

# International VIEWPOINT

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**Nicaragua :**  
**the state of**  
**the revolution**  
**after six years**

**Gorbachov's**  
**economic program**

**Iran : regime**  
**erodes**





# International Viewpoint

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## BOLIVIA

## Editorial

WE PUBLISH below a statement from the bureau of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on the wave of anti-worker repression in Bolivia. The declaration was issued on September 23, 1985.

Since the appeal was launched some of those trade unionists who had been arrested, amongst them members of the POR-U (Partido Obrero Revolucionario — Unificado), Bolivian section of the Fourth International have been released. Others have been deported to the Pando region including our comrade Eugenio Sanchez, a member of the national leadership of the COB (Central Obrera Boliviana), the main trade union federation.

As we go to press we learn that on October 3 the COB called off their strike. The hunger strike in the mines is continuing according to unconfirmed sources.

On August 29, the government of Victor Paz Estenssoro, a government elected through a rigged ballot, adopted a series of measures aimed to attack the standard of living and the democratic rights of the working class. Inflation in the country is currently running at the unprecedented rate of 14,000%; wages have been frozen for the past four months; the price of oil has risen ten times; all subsidies on basic foodstuffs have been withdrawn; the popular canteens have been closed and finally the peso has been devalued by 95%. At the same time, workers in the public sector have been threatened with sackings if they strike and those trade unionists who organise strike action will, from now on, face six month prison sentences.

On September 19, the government put these measures into practice and deported the entire leadership of the COB (Central Obrera Boliviana — the main trade union federation) to the Pando region, the area where the dictator Banzer had previously established a concentration camp. Other leaders, activists and trade union militants have also been hit; massive arrests have taken place and three thousand militants are now in jail. Despite all this, the strike called by the COB against the government's measures went ahead. Fifteen days since the strike call first went out miners and factory workers are still out. Because of this, the government is now threatening further measures; they are seeking to break workers resistance through whatever means come to hand.

It is therefore vital that a campaign of international solidarity be organised and activated. All trade union and political organisations of the labour movement should make their protest heard. In particular they should demand the release of all those militants imprisoned, the return of the COB leaders to their homes, the lifting of the state of siege and the re-establishment of democratic rights. □



## The revolution on its sixth anniversary

ON THE SIXTH anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution, the increasingly aggressive stance of US imperialism continues to be the dominant factor in the situation. The main priority has to be defence of the revolution in face of the open desire of the Reagan administration to overthrow the Sandinista government.

The damage and the human losses brought about by the attacks of the counter-revolution on Nicaraguan territory have been on the increase since 1983, the year when the contras began their first military operations of any scope.

Thus the number of battles recorded by the Nicaraguan authorities went beyond 660 in 1983, 948 in 1984 and reached 710 for the first six months of 1985. For the first part of 1985 it is calculated that twenty health centres have been destroyed, as well as 14 schools and that a further 359 schools have been forced to close. Physical injuries and losses in production due to contra operations are estimated at 143 million dollars worth in 1983 and 187 million dollars worth in 1984. This represents 40% and 53%, respectively, of the total exports of Nicaragua.

### JEAN-CLAUDE BERNARD

In order to step up the military pressure, the contras have succeeded, in the north of the country, in establishing 'regional commando squads' of 1,200 combatants apiece which, through forming a small co-ordinated group between them and with the help of very sophisticated communications systems, have penetrated Nicaraguan territory. The number of contras in operation at the present time is therefore in the order of several thousands. (1)

The contras' tactic is to pursue a war of attrition in order, over the medium term, to weaken the revolution's capacity for resistance. So, their attacks are becoming more and more selective, aimed mainly at the points vital for the development of the country and against the social gains made since 1979. They are also

1. 'La Contra-revolucion, datos basicos, 1980-1985' Centro de Comunicacion Internacional, Managua.



politically selective. The producers' cooperatives started up by Sandinista activists are coming in for more attacks than individual peasants.

During August 1985, the contras, in addition, launched a limited military offensive in order to gain greater international attention. They attacked a town of 10,000 people on the Pan-American highway 130 kilometers to the North of Managua and to the south of one of the cities where the revolutionary mobilization has been the greatest, Esteli.

On August 1, a unit of 150 contras disguised as Sandinista army soldiers entered the town. After a battle that lasted four hours, they were forced to retreat. Their objective cannot have been to hold the town for long; it must have been simply to demonstrate that they had a real presence in the neighborhood of Esteli.

The testimonies collected in the Trinidad hospital exposed the fact that the contras are forcibly recruiting very young teenagers. The result is a very poor military quality of the contra mercenaries, who are more often used to stage murderous ambushes than for major confrontations with the militia and the Sandinista army.

#### More US aid for the contras

This military weakness of the contras and their inability to strike decisive blows at the revolution must inevitably oblige Washington to increase its aid. The vote of the US congress to give official credits to the contras is going to escalate the amount and quality of the support given to the mercenaries.

The geographical extension of the military operational zones only affects Nicaragua's peripheral regions in the north, the south, and along the Atlantic coast. This means that the contras' areas of activity remain quite close to their training camps in Honduras and in Costa Rica.

Within Nicaragua, the counterrevolutionaries can find places where they can get supplies through terror, corruption and manipulating real feelings of discontent, but their bases are not in the interior.

In combating this aggression, the defense effort of the revolution is based mainly on the productive workers of the cities and on the poorest section of the rural population, small peasants and agricultural workers. This is true, first of all, in strictly military terms. The centers where the militias are most active are the agricultural producers cooperatives, the small-peasant villages, and the urban enterprises.



Reconstruction in Nicaragua (DR)

In the northern regions, the militias are directly involved in the organization of defense and in direct confrontation with the contras. As exemplified by the Somoto region, about 15 kilometers from the Honduran border, the militia is made up of people assigned by each of the cooperatives in the local complex. They serve for six months.

In the building that serves as a command post for the chief of the border guards, young militia members stand guard. They are directly subordinate to the local commander of the Sandinista army. He himself, as he explained to me, sees his task as intricately tied up with the political and military organization of the peasants.

In Region VI, the one around Esteli, more than half of the production workers are mobilized in the militias or in the military service.

The draft that was established in 1984, with the setting up of the patriotic military service, had the explicit objective of broadening the base of the military defense. Nonetheless, a lot of the bourgeoisie are managing to send their offspring abroad in order to get them out of serving the revolution. The result is that the military service is assumed mainly by young people who come from the social base of the revolution.

However, the scope of the confrontation under way in Nicaragua between the revolution and the counterrevolution cannot be reduced to the military aspect alone. The concentration of efforts on assuring the defense and survival of the revolution is leading to a very serious deterioration in the economic situation and a decline in the standard of living of the production workers. In this area as well, it is they who are bearing the basic burden of the defense effort.

The economic problems are growing worse. The pressure of the military aggression is combining with Reagan's embargo and the consequences of the international economic crisis to strangle Nicaragua and keep the revolution from developing the country. Half of the national budget is now going for defense, and service on the foreign debt is absorbing more than half the income from exports, whose dollar values are declining (although the actual amounts exported remain constant). So, there is a scarcity of foreign exchange for imports, and spending for internal needs is being squeezed.

#### Growing economic difficulties

Several phases have to be distinguished in the first six years of the revolution with respect to the economic evolution and its impact on the standard of living of the population. In the first two years, the scope of the most pressing tasks of reconstruction gave rise to a growth much greater than that of the other Central American countries.

The owners of the means of production and the big agricultural estates could keep their way of life if they accepted being deprived of political power. On the other hand, the standard of living of the poorer sections of the population improved both qualitatively and quantitatively. The social base of the revolution was the first to benefit from this, through the efforts made in education, health, and in making it easier for the people to acquire the necessities of life.

From 1981 to 1983, the first blows from the imperialists forced the revolutionary government to make an abrupt change in imports policy. Only those most important to meet the needs of the country's economic



development were continued. The middle strata, whose life style involved importing a lot of nonessential goods, suffered the most. On the other hand, the overall standard of living of the masses was preserved. The prices for the goods included in the "basic basket" of foods were controlled.

To achieve this result, a system of subsidies for necessities was put into practice, reducing their price to the consumer. Everyone in Nicaragua could buy this limited number of subsidized products on the basis of a per capita rationing system. It was even cheaper for the peasants who grew such products to buy them, in some cases, because the sale prices could be lower than the cost of production.

After 1984, growing economic problems made it impossible to maintain the standard of living of the masses any longer. For that year, the drop in the buying power of the minimum wage is estimated at 30%. (2)

The economic measures announced in January 1985 represent a sharpening of this trend. The subsidies on necessities have been eliminated. They are to be removed gradually over this year. For example, in August, the subsidy on milk was taken off, and the price of a litre of milk went from 12 to 18 cordobas. [The exchange rate is set in trade of twenty cordobas to a dollar. The parallel-market exchange rate is 650 cordobas to a dollar]. This results automatically in a rise in the prices of necessities. Inasmuch as a large proportion of the budgets of families of modest income goes for these products, it is the poorer sections of the population that will have to bear the burden of these measures.

Another decision, announced on May 1, worsens the situation of productive workers. In order to cushion the decline in the buying power of the national currency observable in recent years, wage supplements in kind were given to the workers. Thus, they got some of the products they helped to make. This was the case in particular, in the textile and beverage industries. The quantities increased, and in order to get rid of them the workers sold them on the parallel markets that have flourished in Managua. The ending of wage supplements in kind, therefore, means a net loss in buying power for the workers concerned.

Alongside these measures, it was envisaged to increase the wages of productive workers and open up special supply centers reserved for them. Wages have, in fact, been increased but they have gone up more slowly than prices. In May, the minimum wage went from 3,000

cordobas to 4,500 cordobas, while the rise in prices is estimated at around 100%. Thus, the decline in buying power has been about 50%.

The setting up of supply centers for productive workers has been slow and is being carried out in accordance with administrative criteria that are sometimes way out of line with demands of day-to-day life. One example of the still precarious functioning of this network is the long waiting lines on Saturday, when people do not work, while on weekdays the traffic is small, although there are goods in the centers.

This clear decline in the standard of living of the workers is all the more worrying because it affects different strata of the population unevenly. The city of Managua has been unable to get under control the problems associated with the "informal economy," the parallel economy that exists mainly in the currency exchange and trading sectors. A number of stratas are profiting from the inflation and taking advantage of the shortages to hoard and speculate.

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### The "informal sector" of the economy

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These are not just marginal practices by a bourgeois layer that can be easily pinpointed. They reflect deeper economic problems. Growing at a rate of 6% a year, the population of Managua has reached a million, a third of the total population of the country. The number of productive jobs is not growing at the same rate. The uncontrolled population growth, therefore, is swelling the numbers of those engaged in the parallel economy.

It is estimated that more than half of the economically active population of Managua are self-employed as street sellers, artisans, or in providing services. The gap between this sector and the productive workers has so widened that today the minimum income of an ice-cream vendor is at least three times the minimum wage of a productive worker.

The compromises required by the mixed economy are also leading to inequalities between the productive workers and holders of means of production. This is particularly true in the countryside, where the large landowners can draw subsidies in dollars. This possibility, initially authorized for cotton producers, was extended in the summer of 1985 to big livestock raisers. The supervision of the use of these subsidies is still not very tight, and it has been shown that they are not being used by the bourgeoisie for productive

ends alone.

The social base of the revolution - the production workers in the cities and the countryside - is the section of the population that mobilizes most to defend the revolution but it is also the section that bears the greatest burdens to support it in every area. And this does not fail to create difficulties.

The FSLN and its activists do not try to deny these problems. The commitments to political and trade-union pluralism are not being put in question, and this obliges the FSLN to take the lead in providing explanations, to continue to promote the development of a mass movement, and in this way to demonstrate its vanguard role

For example, right after July 19 *Barricada* published a series of investigations indicating the motivations of members of the vast crowds that came out for the celebration of the Sixth Anniversary of the revolution. *Barricada* did not play on the presence of hundreds of thousands of people to paint a comfortably reassuring picture.

All the articles in this study indicated the gravity of the problems of life, low wages, rising prices, long bus rides, etc. Despite these problems, all these people came out for July 19 - that was the central thread of the series.

In a "face to face with the people" meeting with the construction workers at the end of July, President Daniel Ortega discussed with one of the traditional sectors of the working class in which the influence of the two union confederations linked to the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) and the Nicaraguan Communist Party (PCN) is still significant.

In the building industry, moreover, on the same site you find workers paid by the state and workers paid by private subcontractors, with the wage differentials that result from this. Several leaders of the Independent General Confederation of Labor (CGT-I), which is close to the PSN, put questions directly to the "Comrade-President" about wages. Rank-and-file workers raised their problems. Others attacked one or another leader on the platform alongside Daniel Ortega.

While some leaders in their answers hid behind the technical complexity of the problems and bromides about the difficulty of solving them quickly, Ortega constantly referred to the problems created by the imperialist aggression, politically justifying the compromises that the revolution had to accept with social strata other than the workers and peasants.

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2. 'Pensamiento Propio', April 1985.





July 1983: 'Reagan sends another military fleet to Nicaragua' (DR)

The Sandinista Workers Confederation (CST) is the urban mass organization that confronts most directly the problems affecting production workers. This organization dates back to the victory of the revolution, and thus is still in a stage of consolidation. It has to forge a whole generation of activists to give impetus to mass activity in the working class. Facing the competition of the other union confederations, whose influence has greatly declined but which have maintained the confidence of veteran cadres of the workers movement, the CST is reflecting the discontent that is widespread among wage earners both about wages and supplies.

In August 1985, the CST started up a vast discussion among the workers in order to prepare the way for a national discussion on the balance sheet of its activity on September 7-8, 1985.

The objective of this discussion was summed up as follows by the CST itself: "The CST calls on all Nicaraguan workers to take up a mass discussion for the following objectives:

"To measure the successes and problems in the work of the union to carry out the resolutions adopted by the Fourth National Assembly of the Unions and the orientations of the National leadership of the FSLN.

"To evaluate the positive and negative effects of the economic measures taken by the revolutionary government in the context of the latest aggressions by imperialism.

"To present our own proposals vigorously to the revolutionary government with respect to wages, and prices policy, supply, work contracts, and the commitments of the union movement in the areas of military defense, civil defense, and production in economizing and rationalizing our human and material resources." (3)

In the Managua region, more than 1,500 workers belonging to more than 15 enterprises participated in the preparatory assemblies. In its

August 19 issue, *Barricada* presented some of the conclusions of these assemblies: "The workers raised the problem of the supply centers and expressed the opinion that the prices are too high by comparison with production costs. The workers consider that the excessive bureaucracy of the institutions leads to a series of deficiencies in public administration and in the resolution of problems. They pointed out those institutions that have not given the necessary support to the innovations campaign [that is, the workers proposing technical innovations to cushion the lack of spare parts owing to the US embargo]. They noted that there has been lack of speed on the part of the Ministries of Labor and Industry in offering a response to the financial problems of the enterprises. They called for a review of the workers wages and for a rapid solution to pending cases. In the application of the austerity and economy measures, they have found resistance from the administrators, and they demand that these measures be applied not just to the workers but to all sectors." (4)

#### The morale of the masses

While the decline in the standard of living is undeniable, it is not producing a loss of political confidence in the revolution, its gains, or its vanguard. Tangible proofs of this are the success of the July 19 celebration, as well as the inability of the forces opposing or competing with the FSLN to crystallize the discontent that exists.

