them as in the framework of the Fourth International (to the extent this is compatible with American law) and urged the SWP to reverse its organizational course and immediately and collectively reintegrate the expelled comrades. Until this is done, the United Secretariat recognizes that the comrades expelled from the SWP because of their political views will have no choice but to organize collectively in order to, on the one hand participate in the discussion for the upcoming World Congress of the Fourth International and fight for their political views, and on the other to carry out their responsibilities as revolutionary class-struggle militants.

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A Socialist ACTION

Every new political group is obligated to explain its origins and aims. This preview issue of our newspaper (we begin regular publication early next year) is to introduce ourselves to you, who we hope will become our regular readers. *Socialist Action* is a newspaper. It is also the name of a national organization founded at a conference in Chicago at the end of October 1983. It was initiated by a group of long-time socialists and activists in the antiwar, women's liberation and union movements who had been expelled from the Socialist Workers Party in the course of the last two years....

We have taken this step because the SWP is in the process of abandoning the

principles upon which it was founded. Denied the opportunity to reverse this course and forced outside the SWP, we in Socialist Action have no choice but to attempt, from the outside, to stop the degeneration of the SWP. We strive to be reintegrated into the SWP on the basis of the democratic rights traditionally guaranteed to party members. This includes our right to maintain our faction inside the SWP. In the meantime we continue to carry on the political and organizational work of the revolutionary party of socialist workers.

The movement that became the Socialist Workers Party was founded in 1928 by a small group of leaders of the Com-

unist Party, led by James P. Cannon, who chose to follow Trotsky in the fight with the Stalin bureaucracy. After their expulsion, they too formed a public faction of the CP, becoming a separate political party only after the CP had irretrievably moved from revolutionary positions. In the 1930s the new organization led a number of important battles of the US labor movement, most notably the teamster general strike in Minneapolis in 1934. It participated in building the CIO unions in the late 1930s and in the post-World War II labor strike wave. Eighteen leaders of the SWP and of the Teamsters Union in Minneapolis were railroaded to jail for a year at the beginning of World War II for their militant unionism and their socialist objections to placing confidence in the American ruling class's objectives in the war. Two of the four of those 18 who remained in the SWP were expelled in 1982, and one of them, Jake Cooper, is a member of the National Committee of Socialist Action.

In the 1950s the SWP, although reduced to a small isolated group by the anticommunist witch-hunt, put up an effective fight for civil liberties against the McCarthyite witch-hunters. Its best-known victory was a many-year national campaign by Jimmy Kutcher, a legless World War II veteran fired by the thought-controllers from his clerical job at the Veterans Administration for his socialist ideas. His campaign for reinstatement won the endorsement of unions numbering millions of members and was championed by such well-known civil libertarians as I. F. Stone. Kutcher succeeded in getting his job back and setting a precedent that saved the jobs of many others whose views the government disapproved of. This year Jimmy Kutcher fell victim to a purge in his own party.

In the 1960s the SWP was one of the first organizations on the Left to campaign for the construction of a mass, nonexclusive coalition to oppose the US invasion of Vietnam. Its representatives became leaders of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, and of its youth affiliate, the Student Mobilization Committee. These committees were instrumental in calling demonstrations in Washington, San Francisco and New York in which as many as a million North Americans participated at one time (November 1969). Many of us in Socialist Action took part in building those actions, which we are convinced helped to persuade the American people to oppose the war, isolated the Johnson and Nixon administrations and saved the lives of many draftees and many of the heroic people of Vietnam.

A dispute over perspectives for US Marxists

It is not our intention in future issues of *Socialist Action* to dwell on differences with the Socialist Workers Party. Nevertheless, an account of the political dispute as it concerns major issues on which all sections of the Left have taken

and must take positions can only help to define our own trajectory as well as that of the SWP. Even after some years of rapid decline in membership, the SWP remains one of the four or five largest organizations of the US Left, and its experience in seeking to build a party of committed revolutionists should have interest to everyone engaged in a similar enterprise.

Immediately following the August 1981 party convention — the last that will be held before next summer, a year overdue — a sharp dispute erupted in the SWP over three issues. These proved to have some relationship: our assessment of Trotsky's Marxism; our attitude toward capitalist and Stalinist governments in conflict with imperialism but simultaneously engaged in political repression within their own borders; and our willingness to participate in and build formations such as the women's, antinuclear and antiwar movements, as well as the unions, of which a majority of the party's ranks were members.

