

# International VIEWPOINT

ISSUE No 53

21 May 1984

## 35-hour week: Fightback against unemployment

Women and  
the shorter week

Biggest mass  
upsurge  
in Brazil's history

Steel jobs under  
the knife





# International Viewpoint

ISSN: 0294-2925

Fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	IMF dictates spark explosion by <i>Andre Dubois</i>	3
BRAZIL	Biggest mass mobilisation in the country's history by <i>Jakob Studer</i>	4
WEST GERMANY	The crucial battle for the 35-hour week by <i>Peter Bartelheimer</i>	7
BELGIUM	Restructuring capitalist industry: The Belgian steel example by <i>Alain Tondeur</i>	13
SWEDEN	How the 'Swedish model' worked in restructuring steel industry by <i>Tom Gustafsson</i>	16
BRITAIN	Labour movement left challenges 'new realism' by <i>Pat Hickey</i>	18
WOMEN	Part-time work: A choice by women or employers? by <i>Penny Duggan</i>	22
FRANCE	Farewell to Pierre Frank by <i>Philomena O'Malley</i>	25
AROUND THE WORLD	USA, Belgium, France	26
NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY	Sandinista Youth make European tour	28

News closing date 14 May 1984

## Subscribe now!

French francs preferred. Cheques to PEC. Postal transfers to PEC, CCP No 2 322 42T Paris. Bank transfers to PEC, BNP Robespierre, Account 230179/90.

Sterling: Cheques to International Viewpoint. Bank transfers to Williams & Glyn's Bank, Account 14612874, Code 16-00-58, Islington, London.

Mail all subs to: IV, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France.

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES : 6 months 1 year

Surface mail, all countries 95FF 175FF

Air mail  
Europe, Middle East, N. Africa 105FF 195FF  
The Americas, Africa 130FF 240FF  
Asia 145FF 270FF

### Exchange rates :

FF	95	105	130	145	175	195	240	270
£	9	10	12	14	16	18	22	25
US dol.	16	19	22	25	31	37	42	47
Can dol.	19	21	26	29	37	40	49	55

## 1983 collection

A limited number of full collections of *International Viewpoint* for 1983 are available for 100 francs. This price includes surface mail postage worldwide.

These issues nos 21 to 43 contain consistent coverage on the anti-missiles mobilisations, the Central American revolution and the continuing activity of Solidarnosc in Poland.

Included in the collection are major documents of the Fourth International on the Iranian revolution and Southern Africa, and a major theoretical article by Ernest Mandel on permanent revolution.

Individual copies are also available of most issues during the year at a cost of 8 French francs including postage.

Rush your orders now!

### BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

LAST NAME ..... FIRST NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... COUNTRY ..... CODE .....

RENEWAL

SUBSCRIPTION



## IMF dictates spark explosion

The Dominican Republic police and army killed more than two hundred men, women and young people in attacks on the crowds demonstrating April 23-25 against brutal austerity measures. That was the way the government run by the Dominican Revolutionary Party, a member of the Social Democratic Second International, proved its reliability to the IMF and the imperialist banks.

Andre DUBOIS

For months, the PRD government had been negotiating a new agreement with the IMF, after it had already submitted to the IMF in 1982. On April 19, the Dominican president, Jorge Blanco, announced that the government had accepted the IMF's conditions. In fact, this regime — which trims its sails to suit the demands of imperialist finance capital, the multinationals and the small layer of Dominican rich — simply capitulated.

The president hoped to be able to take advantage of the Easter holiday to avoid a mass reaction and defuse the discontent. But he lost his bet. On April 23, the People's Struggle Coordinating Committees in two neighborhoods — Capotillo and Simon Bolivar, in the northern part of Santo Domingo — issued a call for a demonstration. The response was immediate and vast. In the capital, as well as in the cities of San Cristobal, San Francisco de Marcoris and Barahona, tens of thousands of working people came into the streets. They demanded breaking off the negotiations with the IMF, freezing of the prices for necessities and establishment of a minimum wage of 250 pesos with automatic cost-of-living increases.

This outburst of desperation by impoverished and hungry people struggling to survive was seen by the Social Democratic government as a "provocation." So, it ordered its repressive forces to open fire. By this, also, it undoubtedly hoped to show the military how tough it could be.

The world capitalist economic crisis hit the Dominican Republic rather late. But when it struck, the impact was brutal. Today, it is estimated that the real unemployment rate is around 32%. About 58% of the part of the population defined as economically active is considered to be suffering from both unemployment and underemployment. Thus, out of a total population of 6 million, less than a million have a real job. Some 46% of the population is illiterate.

In 1980, it was estimated that a family of five needed 500 pesos a month to live on. But the minimum wage is only 125 pesos. Moreover, for the last four

years real wages have steadily melted away under the impact of growing inflation.

Now, in the spring of 1984, the IMF is going to impose measures that will have the following results for the masses of working people: a wage freeze, going hand in hand with a drastic increase in the prices of necessities (more than 300% for Nestle's powdered milk, 500% for medicine, 50% for bread); slashing of the already meager social spending (education, health, various forms of social assistance); increased unemployment provoked by the reduction of state investment; a new wave of bankruptcies by small and medium enterprises in industry and agriculture; and the elimination of a lot of subsidies designed to cushion the effect of rising food prices.

Still worse, it was projected to de-control prices for petroleum products in June, with all the indirect effects this would have on the cost of transportation, electricity and so forth, when the prices of services have been steadily climbing. Finally, a sharp devaluation of the Dominican currency would give imperialist capital greater control over the economy, since the imperialists would be able to take more goods for less dollars.

The IMF imposed these measures as the condition for making new loans that would enable the Dominican Republic to repay the imperialist banks, which in past years have provided credit at nearly usurious rates.

But that is not all. US budget deficits are skyrocketing, among other things,



because of the high levels of arms spending. The result is an upward thrust of interest rates in the US driving up the value of the dollar. And the higher the dollar goes, the deeper into the quicksand this pushes the countries that owe debts in dollars.

And now the IMF, which is controlled by the US, is demanding that dominated countries, such as the Dominican Republic, tighten their belts until they choke in order to balance their budgets! That's the real provocation.

By demanding that the negotiations with the IMF be broken off, the Dominican workers and peasants directly challenged this shameless imperialist exploitation and the complicity with it of the Dominican ruling party.

Since March, a mass movement had been taking form in the Dominican Republic. Hunger marches multiplied, for example, in the capital, which as the result of the rural exodus, has swollen into a concentration of 1.4 million inhabitants. The bulk of this population is made up of occasional workers ("Chiriperos"), street sellers, semiproletarians, masses of unemployed youth and pauperized workers. For months these poor masses had been showing their readiness to mobilize. Dozens of people's organizations (neighborhood committees, People's Coordinating Committees) launched struggles for limited demands — better water and electricity supply, transport, health care and, most recently, a freeze on prices.

In March 1984, the five labor confederations (1), including the General Confederation of Workers (CGT), which is the backbone of the labor movement and the class-struggle wing of it, called for a "great national day of protest against hunger" on April 7.

The first congress of the Independent Peasant Movement (MCI), held March 22-25, reflected big steps forward in organizing the poor peasant masses independently of the various bourgeois parties and state institutions. The fight against the measures dictated by the IMF and cooperation with the CGT were central themes in the congress.

So, the protest movement and the mass rebellion that occurred in late April were based on a build up of forces that had been going on for a whole period. It was thus not by chance that immediately following the first clashes on April 23, the five labor confederations, including those linked to the ruling party, called for a general strike. On May 1, despite the imposition of martial-law measures, they managed to hold a successful day of protest. The breadth of the movement is

1. The Trade-Union Coordinating Committee includes the CGT; the CUT (United Confederation of Workers), linked to the Communist Party; the CASC (Autonomous Class-Struggle Confederation), controlled by the Christian Democrats; the General Union of Dominican Workers (UGTD), linked to the PRD but led by a section of the party that is in opposition to the president; and the National Confederation of Dominican Workers, which is controlled by the right.



shown also by the lining up of peasant, student and peasant women's coordinating committees behind the trade-union organizations.

The April 23 and 24 events opened a new stage in the class struggle in the Dominican Republic. The repression was savage. The worst seen since the April 1965 war, when the island was occupied by 42,000 US troops, and 5,000 Dominicans were killed. This time, the masses showed that they are not ready to bow to the dictates of the IM<sup>T</sup> and the threats of an army and police force controlled by the US.

### New hotspot in the Caribbean

In the wake of the first clashes, the organizing process in the neighborhoods and in the unions and peasant gained new momentum. The mass organizations began to collaborate more closely. The MCI and the peasant women's organizations joined the Coordinating Committee of Peasant Unions. And this time, unlike in the past, the Dominican Left Front (FID — Frente de Izquierda Dominicana) (2) was able to provide the initial, decisive elements of a leadership for the struggle of the exploited and oppressed. This is a key factor that will certainly be a major obstacle to any attempts by the populist sectors of the PRD, such as the wing led by Pena Gomez, the chairperson of the Second International, or by the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) of Juan Bosch.

Jorge Blanco's government is on the defensive politically. That is why it resorted to machine guns and open repression. The crisis of this regime will continue to deepen. However, precisely as a result of this, the government is stepping up the repression. Thus, on May 7, the security services, which work hand-in-glove with the CIA, arrested about a hundred trade-union and left political leaders, including Rafael Taveras, a leader of the Bloque Socialista and the FID.

In order to understand the full importance of the struggles of the Dominican masses and the late April massacre, these events have to be put in their wider context. A gigantic confrontation between revolution and counterrevolution is developing throughout the Central American and Caribbean region, which is close to the heart of American imperialism, as well as close to Cuba. This gives a particular significance to the struggles in the Dominican Republic.

Support for the Dominican working people, for the political forces united in the FID, must become an integral part of the broad movement of solidarity with the Central American revolution. ■

2. The FID is a coalition of eight left organizations, including the pro-Soviet Dominican Communist Party; the Dominican Workers Party, which has pro-Chinese origins; and the comrades of the Bloque Socialista, an independent Marxist group that publishes the journal *Ofensiva* and plays a key role in the CGT and the MCI.

## BRAZIL

# Biggest mass mobilization in the country's history

SAO PAULO — In November 1983, the Workers Party (PT) launched the campaign for "Direct Elections Now!" Since then, especially in the weeks leading up to the April 25 vote in the Chamber of Deputies, it has mushroomed into a gigantic mass movement, which has already brought 10 to 20 million Brazilians into the streets (see box). This is the biggest mass mobilization in the history of Brazil and one of the largest that has ever developed anywhere.

Jakob STUDER

"Direct elections now!" means the right of the people to vote directly for the president this year, as opposed to the indirect elections the dictatorship has projected for January 1985. The junta's scheme calls for a College of Electors to choose the president. The composition of it has been so rigged that it is a foregone conclusion that it will choose a candidate of the military.

April 25 was the day that the Chamber of Deputies was to vote on the proposal to change the Constitution to institute direct elections. For this a two-thirds majority was needed. The proposal fell just 22 votes short. But even if it had passed, it would have been defeated in the Senate, where there is a guaranteed government majority. So, the failure to go over the top in the Chamber of Deputies was only a partial setback. The dictatorship, in fact, seems on its last legs.

The explanation of this massive popular explosion is obvious. Throughout the twenty years the dictatorship has ruled the country, rage has been building up against oppression, the hopeless poverty facing millions of people, the continual economic disasters, such as an inflation rate of around 200 percent. For millions of people, the struggle for their daily bread is an hour-by-hour fight for survival.

The limited demand for "Direct elections now" has become an opening to express the pent-up feeling for bringing the dictatorship down. The junta has been retreating since 1978, when Constitutional Decree No. 5 (martial law and censorship) was repealed and since the Sao Paulo metalworkers strike in 1979, which spread to other industries and to other parts of the country. In 1982, the first direct elections since 1965 were held for state governors and members of parliament.

Virtually all sections of the population have been involved in the mass movement. On the crest of innumerable, almost daily, mass rallies, festivals and street meetings, the movement rose to the high point of central demonstrations in Sao

Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and other cities. These were great "celebrations" of the freedoms that have already been won but which are still far from secure. They lasted for many hours, with a lot of music, speeches, dancing and fireworks.

Brazilia, the formal capital of the country, where the parliament buildings are, was visited by demonstrators who had to travel a long way to reach the rather remote new city. An outstanding example was the demonstration of 40,000 women on April 18.

On the night of April 25, a chorus of pot-banging (Chilean style) developed in the cities, even in the capital, which is still under martial law.

Continual rallies involving tens of thousands of people accompanied the debate in parliament. They went on from the morning until 2:00 at night (all the parliamentary parties agreed to put off the vote until as late as possible to keep down possible reactions by the people). Many wept when the result became known. Everywhere, you heard shouts of "*vergonha!*" ("Shame!")

The decisive thing was that almost overnight rights were won that a short time ago still seemed far out of reach. This is the sort of thing that can only happen when there is a mass movement. The press reported openly and extensively on the campaign. The liberal *Folha do Sao Paulo* took an active part in the campaign, for example, by publicizing the telephone numbers of all the members of the Chamber of Deputies and recommending that people put the heat on them.

In the commercial mass media, the reporting was unfettered. A lot of debates and interviews were broadcast, and to some extent the media even came out in support of "Direct elections now!" In a country where 30% of the population are illiterate and proportionately less people read newspapers than in Saudi Arabia, radio and TV play a vital role.

Still-outlawed left parties such as the PCB (the old CP), the PC do B (pro-Albania), and others began to come out into the open on a large scale, even providing speakers for the mass rallies. The



military police stayed in the background for the most part and in effect did not intervene.

Only seeing the emotion of the comrades who worked underground through the 1960s could you realize fully how great a turn these demonstrations represented for Brazil, even though the military dictatorship here was not comparable in its grip and its ferocity to the ones in Argentina and Chile.

It should not be overlooked, even now when everything seems to be focused on democratic demands, that this mobilization is developing atop a social powder-keg. The vital question is and remains the rate of inflation — the demand for cost-of-living increases — and the 100 billion dollar foreign debt, which is bringing stronger and stronger pressure from the IMF for an austerity policy.

Even though the inflation rate was down a bit in April (at around 8%), every week the average cost of living goes up by 2%. And since compensatory wage increases lag far behind, this hits even the middle classes hard, to say nothing of the poorest strata. Recent years have seen losses in real wages of up to 50%. The state-guaranteed minimum wage at the moment is 60,000 cruzeiros a month, and it is now to be raised to 97,000, which represents about 145 Swiss francs (55 US dollars).

There are no reliable statistics on employment. Out of an economically active population of 48 million, about 2 million are officially counted as unemployed. And the figures also include 4.5 million "working people without income" (primarily members of peasant families). Only 17 million have official work cards. A huge number, about 20 million, are in the "parallel economy," the so-called "economia invisivel," working in small handicraft businesses, such as street peddlars, on unreported substandard jobs and to a not inconsiderable extent in criminal occupations.

Obviously cost-of-living increases are set without taking into consideration this subproletariat. And this is to say nothing of the conditions in the countryside, especially in the Northeast, or the living and working conditions in the cities where millions of people are concentrated, such as air pollution and the long tiring daily trips people have to make, or the vast shantytowns.

So, it is not surprising that the campaign for "direct elections now" has been accompanied by the growth almost everywhere of movements for concrete demands and strikes, in particular for better provisions for cost-of-living increases. This development has also been facilitated by a slight economic upturn. The biggest strike has been the 14-day stoppage by teachers at the city schools in Sao Paulo, which has ended for the time being with a compromise. The teachers are miserably paid and can count on the support of the parents.

The regime has become seriously isolated. Important sections of the financial and industrial bourgeoisie that

want stability for the sake of economic development are speaking out for direct elections now while the mass radicalization can still be channelled. The representative of these sectors, Vice-President Aureliano Chaves, while not taking part in the campaign, has come out openly for direct elections and is considered the likely winner if a direct vote were held.

The dictatorship's two candidates, the minister of the interior, Andreazza, and the corruption czar Paulo Maluff, a former governor of Sao Paulo state, are holding on for dear life to indirect elections. As a result of the campaign, they have become national hate figures.

The government party, the PDS, has split, with 54 of its deputies voting for direct elections. Under the pressure of the campaign, more than a fifth (113) of the PDS deputies did not dare to take a position, and were absent for the vote. Only 65 voted against direct elections.

President Figueiredo is drifting more than acting, and he has been unable to bring together the doves and the hawks under one umbrella. During the big demonstration in Sao Paulo on April 16, he launched his own proposal for changing the Constitution over TV. It called for reducing the presidential term of office to four years and holding direct elections in 1988. The response of the demonstrators was a giant concert of

whistles. And this bait has still got no nibbles.

A few days later, Figueiredo imposed martial law on the capital, Brazilia, and ten nearby cities, which was supposed to remain in force until mid-June. Rallies were banned. All reports from the capital were banned. The access roads were patrolled. All of this was supposed to be to protect the legislators in the exercise of their functions.

These moves increased the level of indignation. Journalists were arrested. The offices of two left newspapers were closed. Student demonstrations were broken up, and some leaders arrested. For a time, the climate was very tense, and the tension was further increased when a blackout hit six southern cities, including Sao Paulo. There was a lot of talk about sabotage. People were reminded that the military are still in power.

### The military divided

However, the army itself is not united. In the *Clube Militar*, an old officers organization that had a liberal tradition dating from the time of the emancipation of the slaves in the last century, an opposition slate favoring direct elections is standing for the May 16 vote to select the club board.

The state of emergency imposed on Brazilia is supposed to be lifted early. In the near future, a new military coup seems the most unlikely of all variants. It is not known when the president's proposal will go before the parliament, in any case it has no chance of getting a two-thirds majority. However, in his May 1 TV speech, he declared that he was not prepared to make any further concessions.

In the weeks leading up to April 25, the opposition united behind the campaign for direct elections. The common front went from the biggest opposition party, the PMDB (a combination of liberal-bourgeois, middle-class, and even working-class forces, which has the support also of the PCB and the PC do B) to the PDT (the old populist party of Goulart, who was toppled by the military in the 1964 coup; today it is represented by Brizola, the governor of Rio de Janeiro province, a collaborator of Goulart, and has the support of sections of the Social Democracy) to the PT, the class-struggle party led by Lula that came out of the 1979 metalworkers strike in Sao Paulo.

