

# International VIEWPOINT

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**FEATURE :** Social impact of the long depression.  
The right returns to government in France.  
Analysis of NATO referendum in Spain.



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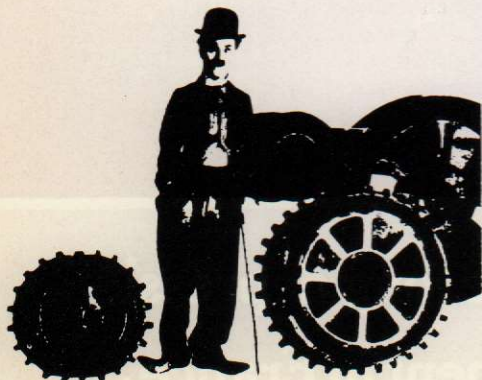
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# Election victory for the right

## Interview with Alain Krivine

THE MARCH 16 regional and parliamentary elections in France saw an important defeat for the ruling Socialist Party (PS) and ushered in a new phase in French politics.

With presidential elections due to take place in 1988, this will be the first time in the history of the fifth republic that a Socialist Party president (Francois Mitterrand) will govern along side a right wing majority of the RPR (Rassemblement pour la republique) and the UDF (Union pour la democratie francaise) in parliament. In the debate over this phenomenon of "cohabitation", the new prime minister, Jacques Chirac (RPR), declared himself willing to cooperate with Mitterrand, whose powers as president are wide-ranging.

The elections were the first to be held under the new system of proportional representation and with only one round.

In the following interview Alain Krivine a leader of the French section of the Fourth International, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire [LCR] assesses the results and gives an initial look at the perspectives for the left in the coming period.

*Question. What is your overall assessment of the election results?*

*Answer.* Of course, generally it was a victory for the right, less significant than had been expected, but compared with the situation when the left was voted in in 1981, the situation has been reversed. On the electoral level, therefore, there is an increasing erosion of the balance of forces between the workers' movement and the bourgeoisie with a general movement to the right inside society. That is the result of the policies of the Socialist Party (PS) in government, of the demoralization created by this and of the absence of an alternative politically or organizationally to the left of the Communist Party (PCF) and the Socialist Party.

This movement to the right by the society as a whole is a function of the different developments of the political parties. That is to say that as the PCF continues its collapse, a section of the working class is voting social democrat (that is PS), the bourgeoisie is strengthened and a section of the bourgeoisie has radicalized to the far right. So overall there's a general development to the right.

The elections represent a real defeat for all those who are to the left of the left or among the far left. Since 1981 there had been the phenomenon of abstention from the left —

that is there are hundreds of thousands, even millions of workers who did not want to vote for the official left anymore.

This time the left abstention rate was around 5 per cent. This was less than before because many turned out to vote PS.

So what the elections show is a recomposition of political forces in France.

*Q. The PS has claimed that its result is a success? What is meant by this?*

*A.* It is true that the PS has never had such a good result except of course in 1981 and that was an exception — that was after Mitterrand's victory in the presidential elections during which a certain dynamic was built up. So, apart from in 1981, the PS has never had a score of 32 per cent of the vote. They are the first party in the country now.

But the success is ambiguous. First of all it is an electoral success. In terms of capacity for organization, implantation in the factories and the unions, there is no equivalent. In this respect they are still very weak. The majority of workers vote for the PS but the majority are not organized by the PS in any way. This is the

crucial weakness in their success. The PS may try to change this, but it is still a weakness.

The PS vote can be divided into three categories. There are a section of voters who vote PS because they believe there is no alternative to reformism in the context of an economic crisis. There is a crystallization around social democratic policies and ideology, if you like, which is a new thing in France.

There is a whole section of the working class who are demoralized and disoriented and who have been won over to social democratic ideology. We must make no mistake about this. This was part of the PS vote.

