

# International VIEWPOINT

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## The deepening radicalization in South Africa

**Nicaragua:  
People's Power  
in midst of war**

**Confrontation  
in Chile**

**Uruguay:  
elections test  
reviving left**



# International Viewpoint

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## People's Power under fire

A Fourth International delegation has just returned from a fortnight's stay in Nicaragua where they went on the occasion of the November 4 elections. The delegation was made up of Jakob Moneta, an ex-editor of the IG Metall's union journal and a member of the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten (GIM) of West Germany; Pedro Penalosa, a leader of the Partido Revolucionaria de los Trabajadores (PRT) of Mexico; Hugo Blanco, a member of the Peruvian PRT; and Alain Krivine of the French Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire.

On arrival in Nicaragua these comrades were given the status of 'invited observers' as well as being representatives of their particular party. This allowed them to link up with the 250 other invited observers from several dozen other countries. In the course of their stay the comrades had several meetings, mainly with leaders of the FSLN; with the Sandinista Youth (JS-19); with the Sandinista Workers Confederation (CST); the women's organisation, AMNLAE; the Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS) and with the Nicaraguan Peoples Solidarity Committee (CNSP).

Apart from these discussions our delegates were able to observe the conduct of the elections in the region of Ocotal, near the Honduran border. They also visited several agricultural cooperatives around Managua and stayed on a self-defence cooperative north of Esteli. The delegation was warmly welcomed everywhere it went.

The comrades of the Sandinista leadership made it clear on every occasion that they had decided, within the framework of political pluralism, which they intend to stick to, to enter into fraternal relations with all those organisations which support them at an international level, without prejudice. Our comrades reaffirmed the commitment of the Fourth International to the solidarity campaign and their willingness to build a united front of all those opposed to aggression against the Nicaraguan revolution.

As well as being interviewed on several occasions by the daily *Nuevo Diario*, which published their statements (see especially the November 8, 1984 edition), they were also able to meet the editors of the FSLN paper, *Barricada*, and the independent review, *Pensamiento Proprio*. At the end of November, comrade Ernest Mandel will also be going to Managua at the invitation of the Institute of Agrarian Reform. In the following article Alain Krivine gives his impressions.

Alain KRIVINE

To understand the situation in Nicaragua, the measures taken by the government, and the way the revolutionary organizations function, you have to start by recognizing a fact that today overshadows everything — the country is at war.

Nicaragua's frontiers are under constant threat from American troops. The slightest pretext might be used to unleash an intervention or at least bombing. Within these frontiers, ten thousand heavily armed commandos, the *contras*, have managed to create a climate of insecurity throughout the country keeping three quarters of the population on continual alert.

Therefore, the FSLN leadership has been obliged to redirect all its policy toward a single goal — making sure that the revolution is able to defend itself.

All the economic plans and projects for establishing people's power are put in question by this central preoccupation. "Safeguarding the revolution is more important than the coffee harvest," com-

andante Jaime Wheelock said recently to twenty thousand high school students ready to leave for the harvest.

Although intervention is possible at any moment, the imperialists are concentrating now on strangling the country economically, hoping in time to be able to base themselves on a current of demoralization and discontent generated by the tremendous difficulties of assuring an adequate supply of food and consumer goods.

For the moment, however, what is happening is rather the opposite of that. In the face of the imperialist threats, the Front has been able to rally behind it nearly all the youth, a large part of the peasantry, and the so-called patriotic section of the bourgeoisie. This result could be achieved only thanks to the authority and popularity, which remain intact.

The bond between the FSLN, its mass organizations, and the people is striking. The great mass of people feel that they are defending *their* revolution and *their* government. This is political support, which is by no means uncritical, for a

collective leadership that is striving to prevent the development of any personality cults. Despite the election of a president, no particular name comes up when you ask who runs the country. All the *comandantes* are mentioned. And each of them is popular in his or her own right. On the other hand, the people don't make any bones about criticizing what doesn't work.

There are a lot of complaints about the growth of red tape, the proliferation of incompetent petty bureaucrats whose only talent is putting stamps on papers. "When there is a new problem to solve, they start by creating a ministry," a Sandinista youth leader remarked ironically to us.

While privileges connected to office do clearly exist, it should be noted that all the leaders have to do tours of duty on the war front, as attested by the recent death in battle of the minister of telecommunications.

The fundamental guarantees of democracy today are the existence of a real political pluralism, total freedom of expression, and the education and arming of the people, which are rather exceptional conditions in the midst of a war. There is a gulag in Russia but not in Nicaragua. "It's because you criticize us that you are Sandinistas," Daniel Ortega shouted at the election windup rally.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the present mobilization for defense is creating obstacles to consolidating people's power. For the moment, all the decisions are made by the FSLN, and no one disputes this. Conceived of as a "vanguard party for working people," the Front selects its recruits. You have to go through three stages before you become a full member. So, today the FSLN has hardly more than 12,000 members. But all of them are devoted to the revolution body and soul, ready to assume any task.

The Sandinista youth is the spearhead of the revolution. Half of the population is not yet twenty years old. All the military and economic mobilizations go through the Sandinista Youth, which has about 56,000 members and can mobilize 300,000 youth without any problem. Based essentially in the school youth, it is starting in some places to organize youth peasants.

At present, about 30 percent of the leadership of the Sandinista Youth are members of the FSLN. And it is not a mere transmission belt. Recently, the Sandinista Youth won the right to vote for sixteen-year-olds by collecting 90,000 signatures. Today, debates are going on over the role of grades in school. A lot of the youth volunteer to go off to fight and complain that they are at a disadvantage when they return relative to those who stayed as regards grades. The debates are generally settled amicably with the FSLN, which has just raised a new slogan in Managua, "Build socialism with the Front."

The basic mass organizations are the Sandinista Defense Committees, which can mobilize the population. They have about a half a million members organized

in nine thousand committees. They are generally structured by elected collectives but not always. At the neighborhood, zonal and regional level, they organize all aspects of daily life (conducting censuses, distributing ration cards, taking care of the schools and health services, and so on.)

Finally, these committees organize popular defense with an impressive efficiency. They recruit for the militia, dig trenches and shelters, organize first-aid teams, and teams to clear the rubble in the event of bombing. They set up vigilance teams that patrol every night in the neighborhoods. How regular the participation in meetings is depends on the political situation and the social character of the neighborhood involved.

The Sandinista Defense Committees are now projecting a national congress. They act on the political level more as a pressure group than an organ of power. Discussions are underway about what role "people's power" will have in the new constitution. But at the moment these committees enjoy a certain autonomy. They have not hesitated, for example, to criticize the opening of supermarkets that sell at free, and therefore exorbitant, prices the goods that generally circulate through the black market.

I should also mention the women's organization (AMNLAE) and its 67,000 members, who play a decisive role in defense through the militias and in economic tasks in which women often replace men who have gone off to the front. They have also waged battles for inclusion of women in the military service and for financial support for the many mothers abandoned by their husbands.

Last but not least, there are the trade unions. In this area, a lot remains to be done. The trade-union movement is very divided, with a series of unions being linked more or less to political parties. The Sandinista confederation itself, the CST, has had difficulty bringing together all the Sandinista unions that are still autonomous. It has about 113,000 members, essentially in industry. But the Sandinista peasant union, the ATC, has about 65,000 members. In the public sector, there are 55,000 union members. The right to strike exists. There were about 15 strikes in September. But the leaders explain that it is often the right that pushes for them: "Some demands are just in the abstract, but the present stage of things makes it impossible to meet them, and you have to explain that strikes rebound against the revolution."

However, in a recent strike in a brewery, the CST supported the labor dispute. And in the private sector, some bosses are engaging in provocation.

Encircled, strangled, besieged and slandered as it is — the Nicaraguan revolution is a breath of fresh air for revolutionists throughout the world and a test of strength with imperialism. It depends on us in particular to make sure that this experience, which is unique today, goes forward. The stakes are considerable. Building solidarity is a political task of the greatest importance. ■



Demonstrators in Johannesburg, August 8 (DR)

## New upsurge sharpens debate over strategy

The spectacular rise of mobilizations by the Black masses since the spring marks a turn in the evolution of the social and political situation, which has been characterized for several years by a revival of challenges from the oppressed. (1) The unfolding of these recent mobilizations, their determination in the face of repression, the content of their demands, as well as the role the anti-apartheid groupings and the independent trade-union organizations have played in them, testify to a rising level of organization of the oppressed masses. This situation has given impetus to a debate of strategic importance in the ranks of the opposition to apartheid over the perspectives for the struggle of the oppressed and exploited masses.

Peter BLUMER and Tony ROUX

In recent months, different social sectors of the oppressed have moved into action simultaneously against the policy of the government and the bosses — the high school youth, the "Coloured" and "Indian" workers, and the people of the Black townships. To a certain extent, these mobilizations have been concentrated in the industrial province of Transvaal. Starting off from specific demands, under the pressure of repression and the national question, they converged, culminating in a 48-hour regional general strike, which demonstrated a dynamic leading rapidly to confrontation with the state.

The power of the unity of the oppressed masses was shown, among other things, by the violence with which the demonstrators attacked everything that symbolized the racial domination of the White minority or collaboration with this oppression. Thus, members of the Municipal Councils of the townships were pres-

sed to resign. (2) Some were even assaulted and stoned by the insurgent population.

These protests have come in the context of the politicization of the Black masses ensuing from the mobilization against the constitutional reform decided on by the government of Piet Botha. This scheme was designed to divide the united front of the Black masses that has grown continually since the Soweto uprising in 1976, with the emergence of the independent unions, the growth of community associations, and the workers' and students' strikes over the past three years.

1. The South African regime divides the population into four official racial categories: "Whites," "Africans," "Coloureds" and "Indians." The term "Black," favored by the opponents of apartheid includes all non-Whites.
2. The Township Municipal Councils are the local structures set up by the regime to perform certain administrative functions in the Black ghettos. They are generally elected, with fewer than 10% of those qualified to vote.

The objective of the reform was also to involve some representatives of the Indian and Coloured petty bourgeoisie in the mechanisms of racist rule by getting them to participate in two parliamentary chambers without any real powers, which were elected separately by the two communities in August 1984.

This operation was a total fiasco, and helped rather to increase the rebelliousness of the oppressed and to sharpen the confrontation between them and the state. It was during the fight for a boycott of the elections that two new political structures embracing various anti-apartheid organizations were set up — the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum (NF).

The boycott campaign led to many public meetings and intense discussions over the strategy to follow. It led also to a major involvement of the independent unions in the political arena. This mobilization culminated in a massive boycott of the elections by the Coloureds and Indians. (3) But it also offered the opportunity for many struggles around specific demands.

Since the spring of 1984 agitation had been gathering momentum among the high school youth in the townships. Subsequently, it was to spread on the basis of three main demands — recognition of the high school students representative councils, abolition of corporal punishment and the suspension of age limits for high school education.

As in the case of the previous revolts by the high school youth in 1976 and 1980, it was the whole racist system of education that was being challenged. But this latest mobilization had a more political dynamic, inasmuch as it converged with the campaign for boycotting the recent elections. About thirty high schools and eight universities were on strike during the election campaign. On August 22, about 630,000 Coloured high school students were involved in this action in several provinces.

It was in this context that over the summer the regime took a series of austerity measures designed to make the masses pay the cost of the recession that is hitting the South African economy. These steps included certain cutbacks in social spending, raising the interest rates on loan, increasing rents, and jacking up the taxes on a series of necessities. These measures came down after social conflicts had been multiplying since the beginning of the year. For the first six months of the year, 176 strikes involving 50,000 workers were registered. And the cost of living was rising at an annually adjusted rate of around 12%.

The protest of the population of the Black ghettos took the form in early September of a violent rebellion against the higher rates for electricity and higher rents for housing belonging to the state. This movement spread to the townships around Johannesburg, as well as to other regions of the country. It lasted for several weeks.

Since these increases dictated by the

government were enacted by the Municipal Councils of the townships, the mobilizations came rapidly to demand that the members of these bodies resign. A ferocious repression resulted in 100 deaths, more than 1,000 arrests, and involved vast police searches of the ghettos. On October 22, some 7,000 soldiers invaded Sebokeng, an urban agglomeration to the south of Johannesburg.

Finally, the mobilization achieved certain concessions. The government at last promised to establish representative councils for high school students in 1985 and to abolish the age limit for attending school. At the same time, the rent increases in the townships were temporarily suspended.

### Workers' movement mobilizes

The working class was not absent from this period of struggles. On September 17, the National Union of Miners (NUM), which claims a membership of 70,000 out of the 480,000 miners, organized the first large-scale national strike in this industry since 1946 and the first legal strike in the history of the gold mines. The NUM gained recognition in some mines only in 1982, after a series of strikes in the face of severe repression.

Negotiations over wage increases opened at the start of 1984 between the Chamber of Mines, which initially proposed an 8% raise, and the NUM, which demanded a 60% increase. The miners' union subsequently lowered its demand to 25%, but the bosses refused to go beyond a raise of between 9.5% and 10.9%. After several months of fruitless negotiations, the Chamber of Mines decided in mid-June 1984 to decree unilaterally a wage increase of 13.3% to 14.4%.

Having exhausted all the arbitration procedures, the NUM moved to prepare for a strike. The action began on September 17, involving about 40,000 strikers at seven gold mines belonging to the Anglo-American Corporation, in which the strike was legal, out of about thirty mines. Walkouts of about 4,000 workers occurred on the same day in other mines, where the demand for trade-union recognition was combined with that of higher wages.

The repression was terrible. Ten people killed and hundreds injured in a strike that lasted only a day. Finally, the NUM accepted a compromise that seemed honorable and even represented a certain victory. On top of the wage increase unilaterally granted in mid-June, it provided for a vacation bonus equivalent to a half month's wages for unskilled workers, who did not get this before, and 75% of a month's wage for the others.

The recent opening up of the possibility for organizing independent unions for Blacks in the mines reflects a desire on the part of a section of the mine owners to bring certain pressures to bear on the monopoly of the White workers' unions, which defend a tight job trust and keep

wages for White miners at a level four times higher than for Blacks. This was also intended to head off a radicalization of the miners' struggles for the right to organize, which had been growing for several years, inasmuch as the rest of the Black working class had already won this right by its struggle.

However, the repression that came down against the first legal strike in the mines shows clearly the limits to the extent that the mining bosses and the government are prepared to tolerate the exercise of trade-union rights in a period of recession and in an industry where the employers' profits are founded on a massive use of poorly paid unskilled labor and an antiquated productive plant.

In the space of a few months, the various sectors of the oppressed that became involved in struggles ran up against the same problem of repression and of the specific provisions of the apartheid system covering their lives and work in their respective spheres. In these recent outbursts of popular anger, the cumulative effect of all these restrictions on the democratic and national rights of the oppressed, combined with the immediate demands of the workers and poor masses in the townships, created a framework of interlocking national and social revolt.

At the call of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), a broad meeting bringing together more than thirty anti-apartheid associations and unions decided to set up the Transvaal Regional Strike Committee (TRSC). This united-front structure embraced the COSAS, the UDF, the Committee for the Release of Nelson Mandela, the South African Women's Federation, the civic associations of Soweto and the Vaal, and the main trade-union forces, including the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), with 150,000 members; and Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA).

The regional general strike of November 5 and 6 was called around the following demands: resignation of the Municipal Councils, withdrawal of the police and army from the Black ghettos, suspension of the increase in rents and bus fares, release of the detainees and political prisoners, reinstatement of workers fired, and rescinding of the taxes considered unjust.

The TRSC distributed 400,000 leaflets and put up 5,000 posters. In the workplaces that it was able to reach with its propaganda, the strike was observed by at least 75% of the workers, and often as much as 90%. About a million people participated in this action, including 500,000 workers and about 400,000 high school and university students.

For the first time in an action of this scope, the independent workers' movement, through the main trade-union organizations, emerged as the backbone of the anti-apartheid protest movement. Before this the UDF, a front in which few unions participated, had been the main

3. See *International Viewpoint*, No 46, February 13, 1984.

force in the protest movement against the rigged-up elections to the Coloured and Indian parliaments.

At the time of the Transvaal general strike, the independent trade-union organizations succeeded in taking the head of the movement of the oppressed, alongside the UDF. Since then, we have seen the appearance of a sort of two-headed leadership of the movement of the oppressed masses. This convergence in action has not prevented important strategic differences from continuing between these two currents.

In the country of apartheid, the national oppression of all Blacks provides the objective basis for unity in their mobilizations. This dynamic has favored the emergence of united fronts against apartheid, such as the UDF and the NF. But the organization and base of the independent union movement have made it possible to give a more centralized expression to this unity.

The South African press, moreover, has not hesitated to say that the recent general strike was the most important labor action in the last 35 years. Unlike the 1976-1977 struggles, when the independent union movement was too weak to play a leading role, the Transvaal strike demonstrated this movement's potential militancy and effectiveness. It showed the capacity that the South African workers' movement already has, through its independent unions, to paralyze the apparatus of production, when these unions manage to take the lead in the mobilization of the entire oppressed population.

### Unity of all the oppressed

Indeed, this strike was in reality a movement of all the oppressed, bringing together the youth in school, working people of different communities, township populations, and also merchants and taxi owners. The breadth of the protest, moreover, immediately forced a number of members of township Municipal Councils to resign.

The government used severe repression against this strike, and in particular against the unions. Many members of the TRSC were arrested. They included Chris Dhlamini, president of FOSATU; Thami Mali, leader of the TRSC and of the Soweto committee of the UDF; Moses Mayekiso, head of the Transvaal section of MAWU, the engineering union affiliated to FOSATU; P. Camay, leader of the CUSA; Themba Nonhlantane of the Municipal and General Workers Union, MGWUSA; and Peter Makgopa, a regional leader of COSAS.

These activists, like the hundreds of other persons arrested, could be detained for many weeks on the basis of South Africa's repressive legislation. About thirty persons were killed by the repressive forces over the two days of the strike, and dozens of others were wounded. In the SASOL enterprise, which makes gasoline from coal and therefore is of strategic

importance and under close government supervision, about 90% of the 6,500 Black workers were fired for taking part in the strike. This reaction by the administrators of SASOL illustrates the government's determination to stand firm against the action of the independent unions. The principal union in the enterprise was the chemical union of FOSATU. But this example also clearly shows the extent of the combativity of the Black proletariat.

Such repression is going to pose new problems for the mass movement, in particular for the independent unions, but it does not invalidate the success of the Transvaal general strike. As Joe Foster, general secretary of the FOSATU said, moreover, repression will only "inflare the situation a little more and increase the polarization."

