

International VIEWPOINT

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A new year for the miners' strike

- Christmas in the coalfields
- Labour and Welsh nationalism

Economic crisis
of Zionism

Grenada's
elections



International Viewpoint

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Workers and peasants in power

In early December, Ernest Mandel visited Nicaragua at the invitation of the Agrarian Reform Research and Study Center, which is under the Ministry for Development and Agrarian Reform (MIDINRA). He had many discussions with officials responsible for sectors of the economy, for training Nicaraguan government cadres and with leaders of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Besides giving several lectures to teachers at the Central American University, Mandel also gave a public talk entitled "The World Crisis of Capitalism," sponsored by the Nicaraguan Association for the Social Sciences. Several hundred people attended the talk, which was announced the day before in the daily *Nuevo Diario*. On his return from Nicaragua, Ernest Mandel was interviewed by *La Gauche*, the French-language paper of the Belgian section of the Fourth International. The text of the interview follows.

Question. What was the class nature of the elections in Nicaragua?

Answer. It's wrong to talk about bourgeois parliamentary elections, about elections for a bourgeois parliament, as I already pointed out in an article in the November 16, 1984, issue of *La Gauche*. My stay in the country fully confirmed my conviction that the state power in Nicaragua represents the workers and poor peasants. Some 450,000 armed working people keep their guns in their homes. It is in the context of such a regime that you have to define the class nature of the Assembly, and not on the basis of formal criteria.

Q. How much do the Sandinistas' declarations of support for political pluralism mean?

A. There is no way to assess individual motivations. It is still harder to make any predictions about future changes in attitudes. But one thing is clear — the Sandinista leaders are now saying that political pluralism is neither a tactical maneuver with regard to the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie nor a concession to international public opinion, whether this be directed at Social Democrats, left Christians, Latin-American bourgeois forces or the imperialist countries themselves.

They are saying that political pluralism is useful and essential for the revolutionary process, useful and essential for building socialism in Nicaragua. It is, in particular, essential for raising the class consciousness and level of activity of the toiling masses, to get them involved increasingly in the real administration of the economy and the state, in the struggle against bureaucratic deformations within the revolutionary camp and the FSLN.

These more and more numerous declarations represent a notable contribution to the development of international revolutionary consciousness, a return

to the original thought of Marx, of the Lenin of 1917, or Rosa Luxemburg and of Trotsky. I see it as the confirmation of what we have been reiterating for decades. Inasmuch as these positions are attuned to the reality in Nicaragua, the entire international workers' movement, the entire world working class, will derive immense advantages from them.

Q. Can you give some practical examples of the fruits of political pluralism for the toiling masses?

A. You can't dissociate political pluralism from the self-organization and self-management of the masses. One conditions the other. A combination of the two is beginning to take hold in Nicaragua. It is far from having achieved its fullest development. But the fact that things are beginning to move in this direction represents a new step forward, by comparison with workers' self-management in Yugoslavia, which has been partially smothered by the single-party system.

With respect to workers' control and mass participation in the management of the enterprises, production committees are operating in more than half the enterprises. The real extent of self-management differs considerably, to be sure, but it is continuing to increase. With respect to territorial organization, the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) are the bodies in the neighborhoods that represent the great mass of the population. They take charge of a series of state functions, such as distributing ration coupons, supervising the distribution of basic necessities and education.

As regards education in the rural areas, there are parents' consultative councils (sometimes including both parents and high school students) that strive in particular to coordinate education and the preparation of high school students for integration into the productive process.



At the same time, vigorous arguments are going on in the press. Every day, *Barricada* and *Nuevo Diario* answer *La Prensa*, exposing the lies and half-truths of the opposition. For example, when *La Prensa* claimed that the government had kept the leaders of the opposition from travelling abroad, *Barricada* published a list of their many trips, based on exit stamps collected at the Managua airport. Another important fact, if you want to talk about pluralism and democratic rights, is that there are presently strikes going on, and they have not been subjected to any sort of repression.

Q. Are the advances toward socialist democracy going to be reflected in the constitution that the Assembly is going to start drawing up?

A. I think so, but obviously I can't predict to what an extent. That depends on the discussions underway, the extent of the involvement and the political activity of the masses, the outcome of social struggles in the coming months, and above all, the outcome of the confrontation with imperialism and the counterrevolution.

So far, there are two gains that should be pointed up. On the one hand, democratic rights, a pluralism of political parties, the right to strike, and freedom of the press and association seem to have been codified. On the other, the Sandinista leadership has just made an important step forward by recognizing the right to regional autonomy for the Miskito Indian ethnic minority.

The big question left pending is that of the institutionalization, alongside the National Assembly, of people's power, either in an assembly or in another form — it does not matter what the form is as long as it is real and not purely a formal, "rubber stamp" body.

In other words, people's power should be established not just at the local level, in the neighborhoods, villages and enterprises but also at the level of municipalities, regions and of the country as a whole.

Q. This rise of socialist democracy is taking place in the context of continual imperialist aggression against the Nicaraguan revolution. Isn't there a contradiction in this?

A. Not at all. The Sandinista regime

in Nicaragua is facing the cruelest sort of imperialist military and economic offensive. In addition to the lessons drawn from the Nicaraguan revolutionary process itself and the lessons from other countries, this imperialist offensive is a stimulus for the FSLN to seek to continually broaden its popularity among the masses and increase the effective support it gets from them in order to be able to mobilize the entire people should there be a massive American aggression. This orientation has been crowned with success.

I think that against imperialism and its contra mercenaries, the support of the masses for the FSLN is almost total. Even the opposition bourgeois parties have said that they would mobilize with a single will in the event of an American invasion.

Q. You speak of a cruel counter-revolutionary offensive. Could you give some examples?

A. During my stay in Nicaragua, a gang of 200 counterrevolutionaries staged an ambush outside El Pericon, to the north of the city of Esteli, and massacred 28 workers who were going to pick coffee beans. Most of the victims of this unspeakable slaughter were telecommunications workers. Several of them were burned alive by the counterrevolutionaries, while others were finished off with bayonettes. During the funeral, the whole city of Esteli was in the streets shouting its grief and its determination to avenge its brothers and sisters.

Q. What are the counterrevolutionaries trying to gain by such massacres?

A. The imperialists are perfectly well aware that international public opinion is becoming more sensitive every day to the threat of massive aggression, of the US air force bombing Nicaragua or of the Marines invading.

If such crimes were committed, hundreds of thousands of people would protest in the streets, not just in Western Europe but also in Mexico, in Latin America, and in particular in the United States and Canada. Washington would have to pay a very high political price. In fact, it is necessary to make every effort to make this political price higher and higher, to make it too high.

In these conditions, for the moment, the imperialists have chosen a war of attrition as their line of attack against the Nicaraguan revolution. They are combining the incursions of armed gangs of counterrevolutionaries with a growing blockade and economic sabotage.

The gangs are operating basically from Honduras. They have ultramodern equipment, and sometimes even have helicopter support. It is obviously the imperialists who are providing this logistical aid, through the intermediary of the CIA.

Q. Does the counterrevolution have a social base in Nicaragua itself?

A. You can't talk about civil war in the real meaning of the term, since the social base of the contras is a very narrow

Production of Basic Products for Internal Consumption (In indexes)

	1977	1980	1981	1982	1983
Chickens	100	99	124	142	155
Pigs	100	93	154	200	150
Pasturized milk	100	99	143	160	189
Sugar	100	107	100	125	123
Soluble coffee	100	514	589	842	984
Pasta	100	167	175	156	190
Oils	100	116	115	114	183
Salt	—	—	100	155	145
Soap	100	—	123	183	197
Paper	—	100	269	330	363
Nonalcoholic drinks	100	107	105	108	120
Cigarettes	100	114	108	95	108
Matches	100	100	104	125	134

Source: Ministry of Industry. Before the victory of the revolution, many of these products were imported.

one. It is made up essentially of Somoza's old National Guard, their families and their retainers, and the whole thing depends on camps established outside the country. This base is clearly being eroded. They're starting to replace their losses by recruiting mercenaries of other nationalities rather than Nicaraguans.

Q. Is this war of attrition effective from the counterrevolutionary point of view?

A. It obviously cannot overthrow the Sandinista regime or even undermine it. But it can place the regime in more and more difficult economic circumstances. It has forced the government to devote 35% of the national budget to military spending. Imports of spare parts, raw materials and consumer goods are dropping. What is more, it has caused damage amounting to one-fourth of the national budget.

Moreover, this war of attrition is forcing the people's government to mobilize a great mass of workers continually in the army and the militia, thereby causing grave interruptions in production and in the circulation of goods. The government has to mount a struggle at the same time to defend the country militarily and to bring in the coffee harvest. That is a very heavy burden for the popular masses.

Q. Has the economic situation in Nicaragua deteriorated as a result?

A. During the first years after the Sandinista victory, the material situation improved for the toiling masses, which is something we have not seen often in the revolutions of the twentieth century. In 1983, Nicaragua had the highest rate of growth in all Latin America.

The year 1984, by contrast, was a

difficult one, a year of war economy, as the Sandinista comrades say. War costs and the destruction caused by the aggressors reduced available resources by nearly 25%. The masses understand this and accept it, but that doesn't mean that they suffer any less from its consequences.

Q. Can you specify what is involved in the economic burden imperialist aggression is imposing on the Nicaraguan masses?

A. The costs of the war involve a reduction in the quantity of good distributed by the public network. The latter in fact is more and more being restricted to rationed goods (food staples) and essential services (housing, education, health, public transport — which, moreover, is inadequate — and water, gas and electricity, where there are also problems).

The wages of blue- and white-collar workers are ample for paying for these goods and services. But they are not sufficient to enable them to get what they need on the free market. Under the pressure of the black market in dollars (the dollar goes for 20 times the official rate on the black market), more and more commodities are flowing into the free market, putting clothing, toys and electrical appliances, in particular, out of the reach of those that have no other means than their wages.

Except for some products, there is no real scarcity. There is, however, an imbalance between prices and incomes. And that's producing an economic reaction on the part of the masses. More and more people, including workers and members of their households, are preferring to take up intermediary jobs. In this way, they can earn four or five times more than they could working in a factory or a cooperative. Unemployment has completely disappeared. There is a shortage of labor.

Q. Does that represent the failure of the mixed economy?

A. It's more complicated than that. When people talk about the mixed economy, they are generally thinking of what remains of capitalist enterprise in the strict sense in Nicaragua. That is not where the main problems come from, because the production and exports of this sector are strictly monitored by the state (the situation is comparable to that of the NEP in Russia). The difficulties arise from the uneasy coexistence of a nationalized industrial sector that is too weak to provide for the entire population and a sector of small peasant producers that cannot be eliminated by forced collectivization.

For political and social reasons, as well as economic ones, it is essential to maintain the alliance between the workers and peasants. But it is necessary to make sure that this uneasy coexistence of the two sectors does not lead to imposing sacrifices on the workers, and blocking planning, industrialization and a reasonable degree of economic growth. ■



The miners' strike and the left

Prospects for the New Year

The British National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has entered 1985 after ten months on strike with its will to win intact. Over 140,000 miners are still on strike despite a 'back-to-work' movement sponsored by the National Coal Board (NCB) employers and backed up by the Thatcher government. Great obstacles face the miners in their fight for a victorious conclusion to their strike. The aim of the government is to destroy the fighting capacity of the miners' union through legal action, as the key to opening a broader legal offensive against the whole union movement.

The leadership of the trade-union movement however are refusing to organise the type of solidarity action decided on in the September 1984 Trades Union Congress, which could have already won the strike if implemented.

The leader of the Labour Party, Neil Kinnock, has continued to attack rank-and-file miners for their violence on the picket lines. As against this line, the left-wing leader, Tony Benn, has urged preparation of a general strike movement to support the miners. NUM president, Arthur Scargill, has likewise called for all out industrial action as the way to win the strike.

Steve ROBERTS

Scargill spelled out the prospects facing the miners in a New Year's message to his members:

'The government and the National Coal Board claimed last spring that the strike would be over by the summer. Then they claimed it would be finished by September. Then that it would be finished by Christmas. All during the past ten months they have backed their inaccurate predictions with a massive abuse of taxpayers' money. The economic costs of the dispute have been devastating.

'Thus far, £5 billion, desperately needed by the British people for housing, health care, public transport and vital services have been spent instead in an attempt to smash British miners fighting to save pits, jobs and communities.

'Our nation has also seen industrial growth halved and the pound plunged in value by over 20 per cent during the course of the dispute. Despite the massive costs, the damage done to the social fabric of our nation by the creation of a national riot police force and the loss of 77 million tonnes of coal production, Mr Walker (the minister for energy) and his cabinet colleagues still refuse to allow the NCB to negotiate a settlement to the strike with the National Union of Mineworkers.

'This refusal exposes the government's real intention which is to butcher the coal industry as it did British Steel and to smash effective trade unionism.

'But in the face of all the pressures and terrible hardship, 144,000 NUM members are solidly on strike. No words of tribute can do adequate justice to the magnificent achievements of British

miners and their families who are fighting with such courage and determination for a decent future.

'As we go into 1985, I call on them to remain firm and urge all NUM members not on strike to join their colleagues in this battle to save our nationalised industry, jobs and communities.

'It is a battle we will win. With all our numbers behind the union it will be won that much more quickly.'

The appeal of the NUM president for miners who have returned to work was designed to counter the 'back-to-work' campaign, seen by the government as the way to end the strike.

Back to work moves

The chairperson of the National Coal Board, Ian MacGregor, has said that he will consider the strike effectively ended if he calculates that more than 50 per cent of the miners have returned to work.

The implications of MacGregor's position is that he will then try to boycott dealings with the NUM elected leadership and instead deal directly with representatives of working miners.

This strategy combines with encouraging the development of a split in the NUM. In Nottinghamshire, local scab officials have pushed through amendments to the rules of their local area which delete the provision that the rules of the national union should have precedence over their local union constitution.

Striking miners in Nottingham have denounced this decision as a move to split the NUM. At the same time, the strikers doubt whether the rank-and-file working miners really want to leave the NUM and set up an independent union, as happen-

ed after the 1926 general strike, when the 'Spencer' union was established in the same coalfield.

The other arm of the government and coal employers' attempt to destroy the NUM is the long list of legal actions being taken against the union by scab miners.

Already such actions have resulted in heavy fines on the union and freezing of their assets by the courts after their refusal to pay. A firm of accountants, Price Waterhouse, have been appointed by the courts to take charge of the union's financial affairs. Other unions, like the National Union of Railwaymen, have now been ordered to appear in court to give details of money sent to the miners during the strike. Price Waterhouse have demanded that such solidarity payments should now be paid to them and not to the miners' union.

It is clear that all unions that have provided support to the miners are now seen as immediate targets for the government's attacks. The two-million-strong Transport and General Workers Union was fined £250,000 by the courts for defiance of the new government trade-union legislation that makes secret ballots a condition for strike action remaining within the law. The fine was seized from the unions' funds after their assets were sequestered by the courts.

The Labour Party is also under very serious attack. In the next year, the government will compel trade unions to hold ballots of their membership on whether they should be able to collect subscriptions for a political levy. The political levy is used by the majority of trade unions to provide funds for the Labour Party. In Britain, where there is no state funding of political parties, the Labour Party is almost completely reliant on such contributions to fight elections and maintain its apparatus. Without the political levy the Labour Party would be crippled since no such restrictions apply to the funding of the bourgeois parties by big business.

Yet another attack on the Labour Party is in relation to local government. As the crisis of the inner cities has become a major political issue in Britain so the Labour councils which run nearly all Britain's major cities have swung to the left, in particular defying government legislation aimed to restrict their spending on social services. Representatives of local Labour councils decided on a strategy to break the law if necessary in their confrontation with the government, a strategy backed by the Labour Party conference in October last year. The key date for this confrontation is March 6, when the government's restrictions will become effective.

The miners have clearly seen this development as a crucial one to their fight. In an article in *Labour Herald*, a left Labour journal closely associated with the fight of local government against the Thatcher government, Arthur Scargill said:

'Any group of workers or section of the working class facing attacks by this

government's economic policies should be supported.

'They should be supported when they resist attempts to destroy the social services, the education and housing programmes which electors in local government have given a clear mandate to their councillors to carry through. Therefore, I thoroughly welcome and support all forms of action against this most repressive government.'