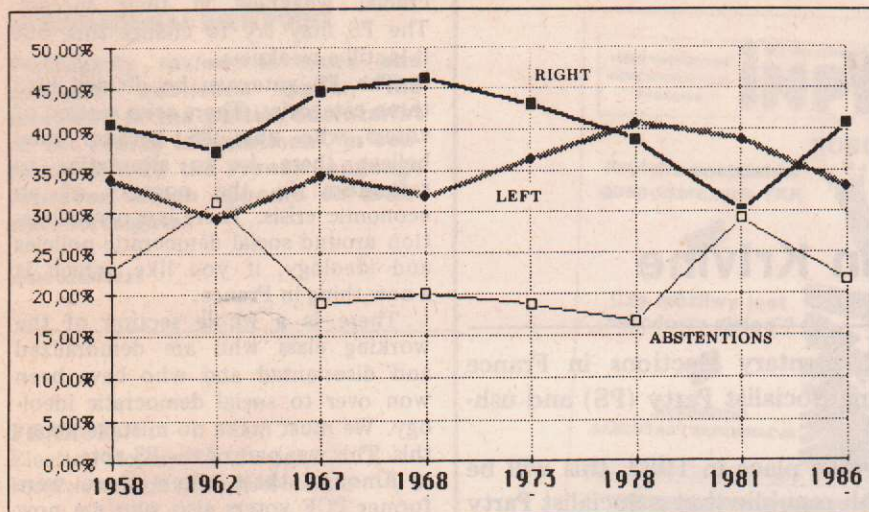
Amongst these voters there were former PCF voters also who are now voting PS for political reasons. That is to say that they no longer believe in the possibility of the anti-capitalist struggle and take up the PS ideology as a kind of lesser evil.

There is another section of workers who voted PS who are difficult to quantify but who took part in what we call the "vote utile" (tactical voting). Among these were large sections of the far left who do not agree with the policies of the PS but who, because of the new system of voting and the possibility of the right coming back to power, voted PS for tactical reasons. This was very widespread and explains to a certain extent the failure of the far left and the ecologists. During our election campaign there were many workers within that minority which is to the left of the PS, who said: "We agree with your policies but on the electoral level a vote for you will serve no purpose." Some said: "We will give you money, we support you, but we will vote for the PS". This includes sympathizers who are very close to the LCR. As I said, it is difficult to know how many, but it is possible that in the region of hundreds of thousands of workers voted for the PS without supporting in any way the ideology of the PS and only in order to defeat the right.

So the election was a success for Mitterrand's strategy, which he has been developing for some time and which involved, first of all, smashing the Communist Party. Here he has obviously succeeded since the PCF got less than 10 per cent of the vote. In five years the PCF has managed to lose half its electorate. That is, they have lost two and a half million votes. Many people have left the PCF and it will continue to decline.

Mitterrand's strategy was to prepare for a system of alternation such as exists in other countries in the West. This goes hand in hand with a strong Socialist Party fortified with a reformist and class-collaborationist ideology





Graph showing voting patterns since 1958 as a percentage of those registered to vote. (DR)

and developed at the expense of the PCF. This has succeeded. What is missing is that this huge PS is not linked to a huge and powerful trade-union organization.

Despite the losses of the PCF it is still the most important force in the factories, and, in any case, the trade-union movement is extremely weak. But the main thing is that no party has hegemony inside the working class in terms of organization. The CGT [Confederation General du Travail], dominated by the PCF, in five years has lost 25 per cent of its members, the CFDT [Confederation Francaise Democratique du Travail], dominated more or less by the PS, has lost almost as many. Today over 75 per cent of French workers are no longer in trade unions. This is not new but it is important.

But we are moving in France towards a two-party system with a strong social democratic party. This is the main conclusion.

**Q. What about the PCF's vote? Why did it drop so dramatically and to whom did they lose votes?**

**A.** This is a historic crisis for the PCF which we had underestimated. They got less than 10 per cent of the vote, the same as the National Front.