It seems, nonetheless, that some members of the TRSC have made an assessment of the relationship of forces that is too onesided. For example, the chairperson of the TRSC and UDF local leader in Soweto, Thami Mali, went so far as to say: "Our task is to intensify the resistance, to create an ungovernable situation, and to really force the state to declare certain regions or zones liberated." (4)

These mobilizations clearly show the complex character of the interconnection between the national question and the social struggle in South Africa. This country exhibits an exceptional combination of national, democratic and social tasks to be resolved by the movement of the oppressed masses. The national dimension is present in all the struggles, including in the social struggles, inasmuch as even strikes express the desire of the Black workers to organize as such to win emancipation and to achieve their demands.

All workers mobilizations, therefore, combine immediate and economic demands (wages, conditions, etc.) with national and democratic demands that go beyond the limits of the enterprise and fit into the framework of the fight for national liberation (equal rights, freedom to organize, freedom of expression).

This is explained by the special nature of South African society, a semi-industrialized capitalist society dependent on imperialist investment and aid, one that despite a considerable industrial development, remains at the mercy of the ups and downs in its gold exports.

One aspect of the South African economy is the extent of the role imperialist capital plays in mining and industry, dependence on the imperialist world market for access to technology, for credits, and with regard to fixing the gold price.

Another aspect is the high degree of concentration of South African capital and the existence of a financial bourgeoisie, which cannot, however, free itself from two constraints. One is dependence on the technical know how and investment from the imperialist powers. The other is dependence on the mechanisms of national oppression codified in the apartheid system, on which the prof-

its of the South African capitalist class are based.

This situation creates difficulties arising from the narrowness of the domestic market, similar to those of other dependent semi-industrialized countries. But no section of the South African bourgeoisie or imperialist big business involved in South Africa can really seek to resolve these problems by accepting the loss of the superprofits accruing from the national oppression of the Black masses.

The industrial development of the past decade has modified the composition of the proletariat by increasing the number of industrial workers. It is in these sectors that the first attempts to form independent union organizations developed. The existence of these independent unions has changed the political conditions for the struggle of the oppressed and exploited masses. (5)

The industrial and mining proletariat is now the driving force in the process of uniting the oppressed and exploited in the framework of the national struggle for winning the right to constitute a single united nation, which is today prevented by the apartheid policy and the Bantustans. In order to achieve this, it will, therefore, be necessary to sweep away apartheid and capitalist rule.

In this specific context, the liberation struggle of the Black masses cannot take the classical path of destroying a colonial government imposed by foreign rule. It cannot be limited to a fight for essentially democratic and national demands. It has to immediately incorporate social demands having an anticapitalist dynamic. In such a situation, therefore, it is impossible to conceive of the organization of a national liberation movement of the classical type, comparable to those that have arisen out of anticolonial struggles in much less industrialized societies and which have generally been based on the peasant and plebeian masses.

### Contradictions for the capitalists

The place and power of the working class in South African society explain, moreover, why it is impossible objectively to expect to see the formation of a national liberation movement of the type of the Algerian FLN or the MPLA in Angola. This does not mean that the movement of the oppressed will not involve alliances among different social categories of the oppressed and exploited population. But the difference of the South African social formation with respect to the Angolan and Algerian examples is sufficient to assign the Black working class a decisive and leading role in the immediate struggle itself, and not just from the standpoint of a historic dynamic of the mobilization.

The growth of the independent unions since 1973 has corresponded with a per-

4. *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, November 7, 1984.

5. See *International Viewpoint*, No 8, June 7, 1982.



Government offices outside Johannesburg burnt to the ground by protesters, June 17 (DR)

iod of industrial growth, numerical increase of the working class, and a strong demand for labor power by the bosses. The world economic crisis had only partial and intermittent effects throughout the period 1973-1982. The South African economy has, in fact, certain shock absorbers. Among them are the variety and strategic importance of its mining exports, the near monopoly position it holds for some of these products, and the relative autonomy of fluctuations in the gold price from the international economic crisis.

But this is also the weak point of the South African economy. It is very dependent on the evolution of the gold price. In fact, gold represents 45% of the country's exports and 20% of the state's income.

In 1981, exports started to drop. In 1982, economic activity fell off. In 1983, investment declined by about 3%. The country was then hit by a recession whose extent and depth reflected a combination of the dependence of the South African economy on the big industrialized countries and the cumulative effects of the world economic crisis on these latter countries since 1973.

The drop in the price of gold led to a loss of income for the regime, despite the rise of the dollar during the same period. At the same time, the rise of the dollar as a refuge for savings accelerated the decline of the gold price. Finally, as a consequence of this situation, the South African currency, the rand, has continually depreciated against the American dollar. From a value of 1.30 dollars at the beginning of 1984 and to 0.60 dollars in November 1984.

In the early 1970s, South Africa continued to represent an oasis of high profits for foreign investment, particularly attractive because of the falling profit rate in other countries. But now such investment itself has begun to decline because of the general narrowing of outlets, the narrowness of the market, and the political risks involved. In 1983, more than 25,000 enterprises closed, 28% more than

in the preceding year. In 1984, an average of 12 closures per day has been recorded. (6)

In these conditions, the trade-union movement has been faced with its first great challenge. It has to be able to respond to a policy of austerity designed to make the Black working class pay the cost of the crisis. Unemployment, a permanent feature of the non-White labor market in the country of apartheid, is growing by leaps and bounds, in tempo with the large numbers of business failures, industrial reconversions and massive layoffs by South African and imperialist big industry.

In 18 months, 70,000 Black workers in the engineering industry have lost their jobs. The capitalists are taking advantage of this situation to increase their profits and the productivity of labor. In fact, this year the productivity of labor has increased in the automotive industry, exceeding the previous levels of the 1980s, despite growing layoffs.

### Growth of independent unions

The main independent Black workers' unions had to build their organization on the basis of gains made in battles waged at the individual plant level. The courage of the initial nuclei of trade unionists spread contagiously in 1970-1980 to tens of thousands of workers, who were learning to strike, to stand up to the bosses, and to join the independent trade-union movement on the basis of this experience and their victories in battles for limited demands. Between 1980 and 1983, the number of "African" trade-union members increased by 300%, going from 220,000 to 670,000. Today, by themselves, "African" workers represent 43.3% of trade-union members. (7)

The insistence of certain unions, such as FOSATU, on organizing at the base and building a system of shop stewards reflected the needs of the first stage of building the independent union movement. It was necessary then to consolo-

date unions on the plant level and offer the Black proletariat a form of organization that corresponded to this initial level of the class struggle.

Today, this whole experience has been put to the test by the layoffs, as well as by the new needs of the confrontation with the regime. Since the start of the year, the trade-union movement has faced a layoffs policy that endangers its basic organizational gains. For example, since August 1984, MAWU, FOSATU's engineering union, has lost 2,000 members, about 5% of its total membership, as a result of layoffs. It is to be expected that another thousand of its members will be laid off between now and the end of the year. (8)

On the occasion of the Transvaal strike, the press stressed that the unions were getting involved in the political arena by directly confronting the state. In reality, since their inception all the trade unions have taken political positions reflecting the needs the movement has faced in its struggles. What is new, therefore, is not so much the attitude of the trade-union movement as the level of the confrontation between the racist state and the bosses on one side and the working class on the other.

In this test of strength, the independent trade-union movement has to be able to give a concrete form to what was only implicit in its initial phase of organization, that is the decisive role that falls to it objectively in building a Black African workers' movement.

For several months, the confrontation between the masses and the racist regime has demonstrated the high degree of organization of the oppressed. This has been reflected in particular in the fact that the mobilizations have come very close together. In this context, two sorts of mass structures have shown their representativeness. One is the unions. The other is the community associations that are active on specific problems, such as housing, recreation and so on.

Unquestionably, the present political confrontation requires tight unity between these two complementary levels of organization. The importance of the community associations stems from the existence of masses of unemployed, the key role of the youth, and the extent of marginal employment. They are the concrete alternative for hundreds of thousands of the oppressed who cannot join unions.

The townships are also natural focuses for building a feeling of solidarity and an understanding of the need for organization. The unity of the oppressed can take very diverse forms, in accordance with the diversity of the concrete circumstances. There are many networks of associations, sometimes even ones linked to the churches, built around different questions that may concretely serve this need.

6. *South African Labour Bulletin*, Braamfontein, August-September 1984.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

8. *The Star*, Johannesburg, October 25, 1984.

However, once a certain stage is reached in the development of the struggles and the confrontation with the regime, a collection of the most diverse forms of organization cannot meet the needs. It becomes essential to consolidate the central position of the Black proletariat in the mobilization. It is because of this that the developments in the most recent period have been accompanied by a very intense debate over the ends and means of the present mass struggle.

The so-called Chartist current, which defines itself by its adherence to the Freedom Charter (9), is trying to provide a political and organizational framework for the oppressed masses. The UDF, which to a certain extent is an alliance among these Chartists and sections of the Church and liberal white circles, has served this objective of rallying the mass movement around an implicit political program, the one contained in the Freedom Charter.

In offering this outlet for the various sections of the population involved in struggle, this current has been trying also to avoid being pushed to the sidelines by the recomposition of the trade-union movement, since it is unable to channel the process of unification going on in the union movement.

The UDF has in fact rallied a substantial part of the anti-apartheid associations and some unions. It played a central role, moreover, in the mobilizations against the racist elections in August, although in the Cape Town area this role was shared by the Cape Action League.

Another political pole formed in the same period, the National Forum. It brings together various currents united around the rejection of any alliance with the liberals and which want to offer a more radical, explicitly socialist program as an alternative to the Chartist current.

Unions like FOSATU, the General Workers Union, AFCWU, etc. have given various explanations for their refusal to join the UDF and the National Forum.

All have stressed their concern for guaranteeing the independence of trade unions, sometimes expressing a refusal to link themselves with nonproletarian sectors, with the associations of Coloured or Indian small employers, or simply with White liberal groups.

This refusal of the main unions to join the UDF can only be explained by taking account of a central feature in the political thinking of the Chartists. For them, the liberation movement representing a single united leadership of the movement of the oppressed already exists. It is the African National Congress (ANC). What is more, for a not inconsiderable part of this current, the ANC, its trade-union appendage, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU); and its armed wing play the role of vanguard because they are in fact led by the South African Communist Party (SACP).

Thus, in their view, the mass movement does not lack a revolutionary leadership. This has existed for decades in the person of the ANC-SACP duo, which

offers a strategy for the struggle. For this current, the only problem lies in the relationship between this leadership and the mass movement of associations and trade unions that has arisen over these last years, to a large extent outside of its control.

In these conditions, the role of the UDF is to serve as the link between this leadership and the new mass movement, in the form of a broad coalition offering the concrete form through which the political leadership of the ANC as the liberation movement leading the anti-apartheid struggle can be exercised. This view of things is disputed to a large extent by the organizations that make up the National Forum and by the main unions.

Because of the prevailing repression, public debate is obviously very difficult and limited. The ANC and the SACP are outlawed and persecuted. Their press, therefore, is mainly brought into the country from the outside. The unions express their views within the narrow bounds of the legal existence they are allowed to maintain under the close watch of the authorities. Finally, all the organizations are obliged to watch carefully what they say politically.

The discussion, therefore, has taken some very formal aspects. The unions, for instance, have criticized the UDF for the form and composition of its leading bodies and for the place it accords liberals in its public meetings. On the other hand, the UDF charges that the NF is really only a forum and not an actual disciplined front. And it has criticized the unions for adopting "workerist," "economist" and "sectarian" positions.

The polemic launched several months ago by the South African Communist Party against the unions that are not in the UDF and against the currents that make up the NF, however, gives a good illustration of the importance of this political confrontation.

At the FOSATU congress in April 1982, the general secretary of this organization, Joe Foster, raised the question of what role a workers' leadership should play, saying: "Has our organizational activity developed workers' leadership that can give guidance and direction to all workers? If we were to think in terms of our members only, we would have a very limited political role. If, however, we are thinking more widely of the working class, then we have to examine very much more carefully what our political role is." (10)

The SACP responded with a virulent polemic, arguing, with the help of quotations from Lenin, that by their nature the unions cannot substitute for the revolutionary party. The article said, for example: "...the existence and achievements of the Communist Party are well known to everybody. Its members today are in the front line of struggle. Dare FOSATU ignore this?"

In answer to Joe Foster, the article pointed up the existence of the ANC as a liberation movement. "It ignores the

reality of a strong and constantly growing working class influence in the ANC, which has given rise to socialist inclined policies as witnessed by the Freedom Charter's provisions on land and monopoly industries..." (11)

This criticism has recently reappeared in a new guise, with the SACP organ writing: "Some of them have become fascinated with the example of Brazil. A recent article on this country in the South African Labour Bulletin attempts to draw parallels with developments in South Africa. In Brazil, they record, mass militant trade unionism has led to the birth of a political party which 'rapidly developed amongst workers, the unemployed, grassroots sections of the church, progressive youth and left intellectuals....'"

"The author mentions almost as an aside that this party 'has drawn much hostility from the supporters of the illegal Brazilian Communist Party... which claims that, historically, they form the party of the workers.' Brazil also features in the study program drawn up by the academics involved in FOSATU's educational work and is discussed in the FOSATU journal.

"...perhaps the authors of this type of material are aware that resort to open anti-communism will not win them support amongst the organized working class. However, the attempts to ignore the programmes and even the existence of the ANC and the SACP amount to the same thing." (12)

The discussion also centers around the question of the alliance with groups of liberal Whites and employers' associations. The UDF has in fact associated itself with members of White liberal organizations, such as the Black Sash, the National Union of South African Students, or even the Progressive Federal Party of the liberal bosses. And it has included within it associations of nonwhite small employers, such as the Western Cape Traders Association. It has also been built around Chartist organizations such as the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) and the Natal Indian Congress (NIC).

Such alliances have been denounced by other currents, such as the Azania People's Organization (AZAPO), which was originally influenced by the Black Consciousness current, as well as by some unions. A policy of class independence of the oppressed has been opposed to one of alliances with White liberals or groups of employers. There has been a rejection of political groupings accepting the divisions imposed by apartheid in order to promote the interests of certain petty bourgeois layers in these communities. These reactions came to the fore in re-

9. The Freedom Charter was adopted in 1955 by the People's Congress, that is, the ANC, and two other organizations representing non-White "peoples."

10. FOSATU document, 1982.

11. *African Communist*, the organ of the SACP, East Berlin, No 93, Second Quarter of 1984.

12. *Ibid.*, No 99, Fourth Quarter of 1984.





sponse to the revival of the TIC and the NIC in the framework of the UDF.

The GWU, as others, has criticized the UDF for being a multiclass organization. (13) On the other hand, the UDF clearly defends this character of the front. It defines itself as follows: "The UDF is not a class organization. It does not claim to work in the interests of the working class, the capitalist class or the peasantry. It is an alliance amongst these classes." (14)

This extremely complex debate centers around two questions. The first is the character and role of agreements with nonproletarian currents. This dispute is obviously directly related to the national question in South Africa. What sort of alliances should be made on certain issues in the anti-apartheid struggle with specific sections of the Indian or Coloured petty bourgeoisie? Should you accept organic unity with movements organized on an ethnic basis, such as the TIC or the NIC? At the heart of this question is the need for a political leadership that could combine long-term strategic choices with a capacity for tactical initiatives in accordance with the needs of the immediate struggle.

The UDF's definition of itself as a multiclass formation reveals its approach to the national question. It is illustrated by the cases of the TIC and the NIC,

whose revival is justified in the following manner:

"The TIC and NIC revival was necessary because the struggle is waged in a specific reality. If we want to mobilize people, we must talk to them about the reality they feel and perceive...in South Africa, each race has a specific role to play but they must not play it independently of one another." (15) In particular, the currents that criticize the UDF reject this view of the national question as a sum of "specific" national questions.

However, the debate also has a second side, the discussion of the long-term strategic option for the South African revolution. All the currents claim to be for socialism more or less, or at least for an end of the exploitation of 'man by man,' the latter formula being very popular among the national petty bourgeoisie in Africa. But the Chartist current proposes a democratic stage in the revolutionary process. On the other hand, a section of its critics talk about the need for destroying capitalist exploitation, which they see as in the final analysis solely responsible for the system of racial oppression. For example, the manifesto of the National Forum explains:

"The struggle against apartheid is no more than the point of departure for our liberation efforts. Apartheid will be

eradicated with the system of racial capitalism. The Black working class, inspired by revolutionary consciousness is the driving force of our struggle." (16)

The SACP organ explains this difference very clearly, writing that, "This theoretical framework, 'socialism now,' is the basis for an attack on the Freedom Charter, for the trivialisation of the national question and a refusal to move from abstract theory or abstract intellectualism to concrete and living reality. Here we see an attempt to impose working class leadership. The attempt to merge the working class struggle with the national liberation struggle is 'sectarianism par excellence.' According to this sectarian view the stages of our revolution are negated and the working class is being mobilized, not to spearhead the struggle for national liberation against national oppression, but to spearhead the struggle for a 'Socialist Azania.' There is a lot that is assumed without being worked for." (17)

The breadth of the mass movement of the oppressed today highlights more and more the importance of the debate among its various political and trade-union components. For one wing, there is already a united national liberation movement that represents all the oppressed people of South Africa. This, therefore, is sufficient reason for all the components of the movement to accept its leadership and line up behind it. This orientation is applied in the solidarity movement abroad, counterposing support for SACTU to support of the independent Black unions.

For the other wing, there is a need to offer an alternative orientation to that of the ANC-SACP current, one that can take the form of "class" fronts that implicitly defend programs of anticapitalist struggle, even if the advocates of this option are not entirely in agreement about all the tactical aspects of this question.

This political confrontation will be decided in the first instance in the arena of the mass movement, by the ability demonstrated by the contending forces to give impetus to the movement and to promote its unity. The Transvaal strike made it possible to form a very broad united front extending from the UDF to the unions. The lessons that both wings have drawn from this struggle will be very important for their respective organizational projects, and therefore for the political debate. ■

13. This debate led to the breakup in the Cape province of the grouping called the "Disorderly Bills Action Committee," which had been formed to campaign against the government's constitutional reform. The Chartist organizations left it to form the UDF. The other organizations that remained in formed the Cape Action League. The GWU drew a negative balance of these events, which had an influence on its refusal to join the UDF, as one of its leaders explained in the November 1983 issue of the magazine *South African Labour Bulletin*. 14. *Solidarity*, Cape Action League News, June-July 1984.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Manifesto of the National Forum Committee, Johannesburg, 1983.