Marx and Engels, the founders of the modern socialist and communist movements, originally posed the idea of a socialist reorganization of society as a possibility only for relatively industrialized countries. They reasoned that without large-scale industry, national planning would be impossible. Further, small farmers, shopkeepers and artisans would be against nationalization of their workplaces, while factory workers, who did not own the factories previously, would be in favor of nationalization as a means to take over control from private capitalists. Hence, without a majority of workers in the population there seemed to be no basis for any substantial government ownership on which the planned development of production for human needs could rest.

In the early years of the 20th century, large revolutionary movements arose in many under-developed countries. This posed for the first time the question of whether revolutions in primarily peasant nations could move relatively swiftly to socialist nationalizations and the beginnings of planned economies, or whether they would have to retain private ownership of industry with its consequent draining off of resources into the pockets of a wealthy minority.

It was the Russian Marxist movement that first began to discuss this question seriously, around the time of the 1905 Russian revolution. Leon Trotsky was the first of the Russian Marxists to propose the possibility of a revolution against the tsar that would set up an openly socialist government. This was the essence of his famous "theory of permanent revolution." At that time virtually the entire Marxist movement doubted the possibility of such a course. Even Lenin, the greatest of the Russian Marxists, disagreed with Trotsky's idea. Later, in 1917, Lenin concluded independently that nothing short of a socialist government could solve Russia's problems. His thinking in effect converged with that

of Trotsky's in the period leading up to the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917.

Afterward, during the rise of Stalin, the conservative bureaucracy sought to discredit its opponents on the Left by slandering Trotsky and working to discredit all of his ideas, including that of permanent revolution. Although this was really an attack on Lenin as well, it fitted in with the general retreat by the Stalinists from any serious attempt to organize revolutionary movements. In place of the struggle for socialism, they called for broad antiimperialist or antifascist movements and governments that in practice proved loose enough to leave the power in the hands of the liberal capitalist parties. The usual consequence was the defeat of revolutionary mass mobilizations through their failure to take decisive action in a period of revolutionary crisis.

Immediately after the party convention in 1981, with no possibility for anyone who disagreed to reply, Jack Barnes, the SWP's central leader, announced that he no longer accepted the idea of fighting for a directly socialist revolution in underdeveloped countries. This led in the summer of 1983 to the publication of a special issue of the SWP's theoretical magazine *New International*, in which Barnes insisted that "our movement must discard permanent revolution" (p. 13).

To reject one of the fundamental ideas of the organization in a public magazine, without it having allowed a discussion of it, was a gross violation of the democratic rights of the party membership.

Politically, many party members were convinced that this break with the strategy of Lenin and Trotsky marked a serious adaptation to Stalinist ideology. Many of the same arguments used by Stalin in the 1920s against the Leninist Opposition in the Soviet Communist Party were used by the SWP leadership, in this magazine and in other articles, to attack the party's own previous positions, which it had held for more than 50 years. In 1982 supporters of Trotskyist ideology and supporters of the Fourth International began to be expelled from the SWP on a variety of organizational pretexts.

Poland and Iran

On December 13, 1981, martial law was declared in Poland and the Stalinist government began the decapitation of the 10-million member Solidarnosc union led by Lech Walesa. In 1968 at the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the SWP had participated in joint demonstrations and protest meetings with other groups on the Left. The same was true of all the organizations of the Fourth International. At that time the Trotskyists sought to exclude from such protests anticommunists or groups that did not have a record of forthright opposition to the crimes of capitalist governments, such as the US war in Vietnam.

In 1981 it was clear the SWP did not

want to be too prominent in support of the Polish workers — this might embarrass the party in its relationship with revolutionaries in Central America who did not agree with this policy. This time the SWP rejected demonstrations of any kind, refused to participate in virtually all meetings of the Left to support Solidarnosc and held only a few pro forma meetings of its own.