I won't go into details but there are huge internal debates in the PCF. [See *International Viewpoint* No. 69, February 11, 1985]

There is no organized current and in any case that is forbidden in the PCF, but there is discontent at the base which has never been seen before.

The opposition is very confused. Some criticize the sectarianism of the PCF towards the PS; others criticize the PCF for having participated in a government which stinks. (1) But in general the criticisms are coming from the left, especially from among workers. They say that the PCF was in government for three years during

which time it was responsible for a policy of austerity and now we are paying for it. They also say that the PCF is not credible any more because the leadership keeps changing direction (five times in ten years).

The debate is going right through the party, even to the level of the Central Committee. People, including leaders of the PCF, are now taking public positions. Some are going on radio and television to demand a special congress. Where this will all lead it is difficult to say. I stress that it is all within a very confused political framework, but this could even end in the break up of the party. It depends how the leadership reacts. But let's just say that at the moment these criticisms of the PCF involve deputies, members of the Central Committee and whole federations on a local level.

On where the PCF votes went. Some voters abstained, a tiny part voted for the far left, a large section voted for the PS and finally a small but very real minority voted for the National Front (FN).

**Q. What type of government will be provided by the UDF/RPR. Will they have to rely on the votes of the National Front to get what they want?**

**A.** The right in France is very divided between two main formations — or even three now. The fascists, the Gaullists of the RPR and the UDF, made up of several small parties. There are some tactical divisions amongst the right which are very important. The PS will try to play on this in order to break the whole thing up. The classical right [that is the RPR-UDF coalition] only have a majority of two deputies. So they will be constantly under pressure from the fascists, who have 35 deputies. The right-wing's majority is very weak and the PS will use this, in the context of cohabitation.

The policies of the two ruling parties are not actually very different from those implemented by the PS. They will carry on with the restructuring of industry, compulsory redundancies, austerity measures and pro-imperialist policies. That is why during this election campaign there was no debate on policies. The right has no real alternative, and, even if they don't say so, the bosses were reasonably happy with the PS policies. They were quite happy with, for example, the weakness of the unions and the "social peace" that is prevailing. Now all the bourgeoisie wants is for this policy to be continued but at a higher level.

The RPR/UDF puts forward a programme of privatization, the implementation of redundancy policies that would bypass the official structures in France which exist for this. The right is proposing that the bosses can sack workers directly instead of going through the established procedures. They are likely to roll back a whole series of progressive measures taken by the PS such as, for example, reimbursement for abortions.

But we have to take two factors into account: first, the smallness of the right's majority; and second, the fact that Mitterrand has the power to either dissolve parliament or call presidential elections by resigning, although theoretically the presidential elections will take place in two years time. This means that the right will hesitate to apply its policies to the full. For example, the right has put forward the proposal to lift price controls totally which could cause an increase in inflation. One of the major achievements of the PS government was to get inflation down from 12 to 4 per cent.

Also, if the right goes over the top in taking anti-working class measures it would break the so-called social peace and provoke workers into struggle. At the same time it would destroy its own credibility and allow Mitterrand to call immediate elections. I think then that the right will be prudent for a year or so, but it will have the National Front on its heels. In this situation, and given the enormous constitutional power of the president, we are entering into a period of profound crisis at the level of government.

In this context Mitterrand and the Socialists will try to allow the right time to discredit themselves in order to call for further elections

1. In the June 1981 legislative elections the PCF got 15% of the vote and from 1981 to July 1984 it participated in successive cabinets headed by PS prime minister Pierre Mauroy. In 1984 the PCF withdrew on the formation of Laurent Fabius' government.





Representatives of the UDF and RPR — On the right, Jacques Chirac (DR)

and even take over the government again. This is not totally out of the question. The policy of the PS in government will be to vote systematically against the right.

Under the constitution laws can be made by decree and it is possible that the ruling coalition will have to resort to this because every time it introduces something it will come under pressure from the FN. The FN has even said that it would vote with the left against certain laws.