The effect of the political compromises that the regime has made in order to divide the bourgeoisie should also be considered. The Sandinistas have sought to involve some of them in the battle for production. Along with this, they have tried to get diplomatic support from other countries in Latin America.

These compromises are leading to inequalities in living conditions between the productive workers mobilized in the mass organizations that support the revolution and the bourgeois and trading strata that have been deprived of political power. There is thus an unstable balance between the demands of mass work focused on the social base of the revolution, and the demands imposed by the political compromises that have been made to gain breathing space for the revolution.

The tasks of politicalizing the masses have become more difficult than in the period when the revolution could begin to satisfy the immediate demands of the poorest sections of the population.

All these factors are leading to

a more complex situation for the mass organizations whose function is both to apply the orientations of the FSLN national leadership and to be the organized means for expressing the immediate aspirations of the masses.

One of the most striking characteristics of the Nicaraguan situation is the continuing capacity of these organizations to mobilize, when the war of aggression against Nicaragua is naturally tending to impose a united political-military command at all levels. Such features are still more marked in the countryside, in which the progressive application of the land reform is opening up a space for new advances benefiting the poor peasants. Moreover, the peasantry is shot through with social contradictions that make it the immediate battle ground between the revolution and the counterrevolution.

The agrarian reform has continued to advance at the same rate since 1981, without any slowup. The policy that has been in effect up till now is being changed in two respects. On the one hand, the cooperatives, to which most of the land was given, are getting a lower priority. In Region VI, Esteli, where there is a sharp social polarization between the mobilized poor peasants and the counterrevolution, the tendency has been for land grants to be given more to individual peasants.

Moreover, there have been cases, where the revolution has not hesitated to upset its plans in order to respond more rapidly to the demands of the peasants. What has happened in the Masaya region, sixty kilometers south of Managua is indicative of this new course. This region is not a focus of military attention, since it is far from the areas where the contras operate. So, it did not get priority for solving the problems that might exist. Thus, six years after the revolution, many poor peasants hardly managed to survive on their tiny holdings, and were obliged to go to work as day laborers on the big cotton plantations or livestock ranches in the dry zone, in the northern part of the department.

These big estates belonged, notably, to Bolanos, the president of the COSEP, the confederation of employers. The peasant mobilization that began in June, thus, had a target particularly representative of the bourgeoisie that remains in Nicaragua. Demonstrations and marches were organized. The banners said: "We want Bolanos' land: He's got a lot of it!"

The movement was largely spontaneous at the start, but very quickly, the National Union of Farmers and

3. 'Trabajadores,' August 1985.  
4. 'Barricada,' August 19, 1985.



Stock Raisers (UNAG) began building the movement and took charge of the demonstrations and of pressing the demands. On June 14, Comandante Jaime Wheelock told the peasants in Masaya that 323 square kilometers of land in the northern part of the department were going to be converted into a "development and agrarian reform zone."

In an initial phase, more than 5,000 hectares of land were given to 1,600 peasant families. The lands given to the peasants were expropriated from Bolanos. Other estates belonging to big landowners have been the subject of negotiations. The government has bought some and made some trades.

The FSLN leader for the region, CA Barrios explained: "The peasants don't want the land just to feed themselves but they also have a bigger say in things. It is our task to respond to their aspirations. Masaya could be the point of departure for a series of actions throughout the country." (5)

In fact, the revolution has greater margins for maneuver in the countryside. Speeding up the agrarian reform does not create additional expenses but has only political consequences. The problem is to strike a balance between meeting the immediate needs of the revolution and the imperatives of neutralizing the social strata that are hesitating between the revolution and the counterrevolution.

The mass work of the UNAG is at the heart of these conflicts. This is why it is the mass organization with the most room for developing its own policy to serve the revolution. Unlike the CST, the UNAG has thus organized demonstrations of thousands of peasants mobilizing to press their own demands.

Inasmuch as the present situation in Nicaragua is one of a sharpening confrontation between the revolution and the counterrevolution, there cannot be any stable balance in the relationship of forces between the contending camps. The stepping up of the aggression is aggravating the social contradictions within Nicaragua. And the FSLN is consolidating its vanguard by continuing, despite the most difficult sort of problems created by the war, to stimulate the organization of the majority of the Nicaraguan popular masses.

Nicaragua is launching a solidarity campaign entitled "Nicaragua Must Survive." The stakes of the war that is underway are clear. It is an unequal contest between the main imperialist power and tiny Nicaragua. Everything that can help to loosen the vise must be done. □

5. All the figures and quotations concerning the Masaya movement have been taken from 'Telex Envio', No 62.

## Interview with Tomas Borge

ON THE occasion of the sixth anniversary of the Sandinista revolution the Nicaraguan journal, *Pensamiento Propio* published the following interview with Comandante Tomas Borge, a member of the national leadership of the FSLN, minister of the interior and president of the Commission for the Autonomy of the Atlantic coast area. In the interview Borge makes a critical assessment of some aspects of the revolutionary process in particular with regard to the problem of maintenance and strengthening of the political hegemony of the FSLN. Although he is optimistic on a general level he does not attempt to paper over the weaknesses of the revolution and in particular the problem of the political and ideological confrontation with the internal enemies of the revolution.

*Question. How would you judge the level of participation of the masses in the revolutionary process?*

*Answer.* I think the question should be turned around. The revolution is not an event in which the people participate to a greater or lesser extent. On the contrary, the revolution would not exist at all if it was not for the people. But if the people are not totally integrated into the revolutionary process, it is not their responsibility. It is the responsibility of the vanguard, of the leadership bodies who have not at a given moment been sensitive enough to involve themselves in the mass movement and evaluate the wishes of the mass of the population.

In this sense it is important to understand the fact that, at the time of the victory, the FSLN had no experience of power, that it was not even constituted as a political party. It was just a politico-military grouping which, in the beginning, had not even managed to insert itself among the broad masses and provide a lead. At the start, the aims of the mass struggle were in the nature of a protest. That was to be expected since they could not have gone beyond this rather limited and sectoral vision without some kind of political guidance.

In any case, errors or weaknesses which have produced a certain decline in mass participation in some areas must be blamed on the revolutionary leadership. But it is also important to understand that such errors are

almost inevitable in the type of situation we are facing, when our revolution is being harassed by an especially aggressive US government, stemming not only from the nature of imperialism itself, but from that deep-rooted hatred that the president, Reagan, has for Nicaragua.

*Q. We often say that the basic tenets of the Sandinista revolution, that is to say, the mixed economy and political pluralism are merely tactical in nature. Is that really the case? How do these issues influence the development of mass participation?*

*A.* The Sandinista revolution took place in a certain geo-political area, in the United States' backyard. It was not on an island like Cuba and our revolution is much more influenced by the situation prevailing in the region. This geopolitical factor forced us, independent of our own will, to encourage political pluralism and a mixed economy. The development of this tactic became transformed into a strategy and today the mixed economy, for example, is no longer an operational choice or a camouflage, it is a strategy.

This particular schema made the task of the revolutionary leadership vis-a-vis the masses much more difficult. Political pluralism, the mixed economy and the more general aspects of the revolution have tended to sow confusion among the masses. There is not, and there could not have been an ideological project that was as clearly defined as the Cuban one.





*A delegation of American Christians, held by the Contras (DR)*

Our project is much more muddled and complicated and such muddled plans confuse the masses. Up until now, we have not been capable of making the people understand this complexity and it is possible that we are still not capable of it. Anyway, sometimes we have not given our ear to the concerns of the masses. We have not even had enough clarity of vision ourselves to understand the very complex nature of the whole process.

*Q. Could you give a concrete example where this contradiction between the popular nature of the revolution and the framework of political pluralism and the mixed economy, that is national unity, has come out?*

*A.* A very clear example, is that of the issue of freedom of speech. We have had to live with this principle, without being able to explain exactly what it really meant. It took on the meaning that it is usually given in Latin American and in other capitalist countries. And, in some ways we actually accepted that concept.

But if we examine the problem more deeply, what freedom of expression are we really talking about? *La Prensa* is not just the object of censorship. It operates its own form of censorship, that is, it censors the revolution, it does not provide infor-

mation on the revolution because it is tied to certain class interests.

At the same time the Nicaraguan people, the masses, have never experienced such freedom of expression as now; in public places, in the 'meet the people' programmes with the leaders and also freedom of expression in writing, on radio and television. Of course there are limits, mainly for bureaucratic reasons and because we have not got our ideas on the role of the media completely clear. But despite these limitations, the people are able to express themselves. There exists real freedom of speech in Nicaragua.

Nonetheless we have to live with this other aspect of freedom of speech, that which the journal *La Prensa* enjoys in order to attack the revolution and which we have to defend and justify in front of US congress members, in front of our European friends and in front of the governments of Latin America. And we do it even though we know that there is an almost insoluble contradiction between this freedom of expression and the defence of a political strategy for defence of the revolution which has to survive, which has to preserve its space and live up to the concrete demands of the masses.

*Q. How far can one justify the lack of any criticism and self-criticism of the revolutionary process on the*

*grounds of defending it? Is there a balance to be found? On the other hand what are the effects of reactionary propaganda on the masses?*

*A.* First of all we have to clarify what kind of criticism we are talking about. Can we say that the journal *La Prensa* is merely exercising its right of criticism. No, it is not a question of criticism. The freedom to criticise should not be confused with the freedom that *La Prensa* and *Radio Catolica* have to express their opposition to the revolution. When we pose this question we must ask ourselves what form of criticism do the newspapers *Barricada* or *Nuevo Diario* or the Sandinista television network or *Radio Sandino* or the *Voice of Nicaragua*, exercise? And we should pinpoint the errors we commit, because we do commit errors. Criticism must be constructive and the criticism of *La Prensa*, and *Radio Catolica* and all the propaganda thrown at us from outside, only aims to destroy. Constructive criticism is the only acceptable kind in the revolutionary process.

Nevertheless, in our country, the criticisms of the opposition parties, even if they themselves never manage to regroup the masses around them, do manage to influence people's perceptions. That is to say, that this propaganda does not have sufficient influence to attract people but it has enough to sow confusion. Propaganda about supplies, or the war or patriotic military service, for example, is not going to convert the masses to social Christianity but it can create confusion.

I think that there exists an intermediary layer of people who are not supporting any one of the parties and who are capable of going along with the revolutionary process on certain points and discussing on many others. For example, there are sections of the population who honestly think that we should negotiate with the counter revolutionaries. For our part we have tried to explain that a dialogue of this type would end up denying the very existence of the revolution and I think we have provided these arguments but we have not pushed them home.

In fact, reactionary propaganda, which on many points is the same as counter-revolutionary propaganda itself, has succeeded, in the sense that a section of the population, not a majority, but an important section believes that a dialogue with counter-revolutionaries would be positive. Some say that this would improve the situation and bring about peace. Others are content to say that the government should decide.

*Q. Would you say that the*



*fundamental problem of mass participation on the basis of this ideological confusion is mainly to be found in the towns? Isn't it more difficult to fool people in the war zones, where they have more opportunity to compare fine speeches with reality?*

A. There are sections in the urban areas who are confused but religious and reactionary propaganda, like direct counter revolutionary propaganda also gets into the rural areas. We must not underestimate the work that the Church is doing in the rural areas on the Pacific. I would say that in the same way that the counter-revolutionaries have targetted the north and the centre of the country as a priority, the reactionary religious sector have prioritised Region IV, near Managua and in particular Masaya. They are there. They haven't got machine guns. They don't fire bullets but they fire ideas and these are an important weapon.

In the rural areas the war does indeed play a clarifying role but there is also a lot of backwardness. You have to understand that in the war areas, military strength and the sign of military strength are very important. That is to say that an enemy unit which arrives well armed and with plenty of demagogic speeches can really throw the population into confusion. On the other hand one of our own units can commit serious errors if they don't take this into account. This can happen if our forces turn up, too cocksure of themselves ideologically in the sense that the *muchachos* are convinced that their cause is just and that it should be recognised as such by the peasants. In so doing they act more like soldiers defending a cause than as political spokespeople. It should not be like that and it is not so much like that now.

*Q. In the three-month courses at the Military Academy which young people in military service do, is there any kind of political training or indications given of how to behave with the people?*

A. I think that at the beginning we didn't stress that aspect at the Military Academy. Then experience showed us that people had to be educated for this. Nevertheless, I don't think three months is enough. We still prioritise military training over political preparation. I think we should include within this political preparation training on human relations. Sometimes a smile at the right time can do more than a scientific manual.

*Q. Would you say that the FSLN is beginning to realise the need to strengthen the ideological battle, for*

*example, through the 'house to house' campaign which was organised in the run-up to the elections or through the construction of the special brigades like the fifth anniversary brigade which goes into the most backward areas in order to do political work?*

A. Yes, but its a more basic question. What it amounts to is that the ideological organisation of the enemy is stronger than ours from the structural and technical point of view. We have to be everywhere at once fighting a war, solving economic problems, conducting a struggle on the international level. Our cadres are within the infrastructure, in the administrative areas, in the Ministry of the Interior and inside the structures of the party with organising responsibilities.

In contrast to this, the enemy can concentrate exclusively on the ideological confrontation. That's where they have their best cadres. The Church is a very strong organisation. It has its generals, its officers in the field, its best cadres — scholars in theology, used to talking, who are assigned to the ideological struggle. Our cadres for the ideological struggle are not very numerous and are not the best. The 'house to house' campaign had to be done by comrades who themselves are only just learning. Imagine Comandantes Joaquin Cuadra, Omar Cabezas, Hugo Torres, William Ramirez, Monica Baltodano, Lenin, Cerna or Father Miguel d'Escoto going from house to house. Well, that is what the Church does. Why do you think that the Catholic hierarchy was so insistent that we should allow the ten ecclesiastics, the ten leaders of the ideological combat, back into the country? (1) Imagine if ten of our comandantes were to die just like that. The blow we struck them then was of that order of things. It is logical that the Church stipulate that the condition for dialogue with the government is the return of these ten ecclesiastics. And during this time what do you think they have been doing? Well, they've been preparing quick seminars in order to produce new cadres of course.

We, on the other hand only have the Sandinista Youth and some workers organised in the Sandinista Defence Committees to rely on to wage a 'house to house' campaign. They do it but their arguments are influenced by contra propaganda. These are not embattled cadres, they have their own doubts. Our one big advantage is that we are astride the horse of history. That is a big advantage. And this horse of history is forging straight ahead at a gallop. Sometimes it gets tired, sometimes

it gets confused but it never turns back. In contrast to this, the enemy possesses the major disadvantage of going against the current of history. Moreover we have the power and that also gives us more means to confront the influence of the enemy on the masses.

If we had an ideological army, it would be very easy for us to fight the enemy on this terrain. But as we don't have very strong cadres in this area we have to make use of coercion by the state in order to compensate for our weakness in this confrontation.

We have not completely lost. Far from it. The fundamental task of the hour is to win the military war, and avert direct US intervention. Then we can put all our efforts into the ideological war, which in the long run is the most important.

*Q. Couldn't we lose the military war as a result of not winning the ideological war?*

A. If we abandoned the ideological war, yes. Only at the moment we are prioritising the military war without abandoning the ideological war. We have forces directed towards holding in check the ideological offensive of the enemy and our main forces are assigned to fight the military enemy. When we are able to put our best cadres into the ideological field, there will be a qualitative change in the situation. For the time being we are hitting the enemy's logistical rearguard, their supply centres. This can in the short term, but in a qualitative way, turn the situation of the war around. The counter-revolutionary war is historically destined to fail in the short term. I am talking about the next year or two.