Everywhere these parties formed united "Direct Elections Now" Committees. But it was only after the campaign began to mushroom, that the PMDB and the PDT recognized that they were in danger of becoming isolated and losing their chance to come to power on the back of the mass movement, that they plunged in and took the leadership. The PMDB was the quickest to reorient itself. As late as March, for example, Brizola was still opposing any further demonstrations in Rio de Janeiro. It was only after the PT by itself brought 200,000 people onto the streets on March

#### *Highpoints of the Campaign for Direct Elections*

*January 12 — 50,000 in Curitiba, the capital of Parana state. This was a test city because the population is most representative of the country as a whole.*

*January 25 — 300,000 in Sao Paulo.*

*February 16 — 50,000 in Rio de Janeiro.*

*February 16 — 60,000 in Belem, the capital of Para state in the north.*

*February 25 — 300,000 in Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais state.*

*March 21 — 200,000 in Rio de Janeiro.*

*April 2 — 50,000 in Londrina, a center of the coffee trade in Parana state.*

*April 5 — 80,000 in Recife, capital of Pernambuco state in the northeast.*

*April 10 — Over a million people in Rio de Janeiro.*

*April 12 — 250,000 in Goiania, the capital of Goias state in the center of the country.*

*April 13 — 200,000 in Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul.*

*April 16 — 1.7 million people in Sao Paulo.*

*April 18 — 80,000 in Vitoria, the capital of the state of Espirito Santo, whose total population is only about 200,000.*



21 that he gave in. But then his coming out in support of the movement helped to prepare the way for the mobilization of more than 10 million people on April 10, which unleashed a new upsurge.

There are several possible opposition candidates for president. They include Tancredo Neves, the governor of the state of Minas Gerais; Franco Montoro, governor of Sao Paulo state; Ulisses Guimarães, chairperson of the PMDB; Brizola, probably the biggest electoral threat to the dictatorship's candidates; and Lula, although the PT has not yet decided whether to run him or not.

This broad unity was only possible on the limited demand for "direct elections now." In the demonstrations, little was said about the social situation, the dictates of the IMF, or a concrete governmental program. And what little was said was generally quite vague. The clearest things were said by Lula, who spoke everywhere and got by far the biggest applause, although this was deliberately played down by the media. In this campaign, he grew into a national figure.

The campaign was given a very ambiguous "mood of national unity," expressed in the singing of the national anthem, the same anthem that has also served the military dictatorship. In a "third world" country dominated by imperialism, such national sentiment does of course reflect an aspiration for liberation, but not one that can lead to the solution of the problem, any more than direct elections of the president can.

Two fundamental facts have to be kept in mind and distinguished. In the first place, the parliamentary defeat of April 25 did not break the mass movement. The dynamic seems to still be operating, although a momentary lull has set in. New mobilizations are in prospect. Valuable experience was accumulated in the campaign. Democratic gains were made that cannot be wiped out overnight. The working class has been politicized in a struggle against the ruling institutions. This has opened up a period in which the workers and peasants can win important gains.

Secondly, there is not a revolutionary situation. Nor is there a strong revolutionary force. The PT is far from being that. The majority of the party has either not yet taken a stand on the decisive questions or has taken ambiguous positions.

What is at stake now, and it is no small matter, is whether the movement will go to a definite break with the dictatorship or toward negotiations with the regime on the famous *transicao* ("transition"). A break with the dictatorship is the fundamental precondition for the continuation, widening and radicalization of the mobilizations for "Direct elections now."

If such a break takes place, it can open up a dynamic in which there will be a greater tendency for democratic demands to combine with social ones. This could prepare the ground for the demand for a government of the workers, peasants and urban semiproletariat. The opening

for this exists. For example, when Montoro, the governor of Sao Paulo has, on the one hand, involved himself in the direct-elections campaign as a "friend of the people" and, on the other, opposed the strike of "his" teachers. This contradiction offers the masses the possibility to draw some conclusions.

Nonetheless, the bourgeoisie still holds a lot of cards, even if the bulk of the ruling class is by no means ready to grant "direct elections," which could lead to its losing control of the movement. There is a lot of talk now about negotiations. Wheeling and dealing is traditional in this country where there is a vast federal system and network of local interests, a plethora of local bosses and patronage. For all these interests to continue to coexist, a lot of horse trading has always been necessary.

### Toward a general strike?

One of the alternatives being mooted is a "buffer presidency," that is a president who would hold office only for a year or two before direct elections were instituted. Naturally this would be accompanied only by modest reforms. It is quite possible that these two variants could be "reconciled" in the way this was done with the transition from Francoism in Spain, with an agreement like the Moncloa Pact, a pact of national unity subscribed to by the Spanish Social Democratic and Communist parties. Calls for this sort of solution are already being raised, even in the ranks of the PDS. This would mean that direct elections would be held quickly but at the expense of radical social reforms.

The PT has come out against negotiations and for the continuation of the mobilizations. But it has not yet pushed any basic demand that would mean a break with the regime, such as the call for a constituent assembly, or the institution of any number of democratic rights. Such demands could include punishment of the military officers responsible for repression and torture, autonomy for the trade unions, the right to vote for soldiers and illiterates, legalization of all parties, and a break with the IMF or an unconditional moratorium on debt payments.

The latter demand is in fact gaining ground everywhere in Latin America and slowly starting to send shivers down the spine of the imperialist bourgeoisie. The explosion in the Dominican Republic indicates its potential force.

Other possible demands would be for a radical land reform, full cost-of-living increases, an employment program, and even a governmental formula. The Brazilian Fourth Internationalists are trying to root the concept of such a program in the PT. Right now, they are propagating the idea of a national referendum, a plebiscite for "Direct elections now."

The present situation remains unclear. After April 25, the unity of the opposition has not broken down. But a spec-

trum of differences has developed over the question of further mobilizations and "negotiations." In the PMDB, a wing led by Tancredo is for a "buffer candidate." One that for the moment is stronger, led by Ulisses, which represents the more radical sections of the PMDB and is more directly exposed to the pressures of the mass movement is still against this.

Brizola, who would not have much chance of winning at present, is also for a "buffer candidate." There is a dizzying round of declarations by the political gurus. In parliament, the pro-direct elections faction of the PDS is involved in drawing up an amendment to Figueiredo's proposal, designed in principle to revive that unlucky initiative.

The national Direct Elections Committee is talking about a nationwide day of action on May 13 that could bring 20 million people into the streets in every city throughout the country, although it has not yet decided on this. The unions are also moving onto the political scene. In the wake of April 25, the CUT, the CONCLAT (1) and the public employees unions have issued a common call for a national 24-hour general strike on the of the parliamentary debate on Figueiredo's proposal.

This common call represents an important step forward, since before April 25 the CUT's proposal for such an action ran up against the refusal of the CONCLAT. On May 18, workers assemblies will be held throughout the country to decide on the general strike proposal and on how to organize the action. In the same spirit of unity, which is something new, the May Day demonstrations were conducted everywhere. They were focused around the theme of "direct elections now," and all the opposition parties participated in them, as well as the Ministries of Labor in the states governed by the opposition.

Nonetheless, the crowds that came out for May Day were disappointing, probably because of the exhaustion that followed a long series of mass mobilizations that went on almost without letup. In Sao Bernardo, in the industrial belt around Sao Paulo, not even 2,000 people came out. In Sao Paulo itself, there was a small crowd of about 10,000, and in Rio de Janeiro about 50,000 people.

This was the first May Day in twenty years in which all the left organizations were able to participate in full freedom. Most of the speakers showed a striking clarity about the fact that a critical new phase has now opened up. Most also spoke out unambiguously against "negotiations" and "reconciliation" for a continuation of the mobilizations and for the general strike. Conciliators such as Tancredo and Brizola were hooted. The coming weeks will be decisive for the next wave of mobilizations. ■

1. CUT, Central Unica dos Trabalhadores, was founded in the summer of 1982 by trade-unionists trying to build an independent union movement. It still represents a minority trend, concentrated in the Sao Paulo area. CONCLAT Coordenacao Nacional das Classes, unions that continue to accept the state framework.



## The crucial battle for the 35-hour week

Following the Easter pause, the West German unions fighting for the 35-hour week have been forced to escalate their struggle. On May 14, IG Metall began an extended official strike in the Stuttgart region. About 13,000 workers were involved.

Strike referenda were held in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg (Stuttgart) on May 3-4 and in the state of Hessen (Frankfurt) on May 8-9. The results were respectively 80.11% and 80.77% for extended strike action.

The printers of IG Druck und Papier, the other union involved in the fight for the 35-hour week, are also girding for a stronger fight. By May 2, strike votes had been held in 198 printing plants, with 19,600 printers and 3,000 clerical employees casting ballots. The result was 81% for the strike.

The strike votes were major hurdles because an elaborate system of class-collaborationist legislation in West Germany makes strikes quite difficult. In order to call a strike, the proposal has to be approved by 75% of all the workers involved. So, first of all, a high turnout was necessary to win the vote. In Baden-Wuerttemberg, 250,000 workers voted.

Moreover, once an official strike is declared, the unions are obliged to pay the workers who go out strike pay at a rate specified by law. That means that IG Metall has to pay every striker every week benefits amounting to 12 times a union member's monthly dues.

This entangling network increases the reluctance to move forward on the part of a union leadership that has been forced into a fight whose stakes and implications go far beyond any one they have fought before. Thus, at the same time as calling extended strike action, the IG Metall leadership proposed to the employers reopening regional contract negotiations. The fact of the matter is that a long series of regional discussions produced nothing before and talks are hardly more likely to produce anything more now.

According to Luc Rosenweig, writing in the May 14 issue of the Paris daily *Liberation*, Hans Mayr, president of IG Metall has described the extended strike action as designed to show determination while "creating as little economic disruption as possible." The 13,000 called out in Stuttgart represent about 5% of the workers in the area and work mainly in the auto parts plants.

IG Metall will probably soon have to call extended strike action in Frankfurt, the other area in which the workers have voted for this.

The International Marxist Group, West German section of the Fourth International, is calling for the holding of strike votes in the other regions as well. With the vacation period approaching, the unions do not have unlimited time for a slow buildup.

In a period of economic crisis and rapid automation, the fight for the 35-hour week in Germany is a crucial struggle for labor in all the industrialized countries. It is essential to meet the threat of demoralization to the working class from unemployment, to assure that working people gain rather than suffer from advances in technology.

Peter BARTELHEIMER

In no other West European country in the past year has the demand for a 35-hour week without cut in pay come so much to the center of the fight against mass unemployment and austerity as it has in the German Federal Republic.

After the mass mobilizations by the peace movement last fall, the unions took up the fight against the government of the right on a grand scale. But only in the post-Easter period will it become clear whether the movement will go so far as a general strike for the 35-hour week.

The fight for the 35-hour week, for which key sections of the West German union movement had been preparing for a year, has reached a turning point. Throughout the country, a campaign of strike action has begun to back up this demand. But the unions are coming under very heavy fire.

The employers organizations and the right-wing Christian Democrat-Liberal coalition that has been in power for a year and a half are throwing everything into an effort to create a veritable pogrom atmosphere against this demand. Their slogan is that one minute less than



forty hours means the ruin of "our" economy.

In the factories, under the pressure of unemployment, the workers are showing signs of anxiety and uncertainty. The union movement is split. A number of the individual unions prefer to negotiate with the government and the employers for higher wages and early retirement at age 58.

The biggest and most powerful of the unions that have committed themselves to the fight for the 35-hour week, IG Metall with its 2.6 million members, has been negotiating for more than four months and it has not yet come to any decision about a general strike. The leadership is still trying to avoid such a struggle.

At the end of February, the obligatory strike moratorium ran out in the steel and engineering industry, and at the end of March the small printers union IG Druck und Papier, got a free hand to strike. (According to West German labor law, after contracts run out the unions are obliged to maintain "labor peace" for a specified period.)

In the steel and engineering industry, after February 13, IG Metall launched a campaign of warning strikes, which were intended to accompany negotiations with the employers. In some cases, individual plants were on strike for one to two hours. In others, the workforce from several factories assembled for rallies or demonstrations in the downtown areas. A high-point of the warning strike campaign came on April 5 and 6. On April 4, 132,000 engineering workers took part countrywide in the warning strikes. The center of gravity was in northern Germany, in Hamburg.

About 14,000 engineering workers in 48 plants "tried out" the seven-hour day. They left work an hour early. Seven thousand joined in a common demonstration with the printing workers. On April 6, the day of the first central negotiations between IG Metall and the industrialists, IG Metall mobilized 90,000 workers in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg alone, and countrywide 135,000 participated in short strikes. Here also the slogan was "Today seven hours is enough." In particular in the big Daimler-



Benz and Porsche auto factories, 90% of the workers walked out after seven hours.

On March 14, "spontaneous actions" began in the printing industry. The union could not officially call for such actions. But after that time they continually increased within the framework of the union's "flexible strike tactic."

IG Druck und Papier is a small union (it has only about 145,000 members today). It has been hard hit by the technological innovations in the printing industry and the decline in the number of jobs. But the proportion of workers in the industry it represents increased (to over 53%).

Since the big printers strikes in 1977 and 1978, this union has been considered financially too weakened to wage other big strike struggles. (West German unions are obliged by the statutes to give strike pay in official strikes.) But with its tactic of rotating strikes it has now taken the lead in the struggle for the 35-hour week. Up until April 6, 18,000 printing workers in 136 shops had participated countrywide in warning strikes.

Many newspapers did not come out, or appeared late in reduced editions. On April 5, the IG Metall day of action in northern Germany, the press of the reactionary Springer combine, in particular the gutter rag *Bild*, disappeared from the newspaper stands throughout the entire northern region. One shift after the other stopped work in all the big Hamburg printing plants.

On April 7, the leadership of IG Druck and Papier decided to hold strike votes in various key corporations where workers would then stage two-to-three day warning strikes throughout the country. The upshot was that on April 12 and 13 in 50 printing plants throughout West Germany the workers went out on one-day warning strikes, so that over the weekend a lot of newspapers failed to appear.

The trade unions in West Germany are struggling against the current. But the effects of the 1979-82 world economic crisis and the replacement in 1982 of the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition (SDP-

FDP) by a right-wing Christian Democrat-FDP government made it clear even to a section of the Social Democratic trade-union bureaucracy that the reactionary "turn" in Bonn had to be met by a militant turn in the union movement. Otherwise, the unions would lose all their influence.

Franz Steinkuelher, who was elected vice-president of IG Metall in 1983 and to a certain extent represented this change in consciousness in a lot of trade-union leaders, expressed it quite clearly. The fight for the 35-hour week is a "life-or-death" struggle for the unions. "The unions are to be made toothless and tame, at best good enough to hold indoor Labor Day rallies. That's the bosses' dream. They want to use unemployment to achieve that." (Steinkuehler in an interview.)

### The unions have to fight

While in the EEC as a whole, the number of registered unemployed rose in 1975-83 from 4.6 million to about 12.6 million, in West Germany this tripling of the jobless figures was concentrated into a three-year period. The official count rose from 889,000 in 1980 to 2,350,000 in 1983. In the years of the latest recession, there has been a massive introduction of microelectronics in West German factories and offices. This alone will eliminate between 3 and 4 million jobs before 1990.

Since the 1978-79 steel strike for the 35-hour week, which was unsuccessful, the unions have just sat by and watched this development taking place. At the same time, real wages have fallen year by year, and at the end of 1982, they had already dropped below the level of 1982.

Although the decline in union membership has so far been limited (in 1983 the unions lost 100,000 out of 7.85 million members), the workers confidence in the fighting capacity of the unions has been undermined. A delegate to the 1983 IG Metall convention coined the formula of a "difficult reorientation

from a period of negotiations in boom times to a period of struggles in hard times."

The need for such a reorientation was highlighted by the change of government. For more than a decade union leaders had been used to collaborating with the government. They were shocked by the confrontation course set by the new regime. It went on the attack not just in the area of social welfare (however, since 1982, Bonn's austerity policy — which was in fact started under Schmidt — has cost the mass of wage earners 176 billion German Marks). Above all, it was spoiling for a political confrontation with the unions.

In the fight over the 35-hour week, the Kohl government has demonstratively taken the side of the employers. Chancellor Kohl, a Christian Democrat, has described the unions' demand as "stupid and ridiculous." In parliament, the minister of the economy, FDP leader Count von Lambsdorff, has denounced IG Druck and Papier as a "Marxist cadre organization." The premier of Bavaria, Franz Josef Strauss, has declared that the 35-hour struggle is only a pretext to topple the government.

All the representatives of capital are talking about an upturn. Now that it is finally here, everybody is supposed to relax. The crisis is over. Nothing special has happened. Unemployment will go down. This propaganda is aimed directly against the 35-hour week struggle. The unions, supposedly, have the solution in their hands. If they drop "unreasonable" demands, all the problems can be overcome by "the normal operation of the market economy." But if they fight for such "radical" demands as a shorter workweek, then the upturn will quickly falter, and still more jobs will be in danger. This propaganda has not failed to have an effect in the factories.

However, the government has not limited itself in its propaganda to invoking the threat of ruin for the West German economy and the "free market system." It has already intervened on the side of capital by passing new laws. On March 29, for example, a law was adopted on early retirement, to go into effect on May 1. According to this legislation, in the next five years workers 58 or over can retire on 65% of their gross wages. (With the exception of workers in small enterprises where there are less than 20 on the payroll.) To help pay the cost of such early retirement, the employers will get state grants equal to 35%. (This provision does not apply to the public services.)

The aim of this law, which is playing a central role in the negotiations with the bosses, is to split the unions. The alternative the bosses are offering to a shorter workweek is precisely a voluntary improvement in the early-retirement pensions, which hardly anybody could live on.

