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- The examples
of Spain and
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of East Europe

Reagan's offensive against Nicaragua



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The new threats and the imperialist strategy

Incidents are growing along Nicaragua's northern border with Honduras and its southern one with Costa Rica. Behind these frontiers, the contras are given full freedom to stage murderous raids and sabotage in Nicaragua. The threat they pose to the Sandinista revolution is forcing the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) to strike back, despite the risks of such clashes being used by the imperialists in the framework of their strategy of provocation. A Costa Rican representative has said, in fact, that his government was studying the possibility of evoking the Rio de Janeiro Mutual Defense Treaty (1) if appeals to the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Contadora Group (Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia) proved fruitless.

At the same moment, the meeting of the Contadora Group held in May marked an initial diplomatic

Jeannette HABEL

On January 9, 1983, the ministers of foreign affairs of Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama decided, with the backing of their respective governments to offer their mediation for re-establishing peace in Central America. Representing governments geographically close to the Central American isthmus, this group of four countries had various interests in making such a move. First of all, there was a political interest. They wanted to avert a direct imperialist military intervention that would represent a major danger for the Latin American bourgeoisies in a situation of economic and social crisis, especially for Mexico, sandwiched in by the pressures on both its northern and southern frontiers. They also had an economic interest at stake, because the Central American region offers a major market for the industries of these countries.

This initiative coincided with the EEC's attempts to expand its economic relations with Latin America. For the region, the EEC countries represent its second most important market and its second major source of investment after the US. In 1979 24% of Central America's exports went to the EEC (the Europe of the Nine at the time). In 1982, 50% of the total aid to Latin America came from the EEC. In 1983, this share receded to 31%. (2) This convergence of interests was to be reinforced by the coming to power of several European Social Democratic governments, while at the same time the Socialist International had been trying to gain a foothold on the continent since the 1970s, seeking to take advantage of the limited liberalization

success for the imperialists. Nicaragua had to accept the Preliminary Accord that it approved in September 1984 being put in question, which was the Reagan administration's objective. The aim was to force the Nicaraguans to submit to the conditions of the Reagan plan.

On the economic level, the consequences of the American embargo are already making themselves felt, and the aid to Nicaragua from the EEC, Social Democratic governments, and some Latin American countries is decreasing.

Throughout the Central American region, the imperialists are stepping up their military pressure and reorganizing their forces in a context where revolutionary fighters are facing more and more difficult conditions.

attempts in these countries promoted by the US. (3)

The meeting in September 1984 of the ministers of foreign affairs of the EEC countries, Spain and Portugal, and leaders of the Central American and the Contadora countries confirmed the explicit support of the European governments present for the Contadora's Peace Accord. (4)

However, the EEC's economic aid to this region remains very modest compared with that of the USA. The dependence of the Central American countries on the US has, in fact, been increased, and the importance of the aid they receive from the EEC been reduced by the extent of the economic problems they now face and the size of their foreign debts.

Nonetheless, the European parliament has endeavored to support the efforts of the Contadora Group, and the International Court at the Hague has condemned the mining of the Nicaraguan ports. The Socialist International has acted in a similar vein, seeking to play a greater mediating and moderating role inasmuch as it is directly linked to parties that hold different positions in the conflict, and it does not intend to put all its eggs in one basket. (5)

Nonetheless, the Socialist International finds its room for seeking a middle way limited by the predominant influence of US imperialism in the region, since Washington vetoes any proposal that does not seem to be in its interests. The Reagan administration has just made this clear.

It was Nicaragua's approval of the Peace Accord on September 21, 1984, that prompted the Reagan government to mount a general challenge to it, since

Reagan found himself impeded in his diplomatic maneuvers by the Sandinistas' signature. The American government counterattacked immediately, calling together a meeting on October 20, 1984, of the leaders of Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica to draw up amendments to the text of the Accord. In reality, the objective was to present an opposing draft and to sabotage the Accord signed by the FSLN. Already postponed for three months, the last meeting of the Contadora Group in May 1985 yielded to this operation.

The participating countries declared for a reediting of the Accord, as the US wanted, and for indefinitely putting off the possibility of an accord on bases acceptable to the Sandinistas.

In fact, the history of the Contadora Group has been marked by postponements and by direct and indirect pressures from the USA, which while giving the operation purely formal support, has

1. The Rio Treaty was adopted in 1947 and reunited all the American states, except Canada, within the framework of an agreement of mutual assistance in the case of aggression against any of its member states.

2. From *Amerique Latine*, the journal of CETRAL, October-December 1984.

3. Some EEC countries still maintain direct links with their colonies or ex-colonies in the Caribbean. This is true for Great Britain, the Netherlands and France, not forgetting the 'historic' links that the Spanish state has in the area.

4. This was a text approved by Nicaragua after being revised.

5. The Party for National Liberation (PLN) of Costa Rica; the Democratic Alliance of Venezuela; the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR), a member of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) of El Salvador; and the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) of the Dominican Republic are all allied with the Socialist International. The Grenadan New Jewel Movement used to be, and the FSLN, are observers.

sought to discredit the process set in motion. The imperialist alternative is the Reagan Plan. This plan is an ultimatum aimed at forcing the FSLN to surrender. It demands — under the pretext of national reconciliation — dissolution of the Assembly elected in November 1984, new elections in which the contras can participate, a general amnesty, and a ceasefire.

A cover for US intervention

This plan could lead to the following scenario: The FSLN would engage in dialogue with the contras, who would thus be recognized as a belligerent force. The dialogue would fail, because the contras' demands would amount to capitulation by the Sandinistas. But the contras would have thus gained legitimacy and could, therefore, form a provisional government that would appeal for help from the imperialists to rescue "democracy." Such a maneuver has been approved by several Latin American presidents, and it is at the center of the pressures the imperialists are putting on the Contadora Group.

The Accord signed by the Nicaraguans in September 1984 has already been subjected to many amendments and corrections. An additional protocol was drawn up concerning the means for inspection to make sure that the provisions of the document are observed. But the essential thing in the original text is not that. It was a general document for Central America, including economic, social, and political aspects. It laid the bases for integration of the region, proposing reactivation of the Central American Common Market and preparing the way for a readjustment of the institutional frameworks of the various states in the region.

This document affirms the right of the peoples of Central America to self-determination. It opposes all discriminatory treatment and economic embargoes. It takes a stand against any foreign intervention and any use of force. It, moreover, defines the bases for agreement on the military problems of security, opposing international military maneuvers or foreign bases or military schools, and demands the removal of those already there.

The document also proposes checking up on the numbers of foreign military advisors and withdrawal of those whose functions are essentially operational. It bans all support for irregular forces fighting to overthrow the existing governments. It proposes surveillance of the borders, disarmament of the irregular movements, and dismantling of all military installations used against neighboring governments.

The Contadora Accord rules out any financial support for acts of sabotage or terrorism and defines the means for inspection applicable to problems of security, which are to make it possible to check that the foreign military instal-

lations are actually dismantled, that military advisors are withdrawn, and that a detailed classification is established of the arms, equipment, means of transport, and military installations of the armed forces (police, navy, air force, infantry, paramilitary forces, etc.).

This document also reiterates the need for "pluralist democratic systems" in which all political currents can participate in "honest and regular elections." It advocates, finally, "national reconciliation," where "deep divisions" have developed, the establishment of dialogue with "the opposition groups" and a full-fledged amnesty.

The last part in form resembles Ronald Reagan's proposals, but, in substance it is quite different, because this process of dialogue and reconciliation is envisaged in the context of what provides the underpinning of the document, that is, the withdrawal of the bases and of the military advisors, which are essentially American, and the end of all foreign intervention.

This is what the Sandinista commander Bayardo Arce calls the "Bolívar spirit" of the document, which he considers to be in conformity with the "project of the Nicaraguan revolution." In other words, the document represents a dialogue with the counterrevolutionary forces, which would then no longer enjoy colossal support from the imperialists, which would thus be semi-disarmed counterrevolutionary forces deprived of their major card. And it is clear that without the military support of the CIA, the contras would virtually disappear.

For its part the FSLN has already said that there was a place in Nicaragua for "all the forces that operate on a civilian basis," (6) that such forces could have the benefit of the amnesty and return to Nicaragua. This measure applies particularly to the peasants forcibly recruited to the counterrevolution.

The Contadora Peace Accord fits into a precise context. The symmetry that the imperialists want to get accepted between Soviet and American interference in the Central American isthmus masks a situation in which the military relationship of forces is overwhelmingly in favor of the world's greatest military power.

This relationship of forces is buttressed by the presence of gigantic US military bases in Honduras, by the great amounts of arms given to the Salvadorean army, by the militarization of Costa Rica, and by the presence of 16,000 US-trained contras on Nicaragua's borders. (7)

This part about foreign military involvement, is what makes the September 1984 Contadora document unacceptable for the imperialists. This is all the more true because the forms of inspection proposed, initially at the request of the United States, are, because of their precision, a means that would only highlight the imperialists' war effort.



Edén Pastora Gómez

The full application of this Accord — which was to go into effect after being approved by five Central American states — would have meant the withdrawal of the American bases and advisors without any serious quid pro quo. The presence of the Cuban advisors is very limited, as the Pentagon knows very well. The Nicaraguan's armament is old and insufficient, and if the Yankee threat did not exist the Nicaraguan people would have no difficulty defending their revolution by themselves.

As for the revolutionary movements in El Salvador, they do not draw their strength from foreign aid, unlike the CIA's mercenaries. The American imperialists are well aware of this. This is why, while maneuvering to avoid a direct confrontation with the Contadora Group, they have continually increased the number of conditions, and finally come to veto a document that all the Central American countries were initially ready to sign.

The "amendments" suggested by the American Security Council are aimed at reversing the logic of the document, making Nicaragua the aggressor. In the name of a purported Sandinista threat, they would then keep their bases, their maneuvers, and their military advisors. And in these conditions, they could propose an amnesty for the contras, keep the present relationship of forces, and on this basis set up the mechanisms for arms limitations. This amounts to legitimizing the overwhelming military superiority of the imperialists, demanding that Nicaragua give up its defenses.

6. Daniel Ortega, president of Nicaragua, at a press conference in Paris, May 13, 1985.

7. In April 1984, Honduras was able to receive 15,000 US soldiers of the 82nd brigade in one afternoon. Pensamiento Propio, Managua, March 1985.

The Reagan Plan then comes to complement all these devices and to get the Sandinista revolution in a vise where it would have to chose between being crushed militarily and capitulation. This is the reason why the FSLN has put so much effort into getting an agreement with the Contadora Group.

In total, three successive versions of the Contadora Accord have been rejected by El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica. Nicaragua then relaunched bilateral negotiations with Honduras, proposing joint military patrols and guaranteeing the inviolability of the frontiers. But the Honduran regime turned this down.

This was the final touch to the imperialists' plan. The US broke off the Manzanillo bilateral negotiations with the FSLN. Reagan had made use of these talks running up to his reelection. But the difficulty with them for him was that they pointed up the role of the US as the main dealer too much. The aim of the American government, to the contrary, is to minimize its role. The Pentagon offered no response to the Sandinista's new diplomatic compromise proposal for taking into account the American "security needs" and tolerating the existence of military bases in Honduras, as the Cubans "tolerate" the Guantanamo base on their territory.

So, the Contadora Group ended up in an impasse. Under the pressures put on them to include the Reagan Plan in the Peace Accord, the member governments contradicted each other a good deal. The Colombian president, Belisario Betancur, ended up by condemning the Reagan Plan, describing it as a "preparation for war." The Venezuelan president, Luisinchi, approved it, comparing it to the negotiations underway in El Salvador between the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the government. Only the Mexican president, Miguel de la Madrid, the cornerstone of the Contadora Group, said that the process of national reconciliation involved questions "that go beyond the character of the group, one of whose fundamental

principles is nonintervention in the internal affairs of countries." (8)

As for the Socialist International, in April it adopted a document condemning the Reagan Plan as a plan for war.

One might wonder what the practical effects of these statements will be. The Contadora diplomatic operation seems more and more fictional, less and less in line with the political behaviour of the states concerned, even if the aim of the Latin American bourgeoisies is still to avert a regional confrontation of incalculable consequences.

The FSLN is trying through this diplomatic battle to build up the maximum Latin-American resistance to the imperialist plans. But it cannot today hide the fact that its efforts ended in failure at the last meeting of the Contadora. And it is unlikely, despite the worsening of the situation in the region, that the next meeting of the Contadora will change this course.

Outcry against US embargo

Already discountenanced in the Contadora Peace Accord, the embargo declared on May 1 by the US government met with almost unanimous condemnation in the OAS in particular. But it is a long way from words to deeds. For the European and Latin-American bourgeoisies anything that weakens the Nicaraguan revolution is not too hard to swallow. Covert war, slow steady strangulation, are less glaring and less dangerous than an open military intervention.

Even if the economic embargo fails to strangle Nicaragua, even if it can be partially circumvented, it will not fail to have an effect. (9) The Nicaraguan economy was traditionally linked to the USA, and it is going to have to suffer the consequences of a shortage of spare parts for its agricultural machinery and its transport fleet. It is going to have to reorganize its medical

services, to renegotiate for new imports to replace those blocked in the conditions of a worsening of the economic situation, with 40% of the budget going to defense.

Foreign debt and the cost of the war have created enormous difficulties. Nicaragua's oil needs alone represent a cost of 175 million dollars a year, 40% of all income from exports. Nicaragua owes Venezuela and Mexico, its main oil suppliers up till 1983, almost a billion dollars. Today, Iran and the USSR have replaced Venezuela, and shipments from Mexico have been suspended.

It was in this difficult conjuncture that the Nicaraguan president, Daniel Ortega, recently travelled to the East European countries to appeal for aid for the "survival" of the Nicaraguan people. And this was just the pretext that Ronald Reagan would take, on the eve of the summit meeting of the industrialized countries, to announce his economic blockade of Nicaragua.

Of course, the imperialists' economic pressures do not date from that decision. Recently, the American administration intervened to stop the Inter-American Bank for Development from granting a 58 million dollar loan to Nicaragua, while the 25 Latin American members of this bank had approved the loan in principle.

In February 1981, the government of the United States had already suspended a loan and blocked the loading of 10,000 tons of wheat, then it stopped loans from international organizations, blocked access to sources of private or official financing in the US, closed the traditional markets to revolutionary Nicaragua, etc. This war of economic attrition, ranging from the mining of the ports — which resulted in the loss of 19 million dollars worth of exports — to the destruction of agricultural cooperatives, had already been envisaged by the US joint congressional committee headed by Henry Kissinger.

In this report presented in January 1984, the Kissinger Committee wrote cynically:

"Nicaragua must know that the use of force is only a last resort ... We have additional nonmilitary measures that have not been used yet, such as economic restrictions and the limitation of diplomatic contacts." [Retranslation from French.]

The blockade is going to affect all sectors of economic life, starting with imports. The following are the sectors concerned — medical care (70% of medical equipment came from the US), transportation, (35% of the spare parts), industry, energy, and telecommunications. But it is agricultural production, which is

US arms on their way to Honduras



8. Barricada, Managua, 12 April 1985.

9. This embargo includes the banning of all trade between the USA and Nicaragua, the suspension of all air and maritime traffic and the cancellation of the Treaty of Friendship, Trade and Navigation, signed in 1956 under the Somoza dictatorship which gave Nicaragua certain trading rights.

vital to the economy of the country, that is going to be hardest hit. The material needed for the sugar mills, for the cotton and coffee harvest, and for irrigation came from the US, as well as fertilizers and various chemical products.

On the export side, the main products affected will be bananas, molasses, and sugar. But now only 16% of Nicaragua exports go to the US. The worst hit will be the middle and big private producers, those who have built up their business on agricultural exports to the US and are used to American technology. (10)

The primary objective of the US blockade is obvious. It is to weaken Nicaragua and to bring its people to their knees by starvation and misery. But the embargo is also aimed at creating growing social tensions. It is not impossible that we will see a "radicalization" of the Supreme Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) and of the agricultural exporting sectors, attempts at boycott and sabotage, to say nothing of plant closures because of lack of raw materials and spare parts.

There may be processes of hoarding or sabotage of production — land left uncultivated, destruction of materiel, spare parts hidden, etc. In a general way, the economic war is aimed at suffocating the revolution, at undermining its social base in order to prepare the way for its destruction.