*Q. Within this time limit, what are the prospects for a war of devastation? What chance have the counter-revolutionaries got of increasing the level of instability in the country and of creating an interior battle front?*

A. Imperialism wants to destroy us. They think that coercive economic measures and a counter-revolutionary war can undermine the internal situation. But this shows a total misunderstanding of reality. It is a strategic, historical error on the part of the US government because they should understand that real revolutions, that is those which succeed in changing the nature of the ruling bodies because they have changed the class domination of the state, are irreversible.

1. On July 9, 1984, ten foreign priests were expelled from Nicaragua, accused of being involved in 'intensive political work against the Sandinista government.'



Even the errors of revolutionaries cannot turn back this process unless the latter begin to quarrel over power, then the structures of the government will be weakened by internal disagreement, as happened in Grenada. It was indeed revolutionaries who killed the revolution in Grenada, not imperialism. What happened in Grenada could only happen here if revolutionaries started to tear each other apart and to fight each other for a share of the power or began to seek individual power. This is the dream of the enemies of the revolution.

*Q. You are in charge of special areas I and II and you are president of the National Commission for Autonomy on the Atlantic Coast. Could you tell us what this project means for Nicaragua?*

A. The autonomy project is a conjunctural response. It is a project with great scope. It is a contribution by Nicaragua to human understanding. The project is the legal expression of a recognition by the revolution of the situation of marginalisation and oppression that the indigenous communities and ethnic groups have been suffering for centuries. The revolution is taking on board these historic demands and is committed to respond at all levels. The plans for the autonomy of the Atlantic coast area proposed by the Nicaraguan republic are not merely based on an academic discussion on the problem of indigenous populations. It is not a matter of creating state aid for these people. The plan envisages intellectual cadres working in the region in every area whether it be economic, political, cultural or social.

Various ministers are busy discussing the workplans which directly affect the Atlantic coast. All this is happening at the same time as the meeting of regional and national commissions on autonomy. It is these commissions which are thrashing out the guidelines which will govern autonomy and which will also, and above all, oversee the process of popular participation. The project of autonomy is a national project. Through this process, the country as a whole will grow richer. The Atlantic side because it is the possessor of autonomy and the Pacific side because it will benefit from the cultural heritage of the Atlantic. And finally both sides will be the richer because the project will sweep away prejudice and misunderstanding.

*Q. Comandante, what are the implications of the plan for autonomy on the development of military activity on the Atlantic coast?*

A. The plan for autonomy is a

political project. The problem calls for a political solution. We have never conceived of a military solution and we have corrected any errors tending in that direction. We do not believe that the demands of any indigenous peoples within Nicaragua, nor the demands of any ethnic community to be without justification. We make a distinction between the just demands of those who have been dispossessed and the unjust demands of the enemies of the country. We have sorted the grain from the husks. The indigenous peoples are on our side. Nicaragua is the first country in Latin America to recognise the multi racial character of our country.

*Q. Faced with the prospect of a prolonged war and an economic crisis, what, in your opinion, will be the political drift of the population?*

A. Firstly, as I have already said, I do not think that the war will go on indefinitely. But, in the event that we are not obliged to confront a US invasion, the ideological war and the conspiracy will take on a fundamental importance. We must therefore put all our efforts into the development of our counter-espionage services and lean even more heavily on the masses in order to confront the situation.

Anyway, I think that the political tendencies currently shaping up within the masses are basically of three orders. There are two active sections, the counter-revolution and the revolution. This last one is the most powerful since those sections who support internal reaction and the counter-revolution have always been in a minority. And then, as I have already said, there is a third, intermediary section of the population which tends to vacillate or at least allow themselves to be dragged along in the revolution. This can depend sometimes on rather tenuous factors like a particular social programme, a children's playpark, things like this, which can help to claw back the support of the most backward sectors.

*Q. Do you think that the economic boycott will bring about important changes in Nicaragua's economic relations abroad, like a greater alignment with the socialist countries or with Latin America?*

A. I think that we will get a significant amount of aid from many countries in the world, mainly the socialist countries. But such aid will not solve our economic problems. Nevertheless, for the moment, this will not change the Nicaraguan model. With time, some natural changes will come about. These will not be forced but will come about as part

of a process, when we reach a certain stage of development which cannot be determined by decree. This should be a natural process, like the trees that blossom after the rain.

Our political goal is to link up completely with the countries of Latin America, but that depends on the changes which have come about and are coming about in those countries on which the Nicaraguan revolution has an influence. The ruling elites in Latin America have a horror of revolutionary change and that is why they prefer to opt for democratic change. These countries have an interest in not allowing the Nicaraguan revolution to be crushed but they also have an interest in making sure it doesn't go beyond certain limits. What would happen if the revolution were destroyed? The reign of the 'gorilla' dictators would come back in Latin America, the military would come back to power in Uruguay and Brazil. If that were to happen the next stage of development could not come about without revolutionary struggle.

That is why all these governments have an interest in the Contadora remaining in being (2) because the Contadora is both a barrier to direct intervention and an instrument for influencing Nicaragua's policies. In fact, when we signed the Contadora Pact, that implied certain concessions. They were necessary for peace, but they were in the long run concessions. The Contadora is thus a way of exercising an influence in the direction of the democratic model, as those governments who are part of the Contadora as well as the other governments of Latin America, conceive of it.

In spite of all this, even if, at times, the Contadora has a more aggressive stance toward the United States, it is vital to bear in mind that fundamentally this represents a non-hostile disagreement with the US. The development of the revolutionary process in Latin America itself constitutes an antagonistic challenge for imperialism. And although relations between the Contadora and the US are not fundamentally antagonistic, nevertheless, the challenge is maintained because it corresponds to objective factors. The Contadora represents an attempt to find a non-violent solution to the Central American crisis but also in every other country in Latin America, even if this is not specified in their speeches or in their legal limits. The Contadora is not going to dissolve. It represents an objective need and that is why it won't dissolve. □

2. The Contadora group involves Mexico, Colombia, Panama and Venezuela and is seeking to find a negotiated solution to the conflict between the US and Nicaragua.



# Fourth International urges massive solidarity campaign

INTERNATIONAL solidarity with the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa is growing in many countries in the world. Within the trade union movement, on the campuses and in political parties there is a growing pressure for sanctions against the South African regime and growing links being made with the independent Black unions in South Africa.

At the October meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International an appeal was issued for the stepping up of this action by all sections of the International. We reprint the appeal below and give some examples of the type of activity that has been taking place.

The mounting revolutionary mass mobilisations of the people of South Africa against the apartheid regime demand the broadest possible support and active solidarity throughout the world. The FI calls on all its sections to place a high priority on this work, helping to organise the most powerful united action against the brutal repression of the racist South African government, for the freedom of Nelson Mandela and all political and trade-union prisoners, and against the complicity of the imperialist governments with the apartheid regime.

The call to break all ties with the South African government, divestment campaigns aimed at companies doing business in South Africa, opposition to sales of the Krugrand, boycott of all sporting events with South African teams, and the forging of direct links with, and concrete support for, the struggling civic associations, independent trade unions, student organisations, churches and other organisations — these are the kind of solidarity actions that have already been taken. They must be broadened deepened and intensified, especially within the organised workers movement in all countries.

The goal of this international campaign is the progressive isolation of the South African regime on all levels, and the growing active involvement of working people the world over as they throw their weight behind the courageous and determined

battle being waged by their sisters and brothers of South Africa to bring down the hated apartheid regime.

The South African mass movement is internally strongly differentiated on the political, trade-union or association front. The press of the International and its sections should take this differentiation into account.

Solidarity work should be undertaken in an identical fashion for all the components of the mass movement, without sectarianism or exclusion. In the solidarity campaigns or committees that our sections participate in we oppose all sectarian practices that consist of only really supporting one section of the organisations representative of a section of the oppressed and fighting against apartheid.

*US solidarity with South Africa (DR)*



We propose that these different organisations be invited to attend and speak at mass actions. We also call on workers organisations to send fact-finding and solidarity delegations to South Africa.

In the workplaces we call on the trade unions to participate in the solidarity structures. At the same time we aim to get them to take on specific solidarity tasks in relation to the independent South African trade unions (particularly those that correspond to their industrial sector) through appropriate trade-union aid, the popularisation of their struggles and press, and possibly "twinning".

## International Viewpoint on South Africa

*International Viewpoint has already published several articles on South Africa in the following issues:*

'Independent Black unions in South Africa' by Nathan Palmer and Peter Blumer *IV No 8, June 6, 1982.*

'Land and the national question in the South African revolution' Document of the Fourth International *IV No 25, March 7, 1983.*

'Mass response to the new racist constitution' by Nathan Palmer *IV No 46, 13 February 1984.*

'Another step toward "Pax Americana"' by Claude Gabriel *IV No 54, June 4, 1984.*

'Mass struggles come together to produce explosive situation' by Nathan Palmer. *IV No 60, October 1, 1984.*

'New upsurge sharpens debate over strategy' by Peter Blumer, Tony Roux *IV No 65, December 12, 1984.*

'The people's anger' by Ndabeni *IV No 74 April 22, 1985.*

**SPECIAL DOSSIER ON SOUTH AFRICA**  
*IV No 80 15 July, 1985.*

'The implications of French sanctions' by Nathan Palmer.  
*No 82, September 16, 1985.*



## International solidarity

IN SWEDEN ... there has been a big expansion of the solidarity movement with South Africa in recent years. The Isolate South Africa Committee, ISAK, has increasingly become the legitimate representative of the solidarity movement.

In March this year there was a demonstration of some 3,000 people in Stockholm against apartheid and against racism in Sweden. There has also been a successful campaign in all Swedish schools, collecting for the 'A day's work for South Africa' fund drive.

Within and outside the solidarity movement the question of a boycott has been a much debated theme in the last year. The Swedish legislation regulating trade with, and investment in, South Africa was sharpened, but still without essentially affecting the Swedish investments in South Africa. Imports of fruit have, however, been banned.

At the beginning of this year a big cooperative chain of distributors and retailers decided not to sell any South African goods. This was seen as a big step forward after years of campaigning with the local Coop branches. In the Metalworkers union a very important debate has been taking place on the issue of the withdrawal of Swedish companies from South Africa and the selling of shares in companies with South African investments. A group called Metalworkers Against Apartheid was set up and a resolution went forward to the national congress of the union in September. The motion was not carried but the debate was very important in putting pressure on the union leadership to take some action on the issue.

In the coming months, ISAK has several activities planned. These include a big demonstration against apartheid on October 11, a "Peoples Parliament Against Apartheid" next February and a continuation of the campaign against companies with investments in South Africa. Students, for instance, are now organising a boycott against one of the bigger text book publishing companies, Esselte.

IN THE USA ... many groups have endorsed the call for an outpouring of opposition to the apartheid regime on October 11 - the National Anti-Apartheid Protest Day and Day for South African Political Prisoners. Protests are planned in Albany, Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, Tucson, Washington and other cities as well as over 100 colleges and universities. Plans include marches, rallies and picket lines along with other educational activities such as teach-ins on apartheid and Washington's role in South Africa. These actions are being organised by, in some cases, newly formed ad-hoc coalitions and in others by already established anti-apartheid organisations.

In August, there were large actions in New York and Washington DC demanding that congress pass legislation imposing sanctions against the South African government. These built on the largely campus-based protests demanding divestment. A further meeting in New York took an important step in involving trade unionists in the campaign. On September 17, the New York Anti-Apartheid Coordinating Council was established at a meeting called by the United Auto Workers District 65 and involving representatives from several different trade unions in the City.

IN FRANCE ... the key task of the solidarity movement is to unify itself in order to fight for an extension of the meagre sanctions imposed by the Fabius government (see *International Viewpoint* No 82, September 16, 1985).

An important step towards such a process was made at the September 26 demonstration called by various different organisations including SOS-Racisme, the ANC, SWAPO, the Anti Apartheid Movement and one of the major student unions - UNEF-ID (Union National des Etudiants de France - Independente et Democratique). Between 3,000 and 5,000 attended the demonstration - possibly the biggest on this issue yet seen in the capital. On the same day, workers at Orly airport attempted to stop all flights to Johannesburg. They succeeded in holding up the flights, in this, the very beginnings of trade union action against the South African regime.

The Anti-apartheid Movement is holding a forum at the end of the month with international speakers to discuss how to take the campaign forward.

IN BRITAIN ... the main focus for action against apartheid is the national demonstration called for November 2 by the Anti-apartheid movement. The expected turnout is somewhere in the region of 50,000 people.

Thus far the main focus of the campaign has been to demand that Prime Minister Thatcher agrees to impose even the limited sanctions agreed to by the EEC (European Economic Community). Pressure for a more activist campaign based on the demand 'Break all links' is now growing.

IN THE NETHERLANDS ... The FNV, the main trade union federation, has established a solidarity fund for independent Black unions in South Africa. This issue of solidarity with South African Blacks is just beginning to become a real focus of attention following a huge debate in parliament and outside about the visit of the Foreign Affairs minister to South Africa as part of the EEC delegation. On September 14, there was a 2,000-strong demonstration and there is a campaign for a boycott of South African fruit under way. Two major supermarket chains, *Ahold* and *Vendex International* have already decided to implement such a boycott.

IN WEST GERMANY ... On Saturday, September 21, 15,000 people demonstrated in Bonn and West Berlin for a total boycott of the racist regime in South Africa.

The West Berlin demonstration of 5,000 was supported by the SPD and the Jusos [SPD Youth] as well as by the Alternative Lists. The SPD state chairman Jergen Egert was among the participants.

In Bonn's Muensterplatz, along with Dr. Wela Boesak, the brother of the recently arrested president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Dr Allan Boesak, were HBV [SPD Student organisation] Executive member, Christian Goetz and Ingrid Mattaeus-Mueller of the SPD Bundestag fraction.

The attempt to make the Bonn demonstration, for which there was a national mobilization, into a genuinely united action failed despite a number of preparatory meetings. The DKP [German Communist Party] only invited representatives of the liberation movement who were close to the CP-influenced ANC: Pashukeni Shoombé of SWAPO and Elena Khanyil of the ANC women's section. The fact that along with Peter Gingold (DKP) and the theologian Professor Walter Kreck, Uschi Eid of the Greens was also to speak could hardly counterbalance this one-sidedness.

Please send details of solidarity activity in your country to IV, 2 Rue Richard Lenoir 93108 Montreuil, France. □



# Gorbachov's reforms

THE INITIAL reforms of the new young leader of the Soviet bureaucracy were described in the first part of this article in the last issue of *International Viewpoint* - repressive measures against mass alcoholism and the kiss of the guillotine for a long list of particularly incompetent or unlucky officials. That article ended with an indictment of the present economic structures by the new ruler and his sounding of the alarm about the urgent need for changes. The following one takes up Gorbachov's program for reforming the economy, as well as the problems and contradictions he faces. The advent of a vital and intelligent general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, in particular following a series of No. One's who held the scepter of supreme power with a dying hand, two of them momified apparatchniks, have inspired heady speculation about a new spring in the USSR.