The SWP's program since 1935 has been to designate the Soviet bureaucracy as something less than a new ruling class, but nevertheless unreformable. Its official position is for "political revolution," that is, to state that the restoration of workers' democracy is possible only through the removal of the bureaucrats by revolutionary means while preserving the social advances made possible through the property nationalizations. Shortly after the beginning of 1982, this concept also virtually disappeared from *The Militant*, the newspaper reflecting the SWP's viewpoint. In its place ambiguous formulas appeared that could be interpreted as calling merely for the reform of the Polish CP.

A similar course was followed in the SWP's coverage of Iran. After the bitter struggle between the Khomeini regime and Mujahedeen began in the fall of 1981, the SWP's press refused for many months to defend any victims of repression in Iran, whether they were Mujahedeen supporters who had fought the government or innocent bystanders. The SWP advanced a general argument that it served the aims of reaction to criticize, from within an imperialist country, governments under attack by imperialism. The consequence of this stance was self-censorship. Universally known facts about torture of every variety of dissenter in Iranian prisons, military assaults on the Kurdish national minority areas, use of private progovernment armed organizations to halt the land reform — none of this could be found in *The Militant*.

The consequence was that a newspaper that had once had the reputation of being among the most accurate and truthful on the Left was transformed into a propaganda organ that withheld basic information in order to create the desired impression. We could put this delicately, but in effect it meant that you could not tell what was going on in places like Iran, Poland, Afghanistan, North Korea, Vietnam or Ethiopia from reading the manipulated accounts in *The Militant*. Many party members began to subscribe to other left-wing publications simply because they no longer believed what their own press told them.

We understand the problem of playing into the hands of the many reactionary propaganda campaigns orchestrated by the Reagan government and its agents in the press. We saw the anti-Iranian hysteria, the hue and cry over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the meetings where the unspeakable General Haig declared his "Solidarity with Solidarity." But we are also convinced, as Trotsky used to say when pressured to make simi-

lar adaptations and not criticize the Stalin regime because the capitalist press would use it, that "only the truth is revolutionary." We think the SWP is profoundly mistaken in the approach it has recently adopted in covering world news. Its aim is to protect the victims of imperialism by not mentioning some unsavory facts that are being exploited by the imperialists. The result will be that no one will believe its version of international events.

For common work against our common foe

The SWP has patently been going through a dramatic internal transformation over the last two years. Its leaders explain it as an effort to draw even closer to the revolutionaries of Cuba and Central America, on the one hand, and to root the party more deeply in the industrial working class, on the other hand, through the extensive colonization of party members into basic industry. We believe that a different process has been taking place.

Since the last party convention, the SWP has publicly renounced the most basic ideas of the Trotskyist movement, of which it was a leading part for half a century. This momentous decision was never put up for a vote or even discussed, and this in a party that had a long and highly respected democratic tradition. A purge has been launched against supporters of the Fourth International and of Trotskyism in the party, and they are being systematically expelled. The majority of the Fourth International has become alarmed at this development. At the October meeting of the world organization's leading body, the United Secretariat, an overwhelming majority characterized the wave of expulsions from the SWP as a political purge aimed at the International and recognized the right of those expelled to form a new organization that would have all rights of fraternal collaboration with the world organization permitted by reactionary US laws — the same status held by the SWP.

Such sharp twists and turns and the driving out of much of the older generation of the party could be accomplished only through a deep erosion of internal democratic rights. This was done by declaring the leadership to be completely correct; by definition, all of its critics were "enemies of the party" (this cliché from old Stalinist pamphlets was actually used in Oakland, California, to characterize Jeff Mackler, one of the main leaders of Socialist Action). This kind of attitude could not help but spill over into the SWP's approach to organizations outside its own ranks.

In the last several years the SWP has tended to view everyone else engaged in the struggle against the evils of capitalism as a "petty bourgeois." The exceptions are leaders of faraway revolutions whom the party does not have to work with anyway. This designation swallowed up the SWP's work in the women's movement, then the antinuclear power movement, later the antinuclear weapons

movement. Finally even the trade unions, where the membership had all gone to escape the "petty bourgeois" Left, also became nothing but "petty bourgeois bureaucrats."

Party members in the unions confine their activity largely to general socialist propaganda work with individual workers. Because this is not oriented around actual issues that appear in workers' lives or around the organizations they belong to now, such work has proven ineffectual and has won very few members to the party.

