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Rise of US movement against war on Central America

Argentine regime maneuvers amid disaster

The implications of "Star Wars"



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RENEWAL

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A French May 1968 on the Nile ?

"Khartoum has gotten its voice back, after the fall of a 16-year-old autocratic regime, brought down by the pressure of the people in the streets and by the military hierarchy turning against its supreme commander. 'This is our May 1968,' I was told by a Sudanese in the Staff Club of the University of Khartoum, which had now been made the headquarters of the trade-union coordinating committee that precipitated Numeiri's fall."

That is what Pierre Haski, special correspondent for *Liberation*, wrote from the Sudanese capital in the April 15 issue of the Paris daily. His description of the burgeoning political life in Khartoum was, in fact, reminiscent of the situation that opened up in Portugal

Gerry FOLEY

Haski went on to say: "In less than two weeks, the events in Sudan have accelerated at a dizzy pace. What is now being called 'the revolution' and not a coup d'état caught everyone by surprise. Eight days after the change of government, trade-union and political structures are still being set up in the euphoria of freedom regained. Some 28 parties have already made their appearance."

In the April 23 *Le Monde*, this Paris daily's chief Middle East correspondent, Eric Rouleau, termed the political process opened up by the fall of Numeiri a "creeping revolution." He wrote from Khartoum:

"Freedom is also the disappearance of the informers who had haunted the streets and public places. In the Staff Club people do not lower their voices to criticize one or another general in the transitional military council that took power on April 6 'in the name of the people.' Willingly or unwillingly, General Dahab's junta has dismantled the redoubtable 'security apparatuses' — the veritable parallel army maintained by Marshal Numeiri, and arrested all their officers, in all more than 400, and about 3,000 operatives. The 30,000 to 40,000 police informers are no longer plying their trade."

Rouleau noted another feature of the new situation, an atmosphere of order without repression based on a feeling of great hopes and solidarity among the people: "The most remarkable thing is that the vacuum of power is not giving rise to disturbances of anarchy ... The public meetings organized by the big parties and which every day assemble 5,000 to 10,000, and sometimes 20,000 people, proceed without incident."

The same atmosphere was notable, for example, in the Catholic ghettos of Northern Ireland after the rebellions of

after the fall of another long-lived dictatorship that had become rotted through before finally being toppled in April 1975.

"Inside the University Staff Club are big banners, bulletin boards, and a loud speaker broadcasts frequent announcements interspersed with music. The Club has become the center of the political effervescence in the Sudanese capital. Its big garden is constantly filled with groups of Sudanese reflecting the human diversity of the biggest country in Africa — from Muslim northerners in turbans and flowing white robes to ebony-Black southerners in Western suits. They discuss in small groups, exchanging information and the mimeographed bulletins that are proliferating."

August 1960 and in Portugal after the fall of the dictatorship in 1975. There were also periods like that in the course of the Iranian revolution, but they were brief and tentative because of the effective control of the mass movement by the Shiite clergy led by Ayatollah Khomeini.

Islamic fundamentalists, in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood, are also strong in the Sudan. In particular, they have the only strong and well-financed organization in the country now and could gain control of a decisive section of the masses. But that is still far from a foregone conclusion. The political-religious forces in the Sudan are much more divided than they were in Iran.

The historical political-religious factions are the Ansars, whose origins are in a mystical Shiite movement; and the Khatmia, who are orthodox Sunni Muslims. For historical reasons, the Khatmia have been associated with Egypt, as a center of Muslim orthodoxy, and the Ansars, in reaction against this, have been Sudanese particularists.

The head of the new junta, General Sewar Ad-Dahab, is aligned with the Khatmia and apparently well regarded by the Egyptian government. The political expression of the Ansars in the Uma [Community of Believers] party and that of the Khatmia is the Democratic Unionist Party. Both groups are in the Front of National Forces for Civic Salvation, the main political center of the movement that ousted Numeiri.

The Muslim Brotherhood is a relatively new but powerful force in the Sudan. It stands on the orthodox Sunni side of Islam, with links to the Saudis. It is not in the Front. So far, the Muslim Brotherhood seems to have been able to enjoy the advantages both of being part of the establishment and part of the opposition.

In *Liberation* of April 17, Pierre Haski wrote: "The superiority of the Muslim Brothers over their rivals is not owing

just to the freedom of movement they gained under Numeiri, but also to the financial empire they established. Facing the University Club, the center of the alliance of parties and unions [i.e., the Front of National Forces] stands a building that seems a direct affront to these 'secular' or modernist Muslims. It is the Faisal Islamic Bank founded in 1978 with 60% Saudi and Kuwaiti capital, and which functions in accordance with the Sharia [Islamic law], that is, without interest.

"Since its creation, the Faisal Bank, which has many branches in the country, has multiplied its assets tenfold. It has invested in insurance, import-export, and in commerce. It is a little financial empire functioning according to the Islamic principles dear to the hearts of the Muslim Brothers, and which indirectly brings them comfortable dividends."

The ousted dictator turned to the Islamic fundamentalists in 1983, apparently as the last possible base of popular support for his regime. He introduced the Sharia and applied it in the most barbaric way, making mutilations and whipping common punishments. In fact, in so doing, he alienated the doctors union, which played a leading role in calling the April 3 general strike that struck the death knell of his regime. The doctors refused to carry out the amputations of hands and feet decreed under the authority of the Sharia.

The dictator claimed to have undergone a dramatic religious experience, a vision. In fact, his turn to religion coincided with a levitation into megalomania. He declared himself "Imam," and was not content only to be the supreme guide of the faithful. He also wanted to take over the training of Khartoum's El-Hilal football team, according to *Der Spiegel* of April 15. The West German weekly magazine tried to build a case, indeed, that Washington and Cairo had had the wisdom

and foresight to plan a timely removal of a dictator who was starting to act very strangely indeed.

General Ad-Dahab does seem to have very desirable characteristics, from the standpoint of Washington and Cairo, to replace Numeiri. He is, by all accounts, a disciplined Western-trained professional officer and a friend of the Egyptian regime.

In an editorial in *Liberation* of April 8, Jean-Louis Peninou wrote that when US vice president Bush visited Khartoum on March 5-6, he gave Numeiri three orders: "(1) to turn the command of the army over to Ad-Dahab; (2) to fire his Muslim Brother advisers; (3) to eliminate the subsidies on essential foods, as demanded by the IMF."

On March 10, Numeiri denounced a Muslim Brother plot, and 150 members of the group were arrested, including Hassan El-Tourabi, who had been his minister of foreign affairs. On the other hand, the Muslim Brothers could be expected to be a difficult ally, as dramatic experience has impressed on the Egyptian regime, which also relied on them for a period.

According to Hassan El-Tourabi, who has reemerged as the main leader of the Muslim Brothers, the dictator tolerated no rivals for spiritual authority.

However, the scenario of Washington and Cairo getting together to oust a dictator who was starting to look too wild in the eye is hardly credible. Madness is the professional disease of despots of all sorts, and Washington has lived a long time in apparent contentment with demented hangmen. It has only been when their madness has gone to the point that they thought they could doublecross the US that Washington has considered them *non compos mentis*, as in the case of the former Dominican dictator, Trujillo.

Numeiri's alienating of the southern non-Muslim population in 1983 by ending their autonomy, moreover, was not necessarily a sign of megalomania as such. This sort of thing is typical of a hardening dictatorship in nationally divided states. The populist regime in Iraq in the 1960s also turned against the Kurds as it moved rightward. The reason for this is that national autonomy is an obstacle to the imposition of an effective dictatorship.

In fact, the Numeiri regime was one of the pillars of US influence in the Middle East and in East Africa. Moreover, it was the first to be overthrown as a result of mass protests against the imposition of IMF dictatorships. This must certainly have come as a shock to Washington, after the revolts against IMF-dictated austerity in the Dominican Republic, Tunisia and Morocco.

The mass explosion in Khartoum is also the first time since the Iranian and Nicaraguan revolutions that a pro-Western dictatorship has been overthrown by the urban masses of an underdeveloped country. Moreover, unlike Iran, this was also an upsurge led by a trade-union movement in which there has been major Communist Party influence.

The Sudan is precisely the country in the Middle East where a Communist Party has played the biggest role. In fact, Numeiri originally came to power in alliance with the Communist Party, just as the present regime seems to be seeking the good will of the Communist Party, the Soviet Union, and Libya. Moreover, neither Washington nor Cairo seem unhappy with this. They undoubtedly know the new regime needs this support to stabilize itself, as Numeiri himself originally did. Once he got through the rough patch, he turned on his CP allies and slaughtered them.

Despite his Western training and sympathies, Ad-Dahab has had no difficulty in adopting populist language. In an interview published in the April 22 *Der Spiegel*, he said: "I did not overthrow him [Numeiri]. The people did. When it became clear that the people could no longer live with Numeiri ... as a citizen as a commander of the 'Armed Forces of the People,' as our army is called, my highest duty was to respect the will of the people."

Why the army moved

In fact, the sequence of events that led to the army dumping Numeiri is clear enough. On March 27-28 spontaneous protests broke out against the removal of food subsidies. The repressive forces fired on the crowds, killing eight demonstrators. Many more were wounded. The doctors launched a protest against the ill-treatment of victims in the hospitals. Then work stoppages began. Next the unions, led by the white collar ones such as the lawyers, doctors and professors, called for a strike.

On April 3, the general strike in Khartoum called by the unions was 80% effective, according to *Liberation*. On April 5, the government rescinded the price rises on basic foods. On April 6, the army took over.

In *Liberation* of April 15, Haski quoted a union leader who, he said, "admitted being relieved to learn of the coup," as saying, "If the officers had not taken control, the population of Khartoum was determined to go into the streets on Saturday [April 6] to get rid of this regime, no matter what the cost."

The first reports of the situation inside the country since the revolution indicate that two political blocs have emerged, including both parties and unions. One is the Front of National Forces for Civic Salvation, and the other is the Muslim Brotherhood and the unions it influences.

"Behind the formation of the initial transition government to be chosen," Haski wrote in the April 15 *Liberation*, "the dividing line is shaping up for the future political battles in the Sudan ... A few kilometers from the University Staff Club ... is the headquarters of a trade-union coordinating group rival to the first (i.e., the Front of National Forces for

Civic Salvation, which sits in the Staff Club)."

The chairperson of this rival formation, the Group for Trade-Union Independence, Munir El-Hakim, according to Haski, described the Front of National Forces as "limited to a certain color, leftist and Communist."

Liberation's correspondent noted that 69 unions, including a very large peasant union, were affiliated to the bloc headed by El-Hakim, behind which "can be seen the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood."

On the question of the transitional government, Haski quoted El-Hakim as saying: "We have refused to nominate people for the government, but we will express our opinions about those chosen. We will not hesitate to say that this person is a leftist or linked to such and such a party."

This position, Haski wrote, "follows the same lines as Hassan El Tourabi, who engages in dialogue with the military government but is careful to keep his distance from it, preferring no doubt to save himself for future battles."

The first battle the Muslim Brothers seem to be preparing for is over the Sharia. Tourabi has called for a "front in defense of the Sharia." This issue is a larger one than secular democratic rights in the Muslim areas. It was the "Islamization" of the state that was one of the main grievances leading the non-Muslim southerners to renew armed struggle against Khartoum. And there is a long experience to show, especially in recent years in Africa, that if the new government tries to continue the war to suppress a large national minority, it will very quickly turn to repression on all fronts.

The tactic of the Muslim Brotherhood may well be to let a weak bourgeois government under military tutelage discredit itself, while it uses its organization to capture the discontented masses. The combination of a stance of intransigence plus building up a communalist base and organization has proved effective for Muslim fundamentalist forces in both Lebanon and Iran.

The stance of the Muslim Brothers makes still more clear the dangers that can arise if the Communist Party, still the major left force, again plays into the hands of bourgeois politicians and officers who remain fundamentally reactionary despite their professions of populism and respect for the USSR.

In particular, given the disastrous economic situation now, no bourgeois populist government is going to do much either to increase the national independence of the Sudanese state or to alleviate the conditions of the masses.

The political opening in the Sudan will, therefore, probably not last long before there is a decisive confrontation. The debate and experience on the left in this period, however, will be very important. Among other things, it is likely to influence the socialist and workers movement and the movements of national liberation in the Middle East, especially the Arabic-speaking countries, for a long time. ■

April 20 demos show new rise of US antiwar movement

The tide of resistance to the policies of the Ronald Reagan administration is beginning to turn inside America. The nationally coordinated April 20 actions against the government's austerity and war policies saw the largest mobilizations of the American people since the days of the campaign against US intervention in Vietnam.

Throughout that week, the student campuses were alive with protests about US companies' investments in South Africa.

Below we produce reports of the April 20 actions in the major cities which illustrate the scope of the movement that is unfolding.

Fred FELDMAN

WASHINGTON D.C. — Chants of "USA, CIA out of Nicaragua," and "Hey, hey, ho, ho, apartheid has got to go," rang through the streets here on April 20 as tens of thousands of people rallied and marched to oppose US imperialism's actions at home and abroad.

The demonstration — part of the four day April Action for Jobs, Peace and Justice — represented a broad and massive protest against the US war against Nicaragua and US government and corporate support to the racist regime in South Africa.

The April actions were called around four demands:

- Stop US military intervention in Central America. End intervention in the Caribbean, the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific and Europe.

- Build a just society by creating jobs, cutting military spending and providing for human needs. End racism and discrimination based on sex and sexual orientation.

- Freeze and reverse the arms race, beginning with a halt on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons.

- Oppose US government and corporate support for South African apartheid and overcome racism at home.

The demonstration was estimated at 65,000 people by April Actions coordinator, Damu Smith, who chaired the closing rally. It sent an unmistakable message to the US rulers. Their war against the Nicaraguan revolution and their alliance with the racist rulers of South Africa face a developing movement of opposition that has the potential to mobilize growing support in the union movement and the Black and Latino communities, as well as on college and high school campuses and elsewhere.

More than ninety organizations endorsed the march, and many more participated. Endorsers included eight national unions: the International Association of Machinists; International Glassworkers Union; International Longshore-

men's and Warehousemen's Union; United Electrical Workers; United Farm Workers; United Food and Commercial Workers; National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees and United Steelworkers of America.

Other endorsers included the North American Farm Alliance; the United States Students Association; League of United Latin American Citizens; Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Operation Push; National Council of Senior Citizens; Congress of National Black Churches. Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign; National Congress of Puerto Rican Rights; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; SANE; National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People; the Rainbow Coalition; Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador; several gay and lesbian rights organizations and many others.

A few prominent Democratic Party politicians participated, most notably, Jesse Jackson and Rep. John Conyers.

Together with American Indian Movement leader Vernon Bellecourt, Jackson walked at the head of the march from the White House Ellipse to the Capitol steps.

The marchers were of many nationalities. US Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Costa Ricans, Hondurans, Uruguayans, Canadians, Koreans, Filipinos, Chinese, Vietnamese, Lebanese, and others marched and rallied.

The mood was militant.

The predominantly youthful participants were eager to hear more about and discuss the issues that inspired the April Actions. And they looked forward to more actions aimed at winning still wider backing.

An indication of this was the call by students from Berkeley, Columbia, Cornell, Princeton, Rutgers and Santa Cruz for a "National Student Anti-apartheid Protest Day" on April 24. This spirit was reflected in the April 18 news release issued by the April Actions Coalition in Washington D.C.

"Our Work does not stop on April 22.

We will take our fight back to our local communities and reconvene regionally and nationally as needed, keenly aware of the importance of all our issues and of the power that exists in our unity."

The coalition set June 1 as the date for a meeting to discuss next steps.

The militant mood was also indicated by the thousands of signs with hand-lettered antiwar or anti-apartheid slogans that were carried by participants.

"The contras are not my brothers," declared the placard carried by a young woman. A Black youth carried a sign reading, "Did George Washington rape children? The contras do." "I'll never register to be a contra — no draft" read a young man's placard. "Contras rape, kill. No contra aid," read another.

Hundreds of participants had visited Nicaragua. Many of those who had gone to Nicaragua as part of work brigades in the coffee, cotton and sugar harvests marched as a contingent, and were received with enthusiastic applause. Many wore badges bearing the names of Nicaraguans murdered by the US government's contra killers.

During the massive April 20 protest march, many hundreds of unionists walked behind union banners in the labor contingent. Hundreds of others participated as individuals or in other contingents.

About 100 workers from the United Electrical Workers union marched. Placards in their contingent opposed the US war against Nicaragua and US support to apartheid.

Some fifty women, most of them Chinese, marched behind the banners of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Local 23-35.

A busload of Baltimore hospital workers participated — most of them marching with the 1199 banner.

Mary Moore, a staff member of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Civil Rights Department, told the *Militant* that USWA members had come from Pittsburgh, Chicago and Baltimore. She carried her union's banner in the labor contingent.

A sizeable contingent marched behind the banners of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). This included an all-Black contingent of hospital workers organized by AFSCME Local 420 in New York City.

Their chant — "Hey, hey, ho, ho, union-busting has got to go" — became a popular one among the unionists.

A small group of members of IAM Local 1784 from Koppers Industries in Baltimore marched together. A Black worker told the *Militant* that they had been attracted by the themes of "jobs, peace and justice." He said they were planning to continue bringing up these issues under the good and welfare point at union meetings.

The Chicago Teachers Union brought a busload to the demonstration.

About 15 workers came on the bus sponsored by International Union of Electronic Workers Local 201 from the

General Electric Plant in Lynn, Massachusetts.