Local Labour councils too have seen the miners' fight directly linked to their own. Many Labour councils in mining areas have indemnified miners against electricity and gas bills, waived council house rent and rates (taxes) and provided substantial regular payments to the solidarity funds for miners' families.

So, a political perspective is emerging for the strike of an alliance between the miners and local Labour councils and council workers. This will be a powerful boost for the miners since the Conservative Party is more deeply divided on the local government issue than any other, with senior figures like ex-Prime Minister Edward Heath, openly speaking and voting against the government's measures in parliament.

However, the greatest obstacle to the miners' cause lies directly within the leadership of the labour movement. The Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock, elected with the support of a majority of the party's left wing in 1983, now faces calls for his removal because of his barely concealed hostility towards the miners' strike. In a New Year article in *Labour Weekly*, the party's newspaper, Kinnock blames the miners' strike for his failure to put the Labour Party ahead of the Tories in the opinion polls.

He has maintained a constant stream of criticism against the miners' pickets for violence refusing to even visit a picket line for the first ten months of the strike. Kinnock has pledged himself to support only those actions of the miners that remain within the law.

As the Tory government's main tool for attacking the NUM has been through the courts, this means that Kinnock has consistently refused to stand up to the legal moves which not only threaten the NUM and other unions, but also his own party. In particular, Kinnock has expressed his unhappiness with the strategy being adopted by left Labour councillors in defying the law.

Kinnock has formed a united front with those trade-union leaders who have consistently blocked the implementation of the decisions of the Trade Union Congress of September 1984. In particular these decisions called on the unions with members in the power stations to actively support the miners by refusing supplies of coal and oil. There has been no serious attempt to implement this on the part of the majority of the unions involved and an outright refusal by the right-wing led electricians' union.

The government gratefully acknowledged their debt to Frank Chapple, the



Miners and their wives demonstrate for jobs (DR)

retiring leader of the electricians' union, by making him a 'Lord' in the new year's honours list; earning him a seat in the unelected House of Lords, and a handsome attendance allowance of £48 per day!

There are many other aspirants to such titles in the trade-union leadership. In the past three months, in addition to the sabotage of the miners' struggle, important unions have accepted key parts of the government's trade union legislation, contrary to the policy of the trade-union movement as a whole, without any public rebuff from the TUC General Council. The majority of trade-union leaders are accepting the legislation as accomplished fact — all with the excuse that the trade-union movement must stay within the law.

In response to this class collaborationist policy of the right wing and centre trade-union leaders the left have begun to organise. Rank-and-file activists in the Labour Party organised a highly successful Miners' Solidarity Conference on December 2, attended by over 1,700 delegates. (See IV, No 66, December 24, 1984.) The Broad Left Organising Committee, which aims to coordinate the various left oppositions inside the trade unions has called a major conference for March. Given this, even the Communist Party has had to mobilise its almost moribund trade-union tendency to provide a line for its militants who have generally played a conservative role in the dispute, collecting money for the miners, but refusing to extend the struggle to other sectors of the working class and mobilise them in action on the picket lines.

While Scargill and Benn will support and speak at these types of conferences, what is still lacking is a strong national unitary lead from the left. This is due to a number of factors.

Scargill fears that if he is seen to openly organise forces at the base of unions, this would increase the hostility of the bulk of the union leaders to the miners' struggle. However, this does not take into account the positive effect on the miners' cause that a strong conscious minority fighting throughout the labour movement could have in shifting the support of the trade-union movement to the left and therefore towards the miners.

Secondly, such a move to organise the left would have clear implications for the leadership question inside the Labour Party. The calls for the removal of Kinnock from the leadership of the Labour Party have largely come from rank-and-file activists in the party and the unions and from the far left.

The organisation of a national left-wing current would undoubtedly place the question of a challenge to Kinnock pointblank on the agenda, something which Benn has sought to avoid in the past period. Not only would this be the case at the national level, it would also start a battle at every level of the labour and trade-union movement to remove those elected officials who refused to support the miners' struggle and replace them with those who did.

The first round of this battle will start with the reselection of Labour MPs for the next general election. In many constituencies in mining areas, NUM members have joined the Labour Party in order to influence the direction of the Party, and their voice will no doubt be heard in the selection of future Labour MPs.

Ken Livingstone, the left leader of the Greater London Council, has given voice to this process through calling for a 'Target Labour Government' campaign to be established which would have the objective of securing a Labour government committed to socialist policies and the election of a greatly increased number of MPs who would fight for such policies to be implemented. Such a move corresponds accurately to the political radicalisation engendered by the miners' strike and the role of the Labour Party in the strike.

It is this process of politicisation and clarification on the left which today is the next step towards the construction of a leadership in the British labour movement which fights consistently to represent the interests of the working class. The building of such a class struggle left wing in the Labour Party and the trade unions is the path through which a leadership of a real 'party of labour' can be built, which unlike the present leaders of the British labour movement, not only supports each and every struggle of working people against the ruling class, but also opens the way towards overthrowing capitalism in Britain. ■

International solidarity with British miners

In Belgium ...the boycotting of coal bound for Britain has at last begun. From December 12 the transport unions — the FBVV, the CSC and CGSLB — have been refusing to load coal onto the ships. A leaflet put out by the Antwerp joint union committee calls for 'practical solidarity' on the part of all workers in the Belgian ports.

The boycott began in Ghent, where most of the coal exported from Belgium leaves for Britain. According to UBOT, the transport section of the FGTB (the Socialist Party-dominated union federation), three boats had been boycotted by December 17. One was able to leave with half a load, and two were simply not loaded. The coal was thus transferred to Terneuzen where not all the workers are unionised.

Here the coal was loaded directly by a transport firm, Ovett, whose workers are not dockers.

From the very beginning of the miners' strike the import of coal to Britain has gone up by 81 per cent in the first ten months of 1984, compared with the same period in 1983. Imports from the Netherlands have gone up ten times and imports from Poland have gone up 162 per cent. Imports from the USA have doubled. Compared to this Belgian exports are tiny, but the example of Belgian workers can be followed by other workers. A boycott has already been agreed among the transport unions of Belgium, the Netherlands and West Germany at a meeting with the TUC (Trades Union Congress) in London on December 8.

This must be put into action.

A petition circulating within the Belgian workers' movement states the matter very clearly: 'The entire movement must make sure that not a single piece of coal gets to England through our country.'

Miners' children at Christmas (DR)



In Luxembourg ...the following statement appeared recently in all the major newspapers in support of the National Union of Mineworkers.

'The attempt by the British courts to seize the British miners' funds and thus to try to break their resistance so as to finish, once and for all, the strike which has already lasted for ten months, is an outrage. It will unleash solidarity action with the striking miners over the channel, all over Europe.

Three major European trade unions — German, Dutch and Belgian — have this weekend decided to do everything possible to limit the export of coal to Britain.

'In Luxembourg, where young European trade unionists met last week and have already made collections for their British colleagues, we of the FNCTTEL (youth section of the railway workers) solidarise with the NUM and demand that the British courts not be allowed to touch the NUM's belongings in Luxembourg.'

The statement went on to point out that capitalist firms and governments, even military dictatorships could leave their money in banks in Luxembourg without any risk of it being touched. Why was a different rule to be applied to the NUM? It urged trade unionists to step up donations to the NUM.

In France ...President Mitterrand is helping Thatcher to break the strike by supplying coal to Great Britain. In a semi-clandestine operation, coal was taken from Gardanne in the South, with another town, Villeurbanne, as the supposed destination. On arrival, according to an internal memo of the French railways board, the SNCF, the destination was changed. The CGT (the Communist-dominated union) got wind of this however and managed to foil the plans (see IV, No 65, December 10, 1984).

Furthermore, it appears that Thatcher has discussed with the French government the possibility of France supplying electricity to avoid power cuts in Britain.

But if the bosses' governments are cooperating to break the strike, the support for the miners at a rank-and-file level inside the trade unions is also increasing.

At Christmas, several delegations went over to Britain to take toys and money to the miners and their families. Amongst these was the CFDT (Socialist Party-dominated union) health section (Paris region) which took two convoys over before Christmas. One contained 150 dolls for miners' children from the Bella-Poupee factory where women workers have been fighting a protracted battle against redundancies. One convoy was stopped at customs in Britain and held for 24 hours. They were only finally allowed into the country when the French consul intervened on their behalf!

The CGT has previously sent over more than 100,000 presents for miners' families and were planning a further convoy in the New Year.

In Sri Lanka ...a total of 21 trade-union organisations have called upon the British government and the National Coal Board to enter into negotiations with the National Union of Mineworkers and settle the strike instead of using the police to attack the strikers and seek to starve them back to work.

Copies of the joint letter were sent to Mr Ian MacGregor of the National Coal Board, Mr Arthur Scargill of the National Union of Mineworkers and the High Commissioner for Britain in Sri Lanka.

Welsh nationalism and the miners' strike

The following interview was given to Gerry Foley in London on December 10 by Dafydd Ellis Thomas, Plaid Cymru [Welsh nationalist] MP for the constituency based on the old west Wales county of Meirionydd. This is a mainly Welsh speaking and farming area. At present, Plaid Cymru holds two of the 36 Welsh seats in the British parliament.

At its highpoint in the 1980s, Plaid Cymru had three MPs. It suffered a relative decline, following the rejection of devolution in Wales in a referendum in 1979. Although the British Labour government in power at the time proposed devolution, Labour in Wales in reality opposed it. Basically only Plaid Cymru campaigned for it, and the "yes" vote was around the level of the nationalist vote, about 10%.

Since the initial "p" of "Plaid" becomes a "b" in Welsh after the article, it has become established usage to speak of "the Blaidd," and "Plaid" when there is no article.

Question. Why is the British miners' strike so important for Plaid Cymru? What does it have to do with the goal of an independent Welsh Wales?

Answer. It's important first of all because of the number of people it involves in Wales. If you add up the twenty thousand miners and their families and the ancillary jobs in the industry, it's at least 100,000 people. [The total population of Wales is about 2.5 million].

Moreover, the communities involved are the key communities of the industrial valleys, including areas where we have made some political progress, both in the by-elections in the 1960s and in the local elections. For three years in the late 1970s we controlled the Merthyr Valley and Rhymny Valley district councils.

I think that what the strike represents is a working-class Welsh struggle, resistance to a war waged on Wales by the British government, a war in which it is using the nationalized industries as a means of reducing public spending and of destroying a democratic trade union. The response to that from Wales has been particularly strong. South Wales has been one of the most solid areas in the strike.

We in Plaid Cymru have seen this struggle as an opportunity for us to operate as a national movement, developing more effective and closer links with organized labor. Of course, this is no new struggle for us. We've always fought pit closures. But a major strike such as this gives us the chance to relate directly to the union, to the lodges and to the support groups.

Q. How precisely does this relate to winning Welsh independence?

A. It does because it's independent working-class action that's community based. Therefore, it's a process of asserting independence based on defense of

communities. That is what gives the content to any national struggle. There is a fight going on between the right-wing British government and an important part of Wales. In that sense, this conflict involves a very specific form of the national struggle.

Q. Has Plaid been able to mobilize support for the strike in both historic sections of Wales, the largely rural, Welsh-speaking north and west, as well as the industrialized English-speaking south and east?

A. Yes. In the valleys we are involved in support groups, and we have organized them in other communities. The form of political activity that has resulted from the dispute has been a nonsectarian one that has involved Plaid, the Labour Party, the Communist Party, the churches, the Farmers Action Groups and so on.

Thus you have the Wales Congress in support of the miners that was set up in September. We have on its steering committee representatives of all the progressive democratic forces active in the life of Wales. In terms of our own personnel, our national field organizer, Gerald Howells, has spent most of his time on this issue.

Q. What about the north and west specifically?

A. Plaid members in those areas are involved in fund raising and other solidarity work. For example, today I was talking to the constituency organizer who does half-time work for me, and he's just been on another trip this week to the anthracite coal field with a van load of stuff. I would remind you also that there are also mining communities in north and west Wales, although they are built around slate mines. Some of these slate quarries have been closed. Some are still working. And there has always been a

strong connection historically between the slate miners and the coal miners.

Q. What is the role of the Wales Congress in the solidarity movement?

A. What we've been doing is setting up new support groups and providing a sort of federative action in support of the groups. In particular, we've been putting the argument about energy policy. That's very important because that is not being done in the media and so there is a danger of all the debate about the strike centering on the issue of direct action, the use of force and counterforce.

All the solidarity committees in Wales are connected in a loose way to the congress. It's very important as the dispute continues to have funding coming in on a regular basis, to have the arguments being put forward on a regular basis. The steering committee of the Wales Congress meets every week.

Q. Do you think a different strategy in the strike and in strike support work is needed in Wales, as against other parts of the British state?

A. There are some specific features in Wales. One is the greater extent of the solidarity. Another is the level of political awareness that has existed historically in south Wales. There is also certainly the awareness of the national question as part of the struggle. But fundamentally, I would not say that a different strategy is needed. Because of the low investment in the south Wales mines, we are very much dependent on the solidarity of other coal fields in the fight to reverse the government's policy.

Q. What about the aspect of farmers' support for the miners? That's specific to Wales, isn't it?

A. I think so. That developed because of the effects of the milk quotas. (1) These are seen as another attack on living standards by the Thatcher government. And we have some radical farmers who have been used to taking direct action themselves, since 1974. There is a history of direct action by the farmers that may make them more sympathetic to the case of the NUM. There is also a link in this country between the farmers and the mining communities. [In particular in the southeast of Wales, many farmers have worked in the mines or have members of their families who are miners.] There are two farmers on the steering committee of the Wales Congress, Bini Jones from north Wales, and John Howels, chairman of the Dyfod [south-east Wales] Farmers Action Group.

1. British dairy farmers have to sell to the Milk Board. The amounts they were allowed to sell was reduced in accordance with a decision. So, while they had milk above quotas, they delivered it free to striking miners. About 67% of farmers in Dyfod are dairy farmers.

Tri Aelod Seneddol
Plaid Cymru, 1974.



Three Plaid Cymru MPs in 1974 (DR)

Q. What sort of program does Plaid have for the unions and where does the miners' strike fit into that?

A. Our program has two aspects. The first part of it is to support unions as democratic organizations of the Welsh working class. We've seen such a strong attack on trade-union rights in all sorts of ways by the government that it's necessary for us to join in the broader political support for trade unions as organizations within a pluralist democracy. The second aspect is to reintroduce political analysis into the unions.

Q. How do you propose to reintroduce politics?

A. We're doing that, in that we are involved in the unions and the local trades councils in taking initiatives. There are also a number of union members, particularly in the public service unions, who are active members of Plaid. You will very often find an alliance between left Labour people, Eurocommunists and Plaid people in broad democratic alliances.

Q. Do you favor separate Welsh organizations for the unions?

A. Most of the unions do have a Wales section or a regional section that is affiliated to the Welsh Trades Union Congress. I think that is the way forward. I don't believe in separatist unions. I favor increasing the autonomy of Welsh sections of the present trade unions,

while maintaining the links across the border and not just in Britain but also broadening international links, because multinational capital makes necessary solidarity among workers beyond the boundaries of the nation states.

Q. In Ireland, the development of a separate TUC was a watershed in the growth of the movement for independence. I don't get the impression that the Wales TUC plays anything like that role.

A. No. It doesn't. That is because of the way it was established and the context it is operating in. What has happened is that the Wales TUC tends to be an agency of social control rather than one for substantial change. But there again, I think that may alter to the extent that the strike and other issues radicalize people and get them to make a more autonomous outlook in the unions.

Q. Do you see a danger of Plaid becoming subordinated to a British union through its work in this strike?

A. The NUM is not an all-British union. It is a federation of area organizations. That is part of its tradition. It's why the NUM was one of the founding unions of the Wales TUC. It's why the NUM has always supported notions of Welsh autonomy, the demand for a Welsh assembly.

The NUM has been involved actively in the Labour Party in promoting policies of devolution. It is fundamentally the

south Wales NUM we work with. But obviously we also support the initiatives of the NUM throughout Britain, because we think that this is important as a tactic to defeat the British state. To this end, it is important to be involved in an all-British dispute at this stage.

Q. Historically, the Plaid has been for full national independence for Wales, although for most of the history of the party this was formulated as "Commonwealth status." Do you still see this as a realizable goal?