## ERNEST MANDEL

The principal failings of the Soviet economy denounced by Gorbachov are as follows: He pointed to a technological lag and the poor quality of many industrial products, which together "undermine the competitiveness of Soviet products, including machinery, on the world market." (1) Then there was the low productivity of investments, which were to a large extent excessive and left unrealized (frozen) for a long time. Finally, he referred to an unbalanced planning, becoming more and more incoherent, and to a growing waste of energy and raw materials. (See table.)

Gorbachov's indictment was followed up by a sensational decision. The draft for the next five-year plan (1986-1990) was sent back to Gosplan (the state planning agency) for major modifications. Gorbachov concentrated his criticisms in an onslaught on the Ministry of Steel:

"Over 15 years, 50 billion roubles in investment have been allotted to the steel industry. Most of this was assigned to financing the construction of new capacity, which moreover has been left uncompleted, while the technical reequipping of the enterprises has been neglected. Because of the defective policy of the Ministry of Steel, and of the minister, Comrade Kazanets, this industry failed to meet the targets of either the tenth or the eleventh five-year plan. The situation

that has developed requires radical changes." (2)

The fact that there is general cause for alarm is attested by the new decline in the rate of industrial growth this year, after a brief recovery

TABLE

A report drawn up by the Polish Academy of Sciences cited in the July 6 issue of *The Economist* estimates the expenditure of energy (in terms of kilos of coal) and of steel products (in terms of kilos of steel) for each 1,000 dollars of Gross National Product (at official exchange rates) for the years 1970-1980:

Country	Energy	Steel Production
USSR	1,490	135
East Germany	1,356	88
Czechoslovakia	1,290	132
Hungary	1,058	88
Great Britain	820	38
West Germany	565	52
France	*502	*42
Switzerland	*371	*26

\* These figures are not entirely comparable. Manufacturing plays a smaller role in the formation of the GNP in these countries than in the others mentioned.

spurred by Andropov's disciplinary measures. According to official Soviet sources, industrial production increased by only 3.1% in the period January-June 1985, as against 4.5% for the period January-June 1984 and 4.1% in the period January-June 1983. For the period January-April, the contrast was even more striking. The growth rate was 2.7% as against 4.9% and 4.4% respectively for the corresponding period in the two previous years. The denunciations of these problems are significant, but after all routine, except for the sense of urgency that surrounds them. They reflect general conditions whose structural character we have been pointing out for a long time.

The slowing of economic growth in the Soviet Union indicates the failure of the bureaucratic dictatorship to make the transition from extensive development to intensive development of the economy. This is generating steadily growing tension in the allocation of supplementary resources.

Unlike the period 1953-1973, the Kremlin can no longer simultaneously raise productive investment, military spending, and the standard of living of the masses. Gorbachov's report explicitly recognizes this. The conclusion that follows from this is obvious. Growth has to be given a new impetus with smaller investment. Above all, investment itself must be "rationalized."

Stress is being put on two factors - modernization and discipline. Gorbachov is the herald of the "scientific-technical revolution," the bureaucracy's term for the third technological revolution. Automate, computerize, robotize - these are the three themes that are being taken up in chorus by the official ideological apparatus. No doubt, they will be the leitmotiv in the "programmatic" documents for the Twenty-Seventh Congress of the CPSU, which has been called for February 1986. (Once again, this formulation is Gorbachov's own).

"Discipline" is supposed to mean greater economy in the use of energy and raw materials, as well as more rational use of equipment and labor power and a reduction of the demands for additional investments to meet the targets of the plan. All of this is quite traditional, abstract, and unrealistic, given the material interests of the bureaucracy, which more than

1. In his report to the Central Committee, Gorbachov nonetheless called for a considerable increase in the production of this "uncompetitive machinery." The growth of machine production is to be between 9% and 12% per year in the period 1986-1990, as against a growth of 6% in the period 1981-1984.

2. The full translation of Gorbachov's speech appeared, for example, in the June 29 and July 1, 1985, issues of the West German daily "Frankfurter Rundschau."



ever "rules the roost" in the economy.

The only concrete proposal is for a substantial reduction in construction of new plants for the sake of modernizing already existing plants and equipment. "Reconstruction" is now to absorb more than 50% of investment spending, whereas it now accounts for only 30%.

### The mountain and the mouse

How can this scheme, along with the related ones in Gorbachov's report, be carried out? There are, of course, the traditional, routine references to "material incentives" and "mobilizing the workers." But everyone knows that this is only empty rhetoric, especially in view of the meager results that followed similar talk in the case of the Liberman-Kosygin reforms in the mid-1960s. The only recourse left is administrative changes, that is, readjustment of the bureaucracy. In fact, that is all that Gorbachov's proposals can lead to.

He is proposing to beef up simultaneously the power of the central planning bodies and the powers of the plant managers and enterprise groups. It is, therefore, the intermediate authorities that are to have their prerogatives reduced — the ministries, especially the republic ministries, the local and regional bodies, the authorities for specific industries, and inspection bodies. They are to be cut back numerically and accorded less responsibility and weight. This bureaucratic rationalization will be accompanied by a simplification of the indices of the plan.

None of this is very radical or very convincing. It reminds you of a saying by the Latin poet Horace about the mountain in travail giving birth to a mouse. The gravity of the affliction and the severity of the diagnosis are clearly out of all proportion to the hesitating and limited character of the remedies offered. This situation is strongly reminiscent of the famous Novosibirsk Report in 1983 in which Tatyana Zaslavskaya made a critical analysis of the structural deficiencies of the Soviet economy, only to end with extremely vague and limited proposals for reforms. (3)

The reference to Zaslavskaya is not at all a fortuitous one. Although she was publicly reprimanded, she was not removed from her position. Her ideas have by no means fallen into disrepute. They were raised again in an interview with her that she was able to get published in the June 1, 1985, issue of *Izvestia*. They seem, in fact, to be the inspiration for at least part of Gorbachov's economic reform, as they were for Andropov's

"experimental reform." (4)

In any case, you find in the Novosibirsk Report the same theme of a parallel strengthening of the powers of the central planning bodies and of the plant managers, with a reduction in those of the intermediate bureaucratic authorities, that dominates the "Gorbachov reform."

But in Zaslavskaya's report you also find another reform proposal that has not yet been taken up officially by Gorbachov but which may become a focus of attention before the CPSU congress in February 1986. It calls for an expansion of the "private" sphere of the market economy in agriculture and in the services. Zaslavskaya's interview in *Izvestia* explicitly mentions the possibility of doing this in agriculture, so long as this expansion "remains within the limits of the law."

In this connection, it should be remembered that for seven years Mikhail Gorbachov was the boss of Soviet agriculture in the Central Committee of the CPSU. The least that can be said is that the record of his stewardship is hardly a brilliant one. Soviet agriculture is suffering from persistent stagnation. The deficit in the production of cereals for livestock feeds has led to a flattening out of meat production at around 60 kilos per capita, as against more than 100 kilos in France and 92 in East Germany, the country increasingly cited as an example by the Soviet leaders (including Gorbachov) for planning and economic management.

This year, cereals production is showing a slight upturn. It will no doubt be around 190-195 million tons. But this is still far from the target of 240-250 million tons that was initially set for the five-year plan 1981-1985.

There are many indications that Gorbachov wants to stimulate the production on the private plots of kolkhoz (collective farm) members, and the Sovkhoz (state farm) workers, which fell into stagnation under Brezhnev. This represents some 25% of total agricultural production, with a greater specific weight in livestock raising and the production of fruit and vegetables. (5)

In fact, stimulating private production while keeping it under the control

3. On the report of Tatyana Zaslavskaya, see the article by Marina Bek in "International Viewpoint," No 73, April 8, 1985.

4. This concerned a limited number of industries and enterprises, where the power of the managers to determine the prices and assortment of products has been widened.

5. For fruit and vegetables — except for apples — the gardens of city workers also play a not insignificant role.

6. In his excellent book "Travail et travailleurs en URSS" (editions la De-



Mikhail Gorbachov's recent visit to France — a new image for the 'young' leader (DR)

of the state and channelling it through the outlets of the state and cooperative distribution networks is one of the solutions advocated by the reformers. This recipe is close to the East German model, halfway between the present Soviet structure (inherited from the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras) and the Hungarian one, to say nothing of the Polish or Yugoslav one.

The most audacious aspect of this reform comes in the services. It has been applied experimentally in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Estonia. According to an article in the August 19, 1985, issue of *Izvestia* the repair services industry is today one of those that offers the least satisfaction to the population. The "official" state and cooperative repair services have an annual turnover of 6 to 7 billion roubles. The "unofficial" sector of the repair services industry has a similar volume of transactions. Unmet needs for repairs are estimated at a value of 5.5 to 6 billion roubles a year, that is, about a third of the total.

Moreover, some 17 to 20 million workers do moonlighting repairs in addition to their "official job," which obviously suffers as a result. In particular, they may steal materials from their workplaces to do such work. (6)

cowerte, Paris, 1984), Jacques Sapir notes that under Andropov, in order to combat absenteeism, which is in part the result of moonlighting and is aggravated by alcoholism, an attempt was made to launch a "hunt for shirkers," but it fizzled. "Sending the militia [police] at the beginning of 1983 to check whether the people in the cafes, movie houses, and theaters were absent workers could be an indication. But the way in which this campaign fell flat also shows the limits of coercive action. You cannot put a cop behind everyone of 128 million workers." (p. 68)





was part of the attempt to create

In the Estonian SSR, the radio and TV repair firm Elektron in Tallin rented out one of its shops to a brigade of technicians for 650 roubles a month per worker. In addition, the technicians involved had to pay the costs of materials, electricity, heating, and so forth. In return, they could demand what they thought was a proper price for repairs from their customers.

The price was established by the operation of the law of supply and demand. The repair workers could keep 70% of their net income. They had to pay 30% to the state enterprise as a sort of profits tax.

### TV repair experiment

The results seem to have been sensational. The waiting time for repairs, which had been two weeks — and in that respect Tallin is fortunate by comparison with Moscow and Leningrad, where waits are much longer — was reduced to one or two days. A radio or TV set taken to the shop in the morning was often returned in the evening.

The quality of the work improved considerably. Bribes were eliminated, and prices stabilized rapidly. In fact, the supply and demand were brought into balance so quickly that the brigade is now looking for new clients in the countryside, since the market for its services in Tallin was rapidly saturated.

The fact that articles about such cases can be published in the Soviet press seems to indicate that Gorbachov and his team want to expand this sort of experiment. The example in

the service industries is already closer to the Hungarian model. But as the case of Hungary itself indicates, it is by no means easy to apply this sort of reform in large-scale industry, and there is no assurance that it will be successful in either economic or social terms.

The Soviet lag in the dissemination and use of computers in a way sums up the scientific, technical, economic, social, and political problems confronting the "Gorbachov reform."

In the field of pure scientific research, one can hardly talk about a clear lag of the Soviet Union behind the United States, Europe, or Japan. The Soviet mathematicians are among the best in the world. Speaking over Radio Moscow on January 20, 1985, Vladimir Gurevich said that the Soviet Union is building the most advanced supercomputer in the world in Severodonetsk. We have no way of telling whether this was a boast, but in itself such a claim does not seem hard to believe.

There is, however, a long road between undertaking such a project, building prototypes, and testing them, and then putting such devices into mass production, let alone into general use. In the latter respect, the Soviet Union's lag is undeniable, striking, and very grave. The only computers available in practice to plants, administrations and schools is still of the so-called Third Generation.

Production of the Fourth Generation, which has already been generalized in the West, has hardly begun. Only 35% of the big Soviet enterprises (i.e., those that employ more than 500 workers) have a computer, while in the United States and Japan close to 100% do. Although the current five-year plan projected an annual production of 2.5 to 3 billion roubles worth of software, the real production in 1983 and 1984 barely amounted to 1% of this figure. Moreover, on the average computers are used only 12 hours a day, even though the plan projected a daily use of 18 to twenty hours.

Massive introduction of computers into the schools is an urgent need to prepare the upcoming generations in the Soviet Union for general use of this new tool for work and research. Given the inadequate production in the Soviet Union itself and East Germany's limited capacity for export, the Soviet authorities have turned to British and American firms in an attempt to import on a large scale "personal" computers of the Apple-Macintosh, or IBM PC-AT type. But the lag remains. It is estimated that the Soviet Union is ten to 15 years behind the United States, and five to ten behind Japan and Great Britain as regards the quantity and quality of

computers in wide use.

The lag is still more pronounced in the utilization of computers. At the start of the 1970s, the idea was widespread in the Soviet Union and East Germany that the planned economy would lend itself better than the capitalist one to the use of computers for planning and managing production, investment, and the economic life as a whole. Schemes for a unified data bank for the entire national economy of the Soviet Union were worked out.

Today, the Soviet philosophers, economists, managers, and apparatchiks have to sing a different tune. Rational generalized use of computers in the management of enterprises and of the national economy is running into innumerable difficulties, which seem in fact to be growing.

### Data and dictatorship

Some of these problems are technical in nature but hard to eliminate in the short or medium term — an inadequate infrastructure (in particular a deficient system of telephones and of telecommunications in general), a scarcity of electronics technicians and especially of software specialists, and difficulties in justifying the use of computer technology in financial or productivity terms (the introduction of computers not having led to the elimination of mechanical or even manual departments for accounting and correspondence).

However, the main difficulties are socio-economic and socio-political. Generalized use of computers presupposes the free and open circulation of information, which is assured within capitalist enterprises by their private ownership. Such unimpeded circulation of information throughout the national economy is not essential for the functioning of a market economy. (7)

Within the Soviet economy, given the material interest the bureaucrats have in getting the maximum resources for as minimal planning targets as possible, free circulation of information among enterprises and higher authorities is not only assured, it is in practice out of the question. Even within individual enterprises, the circulation of information is limited.

The system of bureaucratic management functions to a large degree on the basis of false information, known to be so by all the interested parties. This is what the former

7. The growing concern of the bourgeoisie and its state about "computer crime" reflects this contradiction. The relatively easy access of "people outside the business" to information concerning it "interferes with competition."



Communist premier of Hungary, Andras Hegedus, once called "generalized irresponsibility." (8) In such conditions, how can you "rationally" utilize a unified data bank? The bureaucratic system of management itself seems to be an obstacle. (9)

Alongside the socio-economic problems, there are the sociopolitical ones. Personal computers are generally equipped with printers, that is, with a printing apparatus that can function like a small offset press or a photocopier. Millions of personal computers spread through the schools, the universities, the enterprises would be millions of potential sources of samizdat, of a flood of uncensored publications.

What a nightmare for the KGB, and what a windfall for the so-called "organs of anti-Soviet agitation," which in fact is only the natural and normal exercise of the right of the working people to express their views about the whole range of social reality in the workers state, a right that Marx and Lenin expected that the workers would, and should, have.

These two difficulties have given rise to much hesitation and debate in the Soviet establishment about the advisability of disseminating miniaturized computers widely in administration and education. Since technical progress is irresistible in the world we live in — in particular because of the pressure of competition between the two systems — computers will eventually make a massive breakthrough in the USSR as well.

However, the bureaucrats will try to come up with all sorts of compromises to "limit the damage." So, they are talking about decentralizing the printers, that is, to disseminate personal computers generally but to mutilate them by separating them from their means of printing.