Members of the International Chemical Workers Union carried their union's banner.

A number of United Auto Workers (UAW) locals participated. UAW Local 438 at the Delac Plant in Milwaukee sent a bus with seventeen people. A number of them, including six Black women, marched as a contingent.

District 65 UAW marched with signs proclaiming, "Down with apartheid, stop plant closings," and a large banner demanding "Stop Reagan's war in Central America."

The New York Headwear Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union carried signs demanding, "Divest from South Africa."

Anthony Luddy, secretary-treasurer of the United Food and Commercial Workers, commented on the importance of labor's participation in a speech he gave to the rally that preceded the march to the Capitol.

"Our goals are peace, jobs and justice. No one will give them to us on a silver platter," he declared, "not the Democratic Party, not Congress and certainly not Ronald Reagan."

"We have to organize," he continued. "We learned that the hard way. We used to rely on the National Labor Relations Board and politicians to help us organize. But it was only when we went to the people that we began to grow. I'm talking about Power, the Power to change things, to take Power away from those who have it."

"We need the unions here. We have got to have them."

Thousands of high school and college students were among the most spirited and activist-minded marchers.

Many of them were brought to Washington by recently formed organizations which carried out antiwar or anti-apartheid activities before the march. Many viewed April 20 as the stepping stone to more action.

Despite its modest size, the contingent

of the National Black Independent Political Party was significant. The NBIPP fights to mobilize the Black community for an uncompromising struggle against racist oppression. The NBIPP believes that this course must be advanced by Black people building their own independent fighting organization, in opposition to the racist, capitalist Republican and Democratic parties.

Four UAW members from the Leeds General Motors plant in Kansas City marched with this contingent.

Contingents of farmers took part. One contingent's banner read, "Minnesotans demand parity." And slogans like "Grain silos, not missile silos" and "Feed the world, not the contras" were a common sight.

A contingent of the Union of Democratic Filipinos called for an end to US backing of the Marcos dictatorship. Young Koreans United carried a placard that demanded, "Troops and nukes out of South Korea."

Some groups focused on opposition to the US arms buildup and advocacy of a US-Soviet nuclear freeze. Protests against the MX missile and the swelling war budget, and banners pointing to the danger of nuclear war were prominent.

Many participants marched with contingents that carried banners of the dozens of local coalitions that built the April Actions. A number of contingents came from lesbian and gay organizations.

Almost every left and radical organization participated in the April 20 march and rally.

A Socialist Workers Party banner declared, "No US support to racist South African regime. Black majority rule now." A banner carried in this contingent by the Young Socialist Alliance demanded, "No US war in Central America and the Caribbean. Jobs not bombs. Farms not arms."

Rallies were organized in three phases at the Saturday protest. The day opened with a Festival of Resistance, held around six stages — each devoted to one of the themes of the demonstration.

Then as the contingents gathered for

the march a second rally was held.

Finally, at the conclusion of the march, a final rally was held on the steps of the Capitol.

The Festival of Resistance, with its varying balance of political talks and cultural performances, was quite successful. Thousands gathered around the various stages to hear speakers from various struggles, poets, musicians and singers.

The anti-apartheid stage featured Anthony Glover, a leader of the movement seeking to make Columbia University divest itself of interests in South Africa. A South African woman student, against whom Columbia is bringing charges for her role in the protests, also spoke.

The keynote speaker at the finishing rally was Rev. Jesse Jackson. Jackson was enthusiastically applauded at many points, especially when he denounced US aid to the contras as "madness," identified himself with the student protests against apartheid, and voiced support for the struggles of farmers.

Jackson wants to turn the movement into "politics." In his view, this means shifting from emphasis on independent mass actions opposing the prowar, racist anti-worker policies of both parties, toward a strategy which centers on electoral politics in the Democratic Party.

Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich) spoke too. He identified himself with the "Rainbow Coalition" Democratic Party strategy.

Guadalupe Gonzales greeted the rally in the name of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front and the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FMLN-FDR) of El Salvador. She described how Washington's massive military buildup in El Salvador is blocking FMLN-FDR efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement.

Neo Mnumzana, a representative of the African National Congress mission to the United Nations, declared, "I speak for the peoples of South Africa, the only country in the world where racism has the force of law. I speak also for the people of Nicaragua fighting the contras and for the people of El Salvador fighting

TRADE UNION LEADER ATTACKS REAGAN'S POLICIES

Jack Henning is the executive secretary-treasurer of the California-state AFL-CIO. The following is an excerpt from his speech to the San Francisco rally.

We want the United States out of Latin-America. Precisely we want it out of Nicaragua, where the Reagan administration is using mercenaries and assassins to interfere with the rights of the people to determine their own form of government. And we want an end to their accord with the powers in El Salvador that for generations have exploited the poor and the workers and are a threat actually to democracy in all of Latin-America.

And particularly, because of the events of the past few weeks, we want America to end what is in effect a blood alliance with the murder machine that calls itself the government of South Africa.

The word, brothers and sisters, on justice. There is no justice in a society that is polarized economically. We

have 35 million Americans today living in absolute poverty. We have hundreds of thousands sleeping in the alleyways, on the sidewalks and on the streets of America. The homeless of America — Reagan's greatest contribution to America the Beautiful.

And as jobs are concerned, there has been a murmur of recovery in the economy, yet millions are unemployed in America. Nearly a million jobless in the state of California. But we should remember this, that the murmurs of recovery are resulting from the "Third Reich" economy of the Reagan administration, a Third Reich economy founded wholly upon defense expenditure. Well we want jobs, we don't want 14 billion dollars spent either in arms or economic aid to the subversive forces in Nicaragua at the very time Reagan is cutting on aid from the senior citizens, from the welfare people of America and from the students of America.

fascism. I speak for everyone who is seeking to end the exploitation of man by man."

The mood of the demonstration was summed up by Sergio Sarmiento, who represented the National Union of Nicaraguan Students. When he announced he was bringing "affectionate and appreciative greetings from the heroic people of Nicaragua," he was greeted with wild applause.

Sarmiento described the role of youth in the health and education campaigns, and in the cotton, coffee and sugar harvests. "We now have the experience of participation in a popular militia organized to defend our country. We youth have had to assume these tasks and to give them time and resources that we would have devoted to the reconstruction of our country...."

"The people of the United States and the Nicaraguan people are not enemies. The bases for friendship and solid collaboration exist. We believe that the example that Nicaragua represents for oppressed people all over the world merits all the support and solidarity you can give. We, the people of Nicaragua, will do all that must be done in defense of our country.

"Together with the people of the United States we will say, 'No Pasaran!'"

Carl FENAMORE

SAN FRANCISCO — The demonstration on downtown Market Street stretched for miles and took two and a half hours to complete, as 50,000 protesters marched to a civic center rally co-chaired by Jack Henning, executive secretary-treasurer of the Californian AFL-CIO, and Pat Norman, a well-known Black Lesbian political activist.

It was the largest Bay Area action in recent years but even more impressive was the wide variety of groups and individuals in the march. Attracted by the broad appeal of the coalition, many thousands were demonstrating for the first time. Thousands of students swelled the huge anti-apartheid contingent. Many of them had been involved in the recent explosive anti-apartheid activities on several Bay area campuses.

Seventy-five United Farm Workers, proudly carrying their union banners, joined 400 members of the international Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and members of over fifty other unions in an impressive labour contingent.

The first and by far the largest contingent, organised around "No US intervention in Central America and the Caribbean," was by itself larger than recent protests against US intervention.

The San Francisco Mime Troop and dozens of bands, dance and cultural groups accompanied the march and contributed to the up-beat and militant nature of the action. In addition to some floats, several buses driven by union members from the Transport Workers

Union and the United Transportation Union, rolled alongside the demonstrators.

Following the demonstration, all the major papers ran extensive front page stories describing the wide support the protest had received from hundreds of labor, church, peace and community groups. Under the banner headline "50,000 rally in SF against Apartheid, Reagan," the April 21 *Examiner* noted that the contingent organized by the Santa Clara Central Labor Council had attracted "2,500 members of community groups ... aboard a chartered 'Spring Mobilisation' train."

The April 23 *Examiner* had another front page story titled "union undertakes new alliance with activist causes." The article noted the "unprecedented show of force by northern Californian unions from Painters Local 4 to the ILWU international executive board. Every labor council in the five county Bay Area endorsed the April 20 March, as did virtually every local union local."

Peter Servantes-Gautschi, business manager of the Santa Clara labor council, was quoted as saying "this time the unions expect to be in the forefront as opposed to where we were 15 years ago, when we tagged along with other movements."

Charlene Tschirhart, director of the San Francisco Nuclear Freeze campaign, told the *Examiner* reporter that "normally peace and environmental groups had to get together and beg unions to come aboard, this time they picked it up and took the leadership." This important union involvement was clearly recognized as a major achievement of the San Francisco action.

At the April 20 rally itself, Mario Savio, leader of the 1964 Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, received thunderous applause when he began his speech by saying "its very encouraging to see so much support from organized labor. Without organized labor, we can't win. With organized labor, we will prevail."

Other speakers at the rally included Jimmy Herman, international president of the ILWU; Felix Kurry, a leader of the Salvadoran trade union movement; Pedro Noguera, president of the student body at UC Berkeley; representative Sala Burton, Democrat, San Francisco; Mario Savio co-founder of the free speech movement; representative Ronald Steed Dellems, and many others.

Symbolising the important new alliances made by the spring mobilisation coalition, the demonstration was led off by leaders of all the major contingents and included labor figures marching alongside the Grey Panthers, veterans, the disabled, and the 169 arrested anti-apartheid protesters from the university of California at Berkeley.

Indeed, April 20 became "the place to be," just as singer Holly Near had hoped when she spoke at a recent coalition fund-raiser featuring actor Ed Asner and Apple computer founder Steve Wozniak.

That particular event raised 11,000 dollars for the coalition.

Over 40,000 dollars were raised and spent in the four months of the coalition's existence. The rally sales of buttons and T-shirts, and the fund appeal collection gathered another 13,000 dollars for the coalition.

Organizers are optimistic that the gains made during this mobilization will encourage an even wider layer of groups and individuals to participate in future protest actions in support of the four themes of the spring mobilization.

Sophie MASTOR

LOS ANGELES — Marking the largest antiwar demonstration since the days of the Vietnam war protests, 7,000 to 8,000 activists representing over 100 organizations, marched down Broadway to the Los Angeles City Hall. Hundreds more attended the rally there.

Because of the unique ethnic make-up of the city, with its Latino population of over 3 million, the accent of the Los Angeles action was on Central America. At the same time, this event marked the first large broad-based demonstration in Los Angeles with a significant Black presence. The Filipino community also was extremely active in the April 20 coalition, another first for this city.

Chairpersons for the event were Los Angeles city council member Robert Farrell, who heads the national Black caucus of local elected officials; Jack Foley, district director of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers international union; Jackie Goldberg, Los Angeles board of education member; Fumi Haru, national recording secretary of the Screen Actors Guild and Father Luis Olivares of Our Lady Queen of Angels church.

Among the speakers were Angela Davis; Marta Alicia Rivera, of Andes, the Salvadoran teachers union; Sabino Virgo, of Jews United for Peace and Justice; Salah Amin, of the November 29 coalition for Palestinian Rights; Antonio Rodriguez, of the Coalition for Visas and Rights for the Undocumented; and Mitchell Learner, of the American Indian Movement.

Notable was the low-key presence of the infamous Los Angeles Police Department. Two days before the demonstration, in a sudden about face, the police department informed the coalition that instead of allowing us to march down only half the street, which in the past had made it impossible to fully unfurl banners, we could have the entire street, which would be cordoned off to traffic.

This resulted in a demonstration quite free of the tensions that have existed in the past.

Peacefully united and strong, we carried our message "Build a just society through peace, jobs and justice. We feel that we can grow."

How the Vietnam war was stopped

The American antiwar movement of the 1960s and early 1970s arose in response to the US government's "dirty war" against the people of Indochina.

It was a war that lasted for 15 years — from 1959 until 1974. Vietnam, especially the South, was virtually destroyed. More bombs were dropped on Vietnam — and later Cambodia — than in all the previous wars combined. Vietnam was the first "television war" — showing all the brutality of the US military machine.

The following article is reprinted from *Socialist Action* published in the US, in its April 1985 edition.

Asher HARER

All in all, 3 million US soldiers served in Vietnam. Sixty thousand died; 46,000 of them in combat. And how many Vietnamese were killed, maimed and burned to death? Perhaps millions.

The movement of the 1960s was antiwar all the way. It was not the old-style pacifist movement that opposed war until it began — only then to become gung-ho patriots. That leadership was bypassed.

This antiwar movement was the first mass antiwar movement in this country that opposed a war while it was going on and that played a decisive role in stopping it.

It united students, workers, Blacks, Latinos, Asians. Yet most of those who marched were Democrats or Republicans, not socialists — although the leaders were radicals.

The movement, however, was successful because certain political and organizational questions were fought out and approved before every big action. These included the following:

- Non-exclusion. No red-baiting.
- Political autonomy. No endorsement of political candidates. This would split the movement.
- A nonviolent, mass-action approach aimed at youth and GIs. Organized civil disobedience was not excluded but was strictly secondary and individual.
- A single-issue, i.e. "Out Now" approach. The "multi-issue" people wanted to combine such things as community organizing with support of so-called Democratic Party "peace" candidates.
- Democratic decision-making. One activist, one vote. No secrecy.

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) — in the process of breaking with the right wing Social Democrats — took the lead. In 1965, on April 17, SDS organized an antiwar demonstration in Washington, DC. Twenty thousand came, mostly youth. There had been demonstrations before, but not of this size.

Then came the "teach-ins."

The first one was held at Ann Arbor, Michigan, on March 24-25, 1965. Over 3,000 students and teachers, denied the campus during daytime, met from 8 p.m. until 8 a.m. They discussed the war, debated government spokespersons, and learned the truth in this process.

Then came the Berkeley, California, teach-in of May 21-22, 1965. In the course of 36 continuous hours, 30,000 attended.

The first big march and rally in the San Francisco Bay Area took place on April 15, 1967. About 75,000 people marched up Market Street to Kezar Stadium. It was a broad coalition, including many young Blacks who marched behind a banner, "The NLF-Viet Cong never called us Nigger!"

Seven thousand unionists marched, many of them behind their union banners — especially those of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union. Very little official union endorsement or support had developed at that time, however. Union leaders were generally solidly behind AFL-CIO President George Meany, who was "All the way behind LBJ." [Lyndon Baines Johnson, US president]

The year 1968 opened with a major setback for the US military in Vietnam — the Tet Offensive. On January 31, the lunar New Year holiday known as "Tet," the National Liberation Front launched a counterattack the length and breadth of South Vietnam. The NLF occupied the US Embassy in Saigon for one day.

For a few days the NLF held almost every major city in South Vietnam. Their success, which came as a complete surprise to the US military, showed that the population was behind the NLF. The US Army held only its own bases.

The United States responded with massive carpet bombings of the cities. Thousands of civilians died. Over 500,000 were made homeless by B-52s from Guam. Vietnam, a beautiful country, once the "rice bowl" of Asia, was turned into a

wasteland of bomb craters.

The Tet offensive and the US military's savage, inhuman response, was fully recorded by the press and TV. It convinced additional Americans that the war was morally indefensible and unwinnable.

This was the turning point for the antiwar movement, which grew rapidly and became more and more an international movement.

In 1968 the demonstrations were not concentrated in two or three cities but took place all over the United States. Several hundred thousand marched. There was a march to the Pentagon of 100,000 people, led by Vietnam veterans. Over 600 demonstrators were arrested.

Time magazine's cover featured a photo of a banner, "Bring Our Boys Home Now!" This magazine went all over the world — including to Vietnam, to the GIs fighting the "dirty war."

The GIs saw that the movement was not against them. It wanted them home, where they also wanted to be.

The US Army became more and more demoralized. It was reported that GIs were questioning authority, refusing to follow orders to advance if they considered the situation to be dangerous.

In 1969 came the huge marches and rallies. *Life* magazine called the November 15 marches "a display without historical parallel, the largest expression of dissent ever seen in this country."

Vietnam veterans and active-duty soldiers participated. There had been widely publicized cases of GIs refusing to go to Vietnam, such as the Fort Hood Three and the Fort Jackson Eight.

Just before the November 15 marches, the story of the massacre at My Lai in South Vietnam broke in the newspapers. Eighteen months earlier, on March 16, 1968, My Lai had been occupied by American troops.

There had been no resistance. None of the villagers bore arms. Still, their homes

Former US president Richard Nixon (DR)





April 15, 1967, San Francisco. Demonstrators call for US troops out of Vietnam (DR)

were destroyed and the villagers — men, women and children — were lined up and machine-gunned. In total, 799 people died. Buried under the bodies of the dead, 132 villagers lived to tell the story.

This event, probably one of many, was covered up for one-and-one-half years. The American people were revolted.

The “unwinnable war” continued. Now it could be seen openly as a genocidal war to destroy the rural population, considered the base of the Viet Cong. It became necessary “to reduce the population,” as one American general put it.

The infamous “body count” became the index of how the war was going. Some Americans, not even radicals, found themselves rooting for the Viet Cong — a strange turn of events.

Larry Rottman, a Vietnam veteran, expressed this sentiment in a poem:

“Ask what kind of war it is/Where you can be pinned down/All day in a muddy rice paddy/While your buddies are being shot/And a close support Phantom Jet/Who has napalmed the enemy/Wraps itself around a tree and explodes/And you cheer inside?”