A. The Plaid program was changed at the 1981 conference. We adopted the objective of a democratic socialist state, emphasizing decentralized socialism. I think that this idea of decentralization has been key to the whole tradition of socialism in Wales from Robert Owen on. It is at the core of the syndicalist tradition in the south Wales valleys.

The adoption of the objective of a democratic socialist state to supercede the formula of "self-government" was a very important step because it committed us to two things: It committed us to a socialist position; it also committed us to a definition of the state and the kind of state we want to establish. In this way, the demand for self-government ceased being a utopian affirmation and became a specific political program. And that has changed the way the Plaid is seen in Welsh politics.

What I mean by independence is a process of achieving independence from the present structures of the British state and of multinational capital as it dominates the life of Wales. It means building up a commitment to independence and to the practice of independence among working-class people themselves in their communities.

That's why I regard the strike as a very important process in building up this notion of independence. For us, the idea of independence is not some sort of third-world neocolonial secession from the mother country. To pursue the Freudian metaphor, we're not talking about loosening the ties with the mother country; we're talking about killing the father, that is, the British state, because it after all includes Wales as an integral part of it.

Thus, the campaign to transform the relations within the British state, between the constituent nations and classes, is a campaign that is much more far reaching than gaining independence from direct imperialist control. I would say that independence for Wales requires independence for England. It requires regionalism in England. It requires self-government in Scotland. It requires British withdrawal from the north of Ireland. The sort of changes that we are working for in Wales imply very important changes in the nature of the British state itself.

Therefore, we need allies in other parts of the state itself. This in fact is nothing new, the leader of our great rebellion in the fifteenth century, Owain Glyndwr, had alliances in England.

Q. *There seem to be two aspects to that. One is how you can achieve the sort of independent Wales you want, through a combination of national and social struggles. But the other is what relation would it have to any other government in these islands. Do you still seek sovereignty for Wales?*

A. We don't know. We don't use the term independence or sovereignty in our program. I think that the idea of sovereignty is a complicating one. National sovereignty is so circumscribed anyway, by treaties, by membership of the EEC, the role of international capital, and indeed by the military occupation of Britain by the United States army. What is sovereignty in this context?

Q. *Does that mean that you still want a Welsh government for all of Wales?*

A. Oh yes, very much so.

Q. *A Welsh parliament?*

A. Yes. But I'm not sure we would use the Anglo-French expression "parliament." It would be a representative assembly that would democratize the existing state in Wales, the Welsh Office, and all that. But it would also be responsible for overall planning and for international links. But it would be established not through some process of secession from England but through a process that would transform the internal politics of Wales itself through community action, through independent socialist initiative within the community. And it would be linked to changes in Scotland, changes in Ireland, and in England itself.

Q. *But in practice it might all come together, and then again it might not, isn't that true?*

A. Of course. But I think that the objective conditions for killing the British state are going to open up between now and the year 2000. The drift to the right will continue. The forces of the left are going to see that the only alternative is autonomous action based on regions and communities and nationalities rather than another Fabian taking of parliamentary power, which is still the Labour program and still the Kinnock program.

Q. *What alliances specifically do you have in mind?*

A. For example, in the discussions I've had with Ken Livingstone and the Greater London Council (GLC), I know that he recognizes that he can't be in favor of the withdrawal of the British state from the north of Ireland and not be in favor of self-determination for the Welsh people. And this is a position that is increasingly being taken on the left. The Labour Party in Wales with its grip on power is different. But I think that the Labour Party and other forces in Britain recognize that the national movement in Wales is a legitimate and necessary part of the struggle against the growth of the right in Britain.

Q. *In the past, the Labour left has been anything but sympathetic to the demands for self-government for the smaller historic nations of the British Isles. Do you find today that the Livingstone and Benn forces in the Labour Party no longer consider Welsh nationalism as divisive, an obstacle to a united working-class struggle, a diversion?*

A. Yes, although that's less true of Benn. There are two reasons for the change. First of all, Plaid is quite clearly not putting forward a nationalist ideology but rather a socialist program, which is a position that combines class analysis and the national question. Moreover, many of the intellectual opponents of devolution — and there were not many of them — such as Eric Heffer, who opposed devolution in the name of a united British working class, now recognize that they were wrong.

They now recognize that there is an argument for autonomous democratic action arising from a national base. That to me is very exciting because it means that it will be very difficult for any emerging Labour Party, when all these shits are deselected (2), not to recognize the validity of what we're saying. Whatever may be said out of Transport House-Cardiff by the Welsh Labor Party, which is continuing its Fabian subservience to centralism, the center itself will have changed its view.

Q. *Of course, the bottom line to all this is that the Labour Party runs candidates in Wales and you do too, and therefore you run against each other. Won't they say, "All right, if you're left too, why don't you get into the Labour Party along with all the rest of the left?" How can you justify your separate existence?*

A. First, there is the nature of the Welsh Labour Party. It has been a conservative force in Welsh life, and it rejects the Welsh road to socialism that I have been talking about.

Moreover, in a speech I made recently, I did say that the Labour Party should consider its position about certain seats. We made it quite clear that in the case of constituencies where we come in second or third after the Tories, it should consider its position. They have not yet indicated their willingness to negotiate. But if they did, obviously we would follow suit. We've done this before. We stood down for Labour in 1951 in Meirionydd in the interests of collaborating with forces in the Labour Party in the campaign that was going on at the time for a Welsh parliament.

Now, I think that it's important to get some cooperation to break the existing Tory presence in Wales. This would be an opportunity for them, if they wanted to cooperate. But they don't.

Q. *But what if the character of the Labour Party in Wales changed, what if the left gained control? Would you then have to consider your position about remaining a separate party?*

A. Yes. If the Welsh Labour Party

were to transform itself into an autonomous socialist party, then, of course, we would all be part of that one big movement. But that is a long way from where we are.

Q. *What do you think about Solidarnosc as a movement that combines the struggle for national and social liberation?*

A. We have not had any links with Solidarnosc. Over the years, perhaps, we have not had enough direct contact with the movements of nationalities and groups within Eastern Europe, and we need to develop this. Notions of self-determination, control at the plant level, and so on are something that we regard as inherent to any socialist transformation, whether this involves overcoming the blockage in "actually existing socialism" in Eastern Europe, or whether it's the transformation from state capitalism in Western Europe.

Q. *That leaves the question, however, since you are for both socialism and national liberation, of how you explain the fact that in the so-called socialist states of Eastern Europe national oppression still exists, as evidenced by the rise of Solidarnosc, and how you expect this to be overcome.*

A. Well, this problem has to do with the nature of the bloc system. It also involves the articulation of the national question, the gender question, minority linguistic questions within Marxism. What you see in Eastern Europe is the expression of an ideological problem within Marxism, the downplaying of national and minority differentiation within state systems. Of course, it also reflects the particular form the state has taken in "actually existing socialism."

We are for a state form that goes beyond Labourism or Fabianism, state capitalism, and the bureaucratic models of most of the socialist countries. At the same time, we do not want to leave the way open for market socialism, which would expose us to multinational capitalism ravaging the economy even more. We will be trying to work a system of economic management that will answer the problems of the nationalities incorporated in Western Europe. That may be applicable to the problems of the nationalities in Eastern Europe. But that depends to a large extent on breaking down the bloc system.

Q. *From what you say, it seems that you think that there is room for argument with other forces that identify with socialism on the national question. Have you been engaging in such arguments?*

A. Oh yes, always. Because of our own political experience, this is something that we have to contribute to an

2. The left at the last Labour Party conference won the right for constituency committees to "deselect" MPs whose performance in parliament they do not like.

understanding of the relationship between the nationality or minority cultures and the form of the state that socialism requires.

Q. Have you discussed the Miskito question with the Sandinistas, for example?

A. I've discussed this with the Nicaraguan ambassador here, and emissaries of ours have been to Nicaragua. We understand the problem from the point of view of the Nicaraguan liberation forces. We also understand how the contras have made use of separatism. Some of our people who have been to Nicaragua have realized that mistakes were made there on the minority issue. This is not unusual in the history of rapid social changes, where the vanguard party of the larger nationality within a state has taken shortcuts in making cultural changes among minorities. But I certainly would not be critical of the overall program of the Nicaraguan government. And I know they recognize that there were problems and that their program for the minorities has deeply changed.

Q. How do you see the continuity between the left in Plaid today and the historic party?

A. I think there is a continuity in the commitment to community socialism. A lot of the early people in the Blaid came from the Independent Labour Party, people like my own father. And their background was the cooperative socialism of D. J. Davis. The National Left has carried the previous attempts of the Blaid to come up with a program of economic democracy to a more sophisticated level.

There was, of course, a break from the historic ideology of liberal nationalism in the decision of the 1981 conference. That was a change. But it reconnected with a left that had always existed in the party. And in a broader sense, it was the national movement reconnecting with the Labour and trade-union movement in Wales. The reality was that you had a Labour Party that was de facto the national party of Wales but it did not do anything about the national question. You had Plaid, a national party, but its social commitment was not identifiably socialist. Now all that's changed. We have a national movement that connects with labour, the trade-union movement, the women's movement, the peace movement. Unilateral disarmament, for instance, has always been part of the program of the party.

Q. Of course, as the Labour Party moved rightward, it abandoned both its social radicalism and its original commitment to self-government for Wales, although at a different rhythm.

A. Well, both things were dropped. I think for similar reasons. Given the Fabian commitment to holding power within the status quo, Wales was needed to deliver dumb Labour MPs to prop up the whole in London. Labour did nothing

to change the conditions of working people in south Wales. It used its base there to deliver support for Fabian tinkering with the levers of the British state.

Q. Nonetheless, the left winning a majority in Plaid is something that happened only recently. Why do you think it happened only now?

A. It came about because of the failure of devolution. It was recognized that the devolution program did not include changing the political and social relations in the country and therefore would not change anything. We had to make the national movement the movement of working-class people. That was realized because of the failure of the devolution campaign.

Another factor was the drift to the right of the British state. If there were people within the Blaid who felt uncomfortable about being labelled "left," once you had the Thatcher government, everything even mildly progressive was left.

Q. What position did the Blaid take on the Malvinas war?

A. We were completely opposed to the whole exercise. I don't think we came out against it quickly enough. But certainly after the task force sailed and we realized what was going to happen, we took a very strong position.

Q. Have the struggle in Ireland and the socialist revolutions in Latin America had an influence on the growth of the left in Plaid?

A. I think we were more influenced by factors in Western Europe. One was the new thinking on the left on the national question. Another was the breaking down of many of the old structures of Labourism and the democratization of the Labour Party.

Q. What are you referring to specifically by new thinking on the national question?

A. Well, on the theoretical level, there is the rediscovery of the Gramsci position, the position of the Austro-Marxists, and more recently the positions that have been developed within and around the Eurocommunist sections of the British Communist Party. At the level of practice, you have the creation of the Wales TUC, the failure of the assembly

campaign, the question of membership of the EEC, the peace movement and its internationalization through END. All those things forced us to look for a theoretical approach that would enable us to understand better the relationship between the state, nationality, the economy, the culture, the minority language, the gender question and the international implications of all. All these problems came up in the wake of the collapse of one set of our national strategies after the failure of devolution.

And the new thinking going on at the time in the broader British and European left came into the mainstream of our political thinking. It's always helped to find other people saying what you are saying. One of the most fascinating things here has been watching the campaign for democracy in London, to see the GLC and the Labour Party using the same tools of analysis and the same sort of slogans we've been using.

Q. That ended your isolation from the left in the broad sense?

A. There is no isolation. No one in Plaid today thinks of us as a beleaguered nationality with our backs to the Irish sea. If anyone is beleaguered today, it is the British state.

Q. You talk about a new openness of the Labour left to the national question. But one important section of the Labour left is the Militant, which is not exactly reconstructed on this question.

A. Yes. There are sections of the Labour left that recognize the relevance of the argument for autonomy. The Militant doesn't. I think the key thing is whether the left forces are economic or not. If they are, then they will want to boil everything down to such issues. But it's more difficult now to do that after the great impact of feminism. The people who have become sensitized on feminism in particular have become forced to reconsider their whole simplistic approach to class analysis.

Q. The last time I did an interview with Plaid leaders, five years ago, the idea was still strong that the best way to save Welsh Wales was through Welsh speakers becoming better at running small businesses. It seems that this idea has faded.

A. Yes. The miners' strike has done a lot to replace utopianism with a practical approach. It makes a big difference when you actually see people in struggle.

Q. In fact, a Lancashire miner touring the continent told me that it was his impression that the strike had united Wales as a nation for the first time. Of course, that reminded me of the 1913 general strike in Ireland, which brought together the revolutionary wing of the workers' movement and the revolutionary wing of the national movement.

A. Whatever happens, I do not think that the politics of Wales will ever be the same again, because of what we have gone through in this strike. ■

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Choices for the Greens

After more than five hours of debate, the second federal conference of the Greens, meeting in Hamburg on December 8, decided not to seek to form a coalition with the Social Democrats on a federal level. The local, district and state organizations, on the other hand, were left the freedom to make their own choices about entering into coalitions. It was stated, moreover, that there was no need to make any decision about coalitions on the federal level.

Under the point on "Perspectives for the Greens," two line resolutions were put before the conference. The resolution of the Federal Leadership (Bahro and Trampert) called for "opposing the system." The other was proposed by the advocates of "Realpolitik" (Joschka Fischer, Otto Schily, Waltraud Schoppe).

The "realists" took a positive position in the discussion toward the dealing between the Greens and the Social Democrats in the state of Hesse. They argued for a policy of gradual reforms to safeguard the environment, using the Social Democrats as a counterweight to the policy of the "Turn-Coalition" [the ruling right-wing coalition that wants to "turn" the country decisively to the right].

The so-called Fundamentalists, on the other hand, pointed out how little in the way of real reforms had been achieved in Hesse. They predicted that joining in a coalition with the Social Democrats would lead to coopting the Greens into the existing system.

As an alternative to the reformist policy of the "Realos," the "Fundis" argued for a clearer definition of the positions of the Greens, as the only real opposition, for a stronger party structure, and for increased involvement in extraparliamentary movements. But they did not show how a policy of radical opposition to the system could meet the need for unity felt by the SPD and Green voters.

In the voting, the Federal Leadership resolution got a majority of 330, with 280 against. The Realos

then withdrew their own resolution and supported the "compromise" resolution, which was finally adopted by the conference over the resolution of the Federal Leadership.

The "compromise" called for no coalition on the federal level, but left the Green groups at the state and municipal levels a free hand in the matter. If the Realos had put their own resolution for a vote, they would have risked defeat.

Political suicide was committed at this conference by Rudolf Bahro, who fell prey to the tragic fate that has befallen many East European oppositionists in the West, who have lost their bearings and retreated into religious and mystical positions.

In a speech that lasted for hours, Bahro attacked even his own fundamentalist supporters personally, compared the rise of the Greens explicitly with that of the Nazis in the Weimar Republic, and projected the vision of "a God- or Goddess-centered country" as the perspective for the future.

The federal conference took its distance from Bahro subsequently in a statement rejecting his comparison of the Greens with the Nazis.

Another result of the conference was the election of a new Federal Leadership. Along with Rainer Trampert, it included the Frankfurt fundamentalist Jutta von Ditzfurth; the centrists Lukas Beckmann and Regina Michalik; Christa Wolf, who stood in the middle ground between the factions; and only one Realo, Norbert Kostede.

Klaus DRAEGER

The article below is from the December 6 issue of *Was Tun*, paper of the West German section of the Fourth International. It was written on the eve of the Greens' federal conference in Hamburg. *Was Tun's* introduction follows.

Can the Greens give passive support to SPD minority governments without surrendering their political independence? That question faces not only the Greens in the state of Hesse or the Green and Alternative Slate state organizations in West Berlin, the Saarland, and Nord-rhein-Westfalen, where conditions similar to those in Hesse may arise after the state elections next spring. This question also stands at the forefront in the Federal Delegate Conference of the Greens in Hamburg.

Peter BARTELHEIMER

What is already on everyone's mind today is the political lineup that the pollsters consider likely in the 1987 elections for the federal parliament. That is, the Liberals (FDP) can no longer count on getting into parliament [i.e., they are seriously in danger of falling below the 5% threshold required for representation]

and thus on being able to give the "Turn" government a majority.

On the other hand, the SPD and the Greens together seem likely to come close to getting an absolute majority. The relations between the latter parties, therefore, are becoming a key political question.