So, Gorbachov's problem is essentially social in nature. He is confronted with a choice between contradictory social interests that come into conflict from the outset of the "reform" and which will collide explosively if certain developments are pursued to the end. (10)

Clearly, bureaucratic "rationalization of bureaucratic management" involves increasing the rights of managers, which will undermine the right of workers to a job, the main gain of the October revolution left for the Soviet workers. All attempts to get around this problem up to now, for example by means of self-discipline and self-layoffs by teams of workers, or through the brigade system, and by holding out the lure of substantial bonuses (for a minority), have come up short against the class

solidarity and instinctive egalitarianism of the workers. (11)

It is not very likely that mere political pressure can break down this obstacle. Stepped-up economic pressure will be necessary, that is, the introduction of massive unemployment. But in the present relationship of forces, this cannot be done without provoking enormous and explosive working-class resistance.

However, if this barrier of working-class resistance is not broken down, the increase in the rights of managers will remain limited, confined essentially to a minor redistribution of responsibilities within the bureaucracy. Correspondingly, the positive effects on the rate of economic growth and the speed of technological innovation (12) will be of limited duration even if they may be real, as were the first Malenkov-Khrushchev reforms and the Liberman-Kosygin reforms after them. After a few years, the same causes will again produce the same effects. The problem is a structural and not a conjunctural one.

Everything indicates that by his origins, his social nature, and this cast of mind, Gorbachov is incapable of disentangling himself from the bureaucratic octopus, which through a thousand forms of obstruction defends the status quo, that is, its privileges. The crisis of the Soviet economy and society, as even the very limited description in the Novosibirsk Report and in Gorbachov's report makes clear requires a radical cure.

The medicine is called democratically centralized management of the economy by the workers themselves, organized by their democratically elected councils, debating and making decisions openly. This involves motivating the producers fundamentally by energetic action to reduce social inequality and a clear and open share for all in the social dividends. And this means liberating the enormous creative potential of the working masses.

Such a turn is impossible without abolishing the nomenclature, elimina-

ting the political monopoly of the bureaucracy throughout the USSR, the introduction of political pluralism, and legalization of the political parties and formations that respect in practice the Soviet constitution. All of this requires a full-fledged political revolution.

Gorbachov sometimes speaks in tones that even through the traditional verbiage and wooden jargon reflect an awareness of the gravity of what is at stake. In an interview published in *Time* of September 9, 1985, he said, for example:

"The need for a drastic change and the need for a radical improvement of performance are not only supported by the people; they are becoming its demand, the real imperative of our time." [Retranslation from French]

These words "drastic change" and "radical improvement" have a definite sound, but no such thing will be achieved by the sort of bureaucratic reforms this same Gorbachov is projecting.

When the Soviet chief cites the great advances the Soviet Union has made thanks to the structures created by the October Revolution, he has a point. If the imperialist propagandists make fun of the USSR, which today accounts for a quarter of all scientific degrees in the world and nearly half the engineers and still suffers from a marked technological lag behind the imperialist countries, they are a bit too quick to sneer.

These scholars, these engineers, the skills and culture of the Soviet working people are facts, and impressive facts. Anyone who does not understand this, does not have a full understanding of today's world.

It is the immobility and the grip of the Soviet bureaucracy that is preventing this enormous potential from producing the benefits it could for the Soviet peoples, for the cause of international socialism, and for all of humanity. (13) If the Soviet masses break this grip, the world will be changed as dramatically as it was in the ten days that shook the world in October 1917. □

8. The Novosibirsk Report stressed as well, a decade later, the fact that the system of economic management (and "political and social" should be added to this) in force in the Soviet Union generates "laziness, dishonesty, and a low moral level throughout the entire population." It might have added that the example is set at the top, "Der Fisch beginnt am Kopf zu stinken" ("Fish start to go rotten from the head down.")

9. In this respect, see the important considerations contained in a doctoral thesis by William K. McHenry, an American specialist (very hostile to communism) on Soviet Computer science.

10. The Novosibirsk Report explicitly mentioned the contradictory interests of various social layers as one of the causes of the delay of a radical economic reform in the USSR. Gorbachov himself alluded

to the same phenomenon, albeit in a toned-down way. On the debate unleashed in the Soviet Union over the existence of these contradictions, see the article by Marina Bek in IV, No. 72, April 8, 1985.

11. A French industrialist invited to the USSR reported interesting details about this in an account that appeared in the May 24, 1985, issue of the French business magazine "l'Expansion."

12. Gorbachov promised to increase the salaries of engineers and technicians and to increase bonuses for "innovators."

13. Professor Harley D. Balzer recently analyzed the causes of this contradiction in the American magazine "Issues in Science and Technology." They all lead back to bureaucratic management and dictatorship and not to the system of collective ownership of the means of production or to economic planning.



## Regime facing problems

ON AUGUST 7 this year, the Supreme Court of the Socialist Republic of Serbia took the decision to send two Belgrade intellectuals, Miodrag Milic and Milan Nikolic, to prison [see *International Viewpoint* No 70 February 25, 1985]. Sixteen months ago they and four others Pavle Imsirovic, Vladimir Mijanovic, Dragomir Olujic and Gordan Jovanovic had faced the charge of forming a 'counter-revolutionary organization' and the possibility of a maximum sentence of 15 years each in prison. After a long and sustained legal battle, four of the Belgrade Six were effectively freed. Milic was found guilty of 'hostile propaganda' and Nikolic of 'insult to the state', and sentenced to 18 and eight months in prison respectively. This dramatic transformation of the whole case against the six defendants has driven a coach and horses through the legal status of *delit d' opinion*. Moreover, according to latest reports, Milic and Nikolic's prison sentences, due to commence on September 30, have now been suspended until December of this year, during which time it is reasonably possible that the law under which they were prosecuted will have been changed.

MICHELE LEE

The case of Vojislav Seselj, which ran parallel with that of the Belgrade Six (both stemmed from a police raid on a private flat in Belgrade in April 1984), showed a similar transfiguration. Seselj was sentenced first to eight, then to four and finally just to under two years in prison, as the original verdict of 'counter-revolutionary activity against the social order' was changed first to 'hostile propaganda' and then to 'attempt at a hostile act'. Once again, different legal instances found themselves in clear disagreement over the nature of the initial 'criminal' act.

During the 16 months since their initial arrest, the accused have been vilified by the highest functionaries of the state and by much of the Yugoslav press. Several of them lost their jobs, were physically maltreated while in prison, and had to resort to hunger strikes in order to protect themselves. They and their families suffered considerable physical and mental effects from this private and public persecution. Only an impressive mobilization of internal and foreign public opinion, mostly coming from the left, has saved the Yugoslav people from having yet another gross injustice committed in its name. For the young worker Radomir

Radovic, however, who died last April after repeated arrests by the Belgrade police, this 'sobering up' of the state's legal arm came too late. For Milic and Nikolic, more struggle lies ahead. Their prison terms are due to begin on September 30 and they have already informed the Supreme Court that they plan to go on hunger strike. They will be joined by Imsirovic, Olujic, Jovanovic and a score of others.

However, there is a fair chance that their ordeal has not been completely in vain and that the Yugoslav Criminal Code may be changed so as to limit the hitherto unchecked power of the state to arrest citizens for holding ideas at variance with current official policy. The trials in Belgrade and Sarajevo have succeeded in securing public recognition that a law which allows such dramatic re-interpretation of presumed guilt is nothing but an instrument of repression directed against normal and constitutionally guaranteed civil rights. The simple equation of criminal and political activity which has informed Yugoslav law since 1945 may indeed no longer hold: a debate on this issue is planned for the autumn session of the Federal Assembly.

While the courts were thus engaged

'in the name of the people', the people themselves have in turn been singularly preoccupied with making ends meet, in the face of yet another drop in their living standards (2.6% in August alone) and a galloping rate of inflation (84% in the first eight months of this year). In September, the Belgrade daily *Politika* reported that the working people of the Commune of Belgrade had taken a grand total of 175,562 years off their working time so far this year on sick leave. It is not the case that Belgrade inhabitants are especially prone to bad health. In fact, a good part of this time was spent in the pursuit of additional work on their private initiative — something which has become necessary to increment the family income. With more than half of unqualified and semi-qualified workers earning wages that condemn them to living at or below the official poverty line, the grey economy is flourishing while the social sector registers increased financial losses: 195,000 dinars in the first six months of this year. The declining value of the industrial wage parallels the increasing impoverishment of the country's industry in general, and a decline of the very foundation of Yugoslav socialism: the "socially owned" means of production. If one is to judge by what has been happening in the factories over the past months, however, there are good signs that resistance against this worrying trend is building up inside the working class.

Following the upsurge in strike activity in the late 1970s, when stoppages involved thousands of workers at a time, there was a long lull from about the time of Tito's death — expressing, no doubt, a general rallying around the country's leadership. Now it appears, however, that the long-awaited response to the deepening economic crisis is slowly being formulated in the factories. This is shown first of all in the increase in the number of strikes. In Croatia, for example, which is industrially one of the more developed areas of the country, there were 74 strikes in the first half of this year compared to 84 in the whole of the previous one. The vanguard is formed by metal and textile workers, followed by workers in building, chemical and food-processing plants. Stoppages now tend to be longer and more extensive, and most importantly the character of strike action is also beginning to change. The events of this summer in Slovenia and Kosovo are indicative of this general trend.

Last August, 120 out of 124 workers at engineering works *Veriga* in Lesac, Slovenia, announced their decision to resign collectively from



their trade union, on the grounds that it had done nothing to protect workers' interests. This decision followed the appearance of a sheet of paper affixed to the factory notice board, which spelled out how much their trade-union, party and local council had 'earned' in the previous month. The list is worth quoting in full:

president of the Trade Union Association of the commune	208 000 din
secretary of the Trade Union Association of the commune	184 000 din
president of the Commune Assembly	189 000 din
president of Executive Council of the Commune Assembly	207 000 din
president of the Commune branch of the Socialist Alliance	192 000 din
secretary of the Commune branch of the Socialist Alliance	182 000 din
secretary of the Commune branch of the League of Communists	181 000 din
executive secretary of the Commune branch of the League of Communists	170 000 din*

\* The current exchange rate is at 3,500 dinars to £1.

In comparison, the average wage on the shop floor during the same month was 35 000 dinars!

The workers explained to the press that they saw little point in remaining members of a trade union which did so little for them, and whose executives paid themselves salaries five or six times as large as those of the members they were meant to represent. After several interventions from above, the threat of resignation was withdrawn - but only after the local trade union officials were forced to accept a clear and detailed programme of action on the members' behalf. Similar threats of collective resignation from the trade unions, and also from the party, have been repeated elsewhere, for example in northern Croatia and in the industrial belt south of Belgrade.

### Miners' strike ends in victory

The above action by Slovene metal workers was followed within days by Albanian miners in Kosovo. The stoppage involved one of the largest of all Yugoslav enterprises, the lead mine and processing plant of Trepca, near Titova Mitrovica. Repression following the 1981 revolt in the province had put a temporary stop to all industrial action there. But dissatisfaction finally broke out and on August 18 the Trepca miners refused to go underground. Their complaints covered a wide range of issues. As in Slovenia, the workers



Milan Nikolic (DR)

expressed a lack of confidence in the local trade-union and party officials, and refused to talk either with them or with management. They were all equally accused of arrogance in their conduct towards the workers, and of rarely attending factory meetings to hear what the workers had to say. The miners also refused to talk to officials of the Commune of Titova Mitrovica, and demanded talks with the provincial party and government leadership. A sharp deterioration in living standards (miners' wages here range between 15, 000 and 30, 000 dinars); large wage differentials between productive workers on the one hand, and managers on the other; corruption in the distribution of flats, housing credits and jobs; the high cost of food in the factory canteen - all this was brought up in a series of three or four hour-long meetings, with the provincial leadership, attended by thousands of miners. They wanted to know why health and safety measures were not being implemented, and demanded the resignation of the trade-union and party bureaucrats at Trepca.

For their part, the enterprise and party bureaucrats had from the very start denounced the strike as sabotage, and the provincial party leadership also suggested that it was the work of Albanian irredentists! However the strike ended with the resignation of top management and leading officials of both Party and Union in the factory. The case was well publicized in the Belgrade press - all the more so since, for the past three years, the republican leadership has been waging a war of attrition against its counterpart in the province.

The two strikes show similar underlying causes: a rapid and deepening social differentiation, and resentment on the part of the workers to the fact that they are being asked to carry the main brunt of the economic crisis. In rebelling against this, the workers also publicly expressed their

lack of confidence in the official trade unions and in the League of Communists [LCY] at the local level. This autumn and winter could see a new wave of strike actions, and increasingly, the formation of a factory-based working-class leadership quite independent from the official structures. (It has to be said, however, that this process would be less arduous if critical socialist intellectuals in the various republics and provinces had done more to transcend the parochial limits of their 'own' nations.)

The multinational composition of Yugoslavia has provided plenty of scope for republican and provincial party/state bosses to encourage local nationalism, in order to provide themselves with a degree of popular support in these lean days of economic belt-tightening. They then have something to bargain with when decisions are taken at federal level about how to distribute the misery caused by 15 years of economic mismanagement (structured by an irrational investment policy and large-scale borrowing in the West). The plain fact is that the penalties for this have largely bypassed those originally responsible for it, while falling heavily on the working class. In one notorious case, the aluminium processing plant at Obrovac in Croatia closed after only 48 hours in operation. The brand new plant worth 300 million dollars at today's prices - is now being sold for scrap and cannot find any buyers. Four hundred of the original workforce are still unemployed, and live on nominal wages of 13,600 dinars a month! Another gigantic failure, the ferronickel processing plant at Kavadarci in Macedonia, an even more expensive project than that of Obrovac, never even got into full production. Two hundred of its workers, the still unemployed core of the original workforce, marched this summer to the building of the Macedonian Assembly to protest at having to live on hand-outs - which, in any case, had not arrived for the past three months. As a result of this action, money was suddenly found to pay the 'nominal wages' for May and June - it was taken from the Natural Disaster Fund!

Astonishingly, the current economic crisis seems to have produced little or no sobering up in some key economic decision-making sectors. Thus the federal government has recently decided to purchase four nuclear power plants before the year 2000, and another four in the following decade. This decision entails a fresh borrowing of 14,000 million dollars in the first instance, to be added to the current one of 20,000 million dollars and more that the



country owes to the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and Western banks.

Implementation of this decision is now being held up until the thorny problem of where to buy the necessary uranium has been resolved. Since uranium can be bought either from the Soviet Union or from the West, the choice will necessarily affect Yugoslav foreign policy in the long run. But quite apart from political, economic and ecological considerations, whose consequences lie in the future, the recent announcement that extensive power cuts are on the agenda this winter demonstrates a grave shortage of funds for simple maintenance of existing power capacities. Despite considerable resources, coal production has been stagnant for the past two decades.