If laws are introduced by decree they have to be signed by the president and then the whole problem of cohabitation comes in again. Mitterrand would probably sign most of them, but he could veto one or two just to prove that the PS is the left and that it is a force to be reckoned with.

At the level of the institutions, therefore, we are entering a period of instability. Cohabitation could work for a few months but it is not necessarily the case that it can work for two years.

*Q. What about the National Front's vote? Surely this is the biggest shock of the election. How do you explain this? Among which layers in society is their support growing?*

A. This is the direct result of the inability of the PS to resolve the key issue, which is the issue of unemployment. There are now three million unemployed in France and there were two million when the PS came to power. The presence of several million immigrants (a number which, in fact, has not gone up in 15 years) and increasing unemployment has enabled the National Front to draw together two sections of the population.

On the one hand, it is strong among the middle classes, the small shopkeepers and the liberal professions, and on the other, it now has an important echo among the popular masses, not just among lumpen layers but among workers who are unemployed or demoralized and who accept Jean-Marie Le Pen's explanation that immigrants are responsible for unemployment.

The FN is made up of former members of the OAS [Organisation de l'Armée Secrete] from the Algerian war, ex-soldiers etc., and also of a small section of the traditional right who radicalized following the PS victory in 1981. The FN succeeded in winning over certain cadres from the "official" right — mainly from the RPR. Out of its 35 deputies there are about ten who come originally from the RPR and the rest are real out and out fascists.

The FN votes came from all over the country especially from the main urban centres where there are very large immigrant populations, including of course in PS and PCF controlled areas. In Marseilles where there is a very high immigrant population, the FN got 25 per cent of the votes. This makes it a fundamental political force in that particular department.

The FN vote was weaker in the countryside. It does get votes amongst the peasantry but many fewer than in other areas. In areas like Brittany, which has a small immigrant population, the FN vote was much lower. It was in areas of high immigrant concentration, in industrial areas, where the FN vote was highest and that is very, very worrying.

*Q. The votes for the far left and others were extremely low. How*

*do you explain this?*

A. The alternative and the far left lists of course suffered mostly from the "vote utile" phenomenon. The ecologists nationally got 1.2 per cent of the vote. The far left as a whole got 1.5 per cent on a national level though they did not stand in all areas.

The LCR got the lowest score [about 60,000 votes for the 20 LCR lists] amongst the far left because it was most affected by tactical voting given the type of education and the ideas of the united front put forward by the LCR. It is obvious that those who would vote for Lutte Ouvriere [Workers Struggle — an organization about the same size as the LCR which refused to stand on alternative lists proposed by the LCR] are much less aware of the debates around tactical voting. They represent a much more stable electorate if you like.

The LCR had a two-pronged approach. We supported 20 alternative lists and we put up 20 LCR lists. Our main aim was to stimulate unity amongst the "left of the left" and to provide a real alternative. We achieved this mainly with one party, the PSU (Partie Socialiste Unifie). (2)

The alternative lists existed mainly in the regional elections. They got slightly better results, by which I mean that they got 2 per cent and sometimes 3 per cent. But obviously this did not succeed in creating a real dynamic for an alternative. This is because it was done too late. It did not involve all of the far left

2. The PSU originated as a left split from the PS during the Algerian war. It grew up after 1968 through identifying with the social movements and self management and the left of the CFDT. Since then it has suffered major splits to the PS.



## The election results

WITH 31.2% of the votes, the Socialist Party did better than the opinion polls had predicted whilst the RPR/UDF coalition got an absolute majority of 42.2% and 289 seats.

The big shock of the election was the vote for Jean-Marie Le Pen's fascist organization, the National Front, which got 9.65% of the votes and 35 deputies in parliament, thus establishing itself on the political map.

The massive decline in the PCF's vote, which is symbolically equal to that of the FN at 9.78%, was another important feature of the elections.

The votes of the far left further reflected a general drift to the right in French politics, totalling only 1.5%, that is 420,000 voters.

and it was not based on real mobilizations within the country since there have been very few of those since 1981.