Unholy alliance against Nicaragua

It is true that the Sandinistas, foreseeing this decision, had begun to diversify their exchanges. In 1983, when the US closed its doors to sugar exports, the Sandinista government found new markets in the Middle East and North Africa at preferential prices. In 1985, Nicaraguan purchases of American products amount to 110 million dollars as opposed to 247 million in 1980, and Nicaragua's sales in the US are only 58 million dollars.

Moreover, the economies of other Central American countries are also going to suffer the consequences of a drop in Nicaraguan purchases, and investment is going to become scarce in a situation of rising tensions. Finally, the payment of Nicaraguan debts to US banks, which amount to 225 million dollars, will also be compromised.

However, the imperialists' major objective is to create a deteriorating situation within the country that can lead to the disaffection of some sections of the population from the Sandinista regime, creating divisions and breaks that could reinforce the opposition of the middle layers.

It is easy to imagine how the COSEP and the Church hierarchy could try to channel this discontent and force the FSLN to take coercive measures against some elements of the private sector. Such a policy could create favorable conditions for a direct American intervention by reconsolidating the ranks of an internal

political opposition that is today divided and disorganized.

What international support does Nicaragua have? In his recent trip through East and West Europe, Daniel Ortega got, in the words of an American newspaper, "a lot of sympathy in the West and financial help in the East." (11) Oil is being supplied essentially by the USSR, which was already the case after Mexico stopped its deliveries to Nicaragua, having demanded payment in advance.

The Soviet aid is apparently not in convertible currency, which the Nicaraguans need urgently, but in supplies that are often costly to use and not always suited to the needs. Offers of aid have reportedly come from Sweden, Finland, and Canada. In France, the government of Francois Mitterrand is prepared to expand commercial exchanges with Nicaragua only on the basis of mutual advantage, which in the present state of affairs amounts to accepting a substantial cut in aid, if not ending it altogether.

West Germany is threatening to demand that the Sandinista government immediately pay all debts. Development aid projects may also be suspended in reprisal after Daniel Ortega's statements that are supposed to have described West Germany as an accomplice of the US in its policy in Central America. The Portuguese Social Democratic premier, Mario Soares, has confined himself to expressing his fears that Nicaragua will align itself with the Soviet Union.

For its part, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE — the Social Democratic party) has just made known its refusal to officially cover the Nicaraguan government's export credits for the last three months. The stated reason for this decision, which was portrayed as "purely technical" is that the Sandinistas have not paid the interest on loans granted since 1981. The decision not to provide credit cover for exports was taken on March 12 by the Spanish Export Credit Insurance Company (CESCE), in which the government has a 50% interest.

According to the *Financial Times* correspondent in Madrid, this decision means that commercial relations between the Spanish state and Managua have been completely blocked, and that Felipe Gonzalez's government will not grant additional credits until a part of the debt is cleared.

So, despite the official support of the PSOE government for Nicaragua, it is also making its contribution to the American blockade in the name of defending the mixed economy and the private sector. The fact that Felipe Gonzalez is also the one assigned by the Socialist International to Latin American affairs can only be a cause for additional worry to the Sandinista government. The alignment of many Latin American and European governments in practice with the boycott policy of US imperialism makes the latter infinitely more dangerous, in

particular because Soviet aid is essentially in kind and will not be sufficient to compensate for the effects of the blockade.

It is unfortunately not excluded, as the proceedings of the last meeting of the Contadora Group show, that governments hostile to a direct military intervention will prefer a more discreet policy of strangulation which would be less compromising for the Latin American bourgeoisies.

Militarization of the region

This disguised war against Nicaragua has been accompanied by a regional policy designed to prepare the way for overthrowing the Sandinista regime. The modernization and reorganization of the armed forces, the building up of massive military infrastructures, the percentage of the overall appropriations for Central America represented by military credits are all part of the preparations for massive military intervention in Nicaragua.

The realignment of forces in the region is spectacular. Costa Rica, the former "Switzerland" of Central America, which long ago adopted a treaty of perpetual neutrality, has just welcomed in the first Yankee troops assigned to "protecting" its northern border. This is the first time that American soldiers have been stationed in Costa Rica. In May, twenty US officers trained 750 members of the Civil Guard to form a "rapid response" battalion stationed near the Nicaraguan border.

Monge, the head of the Costa Rican government and a member of the Socialist International, has said that his country cannot defend itself — against Nicaragua, was the implication — "with machetes and old muskets." (12) Members of the Costa Rican Civil Guard are being trained in the Regional Military Training Center in Honduras and others in the US and Venezuela. Two anti-terrorist forces have been set up, one special operations unit and the public force "reserve."

Parallel to this, the Agency for International Development granted Costa Rica an outright gift of 160 million dollars. Soon, the Voice of America will begin to broadcast toward Managua from Costa Rica. Finally, the presence of CIA agents in the country has been confirmed.

Thus, with the buildup of a Costa Rican armed force and the stationing of military detachments on the northern frontier, the reactionary military potential of this country on Nicaragua's borders has been reinforced. Nicaragua finds itself caught between Costa Rica in the south and El Salvador in the north.

10. Small, middling and large producers, according to the journal *Envio*, May 1985, account for 60 per cent of the total production of the country.

11. *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 May, 1985.

12. *Financial Times*, 15 May 1985.

And in this encirclement Costa Rica is the kingpin.

In Panama, the nationalist policy of Torrijos ("Torrijismo") is in decline. (13) Joint military maneuvers by the Panamanian National Guard and the US army show how much cooperation the US brass has been able to extract from the local government. Finally, the Yankee imperialists are also envisaging the installation of a military base in Belize.

So, on the regional level an anti-Sandinista "southern front" is being built to mesh with the counterrevolutionary "Northern Triangle" (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras), the center of which is Honduras. The latter has been transformed into a permanent US base. The gigantic military infrastructure established in this country has made it possible to stage regular large-scale maneuvers and exercises that continually pose the threat of an invasion of Nicaragua.

Honduras plays a key role. It is the imperialists' central guard tower and a bulwark for the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN). From its territory, it is possible to put pressure on the rear areas of the Salvadorean guerrillas and to maintain surveillance of the Guatemalan rebels.

A real epicenter of counterrevolutionary struggle in the region, Honduras has been transformed into a US protectorate. It is revealing in this regard that the signing of a new military aid treaty, as well as the setting up of the Puerto Castilla military training center, were not reported to the Honduran parliament until June 1983, when the US Green Berets were already disembarking in the country.

Now, Salvadoran aircraft have the right to overfly Honduran territory. Thanks to the peace treaty signed between El Salvador and Honduras in 1980, Salvadoran soldiers can be trained in Puerto Castilla, and reconnaissance planes fly out of the Palmerola base to inform the Salvadoran army of the movements of the FMLN. The FDN groups also get supplies and air support when they move into Nicaraguan territory. When the contras retreat under pressure from the Sandinista army, they get cover from Honduran artillery.

HONDURAN AIR FORCES

15 B-2 Super-Mystery	25 180-Cessna
10 F-86 Sabre	30 185-Cessna
16 A-37 B Dragon	1 Piper Pa-31 Cheyenne
12 T-37 Tucano	2 S-76 helicopters
4 0-2 Push and Pull	2 H-19 Sikorsky
10 C-47	35 UH1H
4 C-54 Skymaster	15 UH10
6 IAI Arava	1 OH6A
1 Electra	1 Mescalero
4 C-130 Hercules	12 T-28 A
1 West Wind	6 T-6 Texan
1 Beech Baron	12 T-33

The Honduran air-based war involves 232 machines for combat amongst which are 55 helicopters, 83 transport planes and 37 for tactical support.

Source: Barricada, 26 November 1984.

However, the militarization of the region is not a simple affair or without contradictions. Revolutionary movements have existed for a long time in Guatemala and in El Salvador. Such movements are underdeveloped in Costa Rica and Honduras. Nonetheless, in Costa Rica the American plans are running up against an antimilitarist and antidictatorial tradition, and these problems are compounded by an acute economic crisis. The buildup of the country's military capacities, and the presence of mercenaries are eroding the traditional underpinnings of the state and its previous relative stability.

In Honduras, the presence of three foreign armed forces, the contras, the Salvadorans, and the American Green Berets, and the privileges they enjoy, can create a favorable situation for the growth of popular mobilizations. This is why the regime is redoubling its efforts to forestall any opposition. Since 1982-1983, more than eighty persons have "disappeared," 28 activists and leaders are known to have been murdered by the armed forces or the paramilitary squadrons. Spying and informing have been institutionalized.

However, this militarization is not necessarily being accompanied by the maintenance of open military dictatorships. The crisis of the system of imperialist domination in Central America, as well as reasons of international policy, are inducing the imperialists to adjust the forms of their domination.

If the objective is to overthrow the Sandinista regime, the operation has to be made presentable for international opinion, unless, as happened in Grenada, the revolutionary forces themselves offer the US a pretext for intervening militarily in the name of "democracy."

The Pentagon is working in the framework of a strategy that combines military and economic strangulation of Nicaragua in order to set the stage for a direct military intervention that would have to be able to finish off the revolution at the least possible human cost for the aggressors.

The war of attrition, thus, does not exclude a massive intervention, whose timing cannot be predicted. If an opportunity arises, as in Grenada, the Pentagon will seize it. The emphasis up till now has been put on the war of attrition, because a certain number of conditions are not yet "ripe" for moving on to the next phase.

Thus, the Nicaraguan magazine *Pensamiento Propio* considers that the lack of political consensus in the US on intervention in Central America and the reactions in Latin America "does not seem to allow the political aim of destroying the Sandinista revolution to be pursued by means of the direct intervention of US troops. We are seeing rather the combination of an aggressive escalation in military, economic, and political forms accompanied by attempts at negotiation for the sake of appearances

without any real political will to negotiate. This combination of aggression and negotiations gives rise to a war of attrition or a 'low intensity conflict,' which seems to be the dominant feature of American policy toward Nicaragua." (14)

Ronald Reagan and the US military hierarchy say that they have no intention of deploying combat forces in Central America except for periodic maneuvers such as those that have been held in Honduras. But they also reiterate that the US has to be ready — in pursuance of the Rio Treaty of the Inter-American Mutual Assistance Treaty — to send forces into the region if the security of the hemisphere is threatened and if the parties to these military pacts agree.

"We did not come out of Vietnam so well, and we have to do better the next time," a US officer said. (15) Doing better means adjusting military and political strategy. On the military level, US officers have been assigned to study the conditions for an intervention. The questions posed were the following: what sort of artillery will be needed to avert "collateral" damage, that is, the massacre of civilians? What sort of tactical units are best suited to anti-guerrilla operations? How can the Americans set up espionage networks so that information can be collected rapidly?

In civic action, how can the American soldiers help citizens so that the US will not have to carry out the tasks of local government? These questions obviously reflect the lessons that the US imperialists drew from Vietnam and the risks involved in a direct intervention in Nicaragua. (16)

In order to restore "democracy" in Nicaragua, as the imperialists propose to do, they have at least to refurbish their image a bit and dissociate themselves from the most reactionary regimes. They need presentable governments and credible partners to justify their enormous war effort and prepare the way for overthrowing the Sandinistas.

However, it is difficult for the imperialists to have any credibility in condemning the gulag and "totalitarianism" in Nicaragua, if Major d'Aubuisson rules in El Salvador, if the contras are led by former Somozista National Guards, or if the US government supports apartheid in South Africa.

13. General Omar Torrijos renegotiated in 1977 the agreements on the Panama Canal which became known as the Torrijos-Carter accords. Torrijos died in an air crash in 1981.

14. *Pensamiento Propio*, Managua, March 1985.

15. *International Herald Tribune*, New York, 6 May 1985.

16. Kissinger challenged "the inability [of the administration] to take a clear decision." For him, those responsible for the policy in Central America "are like long distance runners refusing to sprint, in order to save their energy for part of the way. But the risk you run in proceeding in this way is to lose the marathon altogether. At a certain moment they have to go out in front and know when to make a decision." (quoted in *El Pais*, Madrid, 19 May 1985.) The former secretary of state attacks what he considers to be the uncontrolled and hesitant policy of the Reagan administration.



Sandinista soldiers on their way to the combat zone (DR)

The themes of democracy and elections are becoming central in the imperialist policy for the region. Such elections are held to provide an appearance of democratic legitimacy and to camouflage the growing militarization. Thus, after the vote in El Salvador, elections are to take place in most of the Central American countries in the coming year — in Guatemala in October 1985, in Honduras in November 1985, in Costa Rica in February 1986, and in Belize in December.

The Colombian model, which combines opening a dialogue leading to national reconciliation with the "rebels" laying down their arms, an amnesty, and the participation of these forces in elections, has already inspired the course followed in El Salvador, as well as the Reagan Plan.

Behind this regionwide pattern you can see the shape emerging of an operation to strangle the revolution by a democratic counterrevolution. This is what the American strategists call the "two-lane road." It combines US military aid and selective repression with "democratization" of the regime and some attempts at reform.

Even though the democratic and social aspects of this strategy are only a masquerade, the Christian Democrats' electoral victory in El Salvador gained Napoleon Duarte a not insignificant international and diplomatic credibility, above all, support from the US congress.

Such a combination of a new rise of the regime's military activity behind the democratic smokescreen of the Christian Democracy may create new problems for the FMLN.

This new imperialist tactic is necessary to isolate Nicaragua but it is also related to the traditional system of

domination. The military dictatorships consolidated the alliance between the old oligarchy — the landowners and the bourgeoisie exporting agricultural products and importing industrial goods (the comprador bourgeoisie) — and the army.

In order to defuse the explosive social situation that exists now, it is necessary to shove aside the old oligarchy, break its alliance with the army, give impetus to the development of an industrial bourgeoisie, and force through an agrarian reform and institutional reforms.

This attempt at "reform from above" has so far run up against all sorts of obstacles. In fact, the dynamic of the mass movement is making it difficult to isolate the old oligarchy without undermining the army. However, the army is essential in order to inflict a defeat on the mass mobilizations and to crush the radical wing of the FMLN in El Salvador or other revolutionary movements.

How can this old alliance between the oligarchy and the military be broken up for the benefit of the industrial bourgeoisie when the latter is still in formulation, when local industry is weak, and the domestic situation is so unstable that capital is fleeing the country? That is the imperialists' dilemma.

Andres Zaldiva, the chair of the Christian Democratic International, for example, argues that there is a need for an orientation that will make it possible to remove from power "the landowning oligarchies supported by unscrupulous armed groups." This would require "regrouping the democratic forces that are in favor of peaceful solutions without

outside intervention, whether American or Cuban, and profoundly changing the economic and social structures. This would make it possible for a vast intermediate class to emerge." (17)

The chances for "democratic" reform

However, carrying through such a project, which is similar to that of the Social Democratic parties and a section of the American administration, requires having strong domestic allies, a social base capable of supporting the economic, political, and military changes that have to be accomplished in the framework of a counterrevolutionary strategy and of maintaining an army that has, moreover, to be professionalized, modernized, and adapted to the present circumstances.

Countries with infinitely greater resources than the small Central American states have had big difficulties when it came to undertaking partial reforms. In Colombia, for example, there was an attempt to institutionalize a restricted form of democracy at the end of the 1970s. This was a response to the rise of mass mobilizations and the threat posed by a guerrilla movement, as well as to the need to make room for the finance capital that had consolidated itself at the expense of certain sectors of the traditional bourgeoisie.

The plan of the Colombian president, Belisario Betancur, which inspired the Contadora operation, includes some economic, political, and institutional reforms, such as a dialogue with the guerrillas. In

17. *Amerique Latine, journal of CETRAL* October-December 1984.

the economic sphere, however, all the proposals for redistribution of the land met with the rejection of the farmers and ranchers associations.

As for the program of reforming the political institutions — the status of the parties, election-law reform, fiscal and judicial reform — it ran into the opposition of the dominant bourgeois parties and the military forces and slowly became bogged down.

Whether the Colombian model maintains its credibility within the Contadora Group or in El Salvador depends entirely on its ability in Colombia itself to settle the political and military conflicts within the framework established by Betancur.

It is, therefore, more than doubtful that such reform schemes can succeed in much weaker and more dependent countries, such as those in Central America. On the economic level, the example of El Salvador is eloquent. So far, the agrarian reform has remained blocked. Now that the Christian Democracy has the majority in parliament, it has the legislative means for carrying out this reform. It is, nonetheless, unlikely that it will manage to do so.

The attempts to establish the rule of law on the political and electoral levels have gotten further. Elections are to take place in all the Central American countries in the coming year. However, this institution of constitutional forms that is being pushed by some sections of the ruling class in agreement with the imperialists is being hampered

by the lack of electoral traditions, the entanglement of the army in every struggle for influence, and the existence of parallel networks and general corruption, complicated still more by the settling of political accounts by paramilitary groups.