A proposed law to "promote employment" also fits into the strategy of the capitalists, who are in favor of in-

### The position of the GIM

- The goal is a seven-hour day, not "flexible" working hours!
- There must be a struggle to assure new hiring. The best way to guarantee this is to get it written into the contracts, along with provision for monitoring of working conditions.
- There must be no cut in wages and there must also be automatic adjustment for increases in the cost of living. Spreading the work among more people cannot be done without somebody paying. It is the bosses who must pay!
- In a situation where 2.5 million people are already unemployed, the 35-hour week already represents a compromise. It can only be the beginning of a longer-term struggle to spread the work among everyone.
- Part-time jobs should be covered in the contracts and part-time workers should get full protection. The spread of part-time work should be prevented. In particular, the shorter workweek must be coupled with higher wages for women part-time workers (12.5%) so that they will have a stake in the struggle.
- In new hiring, quotas should be set for women and immigrant workers.
- Discussion must begin in the unions on a common action program against massive unemployment and cutbacks in social benefits. Central to this is a concrete plan for having the key industries in the public domain.



creasing the number of insecure and badly paid jobs. This bill calls for legal insurance of more part-time jobs, more "temporary labor," and cutting back the protective legislation for youths and the handicapped.

So, it was the government and not the unions that gave the conflict a political character. Today, West German society is deeply split over the issue of the 35-hour week. IG Metall and the unions which have joined with it in this struggle are gaining more and more solidarity from all the forces that oppose the government's policy of "The Turn." That includes the SPD, the Greens, the peace movement, the women's movement and the Immigrants' Rights Committees [Komitees fuer die Rechte der Immigranten].

On the other side are all the forces of the reactionary "coalition of capital and the cabinet" (to use Franz Steinkuehler's expression). The fight for the 35-hour week has become an all-out test of strength with the government of the capitalists.

Under the impact of the trade-union mobilizations, both parliamentary opposition parties, the SPD and the Greens, have dropped their initial skepticism about the 35-hour demand and declared their support for IG Metall and the other unions in their fight for this objective.

The SPD took a long time after it went into opposition in 1982 to shift from the openly bourgeois program of the Schmidt government to new political positions. Under the pressure of the peace movement, in 1982 it broke its decades-long loyalty to the Nato alliance and came out against the stationing of the new US missiles in the Federal Republic.

### The role of the SPD and the Greens

For the SPD to revive as a political alternative to the reactionary Kohl government, however, it also has had to take a new course on social questions and move back toward the unions' positions. In 1982, when the SPD was still the main government party, it declared that the 35-hour week was a far-off dream (Helmut Schmidt said: "I hope I will live to see it). Instead it favored early retirement. Moreover, it declared that any reduction of the workweek had "obviously" to be "paid for" by a reduction in wages.

As late as December 1982, the SPD introduced a bill on working hours that took the 40-hour week as the base and provided for 2 hours a week overtime on a regular basis and up to 20 hours overtime on an exceptional basis. At the same time, it permitted "flexible working hours" (that is, a dividing up of yearly working time in accordance with the changing needs of the capitalists). In the spring of 1983, the SPD proposed a 36-hour week with a 5% cut in pay and state compensation to employers for their increased labor costs.

It was only after the IG Metall convention at the end of 1983 that Willy Brandt, chairperson of the SPD, announced that the party was "shoulder to shoulder"



Our factory is on strike (DR)

with the steel-and-engineering workers union. Since then, the SPD has supported the trade-union mobilizations for the 35-hour week. It has made sure that the symbol of the fight for the 35-hour week (a rising sun over the number "35") dominates the scene in all the cities and towns. It has joined in rallies with representatives of the unions.

But in its own propaganda (its main slogan is "More jobs, shorter working hours"), the SPD treats the 35-hour week and early retirement (although on better conditions than those offered by the government's law) as equally beneficial ways of shortening working time. Moreover, its attitude to the demand for no cut in pay is extremely equivocal. As late as March 28, at the state SPD convention in Hamburg, there was no majority for the unions' demand.

The resistance to the 35-hour demand was initially even greater in the ranks of the Greens. The attitude of a lot of Greens to the "traditional" workers movement, which they identified with the SPD as a government party, was marked by open hostility, as well as by the conception of the need for a "radical break from the industrial system."

The most consistent representatives of such conceptions, who have now begun to organize themselves openly as an "ecological-liberal" minority tendency in the Green Party, see their enemy not as capitalism but as "industrialism," for which they hold the bosses and the trade unions equally responsible. They reject the demand for shorter hours with no cut in pay as "consumerist thinking," and they do not want to exclude the possibility that in "an environmentally conscious economy" people may have to work 45 hours a week or more. But this position has long since ceased to exercise a decisive weight.

The "Turn" in Bonn and the experience of being together with the SPD and the unions in opposition to the government's reactionary course, as well as the

"pragmatism" of the majority of the Greens' parliamentary fraction, have favored a reorientation. Thus, the call for a 35-hour week "with no cut in pay for lower and middle wage earners" assumed a prominent place in the Greens' election program for 1983 as a measure for fighting mass unemployment. And in March 1984, the Greens' parliamentary fraction invited trade unionists to a hearing on the worktime question to discuss what position the fraction would take on the 35-hour week.

In the resolution, the Greens declared their support for the individual unions "which face a hard struggle to win the 35-hour week." In addition, they called for preference for women in the new hiring that reduction of the workweek would make necessary "in order to progressively eliminate sexual discrimination in jobs and give equal opportunity to women." They called as well for the right of codetermination by workers in the introduction of new technological advances, agreements on the number of new hires and extensive shortening of working hours. But at the same time they proposed "labor-intensive small, middle and cooperative enterprises and self-managed initiatives."

Like the SPD the Greens have shied away from defying a taboo of West German politics, that is, that the most laws can do is round out the agreements that the "contract partners" (the unions and the employers) come to themselves. The Greens' bill for revision of the still valid (!) 1938 law on working time — which was put forward in sharp opposition to the SPD — nonetheless accepts the 40-hour week as a basis, just like the SPD bill.

Moreover, in the state of Hessen, where the Greens are negotiating with the SPD about supporting a Social Democratic minority government, it has not yet occurred to any Green or any Social Democrat to use the parliamentary majority the two parties together hold to intro-



duce the 35-hour week on the state level. Both parties have yet to demonstrate their solidarity with the struggle for the 35-hour week both in the parliament and on the streets.

Already before the beginning of the fight for the 35-hour week, the formal unity of the 17 national unions under the umbrella of the DGB [German Confederation of Unions] evaporated. The deep split that exists in the union movement is the biggest danger to the struggle.

Eight national unions have committed themselves to the fight for the 35-hour week. Along with IG Metall and the printers union, they are the Gewerkschaft Handel, Banken, Versicherungen (HBV, Retail, Bank and Insurance Clerks); the postal workers union, the wood and plastic workers union; the gardeners union; the agriculture and forestry workers union; the public workers union; and the teachers union (GEW). Moreover, after long debate at a national conference on working time on April 11, Transport and Verkehr (OTV, bus and rail workers), which with 1.17 million members is the country's second biggest union after IG Metall, decided to give priority to the demand for the 35-hour week and declared its solidarity with IG Metall.

### Labor split

On the other side, five unions have openly refused to support this struggle. They include IG Chemie (chemical workers); IG Bau, Steine, Erden (IG BSE, the building, stone and earth workers); IG Bergbau (miners); the Gewerkschaft Textil, Bekleidung (textile and garment workers); the Gewerkschaft Nahrungs and Genussmittel, Gaststaetten (food, restaurant and hotel workers).

These five unions declared early for negotiating with the government and bosses for early retirement, in which they would concentrate on getting higher pensions. (In West Germany, the bosses negotiate only with the individual unions in the various industries. Thus, the separate national unions make decisions autonomously.)

The split in the union movement reflects the attempt by a section of the union leadership to continue even under conditions of mass unemployment and facing a reactionary government the policy of "social partnership" and "peaceful" negotiations that was pursued in the 1960s and 1970s.

Back in 1983, IG Chemie signed a new contract confirming the 40-hour week up until 1987. On April 2, 1984, IG BSE followed this example. In return for a 3.3% wage increase and promises of early retirement, it recognized the 40-hour week up until 1988. This sort of "practical trade unionism" is being used as an example by the bosses and the government in their public hysteria campaign against the 35-hour week.

Moreover, the unions' fighting capacity is threatened by another split and in the ranks of IG Metall itself. The reac-

tionary Factory Committee Law of 1952 divided the mandate for representing the workers in each factory. On the one hand, there is the Factory Committee (Betriebsrat), which is elected by the workforce as a whole, both unionized and ununionized. It has the legal right to a say in the management of the factory (Mitbestimmung, codetermination). But it is bound to "keeping industrial peace in the factory." On the other hand, there are the shop-stewards bodies elected by the union members.

It is true that 80% to 90% of the members of the Factory Councils are put forward by the member unions of the DGB. But in the big factories a special form of "partnership" has developed between these "Factory Council bigwigs" and the bosses. And now in many cases this arrangement is seriously obstructing IG Metall's efforts to mobilize the workers in the big plants.

A lot of IG Metall factory councilors not only came out against the 35-hour week in the March and April Factory Council elections. They even banned any propaganda by the union for this demand, obstructed any move by the shop-stewards bodies, and made sure themselves that the union leaflets disappeared into the trash cans. The sad state of affairs now is that a lot of these councilors not only hold a rein on the shop-stewards bodies but have also become quite independent of the local trade-union apparatus.

"So, what is at stake in this struggle is whether the labor movement can come up with a united response to the bourgeois policy, or whether it will be split up into a number of interest groups in a "neoconservative" society of a war of all against all.

Under these difficult conditions, it can hardly be overestimated how important the demand for the 35-hour week is as the starting point for the necessary reorientation of trade-union policy. For the first time, a considerable part of the

trade-union movement is fighting for a demand that breaks with the logic of the capitalist system.

— The immediate introduction of the 35-hour week is being sought with the aim of creating 1.5 million new jobs throughout the economy. In comparison with this, the regulations for early retirement from age 58 would "free" hardly more than 27,000 jobs a year. The speed-up has gotten so intense that there are hardly any older people still working in the steel and engineering industry. (In fact, the average age of workers leaving the job because they cannot do the work had already fallen to 58 in 1982.)

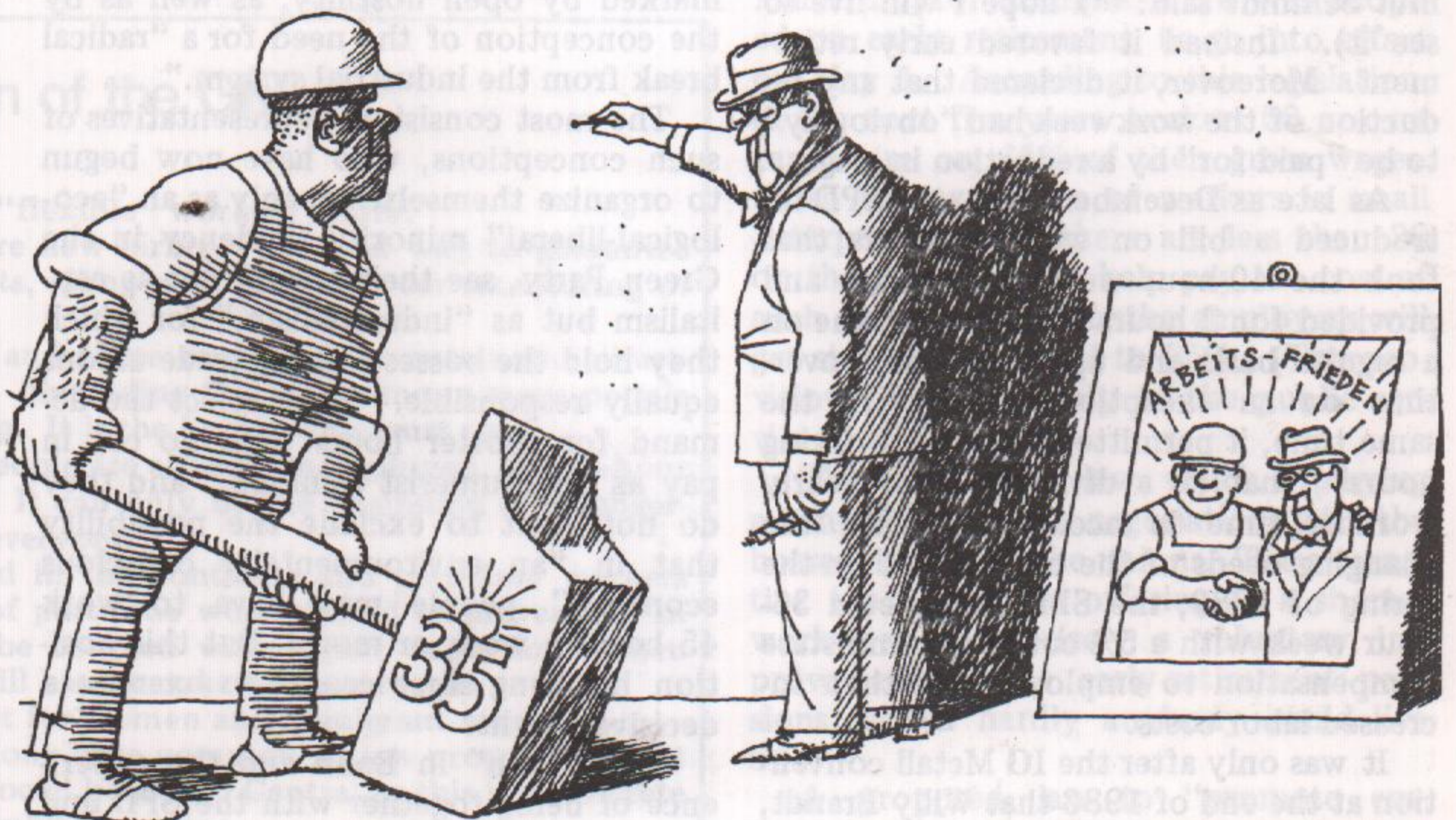
— In particular, in the propaganda material put out by the IG Metall anti-capitalist ideas are finding expression. With respect to the technological revolution, it is noted that there is not going to be any new "economic miracle" (*Wirtschaftswunder*). That is, that the "upturn" promised by the bosses and the government will not reduce unemployment and that economic growth under such conditions would mean a further worsening of the ecological catastrophe.

— The complementary demands raised especially by IG Druck und Papier and IG Metall also express an anticapitalist logic. The printers are demanding a veto right on the introduction of new technology. IG Metall points out that in 1982 overtime amounted to 2 billion hours, which corresponds to 1.2 million jobs. So, it is demanding contracts that permit overtime only in exceptional cases, and then to be balanced off by additional time off.

### Beyond narrow unionism

For the first time, a number of big national unions are fighting for a common objective, rather than jealously clinging to their autonomy. The attempts to coordinate the struggle in the various industries, nonetheless, remain modest on both the regional and central level. But

Workers demand for 35-hour week blasts bosses hope for 'industrial peace' (DR)





at the local level, active trade unionists are striving to develop effective collaboration, even going beyond the official union structures.

Moreover, for the first time in its history, the IG Metall has not just "slid" into a confrontation. In fact, it had systematically prepared for this struggle for a year. From the start, the leadership said that the 35-hour week demand could lead to the "sharpest labor conflict of the postwar period." But in contrast to previous struggles, the traditional organizational discipline cannot be counted on to mobilize the workers. The insecure workforces in the factories are often vulnerable to the propaganda of the bosses and the government.

Confidence in the organization has declined. Under these difficult conditions, the union leadership was obliged to put forward measures for mobilizing that the union activists had often called for for years in vain.

— In a lot of factories, the shop-stewards bodies have set up Work Circles in which all union members can participate. These Work Circles collect information about the economic position of the factory, the number of jobs that have disappeared in the past, and the layoffs threatened in the future. They then present these facts for discussion.

They calculate the number of new hires that would be necessary if the 35-hour week were introduced, and determine the changes needed in equipment and work organization. They are planning actions to keep the bosses from simply speeding up work if shorter hours are introduced. (In the 1983 IG Metall convention, a minority proposed that the right of the union to monitor working conditions should be included in contracts. They were unable to win majority support.)

These Work Circles are also staging imaginative actions to publicize the results of their investigations, such as putting up empty chairs in factory assemblies for those who have been laid off in recent years.

To support this mobilizing campaign, IG Metall organized a countrywide consultation in the workplaces, in which 600,000 workers took part.

— For the first time in a long while, union membership assemblies are being held in the factories or on the streets.



## Statement of the publishers and supporters of Info 35

On April 7, 1984, the publishers and supporters of *Info 35* met in Frankfurt to discuss the present situation in the conflict over the 35-hour week with no cut in pay. About 20 workers from Frankfurt, Dortmund, Stuttgart and Nuremberg took part. The meeting was held after the summit talks between IG Metall and Gesamtmetall [the industrialists association], and after the decision of IG Druck and Papier to hold strike votes, but in advance of the decisive meeting of the leadership of IG Metall.

The men and women workers present summed up the results of the discussion in a statement that is to serve as the guideline for *Info 35* in taking positions as the struggle proceeds.

1. The bosses have made it absolutely clear that they do not intend to concede anything toward a shorter workweek. Negotiations and summit talks, even accompanied by warning strikes, have changed nothing in this respect. So, we have to change the relationship of forces through our struggle. The current was against the unions, but it is now beginning to shift in favor of a strike for the 35-hour week. Solidarity is growing. Before this struggle is fought, compromise offers are out of place. The result depends on the strength we can develop in this struggle. Talking about compromises in advance only demoralizes those who have committed themselves to such a fight in the warning strikes.

2. In this struggle, we must make clear:

— Any giving way to the bosses' demand for reducing pay would make it impossible for a lot of fellow workers in the low-wage categories, who have been hit the hardest by the decline in real wages over recent years, to support the fight for the 35-hour week.

— "Flexible working hours" are part of the bosses' rationalization strategy. They want to get more use out of the new and more expensive machinery by more night work and Saturday work. All forms of "working according to the (bosses') need" run counter to our aim of creating more jobs by cutting the workweek.

3. The strike ballot has to be carried out now and won. The best counter to the bosses and their propaganda is to get as high a vote as possible for the 35-hour week fight. The vote should be held in as many workplaces as possible, in as close to all IG Metall districts as possible and in as many printing plants as possible, because everybody is needed in this fight.