The power of the antiwar movement was based on the indignation of millions who had learned the truth about “the dirty war” in Vietnam.

When on April 29, 1970, the United States invaded Cambodia, the antiwar coalition immediately called for a demonstration on May 9 — only one week away.

The campuses exploded. In one most unlikely place, Kent State, Ohio, there

was an antiwar rally. It was fired on by the National Guard and four students were killed. Within a few days 350 universities were on strike.

On May 9, 1970, with one week’s preparation, 100,000 marched on the White House. Walter Reuther, UAW [Union of Auto Workers] president, finally sent a telegram to Nixon condemning the shooting down of students.

At Jackson State College in Mississippi, a Black school, the National Guard killed two students charged with “rioting.”

But the war continued and the demonstrations continued. The biggest of all occurred on April 24, 1971. In San Francisco an estimated 250,000 to 350,000 participated. In New York there were over one-half million. A Harris Poll showed 60% of Americans in favor of the withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam.

Then came the Pentagon papers. Nixon was re-elected after he promised he would negotiate and withdraw troops. But he broke off negotiations and rained 100,000 tons of bombs on North Vietnam in 10 days. It was an act of vengeance. In the middle of the bombings he went to Moscow to negotiate a trade agreement and was received with honors.

The combined historic resistance of the Vietnamese and the tenacious struggle against the war by the American antiwar movement finally forced the United States to pull out. In 1973 the pullouts began.

On January 27, 1973, a ceasefire was signed. These were the Paris Accords. Vietnam again remained divided, but that

wouldn’t last long. The war resumed. But without US troops, the new US puppet, General Van Thieu, lost all of Vietnam to the North Vietnamese armies — and the war was over.

Yes, this movement altered the course of history. It demonstrated that working people in this country could effectively change the foreign policy of this government if mobilized on a correct “Out Now” basis.

Today, as the US government rains down napalm bombs once again — this time on the people of Central America — a new antiwar movement is emerging. What we did in the 1960s and 1970s will be done again.

But this time, I believe, the movement will be compelled to develop on a much higher political plane. Today, for example, the unions are in on the ground floor in this developing antiwar movement. In the case of the San Francisco Spring Mobilization, the unions are in the leadership of the movement.

And out of it must come something that did not come out of the antiwar movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and that is a political organization that represents the American working class — a labor party.

The next big step the labor and antiwar movement must take is the formation of a labor party that would oppose the war and actually begin the fight against the political system dominated by both the Republican and Democratic parties. ■

Reagan Star Wars The "First Strike" is in the workers' pockets

In a resounding speech on March 23, 1983, the US president announced his intention to open a new and decisive stage in the arms race with a general militarization of space. The American Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), Ronald Reagan claimed, could "counter nuclear weapons and make them obsolete." In reality, this was a skillful ideological camouflage job designed to conceal from American and international public opinion the objectives and the manifold consequences of this new program of militarization, the most ambitious and expensive of all the military programs ever conceived by the Pentagon.

In the initial research alone, this program will absorb tens of billions of dollars. The immediate effect of this will be a concerted, massive, and brutal attack on the standard of living of the masses, not only in the United States but in all of the imperialist centers. Caspar Weinberger, the US under secretary of defense,

has in fact just made a European tour to propose "participation" by the other capitalist states in this unprecedented militarization project. The *New York Times* in October 1983 already estimated the costs of setting up a complete system of defense against ballistic missiles at 500 billion dollars.

The American SDI is thus creating a new situation, upsetting all the strategic certainties of the last 25 years. And this will have a lasting effect on international relations, both between the imperialists and the Soviet bureaucracy and between the United States and its allies. The first task for the workers movement and the antiwar movement is to assess clearly the extent of this threat in order to prepare the way for powerful mass mobilizations to stop this diabolic scheme of the imperialist leaders from being carried out. *

Jean Louis MICHEL

Research on the military uses of space is not exactly new. In fact, it goes back thirty years. From the early 1960s, the United States, followed by the Soviet Union, has been trying to set up defense systems against ballistic missiles. These efforts were logical countermeasures against the development of arsenals of intercontinental missiles at the time. They involved using interceptor missiles, themselves armed with nuclear warheads, in the hope that they could neutralize attacking missiles before they hit their target.

The antiballistic missile system set up around Moscow, based on Galosh interceptors, and the similar American system — the Sentinel network first and then the Safeguard network for protecting Minuteman missile launching sites in the state of Dakota followed exactly the same logic. It was closer to classical anti-aircraft defense than the projects involved in the SDI.

These first antiballistic missile systems (ABMs) were in fact quickly put on the back burner because of serious doubts about their effectiveness, and especially because of the high cost of setting them up. At the time the US gave priority to financing its war effort in Southeast Asia. The signing of the Salt accord in May 1982 by Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev only gave formal recognition to this state of affairs. (1) The two parties to the protocol agreed not to set up ABM systems except at two sites for each country, which was later reduced to one.

So, there can be no comparison between the systems that are now being

studied in the framework of the SDI and their predecessors in the 1960s. This fact has to be stressed as much as possible, because the imperialist centers will not fail to argue, in accordance with a long-standing tradition, that the US has fallen behind the USSR in this field. In fact, the Soviet Union still has the old Galosh system, which everyone considers obsolete. The corresponding American systems were dismantled in 1975 because of this.

In the 1960s and 1970s, these defense systems were aimed simply at providing anti-aircraft cover for certain "hard" targets, such as Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) sites and the main command centers.

The SDI is designed for quite a different purpose. It is intended to set up a real shield, a dense as possible, to stop the bulk of enemy missiles, if feasible in the first stage of their flight — three to five minutes after firing for the ICBMs of the present generation. This is what is new about the American project and makes it possible to speak about a general militarization of space.

With the SDI in fact Reagan has put on the agenda the perspective of an overall antiballistic-missiles system that involves detecting as quickly as possible the launch of enemy missiles in order to neutralize them as far as possible from Fortress America. This implies a capacity to intercept ballistic missiles at every stage of their trajectory, from the initial firing to the final phase of reentry into the atmosphere above their targets.

The trajectory of missiles can be divided into four separate phases, corresponding to four layers of defense, which combined are supposed to offer nearly

total protection for Fortress America.

The first phase is the firing. For most of the ICBMs currently in service, this lasts a little less than 300 seconds. But this initial phase will probably be considerably reduced in the future. The firing of the American MX missile lasts only 150 to 180 seconds. Obviously, intercepting missiles at this stage, which is the most desirable because it means that the blast will occur as close as possible to the territory of the attacking forces, excludes any chance for political judgement. It can only be done by means of an automatic response.

The second phase, the so-called post-firing one, which lasts from two to six minutes, represents the stage of a missile's trajectory in which it can still be neutralized before the multiple warheads that carry the explosive devices are launched.

The third phase is the phase of ballistic flight, the duration of which is up to thirty minutes. During this time the missiles fly at an altitude of 45 to 1,200 kilometers and launch the warheads assigned to their specific targets. At this point, the country under attack would have to be able to follow the course of each of these warheads in order to neutralize them.

The fourth phase is the reentry of the warheads into the atmosphere above their targets. This is the last chance for the country under attack to knock them out. At this point, antimissile defense has all the disadvantages of the old systems. That is that an explosion of a missile in

* All quotations originally in English have been retranslated from the French.

1. Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), initiated in 1968 between the USSR and the USA.

the final stage of its approach complicates the tasks of the defense forces by jamming communications and radar.

The technological challenge the imperialists have posed for their researchers is to perfect space weapons that strike at enemy ballistic missiles at all stages of their flight, designed particularly to hit them in the first two phases. What this requires is launching research programs that combine many kinds of technology, both as regards the detection of missiles as well as for firing and guiding the new so-called third generation space weapons.

The US undersecretary of defense for atomic energy has given the following definition of these third-generation weapons: "They are weapons in which the energy produced by the explosion is in part transformed into a form more suited to achieving the desired objectives than blast and heat, the best known effects of nuclear weapons in the past." (2)

These include, while this is by no means a full list, reinforced radiation weapons; "directed energy" weapons using laser rays that travel at a speed of 300,000 kilometers a second, or fascicles of particles that travel at almost the same speed; weapons that amplify electromagnetic impulses in a radius of several thousands of kilometers, which are harmless to human beings but can cause major damage to electronic installations; "directed plasma" weapons that concentrate the effects of a nuclear explosion and prevent the spherical dispersion of the classic nuclear weapons.

The deployment of this new generation of weapons, moreover, involves large numbers of space rockets, spy satellites, and killing-ray transmitters and reflectors. This is no doubt the major handicap of the Star Wars program. In any case, it is sufficient to show the main outlines of the sinister scenarios the imperialists are preparing for us in order to highlight the extent of what has been undertaken and the threat that flows from it.

Where will the money come from?

The threat represented by the Star Wars program has many aspects. But its most immediate implications for the civilian population arise from the exorbitant cost of mobilizing the economic, industrial and financial resources needed even for the first phase of research. An indication of this is given by the US Congress' approval of the appropriation demanded by Ronald Reagan, which amounted to 25 billion 780 million dollars over five years just for the central research projects involved in this program.

From this standpoint, no previous program can be compared with the SDI. As an indication of the scale, the total cost of the space orientations of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration since 1958, including research and development, amounts to 150 billion dollars, of which about a third was devoted to purely military operations.

Still more fabulous sums have been evoked, such as those mentioned in the *New York Times* (3). And most of the experts consider these figures "reasonable" or even "optimistic," that is, an underestimation." Thus, the cost of a laser-ray antisatellite system (ASAT) is presently estimated at 50 billion dollars.

So, it would be a mistake not to see that, behind the Reagan Administration's ideological talk about "Star Wars," a very large-scale offensive against the living standards of the masses is shaping up. The capitalist trusts are preparing to wage it through the medium of the US federal government. This is the main thing at the present stage.

Trusts such as TWR, Ford Aerospace and Communications, Martin Marietta Aerospace, Boeing and Rockwell International which are already the beneficiaries of the military aerospace business, have also invested a lot in order to get into a position to participate in this program. And in so doing, they have created a very powerful military-industrial lobby for Star Wars.

This is leading to a situation where what is ultimately at stake is nothing less than how brutal an austerity the capitalist states are going to have to impose in order to finance this ruinous project. It is ruinous for the American masses, for the masses of the imperialist countries associated with the US. It is ruinous for the dependent countries, in particular because of the way the financial mechanisms operate. And finally it is ruinous for the masses of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, who will have to bear the burden of whatever countermeasures the Soviet bureaucracy takes, even if they are limited.

In this respect, the policy of superarmament, given concrete expression by Ronald Reagan's SDI, constitutes a drastic capitalist solution to the economic crisis. It is a barbaric solution, not only because it increases the possibility of a final holocaust for humanity but because it involves poverty for the overwhelming majority of the world's people.

To be sure, the bulk of this mad program still remains in the initial drafting stage. But the fact cannot be underestimated that not inconsiderable concrete steps have also been undertaken to carry it out. Half of the US space shuttle flights from now until 1994 will be reserved for secret military operations connected to the Star Wars program. The first real test of a laser weapon in space is scheduled to take place on a space shuttle in 1987.

These steps will have practical consequences all the more rapidly because however enormous the sums allotted for this program now seem, they are still modest by comparison with the ambitions exhibited by Washington. That is why it is probable that the antiwar movement and along with it the international workers movement, will have to fight a decisive battle in the years immediately ahead against the imperialist militarization offensive. And the outcome of this battle

The US imperialists are redoubling their ideological offensive in order to be able to speed up their programs for militarizing space and present them in a favorable light. A series of factors have come together to give them the idea that the time is ripe for rapid and determined action.

Crisis of deterrent

The background to this is the general crisis of the strategies of deterrent in force in NATO for 25 years, which have been challenged more and more in the US, as well as in Europe, Japan and Australia.

On the basis of constant technological innovation, the imperialist general staffs themselves have started to think about strategic problems in new terms. With the miniaturization of warheads and carriers, the NATO experts have been able to see a prospect for limited nuclear wars. In fact, they have projected their speculations about this into a precise battle scenario in Europe — the *Airland Battle 2000 Doctrine* — which has become an essential reference point for the Western general staffs.

Public opinion, on the other hand, has not been taken in. The old balance of terror, based on "the certainty of unacceptable destruction on both sides," which was supposed to guarantee a state of nonwar, is no longer a really convincing argument. This is shown clearly by the mobilization against the deployment of new missiles in Europe, whose destabilizing effects cannot be underestimated.

Three key factors today are accelerating the general crisis of deterrent. The miniaturization of nuclear warheads, the famous "mini-nukes," is undermining it on the ground, by opening up the way for the use of nuclear weapons in limited conflicts. Moreover, this threatens to touch off an uncontrollable proliferation of nuclear arms.

The development of the "new technologies," especially their applications in the conventional arms sector, is helping to lower the step that has traditionally separated the use of conventional weapons from the use of nuclear ones. Finally the miniaturization in the technology used in space is undermining the strategy of deterrent from above, or at least threatens to.

The Reagan administration has taken the offensive on the ideological level in the attempt to deal with the problem of the breakup of consensus around deterrent. The SDI offers a basis for this, inasmuch as the complexity of the pro-

2. Department of Energy Fiscal Year 1983. National Defense Programs Authorisation, hearing before the Senate Armed Forces Committee, cited by *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 1985.

3. Sandra Blakeslee, "New Horizon in Space Seen for Businessmen," *New York Times*, October 6, 1983.

ject permits important differences in interpretation. The public version offers the perspective of a radiant future "for the free peoples who would be able to live knowing that their security no longer depends on the threat of immediate reprisals by the United States." (4)

Reagan, adopting the unwonted guise of peacemaker, asks, "Wouldn't it be better to save human lives than to avenge deaths." (5) Then he goes on to conclude that the SDI can "make nuclear weapons obsolete."

The truth, as we have seen, is totally contrary to these oily statements, because most of the space weapons of the so-called Third Generation rely on nuclear technology, and are still more terrible than the H-bombs that have made up the bulk of nuclear arsenals until today.

However, the main danger of the imperialist technology lies in the idea that the SDI is a defensive system. It has to be observed, as the Union of Concerned Scientists say, that "even if in its birth the antimissile defense system based in space does not provoke a cataclysm, success in deploying such a system can only increase the instability of the strategic balance. It is in fact difficult to imagine a system more apt to provoke a catastrophe than one that requires instantaneous decisions, where there can be no prior testing; a system that is fragile but which, nonetheless, threatens the opposing camp's capacity for retaliation." (6)

Some Pentagon spokespersons offer a more realistic view of the objectives of the SDI. For example, M. Furniss, who is in charge of drawing up the blueprints for the research program, recently explained to the *Washington Post* that he "thought that since the Soviets do not have unlimited financial resources they will prefer to modify their strategic arsenal and rely on their bombers rather than ballistic missiles to penetrate the American defense system. So, we will go back to the relatively stable period of the 1950s." (7)

In other words, the US imperialists and their allies, assured of virtual impunity because of the military superiority they would gain through the SDI, would have their hands free, as at the start of the nuclear era, to impose their policy around the globe. Such a situation would make the conditions more difficult for the national and social liberation struggles of the peoples in the independent countries.

Moreover, you need only look at the list of the 17 countries that Washington has proposed to involve in the SDI to gauge the danger that would be represented by such a Holy Alliance of reaction. They are the NATO countries, including France, although it is not represented in the integrated military command; Israel, because of its role in the Middle East; Japan; South Korea; and Australia.

The letter that the US Secretary of State, Caspar Weinberger sent to these 17 governments makes it clear: "If your country is interested in seeking an agreement on cooperating or contributing, please send within sixty days an indication

of your interest in participating in the SDI research program and of the areas where you think the quality of research in your country seems most promising for this program. We want to take your response into consideration quickly in order to initiate the appropriate bilateral discussions on specific subjects and cooperation agreements." (8)

The first thing that stands out is Washington's insistence on a deadline, sixty days, which is exceptionally short, and the procedure for bilateral discussions to settle the details of participation. All these elements illustrate the American determination to restore order in the imperialist camp, which applies both to its allies whose interests are centered on the Atlantic zone, as well as to those whose interests focus more on the Pacific and the Mediterranean.

Thus, the SDI could well serve as a cover for general military collaboration in a bilateral framework that would be less constrictive for the American leaders than that of multilateral pacts such as NATO or ANZUS. (9) While in the final analysis American decisions always prevail in these multilateral alliances, the other parties to them have sometimes ganged up to restrain Washington's overeagerness, especially as regards increasing their financial contribution to the American war effort.

Evolution of Western military spending

With respect to Europe, Weinberger's letter advances the perspective of research specifically devoted to the defense of Capitalist Europe: "The SDI program will not be limited to the application of technologies for combatting intercontinental ballistic missiles ... but will also carefully examine technologies for combatting shorter range ballistic missiles." This refers in particular to countering Soviet missiles with a range of less than 1,000 kilometers by perfecting high-velocity ground-to-air cannon on the basis of the advanced technologies applied within the framework of the SDI for ICBMs.

Such an orientation for the moment remains imprecise but the fact that the NATO defense ministers gave "broad and unanimous approval" to the SDI on March 26 indicates the danger clearly enough. On the heels of their decisions on the deployment of the new missiles, the European capitalist governments are ready to engage in new militarist adventures at Ronald Reagan's invitation.