Also this first aspect of our policy could not completely succeed because a rather important section of the far left, Lutte Ouvriere, rejected this regroupment and was very sectarian. Many workers saw these divisions in the far left and decided that it was not an alternative. This is especially true of those workers breaking from the PCF who did not want to end up as part of a divided left.

In many cases, though, the poor results mask the fact that some very good campaigns were mounted. Often the electoral results had little to do with the implantation and activity on the ground. There are now unified collectives in 40 departments. These involve sections of the far left — the PSU, ex-Maoists — and independents from the trade unions, the women's movement, ex-members of the PS and the PCF. In some areas these collectives involved about 200 activists and yet electorally they did not succeed.

Where there were no unified lists the LCR stood on its own with the theme of its campaign being "Voyez Rouge" ("See Red" — *Rouge* is the name of the LCR's weekly newspaper). The idea of this was to regroup all those who are disgusted by PS policies, to rehabilitate the idea of socialism and the revolution. On this we have to be very clear — it was a total failure.

It is clear that the LCR's score was very weak and apart from all the reasons I have already put forward

there is a further, important reason for this. That is the decline in the level of consciousness generally in France today. The very fact that we are called "communist" and that we have a hammer and sickle as our emblem means that many workers put us in the same category as the PCF. The very word "communist" at the moment in France is an obstacle. This could even explain why Lutte Ouvriere, for example, did marginally better than we did.

*Q. The Greens were expected to do better than they did. What happened there?*

*A. The situation here is different from that in West Germany. There is an awareness of the ecological issues in France, but it has not been tapped.*

There are two types of organizations. There are the local collectives that work with revolutionaries and others. Then there is the Greens party which adopted the name in order to pick up votes. It did not do so. It is a very particular organization. It has only 400 members nationally. It is very bureaucratic and declares itself apolitical. We have the strange situation therefore in which the LCR now has better relations with the German Greens than the Greens in France have with them. This year the German Greens cut off funding for the elections to the French Greens because they considered them sectarian and thought they should have supported alternative lists with extra-parliamentary groups. The French Greens paid a high price for their sectarianism.

*Q. You say that the electoral results did not necessarily reflect what the LCR and alternative campaigns achieved. Can you give us some examples of what the campaign did achieve?*

*A. Despite the poor vote we have had a good campaign in which we have managed to re-energize the LCR. The end-of-the-campaign rally in Paris had more than 1,500 people present. We have appeared on local radio and television and had national TV time. We even set up new branches in some areas out of this campaign.*

The same goes for the alternative lists which we animated or participated in. But, here again, the success of the campaigns was not always reflected in the vote and vice versa.

To give you an example: in the department of Loiret, where we got the highest number of votes — about three and a half per cent — there was a collective but it did not have a huge implantation. But in the department of Orne in Normandy there was a collective of about 150 people including trade unionists, a committee of the unemployed, and

a group of peasants. We even held a meeting of peasants which attracted about 60 people. We had a real mass implantation and yet the vote was only 0.5 per cent.

In another town in Ardennes we had a committee made up of unemployed workers and steel workers. They got about 2 per cent of the vote and they had a very good local implantation.

As a final example, in the Paris region we participated in a list headed by a former leader of the PCF who is very well-known and one of our comrades, a worker at Renault-Billancourt, was second on the list. In another department — the Val de Marne — we participated in a list headed by a young immigrant who helped organize the anti-racist marches in Paris. On this list there was also a PS deputy who had just left the PS. In the support committee there was a PS councillor. This was a very broad-based alternative list and support committee and yet it only got 0.5 per cent of the vote.

*Q. What are the perspectives for revolutionaries in this new context?*

*A. Well, we have to be frank and say that this is a very difficult situation. But although there is demoralization and disarray in the working class, this has not been a massive defeat — it is not a Chile here in France.*

We think that there will be an offensive against the working class but that this will unleash struggles by the workers now that the left is no longer in government. Many workers drew back from struggle under the PS government because they did not want to play into the hands of the right. Now they will feel that they can fight because with the right in power at least you know who your enemy is. I don't think there will be general movements but there will be a reaction if the right carries out its policies. So there will be struggles but in a context of a general decline of the workers' movement and a crisis at the level of the trade unions and political parties.