4. Symbolic actions are not enough. The strike for the 35-hour week must bring effective pressure on the bosses throughout the country. This means the following:

— A countrywide day of action before the strike votes or before the start of strikes in key selected areas could be a first major rallying of support.

— Common actions by steel and engineering workers and printers must be planned and carried out in neighborhoods and localities.

— Strikes at selected key points have to be accompanied by solidarity actions carried out by all unions, as was done in the 1978-79 steel strike.

5. We cannot respond to lockouts just by protests. Locked-out workers, as well as strikers, have to participate in daily pickets and actions. Instead of letting ourselves be locked out, we have to try to get to our workplaces and make it clear in this way that we are not going to let ourselves be excluded from the plants. We demand back pay from the bosses. Lockouts have to be met by solidarity strikes by all the unions, including on a countrywide level.

— With the support of IG Metall, and often enough against the resistance of the union's own "social-partnership-minded" factory councilors, the workers are refusing to work overtime and therefore forcing management to hire more people.

— For the first time, the unions have begun to adopt the forms of action of the new social movements (e.g., the environmentalists and the peace movement). Naturally, a lot of initiatives remain caught in the bureaucratic routine of the apparatus. But in every city, the unions are going onto the streets and carrying out actions that can make an impact on public opinion.

For example, this year the Easter peace marches were marked, among other things, by the theme of solidarity with the fight for the 35-hour week.

— Likewise, for the first time the IG Metall leadership has officially called for building a broad, mass solidarity movement with the union's fight. In

many cities, neighborhood and citizens initiative groups for the 35-hour week have arisen that are independent of the union. Although the radical and socialist left clearly has a strong influence in them, the local union bodies recognize them and work with them. In an interview with the monthly magazine of the "eco-socialist" line of the Green Party, *Moderne Zeiten*, a leading IG Metall functionary has even appealed explicitly for support from the Greens and the Alternative Slate supporters.

— For the first time, the IG Metall leadership has considered not just holding regional strikes, but striking key concerns throughout the country.

However, the "social partnership" past of the West German union movement is still throwing a long shadow today over the confrontation that is underway. In particular, in the leadership of IG Metall since the beginning of March a retreat from previous positions was unmistakable.

In a lot of press interviews, members



of the leadership have indicated a willingness to compromise with the camp of the bosses and the government. Since the failure of the customary regional negotiations with the steel and engineering concerns, the union leadership, instead of holding a strike ballot and thereby giving the warning-strike campaign a focus, has agreed to two summit talks with the employers organization. The leadership was placing its hopes in a section of big industry that might make some concessions for an agreement on "flexible worktime."

### The tasks of the class-struggle left

In particular, the auto industry, which has been experiencing a minor boom over the last year, does not want to see any strike. Everywhere that new and more expensive automatic equipment has been introduced, the capitalists are interested in a flexible extension of shift work, in order to increase the operating time of the machines. Thus, the management of Nobel-Automarke BMW openly came out for a 36-hour week, divided up into four nine-hour shifts.

In the hope of being able to appeal to this interest, and thus avoid the risks of a general strike, the IG Metall leadership retreated both from the demand for an immediate massive cut in working hours (saying now that it would regard any reduction of the workweek below forty hours as a victory) and from the demand for the seven-hour day as the standard.

The union's original and well-founded rejection of "flexible working hours" as part of the capitalist rationalization offensive has given way to a greater readiness to compromise on this question. And the union leaders are talking less and less about the need to force the companies to hire more people.

Now, if it comes to a countrywide strike in the steel and engineering industry, it will be because of the industrialists, who favor a confrontation mainly out of political considerations, and hope to be able to deal the unions a severe defeat. However, if the outcome is a "compromise" reached without the relationship of forces being changed by struggle, this would also be an onerous defeat for the entire labor movement.

For years, since the demoralizing end of the steelworkers strike of 1978-79, the 35-hour week demand was put forward only by a small minority in the union movement. The leadership tried to consign it to oblivion and discussed early retirement plans. The leadership's resumption of this demand — no doubt under the impact of the change of government — put active, socialist trade unionists, including the members of the International Marxist Group (GIM, German section of the Fourth International) in a new and unusual political and tactical position.

By no means has the "union rank and file" in fact "put pressure" on the union



Vote 'yes' for a strike (DR)

leadership and forced it to act. Rather the left faces a difficult war on three fronts:

- Against the bosses and the government, who are consistently pursuing their strategy ("flexible working hours," part-time work) and who are pointing to the present economic upturn and foreign competition to argue that the 35-hour week would lead to massive new layoffs.

- Against the skepticism of a lot of fellow workers made insecure by the economic crisis who are listening more to the arguments of the bosses than those of the unions.

- Against the union leaderships, who for the time being are mobilizing for the 35-hour week but in no way proof against the temptation to "compromise" at the expense of the objectives of the struggle.

Shorter workweek more jobs (DR)



Alongside a large number of local structures for coordination and exchanging experience, there is in this situation for the first time the beginning of countrywide coordination of the trade-union left. Last year, out of a loose coordination of workers who wanted to exchange their experiences of factory occupations as a means of defending jobs, the project developed of a countrywide information sheet. This was largely the result of persistent work by the GIM, which is the only current on the left that has been systematically preparing for this struggle for years. Since the end of 1983, *Info 35* has been published regularly, with a press run of 4,000 copies. It has made it possible to circulate information among activists and unify them. (See box.)

However, beyond the circles of trade-union left, the GIM has also won a solid position in the movement for the 35-hour week, in particular through its work in building a broad solidarity movement. At the peak of the confrontation its paper, *Was Tun*, has achieved a weekly circulation of 10,000 to 20,000 copies.

The IG Metall leadership's attempts to reach a last-minute compromise to avoid a general strike for the 35-hour week are arousing massive opposition in the factories. The reaction is particularly strong from officials who have spent a year mobilizing for this objective. But even rather right-wing Social Democratic factor councilors are opposing such a move for fear that it could further weaken the union. Nothing is yet decided. A general strike for the 35-hour week is still possible. Such a struggle could put the demand for the 35-hour week with no cut in pay and with new hiring to take up the slack on the agenda throughout Western Europe.

This makes international solidarity for the 35-hour week demand all the more important, so that everyone can work shorter hours. ■



## Restructuring capitalist industry : The example of the Belgian steel industry

In 1981, the European Community Iron and Coal Commission set a definite target for restructuring the European steel industry. This was: to reduce productive capacity for hot rolled steel by 30 million tonnes by the end of December 1985. By this time all public subsidies to the steel industry must end, or the country concerned, if it is a member of the EEC, will be taken before the European Court of Justice.

There have already been important consequences of this policy. The reduction in the workforce, already considerable during the last two years, will continue. EEC estimates are that 90,000 to 100,000 jobs will be lost in the two years to come; 20,000 to 25,000 in France, 9,000 to 10,000 in Belgium, around 25,000 in Italy and a similar number in West Germany, 4,500 in Luxembourg, 2,000 in the Netherlands, and the remainder in Britain, where plans have not yet been made. (1)

For almost ten years the reshaping of the Belgian steel industry — particularly of the Cockerill Sambre steel works in the Walloon (French-speaking) country — has been a recurring nightmare. A nightmare for the steelworkers who see their jobs melting away like snow in the sun. A nightmare for the workers of the industrial basin of the Walloon country where the steel industry constitutes the veritable economic backbone. And also a nightmare for successive governments.

As the state took control to allow various private companies to disengage from the industry, it has had to take responsibility for a socially, economically and politically explosive affair that has been at the heart of most of the political crises of the last few years.

1984 and 1985 will be decisive years for the restructuring of Cockerill Sambre and the Belgian steel industry. The government has undertaken to apply the directives of the European Commission, requiring that aid to the steel industry from public funds be ended by 1985. To satisfy these demands, a draconian plan was introduced. The Martens-Gol-De Clercq government, a coalition of the Liberals and Social Christians, seemed to have won a major victory over a powerful sector of the working class.

However, the workers movement engaged in the battle over the reshaping of the industry at a time when the overall relationship of forces was favourable to it. Weighing in its favour were a strongly concentrated working class, a tradition of struggle going back to the resistance against the Nazi occupation, a very high rate of union organisation in the sector, spontaneous sympathy from the Walloon people, and a quite restricted room for manoeuvre for the bourgeoisie. But all these assets were wasted by the reformist leaderships, who showed themselves to be totally incapable of confronting the bourgeoisie's drive to dismantle the steel industry.

At the end of March, the government introduced a new three-year plan to make the workers pay for the crisis. Over the three years to come, wages and social security benefits will drop by 2%, and the total wage bill in the public sector by 3.5%. These measures aim to reduce the budget deficit from 550,000 million Belgian francs to 250,000 million Belgian francs, an 'economy' of more than 5,250 million dollars. This provoked a big reaction in the union movement, and created a favourable climate for stepping up the steelworkers struggle. The outcome of this fight is not yet finally decided.

Alain TONDEUR

The world steel crisis began in 1974. For the first quarter of 1975 orders for steel products were 33% down on the corresponding figure for the previous year. Prices dropped by 40 to 50 per cent between November 1974 and March 1975, and then by 2% per year in real value between 1975 and 1981. 1982 was a par-

ticularly black year: in Europe and the United States steel plants were only working at half their capacity.

The crisis took steel producers completely unprepared. In 1974 they were still banking on an increase in world production of 1,000 million tonnes before the year 2000. Expensive investments everywhere have had to be abandoned, factories have been closed. Competition

has sharpened and world steel production has been redistributed. A larger and larger share of steel production is supplied by the 'new steel industries' constructed in certain dominated countries. Thus the restructuring policy hits particularly hard at the 'old industries' in capitalist Europe and the USA, whose share of the world market has been falling continuously. (See table). While world production fell by 9.8% in 1975, in comparison with the previous year, it fell by 14.5% in the USA and 12.4% in the EEC countries. In 1982 the EEC produced only 110 million tonnes of steel while its productive capacity remained 200 million tonnes. To be profitable it should produce 170 million tonnes. One has to go back twenty years, to 1963, to find such a low production figure. At the same time, the Japanese steel industry is using two thirds of its productive capacity.

### Hit by full effects of crisis

The crisis in the Belgian steel industry should be looked at in this context. The steel plants at Liege and Charleroi in the Walloon country (joined in 1978 to form the Cockerill Sambre group) have suffered the full impact of the world economic crisis. This is partly because the Belgian steel industry produces, to a large extent, for export, but above all because the financial groups that control the industry have for years operated on a short-term view, based on the race to produce more. Between 1950 and 1974 steel production in Belgium increased fourfold, rising from 3.8 to 16.2 millions of tonnes per year. More than 37,000 million Belgian francs (650 million dollars) were invested between 1967 and 1971.

But the structure of production remained almost unchanged, with a large proportion of ordinary products (steel rods, girders and wire). Investment was concentrated in equipment designed to increase production quantitatively rather than qualitatively. This industrial concentration was matched by a concentration of power in several holding companies: Societe Generale de Belgique, Bruxelles Lambert and Cobepa-Frere-Bourgeois (linked to Parisbas) whose policy of disproportionate investment led to the firms accumulating colossal debts. When the crisis hit, the Walloon steel industry thus found itself in a particularly vulnerable situation.

The policy since 1975 of the holding companies that controlled the steel industry can be summarised in three points:

— firstly, 'nationalising' the steel industry's losses, to recover the capital invested;

— secondly, to continue to squeeze indirect profits out of the steel industry;

— and thirdly, to charge the state with carrying out thoroughgoing ration-

1. The European steel industry employed 792,000 people in 1974. Today it only employs 500,000. *Le Monde*, March 31, and April 5, 1984.



alisation to prepare for the eventual purchase of the profitable sectors by private companies.

The first two objectives were largely reached. In 1978, under a government including the Social Democrats, the state bought part of the stock, and transformed the firms' debts into public shares to become the major shareholder with 81.4% of the shares. Thus the Social Democratic ministers collaborated in a rather unsavoury incident in which the state bought shares in the steel group at two or even four times their quoted value. Finally, the state guaranteed all the debts to the banks and took responsibility for the interest payments. A state of affairs that made it possible for the director of the Societe Generale in 1980 to say arrogantly: 'From now on the finance groups will refuse to invest a single franc at risk in steel.'

The losses thus nationalised, the holding companies continued to wring money out of the steel industry by every possible means. Thus, they have lent to Cockerill Sambre — with a state guarantee even for a short-term loan — the money it needed to reorganise. Fantastic profits have been made — the interest rate was 15 to 20 per cent, 7,000 million Belgian francs (125 million dollars) for 1982 alone.

What is more, the same companies control the ore-extraction, iron and energy sectors as well as, until the end of 1983, part of the marketing of these products, on which they systematically took 2 to 2.5 per cent commission.

### Workers pay the bill

As for the third of the finance companies objectives, it is clear that they have almost reached it when one sees that:

— Between 1978 and 1982 productive capacity fell from 12 to 8 million tonnes, and an unbelievable quantity of production equipment has been abandoned.

— The two steel basins of Liege and Charleroi lost 18,600 jobs in all — almost one job in two. In the same period the average job loss in the EEC steel industry was one in three, an illustration of the faster pace of restructuring in Belgium.

— Productivity rose by 50% between 1975 and 1980, essentially because of speedup. A direct consequence of this is that in 1978 industrial accidents were three times more frequent than the national average and two-and-a-half times more serious.

— The wages of the Cockerill Sambre workers were frozen between 1976 and 1982.

Nonetheless, the restructuring of the group did not go far enough for the finance companies. It was still recording big losses — about 1,000 million Belgian francs (6 million dollars) per month. A second stage of the dismantling policy then became indispensable. But a class collaborationist government including the Flemish and Walloon Socialist Parties

would be incapable of implementing a plan of sufficient brutality, given the relationship of forces between the classes, overall favourable to the working class, and the centrality of the steel question.

This second phase has been put into operation by the Martens-Gol government since it was formed at the end of 1981. Helping in the task have been the EEC and the French 'consultant' Jean Gandois, former managing director of Sacilor, and chosen by Belgium and Luxembourg to give his advice on the restructuring process. The new plan contains the following elements:

— Closing down four production lines at Cockerill Sambre. This time it is not a question of doing away with more or less worn-out machinery. Some 97 per cent of the production machinery at Cockerill Sambre that escaped the first phase of reorganisation had been classified as 'Category 1' by the consultant MacKinsey a few years previously. Among other things the best blast furnace in the group, the best steel works in the group, another steel works dating from 1972, and a wire rod plant, Valfil, described as the best in Europe, were to be eliminated. (2)

— The loss of 8,900 jobs, 'fairly shared' between the two concentrations in Liege and Charleroi. According to Gandois, the promoter of this scheme, and the Belgian government, a careful dose of early retirement, weeding out the 'bad elements' and waiting lists for retraining schemes should make it possible to avoid mass redundancies.

— Stabilisation of the company and recovery of its capital through the state taking responsibility for its liabilities. The total cost of this operation is 95,000 million Belgian francs (1,687 million dollars), 78,000 million (9,750 million dollars) of which had to be paid in 1983. The Gandois plan does not ask for a penny from the banks and holding companies that in 1978 promised 10,000 million Belgian francs for the reconversion plan.

— A 10% reduction in the wage bill by direct wage cuts for the workers.

— Last point: cooperation agreements with other iron and steel groups. There are three companies involved in this collaboration: Sidmar (an integrated steel works in Flanders near Ghent),

Cockerill Sambre and the Luxembourg group Arbed. Each of these companies will have a special role in the new division of labour. (3) They have one thing in common: the major private shareholder is the Societe Generale. Thus the cooperation project is only to prepare to give back the most profitable sectors of Cockerill Sambre to the private sector as dismantling continues and there is a still tighter concentration of capital.

The steelworkers easily recognised the danger of the Martens-Gol-De Clercq government. Even before Jean Gandois worked out his plan, government statements had emphasised the necessity of cutting Cockerill Sambre's productive capacity by half. The workers responded to this threat with a seven-week strike at the beginning of 1982, marked by very determined street demonstrations. Particularly notable was that of March 13, 1982 when several thousand steelworkers confronted the police in the Brussels streets for several hours.

### Two opportunities lost

But the traditional leaderships of the working class were unable to organise the struggle and map out the way forward. The seven-week strike ended without achieving any results. The traditional leaderships had an even greater responsibility given that many other sections of the working class were on strike at the same time to defend the price-indexing of wages. (4) So a united fight around a clear objective was possible: the satisfaction of the immediate demands of the workers and the resignation of the government.

A second, similar opportunity occurred in September 1983 when 800,000

2. We generally distinguish between flat products (sheet iron, sheet steel) produced by continuous mills in wide bands, and long or sectional products, of the type of girders or steel rods for reinforced concrete, produced by section mills. Wire rod, which can then be cut into nails, nuts and bolts, etc., is another long product.

3. The reorganisation of the Belgian-Luxembourg steel industry in time will mean the specialisation of the Arbed group in long products, and Cockerill Sambre in flat products.

4. On the struggles of the Belgian workers at the beginning of 1982 see *International Viewpoint*, No 4, April 12, 1982.

Evolution of Share in World Production (in %)

Country or Group	EEC	USA	Japan	Non-EEC Europe	NCP (1)	PUDC (2)	Miscellaneous
1970	23.2	20.5	15.7	5.5	29.6	3.6	1.9
1980	17.9	14.5	15.6	6.4	35.2	7.8	2.6
Difference	-5.3	-6.0	-0.1	+0.9	+5.6	+4.2	+0.7

(1) NCP: Non-capitalist countries (Eastern Europe, China, Cuba, etc.)

(2) PUDC: Principal underdeveloped countries (Brazil, India, South Africa, South Korea, Mexico, Taiwan, Venezuela).



public service workers went on strike for two weeks against the government's austerity plans. (5) This strike came straight after a series of demonstrations and work stoppages organised by the iron and steel sector after the announcement of the Gandois plan in June that year. During these demonstrations the leader of the Walloon section of the Federation Generale des Travailleurs de la Belgique (FGTB), which organises all the union federations led by the Socialist Party in the Walloon country, promised a 'hot autumn'. But he did not lift a finger to make sure that the iron and steel workers supported the public service workers.