17. *African Communist*, No 98, Third Quarter of 1984.

## No coal to Britain! Victory to the miners!

As the miners' strike enters its ninth month the question of international solidarity begins to play a decisive role in its outcome. Not just on the level of financial support which has started to come in from all over the world, but most importantly in terms of industrial action to stop coal getting into Britain. Most of this coal is getting in via the port of Rotterdam as we explain below.

At a rally for miners in Sheffield, Yorkshire, miners' leader Arthur Scargill denounced the Polish authorities for continuing to export coal. In a letter to the official Polish trade-union federation, he stated, 'My advice to you is to stop behaving hypocritically and in a way that can only be described as anti-socialist. The Polish government has dramatically increased the amount of coal being imported. And you've ignored repeated requests to stop exporting coal....'

In the following examples of the type of solidarity that is building up around the world, we demonstrate the extent to which rank-and-file trade unionists internationally identify with the miners and their fight against the Tory government. The examples here of the Polish workers in *Solidarnosc* and of the action of French workers are eloquent testimony to this. Such actions must be stepped-up in order to bring about a victory for the miners and for the working class as a whole.

### Solidarity from supporters of *Solidarnosc*

The following article was taken from the August 24 edition of *Front Robotniczy*, an underground Polish bulletin.

I. *Should the striking British miners be helped and for what purpose?*

In Great Britain miners are being killed by police serving a conservative government (the latest death was on Monday, August 13); miners just like the ones killed not long ago in Poland. Would we have the right to expect the help we need so much from them if we remained indifferent today to the tragedy they are suffering?

Unless we go beyond statements of support, which are necessary but in themselves have no practical effect, will these not be just empty courtesies? The political bosses of the British monopoly bourgeoisie and the Polish totalitarian bureaucracy — the Thatcher and Jaruzelski governments — have rediscovered the antiworking-class language that is traditionally common to ruling groups.

The counterrevolutionary junta in Poland is exploiting the "situation" of the British miners' strike to step up its export of coal, and with that honorable pretext to increase the exploitation of Polish miners. On the other hand, the antiworking-class Conservative government is eagerly taking advantage of this help to get out from under the economic pressure put on by the British miners' strike in order to be able to force the miners to their knees and carry through economic measures in the interests of big international capital at the expense of the working class.

Despite surface appearances, this is not the first time that capital and the Nomenklatura have joined hands. They gen-

erally vie with each other in exploiting wage labor. But that in no way interferes with solidarity between competing exploiters. What about labor? Is there any effective weapon against the solidarity of the rulers other than the international solidarity of the working people? "When Thatcher is in league with Jaruzelski, it is time to draw some conclusions from that." (*Robotnik*, No 68.)

That's right! The British miners' strike has been going on already for 25 weeks. For all that time they have continued to use the labor of the Polish miners to break the resistance of their strike. We should not forget also that in Great Britain wage workers supported the campaign "Solidarity with *Solidarnosc*." So, can we now deny them our solidarity? The need for practical action in solidarity with the British miners is clear, in our opinion. There remains the question of ways and means.

II. *How and by what means can we give such aid?*

Internationalism — international workers' solidarity — will remain only a slogan, and with it our freedom will remain only a slogan, as long as we cannot build a practical bridge connecting our common struggles, connecting the various national detachments of the working class. If we want to *really* help the striking British miners, we can do so effectively in only one way — by stopping or at least reducing the deliveries of Polish coal to Great Britain for as long as the miners' strike goes on.

The Thatcher regime would not be so unyielding if the strike started to seriously weaken the capitalist economy and hit the pockets of big capital, which is closely linked to the state economic bureaucracy in Great Britain. This regime, which is so indifferent to the wrongs of labor, is quite anxious about the welfare of the rich.

Thus, the basic objective is the following: to force the government of the Polish People's Republic to declare and observe an embargo on deliveries of coal to Great Britain until the miners' strike is over. The fundamental method is a workers' blockade of coal exports to Britain. In this regard, a special role falls to the miners, transport workers and dockers. The miners could reduce the production of coal by avoiding work on our free Saturdays [no work on Saturdays was one of the principles of *Solidarnosc*].

In so doing, Polish miners would lose a part of their wages, but British miners would keep their jobs. "We will not let them buy us off with 'G' booklets or coupons for automobiles, or any other hard-to-come-by goods." (*Wolny Robotnik*, No 20.) The editors of *WR* are right. In this fight for power and freedom, the working class cannot avoid sacrifices. The problem is to make sure that they serve the cause of their emancipation rather than strengthen their enemies.

A blockade has to be well prepared by groundwork. A) People have to be convinced of the point of solidarity actions. B) Means have to be provided for gauging the state of opinion and for making the organizational preparations. C) We have to use the most secure means of actions. This includes the following:

1. Petitions, leaflets, articles, posters demanding that the party that calls itself the workers' party [the Polish United Workers Party, the official Communist Party] declare where it stands. And, to put up a good front, we should demand an immediate embargo on coal deliveries to Great Britain and even breaking diplomatic relations with Mrs Thatcher's government (on the grounds that it is persecuting the trade-union movement).

2. We should respond in Poland to the appeal of the National Union of Miners published in a special issue of its news-

paper, *The Miner*, of July 31, 1984, by increasing the use of electricity in homes and workplaces (in that way, we will use more coal at home and less will go for export to Great Britain).

3. Trying a symbolic solidarity strike, in all workplaces every day until the end of the British miners' strike, stopping all work for one minute on the stroke of noon. These 'minutes of workers' solidarity' will give a practical expression on a mass scale to the simple understanding of the fact that without international solidarity, there is not going to be any Solidarnosc. We await constructive criticism of our proposals.

Workers of the World, Unite, For your Freedom and Ours! [The second part of this call repeats the slogan of the Polish fighters for an independent, united Polish republic in the nineteenth century.]

## and elsewhere . . .

**In Belgium** ...every day coal is being taken to Britain from the ports of Antwerp and Ghent. The POS/SAP (Socialist Workers Party, Belgian section of the Fourth International) have produced a leaflet addressed to workers in the Ghent dockyards calling on them to stop all transport of coal. The leaflet names the boats involved in transporting the coal.

They are the *Brendonia* (British); the *Union Arrow* (Irish); the *Finlandia* (Danish); the *Rein* (British); the *Wib* (British); the *Contact* (British); and the *Stability* (British). The shipowners are also named and these are Lamement, Transcontinental and Ghentrading.

**In France** ...one thousand tons of coal destined for Great Britain were poured out onto the railway tracks in the marshalling yard at Calais on the night of Saturday November 24, by miners belonging to the CGT (Communist Party-led union). The miners issued a statement demanding that 'the export of coal to Great Britain for the purpose of breaking the miners' strike should cease'. About a dozen people were held and later released by the police.

A similar action had been taken the week before by miners from Gardanne, near Marseille in the province of Bouches-du-Rhone. One thousand six hundred tons were tipped onto the track, again in the marshalling yard, at Miramas.

Between November 5 and 7, miners Dennis Pennington and Colin Hiscock and miners' wife Susan Gannon all from Bold colliery in Lancashire had spoken with Gardanne miners during a tour organised by the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League, French section of the Fourth International). In Lorraine, in the northwest of the country a welcome committee had been set up for the miners' visit which organised a discussion between them and miners in the CFDT (the Socialist Party-led union) and the CGT. They visited an iron mine with CGT militants who agreed to send parcels over for Christmas.

In Lyon they were welcomed by the regional section of the CFDT who took them to meet hospital workers and organised a creche. Susan met women from the women's commission of the regional union and from women's groups.

Lille, in the extreme north of the country, was the last stop on their three-week tour in which they raised 90,000 French francs (about £10,000), not including pledges of future support for Christmas. The CGT nationally has produced a lively dossier issued to members with suggestions on what kind of gifts to send and where.

**In the Netherlands** ...from the November 21 issue of *Klassenstrijd*, paper of the Dutch section of the Fourth International.

Is there or is there not a move afoot to stop the shipment of coal to Britain?

According to the *Guardian* (British daily newspaper) of November 10, Norman Willis, the general secretary of the TUC is coming to the Netherlands with a delegation of union leaders to get the unions to black coal to Britain.

Such an effort is supposed to have been made by Mick McGahey, vice president of the NUM, at the time of the meeting of the transport unions. They wanted a total embargo on all coal, according to the *Guardian*.

But neither the FNV [the country's biggest trade-union confederation] nor the Transport Union have yet made any official attempt to get a boycott. What is going on?

Obviously the NUM wants a boycott of coal shipments. It seems at the same time that the TUC has not transmitted the NUM's request to the FNV. There is an explanation for this. The leadership of the TUC — and of the Labour Party — wants to isolate Scargill. Scargill is out for a total victory against Margaret Thatcher. And she is out for a total victory over the NUM. There is no unclarity about that.

But nothing would be more of a kick in the pants to the TUC than a victory for Scargill and the miners over Thatcher, because then the members of other unions would start asking, "if the NUM can beat Thatcher, why can't our leaders do it?"

The present leadership of the TUC naturally does not want the NUM beaten either. Their strategy is rather to take the thing to the negotiating table. They know that Scargill is not inclined to compromise, and so he has to be isolated.

The TUC leadership is closely linked to the Labour Party. And they want to make Labour an acceptable government party for the ruling class, a party it can negotiate with. So, the TUC and the Labour leadership are playing to the bourgeoisie, which is saying "we can't do anything with Scargill and the ranks of the NUM." It is trying to go around the NUM and Scargill to get a solution.

So, reports about a delegation coming to the Netherlands probably came from the NUM as a means of putting the TUC under pressure.

There were, according to a representative of the Transport Union, contacts with the NUM and the TUC and also contacts on the European level for a common approach.

The reason that the Transport Union does not have to wait for an official declaration is that it has got an awful lot of encouragement to act. It has come from innumerable workplaces.



Coal destined for Britain is thrown on the tracks at Calais (DR)

For example, in Eindhoven on October 15 at the FNV autumn meeting, the following resolution was adopted with general approval: "The FNV-Eindhoven annual general meeting which has come out for support to the striking miners in word and deed, is anxiously following developments in Britain. And it is following with interest the discussions between the TUC and the NUM on one side and the Transport Union [Vervoersbond] and the FNV on the other regarding a blacking of coal transport to Britain. It expresses the sincere hope that these discussions will soon lead to the best possible result."

The meeting decided to send memoranda to the FNV-Amsterdam, the Confederation Council, to the Vervoersbond-Utrecht and to the Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Vlissingen branches of the Transport Union.

The motion was put to the meeting by the Eindhoven FNV "Support the British Miners" group, and was also supported by the executive of the Eindhoven FNV. On that same evening at an Industriebond shop stewards meeting in Eindhoven, 235 guilders were collected.



is unclarity over an attempt to institute a boycott through the International Transport Federation. A real boycott remains a problem because there is no official attempt to do this and there is a problem of employment in the transport business.

Collections were also held during the FNV week of action. On the opening evening of the action, three hundred guilders were collected. A special pamphlet is to be distributed about the NUM's alternative.

In Ireland...a special campaign in solidarity with the miners is being organised in the north to collect money, food and toys for miners' families at Christmas. Collections are held regularly among union members and some have been paying a weekly levy. One union, NIPSA (Northern Ireland Public Services Association) has agreed to match pound for pound the donations made by members from their own pockets and has already handed over £3,050 from its central funds to the NUM.

'Irish workers are affected in no small way by the miners' strike', Ben Hearney, President of Dublin Council of Trades Unions told a thousand-strong audience at a recent miners' solidarity concert. Evocative memories were recalled of the solidarity from British workers during the 1913 Dublin Lock-out. The atmosphere was electrifying and the audience rose to give a prolonged standing ovation to the two guest miners: John Burrowes from Yorkshire and the National Treasurer of the NUM, and Dan Evans from Derbyshire. It was a marvellous occasion of solidarity from Irish trade unionists who have collected over £100,000 in the 26 counties.

A support group has been set up in Limerick (in the southwest of the country) and in the space of a few short weeks it has raised £1,100 for miners in South Wales. Already several South Wales miners have visited Limerick and spoken to workers explaining their struggle and asking for support. One group of workers at Shannon have managed to get their company, GAC, to check off contributions to NUM at source. Many shop stewards from Limerick workplaces have participated in the group. Busworkers have been especially generous. Other actions such as a 'Rock for the miners' concert were also planned.

Solidarity work will be aided by the opening of an office in Cork staffed by two South Wales miners. The above information was taken from *Socialist Republic*, the paper of People's Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International.

In Italy...solidarity with the miners is finally getting off the ground. Collections are being organised in the factories and on the streets. Meetings have been held in factories in Milan, Brescia and Mantua.

In Milan there has been a promise to set up a permanent solidarity committee. A Lombardy-wide committee representing engineering workers, building, textile and food workers recently invited miner Alan Jones from South Wales to the region to get support. Amongst other things he spoke to a meeting of workers in the Alfa Romeo factory near Milan.

In Austria...the president of the Kent branch of the NUM, Joe Holmes, spoke to 500 persons in Vienna on November 15.

In Austria also solidarity actions with the miners are multiplying. Miners children have been invited to the country for holidays by the Rote Falken [Red Falcons], the Catholic Worker Youth and the Trade-Union Left Block. The Austrian Trade-Union Confederation [OeGB] has given the miners 100,000 schillings [about £4,000]; the GPA (union of private employees), 200,000 schillings; the Gewerkschaft Metall-Bergbau-Energie [Engineering, Mining and Energy union] has also given 100,000 schillings.

In a meeting recently held in Vienna, 65,000 schillings was collected in one stroke. The Austrian Trade-Union Youth [OeGJ] is planning a postcard campaign direct at the workers' chambers (state body to which workers elect delegates). Solidarity committees are being founded in Vienna and Linz. The international secretary of the OeGB, Karl-Heinz Nachtnebel, made an appeal to the Vienna rally, saying: "We must increase our efforts so that there will be a change in consciousness and effective solidarity with the miners will develop throughout the workers' movement." ■

Also at the Amsterdam ADM and Fokker factories motions were adopted. The executive meeting of the shop stewards at the Amsterdam Dry Dock Company sent a letter to the FNV Confederation Council, the Transport Union and the national executive of the Industriebond. The burden of the motion was that the Transport Union should organize a real boycott of coal shipments to Britain. The miners called for this through the NUM. All of this outweighs the formal argument about having to wait for a call by the TUC or the International Transport Federation (ITF).

The shop stewards group at Fokker sent the following letter: "We are very concerned about the reports in *Vrij Nederland* that coal is being shipped out of the Amsterdam harbor to Britain, from South Africa, among other sources. The British miners have been waging a struggle for seven months to save the mines. We in the FNV have offered solidarity in various forms. Refusing to handle tainted cargo also seems to us to be one of the most important tasks for us in the FNV. We hope, therefore, that you will do everything possible in this respect."

The Rotterdam support committee is organizing a big official Christmas collection to be held from December 20 to December 22. At least a hundred collectors will go out with collection boxes and sandwich boards through the city. In the neighborhoods, there will be house-to-house collections, at bus, tram and metro stations, and on the Christmas shopping evenings in the big shopping centers.

On Saturday afternoon, December 22, there will be a final demonstration, with speakers, music and the announcement of the amount collected.

Many political groups, unions and humanitarian organizations have been asked to endorse this campaign. The first responses have been received. The FNV is supporting the action. A special poster is coming out that will be displayed on a wide scale. This collection and the publicity for it is the committee's chief activity up until the end of December.

Moreover, the committee is trying to get more information about the transport of coal. Contacts have been made with the FNV transport union. But this work is proving difficult. There

## Revolt in a colonialist "paradise"

Kanaks form 42 percent of the population of New Caledonia which is currently a French colony. Most of them live on native reservations whilst the ruling white population grows fat from what were once tribal lands.

Three days after the November 18 elections of the new government of the territory which is dominated by whites, Kanaks fighting for independence and led by the FLNKS (the Front for National and Socialist Liberation for the Kanaks), announced the establishment of a provisional government. This, they declared, was "to lay the basis for a future state of Kanaky." They also stepped-up their campaign involving the occupation of white-dominated lands, the blocking off of roads and the seizing of the sub-prefect, Jean-Claude Demar. All attempts by the government in Paris to do a deal with the Kanaks have failed and divisions have opened up within the French establishment on how to resolve the problem in a way which will protect French imperialist interests.

In the following article *Rouge*, paper of the French section of the Fourth International went on to analyse the events of the last few weeks.

Claude GABRIEL,  
Jean Jacque LAREDO

The determination of the Kanaks was reinforced by the success of the boycott of the territorial elections (about 80% of the Kanak population stayed away from the polls). Behind this action was the FLNKS. It has, therefore, kept the initiative.

The Front's activity turns around two major axes — campaigning for the release of the activists imprisoned during the election period and to force the government to back down and declare the elections null and void.

The FLNKS' hand has been strengthened in this regard because it was the mobilization that it organized that forced the Lemoine government to make its first

retreats — accepting the possibility of a dissolution of the Territorial Assembly and of holding a referendum in 1986.

The Kanaks dealt a severe defeat to

the government with the only weapons left to them by the colonial system. Most of the Kanaks are rural people consigned to native reservations. Their actions have, therefore, been directed at challenging the occupation of lands by the white colonists, the "Caldoches." Blockades have been erected on the country roads, isolating the "white" towns.

The development of French Caledonian society has been a continual attack on the Kanak population — theft of their land, rampant racism, and even assassination, for example, the murder of independence forces leader Pierre Declercq, in September 1981.

Despite the determination of the press to portray them as a band of savages on the war path, the FLNKS activists have demonstrated a high degree of responsibility in minimizing violence in the occupations and in taking officials into custody.

While the situation is not insurrectionary in the strict sense, it is no less true that the authorities do not control some rural areas. On the other hand, the question of political power will be decided ultimately in Noumea, the capital, and main town.