One need not be a wild revolutionary to believe that only a radical transformation of the Yugoslav state and society will be able to meet the demands sharply posed by the current crisis. That something major needs to change is also clear to the Yugoslav leadership, though it has shown itself capable of conceptualizing only superficial and short-term reforms. Blind to the need for fundamental changes in the whole groundwork of Yugoslav politics, it has instead clung to its familiar landscape. The traditional channels of reform, pivoted upon the League of Communists, have been blocked and rendered useless by the all-pervasive bureaucratization and corruption consequent upon decades of party-state symbiosis. All attempts at economic reform so far have foundered upon the great inert mass represented by the party bureaucracy. It has proved impossible to use the instrument of the party to revitalize the petrified state structures, and thus pull the economy out of its present downspin. The recent speech by Alexander Grlickov, one of the more liberal and intelligent members of the leadership, calling for the mass front organization, the Socialist Alliance (1) to play a new role is an act of desperation. No qualitative break for the better can occur in Yugoslavia until the working class moves and takes the centre stage as an independent factor. The past six months have shown that the industrial workers are beginning to flex their muscles. The coming autumn and winter seem set to confirm the trend of increasing radicalization in the factories. Working-class re-entry into the political fray will come none too soon. □

1. The Socialist Alliance was the mass, popular front organisation set up by the LCY when they came to power.

## The presidential elections: heaven not smiling on Islamic republic

COMING THE day after the first devastating Iraqi bombing of Kharg Island, the hub of Iranian oil exports, the election of the president of the Islamic Republic takes on added importance as a test of the ability of the Khomeini regime to keep up the momentum of the war effort after suffering a grave economic and psychological blow. The following article indicates an accelerating erosion in the political base of the regime, along with growing divisions among the rulers.

SABER NICKBEEN

On August 16, 1985, after many months of delays and postponements, Iranians were offered another chance to take part in what Khomeini has called "the freest kind of elections ever held anywhere." They were to choose a new president of the "Islamic Republic."

Three choices were on offer: Khamenehi, who was the incumbent (the delays were precisely because it was not certain that Khomeini could accept him); Asgaroladi (the former minister of trade, a powerful figure in the Bazar); and Kashani (the son of the late Ayatollah Kashani, who helped the shah and the CIA carry out the 1953 coup d'état that toppled Mossadegh). Up until recently, Kashani was the head of the Iranian delegation to the International Court at the Hague dealing with US complaints against Iran.

All three candidates were members of the Central Council of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP), the only party represented in the parliament, the Majles.

Some 49 other prospective candidates were rejected as "unfit" by the Council of the Guardians, which supposedly serves as the watchdog of the "Islamic" constitution. Among them was the former premier, Mehdi Bazargan, who was told that he was not acceptable as a candidate because he did not bow to the Command of the Chief Mullah (*Velayat-e-Faghih*). The ex-head of government denied the charge.

Interestingly, the spokesperson of the Council of Guardians, Ayatollah Khazali, who made this charge, is a leading member of the Hojatieh faction, which fundamentally regards Khomeini as a heretic precisely because he supports the *Velayat-e-Faghih!* (1)

Initially, there were a number of moves within the ruling clique in favor of allowing Bazargan to stand in order to encourage more participation and provide more of a facade of democracy. The former premier had demanded guarantees of a free election as a precondition for contesting. He was promised that the headquarters of his Freedom Movement in Tehran, which were closed down before the last parliamentary elections would be reopened. Moreover, he was to be allowed to publish a new legal daily paper to replace *Mizan*, which was shut down in the aftermath of Bani Sadr's ouster during the summer of 1981.

The present premier, Mousavi, was even obliged to say that the government had "nothing against Mr. Bazargan taking part in the election."

1. The Hojatieh are social and economic conservatives linked to the Bazari merchants. Their religious ideology is that until the Hidden Imam appears, no reforms can be made. Therefore the so-called radical Islamics who identify with Khomeini, and Khomeini himself, are heretics because they suggest to the masses that they can give them blessings that they could in fact only enjoy after the return of the Hidden Imam, the Shi'ite messiah. And one of these blessings is the theocratic rule of the *Velayat-e-Faghih*.



Later on, apparently, the rulers agreed amongst themselves that letting Bazargan stand involved more risks than advantages for the stability of the regime.

A campaign by Bazargan could easily have turned into a rallying point for the entire opposition to Khomeini's rule as Bani Sadr's election to the post of president in 1979 in fact did.

The one most immediately threatened was Khamenehi, and he was the first to move. He came out vehemently against letting Bazargan run, fearing that it would damage his own chances for reelection. His supporters spread the rumour that it was Rafsanjani, the speaker of the Majles, who was behind all this.

The tale they spread went like this: "Rafsanjani failed to convince the Imam [Khomeini] to come out against the reelection of Khamenehi. [Remember, the latter's sister had just fled to Iraq!]. So, now he is trying to weaken Khamenehi's chances to get a respectable majority." (2)

In an interview, Khamenehi himself said: "I believe there is no need for us to put on a show of democracy and freedom. Because in our country, democracy is all too evident. The elections to the Majles last year were the freest sort of elections. We do not need [different] newspapers to show democracy." (*Etela'at*, July 25, 1985).

Reportedly following the Imam's orders, Rafsanjani said a day later that it was possible that the Bazargan's appearance on TV or radio could lead to "a terrible crisis" whose consequences we might "not be able to bear." He raised the spectre of "counterrevolutionary plots," if Bazargan were able, for example, to hold an election rally in Tehran.

### Bazargan slapped down

So, the former premier was eliminated from the race. On July 24, the council of Guardians told him: "Our nation has treated you with patience and politeness. But you should not persevere in your obstinacy, because we fear you may face an even darker future." His protests were not even mentioned in the press! And then he meekly shut up.

The contest, therefore, was between representatives of the three so-called wings of the IRP: the "pro-Bazari [traditional merchant] wing, represented by the big merchant Asgaroladi; the "pro-Hezbollahi [Islamic "radical"] "wing," represented by no less than the reactionary Ayatollah Kashani's son (which tells you a lot about the real nature of the Hezobalahis!); and the majority



Iranian women cast their vote. The Pasdaran watch on (DR)

"Elteghatee" (eclectic) line, represented by Khamenehi himself ("the living martyr" (3).

The actual bosses of the IRP, who remain the *real* Bonapartes, despite a lot of the superficial theorizing (4), Khomeini and his "soldier," Rafsanjani, did not bother to put up any candidates directly representing them.

For his part, Rafsanjani declared that he could "work with all" the three factions. He knows that as long as the Imam lives and after his death, as long as Ayatollah Montazeri retains the throne, the function of the "legal" authority will remain in the Majles. The speaker's role, after all, is to put a legal stamp on the Imam's edicts and that gives him the dominant position in the government apparatus.

In the election campaign, which as usual was confined to two weeks, despite the Imam's warning about preserving unity, the three candidates all accused each other more or less directly of being in the pay of the Americans. Kashani raised the accusation against the government (that is against Khamenehi) that it had backed down to US imperialism in replacing him as head of the Iranian delegation to the Hague court. "The Americans demanded this!"

The premier responded to Kashani's charges by saying that "it was the Imam himself who removed him." Mousavi's minister of labour, Sarhadizadeh, chose the anniversary of the 1953 coup to raise the question: "wouldn't it have been more proper for those who have selected the candidates for the presidency to have asked this man [Kashani] about his relations with Bahaie?" (the latter was a pro-American politician who helped the shah in the 1953 coup and supported Ayatollah Kashani).

The minister of labour compared Kashani to the "monafeghin" (hypo-

crites," that is, false Muslims; this term is usually applied to Muslim leftists such as the Mujehadeen) and the "liberals," who, "like the USA and Bakhtiar (the last premier appointed by the shah who now runs a monarchist exile operation in Paris) criticize the Islamic government."

Sarhadizadeh demanded that the Council of Guardians explain "how it was that such a weak and incompetent person, who so damaged the good name of the Iranian Islamic government [ie, in the Hague court case] and who was removed by the Imam's order, could have been considered fit to stand as a candidate."

A Majles deputy and close ally of Asgaroladi, Esrafilian, accused the government of being both "weak in management" and "eclectic" in its Islamic beliefs, even of "tending toward socialism" in economic matters. The implication was that a major injection of good old Bazari know-how was what was needed to solve the crisis in the country. (The "religious" debate in the regime in fact concerns whether the government should intervene more or less in the economy.)

The government counter-attacked by first saying that "our most import-

2. The reason for this conflict is that Khamenehi plays his own balancing game between the Bazaris and the Islamic "radicals" and does not directly represent Khomeini, as Rafsanjani does. In the last period Khamenehi has leaned more and more toward the Bazar and been seen by the clerics as apt to give too many concessions to the Bazaris, concessions that might undermine the political dominance of the clergy.

3. In Islam, "living martyr" is a contradiction in terms, because the word is used essentially for Muslims who die fighting unbelievers. This title is applied sometimes to volunteers for the front to mean that they have already given up their lives.

4. That is, some people see Khamenehi as the Bonaparte in the situation, playing between the left represented by Khomeini and the right represented by the Hojatieh and the Bazaris.



ant problems are not economic but political" and if "these oppositionists shut up and do not join the chorus of the counter-revolutionaries, we can overcome the economic problems."

The minister of labour accused Asgaroladi's faction of being in league with the "world powers" who want to "dominate our trading sector." He said that they themselves were "incompetent" and "we saw how they led their apparatus [ie, the Ministry of Trade] to bankruptcy, as well as themselves."

None of the leading ayatollahs who are opposed to Khomeini called on their flock to vote. The regime was so desperate for help in getting out the vote that they distributed Ayatollah Golpayagani's statement that he himself would vote but that he "hoped that the Islamic Republic would remain Islamic, and would respect the basic rules of Islam and not those rules which the slaves of God (5) themselves have imposed because of necessity."

Khomeini appealed once again to the nation to do its religious duty and vote. He even suggested that people could put in a "white vote" [that is, a blank ballot], but they should at least participate. Later on, when the rumour was spread that this idea of casting blank ballots was a scheme by Rafsanjani to weaken and embarrass Khamenehi, the representative of the Council of Guardians, Imam-e-Kashani, declared this proposal to be a plot of the "enemies of the revolution." (Radio IRI, 13 August 1985.)

The other more familiar methods of "encouraging" citizens to vote were also in evidence. Government employees, war refugees, and others dependent on the state were asked to vote with their ration cards. The peasants in the more remote villages were forcibly mobilized. And when all that failed, ballot boxes were stuffed.

Nonetheless, the results were not all that reassuring for the government. Two days after the elections, the State Ministry declared that 1.5 million people had voted in Tehran and the central province, and about 9 million in the rest of the country. The official results, issued the next day (August 19), however, put the total vote at around 14 million.

It was claimed that out of 14.2 million who cast ballots, over 12.2 million voted for Khamenehi, and 1.4 million for Kashani. Asgaroladi was accorded around 300,000 votes, and the "white vote" was put at 400,000.

Obviously, it was hardest to falsify the figures where there was a real race, as in Tehran, Esfahan, Shiraz,

Mashed, and Tabriz. The official total vote for the whole of Khorasan province for example, in which Mashed is located and which is the most populous province in the country, with about 9 million inhabitants, was only 1.4 million. In Mashed, Ayatollah Khoie, a very powerful local figure, has gone so far in opposing Khomeini that he is under virtual house arrest. He had asked his followers to boycott the vote.

In the entire province of Esfahan, with a total population of between 4 and 5 million, the recorded turnout was only about 900,000. What was very noticeable in the city of Esfahan, one of the main provincial industrial centers, was a nearly total boycott by the workers. In Shiraz, so many *pasdaran* were at the polling stations that potential voters were frightened away.

In Tehran itself, the low turnout was very marked. The regime, which only a few weeks before the vote had claimed that it mobilized 5 million people in a demonstration of support for the war (On Jerusalem [Qods] Day), did not even venture to give a figure of over a million votes for all three candidates. And Tehran is the city where all of the factions have their main organizational strength.

These low figures were bolstered by exaggerating the totals for other areas where there was less of a contest, such as the Azerbaijani and Kurdish areas, where the turnout was probably less than 5%. Nonetheless, in the official figures, 1.6 million people are supposed to have voted in these areas (which have a population of 8 to 9 million). Similar clearly exaggerated claims were made for the vote in the war-hit southeastern areas, where the war-happy Khamenehi was supposed to have gotten a particularly big vote.

In any case, the main leaders of the regime had asked for, and predicted, a very high turnout — one "at least greater than before," that is, the 16.5 million votes claimed for Khamenehi in the last presidential election. That is what Khamenehi himself said, who needed a higher vote to strengthen his hand in the cabinet against Mousavi and in the Majles against Rafsanjani, who are less accommodating than he toward the Bazaris. For example, Khamenehi opposed Mousavi's removal of Asgaroladi as minister of trade.

On election day in Tehran, many people deliberately stayed indoors. In the working-class suburbs of Karaj, a large number of people could be seen picknicking, but the polling stations were empty.

It was obvious that the elections

brought no comfort for any of the factions, including the supremo of all the factions, Khomeini himself. The low turnout and the vicious charges traded back and forth between the candidates represented a defiance of his orders. This means that he is no longer able to unite the various cliques within the IRP.

Khamenehi's personal authority has been greatly weakened vis-a-vis the government, and hence his manoeuvring room is less. The differences between the two branches have been out in the open for the last six months. Because of this conflict, Mousavi has been unable to fill the important posts of minister of defense, minister of roads, and of the national plan and budget. Just before his election campaign, Khamenehi had accused the government of being leftist and "weak in the area of management." (*Etela'at*, July 23, 24, and 25.)

Despite the low votes they received, both of the "extreme" factions, the Hezbollahis and the Hojatieh are now in a better position to step up their pressure on the government. The Hojatieh can hardly be unaware of their unpopularity with the masses and therefore cannot have expected a big vote.

They used the election, however, to escalate criticism of the government. The basis of their power is economic, and it is growing. The decline in oil revenues, in fact, means a corresponding increase in the power of the Bazaris, who dominate the other sources of income in the society. The government more and more needs the help of the Bazaris to meet the rising costs of the war.

The budget for the Islamic year 1364 (1984-1985) is running a huge deficit and is being directly threatened by a Bazari boycott of productive investment and their penchant for speculation and hoarding. It seems now that Khamenehi, despite the weakening in his personal authority, may very well win his point about the need for some fundamental changes in the cabinet. There are already widespread rumours that Mousavi is going to be replaced by Velayati, the present foreign minister. The later is associated with the pro-Bazari wing.

5. The expression reflects the Hojatieh's idea that none of the basic laws of Islam can be changed, even interpreted to comply with practical needs, or "necessity." What this means concretely is that an Islamic government may not in any way limit the prerogatives of private property. The term "slaves of God" is a way of ridiculing the pretensions of mere mortals who presume to alter the "laws of God." By using this statement in an attempt to get out the vote, the regime in fact disseminated an attack on its own policies and basic political stance.



The Council of Guardians has already reinterpreted the constitution to mean that the "new" president must present a "new" cabinet to the Majles.

The Hezbollahis, who have supported the Eclectics against the Bazar, have been further weakened by their low poll. But nevertheless, the economic crisis and the increasing discontent of the masses are pushing them into sharper conflict with the regime, which can be expected to react by continuing the purges in the *Pasdaran Army (Sepah-ye-Pasdaran)* and further bureaucratizing the Islamic instruments for the control of the masses (for example, the Islamic societies and shoras) and in general bringing them under a tighter reign.

On the other hand, the Eclectics are going to continue to need the support of the Hezbollahis in order to balance off the Bazaris and maintain the clerical hold on political power. That means that it will be difficult for the government to abandon its pro-war policy. The fighting has assured a huge flow of money to the institutions of the Hezbollahis, and they have come to depend on it.