We are for a sharp break from this policy of self-isolation. We regret that many good people in an organization to which we devoted many years have worked themselves into such a corner. We have a special concern here because while we are no longer members of the SWP, both we and the SWP are sympathizers of the same world movement. Moreover, it is a movement in which our perspective holds a strong majority, although the relationship of forces is reversed here in the United States. We would like to see all supporters of the Fourth International in the United States belong to a single organization. To express that idea we have decided to organize ourselves as a public faction of the SWP, since it is the larger of the two groups in this country that are in solidarity with the Fourth International. Organizing ourselves as a public faction expresses our hope that the party will restore its prior democratic norms, readmit the expelled as a body, and open a discussion of the wrong political line it has embarked on in the last two years.

We hope to work with all others, including the SWP, who want to engage in real struggles against the masters of our society. Although we are beginning as a small organization, from the outset we have committed ourselves to participate as fully as we are able in the central fights of our day. As this issue of *Socialist Action* indicates, we are working to build solidarity with the Greyhound strikers across the country. Many of our members were organizers of the November 12 demonstrations in solidarity with the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean. In the Monongahela Valley of southwestern Pennsylvania we are participating in the movement of the unemployed. As Reagan mobilizes the ultraright and the raw power of the Marines, our responsibilities become more pressing: Every organization of the Left must contribute what it can to bring to bear the counterpower of the US working class. We think that can best be done today through broad struggle coalitions such as the ones being built around opposition to US intervention in Central America. We are also convinced that only a world movement, with a disciplined membership, a press and an overall strategy, can hope to have an effect on events that change their focus from day to day and from city to city. That is why we have chosen to carry out our work through Socialist Action. We hope that many of you will join us. ■



Battered rightist government faces stormy seas in Denmark

COPENHAGEN — "It was a totally pointless election," head of the Danish employers association Hans Skov Christensen said, expressing the disappointment of business circles about the January 10 Danish general elections. [For a detailed breakdown of the Danish election results, see IV, No 45, January 30, 1984.]

In the days preceding the elections, the stock market soared, in response to polls that showed the Conservative Party doubling its seats and the rightist coalition government getting a safe majority.

The stock market settled back into its old rut when it became clear that a record turnout of voters had saved the Social Democrats from the disastrous defeat that had seemed to be in store for them.

The two parties to the left of the Social Democracy, the Socialist People's Party and the Left Socialists maintained both their popular vote and their number of seats.

The Conservatives did gain, but mostly at the expense of the other bourgeois parties. The biggest loser was the Progress Party, headed up by the anti-tax demagogue Mogens Glistrup, who was jailed not long before the elections for tax fraud. This party was deeply divided, with the majority of its deputies refusing to vote for the government's austerity budget. They wanted even deeper cuts in government spending.

The next biggest loser was the Center Democrats, a member of the ruling coalition. The head of this party, Erhard Jacobsen, has specialized in attacks against teachers, day-care workers, radio journalists and even pastors, whom he has accused of using their pulpits to spread socialism.

Conservative Party leader and premier Poul Schlueter called the elections when he failed to get a majority in parliament for his 1984 budget. In October 1982, the Social Democrats allowed him to form a minority government that was able to survive only with the support of the Progress Party and the Left Liberals. In the January 10 elections, on the basis of a late recount that turned on less than 100 votes, the coalition managed to get a bare one seat majority.

In 1983, Schlueter's budget was passed with Social Democrat votes. He used this helping hand from the Social Democrats to put a 4 percent ceiling on wage in-

creases, cut social security and freeze unemployment. He also broke a three-month-long dockers strike by means of police violence and prosecution of the leaders.

During the fall of 1983, there was increasing pressure on the Social Democratic leadership from trade-union officials, antiwar activists and party branches demanding that the party do something to bring the Schlueter government down. This pressure was focused on the point that the Social Democrats at least should not vote for Schlueter's budget again, if the Progress Party refused to do this.

Faced with contradictory demands from the Left Liberals, who wanted fewer cuts in social spending, and the Progress Party, which wanted more, Schlueter chose to yield to the Left Liberals, since he realized that this time the Social Democrats might not come to his rescue. On the basis of favorable polls, he planned after the elections to drop his alliance with the Progress Party and work only with the Left Liberals.