The crisis of the parties

In Honduras, the dominant parties are in crisis and deeply divided heading into the November elections. An opposition front has been formed, the Coordinadora Democratica de la Oposicion (CODECO). It revolves around the Christian Democracy and M-Lider, a left split from the Liberal Party. Its primary objective is to see that honest elections are held and to get support for a project to "take Honduras out of the regional war plan ... to restore economic and political stability in Honduras."

In an indirect way, the crisis of the parties reflects the deep economic, political, and social crisis that is wracking the country, where "the mixture of extreme poverty, high unemployment, and constantly deteriorating social conditions, and the extreme youthfulness of the population is potentially explosive," as the Kissinger Report acknowledged.

To these problems have to be added the consequences of the stationing of three foreign armies — American, Salvadoran, and Nicaraguan contras — in the

country, whose members are often better fed and paid than the Honduran soldiers. This situation is reviving the old anti-Salvadoran nationalism, while the military occupation is giving rise to what the Jesuits in the country have called the "denationalization of Honduras."

If they are held, the elections may temporarily mask this political reality and serve the projects of the imperialists, but they will not solve the grave crisis that is gripping the country.

In Guatemala, the difficulties of the armed revolutionary movement are facilitating a certain stabilization of the regime. The military dictatorship is taking advantage of this respite and preparing the way for a new electoral farce to clean up its own image and that of the imperialists, thereby enabling the latter to provide more direct military aid.

The participation in the coming elections of Social Democratic leaders, after six years in exile in Costa Rica, can help somewhat to legitimize one of the bloodiest military dictatorships in Central America. Such an interlude could improve Guatemala's image for US public opinion. The imperialists have quite a high stake in this. That is why, through the National Foundation for Democracy, an institution linked to the Reagan administration's Initiative for the Caribbean, they have provided a subsidy of 125,000 dollars to Guatemala's Center for Political Studies. The latter is supposed to be an instrument that can aid in the development of "democratic values" and facilitate a transition to democracy in the country. Thus, what the imperialists are trying to put together in Guatemala, as well as El Salvador, is a scenario combining a repressive regime, under which the paramilitary groups can do as they please, with a semblance of "pluralist democracy" based on crushing the armed revolutionary vanguard.

While it is true that the elections in El Salvador have not resolved any of the problems and that they were only a democratic smokescreen, they nonetheless brought certain political benefits for the imperialist project. They made it easier for Washington to extend economic and military aid, reducing the opposition to this in the US Congress. They also partially broke the international isolation of the Salvadoran government.

The victory of the Christian Democracy provoked a crisis in the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) on the extreme right. But despite such internal crises and the fact that the Christian Democracy enjoys an absolute majority in the new Assembly, it would not be surprising if Duarte ran into a parliamentary blockade from the right-wing opposition parties.

Some sectors of the rightist opposition want to gain a role for themselves in the Assembly through negotiations and to get political guarantees. Others are taking a stance of boycott pure and simple in order to have their hands

Mexico's president, Miguel de la Madrid (R) watches as Venezuela's president, Luis Herrera Campins signs a treaty.



free and destabilize the Christian Democratic government.

For the moment, since the elections, the army general staff has constantly proclaimed its support for Duarte's "democratically elected" government and its respect for the Constitution. This attitude is not by chance. It corresponds to the imperialists' new tactic and their project of installing civilian governments in place of the old military cliques. This is designed, moreover, to assure the survival of the regime, and reinforce the state apparatus, while modernizing the army in order to adjust it better to the needs of counterinsurgency warfare.

In Costa Rica, the electoral process is unfolding in a different context. This country has an electoral tradition and a well defined framework of legality. It is ruled today by the National Liberation Party (PLN), which is linked to the Socialist International.

The objective of these elections is to confirm the realignment of Costa Rica and its open support for the counterrevolutionary strategy. The electoral process is to be used to create a consensus for this by undermining the country's tradition of peace and neutrality, which is incompatible with the militarization that is underway.

The breakup of the political consensus that reigned in recent years is leading to a reorganization of the traditional political forces. The PLN went into an open crisis after President Monge's alignment with Washington and his acceptance of the stationing of US Green Berets in the country.

Nonetheless, through Reagan's Republican Party, the imperialists are supporting the Social Christian Unity

Party (PUSC) and its presidential candidate, Rafael Calderon. The massive financial aid given to this party leaves no doubt about Washington's preferences. It wants to take advantage of the decline in the credibility of the Monge government, which it regards as still not hard line enough, in order to put in a candidate who is centering his campaign around the danger that Nicaragua supposedly poses to Costa Rica and criticism of Monge for his lack of support for the American embargo.

The PUSC leaders even say in private that Calderon's first decision if he were elected would be to break off diplomatic relations with Nicaragua. Moreover, some political observers think that if the PUSC wins, there is no doubt that US bases would be established on Costa Rican territory.

Given the growing ineffectiveness of the old military dictatorships and the crisis of the oligarchic system of domination, the establishment of "legally elected" governments is essential for the imperialists and for their domination of the region. This policy is made more difficult by the existence of armed revolutionary movements, by the extent of the decay of these regimes, and by the internal contradictions in these countries.

The electoral policy is obviously an integral part of the counterrevolutionary policy, but as the Guatemalan revolutionists of the Revolutionary Armed forces (FAR) say, "this is not just a maneuver" and regarding these elections "as a comedy and a farce could lead us to make serious political errors."

These electoral maneuvers are designed



to isolate the revolutionary movement, to create illusions in certain sections of the masses "who do not see revolution as a real and immediate perspective." It is not possible to ignore this process in a difficult period "without isolating ourselves from the popular masses." (18)

The big squeeze

The combined military and political offensive of the imperialists, the realignment and reorganization of the forces on a regional scale, as well as the modernization of armaments and the professionalization of the bourgeois armies, are creating a more difficult situation for the revolutionary movements.

In Guatemala, the armed organizations have suffered reverses. In the words of the FAR itself, they are going through a "difficult situation." (19) The effect of the bombing, the regrouping of the population in "model" villages in the framework of so-called Civic Action programs, plus the creation of the "self-defense" patrols have enabled the army to retake control of certain zones that were formerly held by the guerrillas.

The guerrillas have not been annihilated, but they have been forced to retreat, organizing mobile guerrilla units that no longer control territory and are relatively cut off from their social base.

In El Salvador, the army is taking its inspiration from the new political-military tactic applied in Guatemala. According to the US advisors themselves a status quo is being maintained and a military victory is not on the agenda. Although the 32,000 soldiers who make up the official army are better and better trained, they cannot defeat the 5,000 to 7,000 guerrillas "who can still strike where and when they want," as the American colonel Edward King put it.

However, the bombing is having terrible effects. The FLMN's lack of heavy armament and anti-aircraft weapons is limiting its capacities for

Czechoslovak dissidents solidarise with Nicaragua

On May 8, 1985 the French daily *Le monde* published an appeal for solidarity with Nicaragua. This text was signed by several well-known personalities living in the capitalist countries.

Ten new signatures have since been added to the original list. These signatories have a special importance because they come from Prague and are mainly members of Charter 77. It is the first time that activists involved in the fight for democratic freedoms in Eastern Europe have taken a position in defence of a revolution under US imperialist attack. Such an internationalist and anti-imperialist consciousness is a very important development which shows the political evolution that is taking place among these militants.

The taking of this position, which cannot fail to embarrass the Prague bureaucracy, can only serve to strengthen the credibility of the struggle for democratic rights in Eastern Europe as well as the struggle of those under attack by imperialism. Basically this appeal will not please either Reagan or Gorbachev.

Amongst the new signatories are Peter Uhl, a member of VONS (Committee for the Defence of Unjustly Tried Persons) and ex-engineer and currently a heating engineer who has spent nine years in prison; Anna Sabatova, a member of VONS; professor Iaroslav Sabata, ex-spokesperson of Charter 77, ex-member of the central committee of the Communist Party, elected at the fourteenth congress, eight years in prison; Jiri Dienstbier, formerly a journalist and now a heating engineer and current spokesperson of Charter 77; Doctor Gertruda Sekamnova-Cakrtova member of VONS and former parliamentary representative in Prague; Vasek Maly, member of VONS and former spokesperson of Charter 77, responsible for the 'flying university'; Milo Rejchrt, former spokesperson of Charter 77; Eva Kanturkov current spokesperson of Charter 77.

18. Panorama, Mexico, April 1985, balance sheet of the national leadership of FAR (June-July 1984).

19. Idem.

action. The FMLN guerrillas are obliged to move about quickly in small units in order to escape the night-time patrols, and the army has been able to retake some villages for a time.

Nonetheless, the dynamism of some mass mobilizations, while the armed movement is reorganizing in the new situation, shows that a rapid denouement of the conflict is not on the horizon.

In Nicaragua, despite enormous difficulties, the revolution is holding out against imperialist aggression and the attempts to strangle it economically and militarily. The mission of the contras is to undermine the popular support for the Sandinista government through economic sabotage and a military offensive directed against civilian targets, forcing the Sandinista government to devote considerable human and financial resources to defense. The idea is that in this way private capital will be able to exploit the crisis in order to undermine the mass movement.

Militarily and politically, the contra campaign has failed to achieve its objectives. It has been unable, for example, to win a social base that would enable the contras to encyst themselves in Nicaraguan territory. To the contrary, the blows that the Sandinistas have inflicted have obliged the contras to avoid military confrontations and limit themselves to murderous raids on scattered targets.

However, to inflict losses on small groups enjoying a sanctuary in Honduras requires overwhelming military superiority. These needs of military defense make it necessary to organize an effective territorial defense through setting up territorial combat brigades and mobilizing youth in the Patriotic Military Service, with all the human problems that flow from this. The activities of the contras, finally, are creating a focus of tensions favorable to all sorts of provocations along Nicaragua's frontiers.

Democracy under the gun

Thus, all the conditions have been assembled for making the Central American crisis a long-drawn-out conflict in which the American strategists and their local allies are pursuing a policy of attrition and gradual strangulation of the revolutionary forces locally and internationally in order to prepare the way for carrying out a massive confrontation at the least cost.

To accomplish this objective, the US imperialists have first to prepare American public opinion for such a confrontation. That is the meaning of the battle over credits for the contras in the Congress and Senate. They also have to make sure that the human cost of an invasion of Nicaragua is as limited as possible in order to avoid getting bogged down as they did in Vietnam. The US has to be able to wage this battle in the name of freedom and



A Sandinista militia (DR)

democracy, and this means that they have to find presentable partners in these countries.

Finally, the US imperialists have to overcome or neutralize the reticence of the Latin American bourgeoisies, which are opposed to any direct intervention under the present conditions of social explosiveness that exist on the continent.

The points scored by Ronald Reagan's policy in Central America makes Nicaragua the key to the situation in the region. Any defeat for Nicaragua will be a defeat for the revolutionary movements. Conversely, Nicaragua cannot hope in the short run to get help from another revolutionary victory. Reagan is counting on time to tighten the noose around the neck of the revolution.

The Sandinista leadership has no choice. It is giving priority to the war effort. It has first to crush the armed counterrevolution. Otherwise, it faces the danger that the activities of the contras

can serve as a pretext for an imperialist provocation, whatever form it might take, a punitive expedition or invasion.

This war effort cannot fail to cause economic and social problems. The FSLN has at the same time to deepen popular support for the revolution by appropriate measures at the risk of compromising the neutrality of certain sectors, of reinforcing the internal opposition and seeing the international bourgeoisies line up more openly behind Reagan.

Despite the military aggression and scarcities, the maintenance of a pluralist democracy in Nicaragua is an unprecedented fact that must be publicized by an international campaign of support to expose the shameless demagoguery of the crusaders for "freedom."

20. Latin America Regional Report, Mexico and Central America, published in London, 15 February, 1985.

Preparing the conditions for a new campaign against imperialist militarisation

The fourth convention of the European peace movements which is taking place in Amsterdam from July 3-6, comes at a key time in the struggle for peace. The peace movement saw its biggest rise in Europe in response to the NATO "twin-track" decision of December 1979, and it now has to face a new situation. (1) Since the autumn of 1983, the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles has gone ahead, to all intents and purposes, at exactly the pace required by the capitalist governments.

This has not, however, led to a decline in the mobilisations of the peace movement, as the activities in spring this year show. There were Easter marches in Great Britain and West Germany; demonstrations

against NATO and against Reagan's visit in the Spanish State; demonstrations against the decision of the Martens' government to deploy the first cruise missiles in Belgium. This is not to say that the situation of the movement in some countries, such as France, Italy and, in a different way, West Germany, is not still very difficult. Imperialism's new moves towards greater militarisation, especially militarisation of space, demands a response at a higher level and a more worked-out political response offering an alternative strategy.

If it is able to take these questions head on, then the Amsterdam convention could play a very positive role.

Jacqueline ALLIO and Jean-Louis MICHEL

The installation during the last 18 months of the first cruise and Pershing missiles, despite the mobilisations against the NATO decision, shows two things.

In the first place, the strength of the peace mobilisations has not prevented the capitalist governments from implementing policies that are in direct contradiction to the views of the people expressed in public opinion polls. This is no less the case, despite the fact that the decision in the Netherlands is still pending. This shows the inability of a social movement of this type, no matter how powerful it is, to overturn the will of western governments, unless a real political means of forcing the issue can be found through generalised industrial action, through mobilising on the electoral level, or through a combination of these types of activities.

The peace movement as a whole has often been too timid in pursuing such actions. However, it is only on this basis that it would be possible to act effectively to change the course of events. This lesson holds true for the future, and it obviously requires an assessment of the type of political alliances it will be necessary to seek.

On the question of alliances, we know that there are widely differing views. On the one hand there are those who preach in favour of alliances with the right, and of political wheeling and dealing, and who are trying to divert the movement in any way possible from its objectives, even looking for 'guarantees' for 'European defence'. On the other hand, there are those, including us in the Fourth International, who believe that the movement can rely only on the power of its mobilisations and on their social impact in order to force militaristic governments to respect the

will of the masses. This presupposes the need to defend the independence of the movement.

In the second place, of course, no one would dream of trying to repeat the old battles over Euromissiles in the countries where they have already been deployed. But does this mean that the immediate goal of 'no to the missiles' should be abandoned? Should we merely limit ourselves to the general slogan of a nuclear-free Europe from Poland to Portugal. Should we, as some are proposing, take up the slogan for the denuclearisation of the NATO forces in such a way as to avoid more concrete objectives and to avoid posing the question of the need for a break with the imperialist alliance?

This would evidently be the wrong road. The way forward for the peace movement is to link the fight against nuclear weapons to the fight against the presence of foreign troops under NATO command. The twin demand of the Spanish movement, for example, for the closure of American bases and for NATO out of Spain is undoubtedly the best response to the threat of the nuclearisation of the Cadiz bases.

The problem is posed in the same way in Greece, though in different circumstances. The demand for the withdrawal of foreign troops from both Germanies has a similar value, since it implies withdrawal from NATO. We are in favour of the generalisation of unifying slogans of this type for two reasons:

— They take account of all aspects of the militarisation policy, which cannot be reduced solely to the question of nuclear arms.

— At the same time, they set out precise objectives that the masses can mobilise around.

In addition, the fight against foreign bases must, from now on, be linked to

the struggle against the participation of Western Europe in the Star Wars plan.

Both the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) proposals, conceived of by the Pentagon, and the Eureka project, proposed by Francois Mitterrand of France, lead logically toward increased militarisation of space. The cost of this will rapidly become insupportable for humanity.

In the long term the imperialists are looking for a new strategic deal giving it a margin of security that will leave its hands free for forcing through their policies in all four corners of the globe.

In the middle and short term, the imperialist centres might hope to attain, with the help of the financial and industrial world, several interlinked objectives. These are to create a permanent deterrent in relation to the Soviet Union, and therefore make it impossible for the bureaucratic leadership of that country to play a role in most regional crises; to give a new impetus to the crisis-ridden capitalist economy through an increase in the rate of profit at least in the key sectors; and finally and most importantly to impose a policy of austerity on the working class, both in the imperialist centres as well as the other countries linked into this programme.

What is really at stake in the coming years is the extent and brutality of the austerity plans that will have to be imposed on the masses by Western governments in order for the latter to be able to finance the SDI and Eureka programmes.