We will have to be present in the mobilizations and be ready to mount a real unified struggle against the policies of the right.

One area which will be a big pre-occupation is the issue of racism and the FN. Following the success of *SOS-racisme* (3) we are convinced that the first mobilization under the new government will be against

3. *SOS-Racisme* is a national organisation of anti-racist groups initiated by individuals from the Socialist Party and others. Its success followed massive mobilisations of immigrant youth in national demonstrations in 1983, 1984, 1985.



Le Pen and in defence of immigrants.

During the election campaign a group of fascists murdered a trade-union militant supporting the PS. They killed him while he was putting up posters. This provoked shock waves in France but little active reaction because the PS wouldn't do anything. There was a silent demonstration which the LCR participated in and we used our last television slot during the election campaign to pay homage to this militant. The PS and the PC didn't mention it.

So the first task will be the fight against the fascists and the second task is linked to that. That is to respond to the historic crisis of the workers' movement. The situation is gloomy but there are tens of thousands of workers who want to build a real left — what with the crisis of the PC and the radicalization of the youth. There is a willingness to fight.

The policy of the LCR in this context will be to popularize the need to build a real left, a united left. It flows from our policy in the elections. In the factories and in the different areas we will be fighting for united actions to regroup what we call the "left of the left". At the same time we will build the Ligue, fight for the idea of real socialism and internationalism for we are practically the only people who still do this.

*Q. You have emphasized the crisis of the PCF coming out of these elections. Can revolutionaries relate to this in any way?*

*A. The crisis of the PCF is so important because it influences the most class conscious and militant workers.*

This is much more so than in the case of the PS for example. There are militants in the PS who were unhappy with the policies of the government, but after these elections the debate will be very quickly stifled because the whole orientation will be to prepare for taking power again.

We have now built up a lot of contacts with PCF militants especially during the election campaign.

We held about 50 meetings at which a large number of PCF militants were present and in some cases they were local officials of the party. We have to make a special point of relating to the disarray inside the PCF. Many of us come from there originally and we act as a sort of conscience for some of them.

In a lot of factories the PCF cells are no longer meeting, and the militants are concentrating on organizing in the union and in the factory. There are very important debates coming out of the CGT in that context. □



Madrid, March 24, 1986. (DR)

## The price of the government's referendum victory

BY SHAMEFUL manipulation and coercion of public opinion, the Socialist government managed to break the anti-NATO majority that exists throughout the Spanish state. In this way, it won the March 12 referendum on NATO membership by 2 million votes.

Thus, it gained the backing of an electoral majority for the pro-NATO policy that it has pursued since it came to power and dealt a severe blow to the peace movement, which has been the principal political movement, the major obstacle, standing in the way of the government's pursuit of its capitalist policy.

On the other hand, the government and the PSOE [the ruling Socialist Party] itself suffered an important weakening of their social base. And, above all, they failed to defeat the peace movement *politically*. It came out of the referendum with the strength and the will to continue the fight, and with all its moral and intellectual capital intact.

### MIGUEL ROMERO

In a completely unequal contest with the entire state apparatus, seven million votes against NATO were not a victory. But, nonetheless, the great majority of these votes reflect a political position clearly to the left of the PSOE, which represents the highest level reached in this respect since the opening of the post-Franco period.

This reality soon gained the ascendancy over distress and disap-

pointment, even on the evening of March 12, particularly in view of the clear majority against NATO won in Euzkadi [the Basque Country], Catalunya [Catalonia] and the Canary Islands.

After a long period of doubt, the Socialist party finally called the referendum because it was forced to by the relationship of forces created by the peace movement. Failing to call it would have meant serious political trouble for the government.