After some hesitation and wrangling in the leadership, the Social Democrats decided to yield to the pressure from the ranks and vote against the budget, for the first time in fifty years.

The government parties and the Left Liberals accused the Social Democrats of playing a spoilers role, undermining the stability of the country without offering a real alternative. The polls indicated that a lot of voters bought this line. Moreover, Schlueter tried to claim personal credit for the effects of the beginning international economic upturn.

Nonetheless, the premier gained at best a hairline majority for his 1984 budget. In this situation, he will be under very strong pressure to negotiate with the Social Democrats. The Schlueter government seems to have run out of steam. What is more, if the economic upturn falters in the fall and undermines the cabinet's economic "stabilization," the government will be very weak indeed.

The election campaign highlighted the Social Democrats' lack of perspectives in a period when the capitalist economy has gone into a prolonged general decline. The economic bases for "socially balanced" management of the capitalist economy and state are disintegrating. It is no longer possible both to give subsid-

ies to private companies and maintain the social security net, when more and more companies are going bankrupt and there is a growing army of the unemployed demanding benefits. In the present conditions, to try to continue such a policy leads to a pyramiding of government debt.

This crisis of government finances has hit the Danish model "welfare state" very hard. And it has hit the chief political exponent of this policy, the Social Democrats, at least as hard.

The present crisis demands more consistent solutions, either drastic attacks on the welfare state and the workers real wages, or workers power and economy planning. The Social Democrats, however, are unwilling to take either path. They are afraid to mobilize the working class against Schlueter and his big business backers. But they are also afraid of cutting social spending and wages too much, for fear that the workers would turn away from them, looking for a more left-wing alternative.

This contradiction was illustrated in the very contradictory campaign waged by the Social Democrats. The party leaders would raise loud cries of "Stop Conservatism." Then, the next minute, they would reassure the journalists of the capitalist press and business people that they would of course cut government spending, only in a more "justly and socially balanced way."

The only thing the Social Democrats were consistent about was appealing to the workers to rally around them and turn away from the parties to their left. Their appeals, however, went unheeded. The Social Democrats did not win away votes from the Socialist People's Party and the Left Socialists. They were saved by those who had abstained in the previous elections.

While both the People's Socialists and Left Socialists held their vote, the election was a catastrophe for Denmark's philo-Soviet Communist Party. In the last general elections, the CP got 1 percent. This time it got only 0.7 percent, 23,000 votes.

The acolytes of Peking and Tirana also did badly. The former Maoists of the Communist Workers Party were unable even to collect the 20,000 signatures needed to get on the ballot. Having gone through a number of splits and crises, this party hardly does any public work now.

The pro-Albanian DKP-ML, however, got on the ballot for the first time and got 975 votes.

The Socialist Workers Party (SAP), Danish section of the Fourth International, got about 2,000 votes, about as many as in the previous election. The

SAP suffered this time from a number of handicaps. Many people who sympathize with our politics vote for the People's Socialists or the Left Socialists, since they do not expect us to top the 2 percent threshold for representation. This tendency was strengthened this time because the polls indicated that the Left Socialist vote would drop below 2 percent, and they appealed to left voters to keep them in parliament. The Left Socialists do not have a political program but argue in various ways for socialist revolution.

Moreover, in this election the Left Socialists took a less sectarian line than usual. Among other things, they took a position advocated by the SAP, calling for a united campaign of the workers parties and trade unions against Schlueter.

The results of the elections point up the need for the unity of the working class parties, including more discussion between the Left Socialists and the SAP.

The Social Democrats still have most of the opposition seats in parliament. And they have repeatedly shown that they are ready to compromise with Schlueter, if they are not subjected to strong pressure from outside the parliament, by antiwar demonstrations, trade union protests, strikes and appeals from trade union bodies.

It is this sort of social pressure that will determine whether the workers movement will resume the offensive. The polls show that a majority of the population supports the anti-missiles movement and the fight for a shorter workweek. In recent years, sections of the working class have gained experience in political demonstrations and strikes. If the left can achieve unity and appeal to the supporters of these movements and the Social Democrats' mass base, Denmark will soon see new mass demonstrations against the government's rightist policies. And new parliamentary crises will be inevitable. ■

Fourth Internationalist youth summer camp

During the last three years youth organisations in solidarity with the Fourth International have been formed in almost every European country.