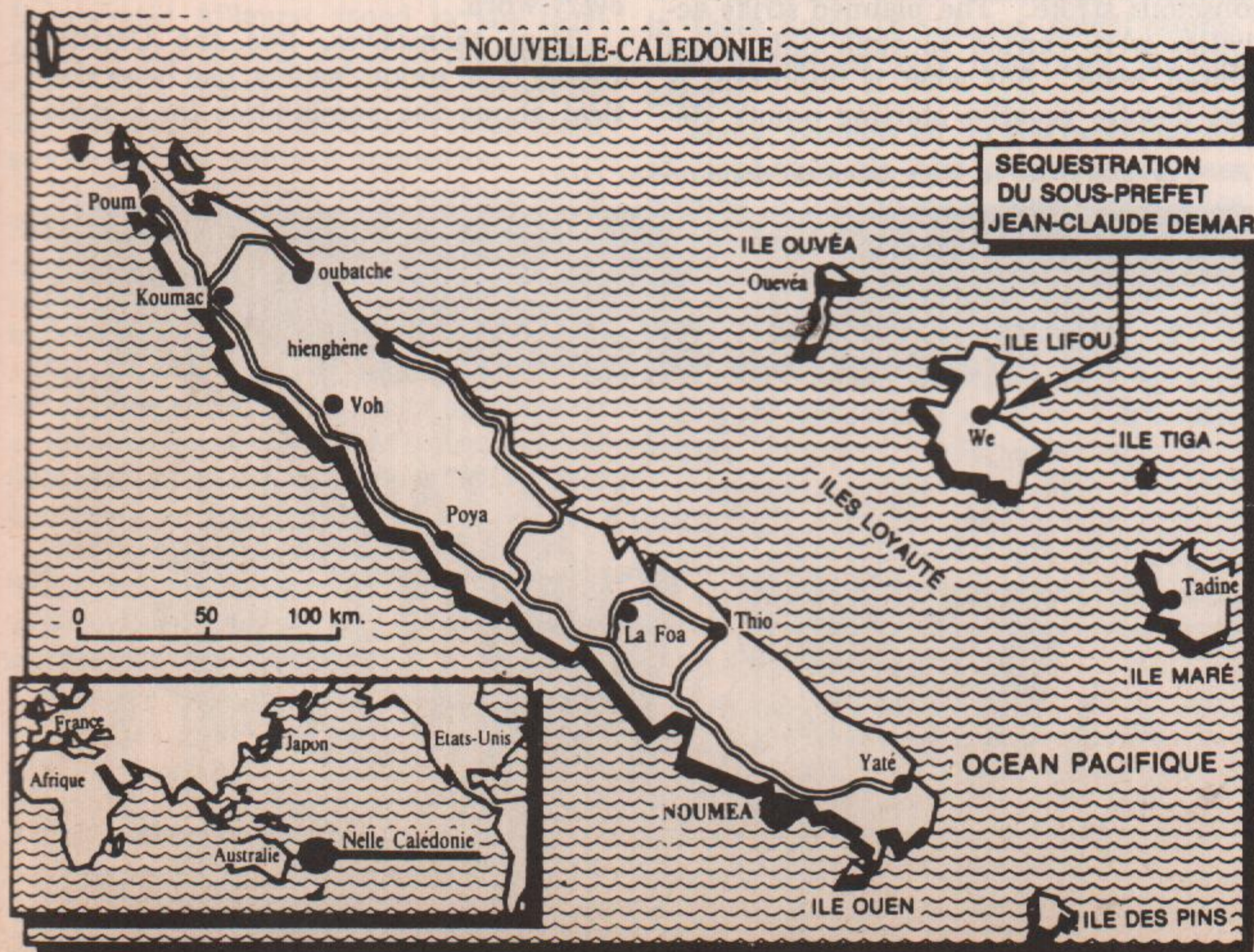
The argument most used to deny the Kanak people the sole right to determine

### STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

Meeting in Quimper, Brittany, on November 23, the following organizations expressed their solidarity with the Kanak people's struggle for independence and demanded that the French state cease its repression in New Caledonia and abandon all colonialist or neocolonialist policies.

Herri Batasuna [The People United, the major revolutionary nationalist political organization in the part of the Basque country that is in the Spanish state], EKIN [a Basque human-rights organization], the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire [French section of the Fourth International], Emgann [Victory, a Breton nationalist organization], the Union Democratique Bretonne, the Parti Communiste Marxiste Leniniste, Kuzhul an Dieubidigezh [Liberation Council, a Breton nationalist organization], Skol an Emsav [School of the Revival, a Breton nationalist cultural organization].

The statement was delivered to the Quimper Prefecture on November 24, and copies were sent to the FLNKS and the USTKE [Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Kanaks et Exploites — Union of Kanak Workers and Exploited].



the future of their country is that they are in a minority. If this is true, it is the result of a settlement policy stepped-up at the beginning of the 1970s. Furthermore, this argument is purely formal and changes nothing with respect to the "inherent right of the Kanaks to their land."

The position of the FLNKS has been deliberately ignored in order to suggest that it is racist. The founding congress of the Front clearly stated that "the country will remain open to all those who accept Kanak sovereignty." What is more, it should be noted that the FLNKS includes white activists, and that Pierre Declercq himself was white.

The nub of the problem both for the government and the right is that the independence forces are challenging the imperialist interests represented by the Caldoche population, and that is what the authorities want to portray as a racist reaction.

In demanding that only Kanaks be allowed to participate in a referendum on self-determination, the FLNKS is only

## The prospects for Pinochet's crackdown

asking for an elementary right, but one that undermines the legal status of the French presence in all the colonies.

The colonial administration has always used religion and local customs to induce the Kanaks to respect the framework and authority of its institutions. For some months, the government has been trying to break the unity of the independence movement. It thought it had scored a success when the Liberation Kanake Socialiste (LKS) left the Independence Front last July, coming out in support of the Lemoine scheme and deciding to participate in the elections. But the results proved not so satisfactory. The LKS proved able to attract the support only of a tiny minority, and then decided to withdraw the six representatives it elected from the Territorial Assembly so as not to discredit itself any more.

On the other hand, the FLNKS broadened with the entry of the Palika [Parti de Liberation Kanake, a group based mainly in the youth that had previously opposed the Front for being too moderate]. Lemoine's most recent proposals were aimed again at dividing the independence forces and preparing the ground for a scheme of neocolonial independence that would preserve French interests. A few days ago, he submitted a draft government communique to the FLNKS inviting "in particular the representatives of the FLNKS to discuss the conditions under which the Kanak people can exercise their right to self-determination." On November 25, the FLNKS grabbed the ball and ran with it. "Public dissemination of Mr Lemoine's communique is a condition for the FLNKS immediately releasing Mr Demar, chief of the Iles Loyaute subdivision." The communique stayed in the desk drawer, probably on the decision of Paris.

The government wants to extend the status of independence to New Caledonia. But the sort of "independence" it has in mind is one that would safeguard its control over raw materials, such as nickel, as well as its position in the Pacific trade, which plays a pivotal role in world commerce.

Lemoine's proposals were an attempt to gain the initiative before the radicalization of the Kanak masses made this impossible. They amount to an operation reminiscent of the one carried out in the 1950s in Africa — the establishment of an ambiguous transitional status opening the way for formal independence.

There are two obstacles to this project. One is the demand of the colonists and the bourgeois opposition parties in France. The RPR remains the main political defender of colonial interests. The other is that the FLNKS program includes as a fundamental point that only the Kanaks should decide the future of the territory.

So, the path for the government is a narrow one. In fact, it could not find anything better to do than to send a negotiator who was a former director general of the national police. That was symbolic enough! ■

On November 6 state of siege regulations were reimposed in the main regions of Chile. The emergency measures include a permanent curfew (from midnight to five a.m.) in five cities, restrictions on public meetings (which can be held only on the premises of the organisation involved or with the permission of the local military authority requested 10 days in advance) and a ban on the publication by the media of articles, interviews, reports or images which could be deemed contributory to a disturbance of public order.

The state of siege was declared after several *protestas* against the regime and the increasing growth of the underground opposition. It was an immediate response to the October 30 general strike which produced an average 50 per cent absentee rate. There was a particularly good turnout for the strike in the industrial sector. The Pinochet regime has responded in the most brutal fashion to this growing support for the opposition.

The repression marks the end of any pretence at liberalisation which had been pursued since 1980. Recent *protestas* have initially been weakened in this context, with Santiago, the country's capital, now virtually under military occupation. Our correspondent was in the city when the state of siege was declared and he describes the situation there.

Olle LIND

SANTIAGO DE CHILE — It seemed symbolic. On October 30, the day set for the first general strike in Chile, there was sunshine. But on November 7, when a state of siege was declared for the first time since 1978, it was as cold and rainy as the worst fall day. [Actually, it is late spring now in the southern hemisphere.]

Things are moving rapidly now in Chile, back and forth from hope to despair. Hopefully they will move as rapidly from fragmentation and ambiguity to unity and clarity in struggle.

The October 30 strike was an advance, but with limitations. It was not a total, conscious strike. The planned strike activities were carried through only on a limited scale. But what is important is that despite negative starting points, de-

spite the threat of shootings, despite the still poor level of trade-union organization, despite the fragmentation of the union movement, despite knowledge that the most important groups of workers had already decided not to participate, despite the preventive mass arrests, despite all this and more, the city of Santiago was paralyzed by midday on October 30. And not even the press most loyal to Pinochet could deny it.

When Rudolfo Seguel and Manuel Bustos, the two foremost leaders of the CNT (Comando Nacional de Trabajadores — Workers National Command) declared that the strike had been an advance beyond what they dared hope, they meant every word.

They themselves, like the Christian Democratic union leaders, had been skeptical about the possibilities for a strike.

'For a general strike to bring down the dictatorship' (DR)



It was only after the rank and file organizations made the decision on their own to strike that these leaders fell in behind the proposal. And even then they were hardly more convinced that the strike would actually come off than they were worried about losing their influence over the more militant groups of workers.

The CNT had developed a bad habit of launching proposals and then doing nothing to carry them out. That is what happened in the case of this strike. Previously at the end of April, the CNT had voted to call a general strike within 90 days. But the months went by, and it was only after the September 4 and 5 days of protest, when Comfasin (a body that represents the union base organizations and the national federation) decided on their own to adopt a strike motion, that the CNT finally gave a concrete content to its old resolution. But it still left the actual organization of the strike mainly to the base units.

On May 1, the CNT called for the formation of Mesas de Concertacion, coordinating committees for various people's base organizations, to discuss political solutions for the situation in the country. But, as with its strike call, it did not go much beyond words. Such Mesas de Concertacion do exist today in Santiago, but that is because the base organizations took up the task of implementing the CNT's proposal.

It was these Mesas de Concertacion that organized the strike through the unions, the neighborhood organizations, and the parties represented in them. But when the strike organized from below did actually come off, the CNT's leaders gave expression to what a lot of people thought: "Now there has to be an end to this disastrous fragmentation, now there has to be a real, united, total action to get rid of the dictatorship."

The CNT's leaders spoke forcefully, conscious that the strike had created a new situation in which they, and not the Democratic Alliance, stood in the forefront as the driving force in the opposition. This change was also perceived by the Democratic Alliance, as well as other sections of the political opposition.

Thus, for the first time perhaps since September 1973, a possibility exists for united action against the dictatorship, not to force it to make certain concessions but to get rid of it once and for all.

Pinochet saw that. And that is why he raised the threat of a state of siege in advance of the strike. That is also why he declared the state of siege on November 6, exactly one week after the strike.

The two attacks on the police that followed the strike gave Pinochet the pretext he was looking for, but they were not the cause of his decision.

Already before these attacks, there was a plan for "intensifying the struggle against terrorism." Already before the attacks, slingshots had been defined as a weapon in law, the possession of which means an automatic jail sentence. Already before the attacks, Pinochet had threatened to carry out a "new Septem-



*New repression in Chile (DR)*

ber 11" [The coup d'etat that put the dictatorship in power and resulted in mass imprisonments and the slaughter of 20,000 people started on September 11, 1973].

Moreover, a lot of people are asking who it was exactly that carried out the attack against the policemen. No one has yet taken responsibility for it. And who has the capacity to carry out this type of attack? First a land mine was detonated by a remote control device and then there was a coordinated attack against a police station from three separate cars. And then after such an attack, the authors just evaporated without making any statements! The questions remain.

But the most important unanswered question is what is going to happen now? In one respect, the answer is easy. But openings achieved by the struggle of recent years are being closed.

Already the headquarters of the Movimiento Democratico Popular (a coalition including the CP, the Almeyda faction of the SP and the MIR) and of the Bloque Socialista have been taken over. Trucks carried away everything that was in them down to the last pencil stump. And unmarked cars took away all the people.

Many, perhaps all, of the headquarters of nonbourgeois opposition groups are coming in for the same treatment. A lot of left leaders are being sent into internal exile, and in some cases expelled from the country. All meetings and political activity are being banned. The opposition papers and radio stations are being subjected to censorship or shut down altogether. The situation is hardening.

However, at the same time Pinochet is trying to get the non-Marxist opposition to enter into some sort of dialogue. He hopes that the internal elections coming up in the Christian Democratic Party will be favorable for him.

He is probably making a mistake, not in principle but because he put the cart before the horse, by launching a frontal attack on the Catholic church. He did this by refusing to allow the pastor of La Vicaria de Solidaridad, the Spanish priest Ignacio Gutierrez, to return to Chile from Europe, where he is now.

Pinochet has deported foreign priests before. But Ignacio Gutierrez is too high up in the Catholic hierarchy for the church or the Christian Democratic Party to accept such a measure against him.

Declaring a state of siege now is a sign of weakness. The mobilizations have been going on so long and have now involved so many people that they cannot be stopped, unless Pinochet carries out the same sort of total repression that was imposed in the wake of the coup.

The question, therefore, is whether this sort of repression is politically possible. The question is whether he may dig his own grave by provoking the sort of tensions in the armed forces that he has managed to avoid for the whole 11 years that he has been in power.

Now, under a night-time curfew, Santiago is silent. Here and there, you hear footsteps, a voice over a loudspeaker, gunfire or a bomb exploding. The mood is nervous, a feeling of insecurity.

What will the response of the masses be?

It would be unrealistic to think that they are not going to be affected by fear. It would be wishful thinking to believe that there can be any spontaneous uprising, or that Pinochet's repressive measures are automatically going to bring a reaction of greater unity and militancy.

However — and that is Pinochet's problem — even if he can temporarily push the movement back, it will be difficult to defeat it altogether. Pinochet is more isolated than ever. Even the National Party is against him. Major sections of the bourgeoisie want to be rid of him. The US State Department sees him as a problem, as a factor promoting a radicalization of the struggle.

Moreover, the new generation that is now in the forefront did not experience September 11, 1973. They have a different sort of experience and a different sort of organization. For them, even a state of siege does not mean shattered illusions but a decade-old tyranny demonstrating its impotence. It may be that this is the prelude to the final act for Pinochet. ■

## Elections under military surveillance

November 25 saw Uruguay's first general election for 13 years. Julio Sanguinetti, pro-US head of the bourgeois Colorado Party, was elected president with 39 per cent of the vote. His party will also dominate the Senate and Chamber of Representatives since cross voting was not allowed.

Although marking the end of 11 years of military rule the outcome was one favoured by the dictatorship. The elections took place amid rumours of official filtering and isolated incidents of violence.

In a tightly controlled 'transition' the military regime had secured an agreement with the leaders of the Colorado Party and the left-wing Frente Amplio which represented a serious infringement of democratic rights. It meant that, for example, two key figures in the elections including the leader of the Frente Amplio, Liber Seregni were not allowed to stand.

Nevertheless, the elections did demonstrate growing support for the Frente Amplio who in the key provincial vote lost the majority in Montevideo by less than two per cent. Across the country they received 20 per cent of the vote, which, though bourgeois commentators are quick to point out was less than predicted, it was nevertheless up on results in the last elections in 1971.

In this article, written before the elections, we examine the background and analyse the positions of the left in Uruguay.

Daniel JEBRAC

For the first time since the coup d'etat in 1973 general elections will be held in Uruguay on November 25. They mark a crucial new stage in the process of transition of the Latin American dictatorships since the controlled loosening up and the elections in Brazil in 1982, the fall of the dictatorial Garcia Meza regime in Bolivia and of the Argentine generals last year.

The Uruguayan dictatorship has distinguished itself by its failure to establish any kind of legitimacy. It was repudiated in the constitutional referendum that it organised in 1980. It was defeated in 1982 in the internal elections of the political parties, which saw a victory of those opposing the candidates favoured by the military. It has never managed to impose a mechanism of control on the trade-union movement.

Since May 1, 1983, repeated blows by the mass movement have shaken the foundations of the regime more and more. In November 1983, a united front meeting of all the opposition organisations brought 40,000 people to the capital Montevideo, in a country where the total population is 2,500,000. In January 1984, the Inter-union Workers Plenum (PIT) organised the first successful general strike since 1973.

On May 1 following, 350,000 workers gathered in front of a platform from which, at the request of the combative oil workers' union, representatives of the

bourgeois parties had been excluded. On June 16, a new wave of demonstrations developed in a campaign for amnesty for political prisoners and the return of all those living in exile. Finally on June 27, in response to a call from the PIT, a new 'national peoples strike' received the support of the entire opposition.

This rise in the mass movement is not simply reducible to a series of mobilisations for various activities. It went hand in hand with a massive and profound reorganisation of the workers' movement on the trade-union and political level.

The setting up of the PIT, for example, marked the continuation of the unitary tradition of the National Workers Central (CNT), which the dictatorship dissolved. The outlawing of the PIT after the general strike in January 1984 has had little effect in practice. (1)

In November 1983, the Frente Amplio (FA) which had been a pole of attraction for the left in the 1971 elections, where they gained 18 per cent of the votes, made its reappearance. It is mainly made up of four different organisations: the Communist Party (PC), the Christian Democracy (DC), the Socialist Party (PS) and a coalition of groups of the extreme left and the independent trade unions under the name of the Independent Democratic Left (IDI).

Of these four components only the Socialist Party and the Christian Democracy were legalised. In a few months time, the organisation at the base of the Frente Amplio took a huge leap forward,

with the setting up of more than 1,000 rank and file committees in Montevideo, with between thirty to fifty activists in each. The committee members canvassed the entire town meticulously, area by area and street by street.

For the leaders of the FA, the committees had an almost exclusively electoral function. But action-oriented groups have already begun to emerge within them especially on the question of the amnesty and freedom for political prisoners. This has given these committee structures a dynamic which is both activist and long-lasting, and which goes beyond the elections.

In terms of its political function, apart from any variations in its programme, the FA stands for three fundamental things:

— Firstly, they are for the unification of the workers' and peoples' struggle against the dictatorship. This is put forward in a context where the actual overthrow of the dictatorship would remain to be achieved after November 25 and will require defeating all attempts to carry out a succession that would maintain a continuity of the regime. The aspiration for unity, therefore, also remains central.