1. The so-called 'twin track' decision was taken by NATO on December 12, 1979. It envisaged both negotiations with the USSR at the same time as deployment, from June 1983 onwards, of 108 Pershing-2 missiles in West Germany and of 464 cruise missiles in four other countries (Italy, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Belgium).

The US government has already pledged some 26 billion dollars for the initial phase of research over the first five years. The main industrial groups overseas who are interested in space research have also invested an enormous amount. The Pentagon has let it be known that it is counting on a commitment from the US's allies equivalent to that of the American government, in other words something of the order of 25 billion dollars for the same five-year period.

The European governments, having approved the general direction of American policy in NATO, are still holding back, for political as well as economic reasons, from investing directly in this crazy enterprise, which from the outset is cut to the size of the tremendous economic strength of the US. They would prefer by far to have a more discreet link between industry in their countries and the SDI projects, especially in relation to arms factories, whether they be public or private. They may very well go through the motions of following the path of inter-European cooperation, independent of the US and integrated into the French Eureka project. This will be an item for discussion at the next European summit in Milan.

In fact the Eureka plan is neither less dangerous nor, frankly is it economically any less wasteful than the SDI programme. The two operations, far from being mutually exclusive, in fact go in the same direction. The programmes linked to Eureka are to be financed from the civil budget for research and development, and up till now the bill has come to about eight billion French Francs (about 700 million pounds). A further billion francs will be injected into the scheme before the end of the year, according to the French minister for research, Hubert Curien. And everyone knows that western governments have always made a point of hiding a large part of the credits allocated to war preparation. This is particularly the case when it comes to research, whether it is public, private or a mixture of the two.

In this situation the peace movement has to do a basic job of defending the public interest and demanding that these decisions, investments and their ultimate goal be openly explained. The wall of silence around this area of activity by governments and heads of major industrial groups must be broken down, and the demand for the opening of the books must be put forward (including state accounts as well as those of the top companies). The idea that tax contributions and profits squeezed from the workers should be invested in the militarisation of space must be thoroughly rejected.

In this regard, the peace movement and the workers movement have a decisive role to play in exposing, before the eyes of the masses, the link between the new phase of the arms race in space



and the policies of austerity by the bosses and the government. These latter are hell bent on forcing wages down and dismantling the social gains that have been made.

Only a peace movement really rooted in the workers movement and based on its organisations can make the perspective of democratic control of defense decisions credible.

Most people in Europe have already shown their aspirations for democracy through referendums (whether self-organised or official) in relation to NATO's Euromissiles. This process should be carried forward through a massive rejection of the militarisation of space and of Star Wars.

For the past decade, the fight for peace has always carried with it a strong element of internationalism which must be reinforced at the Amsterdam convention. A people that oppresses another can itself never be free. Neither can a people, or peoples, that abandon others to imperialist barbarism or the yoke of bureaucratic dictatorships.

This is the direction of democratic demands, which are not divided up according to which part of Europe you come from. For several years the peace movement has supported, without reservation, the struggle for democratic rights in Eastern Europe. But the relations that components of the West European peace movement have maintained with the official peace committees in the East have led to big differences within that movement. Some elements want to sacrifice relations with independent peace activists for the sake of maintaining diplomatic relations between those who respect the established order East and West. Others propose, on the contrary, a break with the official committees in order to build links with the independent activists. We believe that we must take advantage of the stated intentions of the official bodies in order to make them confront the demands for

democratic rights throughout Europe, and that this issue must be at the centre of the convention's work. Of course the kind of work peace activists engage in and their demands will reflect the different conditions and different approaches that arise from the situations in East or West Europe. But the demand for democracy, in a fundamental sense, by its very nature can unite the movement from one side of the continent to the other.

Therein lies the significance of the open letter (see page 28) signed by women of five European countries, East and West, in which either American or Soviet missiles are currently deployed.

But the internationalism of the movement is not confined to the frontiers of Europe. Peace activists are firmly on the side of those people struggling for national and social liberation. They support especially the Nicaraguan people in their fight against the armed aggression of the US government. It is no coincidence that, in the United States, the anti-war movement is embracing both forces opposed to intervention as well as to the missiles.

The Amsterdam convention could provide the opportunity for launching projects of cooperation and solidarity with the peoples of the world — from Central America to the South Pacific, from the Middle East to South Africa.

The obvious ones are a campaign against the Nicaraguan blockade by US imperialism; raising the demand that western governments cease all support to the racist regime in Pretoria; for the recognition of the right to independence, peace and security of the peoples of the South Pacific, amongst whom the Kanaks are currently being submitted to imperialist repression.

What sort of impact the fourth European convention can make will be determined by the sort of decisions it comes to on these questions. ■

The situation of the independent peace movements

The appeals made to the western peace movement by independent peace groups in the East in the last three years, have not fallen on deaf ears. The third convention of the campaign for European Nuclear Disarmament (END) which took place in Perugia in July 1984, was evidence of the interest that exists among the western peace movements for establishing links with the East European movements and supporting their struggles. (1)

The deployment of SS-21 and SS-22 missiles in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Czechoslovakia, in the autumn of 1983 contributed a great deal towards opening the eyes of those who still had illusions in the military policy of the Soviet government. They were forced to recognise that the only response that the Soviet bureaucracy was capable of making to the deployment of Pershing and cruise missiles, was to reaffirm their militaristic path in a step-by-step response to the escalation by the US. In this way the bureaucracy were able to use the opportunity to step up their policy of repression and increase the threat that the presence of Soviet armies poses to the populations of the East.

Jacqueline ALLIO

This growing awareness was clearly demonstrated in the hostility to which the very 'official' Soviet Committee for Peace was subjected throughout the Perugia convention. Any attempts by this committee to win conference round were a dismal failure, particularly since the authorities in the 'socialist' countries had refused to allow independent peace movement supporters visas to come to the convention. Enquiries about the cases of independent activists imprisoned for several years because of their activity for peace were met with the reply that, 'They are hooligans'. This only serves to illustrate the urgency of the need to take up an active campaign of defence of the victims of repression (see box). It also poses the question of the type of relations that the western peace movement maintains with the official committees in the East.

In this respect it is important to take into account the opinion of the Eastern European peace activists themselves and first and foremost the members of the Moscow Group for the Establishment of Trust between the USSR and the United States (an independent peace organisation which has equivalent groups in Leningrad and other towns in the USSR). This group still believes that a break by the western peace movements with the official committees will only serve to reinforce their own isolation and facilitate repression against them by the authorities. The example of the Perugia meeting tends to back this up. The very fact that the bureaucracy was in attendance lent much more significance to the protests which were raised

against the policy of the Kremlin and its supporters. At the same time, it is important to note the development in the views of other independent groups on the subject.

In 1983, East German activists addressing the second END convention insisted on the need to maintain links with the official committees. (2) Two years later, in a contribution to the Yalta forum which was held in West Berlin in February 1985, they wrote:

'The policy of detente in the 1970s allowed West Europeans to journey more easily to the East and it gave us the promise of the right according to which "any citizen is entitled to leave a country, including their own". This assurance has allowed some citizens, since, to leave the GDR forever, but not to go on foreign visits, like this West Berlin meeting. That is what we have to remind the official delegations of, especially remind those from Peace Committees at international forums. At the next Amsterdam convention for a nuclear-free Europe there should be a resolution to allow the representatives of the peace committees observer status only, if visas are once again refused to members of the independent peace movement.'

The authors of this text reckon that it is even more important, 'to establish contact between the equal rights and the peace movements in East and West Europe.' They claim to have no illusions about the possibility of changes in the short term in their situation. This appeal has strengthened the links between East and West as can be seen in all the contributions of groups and individuals in Eastern Europe since the contacts began to be made and in the initiatives of the

British END, the Dutch Ecumenical Council for Peace (IKV) and the French Committee for Nuclear Disarmament (CODENE).

The forum organised in West Berlin at the beginning of February under the title of 'Europe and peace — forty years after Yalta' went a step further in the right direction. The idea for this came out of the Perugia meeting following the publication of two texts on the division of Europe and the perspectives for peace which were jointly signed by activists and independent peace groups in the East and West. (3) In the opinion of many of the participants, this meeting illustrated the difficulties of defining a precise framework for joint activity.

The first difficulties arose out of the differences which exist within the peace movement in the West about what attitude to adopt to the official committees in the East. There are those who persist in seeing them as 'valid representatives' — as the majority of the leadership of END do — and display great reluctance therefore in taking any initiative which might alienate the authorities in the East. Whilst conceding the need to build links with independent groups in the East, they advocate caution and seem to prefer that such contact remains on the level of exchange of documents.

On the other hand, there are those who would like to see the establishment of a real network of independent groups, East and West, adopting a common political programme which would lead to joint activity.

This debate also has an echo among several groups in the East, notably the USSR. The Moscow Group, which sees its activity in a strictly legal framework and bases itself on the constitution which states that every Soviet citizen must take action for peace, has always shown reluctance to attack government policy. A spokesperson of the group, Yuri Medvekov even goes so far as to say that:

'This is not meant to downplay the significance of our leaders ... I believe that we ought to give these people the benefit of the doubt or accept their work for a noble cause.' (4) On the other hand, the Leningrad group, which is not so naive, stated in an appeal to activists throughout Europe:

'And we must remember that Europe extends to the Ural mountains and a considerable part of it is occupied by

1. For a balance sheet of this meeting see International Viewpoint No 61, 15 October 1984.

2. On the second END conference see IV No 31, 30 May 1983.

3. References made here are to the French editions of these texts which were published by CODENE and the Association Initiatives pour le Dialogue Est-Ouest, Paris 1985.

4. Extract from a tape recording made of a speech given at the West Berlin Forum on Yalta which took place in February 1985. Several of the positions cited in this article only exist in the form of copies of texts or recordings distributed to the participants. The footnotes which follow will therefore deal only with those texts which have been published.

a state in which the numerous statements made by its leaders on defending peace and on the need for disarmament are in sharp contrast to their deeds, which are aimed at speeding the buildup of military and nuclear power.' (5)

Furthermore we have to take account of the instability of the independent groups in the East who are constantly threatened with repression. The only movement as such that we can talk about — the one which existed in the GDR from 1982-1983 — suffered terrible blows as a result of harassment by the political police, which was intent on destroying combative groups like the one in Jena. The most active militants were thrown into jail, several were driven to emigrate, or were simply expelled from the country as was the case for Roland Jahn. (6)

In the USSR, several peace campaigners were incarcerated in psychiatric hospitals and even several founder members of the Moscow Group were forced to emigrate. Even in Hungary, where the Dialog group prided itself, at the beginning, on its good relations with the authorities, independent activists who refused to comply with the diktats of the official committee found themselves gagged. (7)

Link the fight for peace and the fight for democratic rights

However, the peace groups are far from disappearing either in the GDR, Hungary or the USSR. The very fact that the Synod of Protestant Churches in the GDR declared itself, in September 1984, explicitly against the deployment of missiles in the East as well as in the West shows that the independent peace movement still carries some weight on the political arena. This was confirmed shortly following this decision by the appearance of the common declaration of peace activists and oppositionists in the GDR and Czechoslovakia against the deployment of Soviet missiles and for peace in Europe. (8) As for the Moscow Group, which some people thought had disappeared following mass arrests in the spring of 1984 whilst members were collecting signatures for a petition for peace, it took new initiatives last summer on the occasion of the anniversary of the dropping of the bomb on Nagasaki by the USA. And Yuri Medvekov announced last December that, 'We conservatively appraise our number of Moscow supporters at around 1,000 — this is approximately the number of people that we actually have direct contacts with and with whom we can maintain some relationships, owing to the inherent difficulties of working without the post or telephones.'

In Hungary, those militants who have not given in to the pressures of the bureaucracy have taken up the fight again and are debating new initiatives.

It must be noted that in Poland, where no peace movement to speak of



The third European convention, Perugia, 1984 (DR)

existed before, developments are coming to light about positions being taken by the Committee for Social Resistance (KOS) or left groups organised around the journal *Wola* in Warsaw. Also regular links with peace groups in the West have been established and the Fighting Solidarity Organisation along with the KOS have approved the setting up of peace groups called 'Ranks for Peace and Solidarity' which are pacifist in inspiration.

The main difficulty in reaching joint positions and joint action between peace activists East and West hinges on the different appreciation that each side has on the question of war, because the immediate issues they both have to face are not identical. For example, from the beginning groups in the GDR, Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and the Moscow Group made it plain that, for them, the decisive issue was to make the links between the fight for peace and the fight for democratic rights.

For many western peace activists, involved in mass mobilisations around Pershing and cruise and the demand for unilateral disarmament by their respective governments, such insistence on the question of human rights often strikes them as a diversion. This shows a failure to understand that for independent activists in the East it is a matter which determines whether they can do anything at all. As the Leningrad group recorded;

'... when thousands of you were freely jumping over national boundaries with your peace marches, people in Moscow who simply spoke out in favour of establishing trust between nations as a pledge for peace (The Group for Trust) could not even leave their own homes to join the peace march by Scandinavian peace advocates (summer 1982) through the territory of the USSR. They are being kept under illegal house arrest, their telephones are disconnected, they are threatened with prosecution; in a word, the suppressive machinery of a totalitarian

state is directed against them. All this cannot be passed over in silence, when peace in Europe is under discussion.' (9)

Today, this concern is largely taken up by peace activists in the West, or at least by those who understand the importance of collaboration with independent groups in the East. By the same token, the latter groups have changed their attitude towards the peace movements in the West which they had often previously suspected of being transmission belts for the Kremlin. 'How can such a movement itself be independent when there are so many of its participants who are not?' Janusz Onyszkiewicz, ex-spokesperson of Solidarnosc, demanded rather crudely, in a letter addressed to the IKV leader Mient Jan Faber on the eve of the Perugia conference. Here he was alluding to the presence of official peace committees from Eastern Europe at the conference. These sort of doubts are generally based on the belief that the peace movements in the West are politically dependent on the Kremlin.

'Your protests against the arms race are being used in the official propaganda of countries of the Eastern bloc.' (10) This accusation is made in a Polish KOS text and though such a statement may shock at first it is important to understand what lies behind it.

The official press in Eastern Europe has always done its utmost to present the western peace movements as 'allies', by referring to this 'new phenomenon' which 'constitutes a serious challenge to capitalism's monopoly interests.' The

5. Return Address: Moscow No 1, September 1, 1984 — an international news bulletin on the activities of independent peace activists in the USSR, published in New York.

6. See IV's sister publication, the French language *Inprecor*, No 159, 24 October 1983 for an interview with Roland Jahn.

7. See IV No 67, 14 January 1985.

8. *Ibid*

9. Return Address: Moscow, *op. cit.*

10. See KOS journal No 32, 9 May 1983

Soviet review *Kommunist* even went as far as to express its approval of;

'the participation of hundreds and thousands of young men and women in antiwar demonstrations, often involving direct clashes with police and army detachments, provides an invaluable practical school of political education for today's younger generation.' (11) Such statements can only engender mistrust within the independent movements in Eastern Europe. All the more so because there do exist currents within the peace movement in the West who present the USSR as an ally and who close their eyes to its militaristic policies, supposedly for tactical reasons and in order to concentrate the fight against the main enemy, NATO.

It is around the slogan for unilateral nuclear disarmament that the most bitter debates between independent militants of East and West have crystallised. This partly arises from problems of language:

'For the citizens of those countries under Soviet occupation, the slogan of one-sided disarmament creates the impression that, in the interests of European security — real or imagined — the western peace movement would be prepared to leave the eastern part of this continent to its fate,' Janos Kis, the Hungarian dissident stated in a contribution addressed to the Perugia convention.

It is incumbent on peace activists in the West to assert and reassert that the aim of unilateral disarmament has nothing to do with supporting the military policies of the Kremlin. On the contrary, it is based on the conviction that if, in one country in Western Europe the movement could force the government to refuse to deploy American missiles, this would represent a tremendous victory for the entire European working class, East and West. END explained it in this way in a letter to the Polish KOS;

'Unlike the leaders on both sides who do nothing but oppose the weapons of

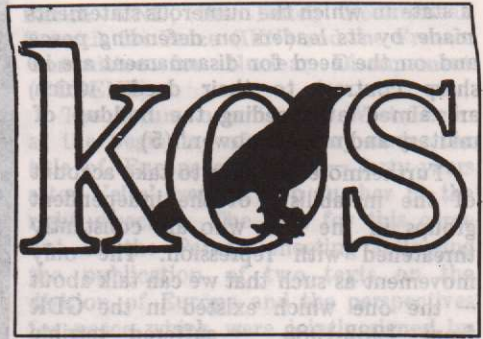
their adversaries, we believe that the only way for us to actually start disarming the blocs is to take first steps on our own territory.' (12) By the same token, the citizens of the GDR have mobilised against the militarisation of civil life imposed by the East German government and against the deployment of the new SS-21 and SS-22 missiles which strengthen the Soviet presence and the dependence of the country on the Kremlin. This does not mean to say that they are unaware of the threat which the Pershing missiles deployed in West Germany represent to them. But how can anyone deny that each movement must mobilise where it is likely to achieve results?