The Martens-Gol government manoeuvred very cleverly to get the union federations to accept, or at least resign themselves to, the plan for restructuring the steel industry. The government continually brandished the threat of outright bankruptcy of Cockerill Sambre. It also launched a campaign, particularly in Flanders, to denigrate the steelworkers as 'the privileged with excessive wages', whose workplaces were draining the public coffers and 'preventing the allocation of funds necessary to create new jobs'. It then invoked the requirements of the European Commission.

And finally the government succeeded in setting the workers of the two big steel concentrations, or of different workplaces, against each other. It particularly used the argument that the restructuring plan did not mean mass redundancies but simply 'shedding the surplus' through natural wastage, etc. The leadership of the Catholic union federation, the CSC, was the first to capitulate to this offensive. The leaders of this union turned into open defenders of the laws of the capitalist market. They took as their slogan 'We can only produce what we can sell' and refused to participate in the protest movement against the Gandois plan.

The regional leadership of the Socialist-led FGTB in Charleroi joined the CSC in its 'realism'. Its main leader explained to the bourgeois newspaper *La Libre Belgique* that 'the iron and steel industry is at the end of the cycle'. The Liege FGTB leadership maintained a correct attitude in words, rejecting the Gandois plan, the closures and the job losses, and demanding the four steel works be kept. But it refused to take any concrete actions.

### Union bureaucracies chauvinist poison

The practical test was the 12-week strike and occupation of the Valfil wire rod plant from November 1983 to March 1984. As Valfil is a unit at the end of the production cycle its closure condemned all the other installations before it in the process. The Liege FGTB leadership was, nonetheless, content to make Valfil a 'symbol', refusing to make it a starting point for organising the workers. The 500 workers there thus suffered a defeat.

Under the battering ram of the offensive by the government, the 'consultant' Gandois and the EEC, the workers leaderships went a long way down the path of 'realism'. This brought about a terrible division between the union organisations and workers of different regions, each trying to get their neighbours to carry the burden of the reorganisation.

A specific element in the division among Belgian workers is that between the French-speaking Walloons and the Flemish. This was demonstrated in the steel industry. All the Flemish political parties continually demanded the immediate implementation of the restructuring plan so that 'not another Flemish penny would be thrown into the Walloon bottomless pit of Cockerill Sambre'.

The government skilfully used this state of affairs to create the impression that bankruptcy was a very real threat which would accompany any political crisis. There was no lack of arguments to reply to this and win the Flemish workers to solidarity with the Walloon steelworkers. It would have been enough, for example, to point out that Cockerill Sambre used 53% of the coal produced at Campine, another enterprise in difficulty being subsidised by the state, which employs 10,400 Flemish miners. But the bureaucratic leaderships, led by the Socialist Party, did not choose this approach.

Rather than class solidarity these leaderships preferred to seek class collaborationist fronts including, at local level, employers associations and parties of the governmental coalition, the Social Christian Party and the Reforming Liberal Party, mobilised for the 'defence of the region'.

Over the years Belgian steelworkers have proved very combative. But, up till now, their vanguard has been incapable of understanding the profound nature of reformist politics faced with the plan to restructure the steel industry, the bourgeois government and the EEC Commission. The failure of the Valfil strike appeared as proof positive of the impasse for this type of very combative but un-

*35-hours, not job loss (DR)*



political syndicalism, incapable of presenting an anticapitalist line as an alternative to that of the bureaucratic leaderships.

### A race against time

In these conditions the orientation of the POS/SAP (Socialist Workers Party, Belgian section of the Fourth International) (6) is focused around the following three axes:

— support for and popularisation of the immediate demands of the workers that correspond to their fundamental class interests: no to the closures; no to redundancies and job loss while there is no effective reconversion and creation of other jobs; no to cuts in wages because the banks should pay the cost of their restructuring plans; a cut in work time without loss of pay, etc.

There has to be a fight for a workers united front on this basis with all the unions and political parties that claim to be part of the working class. A particular aspect of this fight has to be against chauvinist campaigns. In the Belgian case, where the reorganisation of the iron and steel industry is directly taken in hand by a bourgeois government imposing austerity on the workers, the workers united front on the basis of the workers immediate demands points directly to a political objective that is a precondition for the satisfaction of any demand: bringing down the Martens-Gol-De Clercq government.

The alternative to the restructuring plan has to be explained. This particularly has to include demystifying the role of the banks and finance companies and demanding the nationalisation of Cockerill Sambre and all its affiliates without compensation, and cancelling of all debts to the finance companies. This is a demand that expresses a different economic logic and thus one which could only be met by a workers government breaking with the EEC.

The POS/SAP has done vigorous propaganda work around this alternative and in solidarity with the steel struggles in the last period. This campaign has brought it the sympathy of many vanguard union activists. Anticapitalist ideas are gaining ground, but it is a race against time.

At the present rate there is no doubt that the bourgeoisie will succeed in pushing through the reorganisation plan that is still far from being completed today. But the violence of the attacks it has to make to compensate for its tardiness in imposing austerity policies will force the workers and their union organisations to choose between the prospect of anticapitalist struggle and the prospect of being simply crushed by the bourgeoisie. ■

5. See *International Viewpoint*, No 39, October 31, 1983.

6. On the last congress of the POS/SAP see *International Viewpoint*, No 50, April 9, 1984.



# How the "Swedish model" worked in the restructuring of the steel industry

The Swedish trade-union movement is sometimes called the world's strongest. The Swedish union leaders themselves are not bashful about assuming this title. It is true that the unions are strong in Sweden.

Let us take the percentages of workers organized, for example. The strongest industrial unions organize more than 90 percent of the workers in their branches. About 75 percent of municipal workers are organized, and about 60 percent even of the retail clerks.

If you look at the unions' influence in the debate that goes on in the society and their influence on the government's policy, you get a similar picture. The Swedish trade unions are really both seen and heard.

There is, moreover, a close collaboration between the unions and "the other strong branch of the workers movement" (as the Swedish Social Democrats call it) — that is the Social Democratic Workers Party, the SAP. This party has been in power for 44 of the last 50 years and has obviously set its own special stamp on Swedish society.

However, if you apply somewhat different criteria to assessing the strength of the Swedish unions, for example, militancy in the ongoing struggle for better working conditions and wages, the picture dims. And if you measure the strength they have exerted in defending their members interests in some of the most important struggles the Swedish workers movement has faced in the recent period, then the Swedish unions look positively decrepit.

It is useful to go into the history of one sector. It is little known outside Sweden, but highly illustrative for an article on the conditions for workers struggles in the Sweden of the 1970s and 1980s.

Tom GUSTAFSSON

It is the history of how thousands and thousands of jobs have been lost in the steel industry in central and northern Sweden. But it is also the history of how the "Swedish Model" was applied in practice in the "structural rationalization" of the steel industry, with good results for the rationalizers themselves (at least in the short run), but with catastrophic consequences for the workers affected and for their home areas. It is only now that we are beginning to see a few glimmers of light again in the darkness.

What the Swedish Model represents is a historic understanding between the state, the employers, and the union leaders to take social problems to the negotiating table and resolve them through institutionalized class collaborationism based on the rule of the lowest common denominator.

So, what has to be described now is this "remodeling" of the Swedish standard-grade and special steel industry. I will try in this to give as concrete as possible a picture of the conditions for trade-union and political struggle in Sweden today.

In 1977, the so-called state committee on standard-grade steel presented a specific proposal for extensive cut-backs in this industry. The arguments were the usual ones:

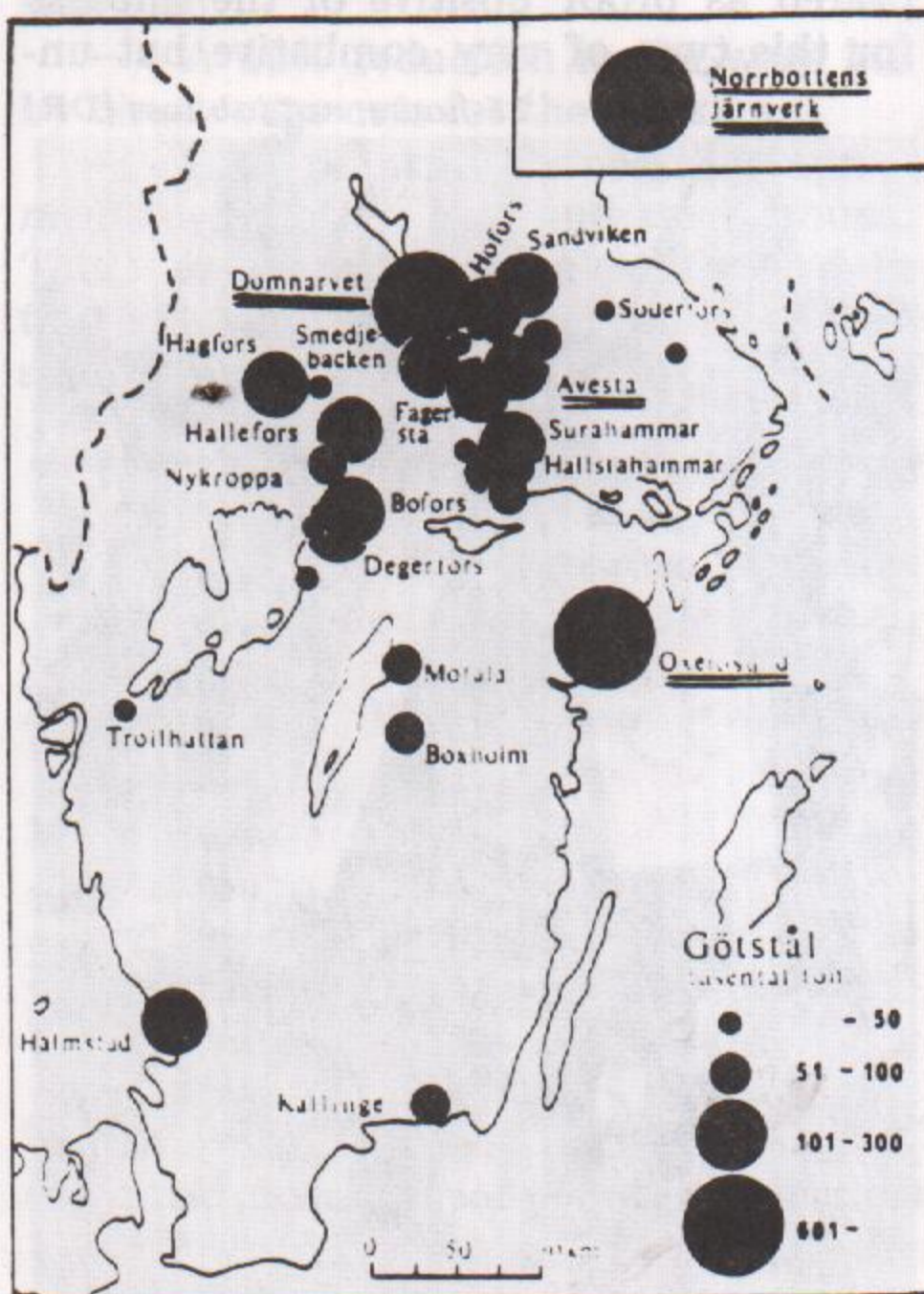
"Overproduction of steel on the world scale."

"The need to adjust to a shrinking export market."

"The need to lower labor costs by modernizing the productive plant."

The proposal involved concretely the disappearance of about a fifth of the

*Steelworks and production in thousands of tons before the closures (DR)*



18,000 jobs in the standard-grade steel industry.

Metall, the union that includes the steel workers, as well as many other groups of industrial workers, protested. It pointed to "the outlook for improvement in the market for steel."

Then Allan Larsson, joint negotiator for Metall and the SAP, sat down and helped to work out an almost identical proposal only a few months later.

It was then that Svenskt Staal AB (SSAB — Swedish Steel Incorporated) was formed through a merger of the state-owned Norrbottens Jaernverk and the privately-owned Stora Kopparbergs and the Graenges steelworks and mining businesses.

## Who gets the axe?

The merger agreement provided for the state taking 50 percent of the stock, while the two private firms got 25 percent each. (Later Stora opted out, in order to avoid loaning the state money. The state now holds over 75 percent of the stock.)

With the formation of the SSAB, Stora got 750 million Swedish crowns [about 100 million dollars] for its facilities. Graenges got 1,180,000 Crowns. This was an unprecedented settlement.

From the state committee's proposal to the formation of the SSAB, a violent tug-of-war took place between the various enterprises but also among the local union organizations.

The hardest fights were over which ore-processing plants and pig-iron foundries would be retained. The committee members and steel directors wanted to cut back the industry first in Domnarvet and Borlaenge. (See map.) The union leaders in the far north (Luleaa) and in Oxeloesund on the Baltic coast pressed to get a quick decision on the question. At the same time, the union leaders in Borlaenge tried to prove that the steel industry was more profitable there than in other regions.

There were some important mobilizations of workers. But the Metall leadership managed gradually to bring local union leaderships to heel. In the spring of 1978, an agreement was signed. The Borlaenge plant would be shut down but not before 1980 at the earliest.

At the time about a hundred workers in the Bloetberget mine a few miles outside Borlaenge had occupied their pit in protest against the closure policy. They were the only ones who consistently opposed it. But they also had to give up the fight because the Social Democracy and the union leadership isolated their struggle.

The role of the Social Democrats was decisive. On the one hand, the Social Democratic leadership was directly represented in the negotiations through Allan Larsson. On the other, the former minister of finance, Gunnar Straeng, sat in the SAP's own steel committee as chairperson and a big name. The views of this



committee were very important in working out an agreement that could be accepted without big political battles.

"With a Social Democratic government, Domnarvet can keep its ore-processing plant."

Kjell-Olof Feldt said that as late as the spring of 1978. At the time, he was a former cabinet minister. Now he is minister of finance. With a Social Democratic government — after the 1979 elections — the general conditions would be altered and the earlier decision in principle could be changed. That is what people thought.

A half year later, the Social Democratic leadership definitely accepted the closures. That came as a shock to the local union, which had long continued to hope that despite everything the steel market might improve and that that could also change the previous decision in principle.

Now the local unionists threatened to withdraw from the negotiations over the ore-processing plant. But they were called down to Stockholm and got a thorough working over by the SAP leadership, the leaders of Metall, and by the party leader and premier, Olof Palme, himself.

What sort of threats were made and what pressures were put on the balky local unionists remain unclear. But later the local union leadership justified its acceptance of the closure by saying unless this was agreed to there was a threat that the investment promised earlier in the rolling mill would not be made.

On the inside, the SAP leadership's line was firmly established and clear. On the outside, it continued to give conflicting signals, up to January 1979. Then, the public line was brought into conformity with the internal one. The slack was tightened.

Moreover, since 1976, the local SAP leadership in the Borlaenge region had supported the demand to keep open the ore-processing plant in Domnarvet, for the time being. But at the same time they tried to prevent any broad trade-union mobilizations and keep demonstrations strictly under the aegis of the SAP.

Even when the agreement was signed in May 1978 when the SSAB was formed, the SAP locally continued to talk strongly for saving the ore-processing plant. Moreover, they managed to get the openly bourgeois government that was in power at the time to appoint a committee to study the "social implications of the SSAB's structural plan."

### Squeeze but with anesthesia

However, the only result of this was that the closure was delayed by a year and various investment companies were set up to create substitute jobs. While all this discussion and investigation was going on, obviously, the interest in mobilizing declined considerably.

When the SAP leadership finally approved the closure in Domnarvet in January 1979, the party locally continued to

plead for the line that people should try to get the decision changed "in the beginning of the 1980s" when the conditions would be different. How that was supposed to happen they did not make clear.

In this way, they managed finally to break most of the resistance from the workers and also inside their own organization to a general acceptance of the closure (even if "only for the time being"). The fighting spirit collapsed.

So, the state became the predominant stockholder in the SSAB. For that it had to pay out close to 4 billion crowns in loans and contributions.

It was also quite clear that the orientation adopted by the SSAB meant that it would pursue the principles of capitalist profitability.

When the perspective of closures was confirmed and the principle of profitability accepted, the blows began to fall one after the other.

The closures were speeded up. The company pushed ahead with layoffs after a couple of years. All workers over 58 years old were retired early.

Throughout the process, moreover, there was heavy political involvement by the parties, the parliament and the state power. All this was to guarantee that the closures could be carried off smoothly.

The political intervention did not even lead to a postponement of the layoffs, as has often happened elsewhere in Europe when the protests got too big. Its function rather was to divert from the beginning the silent opposition to the closures. Bit by bit, the resistance was disarmed by being channelled into the negotiating machinery and the investigating committee mill.

The fight over standard-grade steel took place primarily in the years 1976-1979. The battle in the rust-resistant steel sector, a branch of the special steel industry, has gone on mainly since 1982.

At that time intensive negotiations began over "rationalization" of the special-steel industry. And that was after 6,000 jobs had already been lost in steel since 1976.

After a long tug-of-war, it has been decided that the privately owned Avesta Jaernverk will get the lion's share of the rust-resistant steel industry. The state has contributed almost a half a billion crowns in loan write-offs, and 130 million crowns worth of stock is to be sold on the market.

Where and how the big cuts are to be made has not been specified. But it is for certain that such slashes are on the way. The big battle in this area is also over a processing plant, but in this case it is one that handles scrap iron rather than ore.

There are many clear parallels with the course of events in the standard-grade steel industry. Investigating committees have proposed their own trade-union "alternative." And local trade-union leaderships have been waging divisive campaigns pleading for just their plants to be spared.

The pattern is being followed to the

end with 12,000 special-steel workers being left in the position of being mere spectators. They have no guarantee of their jobs. They have to wait and hope that the big elephants can get through their dance without stepping on them.

There are, however, two special features in this tug-of-war over the special-steel industry.

First of all, the big gainer — the Ax:son Johnson family — is particularly hated by many Swedish workers for its murky and ruthless record in the country's economic history.

Secondly, the latest "remodeling" has been carried out under a Social Democratic government, a government, however, that has not balked at elevating the Johnson clan to the lofty rank of the country's fourth biggest business empire, a company that is still run in the style of the eighteenth century.