— Secondly, in practice, the FA has broken with the bourgeois two-party system based on the Colorado and Blanco National Parties. It is the workers' organisations (PC, PS, IDI) that constitute the centre of gravity of the FA. The presence within it of the Christian Democracy is certainly significant, but it is important to emphasise that this formation, despite its name, is not comparable to the Christian Democracy in Chile, for example. Because of the existence of the traditional two-party system, it is more an organisation of the petty bourgeoisie that participated in the resistance to the dictatorship.

— Finally, the character of the FA is reinforced by the links existing between it and the unified trade-union organisation, PIT. The FA is the political expression of the driving forces behind the PIT — that is, the independent trade unionists, Communists, Socialists and the far left.

After the days of action on June 16 and 27, and in the face of the growing reorganisation of the mass movement, the political situation seemed to have come to an impasse for the dictatorship. The negotiations of the traditional parties (Blanco and Colorado) with the military had reached a dead end. Neither the date nor the rules of the election had yet been worked out. The fate of the prisoners and the 'proscribed' (those excluded from political rights), the latter category including the leader of the National Party (Blanco), Ferreira Aldunate, and the exiles, still posed a major obstacle on the path to possible compromises between the dictatorship and the bourgeois parties.

The military and the traditional bourgeoisie were, however, urgently needed to

1. See IV, No 54, June 4, 1984.





*Demonstrating for amnesty in Uruguay (DR)*

find a way out of the situation. Already the bourgeois opposition had been forced to go in behind the national strike initiative launched by the PIT on June 27. In contrast to the Argentine situation, the radicalisation and organisation of the mass movement could accelerate and upset plans for a controlled transition that were being concocted by both the bourgeoisie and the military.

As a result of negotiations that were conducted virtually in secret, without information going to the base and without consultation, the leadership of the FA itself, in the end, helped the bourgeoisie and the military to get out of this tight corner. They signed the so-called Naval Club agreements with the Colorado Party and the government last August. These agreements fixed the date and conduct of the elections; in exchange for opposition concessions in the area of democratic demands. These were as follows:

- That there would be no general amnesty prior to the elections.

- That some political parties (like the Communist Party and the far left) as well as political leaders would remain proscribed. This would mean that, for example, Ferreira Aldunate for the National Party (Blanco) and Liber Seregni for the FA, would not be able to stand.

- The Naval Club invented the concept of a 'state of insurrection' — an undefined category which would enable military justice, if the case arose, to overrule civil procedures.

- The Constituent Assembly that was to be elected by the November 25 elections would not be able to annul these agreements for at least a year.

These agreements evidently constituted a three-sided compromise. They dropped the democratic demands, and in so doing, compromised the legitimacy of the elections themselves, since so many proscribed and banned people would be excluded from them. They also undermined the sovereignty of the future con-

stituent assembly, placing it in a straight-jacket for at least a year.

In fact, these agreements represent a modification without consultation or debate of the 1967 constitution, whose full restoration the democratic opposition had previously been demanding.

### Free all political prisoners

The justification being given by the FA leaders for signing these agreements was that the mass movement had reached its peak in the June mobilisations, and that it had become necessary to attempt to get out of the impasse. From this standpoint, all future progress depended on the opening up of the electoral process in a country which has the strongest democratic and parliamentary traditions in Latin America. Some argued that the Naval Club agreements were nothing but a scrap of paper to leave the military a way out, and that once the Assembly was elected they could immediately convene new elections, this time without restrictions...

The agreements, in fact, had a rather different import. Their immediate effect was to reduce the mass movement to a state of passivity and to block any further progress, in anticipation of what the elections would reveal. Behind this constitutional pact some very important things are at stake. The effects of the economic and social crisis are such and the reorganisation of the masses so thorough-going that, unlike in Argentina or Brazil, the bourgeoisie needed to achieve both a constitutional pact (which it got in the Naval Club agreements) and a social pact, which has not yet materialised, before even opening up the transition period.

It appears, within this perspective, that after the acceptance by the FA of the agreement, the leaders of the Communist Party in fact were put toward the head of the list in the release of political

detainees and the return of exiles. This seemed to be to give them a sort of boost toward reestablishing their control over a movement which had been badly damaged. In fact, after his liberation last March the well-known leader of the FA, Liber Seregni, stepped-up his appeals for moderation and dialogue, as others have done more recently, when he appeared at the Latin American conference of the Socialist International which took place in Rio de Janeiro in September.

The initial programme of the FA [for the elections] has been watered down and is today a long way away from the demands put forward in the PIT platform. (2) This new programme calls for strict delimitation of the proper tasks of the army, including raising its 'professional and ethical level'. On the other hand, it fails to put forward any proposals for an enquiry into torture or for charges against the torturers. In Uruguay, in fact, the practice of torture reached such levels that the bringing to justice of the torturers and the purging of the repressive institutions could become as explosive an issue as that of the 'missing persons' in Argentina.

The FA programme takes up the rights of workers to participation and control in the various social, economic and political fields but it has no specific demand on wages or jobs. Demands such as the recovery of the buying power lost under the dictatorship or for the rehiring of all workers who were victimised for trade-union activity have to be seen as basic democratic demands, as well as social demands.

Finally, although the new programme reasserts the need for a planned economy and for the nationalisation of the banks, in very general terms, it is quite evasive about the need to reject the policies of the International Monetary Fund, and says nothing about the payment of debts or the possibility of a unilateral moratorium.

In fact, in the drawing up of this programme, every door seems to have been left open to the signing of a social pact and for a compromise on the economic and social demands of the popular masses. Indeed, these questions were issues even before the elections.

Ferreira Aldunate's National Party (Blanco) is the only one of the large organisations that has not signed the Naval Club agreements. It was as if the National Party had, at least partially, snatched the mantle of democratic intransigence from the FA. There is no doubt that its apparent radicalism has earned the party an important audience especially among the youth. But at the same time as rejecting this agreement, the National Party was also deeply involved in the negotiations on the social pact that began in August.

This is in fact the nub of the situation. Democratic issues such as the liberation of all prisoners, starting with the

2. Ibid.

historic leader of the National Liberation Movement (Tupamaros), Raul Sendic, and the return of the exiles, such as the old leaders of the March 26 Movement (an organisation of the revolutionary left), Ruben Sassano and Benedetti, are still very explosive demands. They are demands that already tend to combine and directly link up with fundamental social questions.

As on the question of democratic rights, with the constitutional pact, the Frente seemed prepared to make a compromise on these social questions as well. But in this area they will run into organised resistance from the ranks of the PIT, which will be a lot sharper than that provoked by the signing of the Naval Club agreements. The PIT congress initially set for September of this year was eventually postponed until after the elections, perhaps because of a fear that it might adopt positions in contradiction with the compromises which the FA leadership has been fixing up behind the scenes.

This is also the reason why the FA leadership has been stalling since last March in answering the request to extend membership of the front to organisations such as the March 26 Movement and the Socialist Workers Party (PST — an organisation that has asked for membership of the Fourth International), who have a right to be members since they participated in the formation of the FA in 1971.

As the comrades of the PST note, the two latter organisations have never attempted to build any other kind of alliance, unlike the Communist Party, which called, in 1982, for a vote for the National Party, and during that time held up the prospect of a long-term alliance with that party. But it appears that any member organisation of the FA has the right to veto its decisions. The Independent Democratic Left has already criticised the Naval Club agreements.

The incorporation of new revolutionary currents into the FA would strengthen the combative wing of the movement, and that is why the leadership decided to drag the thing out and not to admit any new organisations until after the elections. Basically, the refusal of the FA leadership to respond positively to the demand of the PST for membership is a response to the latter's denunciation of the Naval Club agreements and its rejection of any kind of social pact (see following documents for the position of the PST on these questions).

Under the Uruguayan electoral system, every party or legalised political organisation can put forward a candidate for the election of the president of the republic. The election of MPs and councilors is done through the presentation of lists and sub-lists, which are put up by parties or factions within political organisations like the FA' (3) Within this juridical framework, the PST decided to call for a vote for the Frente Amplio in the presidential elections and in the others to call specifically for a vote for the IDI slate within the FA.



'This is not an empty cage.  
It is a bird that has been freed.' (DR)

In a statement on October 8, the PST reaffirmed that it 'considers that the Frente Amplio represents a framework for unity of the parties and groups that seek to represent the working class and popular masses that cannot be bypassed.

'That is why, despite our differences with the current majority of the FA assembly we are marching alongside the mass of Frente supporters who see in this organisation an instrument for unity that will enable them to take the first steps on the road to a complete break with the bosses and imperialism. But added to what we have already said about the FA, a new political factor has to be taken into account which is very important: the political project outlined by the Democratic Independent Left and which is developing today within the Frente....

'We refer to the position of IDI for the socialisation of the means of production and for class struggle as the driving force of such a transformation, and to the strategy based on the mobilisation of the people. We refer also to the decision of this organisation to devote itself to building a Uruguayan revolutionary socialist party whose backbone would be the organised working class.... That is why the PST is supporting the candidates of the IDI and is actively taking part in the electoral campaign in accordance with this position.'

In an open letter to the comrades of the IDI, on the same day, the PST explained more precisely the meaning they attached to this vote by stating that 'we think that it is essential to get a vote for working-class and popular unity that can promote the interests of the workers and popular masses. This will be a vote that strengthens the trade-union, student and cooperative movements, which is for human rights and other expressions of the popular movement. It will be a vote for decent wages and working conditions, for a democratic educational system and for a policy to provide health care and housing for the people. It will be a vote for a break from the starvation policies of the IMF. It will be a vote for a full

amnesty without restriction for political prisoners, the return of the exiles and the lifting of all proscriptions imposed on individuals or parties. It will be a vote for the reappearance of the detained 'missing persons' and for the trial and punishment of those responsible for the crimes, tortures and disappearances. In fact we believe that it will be a vote for the complete and utter defeat of the dictatorship and for the construction of a socialist Uruguay.'

To organise this electoral campaign the PST opened discussions with the IDI. But what is at stake in these talks goes beyond the issue of the elections themselves. Despite its heterogeneity, the IDI basically organises the main sections of the combative and revolutionary left. It embraces the Party for the Victory of the People (PVP); the United Action Group (GAU), which is organised around the textile trade-union leader, Hector Rodriguez. Most importantly, it includes a number of independent trade unionists and members of the March 26 Movement, such as Victor Semproni, the coordinator of PIT and the leader of the bank employees' union.

IDI published a draft programme which was adopted last August (see following pages), and proposes to constitute itself as a party at a congress that will take place in 1985. The general parameters of the draft programme represent an important advance. The positions adopted by IDI followed the lines of a class-struggle orientation, rejecting the Naval Club agreements as well as the proposed social pact.

Between the general project for a socialist and pluralist society and the IDI's immediate class-struggle demands on social and democratic questions, there is a missing link. That is, there is no intermediate-term strategic perspective. But the situation coming out of the elections will undoubtedly pose new challenges and will force all those involved in the IDI to make new political definitions.

It is likely that the differences which have already appeared within the Frente Amplio will grow under the pressure of having to confront the question of what attitude to take to the proposals for a social pact in the upcoming PIT congress, as well as the problems of governmental and municipal-level coalitions, and the continuation of the fight for democracy.

A clarification of IDI around these points could create new conditions for building a revolutionary party firmly implanted in the Uruguayan workers' movement and for achieving a synthesis of several experiences and traditions that have developed in the recent history of the workers' movement in this country. ■

3. In this way the FA can put forward several slates for the legislative and municipal elections, representing the various currents within it. All the parties and coalitions operate this way. The winner is the party of the coalition that gets the highest total of votes on all the slates it endorses. Then, the seat goes to the slate within the winning coalition that got the highest vote.

# The positions of the Socialist Workers Party (PST)

The Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) was set up in 1968. In 1973 it changed its name to the Socialist Workers Party. From 1972 to 1976 it was in the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction of the Fourth International. After this, it belonged to the Bolshevik faction organised by Nahuel Moreno. In 1980, the PST broke with the latter current, which had split with the Fourth International a year earlier.

From that time on, discussions developed within the ranks about its international links. They were concluded in the January 1984 congress, which voted by a large majority in favour of applying for recognition as the Uruguayan section of the Fourth International at the latter's next World Congress. On this occasion the PST also adopted the principle of integrating itself at all levels in the Frente Amplio, a coalition which they had participated in before the coup in 1973.

Since 1978, the PST has put out a regular newspaper, *Unidad Socialista*, and since last May the comrades of the PST have been publishing, in collaboration with the Brazilian comrades, a monthly edition of *Inprecor* for the Southern Cone of Latin America.

We publish below a series of positions taken by the PST and reprinted from *Unidad Socialista*.

## Defending the gains of the workers and peasants

...The open negotiations that have begun between various social and political forces in the country do not have the objective of establishing the framework for an opposition front in the struggle against the dictatorship and for democracy. Nor do they aim to elaborate the attitudes held by these different forces in the present period. On the contrary, the aim is to define, and decide on, the political approach to adopt in the next period of government.

In general terms the workers' and peasants' movement has never been, and is still not, opposed to negotiation. That is, obviously, insofar as it does not tie their hands, or downgrade or efface their demands, and does not amount to dealing away over a table what the people have won in the streets through struggle. The main problem is the conditions under which such negotiations are carried out and the forms they take.

For the workers and peasants, these negotiations can represent a step forward by satisfying specific demands, as much on the level of democratic rights as on the economic level. But it is important to take into account that negotiations can be used by the bosses and their political representatives to obstruct the advance of the vast majority of the oppressed and exploited in their struggle to achieve their objectives. The outcome will depend, in the last analysis, on the social and political relationship of forces that tips the situation in one direction or the other.

Above all it must be remembered that whatever agreement may be reached, the

workers' and peasants' movement must retain total independence in its aims and activity. Such an agreement must not be confused with a truce designed to hold back or postpone the expression of popular demands.

Moreover, all agreements must be discussed democratically, beforehand, by the popular and working class organisations. And the only framework in which workers can democratically approve or reject such agreements is a sovereign con-

ference of the entire organised workers' movement, after a thoroughgoing discussion amongst the rank and file.

From this point of view any kind of secret or private negotiations must be opposed from now on. This cannot be accepted in any form. After 11 years of systematic disinformation and total negation of people's right to participate in national decisions, the working class and other sectors of the population are entitled more than at any other time to know the views of particular sections — be they parties or social organisations — about issues which concern them.

This right is all the more imperative if you take account of the fact that we are in the middle of an electoral process in which the population should be deciding on November 25 what sort of government they want to represent them. We must also remember that the current negotiations are taking place in a situation where all sorts of arbitrary practices and restrictions on democratic rights are being perpetrated. And almost all of this is being directed against sections of the popular and workers' movement.

Finally, it is important to state clearly what the problems are that the workers' movement considers must be settled immediately and therefore non-negotiable. That is, what are the limits of acceptability for any agreement? The democratic and popular programme that was forged in the struggle focuses on three conditions that the people expect to see implemented immediately at the negotiating table.

In the first place, they demand that all forces participating in the negotiations commit themselves to an immediate and general amnesty without restrictions. This should mean the release of all political prisoners, without exception, the return of all the exiles, an end to proscription of people and parties and the reappearance of 'missing persons'.

*The Frente Amplio out on the streets (DR)*



At the same time, the people are demanding the opening of an enquiry and the punishment of those responsible for crimes, disappearances and torture; the dismantling of the repressive apparatus; and the abolition of all institutional decrees, including Decree No 19.

Secondly, full trade-union rights must be granted. This means an end to the trade-union laws and to the restrictions on the right to strike; a guarantee of the right to organise; and a recognition of organisations that the workers consider to represent them. All this must, of course, be accompanied by the full restoration of civil rights.

Thirdly, the economic reconstruction of the country must not be achieved on the basis of more sacrifices for the workers and peasants. It must be accomplished through a real increase in wages and pensions, starting with the implementation of the PIT demand for an immediate wage increase of 3,000 pesos and the fixing of a national minimum wage at 7,500 pesos.

Once that is achieved, it will be possible to move on towards a redistribution of the nation's wealth, this time in the interests of the vast majority of the exploited and oppressed. Real wages cannot be increased by just increasing the formal amounts, only to see these raises wiped out by inflation and a rise in the cost of living, as we have already witnessed. Higher wages have to be assured through a mechanism for guaranteeing them, with wages and pensions adjusted on a quarterly basis in line with the cost of living. This is the only way to halt the downward spiral of real wages and to begin to reverse the trend.

Moreover, this much must be clear: an increase in the buying power of the masses is an indispensable precondition for carrying out the democratic reconstruction of the country. ■

*Unidad Socialista*, No 48  
September 20, 1984



*The PST flag (DR)*

## Open letter to the militants of Frente Amplio

For three months, from March to June of this year, the PST held discussions with executive members of the Frente Amplio, seeking the right to send a delegate from our organisation to their assembly. We got no response to this request.

The request was made before the first meeting of the FA assembly inside the country, which was held in April 1984. At that time new organisations which had not figured among the ones that founded the FA were incorporated, which is a very good thing. The question of our integration, however, was still avoided.

For three more months from June to

August the PST continued to make this request to the FA assembly, asking for a decision to accept us into the organisation. But we got no reply.

Because of this, after six months without getting a response from any section of the leadership of the FA, we began to address ourselves to the rank-and-file committees in which the majority of our comrades are already involved, in order to inform them of our current relations with the FA.

As the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), we participated in the founding of the FA [in 1971], and we participated in it right up until the time when it

ceased to function inside the country following the 1973 coup d'état. We have fought shoulder to shoulder with all those in the resistance to the dictatorship for 11 years and have taken our share of comrades imprisoned, exiled, tortured or 'missing'.

Most of this time we have operated under the name of the PST, which we adopted in 1973. When the FA reappeared, we gave our full support to all its decisions. We campaigned for a 'no' vote in 1980 [against the constitutional referendum organised by the military]. We called for a blank vote in 1982 [the elections to choose officials in the legal political parties] at a time when other organisations inside the FA hesitated or adopted ambiguous positions toward the traditional parties.

We did not make any alliances outside of the FA or, still less, give any priority to, or put any other united organisations ahead of, the front.

For this reason we find the obstacles that have been put in the way of our participation in the assembly and other sections of the FA completely inexplicable.