This year they are organising a joint summer camp for several hundred young people from July 19-30. This camp has already been supported by: the Roter Maulwurf circles in Germany, the supporters of *Revolution* in Great Britain, the Jeunesses Socialistes Revolutionnaires of Switzerland, Rebel from the Netherlands, the Jeunesses Communistes Revolutionnaires of France, the Rivoluzione circles in Italy, the Jeune Garde Socialiste in Belgium, the Barricada circles from the Spanish state, Ungosocialisterna in Sweden, the youth circles of the Partido Socialista Revolucionario in Portugal, of the Gruppe Revolutionaere Marxisten in Austria and the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire in Luxembourg. Other youth organisations from Australia, the United States and Japan, the Antilles, etc., will be invited.

The camp will take place in Germany in the midst of a forest area. It will be an opportunity for an exchange of experience and debates with other currents active in the youth movement: ecologists, young Christians and socialists and immigrant groups.

It will not be a political education school but a meeting place open to young people active in the anti-missiles and antiwar movement, anti-racist activity, solidarity campaigns with Poland and Central America, the women's movement and young people's campaigns. It will be a camp for leisure and relaxation — swimming, sports, etc. It will also be for cultural exchange with music groups, theatre, films, photo exhibitions, etc.

Each day will be organised around a particular theme: the anti-war movement, the exploitation of the Third World, solidarity with El Salvador and Nicaragua, the anti-bureaucratic movement in Eastern Europe, anti-racist activities, the struggles against women's oppression, youth struggles against austerity, for the right to education and jobs, open access radios, alternative press, the soldiers movement....The debates will be in the form of lectures, round table discussions, workshops, with a part in simultaneous translation, and with numerous guests.

In general the political forums will be organised in the morning, the afternoon being kept for relaxation and exchange of information and the evening for cultural activities. On Saturday July 29, there will be a grand closing day with Ernest Mandel.

Accommodation will be organised in tents grouped in villages, and food prepared by one team for all the participants. Everything possible has been done to keep down costs and make the camp accessible to young people despite the economic crisis.

But the cost of transport and the stay are still high for young workers and students who do not have high or regular incomes. For this reason the participating youth organisations will be organising fund-raising activities — collections, socials, sponsored walks, etc. — to make it possible to send more young comrades to the camp. The members of the Fourth International and the readers of *International Viewpoint* will want to be the first to contribute to their efforts. ■

New Portuguese abortion law step forward for women's rights

On January 27, 1984, Portuguese women held a vigil outside parliament where the deputies were discussing a new law on abortion proposed by the ruling Socialist Party.

The proposal was supported by the Communist Party, the Union of the Left for Socialist Democracy and the Portuguese Democratic Movement. The Socialist Party's coalition partners, the Social Democratic Party were opposed, although their youth organisation was in support.

The new law, which legalises abortion in cases of rape, malformation of the foetus or danger to the physical or mental health of the mother, was approved by 132 votes for and 102 against. A further proposal by the Communist Party that would have added a 'social clause', i.e. to allow abortion in cases of economic or social hardship, was rejected. The time limit is fixed at twelve weeks.

The only previous time that the question of abortion has been discussed in parliament was in November 12, 1982 when a proposal by the Communist Party along similar lines to the position presented this time around, was defeated.

The campaign to legalise abortion in Portugal has continued since the first campaign over ten years ago in protest at the prosecution of Maria Conceicao and others for having had or helped to obtain abortions. The law then in force, which dated from 1886, stated that abortion was a crime and in all cases punishable by two to eight years in prison.

It is this law — which forced Portuguese women into 200,000 backstreet abortions per year and thus 2,000 deaths — that the Catholic hierarchy continued to defend when in January the Archbishop of Lisbon called on Catholics not to vote for 'parties and personalities favourable to abortion'.