In some respects, the Social Democratic government has proved to be more accommodating to the needs and interests of capital than the bourgeois governments that ruled from 1976 to 1982 ever dared to be.

### When the anesthesia wears off

The "Swedish Model" has also showed twice in the last decade in the "structural rationalization" in the steel industry that it could carry through closures while keeping the social response fairly well under control. It has proven quite serviceable for "flexible" big capitalists, state bureaucrats and trade-union bureaucrats, at least in the present social situation.

However, if this "model" has been able to divert and disarm public reaction, that does not mean that it has been able to eliminate it. In fact, wheeling and dealing and compromising over the fate of thousands of people can have a boomerang effect when the full implications of the decisions become entirely clear for those affected.

If this opens up prospects for a renewed struggle, political energies can be renewed. A sign that points in this direction has recently appeared at the Domnarvet mill.

It is a limited struggle, an election for union chairperson in the laminating section. But this fight has a certain symbolic importance and may be a straw in the wind. The section involved is the biggest one at Domnarvet.

Per Eklund ran in opposition to the Social Democratic leadership in the section. He won. But his election was challenged. The leadership of Metall intervened and invalidated the vote.

In the re-vote, which was held on the shop floor, a long-standing demand of the militant opposition, Eklund won by a wide margin. He got 70 percent of the 450 votes cast in an election in which 65 percent of the workers voted. That may be a record in union elections at Domnarvet.

There was, therefore, a very strong



mobilization. "Even poems and drawings were put up calling for a vote for Per," Christer Olsson, one of the iron workers active in the campaign, pointed out.

"People got a clear idea of what the tv candidates stood for, and they figured out exactly how to vote. The workers took the election to heart, since most of them were furious about the national union's intervention.

"Now, people expect to be better informed about the union's work, and they expect to see real discussion get underway on the local contract," Christer added.

"I am sure, too, that there will be more union activity. People feel involved now that they voted Per Eklund in. They are going to push to see that he really fights for us. The election has also aroused hope that maybe some new spirit will come into the union's work. Finally!"

There is no doubt that it was the years of mismanagement and weak-kneed policy by the Social Democratic leadership that prepared the way for the

## BRITAIN

"change in regime."

In this respect, the election result was a "delayed reaction" to the years of closures and cutbacks.

The upturn in the economic situation and the presence of an opposition candidate who had become known for his consistent defense of his fellow workers' interests, even though he had been in a small minority, provided the catalysts.

The Social Democrats both in the local union and at the national level were obviously surprised at the outcome of the election. They had hoped that the re-vote would have led to a different result than the first. But that did not happen. To the contrary, the national union's intervention helped to increase the workers' determination to elect a more militant candidate.

"A lot of people doubted that it was the formal procedure and a number of minor irregularities in the first election that motivated Metall to make the decision it did," Christer Olsson said. More likely, it was Per Eklund's membership in the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the

Fourth International, that was the sticking point.

So, it seems that the tragic history of the cutbacks in Svenskt Staal AB in 1976-1979 and what has been going on in the special-steel industry since 1982 have not just been swept under the rug.

Even the setbacks have built up a fund of experience that has proved to represent investment for the future.

The change of regime in the laminating section at the Domnarvet works in the spring of 1984 may be a sign that new and more militant moods are also developing elsewhere in Swedish industry.

Disappointment over the years of decline — and discontent with a Social Democratic government that has proved to be almost the exact opposite of what a lot of the workers who voted for it hoped and expected — are having an effect. They are sowing seeds. And in the coming years these may grow into a deeply rooted and vital opposition movement in Swedish unions. ■

# Labour movement left challenges 'new realism'

As the strike by the National Union of Mineworkers enters its ninth week there is every indication that it will be one of the most bitter and lengthy industrial disputes in Britain since the Second World War. The Conservative government's desperate attempts to defeat the coal miners have been underlined by the poor showing of the Tories in parliamentary by-elections and municipal elections on 3 May.

While every political party claimed a victory from the election results, the real picture was that Margaret Thatcher, in her fifth year of office, suffered a political setback at the hands of the opposition parties. The elections showed that Labour is becoming stronger in the big cities and industrial areas outside the relatively prosperous southern region.

In a by-election held in a Welsh mining valley Labour increased its vote from the general election, with the Tories coming fourth behind the Welsh nationalists. Labour also won a majority on Birmingham's council — Britain's second largest city — as well as adding Edinburgh and Southampton to the number of cities they already control. And, in what was a clear rejection of Tory attempts to abolish the largely Labour controlled metropolitan authorities and curb local government spending, the Labour Party in Liverpool increased its majority. The council is now set on collision course with the government over its refusal to conform with spending limits that would result in massive cuts in social expenditure.

However, the results by no means entail that Labour would win a general election. Extrapolations from the votes indicate that while the Tories could possibly lose their overall majority in a future election, the alliance between the Social Democratic Party (formed after a right-wing split from the Labour Party) and the old bourgeois Liberal Party would hold the balance of



Nottinghamshire, the focus of struggle for miners' unity (DR)

power. The Alliance came second in all three by-elections.

However, the future course of political events will be affected in large measure by the result of the miners' dispute. Despite the strike coming during the spring and summer, a traditionally low point for coal consumption, the action is beginning to bite in industry. In the Nottingham coal field, where a majority of the miners are breaking the strike, mass pickets of 10,000



miners have assembled outside scab pits. Mass pickets too have started to appear outside the Ravenscraig steel plant, where management and right-wing steel union officials have collaborated to bring in scab coal. The mass pickets have been met by a huge police presence, with 1,500 arrests being made so far.

The miners are receiving strong support from the left of the labour movement, with a day of action being called by the left-wing Scottish Trades Union Congress and action being taken by the rail and transport unions to make their boycott of coal movement more effective. Other sectors of workers are also beginning to move into action — most notably the railworkers and teachers.

One early victim of this rising militancy is the architect of the 'new realism' policy of class collaboration, the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress Len Murray, who announced an early retirement. Labour's right wing too have suffered a bloody nose with their prediction that the Labour Party would suffer elector-

Pat HICKEY

The miners strike has developed into the most important test of strength between the government and the unions since the 1980 national steel strike in the first Tory administration. The stakes for the working class are very high. If the miners lose, the government will rapidly push through a series of anti-union measures; against the closed shop, for compulsory secret ballots before strikes, and severance of the links between the unions and the Labour Party. If they win, the whole anti-working class project of the Tories will be derailed and the days of the Thatcher government will be numbered. The decisive question for the labour movement is, therefore, to what degree the strength of the whole class can be mobilised behind the miners. This means that one of the decisive issues in the strike as it enters its fifth week is the balance of forces between the left and the right in the labour movement. The right will seek to isolate the miners and leave them to fight alone. The line of the right has been made clear early in the strike. Denis Healey, deputy leader of the Labour Party, has supported the calls of the Tories and the media for a national ballot — a move aimed at demobilising the strikers, and allowing the miners in 'safe' (i.e. not due for closure) pits to vote others out of a job. Bill Sirs, leader of the ISTC (the steel workers union) has declared that he 'will not allow the steel industry to be sacrificed on any one else's altar'. Terry Duffy of the AUEW (the main metalworkers union), in response to a request for aid, said that he 'regretted that the miners had not been able to secure the unity necessary to defeat an employer'. The TUC has so far remained silent.

The left leaders of the Labour Party and the unions have rallied behind the miners. Tony Benn has given the miners full support. The leaders of the major transport unions have agreed to stop the movement of coal.

At the base of the movement activists have organised a whole series of initiatives: rallies, factory tours, support committees,

ally because of the miners' strike. It did not.

The left wing of the Labour Party, led by Tony Benn, is bringing pressure to bear on Neil Kinnock, Labour's new leader to fully support the miners. They want him to break with the 'new realist' strategy that has led Kinnock and other prominent Labour leaders to join in the calls of the media for the miners to stop the militant tactics being advocated by their union president, Arthur Scargill.

As the strike continues it has become clear that flying pickets and active solidarity from the whole of the labour movement are the only way that the strike will be won in the face of intransigent opposition from the coal employers and the government. International solidarity is needed too. Donations and messages of support can be sent to: National Union of Mineworkers, St. James House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield, South Yorkshire. (Telephone: Sheffield 700388).

S.R.

etc., and large amounts of money have been raised for the strikers. Thus the battle of the miners has become not just a fight with the government, but also a battle between the left and right in the labour movement.

The divisions in the dispute run from top to bottom of the movement. These divisions reflect a situation that has been slowly maturing in the movement since the labour government of 1974 to 1979. The state of readiness of the left for this battle will be a crucial factor in the outcome of this dispute. It is to this question that we now turn our attention.

Since the return of the Tory government in 1979, the trade unions in Britain have suffered some heavy blows. British Leyland carworkers, steel, rail and health workers have been taken on by the Tories and have gone down to defeat. Only the waterworkers scored a real victory against the government.

#### Unemployment weakens unions

Unemployment has grown to 4 million. This has particularly affected the traditional sectors of industry: cars, steel, engineering, shipbuilding, etc. As a result, the number of strike struggles declined dramatically between 1979 (29.5 million days lost) and 1983 (3.6 million). Trade union membership has dropped from 52% to 49% of the workforce. The number of shop stewards has fallen from over 320,000 to about 200,000. This decline has been most marked in the industrial sectors: a fall from 130,000 to 80,000. This has been partially offset by an increase in white collar and public sector unions.

The political result of this situation, and the refusal of the labour leadership to

1. The National Graphical Association (NGA), one of the major print unions, had a long battle with a newspaper owner in the North of England against attempts to break up union organisation. Despite mass pickets, with violent confrontations with the police, the battle was lost because of the deal negotiated by the TUC.

The GCHQ (government spy listening centre) dispute came about because of the government's decision to ban trade-union membership for employees at this centre for 'security reasons'. The TUC was forced to call a one-day strike in support of the GCHQ employees by the breadth of protest against government at-

tempt to buy the right to union membership from the workers with £1,000, but this was only a half-hearted action and the dispute fizzled out — this and all following notes by IV.

2. The right for the whole Labour Party membership to vote in elections for the leader and deputy leader of the party was one of the major gains of the left's struggle for democracy. The 'Dream Ticket' for the 1983 leadership elections (so dubbed by the media) was for Neil Kinnock (representing the moderate left) and Roy Hattersley (representing the right) to signify a 'new unity' in the party.

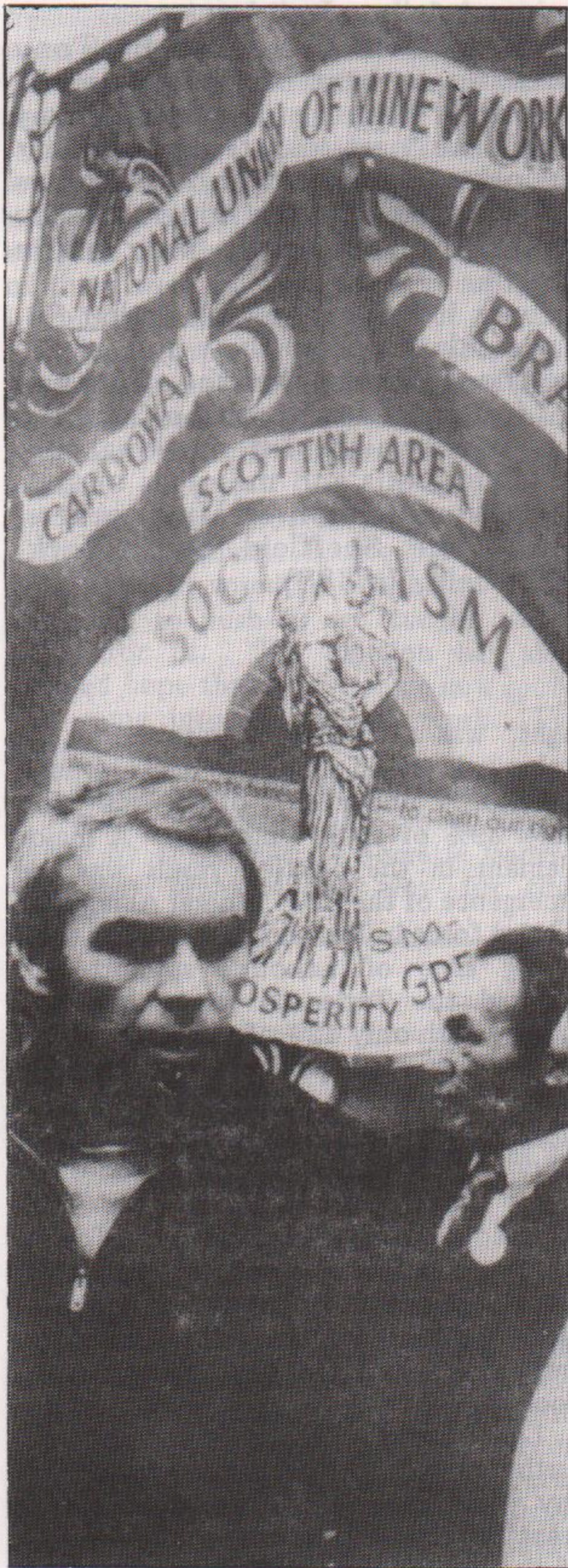
fight, was a disastrous result for the Labour Party in the June 1983 general election — under 30% of the vote, and only 39% of trade unionists. A major element in the election result was the emergence of the SDP/ Liberal Alliance as a third force in British politics. This took a big slice of Labour's support and allowed the Tories to win a landslide victory with only 42% of the total vote.

The first consequence of this was a big shift to the right at the 1983 Trades Union Congress (TUC). The left trade unions were defeated on a series of policy issues. In particular, the TUC adopted a policy of talks with the Tories, to try to soften the edge of their anti-union legislation. This reversed a previous position of no talks while the anti-union legislation was on the statute book.

Len Murray, TUC general secretary, further stated his intention of talking 'to any party capable of forming a government'. This position was to take account of the rise of the SDP/ Liberal Alliance and the lack of confidence of the TUC right wing in the ability of labour to win a general election. This policy has been widely welcomed in the bourgeois press, and dubbed the 'new realism'.

The first fruits of the 'new realism' seen in the betrayal of the NGA and GCHQ disputes. (1) At Labour Party Conference this change was also reflected. The victory of the 'Dream Ticket' in the Labour Party leadership elections was a compromise between the centre (Kinnock) and the right (Healey) which reflected both the gains of the right and the continuing strength of the Bennite forces in the constituencies and at the base of the unions. (2) Its basic aim,





The militant Scottish NUM (DR)

however, is to break up the left wing of the party, Tony Benn's base.

### Changing union left

Despite the compromise line of the 'new realists' the Tories have not eased up on their attacks on the unions. The result has been a much clearer political polarisation in the trade unions than has existed for many years. Over the NGA dispute the left trade union leaders have publicly attacked the line of the right wing. In the current miners strike, the left has organised independently to stop the movement of coal. They have also divided over Labour Party issues.

These divisions are not confined to the level of the bureaucracy. They run from top to bottom of the labour movement, in both the unions and the Labour Party. Moreover, these splits take place in a situation in which despite the defeats, the basic organisational strength of the class is still intact: 49% of the workforce in trade unions, over 200,000 shop stewards, a strong minority in the unions and

the Labour Party prepared both to fight the Tories and to oppose the collaborationist line of the right. The left in the unions and in the Labour Party now have a much sharper political focus than at any time for many years. It is also a very different left from even ten years ago.

Then the dominant political force at the base of the unions was the Communist Party (CPGB). It based itself on a network of shop stewards in cars, engineering, shipbuilding and the docks. In response to attempts to introduce anti-union legislation it was able to organise the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU), which was capable of calling a national strike involving over 600,000 workers in December 1970. Within the unions the CP, in alliance with other left forces, organised through Broad Left bodies which concentrated on electing left trade union officials. They succeeded in transforming the leadership of the two main unions, the Transport & General Workers Union — over two million members at its height — and the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers from right-wing dominated unions to the leading left unions.

This combination of forces, strong rank and file organisation at the base politically led by the CP, and left bureaucrats whose base depended on this rank and file organisation, gave rise to the huge wave of resistance to the attacks of the employers in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These struggles broke anti-union legislation, defeated incomes policy and eventually toppled the Tory government of Ted Heath. They also led to a massive spread of trade union organisation into white collar and public sector workers, e.g., unions like NALGO (white-collar local government employees) grew by 60%, NUPE (public sector manual workers) by 116%, CPSA (national government employees) by 6.5%. By 1976 almost 85% of white-collar workers in the public sector were unionised. There was also a big influx of women into the workforce and into the unions. In 1976 the NUT (main teachers union) was 75% female, CPSA 68%, NUPE 65%, NALGO 43%.

However, the limits of this industrial militancy was soon revealed. The Labour government which succeeded Heath was unable to secure an overall majority. Labour got its lowest share of the vote since 1931.

In short, the militancy of the workers in industrial struggle did not translate itself into support for the only workers party. The turning point was the recession of 1975. The Labour government, in alliance with the trade union bureaucrats imposed an austerity policy which cut living standards by 10% in under three years. The CP refused to break with the bureaucrats who supported this policy. They surrendered the leadership of the shop stewards. The dam broke in 1978-1979, and the Labour government fell in a wave of industrial struggles. It was replaced by Thatcher.

The experience of the Wilson/Callaghan government, and the failure of the CP to lead brought about a major change in the left in the unions and the Labour Party. The focus ceased to be exclusively the direct industrial struggle led by factory-based shop stewards organisations. A new fight developed through the unions and the Labour Party to change the Labour leadership and to make it accountable to the base. This was the first wave of what came to be known as Bennism, and it provoked the most wide ranging political discussion in the trade unions since the war. From 1978 to 1982 this Bennite left wing succeeded in winning a series of democratic reforms in the Labour Party, as well as important policy changes on unilateralism and opposition to incomes policy, etc.

### Left Labour Party frightens ruling class

For the British ruling class these developments were alarming. The Labour Party was the main alternative to the Tories, so they were faced with the prospect of Thatcher being replaced by, at worst, a left led Labour Party, or, at best, a Labour Party which was an unstable and unreliable instrument. The Tory vote had been declining for half a century: they had lost their base in the cities, lost Scotland, lost their majority with women voters and lost their base in the North of Ireland. (3) A section of the labour right split off to form the SDP, and linked up with the Liberals to form the Alliance. In the June 1983 general election they came within a couple of points of the Labour vote. More importantly, they split the anti-Tory vote.