In fact, it has to be said that since its creation, we have supported the main programmatic documents of the coalition, and that this support has not been passive but that we have expressed it in our press at the worst moments of the repression. *Unidad Socialista* has been published regularly from the start of 1978 as an organ of resistance to the dictatorship.

Is this what prevents us being integrated into the FA? We do not think that our total opposition to the Naval Club agreements is a reason, because in this respect our position is similar to that of other organisations within the FA, such as the IDI.

Eleven years of participation in the resistance have forged within our party an unshakeable determination to restore democracy without restrictions or distortions. But this, of course, should not be an obstacle to our entry into the FA assembly.

We heard some comments according to which the problem was bringing in organisations 'which stand for violence'. This was a reference to the methods used by or advocated by certain organisations. The PST is not for violence, and neither is it pacifist. We respect, in the first instance, the methods that the working class and popular movement choose to defend their demands. We would have been 'for violence' on the part of the FSLN and the people of Nicaragua against Somoza in 1979, and we are today with the FMLN in El Salvador, and we are not ashamed to say so.

But we have demonstrated peacefully alongside the Uruguayan people in all the meetings and demonstrations against the dictatorship in the last few years, because that is what the Uruguayan people wanted.

It is clear that neither our intransigent stance for democracy, nor our methods which are adopted by the

Uruguayan people in defence of their rights, should prevent our full integration into the Frente Amplio. So what is standing in the way of a positive decision?

This is the question we are asking you and every other comrade in the rank-and-file FA committees. And we hope to get a reply that is frank and open and does not dishonour the democratic tradition of the FA.

Most of all, we hope for a decision that will not be a stab in the back to the

unity achieved by FA militants in the streets and alongside the population as a whole.

We want to be part of the Frente Amplio at all levels with full rights and obligations.

We make this appeal to the base of the FA, and we trust that these militants will not allow our entry into the FA to be blocked any longer. ■

Montevideo, August 25, 1984

## Free all political prisoners

On Wednesday September 12, 1984, the supreme military tribunal pronounced sentence on the six comrades arrested in March 1982 and accused of being members of the Socialist Workers Party (PST). Alicia Locatelli, Cecilia Duffau, Jorge Frutos, Roberto Rodriguez, and Diego and Ulises Negro were all condemned to three years and three months in prison.

These sentences were unjust in three ways. Firstly, because we consider any judgement on civil matters by military justice unacceptable.

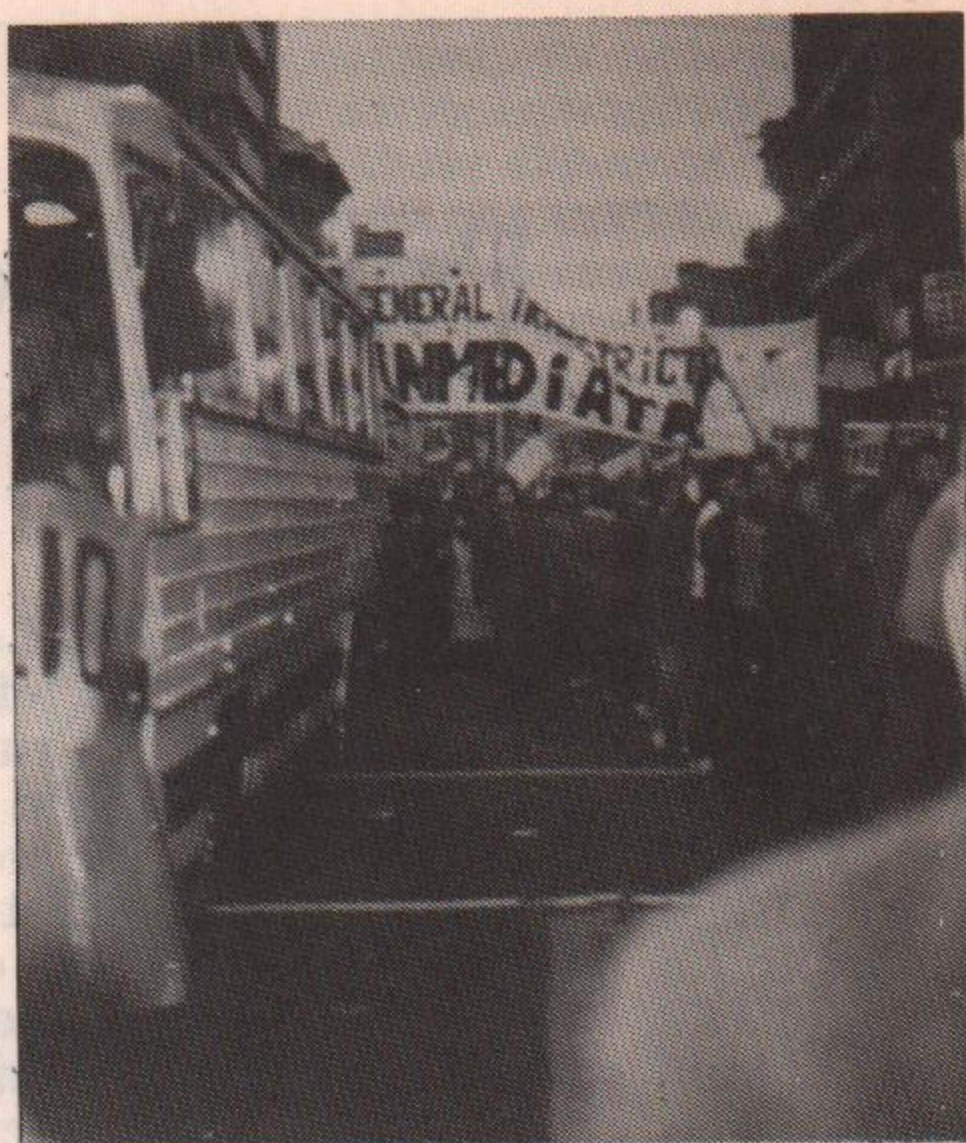
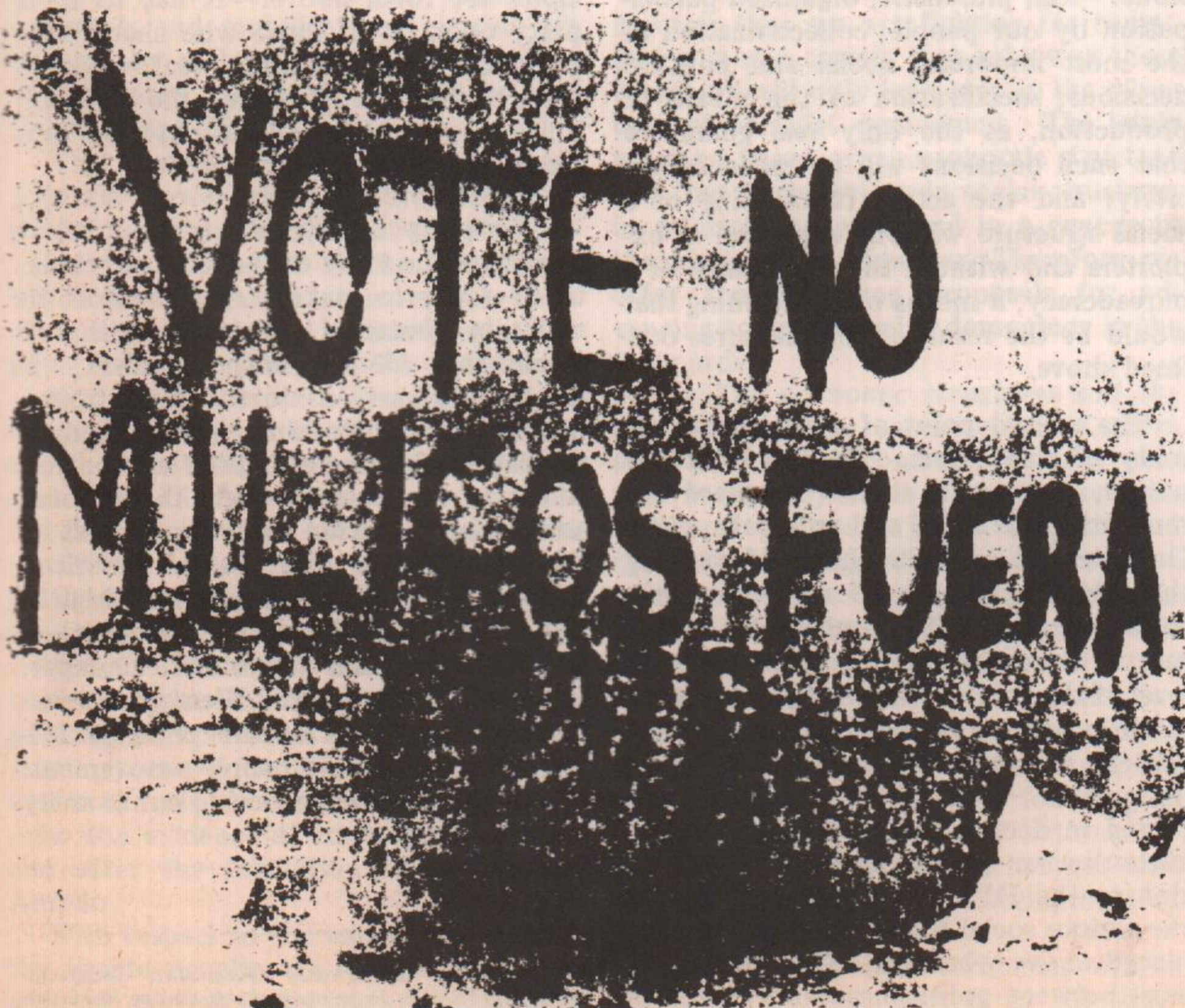
Secondly, because the whole trial is null and void in the sense that all the defendants' statements were extracted under torture as is the case in all trials conducted by the military tribunal. This is a well-known fact amongst judges, magistrates and lawyers.

As a result of his treatment in detention, Jorge Frutos had to be taken to a military hospital with severe cardiovascular problems and Alicia Locatelli suffers from permanent lesions of the heart, stomach and bones.

Thirdly, the sentences were unjust because in the case of these comrades there were no 'related offences', to use the legal jargon. Thus, the sentence of three years and three months which has been meted out to them is simply for holding certain opinions — and this is also unacceptable from the point of view of democratic rights.

'The prisoners are in the hands of Silva Ledesma (the best known torturer in Uruguay)', stated a relative of one of the prisoners during a press conference held

'Vote no! Military out!' (DR)



after a meeting last week between a delegation of the *Multipartidario* (a political regroupment of the National Party, the PS and the PC) and the commanders in chief of the army.

The acceptance in the Naval Club agreements that the decisions about releasing the political prisoners would remain in the hands of the supreme military tribunal has made all five hundred political prisoners virtual hostages of the dictatorship.

Today, with two months to go to the elections they are continuing to convict people for crimes of opinion, giving them sentences of more than three years. This is a total disrespect for the law and for justice.

What is more, on Monday September 17, the spokesperson of the supreme military tribunal announced that no review of the trials was envisaged between now and December, which gives some idea of the significance that the military attaches to the 'compromise' agreements of the Naval Club.

We demand the immediate release of the six comrades and of all political prisoners. As we have stated on other occasions, the November elections should not be used to hold back the demand for an immediate and general amnesty without restrictions. On the contrary, even the smallest opportunity should be used to deepen the struggle for freedom of all political prisoners.

The Frente Amplio has called a demonstration for a general amnesty without restrictions on September 26.... The only way to get Silva Ledesma's hands off our prisoners is to step up the campaign for the release of every one of them.

There should be no truces with their goalers as long as there is a single comrade left in these horror chambers of death and torture which is what the prisons of Libertad, Punta de Rieles and the other places of detention, are. ■

*Unidad Socialista*, No 48,  
September 20, 1984

# Program of the Independent and Democratic Left

The Independent and Democratic Left (IDI) is a grouping of organizations and activists representing the left wing of the Frente Amplio. Under the umbrella of the Frente, it will run its own slates in the November 25 local elections. In August, it made public a draft program in which it defined itself as an instrument for creating a new party and for "waging a more effective struggle for a socialist society, to ensure that the authoritarian link is only the last one in the chain (1), to help to prepare the way for replacing capitalism and dependence with a new system." This program is built around four cardinal principles: "participatory democracy, socialization of the means of production, a strategy based on mobilizing the masses, and an international policy of nonalignment with any decision-making center."

The following are major extracts from the programmatic platform of the IDI.

In Uruguay in recent decades, capitalism has starkly revealed its fundamental incompatibility with the needs of the masses and of the nation. It combines social exploitation, subordination to foreign powers, and stagnation in the domestic economy; and it engenders political dictatorship....

In these last ten years, the crisis has grown more acute. Financial speculation has assumed a central place and become completely dominant over productive activities. Wages and living standards are worse than anything ever experienced in the modern history of Uruguay.

The authoritarian neoliberal economic policy imposed has favored the finance sector. At the same time, it has spectacularly increased foreign control over our financial system. The achievement of such dominance by the financial wing of the ruling class and this readjustment of dependence have created a new mechanism for appropriating the social wealth produced by the workers. This process has been accompanied at the same time by spiraling foreign debt, which has contributed in a decisive way to increasing the foreign control over the country.

The political attitudes of big businessmen show the historical continuity between the last ten years and the preceding stages. It has to be remembered that a lot of the capitalists who are protesting today against authoritarian neoliberalism and thereby helping to isolate the regime, in the past, supported the implementation of such policies. This attitude was maintained as long as profits were increasing, as was the case for certain export industries up to 1981, for the big stock raisers up till 1978 and 1979, and for the biggest building firms up to 1981.

To sum up, the dictatorship set up in 1973 was the last link in a chain, one more attempt to rescue the dependent capitalist system that oppresses the working class and all the working people, blocks the development of the country, and promotes the interests of the oligarchy, foreign capital and imperialism....

## Socialist democracy

The political project we are fighting for is based on five basic points of departure.

The first is that this political project is designed to bring about a revolutionary transformation of Uruguayan society. Being convinced that dependent capitalism is fundamentally incompatible with the needs of the masses and of the nation, we are putting forward the historical perspective of replacing this system with one that can bring liberation, a system that we call socialist democracy.

We conceive of socialist democracy as a system based on four essential foundations: real, pluralistic, organized participation by our people; collectivization of the most important social and political decisions; socialization of the means of production, as the only real guarantee that such decisions will be made collectively; and the actual functioning of a social structure without exploited or exploiters and without the dominance of a bureaucracy, a means of functioning that would be the result of the measures outlined above.

The second point of departure is the unity of all the left. The left has to be united, because it is the vanguard for renovating the social and political system. Only the left can take charge of carrying through this process of deep-going historical change. The unity of the left means the confirmation on the political level of the unity of the workers, students, small producers, urban and rural small owners, and other sections of the working people — the unity that has been forged in decades of struggle against the authoritarian policy applied in subjection to the IMF. This political unity of the various social forces can, and must, be placed above whatever differences might exist between political currents or organizations with respect to their view of the society we are fighting for.

Our third point of departure in this project is a reaffirmation of the historical tasks assumed by the Frente Amplio as the political instrument of the struggle for a program to fight against the oligarchy and for national liberation. Thirteen years after the formation of the Frente Amplio, including ten years of repressive authoritarianism, which have produced substantial changes in our social life, after all this the significance and weight of this coalition and of its leader have not only not diminished, but have increased.

The effectiveness of the political instrument created by the Uruguayan left in its quest for unity is increasing more than ever. This coalition is occupying more and more space in the political spectrum, as is shown by the growing influence of the Frente and its president among the Uruguayan people.

Our fourth point of departure is stressing the need for strengthening the Frente Amplio and all the organized forms of the people's movement. The tasks must be assumed collectively by the fraternal organizations that belong to the coalition. Among these tasks, one is, however, a fundamental one for all — the political organization of the independent left into a party.

This must be a party incorporating those who support the project of socialist democracy rooted in the specific conditions of Uruguay. It has to grow out of practical convergence in the course of social struggle. It has to be able to give organizational form to the ideological contributions and traditions of struggle of a very broad range of organizations and comrades who agree with the principles set forth above. It has to be a party open to all those who share these proposals and are doing real work to achieve them, who assume the responsibility to work politically to put them into practice.

This party has to take as its point of departure the unity of the left as a whole, to be ready to make a special effort to maintain fraternal relations with all forces that identify with socialism. It has to be a party conscious of the fundamental role the working class is called on to play in building a socialist alternative. It has to integrate the fight for national and social liberation into the context of the struggle of the Latin American peoples for their emancipation. And in this respect it will have to take particularly into account the historical experiences of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions, as well as of the setbacks suffered by the Chilean people's movement, by the people's movement in our country and elsewhere.

1. This is apparently Aesopian language meaning that it is necessary to assure that the alternation of bourgeois democratic and dictatorial governments stops here, with an advance toward socialism. — IV.

Our fifth point of departure concerns the role of the rank and file. Our political project is one that is to be built from the bottom up. This work must be based on a practice of internal democracy, which is indeed the fundamental base for uniting and organizing the independent left. More than a method of work — although it is that — the active and organized participation of the rank and file is one of the central features of our ideological profile. From this standpoint, our profile is based on the objective of establishing a genuinely democratic people's government. This goal is vital in order to assure that the Frente Amplio can offer a real political solution for transforming Uruguayan society. It is in this context that our project looks fundamentally to the workers and to their struggle to achieve a society in which they will be the major moving force....

The political movement that we are building takes its inspiration from various past social struggles. From a historical standpoint, it shares the democratic and radical traditions that emerged in the epic of Artigas (2) and which were expressed in a series of economic proposals (such as the Land Settlement of 1815), as well as social and economic ones that made up the program of liberation for which the Uruguayan people fought under the perceptive leadership of Jose Artigas.

### A party for a socialist revolution

This initial struggle also gave impetus to other movements in the history of our country. One of the expressions of this tradition was the movement for mass education. This tradition later manifested itself in workers' struggles, in various proposals and mobilizations by the left inspired by socialist principles, as well as in the more advanced currents of the Colorado and Blanco parties.

This process clearly took on great potential power with the development of a strong workers' movement closely linked to the activity of all the left forces, which took the lead in innumerable days of mass struggle, the culminating point being the heroic general strike of 1973.

Our most recent history has left us every clear evidence of the growing closer together that has been sought and promoted by all those who are for a socialism deeply rooted in our specific national conditions and a style of work that is participatory, democratic, antidogmatic, and always open to discussion and self-criticism. We might cite many important examples in this respect, mention prolonged experiences of political intervention among workers and students, and in the neighborhoods. We might consider the evidence of convergence before and after the formation of the Frente Amplio.