For the first time since 1953 when the Communist Party, linked to the Ulbricht regime, was ousted from parliament and then banned in a climate of anti-Communism, a party to the left of the SPD has managed to establish itself as a parliamentary opposition and to force the Social Democrats, on their home ground of parliamentary politics, to confront the demands raised by broad social movements that challenge the system itself.

To be sure, the Greens have not been able to challenge the dominant role of the SPD as the traditional workers' party in the factories and in the trade unions. Nonetheless, the Greens remain the most active and the most critical section of

society, in particular among the youth, and today the impact of these forces is far from being confined to the questions of defending the environment and peace. Their political activity is also increasingly determining the themes of critical discussions in the SPD and the unions.

Many of those who belong to the Greens or vote for them are open to a discussion of radical answers to the environmental, economic and social crisis. They are more ready to challenge capitalist and imperialist relationships of power. But at the same time they are looking for policies that can lead to concrete political changes here and now.

Today, the policies and program of the Greens can evolve in one of two directions. One road leads to a "neoreformism" of the sort that SPD lefts such as Peter von Oertzen talk about. This means the Greens becoming a mere "junior partner" of the SPD. The neoreformist tendency is being strengthened by the weight of thousands of elected officials in the municipalities, states and the federal

parliament, the growing influence of the parliamentary fractions and the pressure for parliamentary collaboration with the SPD.

However, the possibilities remain for further discussion and programmatic clarification of anticapitalist conceptions.

The Green adepts of "Realpolitik" offer only the appearance of an answer to the felt need for a policy that can bring more and more pressure on the SPD for common action. Pressed by clever Social Democrats such as Oskar Lafontaine and Gerhard Schroeder in the Saar and Lower Saxony to take "responsibility," the "Realos" argue for firm parliamentary alliances with the SPD and even Green participation in governments.

For example, Otto Schily and Waltraud Schoppe in the Green fraction in the federal parliament already see the Greens as a "reform party." And they have proposed a resolution corresponding to this orientation for the Hamburg Federal Delegate Conference. Moreover, Joschka Fischer wants to carry the policy of passive support [toleration] for the SPD government in Hesse further. From the failure of this experiment, he drew primarily the conclusion that in the future the Greens also have to have a direct, personal influence on the SPD state government.

Against this orientation, the "environmental socialists" and "naive" fundamentalists in the Green federal leadership have formed a bloc. Sacrificing programmatic clarity, this alliance is focused on a single point — rejecting both toleration of SPD governments and governmental alliances as "self-destructive."

Between these two positions are the great majority of the Greens, who want to continue the policy of tolerating SPD

governments but are unsure or divided over how to carry out this policy and what the goals should be.

Both the SPD and Green voters expect both parties to use their parliamentary majority against the right (see box). If the Greens reject this demand for Red-Green unity, this will be taken advantage of by the "Turn" parties, as well as by the right-wing manipulators in the SPD and the class-collaborationist trade-union leaders.

Have not the head of the West Berlin SPD slate, Hans Apel, and the IG-Chemie president, Hermann Rappe, already called for parliamentary collaboration, or even a great coalition, between the SPD and the Christian Democrats?

In the interests of the social forces that stand in opposition to the "Turn" policy, the Greens should, therefore, make it clear that they are prepared to tolerate Social Democratic minority governments in the states, as well as at the federal level.

However, as much as the rejection of toleration of SPD minority governments would hurt the Greens, the central objection of those who advocate this line is equally weighty. That is, despite the Greens' electoral successes, it cannot be expected that the SPD will adopt a radically different policy than in the past, when SPD government chiefs Schmidt and Boerner politically pushed through such policies as blacklisting of radicals, cutbacks in social spending, deployment of missiles, and a line of favoring the interests of big business. And as long as this remains true, the Greens cannot take responsibility for the policies of any Social Democratic government.

Moreover, taking political responsibility does not begin with taking cabinet

posts. It starts with voting for a Social Democrat budget, such as the one in Hesse, which, while it made some concessions to the Greens' demands, involved continuing all the fundamental evils of procapitalist policies — inadequate social spending, gifts for the industrialists, money for the police and courts, and so on.

The central problem in the policy of toleration of SPD governments is not, however, just to make a radical verbal rejection of taking responsibility for capitalist policies once and for all. It is rather to clarify the reasons for this continually for the critical forces in the SPD and for the masses who vote for it.

The precondition for carrying out such a policy is a catalogue of clear and comprehensible demands that express the interests of active trade unionists, as well as of the peace movement, the citizens' initiative groups, the women's movement and immigrant workers.

This does not mean so much as complete as possible a catalogue of radical goals but rather demands that can serve as the focus for extraparliamentary mobilizations today and at the same time be "stepping stones to another pattern of development," that is, transitional demands. They could include a radical program against pollution, withdrawal of the new US missiles, immediate introduction of the 35-hour week, transferring industries to public ownership and alternative production.

Moreover, such a catalogue is not so much for any one-off negotiations with the SPD, which could only end in failure or rotten compromise, but rather for ongoing challenge to any "tolerated" SPD government. The specific demands have to be raised again and again, on the basis of mobilizations.

Tolerating such an SPD minority government in no way means making a peace pact with it. The only thing it can expect is support against the right. For appropriations and laws serving the interests of capital, it will have to bear the sole responsibility. What is more, it has to be forced to seek the support of the bourgeois parties for these measures in a way that is clear for everyone.

The explosive power of such a program that is as radical as it is realistic could be enormous. In the SPD, it would push the unions that advocate a great coalition into sharp conflict with the critical forces, which on specific questions are more and more openly showing political sympathy for the radical demands of the Greens.

However, such a policy depends on the Greens clarifying some basic questions — the role of the SPD as a bourgeois workers' party, the relationship between parliamentary work and extraparliamentary struggle, and the concrete content of both an environmentalist and socialist program.

The debate over this will be prolonged. It must involve all forces that are looking not for some "neoreformism" but for a social alternative. ■

A Greens' demonstration (DR)



A government of national paralysis

After innumerable deals, the new Israeli parliament finally found a way out of its stalemate, through the formula of a government of national unity. But that is still a very long way from solving the crisis of leadership of the Zionist state. Despite the unprecedented majority enjoyed by the new government, it very quickly proved incapable of taking any serious steps to solve the two main problems that preoccupy the Israeli population and the ruling class of the country -- that is, the economic crisis and the bogging down of Israeli forces in Lebanon.

Michel WARSHAWSKY

Once again, the Zionist state distinguished itself by its inventiveness in the area of the institutions of government. The key word in the agreement signed by the representatives of the Avoda [Labor Party] and the Likoud (1) is "parity." Everything is on a parity basis in this government. This is the rule for apportioning the cabinet ministries, for determining the composition of the inner cabinet, the makeup of the main committees in the Knesset [parliament], and so on. The government's program is reduced to the largest common denominator in the programs of the two parties, and every minister is provided with a "counter-minister" or a secretary of state belonging to the opposing formation.

As was foreseen by the Labor leader Shimon Peres before the elections, when he rejected Yitshak Shamir's proposal for a national unity government, this government is inherently a government of national paralysis, incapable of taking any bold steps.

During the election campaign, the two big parties promised to strain every effort to put an end to the evils eating at the vitals of the Jewish state -- to withdraw the Israeli army from Lebanon and to produce an overall plan for straightening out the economy. More than three months after the elections, how far have they gotten?

As regards the economy, while the government has taken a series of steps directly attacking the workers' buying power, it has been unable to produce any overall plan. And everyone agrees that, grave as they are for the workers, these measures will have no effect on the evils corroding the Israeli economy.

As regards withdrawing Israeli forces from Lebanon, the new government has indeed made statement after statement suggesting this. But it has never failed to add that any retreat to the 1982 lines is conditional on a political accord guaranteeing that the situation will not be any worse than the one that existed prior to the invasion! This means, in the best of cases, that any withdrawal is ten months away. And the occupation is costing two

soldiers killed per week on the average and two million dollars a day.

With respect to a hypothetical political initiative, behind the contradictory statements of the premier, who says that he does not reject the Reagan initiative, and the deputy premier, who continues to verbally reject it, the real differences are slight.

"Words are cheap," Shimon Peres is saying in effect, "and so we can call on King Hussein to negotiate and show world public opinion that it is the Arab camp that is refusing to sit down to the negotiating table." At bottom, in fact, Israel is not ready to make any concession that could break the impasse.

On the situation in the occupied territories, moreover, the government has indeed promised to impose a "freeze" on building new settlements. But this decision has no practical effect, since 70 percent of the land has already been expropriated and simply "enlarging" the existing settlements would make it possible to pursue the process of Jewish colonization indefinitely.

The Palestinians

As regards repressive policy, the new minister of defense, Yitshak Rabin, is certainly going to try to avoid certain stupid provocations that his predecessor, Sharon, featured in his policy toward the Palestinians. Rabin even might make some concessions to Palestinian currents close to the Jordanian regime. Nonetheless, under the pressure of the West Bank settlers, whose representatives are in the government, Rabin's margin for maneuver is narrow.

In fact, in recent months, we have seen an escalation of provocations by the settlers designed to arouse violent reactions from the local population, which would then be used to justify increased repression. The first two measures taken by the occupation forces following the installation of the new government are symptomatic in this regard.

On the one hand, there was the rejection of the security services' demand for

shutting down the news bureau run by Raimonda Tawil, a moderate Palestinian accused of being in contact with the PLO. But on the other, seven exits from the Deheish refugee camp were sealed with cement, after the population there demonstrated in protest against violent provocations by the fascist Rabbi Kahane and settlers from Kiryat Arba.

Paralysis and impotence do not equal stability, and few are prepared to predict that the government of national unity will hold up for five long years. The immediate danger that threatens the government is, of course, not the parliamentary opposition, which is completely marginal, nor even any imminent perspective of a working-class counteroffensive or revival of the antiwar movement, since the great majority of those who were involved in it are ready to give Rabin a chance. It is in the government itself, in particular in the component of Likud represented by Herut [freedom] that unrest is rising.

The two figures who bear the greatest responsibility for the political and economic failures of the previous government (respectively Sharon and Aridor) have allied themselves with the No. 2 figure in Herut, minister of construction David Levy, in a systematic assault on what passes for the economic policy of the new government, to which they belong.

Not hesitating to use populist demagoguery, denouncing the economic measures as antilabor and the new ruling team as a government of the well off, the Herut leaders would not be unhappy if a governmental crisis led to new elections. They think they could win, thanks to the unpopularity of the economic measures, and in the meantime dump their party's present leader, Yitshak Shamir.

But in this game also the outcome is far from decided. The violent attacks against the minister of finance, who is from the Liberal wing of Likud [see footnote 1] could force the latter to provoke a split in Likud, which would then enable Labor to form a government without Herut. And in that case, Peres could remain premier for five years.

As is clear, far from undertaking a restoration of everything that was destroyed by seven years of the Likud regime, the new government has devoted itself to maneuvering between the attempts of the various factions that make it up to increase their part of the pie. Could there be any more tangible expression of the structural crisis of the Zionist state?

1. The Union, the main rival of Labor. Like the latter, it is also a coalition, consisting mainly of Herut (Freedom), which get the votes of poor oriental Jews and the Liberal Party, historically the party of independent middle-class (occidental) Jews devoted to free enterprise. Herut's origins go back to the Revisionists, the right-wing Zionists led by Jabotinsky. The Liberals go back to the General Zionists, that is, those elements that did not identify with the religious wing, the labor wing, or the ultranationalists. The main contradiction in the Likud thus runs between Herut, whose base is the poor oriental Jews, and the Liberals, with a conservative middle-class base. — IV.

Crisis of the Zionist economy

With the annual rate of inflation already at 450% and a balance-of-payments deficit that will exceed 5 billion dollars for 1984, Israel has plunged into the deepest economic crisis in the history of the Zionist state, falling to the level of the most economically unstable countries in the world. (1) The following article was written in November 1984.

M. WEKSLER

The present crisis, whose origins lie in the economic maladjustment resulting from the war of October 1973, has been openly acknowledged by the Israeli rulers. The gravity of the situation was already recognized under the Begin government. Nonetheless, the succession of Likud governments that continued until the last elections refused to face up to the problem by instituting an austerity program that might have stabilized the economic situation in the medium term.

Alarmed by the economic disaster, the Israeli bourgeoisie put the pressure on all the political factions that represent it to form a government of "national unity" that could implement an austerity program. Thus, a coalition government was formed including the two big bourgeois parties, Likud and Avoda [the Labor Party]. Although these two parties have different notions about the terms of an economic cleanup, they were able to agree on the need for taking drastic measures.

The new government, like its predecessors, turned to the imperialists for help, seeking renegotiation and broadening of economic aid to Israel. By its own means, the Israeli economy could have never financed the development of a major military power in the region, at the same time as offering the Jewish masses an average standard of living higher than anywhere else in the area. This would have been impossible without massive aid from the imperialists (English and French up to the end of the 1960s and mainly American since then).

This aid has tended to change from loans to grants in order to subsidize the Israeli balance of payments. But even these measures, which demonstrate the imperialists' appreciation of the role that Israel plays in the region, have barely been sufficient to cover old debts. Thus, the grant of 900 million dollars last year for nonmilitary aid was used to meet short-term debts, mainly to the US. In 1983 one third of all US foreign aid and one fourth of all its overseas military aid went to Israel. (The evolution of US economic aid to Israel is shown in Table 1.)

Over the last decade, the Israeli state has become imperialism's most expensive outpost. It is on this basis that the Israeli bourgeoisie has fattened and magni-

Table 1
US Military and Nonmilitary Aid to Israel
(Ministry of Defense Data)

	Military Aid (in billions of dollars)	Nonmilitary Aid (in millions of dollars)
1972	0.30	50
1973	0.30	50
1974*	2.88	50
1975	0.30	400
1976**	1.70	700
1977	1.00	735
1978	1.00	785
1979***	3.30	785
1980	1.00	785
1981	1.40	764
1982	1.40	800
1983****	1.70	785
1984	1.40	910

* Re-equipping after October 1973 war

** Withdrawal from the Suez Canal

*** Peace Treaty with Egypt

**** Re-equipping after the Lebanon war

fied its economic power and on which it hopes to be able to reabsorb at least part of the country's economic crisis. But Washington is not prepared to keep pouring money into a bottomless pit. The crisis that world capitalism is experiencing makes necessary a revision of the economic relations between imperialism and Israel. The pressures from the IMF and various American financial groups have shown this clearly enough. The imperialists are not prepared to go on subsidizing the Israeli state unless it cleans up its economy by drastically reducing its social spending.

The subordination of the Israeli state to imperialism is not reflected, as in the case of underdeveloped countries, by the exploitation of its raw materials, the use of cheap labor or the export of capital. That is, it is not the classic form of subordination to imperialism. Although this sort of relationship exists, it is directly linked to the imperialists' need to maintain the Zionist state as an armed bastion in the Middle East, in order to block the advance of the anti-imperialist struggles of the Arab masses and in particular of the Palestinians. Thus, the renegotiation of economic relations cannot take the forms it does with respect to "Third World" countries.

Through its military aid to Israel, Washington has managed to subsidize

its own military industry. Thus, there will be no reduction in the amounts of military loans. The money will keep flowing into Israeli coffers. But the same is not true for the nonmilitary budget. With respect to the latter, the trend is toward direct cuts, as was indicated during the last visit to the US by Israeli premier Shimon Peres. The plans for opening up a "free trade zone" between the two countries, which supposedly would favor Israeli exports, is really designed to recoup the US subsidies to the Israeli civilian economy. In the long run, it will mean the destruction of the sector of Israeli industry dependent on imported raw materials, since the plan requires ending the subsidies for raw materials imports presently extended by the Israeli government.

Moreover, Reagan's economic advisors have made their position clear with respect to any economic plan that might be drawn up by the Israeli cabinet. The US will not accept subsidizing the Israeli budget deficit through an increase in the balance-of-payments deficit, which ultimately would mean subsidizing the deficit by US loans.

However, both Washington and Jerusalem recognize that any economic cleanup that seeks to reduce the budget deficit would have to attack the military appropriations first of all, and there is where the big dilemma lies.

The need for constant confrontation with the Arab world has led the Israeli bourgeoisie to arm to such an extent that direct and indirect military spending absorbs nearly two thirds of the national budget. The growing demands of the Israeli army have led the Zionist bourgeoisie to set in motion an uncontrollable growth of military industry, which has grotesquely deformed the economy of the country. War industry has become the vital center of Israeli economic life. Most of the loans and subsidies granted by the government are in the province of the Ministry of Defense.