Although the new law is far from guaranteeing Portuguese women the right to choose, it nevertheless represents a certain victory. ■

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The new internationalism

Volunteers from many countries are going to Nicaragua to help the besieged country bring in the harvest of vital crops. This is already one of the notable movements of international volunteers in our time. The following article describes the response to the call for volunteers and the departure on January 8 of the first contingent from Austria. It is from *Die Linke* (January 18, 1984, No 1), the magazine of the Austrian section of the Fourth International.

Georg CHAMETIS

For a few hours, the Schwechat airport had an internationalist atmosphere. It was not just the red banners that were unfurled. Surrounded by many friends and reporters, the forty members of the Jura Soyfer Work Brigade were getting ready to fly to Managua. They were going to help in the cotton harvest, which will last until the end of February, and in other agricultural projects.

This brigade was formed in response to the call of the Nicaraguan Rural Workers Union (ATC). The brigade members are to replace workers who are urgently needed at the front, often not far from the plantations, to fight the counterrevolutionaries.

The response to this appeal in Austria was unprecedented. Originally, it was hoped that about 15 people would go. But in a few days more than 300 applications were received. Since this sort of rush was unexpected, the Solidaritaetskomitee fuer Nikaragua, which organized the expedition, had to make a selection. Only a hundred people will be sent. The second contingent of 60 people is flying

Popular support for the new law on Patriotic Military Service (DR)

out at the end of January. The volunteers are covering all their own travel costs, including flight insurance.

What sort of people are making this kind of effort? Carrying their knapsacks, they looked more like campers than political fanatics. The only thing they have in common is the desire to help the Sandinistas. Beyond that, their motives vary.

Susi is a 21-year-old student from Graz. She wants "to finally get to know the country from close up." Eva, a 14-year-old high-school student, is the youngest of the group. She is looking forward to seeing again the country where she spent part of her childhood. For the Kovatsch's, two old-age pensioners, the trip is sort of a family excursion. Their son Gerhardt, who has already worked three years in Nicaragua, was with them. Erwin, an unemployed social worker, felt a "certain quest for adventure."

But whatever the personal and political motives of these people may be, their mission is both welcome and useful to the revolution. And it will not fail to have effects on the left in Austria. As

Max Dillinger of the Solidaritaetskomitee fuer Nikaragua put it: "This is the first case of mass internationalism in Austria since the Spanish civil war."

Most of the brigade members were white-collar workers or students. But they also included a locomotive engineer and a farmer. From the political standpoint, the entire spectrum of the Austrian left was represented. Alongside members of the Socialist and Communist parties, there were members of the Catholic Worker Youth, the Alternative [a grouping similar to the West German Greens], Trotskyists and unorganized activists. Political convictions, however, were not necessary. A lot of brigade members were acting out of purely humanitarian motives.

It will not be easy for the brigade members to accomplish their task, which they describe as work for peace. It is true that the risks that they will run as a sort of "human wall" (in Dillinger's words) against the counterrevolutionaries are considered relatively slight. But they will have to cope with difficult living and working conditions, as a circular of the Nicaragua committee makes clear: "In the morning, there will be one water tap for every fifty persons. Brigade members will have to live crammed together in one room infested with insects. For breakfast, lunch and dinner, they will get one tortilla with beans and maize, with a beverage vaguely resembling coffee or water. They will work a seven-day workweek, from sunup to sundown, for four to six weeks. Along with this, there will be one or two excursions into the countryside."

According to the most recent reports from Nicaragua, the brigade has been sent to the tropical southern part of the country and had to cope with greater difficulties than originally expected.

At the beginning of January, 2,500 *brigadistas* from Western Europe (France, Italy, West Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland) as well as from Japan and North America were doing their work for peace.

The number is growing steadily. Some 600 *brigadistas* have already come from the US. Deserving of special mention are those who are maintaining a symbolic guard on the Honduran border. They are the ones most threatened by counterrevolutionary attacks. But they have at least tried to insure themselves against a "larger scale" sort of attack. They sent a statement to the governors of their states saying that under no circumstances did they want to be "liberated" by US troops like the American students in Grenada.

Can the *brigadistas* cope with so many problems? Obviously the completely alien geography and climate will not make it any easier for them. But they are highly motivated. "You should feel as if you are in your own country," the Nicaraguan ambassador said at the farewell ceremony. Undoubtedly they will. There is no place where internationalists are not at home. ■