With respect to the experience around the Frente Amplio, we should mention a series of actions that arose and developed in the framework of the base committees of the Frente, as well as various forms of

participation in all the elections of the period that began with the plebiscite in 1980....

Another important factor that distinguishes us is that the step we want to take today involves adopting a more developed form of organization — the creating of a party of the independent left. It is in this way that we want to put the crowning touch to a process that has passed through some extremely important stages. And in order to do this, we want to adopt a unified political structure for all of those who have been involved in this project, and in so doing abandon our past separate identities. This political initiative will impart greater strength, organization and impetus to a broad tradition, to the democratic and national vital forces that are today oriented toward the fight for a socialist program encompassing all spheres of social life.

The social project we want for Uruguay assumes a recognition of the fact that in today's world a transition is underway from capitalism to socialism. To participate in this process there is no single road or single national form but a variety of forms and roads that have already appeared and others that will appear in the future.

In this context, we are raising the banner of socialism here and now, recognizing its universal values and incorporating our special national features. No one can say today what Uruguayan socialism will look like in the end. It is the organized people who will build the road to socialism and will give it its concrete context. But what we want to do is to propose a specific historic phase on this road.

It is certain that the path will become wider after we recover the democratic liberties that we are fighting for today. But it is also certain that achieving these freedoms will only be a step in the direction of socialist democracy. The latter must be based on an economic structure and find its reflection in social structure, in political systems, and in a change in the relationships of power. Therefore, we offer the following proposals for advancing toward socialist democracy in the same order.

— *The economic structures and the roads toward the socialization of economic life.* The economic basis for genuine democracy lies in the collective ownership of the means of production and the collective organization and direction of the productive process. In the historic phase that we are referring to in this proposal, state ownership is one of the means of socialization. But it is not the only one. Cooperatives and all similar forms of self-managed associations, for example, can open the way for the prevailing of the collective and national interest and for creating mechanisms that can give impetus to the development of people's power....

On this basis, state ownership will be the road to socialization in all those cases where the most important features overall are the strategic character of the

industry concerned, its national importance, and a strong concentration of capital. Besides those sectors in which the Uruguayan state has traditionally intervened, today the clearest examples of sectors in which socialization is needed are finance, a series of key industries, and all the country's international economic relations.

In other cases, this fundamental course of socialization will be pursued through the transformation of the social relations of production in the sphere of private ownership. This transformation will make the workers the central active force in this sector, in the framework of cooperative and self-management organizations in which they will collectively exercise ownership of the basic industrial products, organize production and determine the destination of the goods produced.

All this does not exclude the possibility that in certain sectors the two forms we have just defined will be combined, through the setting up of collaboration between state enterprises and collective or private organizations of the type described above. On the other hand, we have to accept the fact that both in the cities and in the rural areas there will continue to be a significant range of small-scale businesses that will continue to develop for a long time on an individualistic basis. The big change from the past will be the general context in which these activities will be placed. It will be one dominated by socialism.

For a state that can guide this process, a democratic state open to participation by the masses, and with these different roads to socialization, we propose planning as the central instrument of government. The fundamental role of such planning will be to assure the efficient and rational coordination of the activity of the public and private sectors in the context of the guidelines adopted by the society.

— *Social structure and mass mobilization....* The fundamental basis for this strategy is democratic participation. From this standpoint, our proposal assumes an organization of real democracy at various levels. It implies a recognition of the fact that without real participation by the organized people in making the big national decisions and in all areas and at all levels of social life, the state based on justice and the elected bodies will become only forms without their substance.

This participation will be exercised in several ways: Through the political institutions of people's power, which will have to resolve all the problems affecting society as a whole. Through pressure groups — unions, student associations, etc. — which will give form at a certain level to the various forces in social life.

2. — The hero of the Uruguayan war of independence, representing a more democratic social formation than the one that triumphed in neighboring Argentina, with which Uruguay otherwise has almost no national differences. — IV.

Through the management structures set up by the workers and the people to direct the productive process and everything that affects living conditions — the environment, health, culture, etc. And finally through political and other organizations.

All these forms of participation will take account of the positions taken by the various social forces. To put it another way, in order for real democracy to work, it is necessary to rely on pluralism, a diversity of forms of participation, and continual mobilization....In short, we support popular initiative and decision making in all spheres and at all levels of solving the problems facing the nation....

To sum up, we advocate building socialism on the economic level through democratic political forms that will avert bureaucratization and permit a real development of people's power. In this way, we want to create the conditions so that the people and the people only will exercise political and social hegemony. We also state clearly that we see the working class as the organizing and leading force in the people's movement, as the driving and central conscious force in bringing about the range of economic, political, social and cultural changes that will lead to socialist democracy....

In this sense, respect for the autonomy of the trade-union organizations is the central axis of our conception of socialist democracy. We know that it is necessary to respect and to help to safeguard the independence of the unions with respect to the economic, social, political and cultural organizations. It is unquestionably in the framework of such social freedoms that the workers will be able to combat the tendencies that may arise for a misappropriation of the economic surplus in the form of bureaucratic privileges in the management or administrative bodies of structures of collective ownership.

Our historic project is national and social. Because it is national, it calls for fighting to free the country from dependence. It considers that breaking the ties of dependence is an essential precondition for developing the potential of the country and of the Uruguayan people....

The unity of the peoples and liberation movements of Latin America is an essential factor to give impetus to this anti-imperialist policy. By laying out an international policy of anti-imperialism and Latin American unity, we are only giving a regional content to some of the general principles valid for international relations on the world scale. That is, consistent defense of friendly relations among all peoples of the world, peace among states, the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples, nonintervention in the internal affairs of any people and nonalignment behind any decision-making center. ■

*The Independent and Democratic Left  
Program Commission  
Montevideo, August 1984*

## The experience of the revolutionary left

### Conclusions of a proscribed workers leader

The persons deprived of political rights, the "proscribed," were excluded from the November 25 elections in Uruguay. Their rights were sacrificed by the signing of the Naval Club agreements between the Colorado Party, the Frente Amplio and the dictatorship. One of them, Ruben Sassano, who has been a political refugee in France for several years, is a representative figure. He was an activist in the Montevideo dockers' union, participated in all the struggles of the workers' movement, and was also a victim of all the repression against revolutionary and worker militants. But he also exemplifies the trajectory of the revolutionary militants favorable to the positions and orientations followed in struggle by the March 26 Movement, which today are being carried on by the IDI.

The following interview was given to Daniel Jebrac in Paris on October 30.

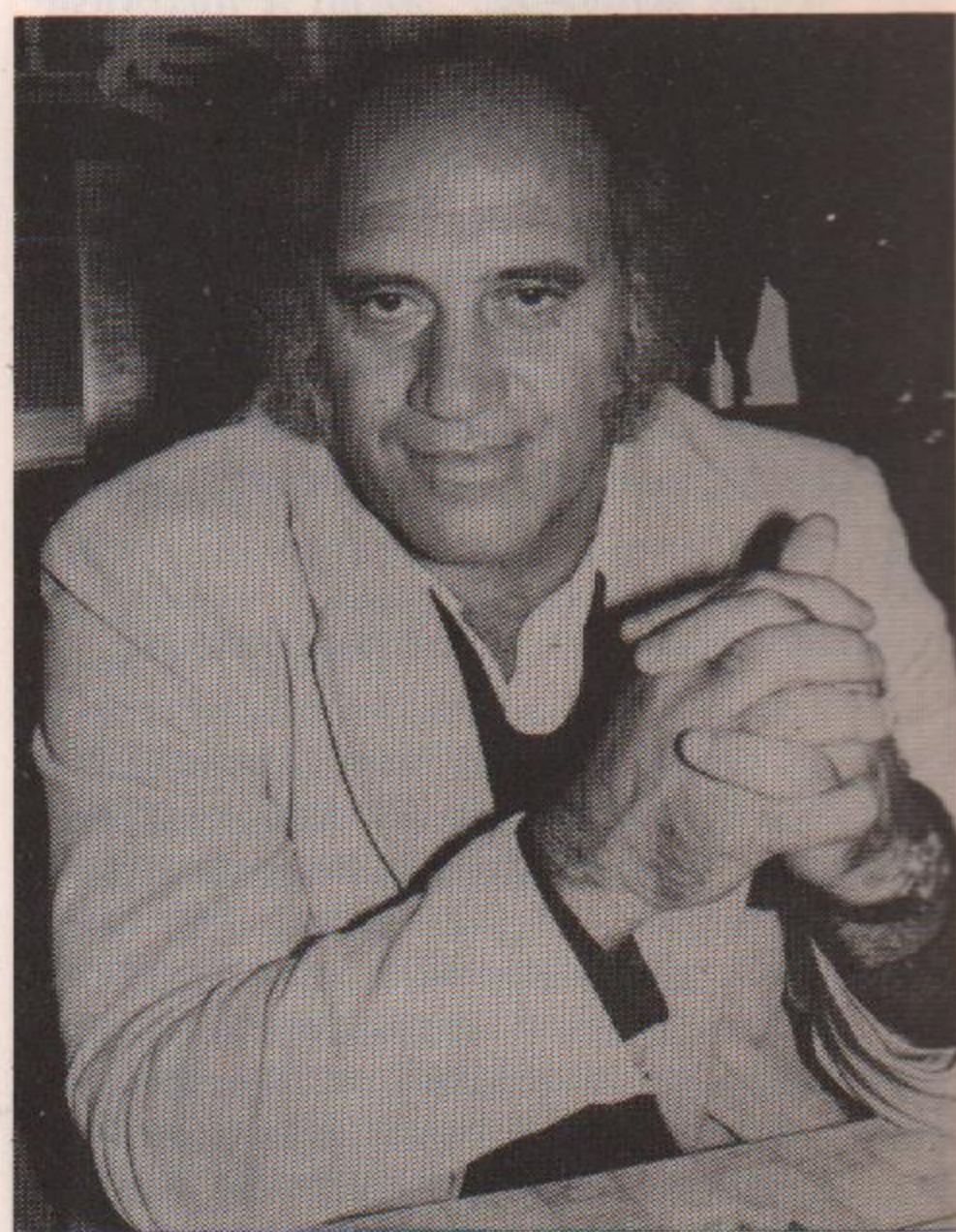
*Question. For many years, you were an activist and a leader in the Montevideo dockers' union. Today, on the eve of the elections, you are among those who remain proscribed. I have seen writing on the walls of Montevideo calling for your return. To put it another way, the demand for the release of all the political prisoners, starting with Raul Sendic; and for the return of the proscribed, starting with yourself and the poet Benedetti, illustrates the limitations of the loosening up in Uruguay. Moreover, it points up the need for a struggle that will continue after the November 25 elections. What is your situation today exactly?*

*Answer. I have been in France for seven years as a political refugee. When I heard talk about a loosening up, I went to demand my papers so that I could go back since, even for a convinced internationalist, exile remains a terrible torture. I had problems enough with the fine points of the language in Uruguay, so you can imagine in France what it is like. After seven years, I still express myself a bit like Tarzan. To cut a long story short, they refused to give me the papers, and I remain proscribed.*

*Q. How do you see the organization going on in the Uruguayan workers' movement and the significant of these elections?*

*A. I have kept up contacts with the country and with worker activists passing through France. One of them told me recently that because of all the people killed and in exile the working class there is like a big body with only a very small head. This is also true of all the left parties. And the military are very much aware of this, even if they are obliged today to make some concessions.*

The political refugees authorized to go back find themselves being subjected to warnings, pressures and threats. The repressive forces have withdrawn intact from the front of the stage. But they remain in the backroom, sharpening their knives, taking miles of photographic



Ruben Sassano (DR)

film, building up their files on the workers' and revolutionary movement.

You can't underestimate the enemy. They know perfectly well that if this magnificent workers' movement rebuilds its leadership, their days will be numbered. So, they will do everything to prevent that.

The elections and the withdrawal of the military into their barracks, therefore, are a safety valve. Moreover, the Frente Amplio put the people off balance by signing the Naval Club agreements. It may lose us in negotiations and elections what the people won in the streets. It has offered the repressive forces the chance to divide the opposition. What it should have done was to demand democracy without any restrictions and not give the military the breathing space they so much needed.

*Q. I heard that in the context of the opening of the election campaign, the IDI held a rally of 15,000 people, at which a message of support from you was*



read and that it got a great round of applause. In what sense did you mean this support?

A. I gave my support to the IDI because I think that it is a working-class united front, even though there are different conceptions within it about how to make the revolution. The differences that remain are over tactics and methods, but there is a common goal. Together with the militant current of the Inter-union Workers Plenum (PIT) in the trade-union field, the IDI can form a real class-struggle pole. Reinforced by all the experience of these last ten years, this bloc can become the main bastion of workers' resistance for struggles today and in the future.

You have to understand what the component forces of the IDI are. There is the Party for the People's Victory (PVP), which comes out of an anarchist background, today identifies with Marxism, and is seeking an identity. There is the United Action Group (GAU) led by Hector Rodriguez, which has an antibureaucratic and anti-Stalinist majority and has a working-class base in the textile industry. There are also a lot of people who were attracted in the past by the MLN-Tupamaros. Above all, there are a lot of independent activists from the new generation looking for a real party.

Finally, the PST is supporting the IDI in its campaign, and has announced that it wants to open up more deep going discussions with the IDI on medium-term perspectives. It is to be expected, in fact, that, under the impact of the crisis, after the elections the "accord" between the Frente Amplio and the dictatorship will blow apart. And then the FA will have to define itself.

Q. You, yourself, are a kind of symbol of the 1960s and 1970s generation of activists who experienced the repression of 1971, the coup d'etat, and the historic general strike of 1973, followed by new repression and torture. With hindsight and the new experience of exile, how do you see your own trajectory today?

A. I started working at the age of 12 in a soap factory. That was my first experience of what it is for a child prematurely turned into a worker to have to sell your labor power. Then, over the years, I started to really understand my situation, and it was Communist Party activists who gave me the first instruments for understanding it. After that, since I had the good fortune to be considered "a promising soccer player," they found me a job on the Montevideo docks. At the age of 17, this new experience served to plant the idea of class struggle firmly in my head.

Q. Your meeting with Che Guevara was a real turning point in your life?

A. Since I was a docker, they assigned me to protect Che when he came for the Punta del Este conference in 1962. I had an admiration for this man who had raised high the banner of internationalism

in Cuba, Mexico, Bolivia and Africa. I wonder how some people can still say that he was a nationalist. You might question his methods of struggle, but not his internationalism. When I met him, I found out for once and for all what a revolutionary activist should be, a pragmatic intellectual who had not lost his roots and who understood the way the people think and feel.

A new situation was created by the Cuban revolution, which shook all of Latin America. As a personality, Che rallied the support not only of the Marxists but also of major Christian currents. Today, some people would like to forget that. But as for me, I can't go along with applauding people when they win and turning your back on them when they have the bad luck to lose.

In 1967, I was invited to Cuba, and there I discovered a people, a collective effort. And I said to myself, here they are beginning to forge the new human being that Che talked about. I was all the more enthusiastic because to go to Cuba I had to pass through Czechoslovakia and stay at the Hotel International in Prague. That was in the middle of the Vietnam war. And the first thing proposed to us in Prague was to change our dollars on the black market. They didn't let us into the hotel ball because we didn't have ties. These first small details were a revelation for us.

There were also the cars of party bureaucrats that passed with drawn curtains. We said to ourselves that these were a funny kind of leaders who drew their curtains in order not to see the people. And there was nothing on Vietnam, no mobilization for solidarity. It was in Cuba that we learned about the uprising in Czechoslovakia. We weren't surprised. It was logical. We had found a bureaucracy living off its people, and there was nothing internationalist about it.

Q. Was it after your stay in Cuba that you moved away from the Communist Party?

A. In 1975, the National Liberation Movement (MLN, Tupamaros) appeared in Uruguay. It polarized the elements attracted by the Cuban revolution. But it fell victim to the confusion that was later propagated in other countries such as Argentina. It considered the Communist Party its strategic ally. But how could you base a strategy on such a division of labor between armed struggle and the movement? How could you build the armed struggle counting on reinforcement ultimately from the masses that were left in the hands of the CP with its parliamentarist conceptions? The inevitable happened.

The masses went their way, following a nonviolent conception of the struggle, and the armed movement went its own. The MLN did not know how to unite the mass struggle and the armed struggle. Thus, the more powerful armed force, the professional army, the armed force

of the state, defeated the weaker army, the guerrillas, as early as 1971.

Q. As a workers' leader, you must have experienced this contradiction more intensely than others?

A. Yes, I did. The idea was that the working class was the leading force in the liberation struggle. But when all the structures are supposed to be secret, when military centralism smothers democracy, activity tends to be reduced to following orders. I believed in a convergence between the armed movement and the mass movement. But the guerrillas were crushed in 1971 by a very selective repression, without the CP-led mass movement lifting a finger. And when the 1973 coup d'etat launched a frontal assault on the workers' movement as a whole, when we counterattacked with the general strike, the comrades on the docks told me: "Now's when we could use the *muchachos* [the 'boys,' that is, the guerrillas]."

In the heyday of the Tupamaros, when you asked the MLN leaders what role the working class should play, some went so far as to say that that should be left to the CP. But we were already feeling the blows of the economic and social crisis. And with the crisis, the liberals become conservatives, and conservatives, fascists. The bourgeoisie started with a selective repression. First the guerrillas, and later the mass movement. The CP and the reformists washed their hands of the repression against the guerrillas, who remained isolated and were destroyed. But afterward it came down on everyone.

Q. You yourself were imprisoned and tortured several times.

A. In 1969, I was arrested for the first time, and for two weeks, under a bourgeois democracy, for the first time I experienced torture. During a session of electric-shock treatment, I broke my bonds and tore off the hood that blinded me. I saw all the officers, their faces. They were already training themselves in torture. The army was already involved, even if it only began to act directly in 1971. And there were already American advisors. This story spread throughout the country as the first case of torture, and yet my only crime was having gone to Cuba to see what it was really like there.

In 1971, I was charged again, this time with being a representative of the March 26 Movement. Moreover, they kept arresting me for being a member of the CP or of the March 26 Movement, for having been in Cuba, as a trade unionist, or simply for being a worker who defended his class. In this little country of about 2.5 million inhabitants, there were 60,000 to 70,000 people imprisoned and tortured.