On the other hand, in the immediate future, unless there is some unforeseeable upset, the launching of the SDI program should not have so immediate an effect on East-West relations, especially those between the US imperialists and the Soviet bureaucracy. There are several reasons for this. The imperialists' program is, of course, aimed directly against the Soviet Union, but the deployment of the systems involved in the SDI is a rather

long-term perspective. In the opinion of the Pentagon experts themselves, the USSR is not in a position to follow the US in this particular area of the arms race, especially for economic reasons, as the head of the SDI program, M. Furniss, clearly indicated in the quotation cited previously.

Competition by the USSR in this field would be possible, according to the same people, only if there were an economic reform, a drastic modernization of the Soviet economy as a whole, which, as they see it, would be the only way to liberate the colossal resources demanded by a general militarization of space. They themselves hardly believe in such a possibility, and rightly so.

It is true that it is hard today to deny the evidence, which is acknowledged by all Western sources, including the CIA, of a constantly widening gap between US and Soviet military spending. For example, in the three years from 1980 to 1983, the American share of world military spending rose from 25.5% to 29.3%, while that of the Soviet Union fell from 23.3% to 21.6%. (10)

The disproportion is still clearer if you compare the shift in the respective shares of world military spending in the same period for NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The former rose from 45% to 48.2%, while the latter fell from 25.5% to 23.7%. In monetary terms, NATO military spending, in 1980 dollars, rose from 216 billion to 307 billion, while Warsaw Pact spending went from 144 billion dollars to 151 billion.

This is the fundamental reason why the conservative bureaucracy that rules in Moscow, which has never taken the initiative in the arms race, is hanging on for dear life to negotiations with the imperialists that are only a trap. The Soviet bureaucracy has called for a "total ban" on the militarization of space, which the American general Hoover has termed a "unilateral technological lobotomy." (11) It called early on for a "moratorium on testing antisatellite weapons."

This formal position is unrealistic for two reasons. The first is the obvious American determination to move ahead in this area. The second is that the US decision is being reflected at the moment in a research program that cannot be the object of negotiation. How can you keep track of work in laboratories? The Soviet leaders will probably put more stress on intermediate agreements for reducing the arms currently deployed of the type of the SS 20, or SS 18 (12) and the Pershing

4. Star Wars speech.

5. Ibid.

6. 'La defense antimissiles balistiques a partir de l'espace,' Hans Bethe, Richard Garwin, Kurt Gottfried, Henry Kendall, *Pour la Science*, December 1984.

7. "La guerre des etoiles obligera les sovietiques a modifier leur arsenal strategique," Henri Pierre, *Le Monde*, August 28, 1984.

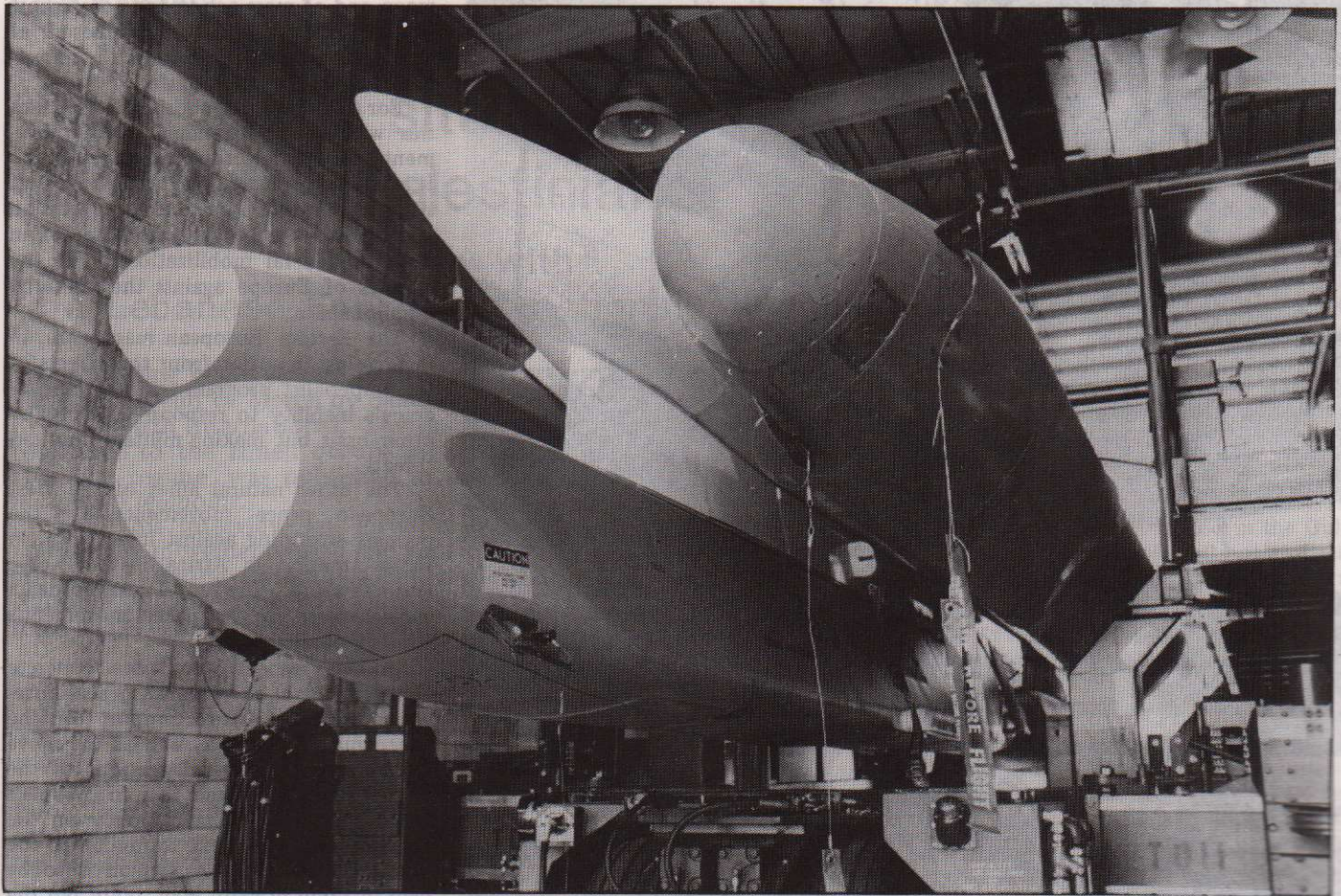
8. Document made public by NATO on March 26, 1985, in Luxembourg.

9. The military pact signed in 1951 by the US, Australia and New Zealand.

10. Source: The 1984 Annual of SPIRI, the Stockholm Institute for Peace Research.

11. The undersecretary of the Department of Energy (DOE) for military applications.

12. Soviet ICBMs.



Cruise missiles at a base near New York (DR)

and cruise. They can hope that Washington will be more flexible with regard to these weapons while waiting for the time that it can deploy the first SDI systems.

Moscow's formal declarations against the militarization of space should not, therefore, create any illusions about its capacity to do anything effective in pursuance of this objective.

Therefore, it is not impossible that we will see a rather long period of negotiations and possibly even the conclusion of limited agreements, which, in all likelihood, will not affect the essentials of the new phase of the arms race represented by the militarization of space. In such a situation, it can be feared, unfortunately, that the peoples struggling against imperialism will find themselves more isolated because of Moscow's determination not to do anything that might endanger the negotiations. No matter what is on the table, they remain the most reassuring thing for the Kremlin bureaucrats.

The deputy American secretary of defense for atomic energy, Richard Wagner, has, moreover, made no bones about this perspective when he said: "The underlying reason for accelerating the DOE's [Department of Energy] advanced-technologies programs is what I would call to keep the Soviets deterred. In other words, what we are trying to do in the last analysis is to keep them feeling that they are in a position of inferiority relative to us, so that in the event of a

crisis they will have an inner conviction that they cannot take us on. This is much more than a simple matter of the number of missiles, their sizes or their effectiveness." (13)

The antiwar movement should be able to take into account the new factors created by the launching of the SDI program easily, since they by no means involve a change in strategy but only confirm the validity of the axes of struggle that the more farsighted section of the movement have been putting forward for quite a while.

Moreover, the antiwar movement is confronting this situation on the basis of a renewed combativity confirmed by the whole series of recent actions, which have dealt a stinging rebuff to those who predicted that the movement would run out of steam after the deployment of the new NATO missiles in Italy, Great Britain and in West Germany. The Martens government's decision to accept the deployment of US cruise missiles in Belgium was met on March 17, less than 48 hours after the government's capitulation, by a demonstration of 150,000 people.

On March 24, the fifth anti-NATO march on the American base at Torrejon, near Madrid, brought out more than 100,000 in protest against the Social Democratic government's pro-NATO policies. The traditional Easter peace demonstrations in Great Britain and West

Germany drew record participation this year in both countries. The April 20 antiwar demonstrations in the US organized by a very broad coalition also confirmed what has become one of the dominant features of the international situation, that is, the persistent refusal of the masses in most of the imperialist centers to accept the capitalist government's militarization and war programs.

In this context, the European peace movement and its various national components must, from now on, focus their strategies on opposing militarization, on the struggle against NATO, on demanding withdrawal of every country from the imperialist alliance, whose foreign ministers unanimously approved Reagan's SDI on March 26 in Luxemburg.

In particular, the peace movements should demand that the governments make public the response that they are preparing to make in the allotted "sixty days" to Weinberger's missive and oppose any involvement of the European states in the militarist adventure in space, the inevitable result of which will be a sharpening of the austerity policies that are the common fate of all the peoples of capitalist Europe.

Stepped-up austerity, greater unemployment and poverty, will in fact be the

13. Cited by David C. Motisson in "Les armes nucléaires de la troisième génération," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 1985, Paris.



MISSILE OTOMAT

Missile anti-navire, longue portée,
développé en coopération avec OTOMELARA (Italie).

Long range, anti-ship missile
developed in cooperation with OTOMELARA (Italy).

Principaux coopérants français:
THOMSON-C.S.F. autodirecteur
TURBOMECA turbo-réacteur
SPM plateforme de guidage intermédiaire

Main french subcontractors
THOMSON-C.S.F. homing head
TURBOMECA turbo engine
SPM nav platform

Part of a recent exhibition of modern weaponry (DR)

first results of the SDI, today for the American people and tomorrow for the masses of Western Europe, if the decision to take part in the SDI is not overturned and if it is translated into concrete budgetary commitments in the countries concerned.

On this ground, a struggle may be fought out that can be crucial in more than one respect. In the first place, the peace movement can find the opportunity to mobilize still more massively workers and their trade-union organizations, because they will be the victims of the austerity policies involved in participation in the SDI program.

For the workers movement, this can be the opportunity to wage a head-on battle against austerity on a European scale, bolstered by a very broad peace movement. Never in fact has the cause-

and-effect link between militarization and austerity been so clear as it is today with the SDI.

The fight against NATO and austerity demand mass action — the most united, the most massive, and the most powerful possible. Those in the peace movement who think that the time has come for a pause for reflection because the reunion in Geneva is, as they see it, opening up a new field of action, cannot long hide their surrender behind such a transparent pretext.

There is no way the SDI is going to be contained in these negotiations. The Soviet diplomats and the official East European peace movements that echo them, with some nuances at most, are not the ideal allies that some leaders of the movement thought they had found in these last two years. In the present situation, the imperatives of such diplo-

macy and of mass action for peace show up as, if not diametrically opposed, at least contradictory, as regards the objectives and methods of struggle.

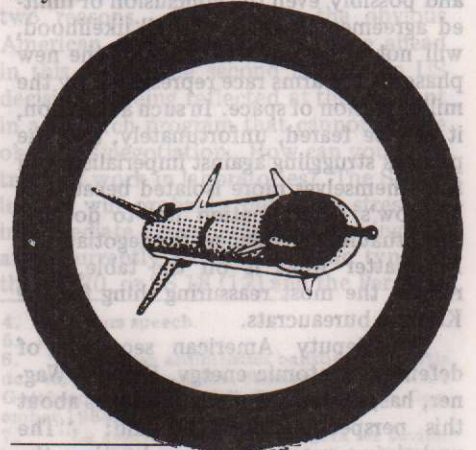
For that reason, establishing permanent ties with the independent peace movements in Eastern Europe remains essential. It is necessary to aid them in their difficult struggle against bureaucratic repression and, in this way, to lay the base for an eventual general mobilization of all the peoples of Europe against the militarization of space.

The Eastern European masses are, in fact, going to suffer from the effects of the imperialist program and the bureaucracy's inability to respond to it on any other basis but making military counter-threats.

The other natural allies of the West European peace movements are the peoples struggling against imperialism in Latin America, in Africa, in the Pacific and elsewhere. They must be accorded a central place in the peace movement's strategy of alliances.

In this respect, the more concrete commitment of the Flemish peace movement VAKA (14) to support for the Nicaraguan fighters, as well as the move by the more advanced sections of the West German movement to hold a people's tribunal against Reagan's policy on the occasion of the next summit of the industrialized countries, which is to be held in Bonn in early May, point out the best way of consolidating the unity of all those directly threatened by the military, racist and imperialist policy of Washington and its allies. (15)

Never have so many issues been taken up in the peace movement, but now in order to fight the SDI it is necessary to lay out concrete perspectives for action against NATO and austerity, in solidarity with the peoples who are fighting for their independence, their dignity and for security. All these questions should be put high on the agenda for a thorough-going discussion at the next convention of the peace movements to be held in July in Amsterdam. ■



14. The VAKA has associated itself with the Anti-Intervention Front for Solidarity with Central America, in particular in publishing informational material.

15. Condemnation of the racist regime in Pretoria and of the barely veiled support for it by Washington is arousing in the US, as in Europe, a surge of solidarity in the antiwar movement with the struggle of the Black people of South Africa.

The situation of the Palestinians

Interview with
a Lebanese Fourth Internationalist

The following is the second part of an interview given to Gerry Foley in Paris at the end of March by Salah Jaber, a leader of the Lebanese section of the Fourth International. The first part, which dealt with the Lebanese resistance to the Israeli occupation and the Christian revolt against the Gemayel regime, was published in issue No 73, April 8, 1985, of *International Viewpoint*.

Since this interview was given, a new division has opened up in the Palestinian movement, with the split of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine from the Democratic Alliance. It is joining with the National Alliance (the Al Fatah dissidents, Jibril's PFGC, and Saika) to form the National Salvation Front.

Question. What has happened to the left in Lebanon throughout the recent crises?

Answer. Apart from the Communist Party, there is hardly anything remaining of the left but the Lebanese section of the Fourth International. There used to be another far left group. But it has gradually abandoned Marxism for Khom-einism, arguing that it was necessary to build bridges to the Islamic masses. It is now in fact dissolving politically.

There is the Communist Action organization, which has existed for many years and occupied a space to the right of the CP. It is a very bureaucratized group linked to Arafat, from whom they get subsidies. The Communist Party does not get on well with Arafat.

As for the Lebanese section of the Fourth International, we believe that the successes achieved against the Israeli army in the south and the deepening of the economic crisis have opened up the way for the growth of our forces. To take advantage of these new perspectives, we decided recently to launch an agitational paper, as a companion publication to our monthly political organ.

We are making efforts to extend our presence to areas both to the north and south of the country where we have not had any base before. Up till now, we have been based mainly in Beirut, where half the population of the country lives, and the Druze area. So, now we are spreading to other areas.

On a modest scale, we think that we have good prospects. That, of course, cannot compensate for the capturing of the radicalization by the Islamic fundamentalists. We hope that the CP may still be able to take a more radical line and avoid being overtaken by the fundamentalists. Radical politics are quite popular now because of the very deep crisis.

Q. Is there any sign of any positive political developments inside the CP?

A. Not really.

Q. What about the Palestinians? What has happened to the PLO in Lebanon since the end of the fighting between the Arafat and the Abu Musa factions?

A. They are in the process of reintegrating into Al Fatah what used to be called the Abu Nidal faction. This group suddenly emerged from the underground in the last period in the Bekaa valley area, and proved to be a very large and well structured organization.

Since the Abu Nidal faction originally came out of a rebellion against Arafat on a nationalist basis, they could easily find a common ground with this new Fatah, and so they are joining it. This will not have any effect on the policy of the dissident movement, but it will have contradictory effects on the Abu Nidal forces. It will cool down their external activities [that is, military actions outside the areas where the Palestinians live]. It will involve them in the type of struggle that the dissidents have been waging, which so far at least has nothing to do with external activities. The dissidents have been concentrating on attacking the Zionist army where it is possible to fight it.

Q. But within the dissident group itself, have there been discussions among movement to the left?

A. No. Although the dissident Al Fatah is very heterogeneous, all the forces in it have one common denominator — radical nationalism, strong opposition to Arafat, US policy in the region and so forth, and what they consider a strategic alliance with the Syrian regime. The differences among the various elements remain more ideological than political. If the situation changes, they may develop differently, but at this stage the differences are on an ideological plane.

Q. What success have the dissidents had in winning support on the West Bank?

A. The West Bank is clearly the weakest point for the dissidents. In fact, Arafat's major argument is now the West Bank population. The few people he still has in Tunisia, North Yemen, and Algeria are living in prison-like camps. They are even more useless to him than Shukeiry's old Palestinian Liberation Army that existed until the 1967 war and was supposed to be a unit of the regular Arab armies. Arafat's strongest card is that he has influence in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that can be utilized in bringing about a settlement concerning these areas with the Zionists, under US patronage. He is not concerned about Palestinians in other areas.