This situation has created common interests linking the various governments, the bourgeoisie and the top army officers. All are joined by their common need to increase military spending and thereby to increase their profits and to build up the whole monstrous machine.

A few examples can indicate the burden of the military machine on the country's economy. In 1981, military spending amounted to nearly a third of GNP. But while this figure was astronomic enough, in the period from June 1982 (the start of the Lebanon war) to the beginning of 1983, military spending rose by 11%, and by the onset of 1984 it had

1. The following sources have been used for this article: "The Structural Crisis of the Israeli Economy" (a pamphlet of the Revolutionary Communist League, section of the Fourth International in the Israeli state) by M. Weksler (the Hebrew title is "Hamesher habinyoni shel hamesheq hayisraeli"); "The Price of Power," the Israeli Ministry of Defense; the weeklies *Koteret Rashit* and *Asakim* ("Business"); the Israeli statistical annual.

risen again by 16%. According to "optimistic" estimates, by the end of 1984, military spending will amount to 40% of the GNP. (See Table 2.)

Table 2

Military Budget (Local Spending) as a Percentage of GNP
(Source: Israeli Statistical Annual)

1966	6.9
1967	10.3
1970	13.9
1972	12.3
1975	16.8
1978	14.2
1980	14.6
1982	16.6

Despite these alarming figures, the Israeli bourgeoisie has committed itself to gigantic military projects, such as building the "Labihi" fighter bomber, for which the initial budget is 2 billion dollars. Although this is a large-scale project, it is not certain that the Labih can compete on the world market with imperialist technology. This fighter bomber will only start coming off the production lines in 1990, and by that time it might be militarily and technologically outdated.

In a direct way, the Ministry of Defense uses one third of the country's industry and one fourth of its workforce (about 445,000 workers).

However, it is not only state capital that has gone into investments in military industry. Both the private bourgeoisie and Histadrut have been concentrating their investments in recent years in military industry, in particular in electronics products and high technology that are mainly destined for the army.

The military budget has, moreover, accelerated the concentration of capital in the country, transforming the "Kur" and "Klal" consortia (belonging respectively to the Histadrut and the Insurance Diskont Bank financial combine) into two giants that, along with the state military industry, dominate the key sectors of the Israeli economy.

All these factors demonstrate that even if the present government tried to cut the military budget, it would inevitably lead to a clash with the interests of the bourgeoisie and the military bureaucracy. But there is no other way out of the blind alley.

In 1967, the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip made possible an economic boom in Israel, after several years of crisis. This boom was owing to the opening up of new markets, in which Israel held an absolute monopoly and in which there was a large reserve of very cheap labor. This sort of Zionist "primitive accumulation of capital" cannot be repeated. The occupation of southern Lebanon has clearly shown that. While Israeli agricultural exports to this area have constantly increased, bringing about

the ruin of the local agriculture, it has proved impossible to make any such gains in other sectors. In general, it can be said that the economic possibilities accruing from the occupation of the territories have been exploited to the fullest.

The structural deformation of the Israeli economy cannot be "cleaned up" by means of the methods classically employed on the world scale. In order to do that, the government would have to wage an open battle against the state bureaucracy, the high army officers, and the key groups in the bourgeoisie. In other words, it would have to restructure its essential interests as a ruling class and drastically change its strategy with regard to the Arab Israeli conflict. That is, it would have, in the final analysis, to struggle against its own class interests.

This is the main contradiction of Israeli capital. It is why when the government spokespersons talk about the need for implementing an austerity program, in fact they mean drastic cuts in those areas they consider possible to chop (education, health, municipal budgets, civil construction, etc.) and in credits to civilian industry. They mean an offensive against the living standard of the masses.

What was said before does not mean that there are no sections of the bourgeoisie that recognize the need to cut the military budget, at least somewhat, as part of an austerity program. In its October 24, 1984, issue, one of the most serious weeklies in Israel, *Koteret Rasheet* ("The Top Stories"), which is the representative of groups close to the Labor Party, published some "proposals" for cutting the military budget: "Today, there are about 100,000 recruits in the army, about 15% of the workforce in the country and about 50% of the workforce between the ages of 18 and 25....Cutting the military budget by 40% would make it possible to reduce compulsory military service from three years to two and a half, and even, in the longer run, to two years. A reduction of a half a year in military service would release about 15,000 youth for the labor market, and this would have a positive effect on the economy...."

Militarism and unemployment

What the writer of these lines was trying to say in a subtle way was that not only would a cut in the military budget benefit us but in the long run the consignment of more youth to the reserve army of labor would have a depressing effect on the workers' struggles and on the morale of the masses.

Another significant example is the following: "The annual cost of keeping the army in Lebanon amounts to 500 million dollars, which amounts roughly to 15% of the account obtained by the Ministry of Defense for purchases on the internal market....The withdrawal of the army would mean a big saving....Nonetheless, the ministry claims that withdrawing our forces from Lebanon would not have a

positive effect on the budget. That is, whatever is saved in Lebanon would have to be invested to reorganize the army along the northern frontier, especially in the face of the threat from Syrian military forces on Lebanese territory, after an Israeli withdrawal.

"...Obviously, the military and government bureaucracy can always find excuses to justify a continuing increase in military spending."

As pointed out above, the austerity program planned by the bourgeoisie, directed mainly against the standard of living of the masses, cannot solve the basic problems of the Israeli economy. But it can cut away the "fat" in the civilian society.

With respect to its junior partners, the Israeli bourgeoisie has opened up an offensive against the small businessmen who prospered over the preceding decade in the shadow of "big capital." They are concentrated in the peripheral branches of the economy — textiles and food, civil construction, private agriculture, insurance, consumer-goods importers, brokerage companies operating on the Tel-Aviv stock exchange. This offensive led to a drastic reduction in bank credit and culminated in the fall of trading stocks on the Tel-Aviv exchange and its closing in September 1983. Those who have suffered most from this offensive have been the productive sectors, especially the farmers organized in Moshavim (agricultural cooperatives). In fact, the crisis has led to disarray in the agricultural economy and the bankruptcy of several Moshavim.

(It is interesting, in this context to note that the emergence and growth of parasitic businesses concentrating on consumer-goods imports and financial speculation are a reflection of the parasitism and deformation of the Israeli economy, an economy based on constant imperialist subsidies.)

The offensive against the masses' standard of living waged through cutting the nonmilitary budget has thus far been successful. Since 1977, when Likud came to power, the share of the GNP invested in health and education has steadily declined. Moreover, last year, the construction of low-cost housing decreased by 50% within the pre-1967 borders of Israel. Several municipalities have gone bankrupt, owing millions of shekels to private banks (the situation of Arab municipalities such as Nazareth is even more disastrous, since their government aid has been cut by 50%).

The universities have had to postpone the start of classes for lack of state funds, and have increased tuition to a thousand dollars per student. Government subsidies for basic food items have been constantly decreasing since 1978, some of them having been removed entirely, as was also the case for subsidies to public transport, which is monopolized by cooperatives belonging to the Histadrut.

With respect to real wages, the Zionist bourgeoisie's offensive has accelerated since the end of last year. There has been

a steady rise in direct taxes, which percentage-wise are the highest in the world. This has been accompanied by astronomical inflation and cutting automatic cost-of-living increases. (In November, the adjustment made up for only 80% of inflation.) From the end of 1983 to early 1984, the drop in real wages was 15%, and, according to various sources, it may reach 40% or 45% by the end of 1984.

The offensive against the workers reached its high point with the signing of a price-and-wage-freeze agreement in early November by the government, Histadrut and the private employers. This accord, which is stipulated to run for a period of three months, expiring in February 1985, will make it possible to reduce the average wage abruptly by 26.7%. At the same time, it permits businessmen to adjust their prices at the beginning and the end of the period covered. (The night before the accord was signed, the government granted general price increases running between 100% and 200%.) It is for these reasons that the three signatories have rushed to declare their readiness to renew the agreement for another three month period.

While the government spokespersons have tried by every means possible to prove that the freeze will benefit wage earners by bringing about a significant reduction in the rate of inflation, the reality is very different. The inflationary process cannot be brought under control without a drastic reduction in government spending, in particular in the military budget. Days before the freeze agreement was signed, the Ministry of the Economy proposed a new reduction in the budget of 500 million dollars, 150 million of which were to be absorbed by the Ministry of Defense. But the army chiefs are claiming that it is almost impossible to accept this cut "without endangering the security of the state and the strength of the Tsahal [the Israeli army]."

The antiworking-class measures already mentioned are being compounded by a constantly growing rate of unemployment, which by the end of 1984 will extend to 7% of the workforce, that is, 100,000 persons. Some 40% of the unemployed are concentrated in the frontier cities in the north and south of the country. Their ranks will be swelled by 15,000 public employees who are to be laid off in 1985 as a result of the cutbacks in administrative staffs and the projected sale of some state enterprises to private capital.

The situation of the Palestinian workers in the occupied territories is still more desperate. They will suffer most from the wave of layoffs, since they are not organized in the Histadrut and are not covered by social security. This comes on top of the fact that 17 years of Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have finally strangled the weak local industry. And at the same time, the confiscation of land has left a large part of the agricultural population without any means of making their living.

Both the government and the Histadrut are anxious to fire the Palestinian workers so that their jobs can be taken by Jews. But in reality, that is not so easy. The Jewish workers are not ready to work in the conditions and for the wretched pay that the Palestinian workers have had to accept. Moreover, the Israeli capitalists are taking advantage of cheap Arab labor and are not ready to give that up, in particular for Jewish workers who are organized and have higher expectations.

In the government's offensive, the Histadrut has played a key role. Over recent months, it has been the Histadrut leadership that has stressed the need for signing a freeze pact, and in that way it prepared the ground inside the working class for such a deal. But even so, the general secretary of the organization, Israel Keisar, found it necessary to try to justify agreeing to the draconian measures included in the pact. This has brought him growing criticism from his fellows in the Executive Committee of the Histadrut. The representatives of the Likud in this body have taken advantage of this situation to strengthen their claims to being defenders of the interests of the working class, in particular since new elections are coming up soon for the Executive Committee, in April 1985.

The need for a real union

In its role as employer and owner of the biggest consortia in the country, the Histadrut has stressed its "responsibility" facing the need to put the Israeli economy in order, and that is why — confronting an emergency situation — it has neglected its alleged function of a trade union. Over the past year this state of affairs led various groups of workers to refuse to ratify the contracts signed by Histadrut and the employers and to threaten to break away from the control of this body.

Under the second Likud government, in 1981, 13 workers commissions were organized to negotiate independently new wage agreements with the Ministry of the Economy. Among these workers commissions, were some representing several of the country's most important enterprises — the Electricity Company, the National Telephone Company, television, the mineral works on the Dead Sea, the National Airline El-Al, the docks and so on. The Group of the 13 arose because of the lack of agreement that existed with Histadrut on the points to be renegotiated. Although its leaders said early on that

they had no intention of leaving the Histadrut, this organization clearly had a dynamic leading toward independence. Its formation qualitatively changed the relationship of forces between labor and capital in the country.

The Group of 13 made its power felt as an independent organization of the wage earners, who could, if they chose, paralyze the country's economy. That is why the Histadrut saw it as a real danger to its domination of the workers, and tried by every means, along with the government, to break it up. For their part, the 13 made a big mistake in sizing up their own forces relative to the class enemy, refusing to organize other workers commissions that wanted to come in. On the one hand, they were afraid of becoming the leadership of an independent workers' organization. On the other, they wanted to remain an exclusionary grouping representing the workers' aristocracy of the country, in order, as they saw it, to be able to better put pressure on the employers.

The government, in particular the Ministry of the Economy, quickly realized the need for smashing these organizations by a decisive attack. Thus, a campaign was launched to supposedly clean up the airline El-Al. The workers' commission in the company fought for several months against the plan, which included the idea of dissolving the workers' commission. The government won, in particular because the 13 did not solidarize with their fellow workers at El-Al. The 13 did not pass the test of fire, and the impact of this was such that the organization dissolved.

The example of the 13 shows how much the crucial problem for the Israeli workers remains the necessity to achieve their independence as a class by forming their own organizations.

The lack of real unions reduces the possibility for wage earners to accumulate the necessary historical experience for facing up to the government's offensive. The lack of a tradition of independent struggles, and in general the lack of any organizational means for organizing any form of class solidarity are the Achilles Heel of the working-class resistance.

While the position of the Israeli working class at the trade-union level is desperate, it is still worse in the political arena. The working class remains tied politically to the big parties of the Zionist bourgeoisie. This leads it into a blind alley and to a basic failure to understand its class interests. It must not be forgotten that the Jewish working class, which is the majority of the industrial working class in Israel, was formed in the process of Zionist colonization itself and as an integral part of this colonization. That led it to confuse its own interests with those of the Zionist state.

While all these factors point up the problems in the workers' struggle and its natural tendency to be a defensive one, that does not mean that the fight is lost. The big tests are still ahead. ■



Anti-nuclear party shakes up Labor

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA — A new radical force burst stunningly onto the Australian political scene with the emergence of the Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP) during the recent national elections, held on December 1.

The NDP has come from nowhere three months ago to win probably two seats in the 76-seat Senate (upper house of the federal parliament). But more important than the number of seats — which is limited by the undemocratically high quota of votes required to win a Senate seat — is the huge number of votes won by the NDP, up to three-quarters of a million or 7 to 8 per cent of the total electorate.

The program of the NDP is direct and to the point:

- Close all foreign [i.e. US] military bases in Australia.
- Prohibit the stationing of nuclear weapons in Australia and the passage of nuclear weapons through Australian waters and airspace.
- Stop mining and exporting uranium.

The success of the NDP, including the enormous blaze of publicity surrounding its best-known candidate, rock singer Peter Garrett from the popular band Midnight Oil, has shaken up Australian politics in a way not seen since the days of the Vietnam War. Thousands of young people have been drawn into political activity by the NDP campaign.

The effect on a hitherto dull election campaign was dramatic. And the longer-term implications for the class struggle in this country are still being worked out.

Jim McILROY

As universally expected, the federal election was won by the incumbent Australian Labor Party (ALP) government led by Prime Minister Bob Hawke. However, a mix-up in the preferential voting system in the House of Representatives (lower house), together with a late swing to the opposition Liberal-National Party coalition, resulted in Labor losing six seats to finish with a majority of about 16 in the 148-seat lower house.

This swing against the government shocked most commentators, not least the leaders of the ALP, who have adopted very conservative policies in their 18 months in government, hoping to entrench Labor as the country's main governing party for the rest of the decade at least.

Opinion polls before the election predicted anything up to a 5 per cent swing to Labor. Instead, there was a 1.7 per cent swing to the mainstream conservative parties.

This has badly dented the "invincible" image of Hawke, whose personal charisma created by big-business media was relied on almost solely by the ALP right-wing Labor machine to win the election for it.

Like most other trade-union-based Labor or Social Democratic parties around the world, the ALP has a pro-capitalist leadership which subordinates the interests of the mass of workers who support the party to the needs of capitalism — with some reforms thrown in to relieve pressure from working people through their unions.

But under the leadership of former Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) president Hawke, the ALP moved further away from the party's base and more towards openly embracing Australian big business than any other Labor government since the early 1930s.

This resulted in the remarkable spectacle of almost unanimous endorsement of Hawke's reelection by the editors of

April 15, 1984. Huge peace rallies paved the way for the emergence of the NDP (DR)



the major big-business newspapers — an unprecedented occurrence.

Nevertheless, Hawke did not get the expected landslide victory.

This has given the Liberals, who had been staring at the prospect of a record defeat, some new confidence. Their leader, Andrew Peacock, known as the "Sunlamp Kid" or "Andrew Gucci," for his globetrotting, high-society ways, has been given a reprieve from the political knifing which is the usual fate of Liberal leaders who fail to win elections.

The Liberal-National party coalition — a combination of urban business and big rural interests — ran on a platform mixing up some tax cuts with selling off public enterprises such as the government airline, TAA, to private business; replacement of the centralised wage-fixing Arbitration Commission with individual US-style company-based wage contracts; attacks on Aboriginal land rights; effective demolition of Labor's new public health-care system, Medicare; stronger anti-union laws; cuts in youth wages; and increases in war spending.