As a result, Thatcher won the largest majority in parliament this century, with only 42% of the popular vote. The Labour Party got under 30% of the vote. Even amongst trade union members it got only 39% — which meant that a majority of trade union members had voted Alliance or Tory. The right wing of the bureaucracy blamed the Bennites for this result, and they launched their counter-attack, aimed at defeating the Bennites and isolating them.

The aim of the right is to make Labour a party acceptable to the ruling class, and if this does not work, to prepare for a possible coalition with the SDP/Liberal Alliance. Some of the right have openly stated their preference for the SDP over a Benn-led Labour Party. These forces link with some of the Labour Party right who favour moving towards a European-type social democratic party, with much less direct links with the trade unions.

3. Up until 1974 the Conservative Party was directly linked to those in the North of Ireland who supported the union with Britain, the Unionists. This direct link was broken in 1974, and there are three 'Unionist' parties, which have had major differences with the Tories on its Irish policy, although some individual Tory candidates may describe themselves as 'Conservative and Unionist'.



To sum up, the trade union and Labour Party bureaucracy has three currents within it at present: a right wing which seeks to weaken the links between the unions and the Labour party, and favours a move towards an individual membership social-democratic party, and towards 'non-political' business unionism. The objective dynamic of this current is towards coalition with the SDP, to keep the Tories out.

There is a middle of the road current which hopes both to make Labour an acceptable government for the ruling class and to rebuild its vote. This current project is a hopeless one in the present crisis. The ruling class will continue its attacks on the unions in an effort to break their organisational strength. And it will continue its efforts to destroy Labour as the main alternative to the Tories. It will tend constantly to be pushed into the arms of the right.

The third current is the one around Benn in the Labour Party, and miners' leader Scargill in the unions. This is the most significant left force in British politics today, supporting democratic reforms in the Labour Party, opposing the coalitionist trajectory of the right, and supporting the struggles against the Tories. The aim of this current is to rebuild the Labour Party as a party of labour, based on the unions, the mass movements — especially the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) — and the struggles of the most oppressed groups in society, women, blacks and youth.

The outcome of this battle is vital for the labour movement in Britain. The Tories have declared their intention of outlawing the closed shop, of attacking the unions' political funds, and of attacking the bastions of Labour in the big cities. They also intend to take on some of the strongest sections of the class and inflict decisive defeats on them. The line of the right is to adapt to these attacks and avoid big confrontations. Such a course would mean a dramatic weakening of the Labour Party and the unions, and a coalition with capitalist parties.

### Organising the left

The Labour Party has become the decisive issue in this battle between the left and the right. The CP has been marginalised in this confrontation: its Eurocommunist wing openly advocates coalitionism, while its Stalinist wing has seen the destruction of its base in the shop stewards organisations. There is no significant force to the left of Bennism in British politics today. The left oppositions in the unions are now animated by forces based on the Labour Party. This was dramatically confirmed by the ability of Militant, a right centrist tendency in the Labour Party which claims to be Trotskyist, to organise a conference for the left in the unions in March this year which attracted over two thousand delegates.

At the base of the unions the left is getting organised, with the fight around the Labour leadership as its main objective. The CP-led Broad Lefts, which based themselves on electioneering politics tied to sectoral issues, have been wiped out as a significant force at the base. The new lefts are tied to forces in the Labour Party, and organise around a range of policy questions: union policy, unilateralism, positive discrimination for women and blacks, support for struggles. These lefts are most advanced in the white collar and public sector unions — NALGO, NUT, ASTMS, POEU, etc. In the main manual unions, such as AUEW, TGWU, GMBATU, the old lefts have not yet been replaced by significant nationally organised formations. The blows suffered by the shop stewards and the weakening of the CP's base has inhibited developments in the industrial sector. There is, however, strong support for left leaders and their policies. Activists are organising increasingly around the structures of the unions, and seeking to make the leadership accountable.

The dominant political pole for the left at the base is the current represented by Benn, and Scargill. So far, these left leaders have not turned to organising their base on a national level. The failure to do so could exact a heavy price. For example, in the National Union of Mineworkers a recent election for general secretary saw left-winger Peter Heathfield only narrowly beat a right-winger.

In the 1.5 million-strong T&GWU the election for general secretary is under way. It seems likely that the right-wing

candidate, George Wright will run the left candidate, Ron Todd, very close indeed, and may even win. Such a result would be a big blow to the left. The T&GWU is the largest union in the country and currently lines up with the left against the 'new realists'.

In a series of major disputes over the past three years (train drivers, health service, the NGA) the right has been able to sell out the struggles because the left were not organised to oppose them.

This issue will undoubtedly surface again in the miners' strike. All of these disputes have demonstrated that there is a strong minority in the unions and the Labour Party prepared to fight both the Tories and the sabotage of the right. The organisation of these forces across the unions and the Labour Party is a crucially important step for the battles ahead. It is also the main failure of the left bureaucracy that it has not done so. For socialists in the movement developing every possible step towards such organisation is the priority task.

The crisis in Britain is bringing about a fundamental reorganisation of bourgeois politics, with the emergence of the SDP/Liberal Alliance as a third force. This crisis is also forcing a fundamental shake-up of the labour movement. The basic choices facing the working class over the next period will be to accept the coalitionist/business unionism line of the right, or to fight for political trade unions, linked to a party of labour that champions all the struggles of the oppressed. ■

*Polmaise workers fought to defend their pit from closure (DR)*







## Part-time work : a choice by women or employers ?

Women and men throughout the European Community in 1975 considered that 'greater flexibility in working hours was perhaps the most important measure which could bring about an improvement in women's opportunities'.

A superficial survey would seem to prove that they were right. The rise in women's employment in the last twenty years has gone alongside a considerable growth in part-time work.

A report by the OECD (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development) in 1983 emphasised that in eight countries, including West Germany and France, the increase in women's employment was primarily due to an increase in part-time work.

Similarly in Great Britain, where the level of part-time work is particularly high, the proportion of women in the workforce grew from 36 per cent in 1961 to 42 per cent in 1980 while between 1971 and 1980 the number of employed workers grew by 360,000 but those working full-time fell by 800,000.

The expansion in part-time work in recent years has been accompanied by a welter of articles, surveys, reports pointing out the advantages in working part-time. These have in general been directed at married women with children, outlining the way in which part-time work enables them to do their 'two jobs' — at home and in the workplace.

Is the increased availability of part-time work really because the employers want to offer their staff, particularly married women, a chance to 'choose' how to organise working time? Is part-time work really 'the solution' for women with a double burden?

Penny DUGGAN

A report published by the International Labour Organisation in January 1984 underlined the structural change that has taken place in the role of women in the workforce. This report announced that the proportion of women aged between 15 and 64 who work had risen from 45 per cent in 1960 to over 52 per cent in 1980, in the Western industrialised countries.

Although the distribution of this percentage over the age range is uneven, it makes clear that over half the women of child-bearing age go out to work. When they choose to have children women are increasingly using the opportunities that exist — maternity leave, childcare, etc. — not to give up work. An increasing proportion are also forced to find a way to earn a living because they do have responsibility for children, as single parents. Certainly, the traditional pattern of working until marriage and children, and then possibly returning to work after the children have left home is less and less applicable.

The underlying basis for the structural change in women's working patterns was the economic boom after the Second World War. The bosses wanted more labour power, there was a big increase in the service and public sectors — the main arena of the growth in women's employment — and women themselves had

different expectations.

But, in the present recession, the employers need to cut back the workforce. The expansion in world productive capacity, leading to a fall in the rate of profit, forces employers to cut down as far as they can on labour costs in order to make their products 'competitive'.

There is equally no doubt that it is among the female segment of the workforce that they will try first to make such cuts. Other 'marginal' sections, whose entry into the workforce is also comparatively recent, or who are not heavily implanted in those sections where workers organisation is traditionally strong, will also be in the front line. Immigrant workers and young workers are other obvious targets.

### Bosses attempts to divide workers

These attempts to cut back the workforce are in the context of a general drive to weaken and disorganise the workers movement, to try and whittle down the gains the European workers movement has made in living standards, working conditions and level of organisation. We have seen attacks on different aspects: the *scala mobile* in Italy which protects workers wages from being eaten away by inflation, the rights of the British trade-unions to organise effectively in disputes or even to organise at all in 'sensitive' areas of the public service.

Such attacks are necessary to impose the complete restructuring of industry and the workforce the employers are seeking.

One aspect of their attacks is the attempt to sow divisions among different sections of the workforce by suggesting that some do not have 'a right' to be in the workplace. Thus, in France there has been the propaganda around the 'right to return' to their country of origin for the North African immigrants. For women, it is the right, or sooner the duty, to stay at home with their family — preferably increasing the size of that family.

The ideological backing for these moves comes from every quarter ranging from the 'rethinking feminists' like American Betty Friedan who wonders whether feminism has not gone 'too far', to the right wing who always thought women's place was in the home.

Ideological arguments, and blandishments about how important it is for women to be at home with their children, are backed up with material moves. These can be incentives, like the French government's offer to pay a (minimal) wage for women to stay at home for two years with their third child, or the West German proposal to pay women 5,000 marks for not having an abortion.

### Women need the money

The women workers of Bekaert Cockerill in Belgium had a rather different experience of employers attitude that 'women's place is in the home'. In October 1982, after a battle by all the workers in the factory against proposed redundancies, the management proposed to reduce 28 of the 31 women workers to part-time status instead. This settlement was accepted by the union (where there were a majority of male members). Men from another section of the factory where there was less work were to be moved into this section for full-time work! The justification for this move was that the 28 women concerned were not 'heads of family'.

A draft directive of the European Commission in December 1981 stated that part-time work must be a voluntary choice, open to both men and women and part-time workers must have the same rights as full-timers, 'with due regard to the special nature' of part-time employment.

As Table 1 shows, in every country of the Community women work part-time much more than men do. A report of the Women's Advisory Committee of the British Trades Union Congress (single trade-union confederation) to the annual Women's Conference in 1980 outlined some of the reasons for the expansion of part-time work in general and why it affects women in particular:

— A shortage of full-time labour in some sectors especially catering and retail distribution;

— The low pay in the service sectors and the tendency for these jobs to in-



Percentage of employed workers in the EEC working part-time in 1980

	EEC total	France	West Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Belgium	Luxembourg	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark
Men	1.5	1.7	0.8	2.0	1.4	0.4	—	2.0	1.2	1.9
Women	23.7	12.2	23.2	6.8	18.9	10.8	14.1	41.7	7.6	40.2
Total	9.3	5.7	8.8	3.3	5.8	3.6	4.1	14.7	3.2	18.0

clude evening, weekend and holiday season work which is unpopular with and unattractive to male employees;

— Part-time workers can be used to cover peak periods of business without the need to pay for a full week's work;

— Less demand for skills meant that part-time and unskilled workers were adequate, and cheaper if wages could be kept below the threshold for National Insurance contributions.

The same report went on to explain why part-time work was attractive to women. It correctly placed first the question of financial need; 'One of the most important reasons and one that must never be underestimated and which is becoming more important is the financial necessity. The myth that women work only for pin money can be quickly exploded.' It goes on to point out that a report in 1978 by the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth had noted, 'that one of the most important factors to emerge from the evidence is the role of married women's earnings in lifting families out of the lower income levels.'

#### A free choice or...

It cites as other reasons the falling birth rate, women's own expectations and possibilities, and the desire for company, 'to spend some time out of the home, in their own individual capacity, rather than as wives or mothers'. At the same time, however, it considers part-time work 'essential' for many women because of their 'primary responsibility' for domestic and household tasks.

It is undoubtedly the case that many women do consider it is 'essential' to find part-time work, given the lack of adequate childcare and other social services that exists. And as the eight-hour day leaves so little time for other activities whether 'necessary' household tasks or 'luxuries' such as time to relax.

A feature in the January 1984 issue of *Antoinette*, the women's magazine produced by the French CGT, the CP-led union, included explanations from a number of different women why they had chosen part-time work. These ranged

from a mother of young children, who saved from the cost of childcare as much as she lost from her salary by deciding not to work the one day (Wednesday) a week the schools are closed, to a telephone switchboard operator, on the job since 1945, who simply wanted a less stressful working week and more time to spend with her husband, already put into early retirement from his engineering job.

But the reality of the part-time work that the employers want to institute is not to introduce hours that aid women



from the standpoint of domestic tasks, time for relaxation, etc., but to introduce a work schedule that meets their needs.

The different forms of 'part-time' work that have been introduced can thus vary considerably.

For example, the multi-national company Philips, has introduced the following three systems of part-time work in its Belgian plants:

— The 6/6 system, working either morning or afternoon for six hours with corresponding reduction of wages for a 30-hour week. Workers are taken on on fixed-term contracts to fill these part-time posts;

— Working every afternoon from 4.30 pm to 10 pm, 3.30 pm to 8.00 pm on Fridays, making a 25 ½ hour week with, of course, corresponding loss of earning and a 'voluntary' renunciation of the legal right to unemployment benefits as part-time workers;

— Weekend work in two systems. One is two teams working 12 hours each on the two days, for a salary five full days. The other is three teams each working 27 hours, twice ten hours and once seven hours, during the weekend.

#### Bosses' needs

Another system of part-time work that has begun to be introduced into West Germany is the 'on call' system. There is a contract between the employer and the worker which stipulates the amount of hours to be worked over a month or a year but employees are notified only the day before of when they will be required to work, and are only paid for the working time, not the waiting time. There are other forms also, short-term contracts or temporary work. Often women will work regularly for the same employer on a temporary basis, taking off, for example, the summer period when the children are home from school. In this way the employers benefit from regular workers who keep coming back to a job they know, but who build up no seniority, no entitlement to workers rights that are based on the number of years worked or continuous employment. Demand in many factories drops over the summer and there is often a shut-down period of compulsory holidays anyway when these women would not be required. The difference is, of course, that they do not get holiday pay.

In Britain one common form of part-time work is evenings, from the time after a husband may get home to look after the children until around 10 pm. Convenient, but it means no common social life for a couple while employers such as late-opening supermarkets get staff for the peak period when other people who work (usually women!) come to do their shopping.

'Job-sharing' is another form of part-time working that has developed over the last few years. The idea is that two people share one full-time job in hours worked and amount paid. This form of





part-time work first appeared in white-collar and professional circles — usually to allow women with childcare and other family responsibilities to return to jobs they had previously held.

The British Department of Health and Social Security in 1969, for example, asked hospitals to 'give active encouragement to return to employment in the hospital service to married women doctors, and other women with domestic or other ties'. One of the ways it suggested of doing this was 'splitting existing post which have proved difficult to fill on a whole-time basis into two or more part-time appointments'. In these situations, although other disadvantages of part-time work may not be present, in Britain, for example, job-sharers normally have more of the employment security and fringe benefits that the full-time job would carry, employers usually get a good deal for their money.

### Shorter workweek for all

As one job-sharer surveyed in Britain explained, 'Both I and my job-sharer do at least one-and-a-half times the hours of work we're paid for. Half-timers tend to work flat out without a tea break.' In the same Equal Opportunities Commission report (published in July 1981) the benefits to the employer were listed: flexibility ('sharers can be in two places at once'), peak-period coverage, continuity (if one has to take time off, the other can do the work) and more energy.

These examples reveal clearly the nature of part-time work — organised to suit the employers needs, to keep machines running continuously, or for more staff at particular periods than others, for which they are not prepared to take on workers who will benefit from the gains that the European workers movement has won in working hours and conditions, wages, paid holidays, sick pay and so on.

All the available evidence indicates that the rate of part-time work will continue to expand particularly for women, but also for other marginalised sectors — the elderly, for whom it is often seen as a way of 'easing into' retirement, young people who are forced or encouraged to combine it with continuing their studies, and the handicapped. To take France as an example, in one year the percentage of women working part-time rose from 12.2% in 1981 to 15.5% in 1982.

Part-time work among men has increased, although very slightly compared to the general rate of increase, but it is interesting to note that the OECD report noted that 'continuing studies' was the most frequent reason given by men who were in part-time work, while for women it was domestic tasks, particularly childcare.

The trade unions in Europe seem to share a common goal with the employers — shorter working time. But the goal of a 35-hour week with no loss of pay differs in some rather important aspects from the employers goal. As the European Community research committee of women explained:

From the employers' perspective, shorter working hours mean a better use of labour power, particularly a greater flexibility and, with the introduction of new technology, allows for a higher productivity.

The unions in the EEC countries generally supported the EEC directive, which, in addition to saying that the choice to work part-time must be voluntary, also laid out that it must be non-discriminatory, giving the same benefits, on a pro rata basis as full-time work, and other protection to workers rights. While those who work at part-time must be entitled to this protection, the starting point of the EEC itself was that women freely choose to work part-time.

Response of the trade unions to the expansion of part-time work has been

moulded by the already existing frequency in their country. For example, the British TUC where the incidence of part-time work (and of married women working — over 40 per cent) is very high, is simply to make the demand for equal rights, and not at all to query whether there are other solutions for women. There is a similar response in the Netherlands where the percentage of women workers is very low and where it seems that part-time work is positive if it gives women a job at all.

But, even in those countries where the trade-union movement is officially opposed to the expansion, such as the French CGT, the Italian and West German unions, there has been little active response from the union movement, despite the correct fears of the Italian trade unions that the introduction of part-time work would be a danger to the unity of the movement and an obstacle to the struggle for a shorter working week.

The examples given above have illustrated that part-time work is offered to suit the employers' needs, not the employees. If 'full-time' working implied a shorter working week, with the necessary social facilities, it would be a better solution for women, than to be consigned to a continuing marginalisation within the workforce, where rates of pay are lower, collective organisation is weaker, and workers are at the mercy of the bosses' changing needs without the ability to fight to defend their own interests.