Arafat also has influence in the Palestinian community integrated in the Gulf area. But these people will not go back to the West Bank, even if a Palestinian state were set up on the West Bank. They are very much integrated into the societies where they live.

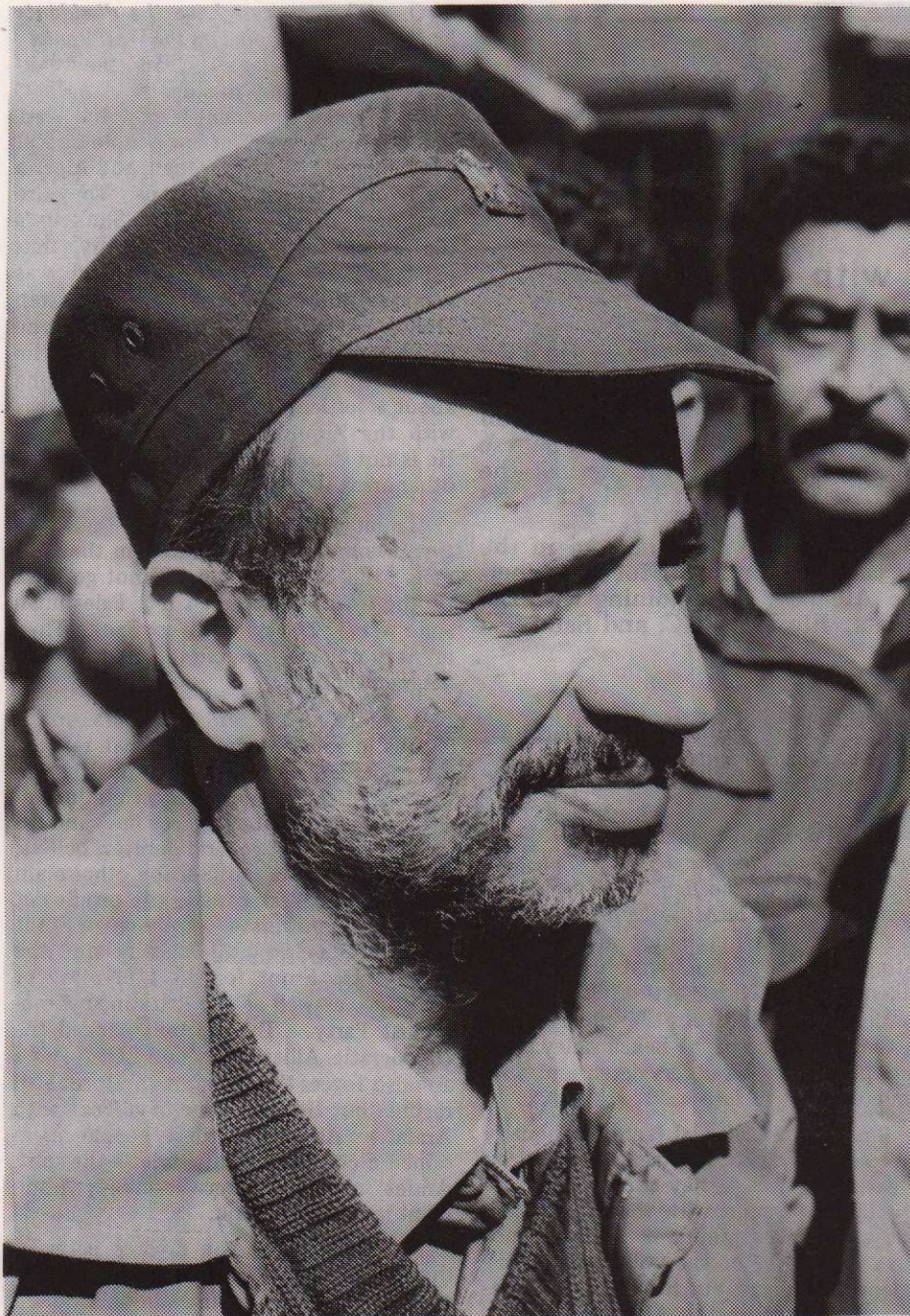
Another area where Arafat has influence is in some of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. He has considerable support in some camps, in certain instances for very material reasons, and in others because of general political beliefs. Besides the Arafat forces, the other main force on the West Bank is the pro-Soviet current, supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, as well as the Palestinian Communist Party. This current backed the Democratic Alliance in the PLO. (There are also forces that support the Jordanian regime, but they are now in alliance with Arafat.) As long as these people maintained a conciliatory attitude in the split, Arafat remained overwhelmingly dominant in the West Bank.

Now that there is a divorce between the pro-Soviet and right-nationalist wings after the last Palestinian National Council meeting, the opposition to Arafat is growing. But he still enjoys majority support there, and probably will maintain it. There are various reasons for this. In the first place, the West Bank is not a proletarian area. Most of its population are petty bourgeois and middle layers.

Q. Or subproletarian.

A. Yes. But you have very wide layers of peasants and petty bourgeois people. And they are politically backward. They still follow traditional notables, such as mayors. Up until 1970, most of them were against the Palestinian resistance, and were pro-Nasser. Until 1970, they saw the Palestinian resistance as extremist and remained mostly pro-Nasser, even at the time of the Rogers Plan.

On top of this is a political factor. For these people, the main thing is to get rid of the Israeli occupation. For them the shortest way to accomplish this is through a compromise. They think that the prospects for liberating the West Bank through armed struggle or through war



Yassar Arafat (DR)

are very illusory. This idea is utopian for them.

Against this attitude, the left forces have always argued that the idea of achieving a compromise with the Israelis is just as utopian. Since both prospects seem remote, you might as well choose the one that suits your real interests, that is, wage an uncompromising struggle against the Zionists.

So, as Arafat fails in his compromise attempts, he will more and more lose his popularity on the West Bank. He has played his last card now, in breaking with the anti-American Arabs, that is, regimes like the Libyan and Syrian and joining with the likes of Hussein and Mubarak. Arafat burned his bridges. And now he is suffering his first defeat, because despite his deal with Hussein, Mubarak could not even get the Americans to accept talks with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation including no key figure in the PLO. This

is a very big disappointment for Arafat, and it will weaken his position.

So, now the reactionary Arab regimes — the Saudis, the Egyptians, the Jordanians — are putting strong pressure on the US administration to make at least some token concession to Arafat to enable him to show his followers that he is making some gains. Because, unless he can offer something, sooner or later he is going to be faced with bankruptcy, and that could mean his political end.

Q. So, how would you sum up the situation in the PLO now?

A. Officially now the PLO is only Arafat's people. All the others are out. Now, discussions are going on among the other forces to see whether they will create an alternative. The Democratic Front is very reluctant. The Soviet Union is very reluctant, because despite everything Arafat is doing, Moscow still has the

hope that once Arafat sees that he is not getting anywhere with the Americans he will turn again. And it would be ready to take him back because he is the sort of bourgeois figure in the Third World that they need for their program of nonalignment. Losing him would be a big loss for Moscow, and so it does not want to cut the bridges.

Arafat is also being careful to keep a line out to the Soviet Union. Even while allied with Hussein and Mubarak, he is talking about an international conference, which means involving the Soviet Union. So, he is trying to make a compromise with the pro-American people, but at the same time insisting on involving the Soviet Union in this settlement.

If such a conference ever got off the ground, in fact, it would have put the Soviet Union in a tight corner. Because if the Soviets had rejected participation, it would have left the ground to the Americans. And accepting it would have meant problems between them and the Syrians. Because the Arafat-Hussein agreement called for some Jordanian-Palestinian negotiation. Then you had amendments to replace a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation with a common Arab delegation reintroducing the idea of an overall settlement in the region. But I think the chances for this policy are very slim indeed.

The Zionist settlements on the West Bank are irreversible, that is the ones in the key areas are.

Q. That is, the ones that are extensions of Israeli cities?

A. Yes. And any idea that you can get a compromise with the Zionists by which they could withdraw from the West Bank and from these settlements is totally illusory. The most that you could get would be a partial withdrawal, opening a space for some sort of Palestinian state federated with Jordan, which would be a state under joint Israeli and Jordanian control. It would be a hostage state, what we have called a large Palestinian camp. And even that does not seem at all likely to happen.

Why should the Israelis go to the trouble? The problems they would get inside Israel from any withdrawal from the West Bank would be greater than any gains they could make. Peace? They have their peace with Egypt, and that is what matters to them. Peace with Jordan? They are not interested in peace with Jordan. What is Jordan? It doesn't threaten them. And peace with Jordan would not mean peace with the Syrians. So, the Israelis have nothing to win by making concessions in this area.

Arafat is relying entirely on the Saudi pressure on the Americans and US pressure on Israel. The Israelis have nothing to gain.

Q. Not a hope of a stable peace in the area?

A. No, the Israelis are smart enough not to believe in that. They have seen even their peace with Egypt deteriorate



into a sort of standoff, no real peace, no real diplomatic relations a very lukewarm relationship.

Q. Sort of an arm's length romance?

A. Yes, exactly. What can the Israelis expect? In particular, since the kingpin is Saudi Arabia, which up until now has followed an anti-Jewish propaganda line. And the Syrian regime now has no illusions about the possibility of getting the Golan heights back through negotiations. They understand that the Israelis won't leave the Golan, won't give it back to Syria. Besides east Jerusalem, this is the only Arab territory occupied in the 1967 war that has been officially annexed. Moreover, from the Israeli point of view any idea of seeking peace with Damascus is crazy, because they know that a month later they could see a coup d'etat, a nationalist coup d'etat that would put them back to square one.

So, the Syrian regime today has no choice but to do what it is doing. And to top it off, this military regime in Syria is profiting from the war situation, from the war mobilization. This situation provides a justification for this military dictatorship and it also allows Damascus to extort big financial support from the oil states.

Q. So, that leaves the Lebanese Christians as about the only ones the

Israelis can collaborate with. What about indications that even this relationship is souring?

A. Well, there is a feeling among the Christians that the Israelis stabbed them in the back. The defeat of the Lebanese Forces in the Druze mountains is blamed on the Israelis. We are even seeing a certain surfacing of old anti-Jewish themes.

Q. The treacherous Jews who betrayed Christ?

A. Yes. Moreover, after the Israeli defeat in the south, the Christians in the south began to get worried about their own skins. So, they shifted support for the Israeli occupation, to neutrality, and now to taking some anti-Israeli stances. But it's more for opportunist reasons than from real convictions. Their real convictions are neither pro-Israeli nor anti-Israeli. But they have lost confidence in Israel; that's very clear.

Now, as regards participation of Christians in the Lebanese resistance, there are also leftists among the Christians, at least individuals remaining from the old left that used to be quite strong in the main Christian areas before the 1975 war.

The Geagea rebellion has an ambiguous attitude to the Israelis. On the one hand, these forces have no confidence in them. On the other, they know that in the con-

flict in the area the Israelis are their only possible ally.

Q. Is there any possibility of a Druze-Israeli alliance?

A. No, because there is nothing in it for the Druzes. We had the development of a pro-Israel current among the Druzes, even a pro-Israeli wing of the Joumblatt party itself in 1982 and 1983. But after the Israeli withdrawal from the Druze mountains, the Zionists will no longer be able to offer them anything. The pro-Israeli wing is fading, and it is the pro-Syrian wing in the Joumblatt party that is now in total control.

However, the Druze situation is very volatile; it can change very quickly and for very parochial reasons. Individuals play a big role. If Hafiz Assad were to die, well ... As I said, Bashir Gemayel's death made a big difference.

Q. What about conflicts between the Shiite fundamentalists and the Druzes, for whom the latter are heretics at best?

A. They don't like each other. That is clear, but there is no disputed ground between them. In the unlikely event that the fundamentalists made a decisive breakthrough and became the dominant force in Lebanon, then they would clash with the Druzes. But even to speculate about that is political fiction. ■

Sandinista government reverses the cycle of poisoning

The author of the following article was recently on a month long reforestation project in Nicaragua.

Diane FEELY

By the 1960s Central America had become one of the primary cotton-producing areas of the world. Forty percent of Nicaragua's cultivated land was transformed into cotton production. Cotton replaced basic food crops — corn, beans, rice and sorghum. Tens of thousands of *campesinos* were bought out for next to nothing or forced off the land.

Somoza reaped millions of dollars of profit on the cotton boom. The cotton barons obtained cheap bank credit which was denied to small farmers. The result was a greater impoverishment in the countryside, greater dependence on the world market and increasing ecological problems. The concentration of cotton over such large tracts of land proved destructive. The region became plagued with soil erosion. Dust storms swept through the area.

Intense cultivation of one crop also creates an individual environment for the development of pest populations. Nicaragua was then caught in a vicious circle. To control the increasing problems with various cotton pests — especially the boll weevil — the growers became dependent on chemical technology. Initially the technology produced impressive results, but the cotton crops became "addicted" to increasing pesticide doses which had to be applied to counter higher levels of insect resistance.

Cotton growers were trapped on a pesticide treadmill in order to maintain profitable cotton yields. Not only did pests develop resistance to the pesticides but new pests emerged when their natural enemies were killed off.

Despite inadequate records, it is estimated that between 1962-72 Nicaragua suffered an estimated 3,000 pesticide poisonings a year. This is an annual rate of 176 cases per 100,000 — or nearly eight times as high as the US rate.

Thus in the span of two decades Nicaragua became a world leader in per capita pesticide poisonings. In 1969-70 alone, 383 deaths were attributed to pesticide poisoning in Nicaragua.

An estimated 80% of Central America's acute pesticide poisonings result from organophosphate exposure. These are extremely toxic in even small doses. They quickly kill pest populations and decompose in a matter of a few days, or

at most in a few weeks. But Nicaragua traditionally used the less expensive organochlorines — pesticides such as DDT and toxaphene. Not as acutely toxic as the organophosphates, they do not decompose as quickly after application.

DDT, for instance, has a half life of ten to thirty years. As the pesticide residue accumulates in the food chain, the poison builds up in the fatty tissue. And of the 25 most commonly used organochlorines, 19 have been shown to cause cancer in laboratory tests on animals.

Of the 19.5 million pounds of pesticides Nicaragua used during the 1974-75 cotton season, nearly 15 million pounds were organochlorines. No other population in the world had levels of DDT as high as those who lived in the Nicaraguan and Guatemalan cotton areas.

Immediately after the 1979 insurrection the Government of National Reconstruction developed practical goals to reverse pesticide poisonings. It banned the importation of DDT, endrin and dieldrin, impounding all existing stock. Through the government import agency, MIDINRA, the Sandinistas have been able to implement their ban by preventing the importation of similar pesticides.

The Nicaraguans have substituted less harmful pesticides for the organochlorines that once predominated. In fact, by the 1982-83 harvest, pesticide usage has been cut by 55%. The Ministry of Agrarian Reform has also developed two experimental programs. One project uses "trap cropping" to control the boll weevil. Four rows of cotton plants per several acres of land are not plowed under after the harvest; these then become the trap in which the boll weevil concentrates. Only these rows are then treated with pesticides. This method reduces the need for pesticide treatment on the main crop during the regular season. By 1984 all cotton producers were required to use this method.

The second experimental program is an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system which employs a wide variety of naturally-occurring controls, including insects and bacteria. IPM holds the use of chemicals to a minimum, with pesticides only to be applied after a careful survey of the insect populations in the field. Instead, biological, environmental, cultural and genetic controls are employed in a complementary fashion. Using resistant

varieties of a crop (as in the case of corn), mixing crops or employing natural enemies to control pests are all integral to IPM.

As a result of these efforts, Nicaragua has become one of the most advanced countries in the Third World in designing and implementing alternatives to pesticide usage.

Crucial to reducing pesticide poisoning is raising the level of understanding about pesticide safety measures among agricultural workers. Under new pesticide regulations, labels must be written in the language of the workers. These labels must contain basic information on hazards and personal protective measures, poisoning symptoms, first aid and medical treatment. The labels will be color-coded for workers who are still not functionally literate. Since a major proportion of occupational injury and illness is dependent upon safety precautions that workers must employ, these safety classes, monitoring programs and labelling procedures are crucial building blocks in developing a well-rounded educational program. Increasing the number of trained inspectors and teachers is another vital element.

The ability to conduct research, train technicians and develop innovative projects has been undermined by the country's need to defend itself against the contra attacks since 1981. Perhaps the most dramatic example occurred around the CIA-organized attack on the Corinto docks and storage facilities in October 1983.

The attack on Corinto occurred at the same time the boll weevil was reaching its critical level in the cotton cycle. Stored at Corinto was methylparathion, a relatively safe chemical the Nicaraguans were going to use on the cotton pest. The destruction of methylparathion supplies left cotton growers with no means to combat the pest. Faced with the potential loss of a major proportion of its cotton crop — one of the two main sources of foreign exchange — and unable to replace the chemical quickly, the government was forced to suspend its ban against organochlorines, open up the storage centers where the pesticides had been kept since they were impounded, and distribute the hazardous substance.

Nicaragua has designed and implemented the most innovative and potentially far-reaching solutions to pesticide poisonings — with the help of scientists around the world. The will to reverse the cycle of poisoning is very strong, yet implementation is limited by US imperialism's ability to cripple that revolution. The attack on the storage facilities at Corinto is but one aspect of the US strategy. The US also pressures other countries and institutions to deny loans or credits to Nicaragua, unleashes a barrage of propaganda against the country and its leadership, and uses economic and political weight to isolate that revolution. It is a testimony to the quality of the Sandinista leadership that despite the real hardships facing the Nicaraguan people today, the struggle to reverse the cycle of poisoning continues.