This program, amounting to an Australian mixture of Thatcherism and Reaganism, is probably regarded by most business interests as premature. Hawke's policy of "national consensus" remains dominant for the present.

But storm clouds are gathering over Hawke's project of years of collaboration between labor and business at home, and the Labor government's policy of backing up the war plans of the Reagan administration internationally.

The eruption of the NDP onto the stage illuminated the severe problems facing Hawke's schemes.

Following years of debate on the issue of uranium mining and the presence of US communications bases, there is widespread popular feeling that Australia's uranium (estimated at 25 per cent of the

world's accessible reserves) should be left in the ground, and that the bases, which are a vital part of the US nuclear war network, should be closed down. The peace movement mobilised at least 200,000 people last April 15 in huge rallies in all major cities.

The anti-uranium movement has powerful support in the trade unions and the Labor Party as well. At the time of its election as the federal government in March 1983, the ALP was committed to a policy of halting all new mines and phasing out established ones.

A July 1984 ALP national conference saw this policy ruthlessly overturned by a combination of the Right and Centre factions of the party against the Left. The conference was heavily dominated by the federal parliamentary machine and the higher echelons of the trade-union movement.

Coming on top of the extremely conservative approach of the Hawke government since its election in March 1983, this was the final straw for many Labor supporters and members.

The Nuclear Disarmament Party grew out of this discontent with the ALP leadership's betrayals.

Beginning as a small grouping in the nation's capital, Canberra, the NDP rapidly established vigorous branches in all state capitals and a number of regional townships, including the Labor-supporting steel cities of Newcastle and Wollongong.

At one Garret rally of 2,000 in Newcastle, 600 joined the NDP on the spot.

A newspaper opinion poll shortly before the election indicated that some 23 per cent of the 18-24 age group intended to vote NDP in the Senate. This represented almost half the prospective NDP vote.

The NDP, while the best-supported, was not the only left political alternative to Labor to perform strongly in this election.

In the lower house electorate of Sydney, the new Greens Alliance, inspired by the West German Greens Party, took nearly 6 per cent of the vote. And independent Aboriginal candidate Helen Boyle won almost 4 per cent in the seat of Kingsford-Smith.

Boyle's campaign focused on the issue of Black land rights, which are under attack from racist and mining company interests. The Hawke government has lost Aboriginal support by backing down on its pledges to guarantee genuine Black control of their land.

Socialist candidates also campaigned strongly in a number of seats.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) — Australian section of the Fourth International — ran nine candidates nationally, winning between 1 and 5 per cent of the vote.

In addition to finding widespread interest in socialist ideas during the course of the campaign, the SWP put special emphasis in this election to supporting the NDP and other progressive campaigns.

In South Australia, a new formation,

the United Campaign for Peace and Socialism (UCPS), was formed to contest the elections.

The UCPS was an alliance of the Socialist Workers Party, Communist Party, Socialist Party and other left organisations. It ran a Senate ticket in South Australia, the first such united left campaign in recent history. This reflects a wide-ranging discussion about prospects for united action now taking place on the Australian left.

SWP national secretary Jim Percy told *Direct Action*, in the December 5 issue of the party's weekly paper, that the election result was a "tremendous victory for the NDP."

"The NDP burst through the [undemocratic electoral] framework. It could become a real viable left force — a force that can't be bought off the way the [liberal capitalist] Australian Democrats have been."

Unlike the Democrats, he said, the NDP was based mainly on former Labor supporters, who "felt the need to create a new party" following the right-wing shift at the ALP national conference.

The NDP's "whole dynamic is different to the Democrats. It is a threat to the establishment.

"That's why the establishment parties gave their preferences to the Democrats, not the NDP," Percy said.

"In the face of all these obstacles, the NDP's success represents an important shift in Australian politics.

"Now there is the task of consolidation, and creation of a viable national party along democratic lines, with real local autonomy and the ability to take local initiatives," he added.

While the success of the NDP was a blow to the Hawke government on one front, Hawke may also face other challenges. Unionists are becoming increasingly restive about wages and other industrial and social issues.

The centrepiece of the Labor government economic strategy since its March 1983 election has been the ACTU-ALP prices-and-incomes accord — essentially a wage-restraint agreement between the unions and the Labor Party.

The accord has been the main instrument enabling the trade-union bureaucracy to keep a tight rein on industrial struggles in the past 18 months. Recent figures show strikes at their lowest overall level for 15 years.

Wages have been effectively frozen for 12 months by means of an Arbitration Commission-controlled wage indexation system, which is rigged to prevent wage claims outside official six-monthly national wage cases — and by manipulation of the Consumer Price Index to understate the real increase in prices.

Some unions, including the powerful Builders Labourers Federation and the smaller Food Preservers' Union, have bucked the system — and have faced attack not only from the employers, but from the Labor government, the ACTU, and other unions.

These unions have been threatened



Peter Garret (DR)

with deregistration, which effectively means removal of their legal right to represent their members.

It is notable that the Hawke Labor government has been able to attack unions more freely than the previous Liberal-National government — precisely because of the "special relationship" between the ALP and the unions.

Signs of militancy are appearing also among public service unions and in other sectors. Such developments could spell trouble for the accord and the government in 1985.

All this comes in the context of looming economic problems in the new year. In the past year, Labor has been able to boast of record economic growth, falling inflation, a reduced increase in unemployment, and high profitability for business as signs of success for its program of capitalist economic recovery.

But recent evidence of a drop in manufacturing production and other economic indicators points to a likely serious slowdown in the economy in 1985. With signs of stagnation in the US economy, the prospects for the Australian economy are grim.

The combination of economic troubles, renewed union militancy, and the rise of antiwar sentiment among youth, casts serious doubt on the Labor government's strategy for stabilising Australian capitalism by class-collaborationism over an extended period.

The challenge facing the left and labour movement is to unite the various forces radicalised by the crisis into a movement capable of offering a serious alternative to the pro-big-business policies of Laborism. ■

Reagan gets the election results he wanted

The Grenadan elections have produced a result satisfactory to the Reagan administration. In the poll, conducted on December 3, the New National Party (NNP) led by Herbert Blaize gained 23,984 votes (59 per cent) to win 14 places in the 15-seat house of representatives.

The Grenada United Labour Party (GULP) — still under the personal control of ex-dictator Eric Gairy — received 14,677 votes (39 per cent) but only won one seat. The Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement (MBPM), while experiencing a late upswing in support did not win any seats, finishing with 2,022 votes (5 per cent) in the 13 constituencies where they stood.

Ronald Reagan speaking on the day the results were announced said they marked 'the first time that a Marxist-Leninist government has been succeeded by a government that received its authority by a free election.'

Nothing was left to chance by the American government in securing this result. Three hundred troops, the remainder of the force which invaded the island on October 25, 1983, and a specially increased force of 500 Jamaican and Barbadian soldiers watched over the electoral process.

Steve ROBERTS

MBPM leader Kendrick Radix, the former industry minister in the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) of Maurice Bishop, complained of deportations of sympathetic journalists, mail interception and phone tapping. Much of this activity is sponsored by the island's Barbadian police chief, Mervyn Holder.

Complaints about the behaviour of the Barbadian security personnel, also came from Roy Chasteau, who was the election's supervisor before he was sacked by the island's governor general, Sir Paul Scoon. Chasteau accused the authorities of having secretly printed extra ballot papers and objected to entrusting foreign troops with the task of collecting the ballot boxes.

Large amounts of money were channelled into Grenada to influence the election result in the direction of the NNP. The National Republican Institute for International Affairs, a grouping linked to the US Republican Party, sent 20,000 US dollars to a body called the Grenada Civic Awareness Group. The money was spent on literature, stickers, posters and other material designed to push the elections. The major fear of the NNP was that the electorate would remain indifferent.

Another American-based body, the Free Trade Union Institute, which is backed by the AFL-CIO trade-union federation, allocated more than 80,000 US dollars to what they claimed was the 'central labour movement' in Grenada 'to encourage discussion on the country's future'. The money was directed through the American Institute for Labour Development — a body widely regarded as being a front for the Central Intelli-

gence Agency operations in the international trade-union movement.

More direct help came from ex-Reagan election campaign worker Morton C. Blackwell, an 'expert' on turning out the youth vote, who organised a 'privately financed team of operatives' to help the NNP.

The NNP was launched in August 1984, as the product of an alliance between the Grenadan Democratic Movement of Francis Alexis, the National Democratic Party of George Brizan and Blaize's old Grenadan National Party. Another grouping headed by Winston Whyte, the Christian Democratic Labour Party, split away from the

alliance soon after it was formed, eventually receiving a derisory 105 votes in the election.

Alexis is notorious for the alacrity with which he offered his services as prime minister 24 hours after the US invasion. At that time he was connected with a group in opposition to the Bishop government based in Barbados with strong US connections. Brizan previously supported the People's Alliance, which was an alliance of opposition parties including the New Jewel Movement in 1976. He worked with the PRG administration that took power in March 1979. But he supported the US invasion and calls for US troops to stay on.

Blaize's own party was the chief alternative party to the GULP during the 1950s and 1960s. Blaize last formed a government in 1967. His party then represented the interests of the old plantocracy and those sections of the business class in opposition to Gairy.

The coalition he leads today essentially still represents the latter category, the influence of the landowners, however, having much diminished in the intervening period. The government Blaize will form will be the image of the majority of other eastern Caribbean governments, a project marked by the presence of Tom Adams of Barbados, James Mitchell of St. Vincent and John Compton on Saint Lucia at the launching of the party.

All were determined to ensure that Gairy did not make a comeback to run the country again. They considered the Gairy regime largely responsible for the ease with which the New Jewel Movement was able to take power in 1979.

For similar reasons Gairy faced opposition from the US authorities themselves. US officials hinted that the 57 million dollar aid package to the island would be suspended if Gairy won and a US industrialist who had begun to set up production in Grenada threatened to

People outside the meeting of October 19, 1984 (DR)



close down his plant.

This was despite the lavish praise heaped on the American government by Gairy and his promise to name the still uncompleted international airport after President Reagan! Gairy overreached himself though when he claimed Reagan had personally advocated that Grenadians vote for the GULP. The US representatives on the island issued an immediate and indignant denial.

Gairy has now induced his sole victorious GULP candidate to resign alleging electoral fraud and he himself may stand in the by-election.

The MBPM apparently hoped for more than the 5 per cent support they eventually received. They objected to the early closure of the electoral registration list before they had decided to run in the elections and called for its reopening as many of their supporters were excluded. This was refused. As a result, only 48,000 of the island's 110,000 population were able to vote, some 15,000 less than in 1976.

The reasons for the low vote for the MBPM do not lie merely in the electoral manipulations of the US imperialists and their local puppets. They lie, above all, in the bloody and disastrous ending of the People's Revolutionary Government by Bernard Coard's military coup. This coup — which resulted in the execution of Maurice Bishop and his most prominent supporters in the NJM, and the murderous suppression of the mass uprising against it — opened the way for the US invasion of the island. According to MBPM supporters, the attitude towards Coard supporters among the population at large is of uncontainable hatred. It is under these circumstances that the majority also looked on the US invasion as a deliverance from the violence of the new Revolutionary Military Council.

The show trial of the Coard faction by the authorities, is being used to try to discredit all the previous supporters of the New Jewel Movement. It is for this reason that some supporters of the MBPM have called for the Coardites to be tried by a people's tribunal of the Grenadan people. However, others are giving evidence to the court. The trial itself has been postponed from its original starting date. Blaize has already promised his new seven person cabinet will crack down on the left, and the trial will remain one of the principal justifications of the repression against the whole of the left.

The votes amassed by the MBPM are a reminder, albeit that of a small minority, that the gains of the revolution still remain a reality for a vanguard on the island. This was also reflected in the memorial meeting organised by the MBPM before the election on October 19 and an election rally on November 18 which, according to the organisers, 2,000 people attended.

Many former Bishop supporters voted for the NNP to keep Gairy out. Given the obstacles put in their way and the



A bust of Maurice Bishop unveiled on October 19, 1984 (DR)

bitter heritage of the Coard coup which brought about the internal collapse of the revolution, it is significant that so many Grenadians gave their support to the platform of the MBPM. This support, moreover, is not just at the level of the ballot box. The active resistance of trade unionists to the attempts of the authorities to liquidate the gains is another obstacle for Blaize in his normalisation programme (see IV, No 64, November 26, 1984). However, no one is under any illusions that the process of rebuilding a revolutionary movement in Grenada will be anything other than lengthy and arduous.

The defeat of the revolution and the re-establishment of the capitalist social order also represents a grave setback for the revolutionary movement in the area. The responses of some figures in this movement, however, have been at variance with the programme and trajectory of the Maurice Bishop supporters in Grenada.

Three important conferences took place in 1984 to assess the defeat of the revolution and draw out the lessons. The first such meeting was held on the island of Marie-Galante in the Antilles.

Present were the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement, the Dominican United Labour Party and the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement, from anglophone Caribbean countries; and a number of French-speaking organisations, including the Groupe Revolutionnaire Socialiste, the Antilles section of the Fourth International.

The meeting, which was held to commemorate the life of Maurice Bishop, issued a statement denouncing Coard and his associates and supporting Cuba's stand during the crisis as expressed in the statement made by Fidel Castro the day after the invasion (see IV, No 40, November 14 1983).

A different approach was taken at another conference in Georgetown, Guyana, initiated by veteran leftist leader Cheddi Jaggan of the People's Progressive Party.

This meeting brought together, in the words of the organisers, representatives of the 'revolutionary and communist' movement in the region including the Cuban Communist Party, the communist parties of Guadeloupe and Martinique, the Workers Party of Jamaica, the Workers Revolutionary Movement of Saint Lucia, the Dominican Liberation Movement Alliance, the United Peoples Movement of Saint Vincent, the February 18 Movement and the Peoples Popular Movement of Trinidad, and the Movement for National Liberation of Barbados.

According to an account of the meeting in the October 1984 issue of *Antilla*, a left magazine published in the French-speaking Antilles, all the parties that originated from the English-speaking Caribbean countries at this conference expressed their support for the Revolutionary Military Council of Coard. According to the same report, Trevor Munroe, general secretary of the Workers Party of Jamaica (WPJ) and close collaborator of Coard in the final days of the Grenadan revolution, went on to accuse the Cuban CP of 'opening the door to the US invasion by their criticism of Coard and Austin's coup'.

In June 1984, the Cuban Communist Party called a conference that brought together nearly all the groups which had been present at the two previous meetings, along with delegates from the FSLN of Nicaragua, the El Salvadoran FMLN, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the Communist Party of Haiti, the United Peoples Movement of St. Vincent, the Workers Party of Guyana, the Vanguard and Nationalist and Socialist Party of the Bahamas and a delegation from various left organisations in the Dominican Republic.

Again, according to *Antilla*:

'The final communique of this "first consultative meeting of the anti-imperialist organisations of the Caribbean and Central America" agreed on a denunciation of Washington's interventionist policy and appealed for the widest unity possible. The official text published from the meeting also confirmed the high esteem in which most of the organisations held Maurice Bishop, the leader of the Grenadan revolution.

'But', the magazine noted, 'this apparent unanimity could not mask the profound differences which had been displayed in the past. So when Trevor Munroe, took the opportunity to again accuse Maurice Bishop of being "petit bourgeois", his attack provoked under-

standable anger from a number of participants, in the first place Kendrick Radix....'

Munroe has pursued this line of approach, saying there is a class struggle inside the NJM, in a number of meetings which he has addressed since the defeat of the revolution. In particular he has accused Bishop of demonstrating softness in apparently opposing the closure of *Torchlight*, (the main opposition newspaper) by the People's Revolutionary Government in Grenada.

Others, in the same vein, have said that Bishop's proposal to speed up the work of the Constitutional Commission set up by the revolutionary government and therefore bring forward elections in Grenada was a symptom of 'right opportunism' and capitulation to the pressures of the bourgeoisie.

Bishop's supporters have furiously rejected these charges of 'opportunism'. At the Havana conference Kendrick Radix declared:

'Munroe talks of a class struggle (to justify the battle inside the NJM), but which class benefits from this madness? In whose interest were the actions taken by guys so drunk on ideology, so constipated by ideology, that they were not even capable of seeing it would lead to the destruction of our revolution?'

Bishop's supporters are, however, also critical of collective errors made during the period. For example, George Louison in the November 1984 issue of *National Geographic* magazine posed the problem:

'If we had gone to the public with our internal differences, it would have damaged our image, our credibility. Of course we were wrong on that... (But) elections don't guarantee open government. You get out there and engage in bribery and slander. Elections breed political tribalism and violence.'