It would have strengthened the peace movement, and the movement would have adopted more radical positions.

The only alternative remaining to the government in its attempt to take the country into NATO and thus defeat the peace movement was to call the referendum and try to win it. The risk that it would lose the referendum was very great. But the Socialist government had already shown its readiness to run any necessary risk to solve the central problems of the Spanish bourgeoisie.

To win the referendum, the government had to confront deep-seated popular feeling against NATO, which, in fact, was one of the fundamental factors in its victory in the October 1982 general elections (in which, it should be remembered, the PSOE [the Spanish SP] hinted with calculated ambiguity that it would take Spain out of NATO).

The question put to the vote was drawn up after a very long study, using sophisticated marketing techniques, in order to sow the greatest possible confusion in the electorate. For example, the word "NATO" did not appear (in fact for months it had been eliminated from official discourse), but was replaced by the term "Atlantic Alliance." And the most shameless Socialist leaders, one of whom was the premier himself, Felipe Gonzalez, strove to explain the subtle conceptual differences between the two terms.

Moreover, the question included three conditions that the government pledged to respect in this "Atlantic Alliance" — that it would keep Spain out of the military structure, not permit nuclear weapons in the country, and that it would reduce the number of American troops.

Finally, the government declared that a victory for the "no" vote would leave in effect all the bilateral treaties with the United States, and therefore confirm the status of the American military bases.

In the first phase of their electoral campaign, the Socialists' objective was to try to convince people about the supposed advantages of the Atlantic paradise. The crudity and demagoguery used by the government ministers and the main leaders of the PSOE reached levels that would be hard to believe for anyone who had not lived through them.

One after the other, bogeymen were paraded — the threat of international isolation, a Western economic boycott, threats to democratic freedoms, increased unemployment. The government played the anti-Communist and patrioteering cards to the hilt (the PSOE's slogan was "For Spain, vote 'yes'.") Up until then, only the most reactionary

Spanish right had indulged in that sort of thing.

The banking industry was pressured to put out a communique signed by the presidents of the country's, seven leading banks, calling for a "yes" vote and evoking economic disasters in the event of a victory of the "no" vote.

### Scare campaign

The demagoguery had no limits. The minister of foreign affairs went so far as to claim that a victory for the "no" vote would lead to Spain's expulsion from the EEC. The minister of defence said that withdrawal from NATO would return Spain to the era of the "gasogeno," an apparatus that was used in cars in the 1940s because of the shortage of gasoline. (This term became a symbol of the backwardness and poverty that prevailed in that period.)

Despite all the means brought into play, this whole phase of the campaign was a complete failure. The results of all the polls in early March showed a majority against NATO, with a decided vote varying between 8 and 10 million persons.

The PSOE and the government then resorted to "Felipismo" [the bonapartist cult around the premier], the only political base they had left and also the only ideology that the party has today. In his speeches in the last days of the campaign, Felipe Gonzalez did not waste a lot of energy in repeating the themes of the "Atlantic unity" propaganda already spread by his subordinates. His role was not to convince people of the advantages of joining NATO but to get the largest possible number of people to vote against their convictions.

For this purpose, Gonzalez used the new notorious formula of "Who is going to implement the 'no'?" ["*Quien va a gestionar el No?*"]. The question implicitly involved the threat of his resigning if the referendum lost. He used the lack of a credible alternative on his left (remember that the parliamentary vote on NATO membership was 97% "yes" and 3% "no.")

In these conditions, the vote on March 12 was not for or against NATO but over continuing the present political framework or facing a government crisis, with major effects on the system of government itself, a crisis of great scope and uncertain outcome. Gonzalez appealed for a vote of fear and got it in sufficient numbers to get a majority for the referendum.

It has to be recognized that this blackmail proved especially effective

in the working class. The highest "Yes" vote came either in the politically most backward areas or in the majority of big working-class concentrations — from Getafe in Madrid to the poor neighborhoods in Andalusia and many towns in the industrial belt of Barcelona (Hospitalet, Badalona, Santa Coloma.) In other places such as Sabadell, the "no" won, thanks to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois downtown vote, while a majority in the working-class suburbs voted "yes."