Thus, in sum the elections show that the regime is sinking deeper in its impasse, and that the consensus it achieved in the last Majles elections (6) is already coming apart, as its political base is shrinking steadily and rather rapidly. The regime's fundamental contradiction is that it seeks to maintain the hold of the clergy on political power and at the same time normalize economic relations, that is, restabilize capitalism. But these two aims are at root incompatible. The clergy cannot run a capitalist economy and society effectively, and ultimately the holders of the economic power will be satisfied with nothing less than hitching the state directly to their interests.

The maneuvers by Khomeini and Rafsanjani in these elections show the continuing determination of the rulers to maintain clerical power. But at the same time, the economic power and the audacity of the money bags are steadily growing and can less and less be held in check. This is shown in particular by the record of this Majles, in which Khomeini had succeeded in marginalizing both the Hezbollahis and the Hojatieh. It is worth looking at this record in a separate article in the next issue of *IV*. □

6. For an analysis of the Majles elections and the makeup of the parliament elected, see my article "What the elections for the Islamic Parliament showed," in *International Viewpoint*, No 56, 2 July 1984.

## Millions sign against the missiles

THE DECISION in principle of the rightist Lubbers government to deploy the cruise missiles was approved by parliament on June 14, 1984, despite massive protests. This vote touched off a crisis in the antimissiles movement.

Moderates started talking about compromises. In fact, the defeat coincided with expectations of a Social Democratic victory in the 1986 elections. The following article describes the last campaign of the peace movement against the final go-ahead for deployment expected on November 1 and the advance of the debate on perspectives.

ROBERT WENT

The focus of the antimissiles movement in September and October is the People's Petition, a massive collection of signatures to show once again that the majority of people who live in the Netherlands are against deployment of cruise missiles on Dutch territory. An estimated 80,000 activists are involved in house-to-house canvassing, getting signatures on a card with the following text:

"To the government and the States General [parliament]. I oppose nuclear armament. Around November 1, you are to make a decision about the deployment of cruise missiles on Dutch territory. I ask you to say 'no' to deployment."

This petitioning drive has given impetus to a vast polarization. The supporters of deployment have responded with a more open counteroffensive than ever before. In advertisements signed by a "Committee for Bilateral Disarmament," prominent personalities have been appealing to people not to sign the card but to "tear it up." In this campaign, the right has mobilized, for example, the former NATO secretary general Luns and the industrialist Frits Philips (of the Philips Co.).

The ultraright is clearly playing a role in this campaign. But it was leaders of the Christian Democratic Party (Christen Democratisch Appel — CDA), the party of the millionaire premier Lubbers, that first came out for it. The CDA always tried to

take an intermediate position, but now that the moment of truth is approaching, they are bothering less and less about that. Bert de Vries, the chair of the CDA fraction in the Second Chamber, has spoken out against the petition, saying that he sees a great danger in the action, because people could turn against "democracy" when the parliament and the government ignore the results of this petition.

The other government party, the rightwing liberal VVD (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie — People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) has always openly supported deployment, and that has not changed. Leaders of this party make slanderous statements about signatures being forged and people being intimidated when they refuse to sign.

The biggest newspaper in the country, *De Telegraaf*, almost every day carries articles against the people's petition. In them, you find the argument being raised that the action could rebound against democracy. In one, there were even references to "Hitler's methods." In short, the right is not very confident.

In June 1984, the Lubbers government decided that the decision was to be made for deployment this November 1, unless the Soviet Union failed to deploy any new SS-20s between July 1984 and November 1, 1985. This was seen immediately by a lot of people as a cheap trick to



put the blame for the deployment on the Russians. But, nonetheless it took the leadership of the peace movement (the KKN) a long time to take any new initiatives. (1)

Leaders of the KKN said openly after June 1, 1984, that the time for big actions was past. And that was despite the fact that only a couple of weeks before, on May 10, hundreds of thousands of workers struck against the cruise missiles, together with high-school students. A lot of pressure from the rank and file of the movement was necessary before it was finally decided at the beginning of this year to organize a petition campaign.

### Local committees established

Petitioning has been going on now for more than three weeks, and as always when there has been some organization, it has been a great success. Thousands of new people have become involved in this action. Tens of thousands of activists who were able to do little or nothing after June 1 have been reactivated.

Never have there been so many local united-front committees. There are now almost 600 committees for the total of slightly over 700 cities and towns in the country. The bulk of the people living in the Netherlands will have someone come to their doors at least once between September 7 and October 26 to ask them if they have signed or if they will give their card in.

From the opinion polls, it seems that since the start of the action, the number of those against deployment once again stands above 50%. Estimates are that at least 3 million signatures will be turned in by the end of the campaign, perhaps even 4 million.

The big question is "And what then?" The KKN has called for a demonstration on October 26 to mark the handing over of the signatures to Premier Lubbers. That is all well and good, but where do we go from there? What happens to the tens of thousands of people who have carried out the action? Here, we come to an area where the Social Democrat-dominated KKN is playing more and more of a braking role.

The KKN is explicitly opposed to a real demonstration to conclude the petition drive. It wants only a modest demonstration for the presentation of the petitions to Lubbers. This is despite the strong pressure of the local committees for a demonstration, which found expression in the national assembly of local committees May 25-June 1.

The KKN sees no good in organizing an action for November 1, the day when the government is to make a decision. It refuses to conduct a discussion about "where to go after the petition," with the argument that it will be time to consider that if the petition drive does not get results.

The well-known IKV chair, Mient-Jan Faber, is trying to work out compromises between "deployment" and "nondeployment," in order to make it possible for the Social Democratic PvdA (Partij van de Arbeid) to come into the government along with the Christian Democrats, after elections scheduled for next May.

The FNV (Federatie Nederlandse Vakverenigen), the country's biggest union confederation, which called a 15 minute strike against the cruise missiles on May 10, is giving only faint encouragement to its people to take part in the petition campaign and bring it into the factories and offices. The result is that much less has been done in the petition campaign in and by unions and union locals than in the previous actions of the peace movement.

The leadership of the peace movement decided *only* to organize a petition campaign and not to look beyond November 1. Or did it? In fact, putting on the brakes and developing no perspectives for after the government's decision means letting the movement wane again after parliament and the government make their decision. For a lot of leading figures in the peace movement, this petition drive seems for the moment to be the movement's last big action.

However, there is an important difference now. For the first time, a *section* of the movement has had the self-confidence to undertake something ambitious, even if the national leadership of the movement (the KKN) is against it.

— On November 1, actions are to take place in many localities throughout the country. The most important will be a new school strike. At the moment Jongeren tegen Kernwapens (2) has sixty local branches that are organizing this strike. In various places, there will be demonstrations. And here and there the union leaders are getting appeals from factories and offices to make November 1 a day of action. Given the attitude of the union leadership toward the petitioning, however, there seems no possibility of this happening.

— A section of the movement, mainly more radical groups, is organizing an "alarm demonstration" for October 26, following the KKN demonstration that concludes the petition campaign. This alarm demonstration will not only mark the end

of petitioning but also focus attention on the need to continue the movement and on the actions to be held on November 1.

The demonstration is being built by a number of city united-front committees; Jongeren tegen Kernwapens, Vrouwen tegen Kernwapens (Women Against Nuclear Weapons), BONK, a national organization that builds civil-disobedience actions; and one political party, the Socialistische Arbeiderspartij (SAP — Dutch section of the Fourth International). The other left parties will not have anything to do with an initiative not supported by the KKN.

For the future of the movement, it is of great importance that these initiatives and actions be a great success. It is clear that there are two paths for strengthening the peace movement after November 1 and building new initiatives. On the one hand, the national united front, the KKN has to be maintained and brought into new actions. On the other hand, sections of the movement have to take initiatives and start campaigns, even if the leadership of the movement is against that, even if — as is the case with the October 26 demonstration — the leadership explicitly opposes it. In this sense, the movement is making some important advances in these months. □

**EXTRA** anti  
**atoombommars**  
**'t harde**  
**zaterdag**  
**28 sept '85**  
Vertrek 14.00 uur vanaf station 'tHarde



**Geen kernwapens in Nederland**  
**Dus zeker geen kruisraketten**

1. The KKN is the national coordinating committee of the peace movement. It includes the left parties represented in parliament, the peace organizations, the soldiers union VVDM, and the biggest union confederation, the FNV.

2. Jongeren tegen Kernwapens now has sixty branches, and consists nationally of representatives of all the left youth organizations, from the Jonge Socialisten (the Social Democratic youth organization) to REBEL (the youth organization in political solidarity with the SAP and the Fourth International).



# Earthquake wrecked more than buildings

ON THURSDAY September 19 a terrible earthquake hit Mexico City killing over 5,000 people and leaving 1,000 buildings completely destroyed. As with all such natural disasters in Third World countries, the earthquake exposed the corruption and callousness of the government and its system.

The following interview was given to Gerry Foley in Paris on October 2 by Sergio Rodriguez, a leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), Mexican section of the Fourth International.

*Question. What political and social repercussions has the September 19 earthquake had?*

*Answer.* It has exposed the corruption, callousness, and ineffectiveness of the government, the capitalists, and the imperialists in a glaring way, as such natural disasters always do in our country.

The quake was entirely predictable, although of course the government could not have known exactly when it would happen. Since Mexico City is in an earthquake zone, buildings are supposed to be designed to resist the strongest shocks. But it is obvious that a good part of the buildings that collapsed did not meet the legal requirements.

It is notable in particular that a great many of the buildings that collapsed were owned by the Mexican government. A lot of the secretariat buildings tumbled — the Secretariat of Labor, of Trade, of Agriculture, of Foreign Relations, and so on. Secondly, a lot of the hospitals that collapsed were government hospitals, such as the Hospital Juarez, the Centroamerico, and so on. Also the public schools, primary and secondary schools. Finally, a very large part of the housing that collapsed were government housing projects, that is "low-rent" housing, such as the Unidad Juarez and the Tlatelolco flats.

More than seventy schools collapsed in Mexico City. It was only because the quake came at 7.19 am that kept things from being much worse. If it had happened an hour later, most of these schools would have been filled, and we would have seen a real slaughter of the innocents.

The earthquake also revealed to the Mexican people as a whole something

that we and the National Anti-repression Front had been saying for a long time. One of the government buildings that collapsed was the Procuraduria General de la Republica, which is the headquarters of the Policia Judicial, a political police body.

In the dungeons of the Procuraduria, they found many bodies of Colombians and Mexicans showing the marks of torture by the police. It also came to light that these people had been held in secret for more than two weeks. Also Mexican law obliges the police to bring prisoners before a judge within three days of their arrest. The Mexican government claimed that these people were drug traffickers but in the trunk of a police car was found the body of a prisoner's lawyer. He had been kidnapped by the police and kept in the trunk of a car for an entire day, before he was killed by the earthquake.

Moreover, the role that the police and army played in the disaster only rubbed salt in the people's wounds. In fact, they were sent in only after the level of organization of the people in the affected neighborhoods, especially the youth, frightened the government. Hardly an hour after the quake, the local people were in the streets taking control of the situation, organizing groups to pull people out from under the rubble, to help the people trapped, in elevators, for example, to organize medical aid. More than a hundred thousand youth went into the streets immediately in Mexico City to aid the victims. This frightened the government, which feared losing control.

The government put into effect National Defense Plan II, a sort

of state of siege. This plan gave control over the city to the army. What this meant in fact was that the soldiers came out with machine guns, not to help the wounded and the trapped but fundamentally to create an atmosphere of panic and intimidation to block the self-organization of the people.

To make matters worse, the police and army robbed the stricken population. The people had to flee without being able to take their possessions. So, the repressive forces carted off tape recorders, clocks, all sorts of things. There is a flood of specific complaints about looting by the police and army. The people are furious.

Ironically, three days before the quake, there was a military parade to commemorate Mexico's independence from Spain. They paraded, among other things, imposing anti-riot armored cars that they have purchased from France and Switzerland. They even gave a demonstration of how these armored cars can knock down barricades in a matter of seconds. So, the people wondered why these marvelous machines were not brought out to move ruins and save lives.

Moreover, the government seems to be seizing on the disaster to clear old low-rent neighborhoods where it wants to build lucrative new projects. The destruction of these old neighborhoods has not gotten much publicity because the buildings that fell down here in places such as La Colonia Guerrero and La Colonia Morelos are not high rises. But this represents a very grave social problem.

These are old neighborhoods, where the local people have lived for generations. Because of long occupancy, the rents are very low. Most of these areas are under dispossession orders, and therefore the people who have lost their homes will have a particularly hard time in getting any indemnity. But they will not find housing anywhere else at anything like the same rent. Masses of people are now camping out in these areas, or just sleeping in the street, demanding that the government rebuild their homes and that they be allowed to stay in their neighborhoods. In this situation, some government officials have said with a shameful cynicism that the problem of these neighborhoods has now been solved.

The government does not like these neighborhoods especially because the level of popular organization in them is very high. They have a system of mobilizing the people to prevent the police from coming in and arresting anybody. They ring a bell, and everybody comes out. In the Colonia Morelos, this has effectively



kept the cops at bay.

Also, in some of the big projects, the large number of people who lived in the roof apartments were not registered, had no leases. They will get no indemnities, and no one even knows how many of them are dead.

*Q. You think that the government has understated the death toll?*

*A. Yes. They said between 5 and 6 thousand people died; we think that it could be well over 20 thousand. Just look at what happened in some of the housing projects, like the Tlatelolco flats. One building collapsed outright, and seven came down later. A thousand people lived in the building that collapsed immediately, of whom only fifty were saved. In another hard-hit project, the Unidad Habitacional Benito Juarez, two buildings of more than 13 stories collapsed. On each floor, there were at least eight apartments, so, you can get an idea of the numbers probably killed.*

*Q. But aren't the dead people missed?*

*A. Of course, but it will take a long time before it becomes clear what happened to them. The government is burying a lot of people in mass graves. You see, a building falls, people dig desperately through the ruins looking for relatives. They won't accept that they are dead until they see the bodies. But in the meantime a lot of the bodies have been taken to the baseball stadium.*

There were more than 1,500 bodies all laid out there, with temperatures running at 30 degrees celsius during the day. They began to rot quickly. A dreadful odor started to hang over Mexico City, since the bodies were out in the open, with no more protection than plastic bags. If people did not come to identify the bodies within three days, or even two in many cases, they were dumped into mass graves.

Mexican TV had shown sickening pictures of hundreds of bodies being dumped unceremoniously in great ditches. This is one way the government has kept the death toll down.

Another is that the government moves very quickly to dynamite damaged buildings, without waiting to recover the bodies of those killed or even to be sure that there are no people still alive in the ruins. There have been complaints in specific cases where foreign specialist rescue teams have located signs of life and the Mexican army has rushed in to dynamite the building.

*Q. What about foreign aid? Are there any scandals about misappropriation of foreign aid, such as hap-*



*Centro Mexico, once Mexico's biggest hospital complex (DR)*

*pened after the earthquake in Managua, for example, which was supposed to be a major factor preparing the way for the revolution in Nicaragua?*

*A. The first thing is that the government delayed the arrival of foreign aid. The day of the disaster, Bernardo Sepulveda, the minister of foreign affairs, announced, that Mexico did not need any outside help because we had everything that was needed. That very day, vaccines and food, even clothing, started to go scarce. A number of governments were ready to send in machinery. But Sepulveda delayed this.*

There were some lamentable cases. For example, two English helicopters capable of moving heavy loads returned to their bases in Belize because they were not given any tasks.