Such statements, sometimes of contradictory nature, from Bishop supporters are part of a more general discussion which draws not only on the balance sheet of the defeat of the Grenadan revolution but also on the victories of Nicaragua. In particular the Sandinistas have shown that the process of political pluralism does not cut across or contradict the development of the mass organisations or the organs of popular power.

On the contrary, the electoral process in Nicaragua has aided the development of workers' democracy through the systematic education process entailed.

This consideration was perhaps even more important in the Grenadan context given the relatively lower level of mobilisation of the masses before the March 1979 revolution. Such considerations also apply to the question of the freedom of the press. The type of debate conducted between *La Prensa*, the bourgeois paper in Nicaragua, and the pro-Sandinista press, has likewise aided the process of mass politicisation and education rather than retarding it. The way in which the FSLN have handled this problem contrasts to the way in which *Torchlight*, the mouthpiece of bourgeois op-



MBPM leaders listen to the Grenada hymn at the beginning of October 19, 1984 meeting (DR)

position to the PRG, was silenced.

The encouragement of pluralism outside the party is obviously linked to the issue of pluralism within. The absence of democratic guarantees within the New Jewel Movement has been sharply underlined by Don Rojas, Maurice Bishop's former press secretary, in an interview with Pierre Rousset in *Croissance des Jeunes Nations* (September 1984), a radical christian journal on the problems of the third world.

Leaders and led

Asked to describe the state of internal party relations and how the domination of Coard was achieved, Rojas replied:

'The relations between the leadership and the membership of the party were essentially relations between leaders and led. The leadership gave directives which the militants carried out unquestioningly, without debate or dispute.

'The rank and file were not able to bring pressure to bear on the leadership because of the absence of internal party structures which would allow democratic flow from the top to the bottom.

'As to the Central Committee it stayed as it had been before the 1979 revolution (not counting two members who were expelled). There was no party congress for the four and a half years of the revolution. For many of us this absence of a congress was a fundamental error.

'The authority of the party was never established. The Central Committee became the supreme authority. But it was never accountable to the base. It was cut off from it. In fact the functioning of the mass organisations was more democratic than that of the party.

'One can easily understand the weight of Bernard Coard's faction in this context. They were a majority before the revolution in a Central Committee which was not changed afterwards.'

It is true that these types of judgments by Bishop supporters are in the light of experience. Very little of this type of debate figures in the reports of NJM Central Committee meetings in the years of the revolution. Nevertheless it was the necessity of renewing the links between the leadership and the masses that Bishop insisted was the precondition for solving the problems that the revolution ran into in its fourth year. As against this prescription Coard's supporters developed their model of the administratively efficient party nucleus, with its backbone of young staff officers of the People's Revolutionary Army.

Bishop's sensibility to the necessity of continuously being in contact with the masses was not a symptom of weakness in the face of imperialism. On the contrary, the greater the level of ties between the masses and the government, the greater the possibility of the masses defending the revolution.

The more a government imposes itself on the people — such as in the way that the Revolutionary Military Council after the overthrow of the PRG did — the easier it is for imperialism to overthrow such a regime.

It was due to the collapse of workers' democracy in Grenada that the imperialists were able to achieve the overthrow of this, in Reagan's words, 'Marxist-Leninist' government.

In Grenada today, the defenders of Bishop's tradition, the defenders of the memory of the greatest black revolutionary produced in the Caribbean since the overthrow of slavery, now face a new period of repression and harassment by the Blaize government.

Defence of the democratic rights of all Grenadan people and supporting the efforts of the MBPM is the way in which the lessons of the Grenadan revolution can be most effectively capitalised on. ■

Stakes rise in trial of Belgrade Six

The following article is from the December 5 issue of *Die Linke*, the paper of the Austrian section of the Fourth International. Its introduction follows.

The trial against the six Belgrade oppositionists is arousing great international interest. In general, it is expected to indicate the direction of Yugoslavia's domestic political course. There are many signs that the hardliners in the bureaucracy are gaining the upper hand.

Branko KRIZMAN

"I am no enemy of socialism. Quite the contrary. I have stood for democratic socialism my entire life. I was brought up in this spirit, and it is in this spirit that I am bringing up my own children."

With these words, the translator Pavlusko Imsirovic, one of the six left intellectuals in Belgrade who have been charged with counterrevolutionary activity and "conspiracy" exposed the political motives behind this case in his testimony in his own defense on November 12.

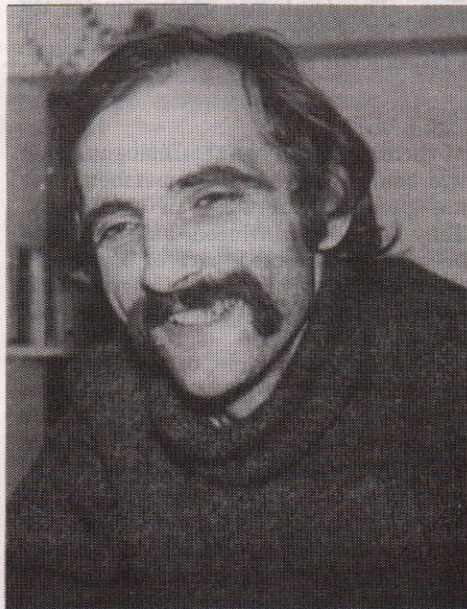
Similarly, a few days earlier, the film maker Miodrag Milic said: "They are accusing us of undermining the social system. But we are not the ones who piled up 20 billion dollars in debts and threw the country into an almost colonial dependence.

From November 5 to 16, in the first phase of the trial against the six who participated in the "Free University" networks that have existed since 1977, the state prosecutor, Danilo Nanovic, cut a worse and worse figure every day. Since the indictment does not offer a shred of proof that the "Free University" seminars actually served as preparation for anti-state actions and were therefore illegal, the prosecutor posed more and more questions about the views of the defendants and those expressed in the manuscripts the police had seized in their homes. According to recent decisions of Yugoslav courts, these documents could constitute "enemy propaganda" even if no one ever saw them.

The presiding judge, Zoran Stojkovic, had to grant the objections of the defense again and again and reject the "questions of opinion" raised by the state prosecutor.

On the other hand, all observers have reported that the defendants have shown a striking firmness and determination in the court chambers of the Belgrade Palace of Justice, which have been jammed to the bursting by 200 visitors.

Four of the six defendants refused outright to answer questions, on the



Vladimir Mijanovic (DR)

grounds that the state prosecutor had first to present some evidence. For example, the sociologist Milan Nikolic said: "I don't know what I should defend myself against. The whole thing is upside down. Those who are staging this trial are committing an offense against the Yugoslav constitution, which guarantees freedom of opinion and assembly."

The main defendant, Vladimir Mijanovic, explained his refusal to testify as follows: "We six are completely unimportant in this proceeding. We are only being used as a means for intimidating public opinion by those who reject genuine dialogue about social reforms and a lasting solution to the crisis."

The fact that the outcome of this trial does not depend on what happens in the courtroom is obvious. It is what happens outside, at the political level, that is decisive. Already in the summer, a very broad petition campaign was waged in defense of the accused, while they were still in pretrial detention.

Since early July, the defendants have been free on bail. Their case has continued to arouse great support in critical in-

tellectual circles. The bulletin that is distributed daily by friends of the accused while the trial is in session, talks about the reading of solidarity statements at the University of Belgrade, which led to the student Milos Bogdanovic being held by the police for two weeks.

In mid-November, 19 well-known intellectuals in Serbia announced the formation of a Committee to Defend Freedom of Thought and Opinion, which will take up the case of the six.

The strong international interest in this trial, and in particular the solidarity of West European left circles with the accused, is increasing the pressure on the authorities. The most spectacular expression of this solidarity was the presence of the West German Green members of parliament Petra Kelly and Gert Bastian at the first sessions of the trial.

The Yugoslav media reacted by raising the accusation that an anti-Yugoslav campaign directed from abroad is underway. The "anarcho-liberals," as the Yugoslav authorities call all those who express unwanted thoughts, that is the "anarcho-liberals of all countries," are supposed to have combined to throw mud at Yugoslavia's self-management socialism. A real conspiracy of the "extreme right and the extreme left," as the Belgrade radio news described it in all earnestness on November 8.

For those involved, however, these expressions have no humorous aspect. They mean that the media have gotten the order to prepare public opinion for a draconian sentence, as Vladimir Mijanovic said in his interview with the Vienna magazine *Gegenstimmen*.

While the Belgrade magazines *Inter-viju* and *Nin* published relatively fair articles about the case before the trial began, in the second week of the proceedings a full-scale campaign got underway. In the Yugoslav capital, in fact, the party organizations were summoned to special meetings, and the militia was put on the alert.

In the last day of the proceedings, the accusation against the sociologist Milan Nikolic was in fact stepped-up. Two of the manuscripts confiscated in his home were characterized as "enemy propaganda." One was a doctoral thesis for the well-known sociology professor Ralph Miliband at the US university Brandeis. The other was an article by an English author for the London magazine *New Left Review* on the Albanian question in Kosovo.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to throw in the towel and assume in advance that the second round of the trial is a lost cause. The Yugoslav situation is marked by the greatest instability, and, in contrast to many other such sad cases, international protest can have an influence on decisions within the party leadership.

The resumption of the trial on December 6 could be an opportunity for reminding the people in the Yugoslav leadership who are pushing this trial that the Western left is not going to abandon the Belgrade Six. ■

The development of the independent peace movement

The Hungarian independent peace movement is young, but already has considerable experience. The Peace Group for a Dialogue was created in 1981 in the hope that the gradual liberalisation of the Hungarian regime in recent years would favour the organisation of an independent peace movement (see IV, No 33, June 27, 1983).

It was even prepared to pay a high political price in order for its activities to be tolerated. The group pledged itself not to oppose in an open way the government's foreign policy in relation to defence. Such loyalty would allow the activists, or so they thought, a relative organisational independence in their work.

Some leaders of the group even considered it necessary to make an extra effort to prove themselves, and openly took their distance from the 'dissidents' of the democratic opposition. The Dialogue group under its samizdat name of 'Beszelo' had the strong impression that the regime of Janos Kadar, the first secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, would tolerate such an experiment.

Antoine DELAGRANGE

The rest is well-known. The Dialogue groups became more and more popular with the youth of Budapest and several other Hungarian towns. The regime saw a real danger in their growth: the political stability of the preceding years was still fragile. And the Dialogue groups' orientation, combining a determination to take a loyalist attitude toward certain aspects of the regime's policy with independence in action, could not offer sufficient guarantees for the regime in the long term for it to be able to tolerate such activity.

The celebrated Hungarian reforms have been in the economic and cultural fields but not in the military domain. Not only was this peace group meddling in taboo political subjects but its growing influence and ability to organise could sooner or later have effects on the basis of Dialogue's programme itself.

The determination to maintain a loyal attitude to the regime played up by the original leaders of the group was not enough to reassure the Kadarist regime.

A political bureau of gerontocrats could not have much faith in adolescents who were newcomers to big-time politics. In the beginning, representatives of the regime participated in meetings and public debates organised by Dialogue. But once it became clear that this would not be enough to reintegrate peace groups into the official structures, the political bureau decided to act, putting a stop to this experiment of independence.

A summer peace camp organised in 1983 by Dialogue on an island in the Danube between Buda and Pest that brought together Dutch and Hungarian peace activists and a delegation of women from Greenham Common (in England) was brutally attacked by police. The foreigners were forcibly escorted out

of the country. Then the Dialogue group was banned outright. Its members were not prepared for such an eventuality. They had been convinced that they could become an accepted part of Hungarian political life. They never imagined that despite their loyalty they could be put outside the law.

The Kadarist regime, of course, had to take account of the negative consequences of their decision. Repressive action threatened to tarnish their image both in the eyes of the Hungarian people, as well as abroad.

The minor policy differences that exist between Hungary and its neighbours in the East are very important for a regime that has succeeded in uniting a large part of the population around a project of limited but real reforms. This distinction has enabled the Hungarian government, in fact, to obtain more favourable treatment from the capitalist countries.

In order to legitimise repression of the peace movement, the Kadar regime, therefore, resorted to an ingenious strategy. One of the leaders of Dialogue, Ferenc Koszegi, was authorised to organise a new group under a new name.

This new group is called 6-4-0 with the numbers six and four representing the number of years that the First and Second World Wars lasted [for Hungary] and zero, the hope that there will not be another one. Its aim was to appeal to and organise young peace activists who had been responsive to the language and arguments of Dialogue and who the Peace Council, the official peace organisation, was utterly incapable of attracting.

Granting legality to the former group could seem to justify banning competing ones. With a bit of luck, this game might even convince the outside world that the regime in Hungary really was different.

Koszegi played along with this game, announcing that he would follow the policy of the Peace Council from then on.

The orientation of this official peace body consists, amongst other things, of supporting the provisions for military steps the Soviet Union might deem necessary to counter the Western military buildup.

As the price for a pseudo-independence for his group, Koszegi demonstrated his readiness to keep quiet about all such problems. Members of the 6-4-0 group are not automatically required to become members of the Peace Council, which allows them to retain an appearance of independence.

By capitulating in this way to the diplomatic policies of the regime, Koszegi presents himself in Western Europe as the official 'independent' representative of the regime.

At the international peace movement conference that took place in Perugia, Italy, in July 1984 (see IV, No 61, October 16, 1984), Hungary became the first country in the Eastern bloc to institute the policy of sending a mixed delegation made up of traditional official delegates and 'independent official' delegates.

For the occasion, since they still had not been able to draw in enough people from the old Dialogue group, Koszegi got an escort of two old wolves from the Hungarian political establishment. The fact that these people had never had anything to do with the peace movement did not bother anyone. The regime's image was rescued. The Hungarian media could, with some concrete arguments, proudly announce to the population that democratisation of society was following its course.

For their part, the foreign press was only too happy to note, with great satisfaction, yet another sign of the renewal of the reform policy. A good proportion of the Western peace movement was hoodwinked by this.

Some peace movement leaders even thought it necessary to safeguard the links with this different sort of regime, to reserve special treatment for Hungary.

With great difficulty, the members of the old independent peace group, Dialogue, managed to reorganise. A good proportion of the old members continued to meet. The Budapest group even decided to ignore the ban and to keep the name of Dialogue. They had to confront a new situation. Today it is impossible for this group to organise public activities in a continuous way. The most innocent activity brings unrelenting repression.

For example, Vermezo Park in Budapest was declared a nuclear-free zone on Sunday afternoon July 27, and within minutes the police moved in, forcibly removing white flags and banners. Furthermore, the tenant of the apartment where the group used to meet was interrogated by police, and eventually had to move. Several members of Dialogue have been interrogated by police under various pretexts.

It is very difficult to define a new orientation in such circumstances. Any

hope of becoming a legitimate movement in the eyes of the authorities is now lost. But a majority of Dialogue members still do not want to let themselves be pushed into the shadows of political life and to have to face repression.

The choice which presents itself to them is a painful one: either to continue the struggle and risk being completely pushed into a corner, or to withdraw from all political activity.

In the first instance the majority of Dialogue members tried to avoid this dilemma by substituting for political activity and discussion more discreet actions (such as symbolic actions, internal activities, etc.) which did not seem so likely to attract the attention of the minister of the interior. But this could not suffice, nor could it last.

Dialogue was obliged to redefine its own identity in relation to the Kadarist regime. The group, therefore, decided to organise programmatic discussions on perspectives for action.

The division of Europe into two antagonistic blocs, the military occupation of Hungary by the Soviet army, the military policy of their own government — on all these questions Dialogue was forced to take positions. Under these conditions, it was no longer feasible for it to maintain a loyalist stance toward the regime. Contact between peace activists and the democratic opposition is being renewed. Dialogue no longer feels obliged to take its distance from the dissidents.

Dialogue also feels part of the international peace movement. But the failure of sections of the Western peace movement to define a political orientation on the peace question acceptable to the peoples of Eastern Europe means that not only must the independent peace movement in Hungary raise criticisms about this but also that there has to be an ongoing discussion between peace activists in the East and West.

On this political basis, a new orientation in public activity will become possible. Dialogue runs the risk of drawing the wrath of the ministry of the interior again, of course. This is mainly because it still has the potential for regaining the following it had two years ago.