The trajectory of the Alfonsín government

In the last two months, after being in office for more than a year, the Alfonsín regime finally took some steps against the military hierarchy responsible for the slaughter of tens of thousands of people under the dictatorship that ruled from 1976 to 1982. In mid-March, the new government retired ten generals and four rear admirals as well as two airforce brigadiers. The new chief of staff was an Airforce officer, and it appeared that Alfonsín had aligned himself with the Airforce in the interservice rivalry that has a long tradition in the Argentine military. In the fourth week of April, the trial began of the nine commanders in chief who ran the country from 1976 to 1982.

The first days of the trial of the commanders showed clearly that the tactic of their lawyers is to prolong the trial as much as possible. Obviously such a tactic presupposes that the government is not interested in pressing for punishment and, therefore, the generals' chance of getting off depends on wearing out public opinion and the human rights movement.

Horacio TARCUS

The government of Raul Alfonsín, which took office on December 10, 1983, after seven years of military dictatorship, succeeded in making itself the focus of the attention and hopes of broad sections of the masses. In the election campaign and at the start of its administration, the Radical (1) team showed considerable political initiative. But it came under strong pressures on the one hand from the counteroffensive of the army, the Church, the local big bourgeoisie, and the imperialists and on the other from the growing resistance of the working class, the human rights movement, and all sectors of the masses.

These pressures are reducing the Radical government's margin for maneuver, dissipating reformist and democratic illusions, and rapidly eroding the popularity that the new government initially enjoyed.

The economic policy of what was called the Process of National Reconstruction (1976-1983) was outlined in the Martínez de Hoz Plan (he was the minister of the economy at the time). It called for a drastic redistribution of income at the cost of a nosedive in the real wages of workers and for the benefit of the bourgeoisie as a whole. Within the bourgeoisie, there was also a redistribution of the surplus value extracted from the workers to the advantage of the financial sector.

The social effects of this policy made it possible to reduce the concentration of the working class, to create a massive industrial reserve army, to increase the number of people working on an individual basis. The objective was to carry through a deepgoing restructuring of the social relationships of production,

striking at the material bases of the political and trade-union strength of the working class.

On the political level, the financial suboligarchy, which knows that it cannot attain political power through a democratic process, organized a system with the following features: a powerful financial market, an economy dominated by the foreign exchange market, gigantic foreign debt, and a superconcentration of capital in which the state lost control of all the variables in the economy.

All of these factors put economic policy in the hands of a small supermonopolistic group and the creditors of the imperialist banks.

On the ideological level, this plan aimed to liquidate the policy of consensus, of adjustments among the "social partners," of social pacts under state mediation, of discussion about strategies of development. It went hand in hand with propagating the ideology of the self-regulating free market.

The balance sheet of this "Process" at the time the new government took office was as follows: The foreign debt had gone from 8 billion dollars in 1975 to 45 billion dollars in 1983. In the same period, the share of Gross Domestic Product represented by wages went from 45% to 25%. Industrial disinvestment had brought production in 1983 down to the level of 1970. The rate of unemployment had gone over 10% with two million workers expelled from production. The national budget deficit amounted to 15% of the Gross Domestic Product, whereas what is considered the maximum acceptable level is about 3%. The annual inflation rate had reached 435%.

But at the start, things do not look so good for the generals, since there was a demonstration of 50,000 people demanding justice.

The following articles from revolutionary Marxist journals in Argentina were written before these events, but they represent the first attempts to assess the trajectory of the Alfonsín regime over a relatively long period. They point up the way the new government have maneuvered in a situation unprecedented in the recent periods of parliamentary rule in the country, the conditions of ruin created by the dictatorship and the crisis, the galloping de-industrialization of the country, as well as the slow fading of Peronism. The second article talks about the outlines of a new policy of the Latin American bourgeoisies, represented by Alfonsín.

Both articles were published in November 1984. The first is from the magazine Praxis, the second from Nuevo Curso.

Unused productive capacity had reached an average level of 40%. The amount of Argentine capital abroad was estimated at about 25 to 35 billion dollars. The loss in production over the eight years amounted to a value of 120 billion dollars.

It was in this context that Alfonsín launched his election campaign and took office, promising "growth, higher real wages, and payment of the debt." After a year of the new government running the country, the reformist, or "distributist" illusions have evaporated. The only thing that has happened is that payment has started on the national debt.

After almost a year of the Radical government, the real wages of workers have dropped. There has not been any revival in industry because credit is scarce or expensive, and, moreover, there has been no increase in demand. The interest rate is not going down because savings are going into dollar accounts (via the black market). The government does not want to increase credit to enterprises, because the latter, instead of contributing to the "revival" that is so much talked about, buy dollars, or speculate by lending money at high rates.

Inflation is rising, to the detriment of those who hold money but not goods

1. The term "Radical" in Argentina refers to the classic bourgeois left party. Its golden age was the reign of the liberal caudillo Hipólito Yrigoyen in the 1920s. He was overthrown by a military coup on September 6, 1930, which initiated the long agony of parliamentarism in Argentina. "Radicalism" in Argentina is thus identified with petty-bourgeois liberalism and constitutional rule. Peronism on the other hand is what is called a Caesaro-populist current in Latin America. Peron was a high military officer who built his machine on the basis of the urban poor. — *International Viewpoint*.

(mainly wage earners) opening the way for price increases that eat up every nominal raise in wages. The rise of the dollar on the black market has not been stemmed, which would be essential to get the exporters to change their currency on the official market. When the difference is significant, they use such techniques as over- or under-billing, or put their hard-currency earnings in foreign banks.

The policy of periodic wage adjustment has been abandoned by the government. One of the top functionaries in the regime, Raul Prebisch, has termed it "inflationary." The timid price control policy has been dropped, under pressure of the bourgeoisie, who made this a condition for the "social accord" the government is calling for.

The wide political leeway that the government gained through the elections, its room for making decisions on the economic level has been reduced, as it has been squeezed between the pressures of imperialism, the local big bourgeoisie, and the resistance of the workers.

The imperialists have brought pressure to bear through the IMF and the foreign banks, relying on the enormous weight of foreign debt in the Argentine economy. The native big bourgeoisie has brought pressure to bear through the economic mechanisms already mentioned (speculation, scarcity of goods, currency flight, etc.).

Political pressure has been applied through the employers' organizations (criticism of the government for price control, conditions for "social accord," etc.). It is impossible to end the super-profits to which the monopolies, the land owning oligarchy, and financial capital have become accustomed in order to transfer resources, as promised, to the productive sector and to wage earners in the political and social framework outlined by Alfonsin.

The hundreds of thousands of workers who have entered into conflicts for wage demands have shown that the government cannot control the only variable that remained in its hands, that is, the wage earners. That points up the importance of Alfonsin's policy toward the unions.

On the economic level, the government's formal power has proved impotent against the real power of the big bourgeoisie and the imperialists. Similarly, on the trade-union level, all that the new government achieved in terms of political consensus in the elections has run up against the fact that the working class continues to identify mainly with Peronism. And this is reflected in the large measure of economic and political power wielded by the Peronist union bureaucracy. But while the government has not waged any battle against the power of finance capital, in recent months it has launched a major offensive against "trade-union power."

Alfonsin's offensive against the Peronist unions in reality flows from his election campaign. He adopted the skillful tactic of presenting himself as the standard-

bearer of democracy, in opposition to the special interests that were supposed to be the source of power of all authoritarian regimes, in particular the unions. Democracy versus authoritarianism — that was the axis of the campaign that brought victory for the Radical candidate. From this flowed other counterpositions — Radicalism versus Peronism, trade-union pluralism versus the Peronist unionists. But underneath this democratic window dressing, what was Alfonsin's real policy toward the unions?

The new president and a section of the bourgeoisie understood that the control of the workers by a bureaucracy that had concentrated great economic and political power in its hands and which supported the main opposition party — the Social Justice Party — could impose very high political costs on the Radical administration.

Alfonsin's union policy

The Radicals' tactic was to try to breach the total domination of the Peronist union leadership by using the "labor statesman" wing (that is, the section of the Peronist bureaucracy most inclined to collaborate with the incumbent government). By this means, it sought to force the Peronist union leadership to negotiate on a basis favorable to it.

Demonstrating political initiative, the Radical team appeared as an alternative for the bourgeoisie as a whole, enabling it to win by political methods where the dictatorship had failed with repressive ones. It should be remembered that the dictatorship believed at the outset that it could settle accounts with the unions by physically liquidating the union activists and outlawing any single national trade-union organization.

Alfonsin's tactic, in which the bill he presented for "restoring order" in the union movement was only one aspect, called for assaults on three fronts:

— *Trade-union unity.* He sought to replace the traditional idea of a single national confederation of labor with the concept of "European-style" unionism, with several confederations, divided on a political basis. So, new trade-union groups were formed around the new government outside of the leadership of the CGT (which is Peronist). The government claimed that they were "representative" and gave them a place at the negotiating table, along with the CGT, which was declared to be nonrepresentative.

— *The economic power of the unions.* A scheme was introduced for decentralization of the National Welfare Institute (INOS) and for state and employer interference into the welfare funds of the unions.

— *The political power of the unions.* The government sought to speed up the depoliticization of the unions by a law making it illegal for them to engage in political activity. The contradiction between dividing up the union movement

in accordance with political allegiances and depoliticizing the unions indicates that when the bourgeoisie bans political activity, in reality, it is imposing its own political monopoly.

The methods adopted by the Alfonsin team to mount its attacks on these three fronts were the following:

— With respect to wages, facing a proliferation of conflicts, the government decided to impose wage increases by decree and to freeze negotiations between the bosses and the unions. The bosses were dead set against this.

— With respect to the labor movement, it presented a trade-union bill, intervened in many unions, and promoted the formation of trade-union organizations that were under its thumb.

The Peronists resisted Alfonsin's policy for the trade unions from the start. On the other hand, they did not fight to defend wages or against the freeze on collective bargaining. Alfonsin's policy was based on the bourgeoisie's distrust of the Peronist union bureaucracy, which it is not prepared to accept as its labor lieutenant.

However, major sections of the bourgeoisie, as indicated in the editorials of the newspapers *Clarín* and *La Nación*, while not abandoning their distrust of the Peronist bureaucracy, have expressed fears about "the new situation that could come out of the union elections, because in the absence of a unanimous view on all these problems the more radical sectors could exert pressures." (*La Nación*, January 28, 1984.)

The denouement was, thus, predictable. The Peronists, supported by other political forces, managed to defeat the bill on restoring order in the unions. The rejection of this bill was followed by the fall of Mucci, the minister of labor, and by the slow death agony of the new trade-union groups (the National Movement for Trade Union Renewal, the Assembly of Argentine Industrial Unions, the National Workers Forum).

With the political initiative it still held, the government made a 180 degree turn. It appointed a new minister of labor, Casella, who undertook negotiations with the Peronist bureaucracy, and together with it drew up a new trade-union bill, called the "Emergency Law," which left the levers of the electoral process in the unions in the hands of the bureaucracy.

The Alfonsin administration knows that today the Peronist union bureaucracy is playing an irreplaceable role in the Argentine state apparatus and in the framework of political relations with labor. It is through negotiations between the CGT and the Argentine Union of Industrialists (the employers' association) and the employers as a whole that the government can hope to put the workers movement to sleep during the recession touched off by the negotiations with the IMF.

Given the extent of the economic crisis and the pressures brought to bear by the various social forces, it has been clear since May at least that the govern-

ment wants to rally around itself the largest possible front of political and social forces in order to manage the crisis. From the end of May to the beginning of June, a lot of moves were made in pursuance of this aim.

Alfonsín seemed to be trying to build a bridge to the military command. He made an agreement with the unions in the negotiations over the electoral code for union elections. And, finally, he organized a political dialogue between the ruling Radical Party, the Social Justice Party, the Movement for Integration and Development of Arturo Frondizi (who was president of the country from 1958 to 1962), and other forces of lesser importance. It led to the signing of a memorandum of compromise between these parties and the Radical Party. However, this memorandum had clear limits.

The agreement with the Peronist movement, the fundamental objective of Alfonsín's move, was extremely fragile, given the crisis of the Social Justice Party's authority revealed by the referendum on the Beagle Canal Treaty. (2) On the other hand, the points of agreement were quite superficial, barely touching the big questions. The comparison that the government tried to make with the Moncloa Pacts in Spain was obviously ludicrous. In Spain, there was a concrete economic plan, with collaboration between the companies and the workers organizations.

Understanding the limitations of the agreement that was reached, the government launched an appeal for social accord between the bosses, the unions, and the state as soon as Alfonsín returned from his trip to Spain. But the government's road to "social harmony" was to prove a bumpy one. Pressures from the right and the left forced it to put off concluding such an accord.

The union elections

To negotiate, the big bourgeoisie demanded "guarantees against wage demands," "lifting of price controls," a fight against inflation" (meaning wage cuts), and "the creation of conditions so that businessmen (sic) can find a framework and incentive for investment" (that is, maintaining the superprivileges of a parasitic bourgeoisie used to state subsidies, speculative credit, etc.). On top of these conditions, a section of the employers did not want to negotiate until it had seen the results of the union elections.

For its part, the union bureaucracy, while it had repeatedly proclaimed that its function was to negotiate, came under pressure from a considerable number of conflicts. Although these battles were for limited demands, they went as far as some very determined actions, such as factory occupations and big mobilizations. In the context of these conflicts and facing the union elections on top of this, no section of the bureaucracy could "negotiate" a wage freeze in the name of "sacrifice for the nation."

In the midst of these conflicts, the CGT had the plenary meeting of its leadership on August 29, in the course of which the confederation leaders were beaten. The meeting forced them to call a general strike for September 3.

The general strike defined the limits of "social harmony." On the one hand, it was a protest of the wage earners as a whole against the bosses and the government's policy. On the other, it was a test of strength between the government and the union bureaucracy, although this remained in the framework of "social partnership." As for the workers' response to the strike call, a great deal could not have been expected, considering that after much hesitation the call was suddenly issued for a Monday without the action having been prepared for by mobilizations and rank-and-file assemblies. Moreover, no instruments had been built for controlling the strike, such as strike pickets. Nonetheless, on the day the average rate of absenteeism in the country exceeded 50%, with the highest rates in the industrial belt of Greater Buenos Aires and in the main industrial centers in the interior, such as Córdoba and Mendoza.

The elections were finally set for the last week in September. During the period between the time it took office and that date, the government's credibility had been severely eroded. Its "hardline" wing, which had waged the first stage of the struggle against the Peronist bureaucracy, felt betrayed. In the tests taking place, the government could only offer an element of legitimacy to one section of the Peronist bureaucracy in opposition to another.

The union bureaucracy itself went into the elections deeply divided, even though it was formally united in the same CGT. (3) On the one hand, there were the 62 Organizations, led by the metalworkers' union leader, Lorenzo Miguel, which had been linked to the far-right paramilitary groups under Isabel Perón's government and were implicated in the militarization of the state. On the other, there was the Group of the 25, representing the "tough" wing of the Peronist bureaucracy that had resisted the dictatorship.

Besides these two currents, there were other groupings, including the one called "Management and Labor," which represented the section of the bureaucracy that was for "negotiations" with the military. There was also the Group of Twenty, another wing of the Peronist bureaucracy that had collaborated with the military and been the last section of the bureaucracy to be integrated into the united CGT.

In addition, there were the "militant" dissident Peronists (Guillan, Alari, Baez, etc.); the Trade-Union Plenum led by Andres Framini, a veteran left bureaucrat who bases himself on sections of the Peronist left. And, finally, there were the groupings linked to the government, in particular the National Movement for Trade-Union Renewal (MNRS), which has some weight in tertiary sectors.

In this panorama, there was clearly a

missing element — class-struggle trade-unionism, which has a long tradition in Argentina. It has to be remembered that the workers vanguard was decapitated in the process of repression that started in 1973-74 under the Peronist government and reached its height under the regime of terror that ruled after 1976. This is why rebuilding an antibureaucratic and antiboss opposition is not seen as an option by the working class in general.

The state of the class-struggle forces

Nonetheless, the "third slates" (formed on a class-struggle line) did offer, if not a clear promise of future victory, at least a road and a stimulus to struggle and organization for the workers, where they could be put forward despite the electoral law, the bureaucracy's control and threats.

For example, in the engineering union (SMATA), the Orange Slate, which represented a coalition of militant class-struggle forces, stood against the slates put forward by the bureaucrats — the Green Slate (the 25 Organizations) and the Blue and White Slate (the 62 Organizations). In the energy workers federation, the Sky-blue Slate, supported by left Peronist and class-struggle forces, opposed the Maroon Slate ("Management and Labor"), the Green Slate (militant Peronists, Radicals and Intransigent Radicals), and other slates.

In the printing industry, an anti-bureaucratic Green Slate, representing class-struggle forces and left Peronists, opposed the Blue Slate (the 62 Organizations) and the Violet Slate (the 25 Organizations, the CP, and the MNRS). In the hospital workers union, the Orange Slate (class-struggle forces, left Peronists, etc.) went forward against the official Blue Slate (62 Organizations, etc.).

In other major sectors, however, such as the textile workers (AOT) or the metalworkers (UOM) there was no anti-bureaucratic opposition on the national level to the candidates of the 62 Organizations, Casildo Herreras for the textile workers and Lorenzo Miguel for the metalworkers.