In 1971, I was kept in prison for 11 months with a hood on and tortured almost daily. All that leaves terrible long-term psychological damage. But since I was a worker activist, the workers

came into the street to demand my release. I tried to commit suicide. Then, the military became afraid of the possible consequences of my death. I can say, therefore, that it was my fellow workers who got me out of prison in 1972.

So, I went back to work, and I was able to go through the experience of the 15-day general strike against the coup d'etat in June 1973. They immediately put me back in prison. A general strike of that type can only end in an insurrection or a defeat. But there had been no preparation for an insurrection, either in the heads of people or materially, and you can't carry off an insurrection without preparation. So, we were defeated, despite the fact that 600,000 workers struck for two weeks.

After having liquidated the armed movement, the military settled accounts with the trade-union movement. This meant imprisonment, death, torture, people forced into exile, ten years of agony for our people. And this paper mache facade of democracy that they want to give us does not represent an end to it. The fate of the prisoners and the proscribed has not yet been decided.

In 1973, after my release, the comrades helped me leave for Argentina. There we continued to work with organizations that spoke the same language as we did. But what had happened in Uruguay helped us to understand things. The Argentine working class had one of the highest standards of living on the continent. The great majority of them remained Peronist. And the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) tried then to make the revolution without this working class. Although we had come to understand some of the errors, we stayed in Argentina up till the last moment. It was a matter both of solidarity and survival.

*Q. But since you have been in France, have you been able to find your bearings politically, to assimilate all this history?*

A. Here, it's difficult. French politics are sophisticated. The bourgeoisie manages to blunt the edge of everything, attenuate everything with its polite forms and speeches. Social Democracy is dreadful. So, my problem is how to make the revolution and for what kind of socialism? How can you criticize the East European countries without falling into anti-Communism? How can you side with the Polish working class and say that the Jaruzelski regime is a lousy one? That's a big problem. And there I have respect for the Trotskyists. How can you make a left critique of the regimes in the East without aligning yourself with the first dissident who comes here and starts making money out of his or her dissent?

Another problem for me is that the class struggle is less visible, less evident, or less direct in France than in my country, with all the social gains that the workers here have made, which at the same time cushion social conflicts. You see, it is difficult for a revolutionist who

comes from abroad to overcome this contradiction, to stay a revolutionist in a country such as this without falling into anti-Communism and giving grist to the mill of the enemy. My answer is that you have to be a dissident with the Soviet or Polish working class and not with the likes of Solzhenitsyn who are making millions out of their dissent.

*Q. Where do you see the place of Cuba in all this?*

A. Cuba, of course, is different from the USSR or Czechoslovakia. In 1967, I saw the poverty there. The other socialist countries gave almost no aid, or only on conditions. If Che had succeeded that year in opening a breach on the Latin American continent, it would have changed the course of things. But we had to wait until 1979 to see a revolutionary victory in Nicaragua. They tell us today that if there were no USSR, there would not be any Cuba. But, as for me, the Cuba I love is the Cuba of 1967, which had the revolution on the continent as its guiding star.

Fidel Castro did try to break the encirclement and open up a road. First it was through Che's endeavor. Later, in another way, he hoped for something with Salvador Allende in Chile. Then, he had to wait for better days. But during this time the bureaucracy put down its foundations. But I am sure that if a revolutionary option appears again, in Central America or elsewhere, things would start to move again, including in Cuba.

This is a situation in which the organizations that identify with Trotskyism have a chance, if they can overcome their secondary internal contradictions and understand the priorities of the movement. The revolution can still be frustrated on our continent by the effects of the division of the world into zones of

influence. For that reason, it is important that there be Trotskyist organizations present, but on the condition that they understand our national realities.

It is necessary to start from the concrete reality of our continent. In Latin America, there are not only Miskitos but also Aztecs, Mayas, Guaranis. It would be too easy to think that once armed with Marxism we are invulnerable. These ideas, which originated in Europe, have led humanity forward. But they have to be applied to a different situation, in which you have to steep yourselves. The best revolutionary Marxist is not the hard-line purist but the political activist who can really advance the revolution by taking account for example of what the samba, carnivals and soccer mean in Brazil and appreciating the role of Christianity.

You can't get revolutionary militants out of some sterilized test tube. There is an intellectual dogmatism that has been an obstacle to the independent and anti-bureaucratic revolutionary left taking the place that it has earned by its sacrifices.

The pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese Communist parties have degenerated. Why has the bureaucracy failed, for example, in Poland to counter the church with what it claims are its own values? The internationalist left is right. Facing capitalism and the church, the bureaucratic regimes are not competitive, unless it is possible to create a new kind of human being.

I tell you all this because while I was in the CP I shouted one day "Long live Stalin!" and another day "Down with Stalin!" without even understanding it. But democracy in socialism begins with democracy in the party. Unless there is democracy in the party, one day it will build an undemocratic state. ■



## AROUND THE WORLD



### Abortion violence on the rise in the USA

The attacks on the right to abortion in the United States have increased dramatically in 1984. Women face physical harassment, judicial challenges and a full-scale attack on the ideological level with a combined attack from the right, the Catholic church hierarchy and Ronald Reagan.

In 1984 alone 19 cases of bombing and arson have taken place, compared with 4 cases in 1983, and 8 in 1982. A few of the more 'noteworthy' incidents include:

— The Feminist Health Center in Everett, Washington suffered an arson attack on December 3, 1983, causing

40,000 US dollars in damages.

— A bomb explosion rocked the Ladies Center, Inc. in Pensacola, Florida destroying equipment valued at 35,000 US dollars.

— The National Abortion Federation headquarters in Washington, D.C. had a gas explosion on July 4, 1984 when gas was pumped into the building at night; an unexploded bomb was discovered on the premises as well.

— The Annapolis, Maryland Planned Parenthood center was bombed at 1:35 a.m. on July 7, 1984.

Perhaps the most "spectacular" action by antiabortionists was in 1982 when Dr

Hector Zevallos, the medical director of the Hope Clinic for Women in Granite City, Illinois, and Jean Zevallos were kidnapped, held for 8 days and told they would be murdered if they did not renounce abortion. They were ultimately released and the kidnappers convicted.

There is an organized and persistent campaign against abortion clinics and users of these services. The tactics used are to not only dissuade, but physically prevent women from carrying out their legal choice to end a pregnancy.

"Sidewalk counseling" is a popular method, with virulent anti-abortionists accosting women entering a clinic, shouting "Murderer!" or thrusting pictures of mangled fetuses in their faces. Tape recordings of crying babies are played and redpaint stained dolls are also brandished about. Your car license number might be copied down, your photo taken, your car tires slashed.

Some clinics have been "invaded," with right-to-lifers chaining themselves to the furniture.

In spite of the most recent polls indicating that at least 75% of the American population supports a woman's right to choose, there has been a significant stepping-up of harassment and violence.

The presidential election campaign highlighted the issue of abortion, with Reagan announcing "We [the Republicans] are for life and against abortion." He is on record as supporting a constitutional amendment to ban abortion altogether. The Catholic church hierarchy joined in the fight when Archbishop Bernard Law of Boston declared that abortion should be a "key issue" in the elections. New York Archbishop John J. O'Connor went even further saying that Catholic bishops expected public officials and candidates for election to publicly oppose "abortion on demand" and "work for modification" of legalized abortion.

This national level attack was most directly aimed at Geraldine Ferraro, vice presidential candidate with Democrat Walter Mondale. She drew virulent criticism from the Catholic Archbishops for her position of "being personally" opposed to abortion, but for saying, "I have no right to impose my beliefs" on others.

But it has been the people most directly concerned with providing or using abortion services that have responded to the renewed bombing and arson attacks, not Ferraro or Mondale, let alone the Democratic Party as a whole.

The New York chapter of Planned Parenthood responded with a press conference, for example. Alfred Moran, executive director, said, "The church, antiabortion and presidential rhetoric on the abortion issue has created a climate that incites terrorism — acts of violence that repeatedly endanger the lives of clinic staff and clients."

There have been petitions, meetings and public demonstrations. Women have taken abortion opponents to court and

they have held counter pickets in front of the clinics.

There has been a local response to each and every attack in support of a woman's right to choose. But there is perhaps an underestimation of the real threat of a reversal of the legal right to abortion won in 1973, and the absence of any nationally organized response by pro-choice forces is disquieting.

The Supreme Court did in effect reject several important challenges to further curtailments in June 1983, including a 24-hour waiting period between the

time a woman signed a consent form and the performance of the abortion and a requirement that all abortions for women more than 12 weeks pregnant be performed in hospitals. However, the court did uphold a Missouri statute requiring parental consent for minors.

The post-election lull may be just the calm before the storm considering the combined offensive of the right, the church and Reagan before the elections. The possibility of a new offensive — juridical or otherwise — is now strong in the coming months. ■

## Basque leader assassinated

In its November 23 issue, *Zutik*, the organ of the *Liga Komunista Iraultzailea*, the organization of the Fourth International in the Basque country in the Spanish state, made the following comment on the assassination of the revolutionary nationalist leader Santi Brouard on November 20 which sparked a general strike on November 22 and the most powerful upsurge in the Basque country since the period immediately following Franco's death.

They have assassinated Santi Brouard, chairperson of HASI [the Revolutionary People's Socialist Party, the political nucleus of the revolutionary national front, Herri Batasuna]. As a doctor, he treated a number of ETA members during the Franco period, and for that was forced into exile... As a member of Herri Batasuna, he served as deputy mayor of

Bilbao and was a member of the Basque regional parliament at the time of his death....

The killers wanted to strike a blow both at the brain and heart of the Basque people. At the head, because he was a member of the Herri Batasuna National Board and chairperson of the illegal party HASI. At the heart, because of his human stature....

Herri Batasuna has called a general strike.... This time the [moderate] Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) also joined in.... There will undoubtedly be a general strike followed by the entire population; it will be an impressive demonstration. And its political effect will be to cement the ranks of the Basque people against its oppressors.

We end with the words of Santi's daughter, "They will pay for this!" ■

## Victory for abortion rights in Canada

In an important victory for women the jury in the trial of Dr Henry Morgentaler returned a verdict of 'not guilty' of charges of conspiracy to perform illegal abortions.

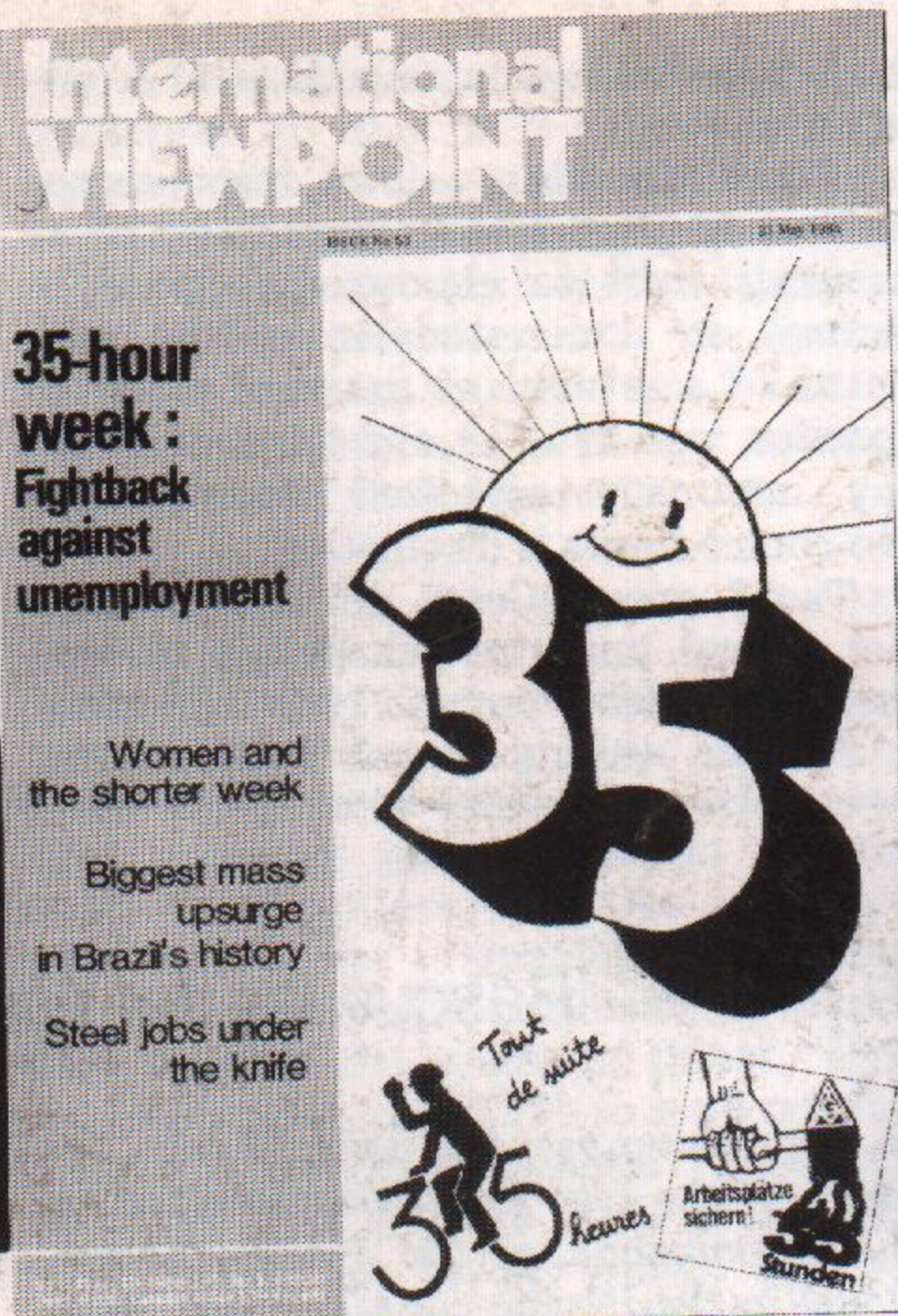
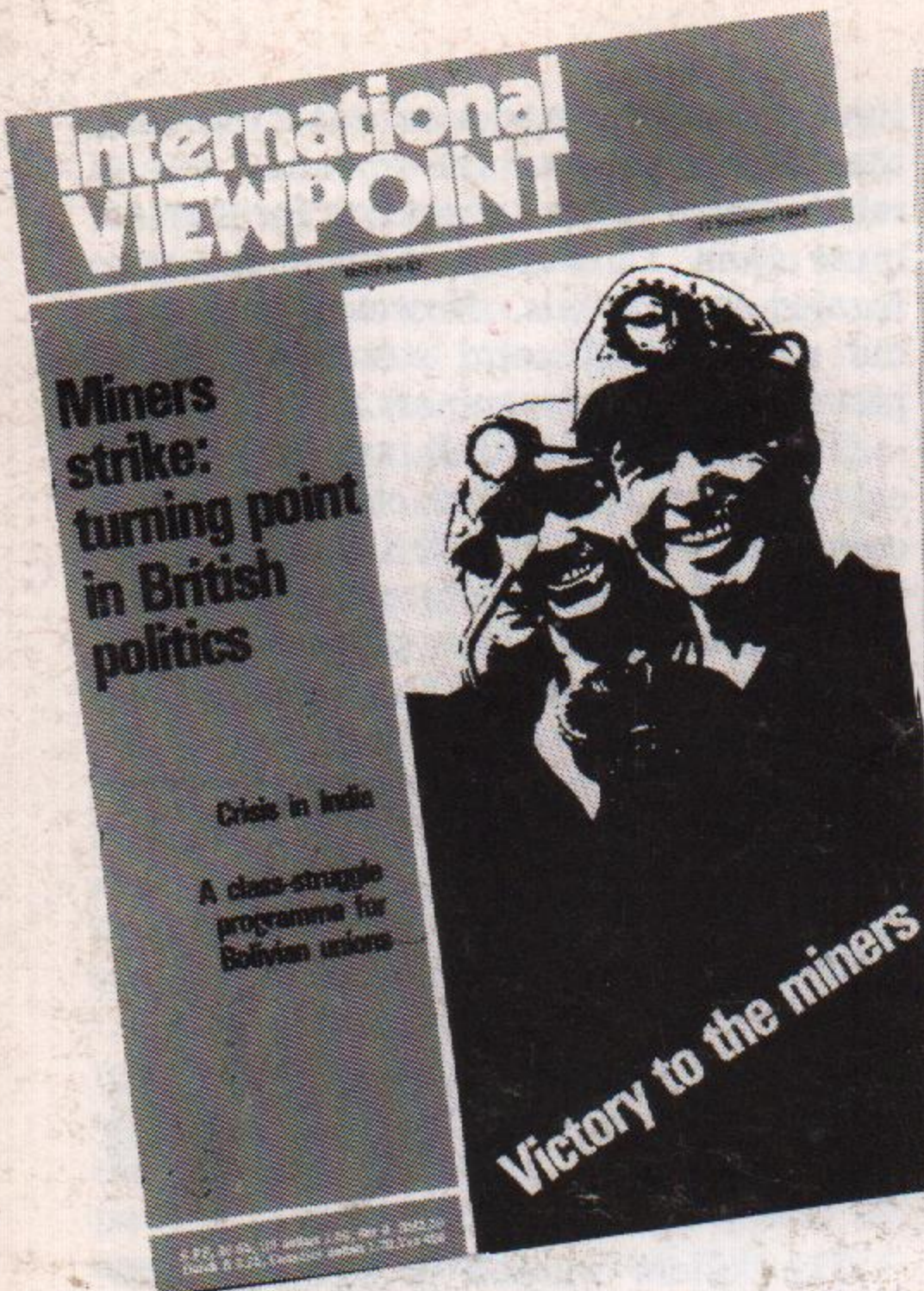
The charges, which carry a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, resulted from a police raid on the Toronto abortion clinic Morgentaler had set up in June 1983. (See IV, No 37, October 3, 1983.) He decided to open the clinic even though this was illegal under Canada's abortion law.

Under Canadian federal law, abortions may be performed only in hospitals that have been specially accredited and then only after the approval of a special

committee of doctors. The woman must prove to this committee that her health or life is endangered by the pregnancy in order to obtain an abortion.

After the trial at a press conference, Morgentaler stated that he would have the Toronto clinic open again within a month. The acquittal he claimed was 'a victory for all women across Canada'. He maintained that the law had now been proved to be obsolete and that he had technically broken it in order to prove just that. 'The law is unjust', he said. 'It is cruel to women: it unnecessarily creates a lot of suffering; it endangers the life and health of women; it oppresses women.'





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