But Dialogue also holds some real trump cards. Its members have no illusions this time about the goodwill of the regime. The group will, therefore, be stronger and more prepared to stand up to the regime.

The Western peace movement carries a huge responsibility for mobilising to counter such a perspective of repression. The forces of repression will have a great deal of difficulty in defeating a group with structured links with the international peace movement. The price will be even higher for a regime whose international image is under threat.

The non-official independent peace activists of Hungary have not been present at meetings of the international peace movement such as the one in Perugia.

Before the banning, Dialogue had only just started to build links with the European peace movement. Western peace activists, on the other hand, have the means to bring sufficient pressure to bear to get guarantees from the Kadarist re-

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Joint declaration of independent peace activists of Czechoslovakia and the GDR

The third convention of the movement for European Nuclear Disarmament (END), which took place in Perugia, Italy, last July, showed that an increasing number of activists in the Western peace movement were aware of the importance of solidarity with peace groups in the East.

The statement below indicates that peace activists in the East are also concerned about making the links with the Western European movement. In particular it demonstrates the progress that has been made in making contacts between activists within Eastern Europe and in their concern to unite their efforts in order to fight the militaristic policy of their respective governments. No doubt this document will be seen as having an important bearing on the preparations for the meeting organised by the Coordination for East-West Dialogue which is to be held on February 8 to 11 in West Berlin.

New Soviet weapons were installed in our two countries one year ago. According to the official explanation this measure had been taken in order to balance the nuclear armament of the two superpowers and thereby consolidate peace.

In reality, the achievement of peace is more threatened than ever, and the arms race is continuing apace. This accusation is addressed to all those countries that are preparing themselves for a new world war, threatening their neighbours and calling up their citizens for military service without giving them any opportunity to participate in decisions that after all directly involve their own vital interests.

At the moment two new countries, that is ours, have become bases for launching missiles, a situation which considerably increases the risk of a nuclear reply to meet them.

That is why we reiterate our protest against the increased deployment of missile bases in our country. In so doing we demonstrate our solidarity with the peace movement in the West, which, on its side, is rising up against militarism and nuclear rearmament.

In our view the first decisive step is to ban all nuclear weapons in Europe from the Ural mountains to the Atlantic. With the independent peace movements in Hungary, the USSR and Poland, we share the conviction that the nuclear arms race is not actually the cause of the current international crisis. It is more the product of a policy based on force, or to put it another way, on practices that involve the dominance of certain vested interests.

Those who think in terms of 'blocs' and 'enemies' prevent any kind of dialogue from opening up. Those who tolerate social inequality and in fact encour-

age it are responsible for poverty and famine. Those who deny human beings their dignity as individuals, who refuse to recognise freedom of opinion can only deal with national and international problems by using violence.

But peace is indissolubly linked to respecting and applying all human rights without exception. We want to live in an open society that respects people for what they are. The road to this does not pass through the army barracks or through pollution of the atmosphere or go past the missile silos.

Czechs and Slovaks, as well as Germans in West Germany have signed this statement in order to demonstrate the permanence of their alliance and cooperation. This solidarity cannot be threatened by the harbouring of historical grudges, nor by any secret police. What unites us in the first place is the following idea: 'Peace in Europe and world nuclear disarmament'. We call on other independent peace movements to support our statement.

Signed (from the German Democratic Republic);

Baerbel Bohley, Antje Boettger, Martin Boettger, Werner Fischer, Elisabeth Gibbes, Katja Havemann, Irena Kukotz, Traudel Kulikowsky, Gisela Metz, Stefan Pickhardt, Ulrike Poppe, Jutta Seidel, Anne Quasdorf.

Signed (from Czechoslovakia);

Petr Cibulka, Jiri Dienstbier, Karel Freund, Vaclav Havel, Eva Kanturkova, Jan Kozlik, Ladislav Lis, Vaclav Maly, Anna Marvanova, Jaroslav Meznik, Radim Palous, Jan Ruml, Jaroslav Sabata, Anna Sabatova, Petruska Sustrova, Petr Uhl. ■

Berlin, Prague, November 22, 1984

The government steps up repression and seeks to silence its critics

After broad protests, especially by labor, Sri Lankan authorities have dropped their attempt to prosecute the author of the following article, a well-known leader of the Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International, and the rest of the Balangoda 18 (see IV, Nos 60 and 64).

Upali COORAY

On November 29 the UNP-led (United National Party) government of Mr J. R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka clamped down on all democratic rights and reduced the North and Eastern provinces to virtual prison camps. Some of the measures adopted by the UNP government are reminiscent of the barbaric Nazi decrees.

For instance, every household in the Northern and Eastern provinces must furnish a list of its occupants to the police and no other person is permitted to stay in the house without the written permission of the police. No person may use a vehicle or even a bicycle without the consent (in the form of a permit from the police) of the government.

A wide stretch of land extending right round the coast of the Northern province and a part of the Eastern province (one hundred metres inland and one hundred metres out in the sea) has been declared a prohibited zone and no person, including fishermen, may enter or remain in this zone for whatever reason.

No person is permitted to travel except between the hours of 6 a.m. and 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. Even this is meaningless since the government has imposed a curfew that extends up to 60 hours. For instance on December 10, the government declared a curfew in the Northern province which was to be lifted at 6 a.m. on Thursday, December 13. Prior to that the government declared a 42-hour curfew in the North.

The national security minister announcing these measures in parliament stated that Tamils in Jaffna should take a holiday in other parts of the country and that would assist the government to determine who is innocent. This statement was flashed on the front page of the government-owned press. The message was clear. The government was going to terrorise the people of Jaffna by indiscriminate attacks on the Tamil people.

One of the new measures announced makes every houseowner in the vicinity of a place where a bomb explodes, vicariously liable for the explosion. This is, in fact, an attempt to justify what the army personnel had been doing all this time — shooting people in the vicinity of every bomb that had exploded in the North and the East.

All these measures were justified on the grounds that the government had

received 'reliable information' that the terrorist groups were planning to drive the security forces from the North by December 31, and to declare a State of Eelam (Tamil state) by January 14, 1985. As the Indian government very aptly put it, the government was working

Sri Lankan people burn an effigy of Jayewardene (DR)



itself up into a war psychosis — or more precisely, the government was whipping up a war hysteria amongst the Sinhala-speaking people.

The main bourgeois party in the opposition, the SLFP (1) swallowed this bait hook, line and sinker. They went overboard and stated that in this hour of national crisis every one should close ranks and stand with the government. They were only sorry that even in this hour of 'crisis' the government was trying to score points and was not seeking to unite all forces to safeguard the nation!

The LSSP [the Lanka Sama Samaja Party] was silent and no one knew what it felt about this fantastic hoax. In any event, they were not prepared to even discuss with other left organisations

1. SLFP — Sri Lankan Freedom Party, is a bourgeois opposition party.

the question of issuing a statement condemning these repressive measures.

The Communist Party became unusually tame; even in their daily paper, *Aththa*, the CP began to concentrate its fire on marginal issues. To its credit, the SLMP [the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party] — the break-away group of the SLFP — led by Mr Vijaya Kumaranatunga (son-in-law of Mrs Bandaranaike) criticised these measures and asked the government to offer realistic terms to the Tamil-speaking people so that a peaceful solution could be worked out to the national question.

Even before these measures were actually put into effect the army was shooting people indiscriminately. The new measures, obviously, strengthened the hand of the army and encouraged their lawlessness. With the result that the army went on the rampage in Mannar again killing over 85 innocent civilians. This was just one example of countless such acts of brutal repression all over the North.

At the same time Tamil youths were being arrested all over the country. Some of these people have since gone missing. Others have died whilst 'trying to escape from the custody of the army'. Although most of the people arrested have since been released, they suffered all types of indignities — from insults to brutal attacks — whilst in police and army custody. Thousands of others are being held in custody and no one knows what will happen to them.

The attacks launched by some Tamil militants on the Sinhala settlers in the Doolar and Ken Farms (between Mullativ and Vavuniya) and the similar assaults on two fishing camps have created an excellent propaganda weapon for the government. They have been able to raise a hue and cry about these attacks whilst covering up all the atrocities committed by the army. It has also galvanised Sinhala opinion behind the government and made it extremely difficult for the critics of the government to expose its fraudulent claims about an invasion.

The LTTE (the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) had apparently claimed responsibility for these attacks and other Eelam organisations, notably the PLOTE (Peoples Liberation Organisation for Tamile Eelam) had apparently criticised these attacks. Since the vast majority of Sinhala people do not know the distinction between the various Eelam groups and depend solely on the chauvinist mainstream media for information, the idea that the Eelamists are bent on destroying the Sinhala nation will now be reinforced, because they see the attempt to set up an Eelam state as the first step in a well-planned conspiracy to make the whole of Sri Lanka a colony of Tamil Nadu [in India].

The national security minister as well as the newly appointed media committee, headed by Mr Wickrema Weerasooriya (brother-in-law of Mr Gamini Dissanayeke and a member of the family that owns

FINCO, the company that gets a large slice of government contracts), have also sought to slander the left in Sri Lanka through propaganda which seeks to link the 'terrorists in the North with the extremists in the South'.

This poster depicts a 'Tamil terrorist', a person that looks like Rohan Wijeweera, the leader of the JVP (Peoples Liberation Organisation, which was banned in 1983 for reasons unknown) and a Russian bear. The purpose of the poster is to create the idea that the Tamil 'terrorists' are working hand in hand with the leftists in the South and all this is a big plot hatched by the Russians. Even if people did not believe that the JVP was not connected with the Eelamists (and, in fact, the JVP had always adopted a chauvinist line in relation to the Eelam demand), the impression created in the minds of many Sinhala people will be of people lurking around in Sinhala areas in the South who are supporting the Tamil 'terrorists'.

This also makes it difficult for leftist and liberal organisations to voice any criticism of the repressive policies of the government. Anyone who dares to do so will not only be branded as a friend of the Eelamists and 'traitors' to the Sinhala and the Sri Lankan nation-state, but also subjected to repression themselves.

Subversive literature

Already a large number of Sinhala youth, suspected of being leftists, have been arrested and detained by the police. On December 4 a friend of mine, Redley Silva, an executive committee member of the Bank Employees Union, visited my house with a woman activist friend to have a drink and supper. On his way back home he was arrested at the bus stop; the police were concerned about the copy of the *New Statesman* (2) he had with him, which they considered as subversive literature.

They took him to the Wellawatte police station, questioned him and then took him to his house. They collected a few more books and newspapers, including a copy of *Labour Law Handbook No 1*, which I had published. Redley had no subversive literature with him — all he had was a copy of *Roget's Thesaurus* (which the cops thought was a guerrilla handbook) and a copy of a press release issued by the MIRJE (Movement for Inter-racial Justice and Equality).

Throughout the period he was held in custody different officers made a variety of accusations — all of which were based on the idea that he was a friend of the Tamil Tigers and a man who was aiding and abetting the 'terrorists'. Redley was lucky because we were able to get a lot of lawyers to intervene and ascertain what 'crime' he had committed. Clearly the police had nothing against him and they had to release him the following day. But they were trying to pin something on him. But the harassment did not stop there. A day after his release the CID

(plainclothes police) paid a visit to grill him and the following day he found the same CID man trailing him.

That was not all. On December 8 at 3 a.m. I had a visit from the police. I was woken up by a rude noise to find five policemen — four constables and one sub-inspector — armed to the teeth standing outside my door. They said they wanted to search the house. I knew that there was very little point arguing with people who did not know the difference between *Roget's Thesaurus* and a guerrilla manual. They searched the house looking for Tamils and explosives; one has become as, or even more, dangerous as the other!

Unfortunately for the cops and fortunately for me there were no Tamils and they were convinced that I had no explosives either. Both friends in the house were 'pure' Sinhalese! So they left after obtaining a statement from me.

Obviously these cops did not know why they had been sent to my house. They had been directed by others, on the pretext that there were Tigers lurking under my bed. People like me must be harassed and hounded out for one simple reason: because as members of the MIRJE we have opposed the idea of a military solution to the national question and we have time and again called for a peaceful political solution. We have demanded an end to bloodshed and immediate negotiations with all parties concerned. Today a call for a peaceful solution is, in the eyes of the government, tantamount to a call to support Tamil Eelam!

Simultaneously with house to house searches and identity card checks, as well as large-scale arrests of ordinary innocent citizens, the government is setting up vigilante groups in all areas ostensibly to safeguard the nation and the economy. Almost all these vigilante organisations are made up of UNP supporters and often local UNP thugs. These people, in liaison with the police, could effectively suppress all opposition in this locality on the pretext that they were a 'risk to national security' or that they 'were sabotaging the economy'. This is by far the most dangerous of developments.

The plan to set up a fascist infrastructure was probably the rationale for whipping up war hysteria. Through this gigantic hoax the government would be able to establish information gathering and a propaganda apparatus as well as a local gestapo on the pretext that the whole country is facing a grave crisis of an invasion by 4,000 Eelamists who may attack any part of the island to achieve their aim.

If the government succeeds, the very people in the opposition who supported these new repressive measures will become victims of state repression. Then it would be too late to do much about it. ■

2. The *New Statesman* is a British weekly journal which generally reflects the views of the right-wing of the Labour Party and the Social Democratic Party.

1985: the miners fight on

The miners' strike is now entering its tenth month and the miners are still determined to continue. *International Viewpoint* spoke to Alan Sutcliffe, a Kent miner and Tricia, his wife, a member of the Aylesham miners' wives support group, shortly after the Christmas and New Year festivities had subsided, about the prospects for the strike.

Question. What has the support been like over Christmas?

Tricia Sutcliffe. The support has been tremendous and has given a real boost to the strike.

SOGAT [the printworkers' union] sent 200 turkeys to Kent so every family had a turkey. They also sent all 13 to 16 year olds a £10 gift voucher. The children all got presents named and wrapped from the local support committee.

Food came from various places like Holland, France, Belgium and Germany. There was a constant flow in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Most of these visitors have been staying with us.

A member of the German delegation was telling me that the mineworkers and other unions in Germany don't support the strike because they are more aligned with the TUC and the right wing, but some are still giving money on humanitarian grounds.

The Coal Board tried to offer us a Christmas bribe. A letter went out on December 31 offering holiday money and tax concessions. But only one person has gone back since Christmas. We're still solid here.

Over the holiday period there has been a Dutch band here — about twenty of them — and they've been down on the

picket lines with us. They have really lifted our spirits up.

We had about 300 pickets at Snowdown [the nearest pit to Aylesham] this morning and about 50 of those were women. This is very good and shows that people are still determined.

Q. What do you think is going to happen now?

TS. I don't know what the future holds now. I used to know exactly what my life would be like and now everything is uncertain. But I can't see anyone going back to work until we get what we want. I think they will have to bring the army in. This village already seems as if it's occupied. There are constant police patrols morning, noon and night. I dread it but I wouldn't give in.

Q. How do you think the strike can be won?

Alan Sutcliffe. The most important thing is the power cuts. If we had power cuts, the government would be discredited.

Some people are calling for a general strike. But you can't just switch on and say we're going to have a general strike. We should be trying to develop a general strike. We're appealing to, and educating, the rest of the trade-union movement every week when we go round the workplaces. But we're not calling a general strike. We're building up to it.

Whenever I go and speak I always make a strong appeal for people to come and help us on the picket lines. Giving money and presents is great but it's not enough. We have to build up the pickets at the pits and the power stations.

Neil Kinnock [leader of the Labour Party] and Norman Willis [TUC general secretary] — their positions are a myth. It is us, through this strike who can make the trade-union movement into an effective instrument. They will have to step aside.

We've been to every country in the world to get support for this strike, and then Kinnock goes to Russia and says there is no hardship among miners. He complains about violence on the picket lines, but it is the likes of him and what they have done in the last ten years that make this fight so hard for us and have made violence a part of the struggle.

If this strike crumbles, it won't be because of the miners' leadership. The other alternative to all this is a revolution — when we could sweep the whole lot away. I would like that to happen, but I can't think that far ahead.

Q. What has the international support been like?

AS. Fantastic. Because we're in Kent we've received a lot of the international supporters. The CGT in France came over with a convoy. We've had meetings here with Turkish, Nicaraguan, Zimbabwian and other European visitors. It appears that in Belgium they're stopping the shipment of coal. That's the sort of action we need. ■

Picture from the French CGT's Christmas appeal to support the miners (DR)