Another important problem is where the aid is being directed. The machinery is being used to do rescue work in the wealthy neighborhoods. None of these cranes and other equipment have been taken to La Colonia Guerrero or the other poor neighborhoods.

Moreover, the Mexican government has taken an outrageously discriminatory attitude toward foreign aid from the various countries. Immedi-

ately after the disaster, Cuba and Nicaragua offered help. The Nicaraguans launched a campaign to collect blood and plasma for the victims. Thousands of Nicaraguans gave their blood. The Cubans sent a planeload of supplies. They offered to set up three mobile hospitals, to send doctors right into the disaster areas to vaccinate rescue workers, etc. But the Mexican government refused. The government said this sort of aid wasn't needed. But precisely many of those killed were doctors, residents killed at the Benito Juarez hospital for example when it collapsed. And many victims are in unsanitary conditions. There are not enough beds.

So, the right started using this to claim that Cuba and Nicaragua weren't helping. They said, look Mexico is doing these countries a big favor by selling them oil at a discount, and when we find ourselves in trouble, they could not care less. Only the United States is helping.

But this is outrageous. At first the US offered only 22 thousand dollars in aid. That was an out-right kick in the teeth to the Mexican people. The PRT itself has given more than that. We contributed the salaries of all our six members of parliament to the relief effort. Then we got a





Rescue worker in Mexico City (DR)

two hour visit from Nancy Reagan playing the lady bountiful. And after that, they increased their offer to a million dollars, which is still derisory.

On the very day of the disaster, the IMF announced that it was stopping all loans to Mexico. This was so provocative, that a cartoonist did a drawing showing the IMF as a sort of Dracula taking the blood from a badly hurt earthquake victim. The fact is, this year Mexico is supposed to pay 1,200,000,000 dollars in interest on its foreign debt. So, we proposed that Mexico immediately declare a two-year moratorium on debt payments until the victims can be provided for and the city rebuilt. We proposed this in parliament, and all but six of the government party deputies voted against it. Despite the disaster and the hard-heartedness, not to say bloodthirstiness, of the imperialists, they remain tied to the IMF plans.

*Q. What other measures has the PRT proposed for meeting the needs created by the earthquake?*

*A. We proposed a ten-year freeze on rents, because the landlords have launched feverish speculation now that so much housing has been destroyed. Already for some time they have been raising rents every year by as much as 100 percent, although the law limits annual increases to 10%. A large proportion of renters now are paying 50% of their incomes for rent, and obviously the other half is not enough*

to meet their basic needs. So, we think a ten-year freeze is very reasonable, just to keep things from getting totally out of hand.

We propose help for people who have lost their jobs or will not be able to work again for some time, like government workers whose buildings have collapsed. In some cases, also whole factories collapsed, like the Topeca garment factory, with a thousand women workers inside. More than 150,000 people have been left homeless. A lot of families have lost their bread winner, so that large numbers of women and children have been left without an income.

We have raised the call for expropriating the luxury hotels and big luxury building projects, condominiums, which are standing empty, and for moving the homeless people in there while their homes are being rebuilt. There are a great number of luxury hotels in Mexico for rich tourists and such. They could be used to house people who have lost their homes. And that would put more pressure on the government to rebuild their homes. In some cases, PRT members have joined with homeless people in occupying such buildings. Of course, a lot of our own members are now homeless as well.

Immediately after the quake our party put out a statement, placed it as a paid advertisement in the newspapers, calling on our members and supporters to participate in the rescue and relief work. We turned our headquarters into centers for collecting food, clothing, medicine to aid the victims. In the Chamber of Deputies, we proposed forming a multiparty commission to investigate the repercussions of the quake. That gave us an important opportunity, because we were able to get into all the areas to see the conditions under which the people were working.

We channelled aid to the poorest neighborhoods, turning it over directly to the community associations and tenants organizations. Some of our members are in the leadership of the neighborhood associations in Tlalotelco, Colonia Morelos, La Colonia Roma, La Colonia Doctores, which were some of the hardest hit neighborhoods. Our idea is to organize the people directly so that they channel the aid themselves and get what they need, so that it won't be channelled through the Mexican government.

The government has set up a bank account for aid. Now, historically, such accounts have been a means for functionaries enriching themselves. Furthermore, the government says this money is for rebuilding schools and hospitals. As important as that is, the first thing people

need is some place to live. We are proposing a parallel bank account directly controlled by the victims themselves.

We are calling for a return to the provision of the Federal Labor Law that sets rents at 10% of wages and for an end to all removal orders. We argue that people who have been living in apartments and paying rent for up to forty years have paid the value of these places and should have owners' rights.

*Q. Do you think the repercussions of the quake will have a serious effect on the stability of the government?*

*A. Well, they have come in a context when the government was rapidly losing credibility already. There was the general economic crisis gripping the country and creating absolute destitution. And there was the discontent revealed in the recent elections, in which only 55% of the people voted. It was obvious that very large sections of the population were losing their confidence in elections, which are rigged by the ruling PRI party. Among those who did vote, the left and the non-PRI right made big gains.*

The Mexican government is caught in the contradiction that it remains tied to the plans of the IMF, while at the same time it has to try to give the people enough to head off an explosion. But one of the conditions of the IMF is reducing public spending. And rebuilding Mexico City is going to require an enormous investment out of the public treasury, which runs directly contrary to the IMF's demands. We think that, while it may make some maneuvers, the government will remain tied to the IMF, and that is going to create a much more explosive situation.

We think that the way to face up to this situation is for us to participate in the process of organization and self-organization of the masses, and to explain that it was the whole system of economic and political domination that created the conditions that led to the horrors caused by the September 19 quake. At the same time, the response of the Mexican people showed the answer. It demonstrated the capacity of the Mexican people to mobilize and take their fate into their own hands. It showed that they can organize, without any need for the police, the army, or the government. What happened even led some observers to say that the Mexican people had taken power. The mobilization of the Mexican people themselves to cope with the disaster has pointed the way to the solution, the way along which we intend to advance. □



# AROUND THE WORLD



## Italy

### Attacks launched on left

ON SEPTEMBER 18, Italian police agents arrested Saverio Ferrari, a member of the National Secretariat of Democrazia Proletaria (DP). The arrest took place in Rome in the headquarters of the organisation. The police arrested five others at the same time, one of them a woman. In the days following a further 13 people were arrested and imprisoned.

These people are accused in relation to two events which took place in March 1975 and March 1976. In March 1975, one of the leaders of the fascist Youth Front, Sergio Ramelli, was attacked in Milan whilst on his way home. He was attacked by a group of people who were never identified. Struck by blows from an iron bar, Ramelli died in hospital two months later. In March 1976, again in Milan, a bar was ransacked leaving three people seriously injured.

According to the instructing magistrates, the responsibility for these two attacks lies with the combat section of Avanguardia Operaia, a far left organisation which participated in the setting up of Democrazia Proletaria. Three of those accused are still members of the latter organisation whilst the others are no longer politically active.

According to the Italian press the accusations have been made on the basis of testimonies from 'repenters' (former supporters of the armed struggle). The same sources also indicate that some of those arrested have confessed to participating in the above mentioned episodes.

Democratizia Proletaria issued a statement of protest and has convened a press conference to denounce these arrests. It categorically denies any responsibility by the three members and demands their immediate release. Saverio Ferrari has begun a hunger strike.

The statement reads; 'The enquiry in which Saverio Ferrari has been implicated concern events which took place a long time ago and in fact represents an attempt to rewrite, reconstruct and criminalise the history of the opposition struggles of the last twenty years ... The anti-fascist mobilisations of the 1970s brought into activity very large layers of the

population and was one of the essential conditions for the safeguarding of democracy in our country. This heritage is too important to be brushed aside by a judicial enquiry. Democrazia Proletaria, which was formed in 1977-1978, and which, since its inception, has conducted democratic and non-violent activity, estimates that it is important today to defend the heritage of millions of anti-fascists of that time.'

The Revolutionary Communist League, Italian section of the Fourth International, expressed its immediate solidarity with Democrazia Proletaria and has issued a statement demanding the release of Saverio Ferrari and the other people in prison. It explains, among other things that, 'These arrests represent an attempt to bring to justice the experience of the Italian left in the 1970s and to attack all those involved in any way on the side of the workers in struggle and to intimidate anti-fascist militants who are not prepared to observe passively the shameful operation of a fresh reevaluation of fascism and fascists.'

## France

### SOS - Racisme

FOLLOWING their successful mobilisation at Place de la Concorde in Paris, when a quarter of a million young people (many of them immigrants) thronged the streets, SOS-Racisme, the French anti-racist campaign, has decided to launch a European wide action. On December 16 young people from places such as Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Amsterdam and Brussels along with others from every area of France, will be arriving in Paris as the culmination of the 'European Tour for Equality'.

SOS-Racisme has issued an appeal to all immigrant and anti-racist organisations in Europe to support this action. In it they state that; '...from October 21 to December 15 a huge "European Tour for Equality" will be organised. In every European capital, in every town in France, we appeal to all individuals, and all organisations to prepare to organise, to welcome and to link up with the demonstrators who will be bringing with them "the Charter for Equal Rights"'. June 15, 1985 gave us all great hope. Now we must transform these efforts, transform the terms of

the debate on immigration, even, and go forward and open up the road for a Europe of Equality ...'

For further details about the campaign contact SOS-Racisme 19, Rue Martel 75010 Paris. □

## Portugal

### Elections underway

THE FALL of the Center Bloc, a coalition between the Socialist Party and the main bourgeois party, the PSD, after two years in government, has provided a breathing space for the working people. The outgoing cabinet had managed to apply the most right-wing policies we have seen since the ouster of the Salazarist dictatorship on April 25, 1974.

The parliamentary elections on October 6 have offered an opportunity for discussing austerity and its effects, for reorganizing the resistance of the masses and of the trade unions. They will also be the first round in preparations for the presidential elections that are to be held on January 5. And the question of the presidential succession has already become a fundamental factor of instability for the regime.

In these conditions, the Partido Socialista Revolucionario, Portuguese section of the Fourth International, decided to intervene in these elections. It is running candidates in all the election districts, thereby obtaining TV and radio time comparable to the big bourgeois or reformist parties.

In all, the PSR is running 330 candidates, of whom more than 100 are women. The PSR slates also include, as independent candidates, a large number of activists coming from other traditions and from other currents.

For example, twenty of the candidates are from the Grupo Quarto Internacional (Fourth International Group), which broke away from the LST (Socialist Workers League), the Portuguese organization affiliated to the international current led by Moreno (the LIT, International Workers League). The LST is a dying organization and is not running in the elections.

In particular, the PSR slates include representatives of all the main far left currents in Portugal from the MES (Left Socialist Movement) to the UDP (People's Democratic Union). These broad slates represent an important step forward for the PSR. □



# The method to the Zionist madness

THE SHOCK waves are still reverberating of the savage Israeli bombing of a PLO camp near Tunis and the arrogant approval of it by the US government. Why did the Zionists undertake an action in such flagrant disregard of international law and opinion on the territory of a moderate Arab state, and why did the US show such contempt for Arab public opinion? Gerry Foley asked Michel Warschawsky, a leader of the section of the Fourth International in the Israeli state, in Paris on October 3.

*Question. What was the purpose of this bombing?*

*Answer.* As *Le Monde's* correspondent in Jerusalem said after the operation, no one should have been surprised by it. It was prepared a long time ago, and they were only looking for the opportunity to make a strike like this, either in Tunis or in Amman. The Larnaca attack [in which Palestinian commandos killed three Israeli hostages] was only a pretext.

You don't have to be a supporter of Yasser Arafat or his line to say that this operation was aimed against his policy. We are now in a process where the Americans are trying to use the new relationship of forces after the Palestinian defeat to achieve some kind of political settlement. The key for such a settlement is the agreement of Israel to deal with the Palestinian leadership. Arafat said clearly that he was ready for this. Israel said no less clearly that it was not.

*Q. Why should the proposals of Arafat, made in conjunction with the pro-imperialist Arab states constitute any threat to Israel?*

A. Because a political settlement would have to involve some concessions to the Palestinians. Israel would have to give them some territory. And any idea of even a partial withdrawal from the West Bank territories and the Gaza Strip could split Israeli society and put it on the brink of a very violent confrontation. I am convinced of it.

*Q. You think the differences between the liberal and the rightist Zionists are as deep as that?*

A. We have had a process of de facto annexation of the occupied territories. Cutting off any part of these territories will now be seen as cutting into the very body of the state of Israel. Although formally these

territories are not part of the state, economically, socially, and in the minds of the Israeli rulers and population they have become part of Israel.

Thus, any loss of these lands would be a catastrophic defeat for Israel, even if the reactionary forces operating in the area might consider this part of a positive solution that would weaken the Palestinian movement and stabilise the status quo. So, I think any peaceful withdrawal by Israel from the occupied territories is out of the question. Nothing short of an Israeli defeat in another war can produce this.

The best example of the Israeli attitude is their reaction to proposals from Jordan for a six month freeze on the construction of Jewish settlements on the West Bank. This is really nothing, its only value would be to give Hussein something to show for his peace overtures, something that he could point to as offering hope for the future. But the Israelis have not even given this, despite many American requests. The ignoring of these requests shows, moreover, how much US pressure would be needed to get the Israelis to make any concessions. A new settlement has just been inaugurated by the deputy premier, who is from the Likud. But this was an official settlement, authorized by the government, which is now headed by the Labor Party.

It is a serious illusion to believe that any deal can be made involving a peaceful Israeli withdrawal, and this is disorienting some Palestinian currents, which have their eyes set on opposing a deal. This attitude is an obstacle to unity here and now against Zionist repression and the occupation.

*Q. Can you cite any examples of divisions caused among the Israeli*

*rulers by the proposals for a political settlement?*

A. In fact, the Tunis operation is a clear response to the divisions caused by King Hussein's speech to the United Nations. After this speech, the Israeli government was completely confused. Hussein appealed clearly for immediate and unconditional talks between Israel and Jordan. Peres said that this was a very positive move. Shamir, the deputy premier, said that it was nothing new. Weizman said that it was a tremendous advance toward achieving peace. Sharir, a Likud minister, said that it was even a step backward. So, the Tunis operation was needed in order to give a clearer and more united response to King Hussein's speech.

*Q. But why did Washington support the Tunis provocation, since it was aimed against a political settlement?*

A. I think that their initial statement was an error. They changed later from saying that they supported to saying that they "understood it." But there is not a total contradiction between this action and the American objectives. They need a deal with some kind of Palestinian force. But they also have an interest in seeing the Palestinian movement as broken and demoralized as possible in order to have to pay a minimal price.

*Q. If the bombing united the politicians, can it also unite the Israeli population? Have the Larnaca attack and the killings of Israelis on the West Bank recreated Zionist unity?*

A. No, I don't think that the government will be able to recreate the mass hysteria, the mass feeling of national unity. This is gone. For the same reason, you cannot create an atmosphere of mass mourning when people are killed in operations. This is very artificial, superficial; in a couple of days everyone forgets about it. This is a big change from the past. Formerly, when someone was killed, the whole society mourned. There was a feeling of being one family.

Today, this feeling is gone. We are seeing a kind of breakdown in Israeli society. The government wanted to use this operation to rebuild unity. But I don't think it will have much effect. I think we will see more hailing of this operation in the European and American press than in the Israeli one. I think that it will be much more acceptable to criticize it than it was in the case of the Entebbe operation or the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear center. □