All indications are that the elections underway will result in a relative decline for the 62 Organizations, a strengthening of the 25 Organizations, and that class-struggle antibureaucratic forces will make a showing in some industries and may even win in a few (hospitals and printing), thereby creating an underpinning for the

2. The Beagle Canal in the south of Tierra del Fuego has been the focus of a territorial dispute between Argentina and Chile since the last century. Called upon to be a mediator, Pope John-Paul II gave his judgement on December 12, 1980. Immediately accepted by Chile, this opinion formed the basis of an agreement between the two countries that was signed on October 22, 1984. It was submitted to a referendum on November 25. The official position of the Peronist party was for a boycott, but the result of the election was a real slap in the face for this party's leaders and a victory for Alfonsín. In fact, 70% of the voters took part, and the treaty was ratified by a vote of 81.13% for and 17.24% against.

3. During the period of military dictatorship, there were two rival CGTs. — IV.

process of recomposition already underway in the Argentine workers movement.

We have pointed out above the underlying implications of the "democracy versus authoritarianism" theme that Alfonsín pushed in the election campaign. The Radical leader identified himself with basic human rights in opposition to the dictatorship that systematically violated them and the Peronists that appeared to be making deals with it. In this way, the Alfonsín team managed to create the feeling that it was the only possible choice capitalizing on the extensive struggle waged by the movement for human rights.

Alfonsín promised "the truth and justice," the punishment of those responsible for the slaughter, democratization of the armed forces. But after a year of the Radical administration, none of these modest pledges regarding human rights has been kept. The political prisoners have not yet all been released. The question of the "missing persons" has not yet been resolved. The new government has offered only some vague responses, such as "there are no clandestine prisons," "there are no missing persons still alive." The kidnapped children have not been returned to their homes. The repressive apparatus has not been dismantled. The joint congressional investigating committee to look into the crimes of the military dictatorship called for by the human rights organizations has not been set up.

On the other hand, a lot of judges who served under the dictatorship have been reconfirmed in their posts. Officers implicated in the repression have been promoted. A reform of the military code has been approved that maintains the military tribunals. And so on.

However, this record of broken pledges is not seen so clearly by the population as a whole, because at the same time the government has taken a series of steps enabling it to gain time and wear out the human rights movement. By decree, it created a National Commission on Missing Persons (CONADEP). This operation had two real objectives.

In the first place, the creation of CONADEP was a delaying maneuver to investigate "what has already been investigated" as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo said. (4)

Secondly, the creation of this body was an attempt to shift the center of gravity of the fight for human rights, to move it away from the representative organizations (which the government today claims are "interested parties" that therefore cannot be judges at the same time) to a group of "notables" (writers, journalists, scholarly figures) convoked by the executive branch of government. After making its report, CONADEP is to dissolve.

The government has designated one of its members to head the Secretariat of Human Rights under the Ministry of the Interior. This was the finishing touch to Alfonsín's strategy. The struggle is to be diverted away from a political movement for human rights to a "neutral" com-

mission appointed by the state, and will finally be taken over by the state itself.

Today, the movement for human rights has entered a deep crisis, which is manifested in the following ways:

— The clear enemy, the dictatorship has disappeared, making way for a constitutional government. Broad sections that yesterday mobilized against the dictatorship see no reason to continue the struggle "under a democracy," or else they think that to demand "too much" could provoke the threat of a coup.

— The mobilizations that reached 40,000 persons under the dictatorship are gradually declining.

— The movement for human rights is beginning to fragment. The Permanent Assembly for Human Rights and the Ecumenical Movement have gone into the CONADEP, while the other organizations have refused to do so. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo did not participate in the march held to mark the submission of the CONADEP's report on September 20, 1984.

— The same division has occurred on other occasions, such as at the September 13 march of 3,000 persons whose theme was "the fatherland of the financiers and the military — the same repression." Not taking part were the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the Families of Those Imprisoned and "Missing" for Political Reasons, the Center for Legal and Social Studies, and the Service for Peace and Justice, named after Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, a Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Another diversion is the trial the government is setting up for members of the three military juntas that ruled the country which is supposed to try the "big fish" responsible for the "excesses." That is what the Argentine bourgeoisie's cynical judicial system calls crimes against humanity. They are going to sacrifice a few big fish to keep inquiries and punishments from extending to the broad layer that organized the state terror under the cover of the so-called National Security Doctrine.

However, in accordance with the recently reformed military code, the primary jurisdiction for trying the chiefs of the three juntas remains in the hands of the military tribunals. Giving its answer to the 70,000 people who mobilized to back the CONADEP on September 20, and in an attempt to defuse the explosive character of the Sabato Report (named after the chairperson of the CONADEP), which went much further than the government thought it would, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces declared that the officers tried were innocent.

Since then, the counteroffensive of the military, the far-right groups, and backward sectors of the Church has continued unabated. In a mass at which the officers implicated in the repression gathered, the officiating priest called for a taking up of "material and spiritual arms against pornographic democracy."

The Council of Bishops has issued a



A workers' house on the outskirts of Buenos Aires (DR)

document decrying the "advances of pornography" and what it considers miserly subsidies for the religious schools.

In the Rosario courts, parapolice groups have stolen documents concerning the human rights movement. These same groups have seized arms and money and kidnapped political activists, threatening them and beating them up.

In the face of this counteroffensive, the human rights movement is caught in a certain impasse. It needs to restructure itself politically and reorganize in order to regain the initiative. Its crisis is not yet irremediable, and the bulk of its program remains to be realized. But in order to overcome this crisis, the movement has to rebuild its unity, rebuild a united front for struggle and mobilization, and politicize to the highest possible extent its program and methods of action.

The movement has to present itself not just as a movement of mothers and relatives of people who disappeared under the dictatorship but as a force fighting for all human and democratic rights. It has to try to link itself to, and root itself in, all of civil society through initiatives like the September 13 march or by promoting bodies such as the new Workers Commission for Human Rights.

Consistent struggle by the masses for their democratic demands (punishment of those responsible for the crimes of the dictatorship, dismantling the repressive apparatus, trade-union rights) and for their anti-imperialist demands (non-payment of the foreign debt, a break with the IMF) comes every day into more open and concrete contradiction with the very bases of the bourgeois system, even of its more "modernist" and "democratic wings."

Only independent struggle and organization by the proletariat and the exploited masses as a whole can fully consolidate such national democratic gains, and thereby it will open the stage of the socialist revolution. ■

4. The mothers of "missing persons" demonstrated regularly during the dictatorship by silent vigils in the Plaza de Mayo. IV.

The paradoxes in the policy of the government and the Peronist opposition

A year after the establishment of parliamentary rule, the paradoxes in the policy of the regime and that of the Peronist opposition have become so glaring that you would be tempted to think at first glance that the former consists of Machiavellian demagoguery and the latter is suspended in midair. We think that these paradoxes are more apparent than real. They require explanation and a deeper analysis. Indeed, Alfonsín was named by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights as its "man of the year," at the same time as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, of which the president is the commander in chief, maintained that the orders given under the dictatorship for "fighting subversion" were justified. It is the Supreme Council that has been made responsible for trying the chiefs of the military dictatorship in accordance with a law passed by parliament. Moreover, at the same time that Alfonsín was being given his title as a champion of

human rights, political prisoners were risking their lives in a hunger strike to obtain their release. They are no longer the prisoners of the dictatorship but of a champion of human rights.

Alfonsín parades at the UN as the standardbearer of Latin-Americanism and the peoples of the Third World, of civic virtue. But at the same time, he has been making deals with the IMF to pay a foreign debt that he himself calls usurious and whose origins are unknown. In the past, the Monroe Doctrine, aimed against the European imperialist powers, was designed to make Latin America the private preserve of US imperialism. The watchword of the Monroe Doctrine was "America for the Americans," meaning of course for the North Americans. Today, Alfonsín is raising the watchword of a Latin America for Latin Americans, meaning for the developed bourgeoisie of Latin America.

Angel FANJUL

The first parliament since the establishment of the dictatorship is ending its first session with an uninspiring record. It has passed a very mixed bag of laws and solved none of the fundamental problems facing society. The deputies did not "have the time" to consider the bill on the political prisoners. They rejected Comte MacDonald's bill for creating a joint congressional commission to conduct an inquiry on the violations of human rights by the military juntas.

The "disappearance" of 30,000 people, many of whom died after torture; the murder of thousands of citizens; the forced exile of thousands more were, thus, not sufficient grounds even for setting up an investigating committee. This is indication enough of the scale of values of this parliament.

The Peronist opposition, through the CGT (General Confederation of Labor) launched a general strike on September 3, 1984, in protest against the government's policy and in defense of the workers. But the same Peronist opposition is loudly proclaiming the need for labor-management collaboration in defense of democracy. It has been making deals with the Argentinian Union of Industrialists (the bosses' association) and with the Countrymen's Society (the equivalent in the countryside), and with the employers as a whole, that is, with the enemies of the workers, in order to establish itself as a group that can put pressure on the government.

If the Union of Industrialists, the Countrymen's Society, the CGT and the military caste come up with policies distinct from that of the government, who is left for the government to represent?

These are glaring paradoxes, and it is necessary to consider carefully how they can be explained. It is common in the orbit of the left organizations to hear simplistic answers. As such people see it, these paradoxes reflect a simple truth. The talk about human rights, Latin-Americanism, parliamentarism, the fight against wage contracts, on the one hand, and acceptance of social pacts on the other, only reveal the continuity between the Alfonsín government and the military dictatorship. Nothing but the form has changed.

The Alfonsín government, supposedly, is only the dictatorship in civilian clothes. In other words, nothing important has happened, nothing has changed, the task is simply to dip into the old arsenal of struggle programs to mount an assault on this execrable government, which is the heir of the ones that went before.

We, however, maintain that these paradoxes are more apparent than real. They arise in fact from the objective contradictions and limitations of a bourgeois policy.

In the first place, contrary to the judgements that are commonly made, it is clear that the Alfonsín government does not directly represent any of the key elements in the power system. To be sure, some of these elements support it, but they, nonetheless, keep their distance from it. The Alfonsín administration is not even the real representative of the conglomerate of tendencies that make up the Radical Civil Union, the party that put it in power.

In reality, the Alfonsín administration operates as an arbiter standing above the various tendencies in its own party. It is conditioned by them, but it acts over their heads. It reflects them, it takes them into account, but it does not represent them. In any case, it reflects an un-

stable internal balance. This is the source of the trials and tribulations of the Radical parliamentary fraction and of the Alfonsín cabinet, as well as of the government's policy in general.

From this standpoint, the Alfonsín government is advancing a policy of a general defense of the system, defense of the ruling classes, but it does not represent any ruling stratum in particular. It is operating over their heads, and in this sense only it can be said that it reflects the tendency toward a new bonapartism, a bonapartism arising from the ruling classes' lack of any overall coherent perspective rather than from a balance of forces among contending sectors.

This new bonapartism is the reflection of an overall social crisis, and this is the reason the government has adopted a language open to many interpretations. In the UN, Alfonsín has raised the banner of Latin-Americanism and of the Third World in general. He has identified himself with the goal of unity of the peoples of Latin America. Until recently, this vision of Bolívar (1) was the exclusive heritage of the revolutionary left that called for a socialist federation of Latin America. Today, the bourgeoisie is taking up this banner for its own purposes, rejecting obviously the socialist and revolutionary road by which the peoples can attain such unity. This contradiction explains why in the mouths of its bourgeois advocates this demand assumes an ambiguity and utopian tone.

However, when you have a bourgeois government acting above the head of its own class and raising such a standard with a certain independence, this means that something has changed or is about to

1. Simon Bolívar (1783-1830), hero of the independence struggle of the Latin-American countries against Spain. He was an advocate of Latin-American unity.

change in Latin America. And what has changed in our opinion is the consequence of factors that all revolutionists have to consider in their tactical and strategic formulations.

The first such factor is that the perspective of the workers fighting independently for the revolutionary transformation of society and with the objective of a socialist federation of Latin America is not one that can mobilize the people today. That is because of the failures of the societies where so-called Actually Existing Socialism can be seen. But no other perspective has taken form.

The second factor is that the margins of maneuver for populist formations — Peronism in Argentina, APRA in Peru, etc. — which have dominated the mass movements of the oppressed and exploited since the Second World War, are becoming exhausted.

The third factor is the absence of a class-struggle perspective with credibility for the masses, while the decline of the populist mass movements is leaving a larger margin of maneuver for the national bourgeoisies and for the ideologues who advocate Latin-American unity as a solution to the crisis.

On the other hand, the lack of an independent working-class perspective and the decline of the populist movements does not mean that the possibilities for the society evolving are exhausted. It continues to develop in a deformed way, constrained by outworn modes of production.

With all the deformations and distortions that Latin America has undergone, which Alfonsín pointed out at the UN, the society has continued to develop. Semi-developed national states have arisen that can no longer fulfill even the role assigned to them in the international division of labor. These societies need a new policy. The vision of the Argentinian Union of Industrialists and the Countrymen's Society, of the various sectors of the ruling class, does not extend beyond defending their special interests.

However, from the standpoint of the historic interests of the system, it is necessary to work to reorient the countries whose structure has changed. This is exactly what Alfonsín says. And in so saying, he differentiates himself from the special interests and rises above them. That is why he is using a new language.

Alfonsín does not talk about the necessity of bowing to the IMF plans. He speaks of the need to restructure the functioning of this institution in order to salvage the world monetary system. He proclaims to the imperialist powers that without moral standards the system will perish.

At the same time, Alfonsín is telling his peers — not Guatemala, Haiti, Bolivia or the Caribbean countries but Mexico, Brazil, and other semi-industrialized countries in Latin America — that they have to agree on action to stimulate capitalist accumulation on the basis of enlarged reproduction in these semi-industrialized countries, at the expense of



December 10 1983. Buenos Aires on the occasion of the investiture of Raoul Alfonsín (DR)

others. In Alfonsín's mouth, the Monroe Doctrine is assuming a new meaning: "Latin America for the semi-industrialized countries of Latin America."

Alfonsín decries the fact that living standards have been falling for six years in Latin America, that the Gross Domestic Product of the region has fallen by 10%, that the value of its exports is going into the accumulation of usurious capital in the capitalist centers. All of this is true. We revolutionists also point this out.

However, what Alfonsín does not say is why this situation has come about. He is trying to convince people on the basis of moral criteria. The values of morality and justice are by no means unimportant. But they themselves are subject to the implacable laws of development, since they are subordinated to the prevailing mode of accumulation and social organization. And Alfonsín says nothing about that, any more than the Peronist

opposition, which criticizes the procedures but not the essence.

However, history has shown that the hearts of the international bankers are not easily moved by appeals to morality and justice. On the other hand, Alfonsín's pretensions are not without logic. They reflect the evident need to seek solutions to the crisis that will not shatter the existing structures but only modify them. They represent a bourgeois democratic task in the context of the mode of production prevailing in Latin America.

If the workers fail to unblock the system by revolutionary methods, as they have up till now, the bourgeoisie and its ideologues will try to do this, with all their cowardice and frustrations.

The Swiss Social Democrats have responded to Alfonsín's request for loans by exposing the fact that 20 billion dollars (almost half the total national debt) has been syphoned off from the Argentine



September 1983. A 60,000-strong meeting addressed by Alfonsin (DE)

national economy and deposited in Swiss banks. Alfonsin has pointed to the fact that 80 billion dollars leave Latin America every year to swell both usurious and productive capital in the creditor capitalist centers.

In the name of the European Social Democratic parties, Willy Brandt has demanded that the imperialist centers give back to Latin America 1 per cent of what they spend in the arms race. While such "generosity" is not terribly moving, it is nonetheless indicative of something. The imperialist centers realize that they have to help the bard of Latin-Americanism get out of the crisis in which he finds himself, that they have to do something to mitigate the effects of international usury in order to offer him some institutional stability. Above all, they know they have to do this to keep such rhetoric from being exploded, because this could lead to the formulation of another alternative put forward by other social forces with other methods.

Faced with these paradoxes, you would have to be politically shortsighted to be satisfied with denouncing the patchwork, ineffective character of such reforms and counterposing to them the beauties of a revolutionary solution. Our task must be to show what material obstacles stand in the way of these ideologues achieving the goals they set themselves.

Alfonsin's deal with the IMF is not qualitatively different from the agreements other Latin-American bourgeoisies have made with this institution. (2) But it is very different from the accord that the military dictatorship, the Countrymen's Society or the Union of Industrialists might have accepted. Clearly, it amounts to the debtor submitting to the international usurer, but it is not an outright capitulation.

What has to be said is not that Alfonsin has capitulated but that the road chosen for developing Latin America is not going to get us where we want to go. The problem is what measures will be taken, starting now, to stem the flight of capital,

what measures will be taken to promote "integration" of the Latin American countries free from control by the international speculators and octopuses. Obviously, on this terrain, Alfonsin's highflown rhetoric comes into conflict with timidity or even a total lack of the slightest reform or progressive measures from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie itself.

There is no progress toward a monopoly of foreign trade or even of supervision of foreign trade. Nothing is being done about limiting the land rent on unused land, nothing about industrial production, nothing about nationalizing banking, nothing about inheritance taxes, nothing about lifting tariff barriers in Latin America.

Our policy cannot be to put an equals sign between the Alfonsin government and its predecessors. We have to point out how the workers can advance other solutions, even within the context of the present relationship of forces. What can and must be done amounts to quite a lot. First of all, an agreement for the formation of a front is necessary, both in Argentina and on the Latin-American level. On this basis, we could offer the workers a Latin-American assembly that would discuss a concrete action program to achieve the objectives that the bourgeoisie has proclaimed but been unable to achieve.