Debates on the role of imperialism

However the differences over the slogan for unilateral nuclear disarmament do not only reflect a misunderstanding of the ultimate goal. They also reflect a profound misunderstanding of the respective roles of US imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy in the arms race. In rejecting, quite justifiably, their government's subservience to the military policies of the Kremlin and especially the presence of Soviet troops on their soil, many Eastern European oppositionists quite simply deny certain facts in attributing responsibility for the arms race to the Soviet bureaucracy.

'If the West shows itself to be weak then a third world war is inevitable', stated members of the Polish 'Ranks for Peace and Solidarity' in an address to peace activists in the West in July 1984 (13) KOS, for its part, puts forward the following:

'The demand for unilateral disarmament in the West will lead to a heightening and not a lessening of the danger of war.' (14) Do such people need to be reminded that the only time nuclear weapons have been used was in 1945,



by American imperialism at Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9? Or that it is US imperialism that has threatened to use nuclear weapons on several occasions since, at times of heightened international tensions. How can we forget that since the Second World War it has always been the US, who has taken the initiative to step up the arms race? Must we also remind people like members of Polish KOS that US imperialism did not wait for the Soviet invasions of Hungary in 1956 or Afghanistan in 1979 to send its troops to crush popular rebellion and national liberation wars when it concerned their economic and political interests, as it did in Santo Domingo in 1965 and in Vietnam. Finally, today it is still US imperialism which is threatening to use its vast armed forces to intervene in Central America against people who are defending, arms in hand, their very right to existence.

It is all the more shocking to discover that this profoundly wrong notion is also being fed by someone like Jacek Kuron, from whom one would never have suspected such ignorance in matters of international politics. In a letter addressed to participants in the West Berlin forum in February of this year he stated that:

'I would like to say above all that it would be a fundamental error to judge the two military and political blocs from the same criteria ... Western Europe and the US are ruled by a social democratic system within which there are certain choices and these choices can be good or bad ... However, if we treat these bad choices made in the context of democracy in the same way as we look at the evil committed by a system governed by the socialist countries, that is by totalitarian states, then we end up confusing what is a bad choice made by a group of people with what is the consequence of a whole system ... Totalitarianism, in the sense that people have no choice, is in itself, evil, while choices made in a democratic system, even the worst sort of choices are still ones which can be changed or corrected; people are what they are, the system is what it is, but it can be changed and corrected'.

Tight security at Red Square, Moscow (DR)



11. *Kommunist* No 12, August 1984.

12. *Peace and Democracy News*, No 1, spring 1984, New York.

13. *B iuletyn D olnoslasky*, No 55, June-July 1 1984.

14. *KOS* No 41, 23 October, 1984.

Is Jacek Kuron trying to make us believe that the American people were in favour of the Vietnam war or that this war, and the threatened US invasion of Nicaragua, are the products of the natural imperfections of democracy and not the product of the economic foundations of the capitalist and imperialist system?

How can he explain the fact that the Belgian government has just decided to deploy American nuclear missiles when 78 per cent of people asked in opinion polls in this country said they were against such a decision?

Because they live in a totalitarian society many dissidents in Eastern Europe fall into the trap of making superficial analyses of the two politico-military blocs which are confronting one another and look only at the form of a particular regime and not at the socio-economic foundations it is based on. These dissidents tend to project onto the whole world the situation in their own country and their own region, which is dominated by the Soviet bureaucracy, in the case of Eastern Europe, and suggest that the destiny of the whole world is

threatened by the desire of the USSR to dominate everywhere. In the face of this, of course, western imperialism is seen as, at best, a secondary danger to humanity.

In this discussion with independent peace activists in Eastern Europe it is important that the voices of those in Eastern Europe who are fighting against this erroneous and all too prevalent view of the role of the US and imperialism in general, is heard. In his address to the Berlin forum, Jiri Hajek, the spokesperson of Charter 77 asserted that:

'The policies Reagan is pursuing in his efforts to restore America's hegemony are designed to boost the crucial arms factor. This means requiring more active involvement and greater efforts on the part of America's allies. What it means as regards America's relations with its opponents, is an effort to convince them of their inferiority and oblige them to utilise still greater resources for military purposes and thereby damage their economic development.' Mihailo Markovic, a Yugoslav philosopher and one of the main thinkers in the Praxis group also declared that;

'Independent Eastern European intellectuals who see in freedom and respect for civil rights a precondition of peace are indeed right as long as they speak about their own part of the world. They would only not be right if they assumed that somehow it would be the responsibility of the West to achieve for them their freedom and civil rights. There are vast disagreements among Eastern European intellectuals in this respect. Jaroslav Sabata in his letter to Edward Thompson rightly insists on "international solidarity of all those who resist every kind of oppression." On that basis a trend of "convergence of the struggle against the modernisation of NATO and the struggle against the violation of civil rights in Eastern Europe", could indeed take place.

'However, Vaclav Racek expressed a view which is both unrealistic and dangerous when he demanded that the peace movement, "support the military forces of western democracies as instruments of human rights confronting totalitarian systems." This view is unrealistic since the military forces of the USA and other western countries are anything but "an instrument of human rights" — suffice to examine how they were used in conquering colonies in the past and in Latin America, South Asia, North Africa more recently.'

There is a good chance that most of the peace groups in the GDR would agree with this view since in their contributions they have always coupled their rejection of the deployment of Soviet missiles in the country with a parallel rejection of Pershing in West Germany. They have sometimes made very valuable contributions to an understanding of the different motives of the bourgeoisie on the one hand, and the bureaucracy on the other or to the

Solidarity with peace campaigners in Eastern Europe

All those in the USSR who decide to demonstrate their desire for peace outside of the official structures can expect a 'choice' of prison, exile or psychiatric hospital. They can be subjected to repeated 48-hour detentions; continual questioning and harassment by the KGB; sacking from their jobs; prolonged internment in psychiatric hospital; being sent to Siberia; imprisonment.

The repression meted out to independent peace activists is no different from the usual methods the bureaucracy have of silencing any opposition although in the case of the majority of members and sympathisers of the Group for Trust they, for example, do not see themselves as oppositionists.

In the spring of 1984, the activities of the Moscow Group provoked several arrests. These activities involved collecting 800 signatures in the streets on May 18 and 19; a demonstration of 500 people on June 1, and more signature collecting the rest of that month.

During the summer, 36 people were arrested on the eve of a demonstration which had been fixed for the anniversary of Hiroshima and fifty others were arrested a few days later whilst they were holding a group seminar. Several were released shortly afterwards but others were held in prison for 15 days, accused of 'thoughtless hooliganism'. They were constantly threatened with being sent to psychiatric hospital. But the Soviet authorities do not just make idle threats as the following cases illustrate:

Lidia Latsis-Doronina, 57 years old, was condemned to five years in a camp and three years in exile, for distributing a Group for Trust leaflet in Riga;

— Aleksandr Vorona, was put in a psychiatric hospital for distributing propaganda from the Group for Trust in Novosibirsk;

— Oleg Radzinski, one of the leaders of the Moscow Group was condemned to exile;

— Yuri Popov and Serguei Troyanski have been subjected to forced neurological treatment in the psychiatric hospital in Moscow since they were arrested in 1983;

— Vladimir Gershuni is detained in a psychiatric hospital in Alma-Ata;

— Valerii Senderov, a trade unionist, was condemned to 12 years in prison and then five years — 17 years in total.

— A particularly tragic case is that of Aleksandr Shatravka, who was arrested in April 1982 and condemned to three years in a prison camp in April 1983. Since his arrest he has faced continual torture and privation from sleep, to the point that, in May 1984 he tried to commit suicide. So he was placed in solitary confinement, where the ill treatment continued. Shatravka has been fighting battles for 15 years now. In 1971, he refused to serve in the army because of his pacifist convictions, following which he was sent on several occasions to psychiatric hospital, where he has spent most of his adult life. He is currently in the *Kazakhstan prison camp at SSSR Dzhambul'skaya, obl.g, Zhanatas, Uchr. 158/3.*

This repression has not stopped the Group for Trust pursuing its activities. They continue to hold weekly seminars, mainly on issues like arms reconversion, on the medical effects of nuclear war and on the consequences of the 'nuclear winter'. They also organised a demonstration for April 12, 1985.

Twenty people were arrested on the eve of the demonstration called by the Moscow Group for May 16, 1985:

— Nicolas Khramov, 'a habitual offender' was sentenced for the umpteenth time to 15 days in prison with the possibility of 7 years.

— V. Brodsky accused of 'serious hooliganism' has a possibility of five years in prison;

— Olga Kabanova and Natasha Atvlyenkova, young women of 16 and 18 years old respectively were put in the psychiatric hospital in Moscow.

It is vital to demonstrate our solidarity with these victims of Soviet repression. Telegrams should be addressed to the Soviet embassy and to the Official Peace Committees to protest against their treatment and to demand information on all the above and other cases.

militarisation of society and the arms race. Their links with peace activists in West Germany and their facility for receiving daily information from West German television undoubtedly has something to do with the fact that they have less illusions than other peace activists in Eastern Europe, in the democratic character of western governments.

As always the debate on the role of imperialism is not confined to a polemic between peace activists from East and West but involves a discussion among peace activists within Eastern Europe itself. But at the same time we must be aware that the East European peace movements can often bring to Western activists information and even an analysis on the motives and dynamics of the military policies of the bureaucratic regimes which could help some to understand the issues more clearly and even to break with some of the illusions they might have on the subject.

Both the struggle for democratic rights, and the fight against militarisation of society (a central theme in the peace movement in the GDR) are very much in evidence in a group like the Association of Estonian Partisans for Peace who are demanding a neutral and denuclearised Baltic. They stress that, 'the USSR might encourage peace movements abroad with great zeal but inside its own borders, the army is glorified across the whole length and breadth of the country.' They also denounce the different expressions of militarism in day-to-day life in the Soviet Union (16)

A similar concern can also be found behind the initiative taken recently by a Polish group demanding a limitation on military education in schools. Thirteen Warsaw students have begun a hunger strike in a church in solidarity with Marek Adamkiewicz, who was condemned to two and a half years in prison for having refused to take an oath required of all those who are called up, and which involves a pledge of allegiance to the Soviet army. A petition was circulated in several towns demanding his release.

It is interesting to note that the approach of activists in Eastern Europe, in the framework of democratic rights, is beginning to involve opposition to certain forms of national oppression to which so many nationalities are subjected under the bureaucratic regimes. Hungarian peace activists and dissidents for example, see the need to take up the struggle against discrimination against national minorities in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Romania. The Polish KOS goes even further, reflecting the fact that this issue is more and more prevalent in the underground press of Solidarnosc. In its address to the West Berlin forum, the KOS put forward the demand for the rights of European minorities oppressed by the USSR saying;

'This is why we address all the participants of the conference, asking them

to remember also the silent victims of Yalta — the Lithuanians, the Letonians, the Estonians, the Byelorussians, the Ukrainians. Their right to self determination is no less inalienable than ours, and their sufferings and oppression are even greater. This is why, even more than we do, they need solidarity.'

But the national question is also raised in relation to Germany, in the Prague Appeal addressed to the upcoming Amsterdam convention:

'If your aim is the unification of Europe', we read, 'then we cannot deny the right of self determination to anyone and this also applies to the Germans. However, as with all other rights this should not be imposed at the expense of other people, or by ignoring their fears. Let us say without equivocation then that no solution will be found by imposing a new revision of European frontiers. In a process of European rapprochement, any frontiers should progressively lose their importance, though even this should not be seen as an opportunity to fall back into nationalism.' (17)

It is important to note that the bureaucratic regimes, true to the policy of Stalin in this regard, always present the division of Germany as the best way to ensure against a rebirth of German expansionism. The concern expressed in the Prague Appeal would only be justified if one failed to pose the perspective of the reunification of Germany in the context of a break with capitalism. There should be no German nationalist danger if the reunification of this country took place, not under the auspices of the bourgeoisie but as the result of an anti-capitalist revolution in the West and an anti-bureaucratic revolution in the Eastern sector.

Peace activists and dissidents within Eastern Europe are well aware of the need to establish contacts and to deepen the debate between them, across any frontiers. It is in this framework that contacts of longstanding have been established between democratic oppositions in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and more recently between Czechoslovakia and the GDR. Hungarian oppositionists are also active in this area. As one of them, Milos Haraszi said,

'The issue of peace could gradually become the international strategic focus



of all East European oppositions.' It was just such an international axis, which according to this writer, was missing in Solidarnosc and in Charter 77. (18)

The more that peace activists East and West understand the different circumstances in which both work, over and above the common aspirations of those who work for peace, the more the necessary dialogue between them can advance. In the words of Mikhailo Markovic;

'It is true, of course, that people everywhere crave for the same things: peace, a higher quality of life, more liberty, social justice and so on. However, these universal values are threatened and violated to different degrees in different parts of the world. Practical priorities are different and the causes for which people are ready to fight, join movements and take risks are different, although they need not exclude each other and may indeed be quite compatible.' (19)

Toward united struggle — East and West

The unity of struggle of the peace movements of Eastern and Western Europe will be decisive in the antiwar struggle worldwide. But it will not be through summit negotiations between governments in Geneva or anywhere else that will allow this to progress, no matter in what spirit such negotiations are supposedly held. The only guarantee against the danger of war, is the mobilisation of the masses against the deployment of nuclear weapons, and against the growth in military budgets; against the militarisation of civil life and against any infringements of civil and trade union liberties. Such a struggle will of course take different forms and different emphases East and West. But at the same time, the international struggle for peace is evidence of the converging interests of people in Eastern and Western Europe who are fighting for the right to self-determination and for the right to determine their own destiny.

Solidarnosc militants in KOS are absolutely right when they say that 'Our implacable struggle against the current regime will make it too costly for Moscow to be able to drag us into the current phase of the arms race.' (20) It is no accident, in fact, that there is not a single Soviet missile stationed in Poland. Through their struggle, and despite its temporary defeat, the Polish people have shown the way forward for all the peoples of Europe. This is the kind of determination which must inspire the peace movement East and West towards a united struggle. ■

16. Published in French in *Alternative* No 31, January-February 1985.

17. Published in French in *IDEO* No 1 April 1985, Paris.

18. *Across Frontiers*, Berkeley, California, winter-spring 1985.

19. *END* No 12, October-November, 1984.

20. *KOS* No 42, 30 October 1984.

The test of deployment

Since 1979, the fight against the installation of the 48 cruise missiles allotted to Belgium has been led by two coordinating committees, the Flemish Committee Against Nuclear Weapons (VAKA) and the Walloon National Action Committee for Peace and Development (CNAPD). They have cooperated in organizing national demonstrations.

The pace for the antimissiles movement has been set by four big demonstrations in Brussels. The numbers grew from 50,000 persons on December 9, 1979; to 200,000 on October 25, 1981; to 400,000 on October 23, 1983; and finally it was possible to bring out 150,000 people on March 17, 1985, in an emergency demonstration two days after the government decided to deploy the first 16 cruise missiles at the Florennes airbase. In all of these demonstrations, VAKA played the biggest role, with the great majority of the demonstrators coming from Flanders.

Moreover, the political life of the country over the last 15 years has been marked by a reorganization

of the state which, while modest in itself, has nonetheless transferred some small powers to the Flemish and Walloon regional authorities. This has led to the division along language lines of every political party — with the exception of the far left — and of many other organizations. Thus, although the central government remains the final arbiter at all levels, the political dynamic, the evolutions of the parties, and the electoral contest are developing in a different way in the different regions.

For these two reasons, this article does not offer a rounded analysis of the peace movement but will concentrate on one particular aspect that is worth studying. It will review the history of the VAKA in order to highlight the specific features of its policy and indicate how the leadership of this coalition managed to build such a mass movement. From there, the article will go on to analyze the effects of the VAKA's activity on the main Flemish parties and especially on the Socialistische Partij, the Flemish Socialist Party.