A recent report of the EEC on women in the workforce stated that the rate of unemployment among women had grown rapidly from 1981 to 1984 and now stands at 11.3 per cent, against 9.3 for men. This represents an eightfold increase in women's unemployment since 1970, while the number of men without jobs has doubled. But, for the EEC, the number of women in part-time unemployment are counted in the workforce. ■



'Last hired, first fired', that's why women are asking for the right to a job and quotas in hiring (DR)





Funeral cortege proceeds to Pere Lachaise (DR)

## Farewell to Pierre Frank

Pierre Frank was a revolutionary militant for sixty years. A leader of Trotsky's Left Opposition and a founding member of the Fourth International, he remained an active leader of the Fourth International, and its French section, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, until his last years.

Philomena O'MALLEY

In this long life of revolutionary activity he met and inspired many, some who spent only a short time in the Trotskyist movement, others who, like Frank himself, made a lifelong commitment to it.

At his funeral at Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris on April 27, 1,500 of these past and present comrades came to pay their last respects to Pierre Frank.

It was this aspect of the funeral that the French press particularly remarked, the ability of the Fourth International to bring together both the other Trotskyist groups in France, and former members of the movement whose subsequent development has taken them away from the revolutionary Marxist movement.

Thus, *Le Monde*, the top Paris daily, noted not only the presence of a large contingent of Lutte Ouvriere and a delegation of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste led by Pierre Lambert, but also a number of former Trotskyists now well-known in other fields. David Rousset, for example, a Trotskyist in the war years and now a retired Gaullist deputy, or Fred Zeller, Trotsky's secretary and envoy to Spain in the 1930s, who afterwards became the grand master of an order of freemasons.

*Le Matin*, the Socialist inclined daily, devoted a two-page spread to the funeral and the 'Frank generation' of the Trotskyist movement. This report also highlighted the internationalism of Frank and the movement he spent his life building.

It noted the presence of Vlady, son of

Victor Serge, now a well-known painter in Mexico. Also present were Mohammed Harbi, leader of the Algerian National Liberation Front in France in the 1950s, and Zbigniew Kowalewski, exiled leader of Solidarnosc in Poland.

Particularly noted was the presence of two leaders of the Sandinista youth of Nicaragua, presently touring Western Europe, whose offering of red roses was placed on the coffin. Other wreaths also gave an idea of the internationalism of this event, from the Vietnamese Trotskyists, sections of the Fourth International in Europe and North America and from the Antilles.

The hundreds of members of the LCR who had left work for the afternoon to come to pay their last tribute bore witness to the new breath of life the Trotskyist movement won from the radicalised youth of 1968 and the succeeding years.

Marguerite Metayer, Pierre Frank's companion for some forty years, was in the front ranks, accompanied by leaders of the LCR. Also a political militant from her youth she was deported at the age of 20 to Ravensbruck.

The cortege was an impressive sight as it wound its way on a bright April day from Place de la Nation to the Pere Lachaise cemetery. Behind an immense portrait of Pierre Frank came a guard of honour with the red flags marked with the symbol of the Fourth International, followed by the international and other guests and then the large number of comrades and friends of the movement, many wearing red car-



Last respects (DR)

nations, as it went came a soft slow singing, of the Russian 'Song of the martyrs' or 'The Internationale' accompanied by a single trombone.

So impressive that *Le Matin* noted, 'not since the death of Trotsky has any leader of the Fourth International had such a funeral', and *Le Monde* paid tribute not only to the internationalism and continuity of the Trotskyist movement but the LCR's ability to impress with its symbols and imagination.

Before the cremation, Ernest Mandel on behalf of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, Jose Iriarte Bikila, Basque leader of the section in the Spanish state, Jakob Moneta of the German section, Barry Sheppard of the American Socialist Workers Party, Charlie van Gelderen of the British section, and Alain Krivine in the name of the LCR, paid their last tributes, recalling the political acuteness, the consistency, the internationalism and the humanity of this man who 'loved life and the revolution' in the words of Alain Krivine. And whose life, as Ernest Mandel said, 'is intertwined with the history of the Fourth International'.





## SWP (US) offices target of attacks

*In recent weeks offices and campaign headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party in the USA have been the target of a series of attacks.*

*On April 24, the Los Angeles office was firebombed. Two days later the Seattle headquarters was set on fire, causing thousands of dollars worth of damage. These attacks come at a time when the SWP is waging a vigorous presidential campaign.*

*Civil rights, black, labour movement and women's movement activists have joined with the SWP in condemning these attacks, of which they are also often the target. The article below, from The Militant, May 11, 1984, reports on the breadth of support won in the protest against the attacks on the SWP offices in Atlanta, Georgia.*

ATLANTA — On Saturday morning, April 14, more than 60 people attended a protest rally here against a recent series of attacks on the Socialist Workers Party's Atlanta campaign office.

The rally was held at the Tabernacle Baptist Church and the theme was "Stop terrorist attacks." The Atlanta chapter of Operation PUSH turned over its regular Saturday morning meeting for the event.

The socialist headquarters has been shot into three times between March 10 and April 7.

The Socialist Workers Party is running Maurice Williams for Congress in the 5th Congressional District and Susan Winsten for US Senate. They are backing SWP candidates Mel Mason and Andrea Gonzalez for US president and vice-president.

The rally was an impressive show of unity in the face of the attacks.

The candidates, their supporters and those who support their democratic right to run for office free from harassment and violence have demanded that those responsible be arrested and that Mayor Andrew Young and Gov. Joe Frank Harris make public statements condemning the attacks.

So far, these attempts have been unsuccessful.

While the rally focused on the attacks against the SWP, it also highlighted the role of the federal government, including the FBI and local police agencies, in fostering terrorism against the people of Central America and against Black activists and unionists here at home.

The rally also addressed the recent wave of racist violence by the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia.

The rally was cochaired by Rev. Bill Thurston, executive director of Atlanta PUSH, and Maceo Dixon of the SWP.

The broad speakers list included: Rev. Ed Loring of the Open Door Program for homeless people; Mary Cater of the Cobb County NAACP; Maurice Williams and Susan Winsten; Rev. Emory Searcy of Clergy and Laity Concerned and the Coalition of Conscience; Joe Beasley, deputy director of the Georgia Jesse Jackson campaign; Michael Samanga, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) staff and a leader of the New Justice Movement; Ken Miliner, National Black Independent Political Party; Robb Luton, Atlanta Committee on Latin America; and David Christian, Antiwar Organizing Committee.

Messages of support were read from the National Anti-Klan Network and the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia.

The mayor's office sent Gordon Sellers as a representative.

Joe Beasley of the Jesse Jackson campaign told the audience that Jackson's campaign office in Atlanta had received a bomb threat on the evening of April 11. He stressed unity in fighting these threats. He also spoke about going to see Mayor Young with Maurice Williams the previous week. They were not able to meet with Young, and Beasley drew the conclusion that it was important to have events such as this one to keep pressure on elected officials to take action.

Rev. Ed Loring said violence in this society is rooted in the greed of capitalism and spoke of the gains of the Nicaraguan revolution as an example to fight for.

SWP candidates Winsten and Williams had participated in volunteer work brigades in Nicaragua recently. They described these experiences and the importance of opposing Washington's official terrorism against Nicaragua, which creates a climate for other kinds of attacks on progressive political activists.

They also pointed out that these attacks against their office took place right after they had returned from Nicaragua and had begun to speak out at public meetings and in media interviews in defense of Nicaragua.

Williams zeroed in on the responsibility of the government and police for these attacks. By their inaction they give a green light to violent right-wing groups. By refusing to publicly denounce these attacks, the mayor and governor tacitly condone them. Williams related how when he and others met with the police, the cops said, "Well, you are an unpopular group and some nuts are going to do things like shoot into your office."

The positive response so far to the SWP's 1984 election campaigns from working people, however, is the real reason for these attacks on the socialist campaign.

The SWP, the Jackson campaign, civil rights activists like Mary Cater, Mexican workers in Cedartown — two of whom have been murdered by the KKK — and others who have been recent targets of physical attacks are not simply the victims of "nuts," declared Williams.

They are victims of illegal attacks designed to prevent them — and by example all Blacks and working people — from exercising their constitutional rights.

The government, whose police often have agents in the KKK and other rightist groups, is obligated to stop these attacks and bears responsibility if they are not stopped, Williams charged.

He also reported that his employer, ITE Inc., has been threatening to fire him for his political activities. He asked for support against this harassment.

Mary Cater spoke about the lack of response from elected officials at all levels. The Cobb County authorities have branded her a "troublemaker" for her work on behalf of Black rights, and are guilty of condoning the series of attacks on her and her family.

In Greensboro, said Cater — referring to the recent trial of nine rightists who gunned down five anti-Klan demonstrators in North Carolina in 1979 — they had the murders on film and knew an FBI agent participated in the events, "but the Justice Department said there wasn't enough evidence. What do they want?"

Rev. Emory Searcy held up a copy of the Socialist Workers campaign platform and said, "This program benefits you and me and our families. Why did they shoot into their office?"

"When they shoot into the SWP office they are shooting into SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference], PUSH, all of us," he said.

Searcy also spoke about the invasion of Grenada as an example of government-sponsored racist terrorism.

Michael Samanga of AFSCME said that despite political differences with the SWP, it was essential to have unity in the face of such attacks.



"If I stand by and let the SWP be attacked, then I am sealing the doom of my own organization," he declared.

Gordon Sellers, the mayor's representative, said Mayor Young deplored the violent attacks and was doing what he could. He objected to any implication that Young had to be forced to defend anyone's rights and tried to depict Young as being part of the "movement."

Rev. Bill Thurston from Atlanta PUSH noted that April was supposed to be "anti-violence month" and said it would be good to see both the mayor and the governor mark this month with a joint news conference condemning the racist violence and the attacks on the SWP. ■

## Belgian Fourth Internationalists launch EEC election campaign

*The Belgian section of the Fourth International, the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste/Socialistische Arbeiders Partij is running a slate of 11 full candidates and 11 alternatives in the French-speaking part of Belgium and 26 in the Flemish-speaking part.*

*The candidates in the Walloon country include Andre Henry, a well-known militant workers leader and Ernest Mandel, a leader of the Fourth International.*

*The POS/SAP launched its campaign in the May 4 issue of La Gauche and in Rood, respectively the French and Flemish papers of the organization.*

*The following is a slightly shortened translation of the announcement of the campaign.*

The POS/SAP says plainly that we are against the EEC because we are against capitalist Europe. The EEC arose to meet

a capitalist need (to strengthen the position of the capitalists in the member countries in international competition) and it remains an instrument of the capitalists.

The capitalists have a lot of differences among themselves, often deep-going ones. They are so deep that European unity remains blocked. But they agree about making the workers pay the costs of the world economic crisis.

All the EEC member states are applying similar austerity policies (cutting wages, cutting back on public services and social security). They are coordinating the industrial restructuration schemes at the expense of jobs, as in the steel industry. They are doing nothing about unemployment. They are pursuing an imperialist militarization policy in the framework of Nato, in particular installing the new intermediate-range missiles in Europe, which is increasing the threat of war.

In several European countries, the workers and their union organizations are waging impressive struggles against austerity, rationalization policies and the step-up in the arms race. In Britain, the miners are fighting for jobs. The Italian workers are fighting to keep automatic cost-of-living increases, and the West German workers are fighting for the 35-hour workweek. Now should the mass mobilizations of the peace movement be forgotten.

To unite these struggles on the international scale, the workers movement does not need to strengthen the EEC. To the contrary, proletarian internationalism is as old as the workers movement itself. The fight of workers in one country against the bourgeoisie concerns all workers. That was true in the case of the first victorious socialist revolution in Russia in 1917. It is true today in the case of the revolution in Nicaragua and in the case of the struggle of the Polish free-union movement, Solidarnosc against the bureaucracy. It is also true in the cases of the struggles of the West European

workers.

Proletarian internationalism is a tradition that the Fourth International and its Belgian section, the POS/SAP have maintained in the face of the most adverse conditions.

So, we are against the EEC but we are for a workers united Europe, a socialist united states of Europe.

The POS/SAP will focus its campaign around the theme of opposition to the Martens-Gol-De Clercq right-wing government in Brussels. First of all this is because our program for the European elections is no different from the one we fight for every day. Secondly, we do not to separate what happens in Belgium from what goes on at the level of the EEC.

The European elections give people the illusion that strengthening Europe will lead to progress and peace. We want to say clearly that that is not the way it is. Thirdly, the elections will be held country by country, and so that offers us an opportunity to focus discontent against our execrable government.

In its campaign, the POS/SAP will put forward the following program of struggle:

— Down with austerity, moderation does not create jobs.

— Get the money where it is; make the big tax evaders cough up; tax the big fortunes; do away with bank secrecy; nationalize the banks, holding companies and key industries.

— Out with Martens-Gol: this government will never change its policy.

— Trade-union unity; a plan for a general strike.

— For a workers government without any representatives of the bourgeois parties, backed up by a trade-union common front and a mobilization of the union membership, a government that will meet the workers demands.

As a revolutionary workers party, our place is in the front line with those who are fighting on the ground. In the election campaign, we intend to publicize the program we fight for in the concrete struggles. We aim to give the workers and trade-unionists a chance to vote in accordance with the struggles they are waging and the political conclusions they are drawing from them.

In this respect, our campaign is a chance to discuss with the people we have worked with in the struggles, in particular to discuss the need for a party that can offer an effective political tool for bringing these struggles to fruition.

But the elections are also a chance to test the programs of the various parties in the workers movement in the eyes of the masses, in particular to test our program against that of the Social Democrats. This is also based on the experience of the struggles. Where was the SP in the struggles? Why doesn't it clearly reject austerity. Voting for the SP can only pave the way for a new coalition government with the bourgeois parties. That is why people should vote for the POS/SAP instead! ■

## French government backs down, Kowalewski can stay

Zbigniew Kowalewski, a regional leader of Solidarnosc, in France at the time of the December 13, 1981, crackdown on union business, has now had his right to stay in France renewed. In addition he has been given the right to travel, which he had also been unable to do for the last year. On March 28 he had been informed that his residence permit would not be renewed, and he was 'invited to leave the country' by April 28.

This reversal of the French government's decision was a result of the broad international campaign waged for his right to stay in France, and not be returned to Poland where he would face the risk of imprisonment like his comrades from Solidarnosc (see *International Viewpoint*, No 51, April 23, 1984). ■



## Sandinista youth make European tour

Two representatives of the Sandinista Youth-19 July (JS-19 July) have been making a very successful tour of Western Europe at the invitation of youth organisations in solidarity with the Fourth International.

Alvaro Porta, member of the national council of JS-19 July and secretary for ideological work in the Managua region, and Lautaro Sandino, head of the Western Europe section and of the commission for international relations, visited seven countries to carry the message of their revolution to the young workers, students and unemployed of Europe.

The movement against the imperialist war drive and the attacks on democratic rights and living standards, have brought thousands of young people into political activity over the last few years. These young people, less weighed down by the hold of reformist politics, are an enthusiastic audience for the message of a living revolution, under daily and increasing threat from US imperialism.

It was the appeal of young people at the forefront of the revolution in Nicaragua to these thousands of young people in Europe, who by their activity in the anti-war movement, the solidarity movements are also confronting the

*No one can doubt mass support for FSLN (DR)*

threat of imperialist war, which was the cornerstone of the Sandinista comrades tour in Europe.

Wherever they went, they took the opportunity to explain not only the nature of their revolution but the role of young people within it. Lautaro Sandino explained the specific role of young people to *Rouge*, weekly newspaper of the French section of the Fourth International:

'The main objective of the Sandinista Youth-19 July is the defence of our country. We don't only mean military defence but also defence on the economic, social and political fronts. In addition, the JS works to stimulate the development of the mass movements such as the student movement, the cultural movement, the sports movement. We want to make it possible for young people to participate in rebuilding the country, building the new society we intend to construct.'

This message was put over in numerous meetings organised by solidarity committees, youth organisations, in towns, on university campuses, wherever there was an opportunity. An important feature of the tour was the opportunity for the Sandinista youth to explain their message to representatives of the mass youth or-

ganisations of social democracy or the Communist Parties.

In Britain they spoke to the 2,000-strong national conference of the Labour Party Young Socialists to give short greetings, before addressing a meeting of several hundred conference delegates at more length. This followed two local public meetings organised by local branches of the LPYS.

In West Germany Porta and Sandino met with members of the SPD youth organisation as well as supporters of *Roter Maulwurf*, the youth newspaper in solidarity with the Fourth International, and addressed a meeting organised by the solidarity committee.

An interesting meeting in the Netherlands was with the leadership of the soldiers' trade union, who are active in the opposition to their own country's involvement in the imperialist war drive.

A highlight of the tour was the meeting organised by the Nicaraguan solidarity committee in Paris on April 26, attended by over 400 people. While in Paris the JS representatives also spoke at a number of university sites, and met leadership representatives of both the Socialist Party and Communist Party youth organisations. Their visit coincided with the funeral of veteran Fourth International leader Pierre Frank, whom they honoured with a wreath 'to the revolutionary Pierre Frank'.

The traditional workers' celebrations of May Day had more revolutionary bite than usual in Belgium where the Sandinista representatives spoke at a celebration organised by the PSO/SAP, Belgian section of the Fourth International, and in Zurich, Switzerland. Here, not only did they address the May Day demonstration of some six thousand people, but they spoke directly to several hundred young people at a meeting organised by the Fourth International youth organisation.

After attending a meeting in Turin organised on a united front basis, the JS representatives then returned to Geneva where they addressed a rally along with representatives of the Izquierda Unida of the Dominican Republic and of the Chilean movement. Participating in this event was the singer Angel Jara, the brother of the well-known Chilean singer Victor Jara who died in prison under the dictatorship.

The last days of their tour were spent in Italy and Switzerland addressing meetings, seeing members of the youth commissions of the trade unions, and so on.

In each of their meetings, with each current of the workers movement they met, the young Sandinista representatives insisted on the need for practical solidarity actions with Nicaragua. As they also explained to *Rouge* the necessity is:

'To make the effort to reconstruct everything that the imperialists have been able to destroy in Nicaragua. If imperialism mines the ports, we have to make the effort to remove the mines. This is not only true for the Nicaraguan people but for the French people, and revolutionaries from throughout the world.'