This initiative could be taken, for example, by the Bolivian Confederation of Labor (COB), the Chilean United Federation of Workers (CUT), the Workers Party (PT) in Brazil, and the tendencies opposing the Peronist bureaucracy in the Argentinian unions.

We do not say that such an operation can be successful or that it will have immediate results. But we think that it is possible and necessary to wage a long-term fight around it, which is the only effective way to find a way out of the impasse of the system. It is necessary to put forward an action program based in the present stage on control by the working people, by the producers, of all economic and political activity, control through which the working class can

assert its leading role with respect to other exploited and oppressed strata of the nation.

What is needed in the present stage of the struggle in Latin America is for the working class, the industrial workers and workers all together, to take the political initiative by presenting concrete solutions and a plan for a society that will make realizable the objectives that the bourgeoisie has been unable to take beyond utopian speechifying.

In order to win the initiative, the working class has to take the leadership in all areas: The fight for human rights, to bring the criminals to justice, and to force the authorities to make restitution to the victims. The fight for an inquiry into illicit activities and for recovery for the public domain of goods unjustly acquired. The battle around the foreign debt and deals with international banks. The fight against inflation and unemployment and for economic development and social progress. The struggle against imperialist domination and drive towards war, for peace among the peoples.

On the question of the struggle against imperialist domination and war the workers, the revolutionary tendencies, progressive currents, and human rights organizations have managed to form a front of common action to put before the oppressed masses solutions that the bourgeoisie avoids and conceals. It is important to work energetically in all these bodies to achieve a minimum accord around specific propositions for the next round of parliamentary elections so as to gain a forum for offering an independent working-class policy to all the oppressed sectors of society. This is one way, not the only one, but one that can be taken to stimulate independent organization of the workers to meet the new tests of strength that are inevitably on the way. ■

2. This accord was signed in September 1984. Aldo Ferrer, president of the Buenos Aires Province Bank, has estimated that it involved "a transfer of about 5% of the Gross Domestic Product, or 40% of the receipts from the country's exports, to pay interest on the debt." He noted that this "will have an impact on the country's standard of living." Cf. *Latin American Weekly Report* of October 5, 1984.



ITALY

LCR and Democrazia Proletaria joint election slate

On May 12 the Italian local, provincial and regional elections will take place. These elections will have a wider political importance especially since they will confirm or otherwise the changes in the relation of forces brought about in the European elections last year. On that occasion, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was ahead of the Christian Democracy for the first time with 33.3% of the vote, the leading party in the country on the electoral level. The elections on May 12 could seal the fate of the coalition government led by Bettino Craxi. This government is made up of the Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Republican Party and the Liberal Party and is beset by constant internal conflicts. The Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the Italian section of the Fourth International has reached agreement on an electoral platform with the largest organisation on the Italian far left, Democrazia Proletaria (DP). This had already been the case in the 1983 legislative elections. We publish below the text of the agreement signed by the two organisations at the beginning of March.

In the run-up to the May 12 elections Democrazia Proletaria and the Revolutionary Communist League whilst maintaining their own separate analysis and political projects, recognise that there exists between them important points of agreement which can be summarised as follows.

The attack launched on the left-wing town councils constitutes an important aspect of the economic, political and ideological offensive against the workers movement by the Craxi government. This attack has recently been stepped up. The dismantling of the gains of the workers movement, the reintroduction of [terrorist] assassinations and the extension of the state of emergency give some idea of the political problems which exist today; of the context in which the strategy of dismantling the left councils is taking place and of the stakes involved in the next elections.

The responsibility for the crisis of the large left-dominated councils does not only rest with the parties which placed themselves in opposition. The responsibility lies equally with the town councils themselves who have in practice accepted

capitalist accounting, who have failed to reject cuts in their spending imposed by financial laws, and who have acquiesced in becoming instruments of a policy of austerity. They have failed to base themselves on popular struggles and have, on the contrary, brought about the fragmentation and dispersion of those forces. They have not attempted to satisfy the needs and expectations of the masses who support them but have submitted themselves to a short-sighted logic of constitutional games which they are bound to lose.

The defence and the boosting of the left town councils should absolutely not imply a re-run, at the local level, of the national unity policy which the PCI put forward following the crisis of Turin town council. On the contrary it is more necessary than ever to take up the struggle against the Christian Democrat dominated system and to give workers a perspective of real 'red' administrations based on their demands and with their support. Such administrations should not be merely to administrate the towns, but should also be instruments for mobilising against the central government and for the construction of an alternative.

The development of an alternative perspective and the political defense of the workers movement necessarily implies the defence of living standards and of the organisational strength of the workers movement. That is why it is necessary to develop and organise in the unions all those opposition forces starting with the Democrazia Consiliare inside the CGIL [Democrazia Consiliare is a trade union group organised within the CGIL, and supported by members of the DP and the LCR. The CGIL, led nationally by the PCI is the most important trade union confederation in Italy.]

Finally the struggle for jobs must be placed on the order of the day, centering on the demand for a 35-hour week with no loss of pay. At the same time it is vital to lead a struggle against ecological deterioration and against a plan for energy based on nuclear power and super coal-power stations, whilst experimenting, including at a local level, with alternative energy sources. Every social and political battle against the bosses' offensive and for a different society must be inspired by the same goals of independence and strengthening of the working class.

From now on it will be necessary to reply effectively and without delay to the relaunch of the strategy of tension and the climate of the state of emergency by breaking the silence for which the left itself must take the responsibility. It is necessary to be courageous enough to say the truth about the assassination attempts and the threats of a coup d'etat; to lead a campaign against state secrecy; for the reopening of the trials of those responsible for these crimes and the punishment of them and their accomplices at all levels; and against all attempts to re-evaluate fascism. It is necessary to roll back the repressive development of the state of emergency and to refuse to make the tiniest concession as regards the freedoms and the democratic rights of the workers.

On the basis of these points of agreement the DP and the LCR recognise that they can and must lead a joint electoral campaign. The LCR will participate with its own candidates on the slates in the name of DP. Within the framework of this agreement the two organisations will then have adequate representation on the slates and at the top of the lists as well as enjoy full participation in all aspects of the electoral campaign. ■

ITALY

LCR statement on the Red Brigades

On March 28, Ezio Tarantelli, economics professor at the university of Rome and the president of the Institute of Trade Union Studies (CISL), was murdered by a commando squad claiming to be from the Red Brigades. The Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the Italian section of the Fourth International issued the following statement on the event:

The murder of Ezio Tarantelli, which the Red Brigades have claimed responsibility for, brings us back with a jolt to the climate of the 1970s which was falsely called a state of emergency. If such a state of emergency ever existed, it existed for the workers movement and not for the government.

As in March 1978 when the Aldo Moro affair (the Christian-Democratic ex-prime minister was kidnapped and later murdered by the Red Brigades) combined with the entry of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) into the government, a terrorist crime has once again shattered the normal framework of political discussion and debate. As in March 1978, the aim of the assassins — whoever they are — is

also clear; in killing Tarantelli they have delivered a severe blow to the project of a referendum on the sliding scale being promoted by the PCI. For there will not be a shortage of people in government circles who will exploit this terrible and bloody event.

It is clear there was only a slim possibility that the referendum on the sliding scale would not be held and that, as a recent survey has shown, the 'no' supporters are rapidly losing ground. The re-emergence of an atmosphere of a state of emergency, which in the past has served a useful function for the bosses and the government, will now be used to intimidate, threaten and undermine the campaign of the left opposition — especially the somewhat half-hearted one of the PCI — for a 'yes' vote in the June 9

referendum. The best response, as we know from several years experience, is not to enter into the vicious circle of intimidation and retreat, but to recommence with even more energy the campaign around the referendum and increasing committees for a 'yes' vote.

It is also important to find new ways of taking up the problem of establishing the truth about the tragic events, of different origins, which have hit the country. It is clear that from now on we can have no confidence in the parliamentary commissions and in the normal channels of justice. The time is ripe for the working class and the left to take up the question of setting up alternative commissions which would be able to shed light on these questions once and for all. ■

rights groups, the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL).

In its first two paragraphs, the pamphlet states a very clear conclusion:

"... the attacks on members of the Sikh Community in Delhi and its suburbs during the period, far from being a spontaneous expression of 'madness' and of popular 'grief and anger' at Mrs. Gandhi's assassination as made out to be by the authorities, were the outcome of a well-organized plan marked by acts of both deliberate commissions and omissions by important politicians of the Congress (I) at the top and by authorities in the administration....

"Experiences of individual members of the team as well as their extensive interviews with the (i) victims of the riots; (ii) police officers who were expected to suppress the riots; (iii) neighbours of the victims who tried to protect them; (iv) army personnel; and (v) political leaders, suggest that the attacks on the Sikhs followed a common pattern, whether they took place in Munirka in the south, or Mangolpuri in the west, or Trilokpuri in the east. The uniformity in the sequence of events at every spot in such far flung places proves beyond doubt that the attacks were master-minded by some powerful organised groups... Newspaper reports suggest that this pattern is similar in all Congress (I) ruled states."

The riots followed a classic pogrom pattern of two phases. The first was the spreading of rumors. There were exactly three stories: (1) that Sikhs were distributing sweets and lighting lamps to celebrate the assassination; (2) train loads of Hindu dead bodies had arrived from the Sikh homeland of Punjab; (3) the Sikhs had poisoned the water supply.

The pamphlet notes: "... we came across evidence of policemen in vans touring certain localities and announcing through loudspeakers the arrival of the train and the poisoning of water. In certain areas, we heard that police officials had rung up residents advising them not to drink water."

The second phase began with the arrival of groups of armed youths in vans and trucks, on scooters and motorcycles. The pamphlet says: "We were told by local eye-witnesses in all the areas we visited that well known Congress (I) leaders and workers (their names are to be found in Annexure-I) led and directed the arsonists and that local cadres of the Congress (I) identified the Sikh houses and shops."

The pamphlet also analyzes in detail the role of the administration, the army, and the Congress (I) party, and the sociological composition of the pogromist mobs.

The publishers can be contacted either through Gobinda Mukhoty; President PUDR; 213, Jor Bagh; New Delhi — 11003; India, or through Rajni Kohari; President, PUCL; 1 Court Road, Delhi — 110054. ■

BRITAIN

Third international miners meeting held

On April 20, *Socialist Action* supporters in Great Britain met for the third meeting of international solidarity, this time to discuss the outcome of the miners' strike. They met near Snowdown pit in Aylesham, Kent. About 150 people were in attendance including miners and their wives from the region.

The miners and miners' wives showed that they had lost none of their fighting spirit although the battle is now very hard, both for those in work who face daily management harassment and for those especially who have lost their jobs. One sacked miner, David, explained how since his sacking he has not been able to claim social security. He argued that the Labour movement should be campaigning for a general amnesty and he denounced Neil Kinnock who has said he is not in favour of an amnesty being extended to those guilty of serious crimes.

There were speakers present from Denmark, the Netherlands, West Germany and Ireland and all of them said how much workers had been inspired by the example of the miners. The speaker from Denmark, where the country was nearly brought to a standstill by a general strike recently, explained that the same problem existed in Denmark as had existed during the miners' strike and that was a lack of leadership for workers in struggle.

Joe Holmes, an NUM member who worked full-time in West Germany building up support for the strike, explained how the campaign to defend those sacked or imprisoned during the strike was continuing in all the major towns in the country.

Kay Sutcliffe, from Kent miners' wives support group, explained how it was incorrect to talk about 'when the next struggle comes', for she believed that the fight had to continue here and now to defend the miners.

Dick Withecombe from Lancashire, explained that the Bold miners who had attended previous *Socialist Action* events

could not be present because of a very important area meeting of the union that day. He announced that Dennis Pennington, a miner well known to *Socialist Action* supporters and Fourth Internationalists, had now been released from prison and was to spend his first day out attending the meeting in order to put a motion of no confidence in the president of the region who had done nothing during the strike. He explained that the *Lancashire Miner*, of which Dennis is the editor, and which was established to rally support for the strike, will continue to be produced because there is still a job to be done.

The highlight of the day came when Fergus O'Hare, Belfast city councillor, began his speech by presenting a plaque of James Connolly, the Irish socialist, to Phil Sutcliffe on behalf of the Snowdown miners. Sutcliffe accepted the plaque saying that 'as long as there is a Snowdown colliery and men and women who will fight for socialism and the working class then this plaque will be in a prominent position and James Connolly will have a place here'.

Fergus O'Hare explained that the Irish people had an inability to give up the fight and had been grateful to the miners and their supporters for the struggle they had put up. As the final speaker on the platform, he ended by addressing the meeting in Irish with the words: 'Tíocfaidh ar La' (our day will come). ■

INDIA

Report on anti-Sikh pogroms banned

Rajiv Gandhi's government has banned the pamphlet entitled "Who Are the Guilty?" which reports the results of an investigation of the anti-Sikh riots in New Delhi following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The study was done by two civil

For an international solidarity campaign for sacked miners and prisoners

The miners' strike is over but the struggle of the British miners against sackings and imprisonment goes on. A national campaign for a general amnesty has now been established and at its last meeting, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International put out a call for an international campaign against victimisation and for a general amnesty for the miners.

There are currently between eighty and a hundred miners in prison following the strike and thousands more whose cases still have to be heard. As Doreen Humber, miner's wife and a founding member of the National Organisation for Miners in Prison and Supporters (NOMPAS) stated, 'these are political prisoners ... victims of the Tories' drive to smash the unions.' Miners have not just been condemned to prison for fighting for their class. At present 720 with a possibility of more in the future have been condemned to life on the dole (unemployment benefit). The aim of NOMPAS is to demand an amnesty for all those sacked, not just in prison. They are pressing for committees to be set up in every area of Britain and plan to hold a national demonstration.

Despite the failure of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) as a whole to vote for a 50p levy to support the sacked miners immediately after the strike, collections have now in fact begun at many pits and campaigns have been launched for those sacked. As *The Miner* (the national newspaper of the NUM) points out, the ballot for the levy was not lost because miners voted against the

sacked men. It was because many saw the levy as a soft option which would discourage the union from fighting hard for reinstatement of those sacked.

During the miners' strike workers of many countries expressed their solidarity with the miners' struggle by sending money, establishing support committees campaigning for coal embargoes. The struggle of the miners is not over yet and it is vital that the campaign of international solidarity continues in support of those miners who have been victimised.

In West Germany for example, teachers' union activists in Wuppertal are organising a nationally coordinated campaign based on local networks to support sacked and imprisoned miners and their families. Lists of individuals are being sent round for supporters in most of the major towns to 'adopt' by sending money and messages of support. This could be done in every country. Supporters of Roter Maulwurf (a revolutionary youth organisation) and its sister organisation, the GIM (International Marxist Group), the German section of the Fourth International, are running a special campaign for Dennis Pennington, of Bold (in Lanc-

ashire) colliery. Dennis has just been released after three months in prison. He is well known to many supporters of the Fourth International for the work he did in drumming up international support. Sacked by the Coal Board, like so many others, he is still ready to take up the fight. Sacked miners and their wives can be invited to do speaking tours and resolutions of support should be put through labour movement bodies internationally.

NOMPAS can be contacted at 5 Calendonian Road, Kings Cross, London N1.



In its last issue *International Viewpoint* launched a special fund to finance the sending of the magazine to activists who cannot pay because of capitalist victimisation. *IV* played an important role for many during the miners' strike giving out news and information about international solidarity and analysis of the strike for readers around the world.

We hope that readers will support the special fund so that we can meet the growing demand of class war prisoners and others for complementary subscriptions.

If you can help, please send your cheque or money order to *International Viewpoint*, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, Montreuil 93108, accompanied by a note indicating that it is for the *IV* fighters fund. Cheques should be made out to *International Viewpoint*.

Statement of the Fourth International

After a year of heroic strike action the British miners were forced back to work. Their strike, the longest mass strike in the history of any imperialist country inspired working people around the world with its determined intransigence against capitalist policies of unemployment and austerity.

But the cost to the miners and their families was high. Two miners were killed on the picket lines; 11,000 were arrested by the police; over 700 miners have been sacked as a result of their participation in the strike and nearly one hundred miners are serving prison sentences. Hundreds of other miners will appear before the courts in the next months. Already severe jail sentences of up to five years have been inflicted such as that of Terry French of the Kent miners. Even harsher punishment awaits some strikers.

However, those found guilty face not only jail sentences but also a life time of unemployment. Those sentenced in the courts have been automatically sacked by the coal industry employers. They are also denied state benefits on the pretext that they are still on strike. Demands for an amnesty have been rejected and instead, the sackings are being made part of a campaign to weaken the organisation of the union.

There is now a need for an international campaign of solidarity to demand an amnesty from the British government for the sacked and imprisoned miners and to raise funds for their families.

The enormous solidarity that the strike received internationally marked the identification of millions of workers with the miners' struggle. Now the same energy must go into the urgent defence of the victims of that struggle.

The goal of the British state and the coal employers is not solely to victimise militant miners. If this campaign of vengeance is not prevented the political result will be intimidation of workers in Britain and internationally from fighting in a determined way to save their jobs. Victory against this wave of victimisation would help in a significant way to roll back management's attacks against the National Union of Mine-workers.

The miners' strike was a strike for the whole international working class. The defence of those victimised is a fight to defend all workers, including those millions who will, in the years to come, emulate the British miners' courage, combativity and determination.

No victimisation!
Amnesty!