Guy HENDRIX

The VAKA sprang up in November 1979, just before NATO's "double-track" decision. The initiative was taken by some organizations belonging to the OCV, a very broad forum in which leaders of the various tendencies participated in order to discuss problems of peace and disarmament. The founding groups of the VAKA, most of them youth, sociocultural, or Third Worldist organizations, thought that it was necessary to respond by direct action, which the OCV, as a discussion forum, was not prepared to do.

At the outset, these organizations came together with the sole aim of calling a demonstration for December 9, 1979, three days before the meeting of the NATO Council at which Belgium was to take a position on the deployment of the Euromissiles. After the success of this demonstration and, noting the reservations that Belgium and the Netherlands expressed in giving their assent to the principle of the NATO "double-track decision," this initial nucleus of anti-missile activists decided to pursue the struggle and organize themselves in a more serious way.

As its name indicates, the VAKA confined itself to organizing mobilizations against nuclear weapons. Its aim is to eliminate nuclear weapons from the entire world. It took the form of a front of organizations without any individual members. The leadership was made up of one member from each of the 18 participating organizations. Political

parties were excluded from membership.

The component organizations of the VAKA remained active in the OCV, with which a formal agreement was reached giving the VAKA an autonomy of decision making with respect to nuclear weapons. This agreement also provided for the OCV as a whole associating itself with the discussions or initiatives of the VAKA. In this way, an organic link was maintained with, for example, the political parties (Socialist parties, Communist parties, environmentalist formations, revolutionary organizations) and the two labor confederations — Catholic and Socialist which were represented in the OCV.

The VAKA leadership launched a major organizational drive leading to the formation of city and town committees throughout Flanders. These local groups were open to all persons who want to work actively for the coalition's objectives, regardless of whether they were members or not of the component organizations or of a political party.

In this way, a new sort of organizational network developed. It combined an autonomous leadership oriented toward direct action and shielded from partisan infighting that could paralyze its capacity for initiative, with an activist structure for mobilizing. (1) Moreover, this whole operation has functioned within the framework of a policy of ongoing collaboration with the organizations of the workers movement.

While it approved the NATO "double-track" decision in December 1979, the

coalition government of the bourgeois Social Christian Party (CVP) and the Flemish Socialist Party (SP) at the same time reserved the final decision to deploy the Euromissiles in Belgium for six months. It made this conditional on an assessment of the negotiations with the USSR. In the spring of 1980, the decision was postponed again as the result of a government crisis.

The new CVP-SP government was to take the first opportunity for negotiations with the USSR — which appeared at the time of Helmut Schmidt's visit to Moscow on June 30, 1980 — to delay the decision again. In September of the same year, it reaffirmed its support for the NATO "double-track decision" and declared that it would wait to see what the results were of the coming negotiations.

In fact, the government declared that "as of now, it accepts the conclusions of the talks and the tasks that fall to Belgium in the framework of NATO if the negotiations fail." However, the execution of NATO's directives would not be automatic, but would remain conditional on the Belgian government's own evaluation of the situation.

The Belgian government maintained this ambiguous position for more than four years. First, it was waiting for the INF (Intermediate Nuclear Forces)

1. It has to be remembered in this regard that up to November 1981 the Flemish Socialist Party was in the government in coalition with the bourgeois CVP but it nonetheless participated in the antimissile mobilizations in 1979 and 1981.

negotiations in Geneva, which were to start only in the fall of 1981. Then, it was waiting for the conclusion of these negotiations, which was to come at the end of 1983, following the installation of the Euromissiles in West Germany, in Great Britain, and in Italy. And finally, it held off insisting that there was the possibility of new negotiations opening up.

At every half-yearly assessment, the decision was put off, and it was again in December 1984. It was only when the day arrived that had been set by NATO for the arrival of the first missiles, March 15, 1985, that the Belgian government suddenly gave the green light, sending shock waves through public opinion. In fact, the Belgian people only learned of this decision after the US airplanes carrying the cruise missiles were already on their way.

For 'a unilateral step toward bilateral disarmament'

At the beginning, the VAKA demanded that the government negotiate before deciding on any deployment of the missiles. This point of view was shared by a very broad spectrum of organizations and defended within the government by the Socialist parties. The VAKA leadership came quickly to understand, especially after Ronald Reagan came out with his celebrated "Zero Option" formula, which was immediately supported by the Belgian government, that the antimissiles movement could not count on the negotiations to solve the problem.

The VAKA leadership, which was in no way tarred by the brush of the peace movement of the 1950s, drew a negative balance sheet of the whole process of disarmament negotiations, stating: "All negotiations in the past have led to new steps in the arms race."

It has to be understood clearly that this position did not come from a Marxist analysis of the arms problem, nor from a conception of the need for unilateral disarmament on the part of the imperialist states. It was based on seeing the impasse that resulted from every strategy for bilateral, simultaneous, balanced, and negotiated disarmament.

The thinking that inspired the VAKA came from a current grouped around the GRIT (Gradual Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension Reduction), which maintains that the process can be unfrozen by unilateral partial measures, which would elicit similar measures on the other side and open the way for new negotiations that would then really be directed toward reducing arms stockpiles.

It was from this standpoint that the VAKA was to focus on the demand that the Belgian government unconditionally reject the installation of a single cruise missile. This position was expressed in the slogan "Missiles, no way! A unilateral step toward bilateral disarmament!"



Brussels demonstration 25 October 1981 (DR)

This political orientation made possible a considerable growth in the strength of the antimissiles movement in Flanders in 1982 and 1983, enabling this movement in turn to become a major factor in the political life of the country.

After the November 1981 elections, the government that is still in office was formed by a coalition between the CVP, the main bourgeois party, led by the premier, Wilfried Martens; the PVV, the Flemish Liberal Party; and their Walloon partners, the Parti Social Chretien (PSC) and the Parti Reformateur Liberal (PRL). The Socialists were forced to go into opposition.

Although this new government maintained its predecessor's ambiguous attitude toward the antimissiles movement and continued to put off the decision on the installation of the missiles, there could be little doubt about the real intentions of such an all-bourgeois government. Nobody could believe that it would go against Washington and NATO. So, the determination of the VAKA and its broad base to fight this government started to grow.

Sustained propaganda and information campaigns by the VAKA have led more and more organizations to take a position of unconditional opposition to deployment of the cruise missiles. This includes not only the opposition parties, such as the SP, the Volksunie (the bourgeois Flemish nationalist party), and Agalev (the Greens), but also a great many Catholic organizations that have traditionally been part of the social base of the CVP. The latter comprise the Pax Christi, Catholic Third World aid associations, all the Catholic youth organizations, the Catholic universities, religious orders, and the sociocultural organizations of the Christian Workers Movement (MOC-ACW), which are genuine mass organizations deeply rooted in every municipality, every neighborhood, and every village in Flanders. (2)

The decision to hold a third demonstration in Brussels on October 23, 1983, which was announced a year in

advance, opened the way for a broad campaign by the VAKA around the slogan "Missiles, no way!" and for broadening its local committees.

At the same time, in the OCV, the VAKA pursued an intelligent unity policy that led to the official participation of the whole of the Christian Workers Movement in the 1983 demonstration. Even though this movement is part of the CVP and does not hold a unilateralist position toward the missiles, it was possible to get its leaders to endorse the action. This is because they feared finding themselves at loggerheads with their own base, which was influenced to a considerable extent by the VAKA campaign and which participated in it actively.

So, the October 23, 1983, demonstration drew 400,000 persons, of whom three quarters were Flemish, that is 300,000 people out of the total Flemish population of 5 million, which is by far the highest proportion that we have seen in Europe, far greater even than in the Netherlands.

The demonstration reflected a real united front of the entire workers movement. Participating in it were the Christian and Socialist Unions, all the parties of the workers movement, and also tens of thousands of individuals who were not mobilized by the traditional apparatuses but directly by the structures of the VAKA. This strengthened the VAKA's position relative to the traditional reformist leaderships, confirmed its authority, and increased its margin for maneuver and its capacity for autonomous initiative.

After this demonstration, the vast network of local VAKA committees, most of whose members are independents,

2. The Christian Workers Movement (MOC/ACW) serves as an umbrella for all the Christian organizations in the working class — the confederation of Christian Unions (CSC), the Christian mutual-aid societies, cooperatives, educational bodies, etc. The MOC is linked to the Parti Social Chretien/Christelijke Volkspartij (PSC/CVP) through the Christian Democratic wing of these parties.

demanding and got the right to send elected representatives to sit on the VAKA leadership. So, since the start of 1984, this leadership has included 15 representatives of the component organizations and 15 representatives elected by the committees (three per province).

Twice a year, a general assembly of the committees meets. It has no formal decision-making power, but has a real influence on the general orientations.

I will try to explain briefly some of the basic elements that make it possible to understand this rather special experience.

First of all, Flanders only went through its big growth of industry in the 1960s. These processes of urbanization and proletarianization reduced the hold of the Catholic church and the effectiveness of religion as an ideological cement of solidarity among the classes. In time, this evolution had to create tensions within the CVP, the bourgeoisie's main party, which got 40% and 45% of the vote respectively in the 1977 and 1978 elections. The Christian Workers Movement, which has a far larger membership than the Socialist unions, has historically been integrated into this interclass party. This latent contradiction surfaced slightly, if at all in the 1970s. It was later to explode over the missiles question, with the economic crisis helping to exacerbate the class tensions.

Moreover, the influence of the Social Democracy, whose historic bastions are in the Walloon industrial areas, has not spread very widely in Flanders. Because of its class-collaborationist policy and frequent participation in the various bourgeois governments since the Second World War, the Social Democracy has appeared to the young Flemish proletariat as an establishment party, lacking dynamism, ideologically rightist, and ageing. In a nutshell, the Socialist Party, whose vote fell continuously from 1961 to 1981, dropping to 22%, got no grip at all on the new radicalized generations after 1968.

Among the Flemish youth, the role of leadership was played by a great many different sorts of associations in which the initiative was taken by young activists not dominated by reformism, who threw themselves pell mell into all sorts of specific struggles and campaigns. It was out of this milieu that the founders of the VAKA came, along with a considerable part of its cadres.

Under the impact of the mass movement, Flemish Social Democracy underwent a spectacular evolution. After the old Socialist Party split along linguistic lines in 1978, the Flemish Socialist Party started up a vast rejuvenation operation under the aegis of its new chair, Karel Van Miert and a new generation of leaders. This operation in no way put in question the political orientation of the party, as shown by its continuous participation in the six governments that ruled between 1977 and 1981, which

introduced the first austerity measures, preparing the way for what has become a thoroughgoing policy today.

At the time of the NATO "double-track decision" in December 1979, this class-collaborationist orientation was maintained. While formulating reservations about the Euromissiles, the Flemish Socialist Party gave its approval to the government's acceptance of NATO's plans. However, a third of the voting members of the SP Political Bureau opposed this position, which meant that they were ready to trigger a governmental crisis over this question.

The ambiguity of the SP's positions, with the party supporting the VAKA's demonstrations on the one hand and endorsing the government's decisions on the other, could only increase the profound distrust that the Social Democracy inspired in the nascent mass movement, who had previously turned against Social Democratic practices. But this movement of radicalization was affecting precisely the social groups that the SP's "modernization" operation was designed to attract toward the party.

After its umpteenth electoral defeat in November 1981 and its passage into the opposition, the SP progressively took up the demands of the VAKA and mobilized actively for the demonstrations of October 1983 and March 1984. From this point on, the SP distinguished itself from every other reformist current, including the PS (Walloon Socialists), in that it no longer opposed deployment only in the name of the need "to give negotiations a chance first to avert the stationing of the missiles." Its rejection of the cruise missiles became unconditional.

While the Walloon Socialist Party and the Christian Workers Movement never questioned the justification for the "double-track" decision itself and left the door open, therefore, for a deployment of the Euromissiles, the SP broke with this decision by NATO and with the political attitude it had held while it was still in the government.

Preparing for elections

This change would never have been possible without the formidable pressure of the mass movement led by the VAKA. But, conversely, the support of the dominant workers party helped the VAKA to stick to its basic demand "Missiles, no way!" despite all the pressures brought to bear on it by the forces of the right.

In fact, while the SP was in opposition, it could take more radical positions without having to pay too great a price. The test came later when, in the beginning of 1985, the government began preparing to accept the installation of the missiles.

After some hesitations, which revealed that an intense internal debate had taken place, the SP finally came out for un-

conditional withdrawal of the missiles that had already been deployed, and without the agreement of NATO if need be. What is more, it pledged never to participate in a government whose program did not include this demand for the unconditional removal of the missiles already deployed.

This evolution was once again the result of the firmness with which the VAKA put its political demands to the parties. It also reflects, on the other hand, the SP's desire to regain its lost ground, to rebuild, and to better its electoral results. The SP has been obliged by the breadth and determination of the mass movement to identify itself as much as possible with its demands.

Moreover, this mass movement is far from being defeated because there has been an initial deployment of the missiles. It is in fact building a new mass mobilization for October 29, 1985, that is, six weeks before the next elections, which are to be held on December 8, 1985. It is demanding pure and simple removal of the 16 cruise missiles already installed in Belgium, and it wants to bring pressure to bear on the formation of the new government.

This context, therefore, posed a very high hurdle for the SP, but it cleared it. The SP's present line, thus, on one concrete point is in direct and open opposition to NATO, the United States, and their imperialist policy. If it maintains this political orientation, any coalition with the CVP is out of the question. No bourgeois party is going to swallow that. However, inasmuch as the present government coalition of the CVP and the Liberals is in big danger of losing its majority in parliament in the upcoming elections, a political impasse is shaping up for the bourgeoisie. The latter may find itself incapable of putting together a government with any stability whatever.

However, despite its education on the missiles question, the SP has not broken with reformism. It does not itself exclude collaborating again in a government with the CVP. It accepts NATO and the concept of deterrent. It accepts the framework of peaceful coexistence and the French and British arsenals. And, finally, it supports a European defense.

So there is no guarantee that the SP will not capitulate sooner or later on the question of the missiles. However, if it does, a deepgoing crisis in the party is a certainty. The SP leadership in fact seems already to have gone further than it wanted to.



Thus, the masses have a whole series of reasons to think that there is a real possibility for victory in the battle against the missiles. There is the vastness of the mass movement — the polls show that 78% of the population are against the missiles. There is the hope that the government will lose its majority in the upcoming elections. And the SP and the Greens have committed themselves to getting the missiles removed. So, despite the deployment of some missiles already, the next demonstration is certainly going to be massive, because there has been no sign of demobilization.

Therefore, the pressure of this movement on the political parties will continue and will pose the key questions of a working-class strategy in Belgium. In the Christian Workers Movement, the unnatural link with the CVP has become the subject of wide-ranging discussion. The current that is fighting for an independent Christian workers party outside of the CVP already represents a third of the Christian Workers Movement. Although this tendency may also be the result of discontent with the Christian unions' support for the present government's brutal austerity policy, it has also been strongly influenced by the CVP's policy on the missiles.

On two occasions, there have been veritable shock waves in the MOC/ACW. About thirty members of parliament belonging to the working-class wing of the CVP demonstrated with the ACW on October 23, 1983. But two weeks later they voted en bloc with the CVP and the government, thereby stabbing the demonstrators in the back. On March 17, 1985, the ACW leadership refused to call on its members to support the emergency demonstration against the deployment of the missiles so as not to put the CVP and the government in difficulty again.

The ranks of the ACW revolted and demonstrated along with the VAKA any way. They did so openly, coming out in tens of thousands. Through these experiences in struggle, the perspective of an autonomous Christian workers party is gaining more and more credibility.

Moreover, the political perspective of the SP, which has never proposed any alternative except governing with the parties of the right, is also being discussed. On the basis of the struggle against the missiles, a lot of people are wondering what usefulness such coalitions could have. The perspective of a political front of the Socialist and Christian workers, based on unity of the two big labor confederations, is more and more coming to the fore as the only possible alternative.

So, the two main obstacles to the advance of the perspective of a workers government are being clearly exposed before the eyes of the masses and on an infinitely greater scale than before. Whatever the final balance sheet of the fight against the Euromissiles may be this political dynamic is not going to be the least of the peace movement's accomplishments. ■

The mass movement revives around the peace issue

The Spanish state's entry into NATO took place in the shadow of the 1979 "twin-track decision," and was marked as well by the "warning" given by the February 1981 attempted coup d'état. Since 1979, the question of NATO and the no less important one of the Yankee bases have been in the air. By a fortunate combination of circumstances, therefore, it was possible to translate this still vague sense of unease in the society into the first antibloc demonstration in the Spanish state, the First March on Torrejon. (1)

Approximately 15,000 persons responded to the call issued by the then virtually unknown Comision Gestora de la Primera Marcha a Torrejon. The reason for this success has to be sought in an effective combination of an issue — a question that was being talked about in the streets — and the touching of a sensitive nerve — a deep-seated anti-American feeling in the country.

Antonio FLOREZ

This first action exceeded the expectations of those of us who took part in founding and building the Comision. The call brought a success that put the forces of the revolutionary left at the beginning of a situation drastically different from the conditions it has been experiencing up to now, that is, since the start of the transition to parliamentary rule. For the first time, a demonstration proved successful on an issue whose full importance has been perceived only by the most highly conscious sectors. Many thousands of people came out in response to a call supported initially only by the forces of the revolutionary left and independent sections of the vanguard environmentalist associations, etc.

In addition, there was another factor besides the timeliness of the call for this demonstration that explained its success. The objectives were coherent, they were firmly maintained, and the forces issuing the call had the prestige of belonging to the only sector that did not endorse the *Reforma* [that is, the rules the bourgeoisie laid down for the transition to parliamentary rule] and did not yield to any of the blackmail that followed. Moreover, since this struggle had been abandoned in advance by the reformist parties, the Social Democrats and the Communists, the whole field was left open to the only ones who were prepared to act.

To a certain extent, we have to ask ourselves if this support for the mobilization was not favored by the attitude of a lot of the "disillusioned" that, on this question at least, we did not have to give in. The feelings of this extensive sector of exmembers of collapsed left parties, independents close to those parties or to the left parties that still exist, and left sections of mass organizations could

range from a deep anti-imperialism to a vague nationalist aspiration for real sovereignty.

However, what is certain is that such a possible amalgam of motives could be focused behind coherent, firm, and radical proposals, thanks to the role that the revolutionary left played in this demonstration and the following ones. This fact was recognized implicitly by all those who worked with the committee, which later came to be known definitively as the Madrid Anti-NATO committee.

For the first time in the recent history of the Spanish state, the revolutionary left was able to take the leadership, to serve as the cohesive element in bringing together a broad vanguard that had been quite disoriented by a political process that had dashed the hopes of the majority of the population for a clean break with the old regime.

In this respect, it was important from the outset to defend intransigently a radical program. Linking the question of the bases with NATO was criticized by the reformist parties and even by moderate sections of the unions, as well as by some of the peace organizations that began to proliferate. The fact that the organizers were able to stand up to this pressure for watering down the content of the demonstrations, which required in the beginning a battle to keep the question of the bases from being separated from the question of NATO, is the secret that explains why more and more people came to follow this radical sector and did not fall in behind the other confused or indecisive forces. The radical sector was the only one that could carry this struggle all the way.

Nonetheless, like so many other things, the whole business could have ended

1. Torrejon de Ardos is an American air base near Madrid.

up as nothing more than a mirage. In the still recent past, there was strong popular pressure for demands that were not won, and this pressure was dissipated by the *Reforma* and the disenchantment that followed. Why did not the definitive entry of the Spanish state into NATO, carried through under the government of Calvo Sotelo, put an end to those mobilizations? Why did this not spread demoralization and why did not the radical struggle give way to "realistic" proposals from the reformist sectors?

No single reason can be given. Once again a series of factors combined perfectly to assure the persistence and continued growth of this infant antiwar movement. In the first place, the attempted coup of February 1981 had an effect. On the one hand, the parliamentary parties yielded to the blackmail of the state apparatus and accepted deals on a series of basic laws — administrative devolution, antiterrorist legislation, economic measures, etc. On the other hand, the feeling of impotence in many sections of the vanguard and other sectors as well in the face of the attempted coup and its subsequent consequences led these elements to see no other way of expressing themselves than participating in whatever mobilization developed, and there was no other than the anti-NATO actions. Another factor was that many people were beginning to distrust the policy of pacts, given the dismal results it produced.

A role was played as well by the growing awareness of the importance of the question of NATO and the bases, the problem of the blocs, the dynamic of the arms race, and the threat of war. The attitude of the Social Democratic party itself, the PSOE, which was then in opposition, was also important, although it was clearly electoralist and opportunist. The enormous rally in November 1981 in Madrid, called by the PSOE, was the answer of a contender for power to the indefensible maneuvers of a government that had, for reasons of state already become caught in the toils of the pact. But at the same time, it had a major effect in drawing the attention of a lot of people to this question, in arousing the interest of large sections of the population in it, and in launching a public debate. All of this was to end as another broken election promise, along with the PSOE's pledge to create 800,000 jobs.

However, there should be no mistake. The PSOE only hitched itself as cautiously as possible to a wagon that the radical left had already set in motion, and which in a very short time had assumed a top importance for any proposal for an alternative government. The mobilizations on this issue forced the PSOE itself to line up behind the already famous slogan "NATO, no for a start!"

But it is significant that from the outset this slogan proved very unpopular because it had a double meaning. And, of course, it was also highly significant



The changes promised by the PSOE government never came (DR)

that this big rally called by the PSOE ended up being taken advantage of by the radicals, inasmuch as the slogan most changed was the one most feared by the PSOE — "NATO, no! Bases out!" It was the first time that the reformists experienced the great difficulty of diverting this movement behind moderate and ambiguous propositions.

Building a national movement

This is the way we explain the unusual fact that the mobilizations did not end and that the political level did not drop. But how can you explain the growing over of this popular feeling against NATO and the bases into a movement with a broad and radical range of objectives, which has gradually organized itself and proved capable of throwing off balance a government that enjoyed an extraordinary electoral mandate?

Of course, as I already pointed out the objectives adopted were in themselves sufficiently timely and sufficiently important. The work of agitation and explaining the importance of these aims was a key to popularizing the struggles and giving them a mass character. But a qualitative step forward is taken when steadily growing nuclei of people go from simply letting themselves be organized, turning out for demonstrations, to organizing themselves, to becoming activists to a certain extent. This process, which is the most interesting thing, had a lot to do with the attitude and the style of work of those who educated the movement politically and organizationally.

I have talked about the unquestionable importance (which is recognized today by parties such as the CP and was from the beginning by the government itself) of the participation of the revolutionary left in building this movement. However, the organizations of the revolutionary left have a reputation, and not only in the Spanish state, for being sectarian

or tending to sectarianism. So, the secret why steadily growing nuclei of independent vanguard sectors, environmentalist organizations, anti-nuclear organizations, etc., and finally the unions themselves and the CP were drawn into the movement must be sought in the dynamic, in the style of work undertaken and pursued by the revolutionary left.

This style of work can be summed up in four basic aspects:

— *A dynamic of unity.* From the outset, the Madrid Anti-NATO committee, as well as other bodies with similar characteristics in the rest of the state, offered the possibility for participating in action and discussion on bases scrupulously tailored to the needs of unity, without any attempts to push people around or manipulate them. There was also the golden rule that there should be unity on something worthwhile. There was no attempt to achieve a fictitious or useless unity which would mean simply trying to include everybody by reducing the movement to the lowest common denominator. Rather, unity was built on the basis of radical and coherent demands, which had already shown that they could unite and mobilize the masses.

— *A nondogmatic dynamic.* Very shortly after the mobilizations had revealed all their importance and after the issue had become the subject of general interest, All-Spain Forums were held in which the participants tried to define a certain "program," expressed concretely in a series of demands for the mobilization. In these discussions, a radical wing took form, and a moderate one.

However, the style of the discussions, which established points of general agreement, without posing the others as an obstacle to unity in action, was the key that enabled a movement as broad and heterogeneous as the one that was then taking form to maintain its coherence and not be pulled apart by the tendency of the various organizations to operate on their own.

Undoubtedly important in this was the common reference point for all, the slogan "NATO no! Bases out!" Despite the insistence of the moderate wing on the need to separate these two questions, the popular support that both had won together and also the intransigence of the radical wing in defending the link assured that this dual slogan would be maintained. It remained as a bulwark withstanding all the reformist attempts to water down the political content of the mobilizations.

So, a style of debate began to take shape that made it possible to work together to build the actions around the slogans backed by the majority and at the same time to continue discussing the questions raised by collectives in the movement on which there was not yet a broad enough consensus.

— *Work and let others work.* But, of course, the other great contribution of the radical vanguard of the movement was to make sure that it did not stay comfortably settled into this small area of common agreement but that it continued to develop its positions on a growing number of issues — dissolution of the military blocs, opposition to militarization; anti-imperialist solidarity; opposition to nuclear energy for either civilian or military purposes.

Moreover, at the same time as deepening the discussion of these questions and proposing that the other organizations in the movement take them up, above all the radical vanguard was acting on these questions. That is, a system emerged that enabled those who had adopted certain slogans to put them forward in the mobilizations, without this meaning a break with other sectors that had not yet come to see their value. This model of work, which can be summed up in the phrase "work and let work," made it possible for the radical wing to "convince" other sectors gradually of the need for adopting those positions.

If the radical wing had tried to impose these positions on others in the discussion, it would have been certain that the co-ordination of those organizations and sectors would have suffered, thereby bringing discredit and distrust on itself.

— *To measure organisational steps very carefully.* In turn, it was possible to achieve all this inasmuch as there was then no stable organizational structure. Thus, the actions and mobilizations built by the radical wing were not seen by other sections as an aggression against them, since it was quite clear that they were called by some and not by others.

It is evident that once the program of the radical wing started to gain acceptance because of its coherence and the firmness with which it was put forward, the time had come for putting pressure on less consistent or out-right reformist sectors to take up the radical demands. So, when the radical wing had carried out enough mobilizations of a different type and had started winning the support for them of widening sections of the

population, it began to pose the need for structuring and organizing better the efforts of all the peace, antimilitarist, etc. organizations in the Spanish state.

This led to the formation of the Coordinadora Estatal de Organizaciones Pacifistas (Spanish State Coordinating Committee of Peace Organizations). This body continued to be characterized by the freewheeling coexistence within it of various tendencies. Its fundamental aim was to organize the mobilizations on the Spanish-state level, thereby raising them to a qualitatively higher level on which they would cease to be mere expressions of protest and start to become the coordinated expression of mass pressure for the whole radical program.

It was such mass pressure, and nothing else, that forced the then candidate Felipe Gonzalez to make his election promises, one of the most important of which was that a referendum would be held on whether or not Spain stayed in NATO if he won the elections. The least important question is whether this promise was the result of a mis-estimation of how much this issue had penetrated into the popular mind or of the belief that in spite of everything, once he held the reins of government and all the means that offers, he could control this tide of public opinion. The fact is that the promise was made (he even said that if the bourgeois UCD government took us into NATO "by the backdoor," we could go out the same way), and it probably brought him a good part of the more than ten million votes that he won.

Naturally, the whole movement seized on this promise quickly and made it the theme of the biggest campaign of pressure that any government has had to face in the recent period. When PSOE leaders themselves talked about a siege of the government, regardless of the truth about this, it was clear that was the feeling that the administration actually had.

The conditions were ideal because the organizations in the movement only asked for, and called on the people to ask for, what was in the PSOE's election platform. Of course, care was taken from the start to warn the public that if the promised referendum were held the question might be formulated in

a tricky way so that the Executive could interpret the result to suit itself.

So the central campaigns in 1983 and 1984 were focused around the demand for 'A clear referendum now!' since the government refused to indicate when the referendum was going to be held or what its character would be.

Gonzalez under pressure

The mobilization for this objective involved two important advances. On the one hand, around it the movement managed to forge the first all-Spanish-state action, which was called by the Coordinadora Estatal de Organizaciones Pacifistas. And this country-wide mobilization pointed up the fact still more clearly that the great majority of the people wanted a referendum, withdrawal from NATO, and the dismantling of the bases. Moreover, on the organizational level, the mobilization involved a qualitative advance for the moment consolidating the prestige and political authority of the Coordinadora, which represented the entire movement, and buttressing it against attempts to push forward tame "interlocutors from outside the movement."

After June 3, 1984, the date of the first big countrywide demonstration, Premier Gonzalez had no choice but to make some statements pledging that the referendum would be held. However, he still failed to set a date, and so this promise remained as dubious as the one made earlier for the sake of winning the elections.

All that was gained was that the movement confronted the government's attempts to create confusion (statements blowing hot and cold about whether the referendum would actually be held, trial balloons about moving up the date for the general elections and thus avoiding the plebiscite). But that was no small thing.

Months later, in a Discussion on the State of the Nation, Felipe Gonzalez, launched his most serious diversion, his celebrated Ten Points. They included not only the proposal to remain in the civilian structure of NATO but not the military one, whatever that could mean, but also the call for the rest of the parliamentary forces to forge a consensus on this question. In this way, the government was trying to play a double game. It sought to build up a parliamentary wall against the will of the people. At the same time, it sought to dilute its responsibility for any measure adopted, which would mean avoiding the referendum or rigging it.

Shortly afterwards, the movement again demonstrated its organizational capacity, calling out hundreds of thousands of persons in the various cities throughout the Spanish state on December 2. This, together with the rejection by the various parliamentary forces of the premier's proposal, forced



Felipe Gonzales to reaffirm his promise to hold the referendum and to pledge to set the date in a short time. As the crowning touch, often the last march on Torrejon, which brought out a hundred thousand people from Madrid alone, the authorities began to advance actual dates, for the opening months of 1986.

Besides this summary of the history of the mobilizations for the referendum, I should point up the importance that this issue has for the movement, the government, and the system in the Spanish state, and the rebound effect it can have on the other European countries.

The test of a referendum

When the radical sector of the movement (which, it should not be forgotten, can be said to have played the most important role) launched the mobilizations for the referendum, it had two advantages. The demand was a basic democratic one that could easily unite broad sectors of the population. At the same time, this demand had the virtue of giving the best concrete expression to the struggle against NATO and the bases.

However, at the same time, from the start we realized that there were dangers in concentrating everything on this issue, because the government always has the means for stalling on the question until the life of this legislature runs out or for moving up the date of the elections, which will mean that the referendum will not be held. In both cases, if the movement focused exclusively on this question, it would run the risk that while the PSOE and the other parties could lose credibility and votes, this would not prevent them from following orders from Reagan to integrate the country into the NATO system.

If that happened, the movement would be defeated, because it would have failed to achieve its sole aim. It would disappear, or become an ambiguous current harmless to the system, since in that way the major factor of instability would have been removed. And undoubtedly the system would be in a better position to reconsolidate itself.

Therefore, we insisted on deepening and extending other objectives parallel to the referendum campaign. The most important of these was active neutrality. This issue arose as a positive response to the accusation that we offered no alternative to the system of defense planned by the government.

Moreover, we managed to extend more and more an antimilitarist consciousness. This was made easier by the experience of the peoples of the Spanish state with the army as the heir of Francoism, whose almost sole purpose is to keep the population under control, as was shown in the attempted coup of 1981.

At the same time, the extent of military spending, given the anger over



the country's steadily deteriorating economic situation, has been attracting the unions and citizens associations to the struggle against the arms race.

Finally, the consciousness about the problem of women's oppression that has been created by the mobilizations for full legalization of abortion made it possible to introduce the issue of the militarization of women (there is a scheme for military service for both sexes) into the feminist movement, along with some specific implications such as hierarchy, machismo, etc.

In the last analysis, this involved spreading the idea that the fight for peace can be seen as a perspective for eliminating oppression and repression, and any kind of exploitation, and that this of course implies solidarity with the peoples oppressed by imperialism who are fighting precisely for that kind of peace.

Only on this basis can the peace movement in the Spanish state face the test of the referendum without having to fear the possible consequences. Because it will have other issues on which it can continue its advance, regardless of what it may face with respect to the referendum and regardless of the outcome of any referendum.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that the government is going to have an easy time in dancing around the referendum question and that, even at the cost of losing credibility, it can get through this test basically intact. You have to start, to the contrary, from the fact that at present every possible way out that the government has involves paying a high cost, except the unlikely one of changing public opinion, holding the referendum and winning it by a comfortable majority.

The most important is that while the continuation of the movement depends to a large extent on what the government does, the regime has to face the fact that close to 60% of the public are against NATO and the bases. Its basic handle, which is its ability to use

all the means at its disposal to change this state of opinion, is being obstructed by the fact that public opinion as a whole is quite alert to the possibility of manipulation, and very resistant to letting itself be influenced by such maneuvers.

While it is clear that up until now, the government has made only some small gestures, the results of these tests could hardly have been more discouraging for Felipe Gonzalez. The statements made early in the year by various political and military figures about the wrongness and impossibility of leaving NATO (from the king to the chief of the General Staff, including the minister of defense accompanied by the familiar commentary of the press) were answered immediately by the mass turnout for the last March on Torrejon, which was called shortly after these statements. The action mobilized more than twice the number that the previous one did (more than a hundred thousand as opposed to 50,000).

The march made such an impact that even the press and the media in general, which are more or less pro-NATO, had to recognize the massiveness of the turnout. Shortly after this, Emperor Reagan, who wanted to show that it was impossible to escape from the long arm of the world's most powerful country, had still worse luck. The demonstrations against him drew the unprecedented number of more than a million people in the Spanish state as a whole, and they were not only against him but for withdrawal from NATO, etc.

Other methods, now classic, have not gotten better results. For example, recently we have seen a proliferation of movies and TV films playing the virtues of the "Free World" and the need to defend it by tooth and claw. But when Reagan came, the result of all this was that he was most often compared to the "baddies" in these films — exactly the opposite of what was intended.

Possibility of early elections

Undoubtedly, after all this, there is a clear possibility that they will move up the date for the general elections, thereby avoiding holding a referendum. The objective would be to shift the discussion away from the referendum toward the elections, bringing into play more issues where the parties would have more influence. At the same time, calling elections could threaten to provoke chaos that could lead to a general collapse of stability.

Moreover, the government's lack of credible alternatives for the other problems (unemployment, social security, abortion, education, industrial reconversion, democratic rights, etc) makes the possibility of calling early elections still more impracticable. What "goody" can any of the parties offer to get people to forget about NATO?

Mass action the way forward for the peace movement

The re-election of the Thatcher government in 1983, followed by the arrival of the first cruise missiles at the Greenham Common airbase at the end of that year, has witnessed the beginnings of a new debate within the British peace movement. Despite evidence to the contrary, the Kinnockite Eurocommunist leadership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) is convinced that the anti-missiles movement is on the wane. Lacking confidence in the movement's ability to mobilise to win its demands, peace movement leaders want to reorient the campaign away from disarmament and the politics of mass protest toward polite lobbying and cosy discussion among like minded 'experts' which offer little threat to the established order. So far this has not proved easy.

Annie BRADY

The anti-missiles radicalisation which swept Western Europe at the end of the 1970s woke a slumbering Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) from its 15-year doze. Hundreds of thousands of new activists poured onto the streets of Britain to protest America's project of forcing them to participate in a European theatre of 'limited' nuclear war.

The radicalisation found a direct reflection — and a ready response — among the ranks of the Labour Party. Campaigners believed Labour to be the only party capable of forming a government prepared to ban the nukes. They were further encouraged to throw their hat into Labour's ring by the accelerating leftward trend within the party.

The demand to rid Britain of nuclear weapons was equally strong among rank and file trade unionists. In 1981, with the support of the union bloc vote, the Labour Party's annual policy-making conference committed Labour to fighting the next election on a programme of unilateral abandonment of all nuclear weapons. That policy has been confirmed at every subsequent conference.

Many activists expected Labour to enter the 1983 election campaigning hard on a unilateralist ticket. It would, they thought, be carried to power on an anti-Tory vote built from four years' experience of Thatcher's war-mongering policies. Such expectations were naive.

During the election, several prominent Labour spokespeople publicly attacked the party's unilateralist policy, while the Tories made hay with the threat of Russian hoards over-running Britain's shores. Labour was resoundingly defeated. The internal disarray of the party carried no assurances that Labour had — or, more importantly, would implement — any alternative to the Tory hard line.

But neither was it the case that the Thatcher government was popular. Britain's quirky electoral system meant that Thatcher was returned, with a massive parliamentary majority, by only 43 per cent of all those who voted.

This defeat created a huge debate both within the peace movement and the party itself. The leadership of the peace movement gave a simplistic interpretation. They argued — and many believed them — that Labour lost because its unilateralist policies were profoundly unpopular. Now it was necessary to reorient the campaign, to take account of the 'British public's fear of defencelessness'.

First they tried for a freeze policy, in counterposition to proposals for a mass mobilisation. Delegates to CND's annual conference at the end of 1983 threw the idea out. Chastened by that experience, during 1984 they have pursued a twin-track course of fighting for the ideological high-ground while simultaneously playing down mass actions.

First they have upped the ideological anti against the 'fundamentalists' — so labelled by the British peace movement's chief theorist Edward Thompson, who argues that the peace movement must reclaim 'defence' because it 'makes us think of various good things, like our 'liberties' and our 'traditions' and our 'way of life'. Now they are cautiously introducing the idea that the peace movement must adopt a policy in favour of non-nuclear defence, in order to persuade public opinion that getting rid of nuclear weapons will not leave this country bare in front of its so-called enemies.

At the last annual conference of CND, in November 1984, a resolution was adopted which, while saying CND would take no positions on specific non-nuclear defence policies, argued for a 'national security policy'. This would be based on 'mutual East-West security' and would not exclude 'independent steps' by

Britain towards nuclear disarmament. The drift is clear.

The point was made more forcibly in a paper presented to the autumn national council of CND. It said: 'Our over-riding goal is to convince the majority of the public by the next general election of the case for complete nuclear disarmament by Britain, and the adoption of a credible defence policy which does not rely on nuclear weapons.' (our emphasis)

The same paper gave the first pointer about how this twin-track policy will be pursued. Recognising that CND is a 'broad church', with a wide variety of interests, it called on national CND to identify central campaigns for the movement, others can be supported 'where appropriate'. That is, no head-on confrontations with the rank and file, just a gradual realignment of what CND is and does.

The idea of adopting a non-nuclear defence platform is more advanced at the level of the leadership. Last year saw the circulation (in secret, to the chosen few) of papers by prominent CND members on the formation of a non-nuclear alliance to take the peace movement into the next general election. So far the only such proposal to see the light of day was a resolution to annual conference on the formation of a 'national defence charter'. It didn't make the final agenda. Such proposals rest on the popular front positions of the Eurocommunists, retheorised for the 1980s as the 'anti-Tory alliance'.

Debate on NATO

The leadership of the British peace movement has not, of course, plucked this debate from thin air. The whole discussion has been given a massive boost by the publication last year of Labour's new defence policy, *Defence and Security for Britain*. The document argues that Labour will abandon all nuclear weapons (with a few clever let-out clauses for a future Labour government), but will 'firmly support continuing British membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation'. (NATO) Labour will defend Britain by non-nuclear means — strengthening the navy and increasing forces on the Central European Front (Germany) — and argue from the inside that NATO should relinquish its nukes.

Pigs would fly first. If Labour were ever elected committed to such a platform there would be a simple choice: NATO or unilateralism. Since the new statement was overwhelmingly adopted at the 1984 conference, many party members have had time to reflect. There is evidence of growing concern with the knotty question of NATO membership.

This debate was fuelled recently by a discussion paper presented to the Labour Party national executive by members of parliament (MPs) Tony Benn and Eric Heffer, which argues for

a discussion in the ranks of the labour movement about whether Britain should withdraw from the American alliance. Commitment to NATO membership is a rather important cornerstone in making Labour safe to govern in an increasingly turbulent Britain. This paper has caused a storm of protest from Labour's leadership. As yet there is little support within the unions for NATO withdrawal. It is unlikely to become a party policy.

The discussion on non-nuclear defence has fired a similar debate on NATO within the peace movement. It is traditional that, in December, the women of the Greenham Common peace camp call a mass action to commemorate the anniversary of the date when NATO first announced its intention to site cruise in Britain. This year (1984) the CND leadership called for an action, at the same time, at the Warsaw Pact embassies. The movement gave its verdict: only a handful turned out at the Russian embassy. CND General Secretary Bruce Kent was forced to admit it was a complete flop. By the same token, a resolution to CND conference calling for a campaign against the Russian bomb was pushed off the agenda by delegates.

There is little prospect of the leadership being able to ditch the campaign's commitment to NATO withdrawal this way. These new debates within the British peace movement make it essential to up the profile on NATO at an educational and propagandistic level, but debates which have begun within sections of the peace movement about the need to centre the campaign on this question are thoroughly misguided. There is no possibility of mass demonstrations in Britain against the alliance. To pose NATO as the central question for the peace movement in Britain today would de facto play into the hands of the leadership.

The main question to be tackled is still that of mass mobilisations versus polite lobbying. In a recent interview (*Marxism Today*, February 1985) ominously entitled 'CND's new era', CND chairperson Joan Ruddock argued the need for the peace campaign to become respectable. The emphasis should change, she argued, from cruise to Trident — where many believe there is more possibility for a popular front. This would be, she said, 'a different kind of campaign, it would involve a lot of intense lobbying, a tremendous amount of direct contact with MPs who are essentially very hostile to CND ... (but) it's not easy for a mass campaign that has focused very much on cruise, Greenham and direct action to make the adjustment.'

Such public announcements signal that the leadership of the peace movement fundamentally lacks confidence in the capacity of the activists to mobilise. This is especially difficult to argue, however, in Britain.

The membership of CND continues to grow rapidly. At the beginning of this year there were 110,000 recorded members, and registration for last December's annual conference was up 13 per cent on the previous year. If the number of people in local groups is taken into account, that puts CND's membership around the 400,000 mark.

The peace movement is still the single biggest social movement that Britain has seen for more than 50 years. Peace campaigners in Britain too have the shining example of Greenham Common — and every woman active in Britain calls herself a Greenham woman. Their determination to endure any hardship for the cause dearest to their hearts has been a constant source of strength and inspiration to the rest of the movement. More, they have conclusively shown that not only is the peace movement in business to challenge the status quo — but that it can be done.

There is still an absolute majority in the opinion polls for getting rid of cruise missiles from British territory.

Of course the arrival in Britain of the first flight of cruise has created confusion among the ranks of the peace movement. Many currents — radical feminists, proponents of civil disobedience, and so on — believed that it was entirely possible for the peace movement to stop their arrival. They failed to understand the significance of an alliance with the organised labour movement and the need for a solution at the level of government.

That debate must now be had again. Especially after the experience of the historic year-long miners' strike, it is apposite to explain that the institutions of the state are not neutral.

For the first time in many years the repressive role of the civil and military apparatus was experienced — directly and on a grand scale — on the British mainland. This matches the experiences of large sections of the peace movement who have already savoured the attentions of those same forces of 'law and order'. It is for that reason that the Greenham women were among the first to line up with the miners.

Those who argue that the peace movement across Western Europe is in decline do not understand the motor force that drives the current campaign. At the end of the 1950s CND was formed to campaign against the atom bomb and organised the now-famous Easter marches to Aldermaston. It declined in the mid 1960s and remained quiescent until the end of the 1970s in an atmosphere where nukes were remote and détente seemed the order of the day.

The new war-fighting strategies of NATO itself is the main motivator of today's campaign. The development of a sophisticated new generation of war-fighting nukes, together with the American idea that it will be possible to fight a 'little' nuclear war in Europe's backyard, will continue to provoke new waves of fighters for disarmament. NATO's new policies won't go away — and neither will the anti-missiles movement.

The debates in the British movement are common across West Europe, only the themes are particular. In Spain, Gonzales is redirecting the PSOE to a 'softer' line on NATO. In the Netherlands, the Christian Democrats are putting strings on the commitment not to accept cruise in the Netherlands. In each case, the peace movement face the same fundamental question: continue the mass mobilisations or find a different course?

The role of socialists within the movement is neither to stand aside from the partial developments within the anti-missiles campaign, nor to demand it adopts a full-blown socialist strategy. We must fight shoulder to shoulder with the hundreds of thousands of campaigners across West Europe who are as determined as ever to change the nuclear status quo.

London, 25 October 1981 — 200,000 people demonstrate on Labour Party-backed demonstration (DR)



An open letter by women, East and West, to all citizens of Europe

DOCUMENT

We are women in five European countries where the development of new American and Soviet weapons has begun. We are women from different cultures, from Eastern and Western, Northern and Southern Europe, some of us involved in the church, others not, some of us feminists, pacifists and members of many other human rights and environmental movements.

Despite our differences, we are united by the will for self-determination, to struggle against the culture of militarism in the world, against uniforms and violence, against our children being educated as soldiers and against the senseless waste of resources. We demand the right of self-determination for all individuals and peoples. We want to make a specific cultural contribution to changing existing social structures. That is why we also challenge conventional gender roles and why we ask men to do the same.

The freedom to determine one's own fate means freedom from exploitation and violence: in our thoughts and actions, at our places of work, in our relationship to nature and the relationship between men and women, between generations, between states, between East and West and between North and South in global terms.

Together we want to break this circle of violence and the anxieties created in us by this violence: anxiety about nuclear weapons, fearing the death of humanity and the end of the earth, fears about the rape of our bodies and souls. Together we wish to confront these anxieties and be able to overcome them, no longer illegally, but with the right to free expression of opinion for everyone, especially in those places where the right is denied on a daily basis. There can be no realistic peace perspective without respect for human rights.

The deployment of new nuclear weapons in our countries has limited our freedom and increased our fears. Our obligation to break the circle of violence has grown because of our potential shared responsibility for a possible catastrophe. We are conscious of being both perpetrators and victims of systems of violence. In both roles, we are not the ones who have made the decisions. We reject both roles. Nor are we reassured by the fact that representatives of both superpowers are about to negotiate over our heads again in Geneva. Once again we are expected to pin our hopes on their seeing reason and voluntarily renouncing the production and use of weapons of mass destruction. Once again talks on how to hold talks are supposed to make us believe that it is possible to solve the problems from above.

Instead of this, we choose the way of self-determined initiatives from below. This road does not go via the militarisation of society, which is why we reject any involvement in the preparations for war — nor does it traverse missile ramps or the destruction of nature and interpersonal relationships.

We do not want a peace which oppresses us, nor a war which will annihilate us.

Forty years after Auschwitz and Hiroshima, forty years after the bloc confrontation began, we want now, at last, to begin collectively getting to know and understand each other better and meeting one another beyond the wall which divides not merely the borders of our countries but all too often our hearts and minds as well.

We have begun detente from below: Join us!

This statement has been signed by women from all five missile deployment countries: United Kingdom, German Democratic Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Czechoslovakia.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Eva Kanturkova, Anna Sabatova (senior), Dana Nemcova, Marketa M. Nemkova, Jana Sternova, Libuse Silhanova, Marie Rihova, Anna Marvanova, Zdena Tomin, Ruth Tosek.

GDR

Barbel Bohley, Ulrike Poppe, Irena Kurkotz, Katja Havemann, Gisela Metz.

ITALY

Elisabetta Addis, Paola Baglioni, Luisa Boccia, Raffaella Bolini, Flavia Bucca, Anna Caporicci, Giuseppina Ciuffreda, Lucia Corbo, Joan Crowley, Vichi de Marchi, Tatiana Facchini, Dora Ferlazzo, Antonella Giunta, Dhiara Ingrao, Cristina Lascialfari, Anna Martellotti, Antonella Martorelli, Cecilia Mastrantonio, Anna Pia Nadalutti, Stefania Piro, Marina Pivetta, Rita Sanvittore, Titta Sassani, Giuliana Sgrena, Lorenza Sorgato, Nicoletta Tiliacos, Anna Vio, Silvia Zamboni, Lisa Zanette, Liciena Castolina.

WEST GERMANY

Irene Flechsbard, Petra Kelly, Maries Waskill, Beate Dohmann, Dorothy E-Simske, Sabine Helens, Eva Quistrop, Eva Marie Eppler, Hanna Kutowski, Barbara Senft, Christina Mengenberg, Mikhaela van Freyhold, Gerlind Gode, Heike Vidrans.

BRITAIN

Mary Kaldor, Sheila Oakes, Margot Miller, Jan Williams, Fiona Weir, Christine Connochie, Jane Dibblin, Nancy Wood, Sue Willett, Jane Mayes, Lydia Merrill, Barbara Bambridge, Margaret Crampton, Anja Manser, Clare Ryle, Carol Hughes, Sally Wood, St. Neott's women's peace group, Jan Martin, Patricia Chilton, Manika Frisch, Denise Aaron, Evelyn Silver, Deborah Leach, Gwen Manchester, Jill Manchester, Joan Gallina, Bee Springwood, Annie Lockwood, Ann Mawson, Maria Wood, Monika Roos, Jolend Norman, Janet Tyroll, Stefanie Durcek, Helen Peace Chariot, Jean Ward, Marguerite Ayeres, Sue Scott, Christine King, Jill Liddington, Ann Harrison, Kate Soper, Anne Tunnicliffe.

Signatories as of 7 March 1985.