There were some isolated honorable exceptions — towns in the Asturian mining basin; Sagunto, which fought a long and heroic struggle against industrial reconversion between 1983 and 1984; some agricultural laborers' towns in Andalusia; some towns in the Valles in Catalunya. These exceptions are not sufficient to establish a pattern. They are explained by local characteristics of militancy and organization.

This working-class vote is particularly striking if you take into consideration the following facts: First of all, all the unions called for a "no" vote (including the Socialist union federation, the UGT, although in that case it was only a formal stand, without any active campaign). Second, for about two years, there has been considerable propaganda work and organization against NATO, which has been well directed and effective, aimed specifically at the workers. Thirdly, the workers have borne the brunt of the Socialist government's policies since 1982.

So, the extreme political ebb into which the Spanish working class has gone had a decisive weight in the results of the referendum. The positive effects that we expected as a result of the general strike last June 20 have not come to pass. The majority of the working class had a conservative reaction at a time when it was essential that it act in accordance with its most fundamental interests. This is the most negative fact in the results of the referendum.

It is interesting to make a rough estimation, without any pretensions to scientific accuracy, about the political makeup of the "yes" vote. My estimation is the following:

1982 PSOE voters — 7 million  
Right-wing voters — 1 million  
Bourgeois nationalist votes — 0.5 million  
New voters — 0.5 million. (1)  
Total — 9 million  
This would mean that the PSOE kept about 70% of the votes it got in

1. The electoral register has increased by two million persons since 1982. It is estimated that the participation of these new voters was very high, probably more than 80%.





*Anti-NATO demonstration in Madrid, March 24, 1986 (DR)*

1982, although a part of these would have been shamefaced votes by people conscious that they were accepting blackmail. It is significant that on the night of March 12, the victors shut themselves up in the PSOE headquarters to hold their celebrations. In not a single town or city was there the slightest demonstration of joy in the streets by the supporters of a "yes" vote. To the contrary, the people in the streets were the unhappy but not demoralized supporters of a "no" vote.

The bourgeois political organizations, and above all the Alianza Popular, were the main losers in the referendum.

The Alianza Popular called for abstention, offering two reasons: First, it was opposed to holding the referendum. Second, it did not want to be bound in the future by the three conditions that were included in the question, which it considered meant a "shameful form of membership" in NATO.

It is estimated that out of the 5.5 million who voted for the AP in 1982, about 3 million abstained, 1 million voted "yes," 1 million voted "no" (the far right supported a "no" vote and at present backs the AP) and 0.5 million cast blank ballots, which was also accepted as an alternative by the rightist leaders. While this result is bad electorally, it is still worse for these rightists that abstention was rejected explicitly by the big bankers, the military hierarchy, and the major leaders of the imperialist world.

The entire AP campaign gave the appearance of uncertainty and incoherence, which is a new demonstration of the crisis of leadership of the Spanish right, which has a poor outlook for the next general elections.

Incoherence was still more notable in the parties of the "center," which have a considerable importance in Spain, because the only reasonable possibility for building a bourgeois electoral majority to oust the PSOE is the emergence of a strong "center" party able to ally itself with the AP and the bourgeois nationalist parties.

The main leaders of this "center" — the former premier Suarez and the bourgeois Catalan nationalist Miquel Roca — took an ambiguous stance. They voted "yes" individually but without daring to advocate this position publicly (to the point that Miquel Roca tried to vote in secret, hiding from the press and photographers).

The bourgeois nationalist parties probably suffered less loss of credibility. Both the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) and the CiU [Catalan nationalists] are convinced friends of the Atlantic alliance. But they knew that the great majority of their base wanted to vote "no" in the referendum (more as a "punishment" of the PSOE than out of anti-NATO convictions). Moreover, they considered it positive for their interests that Catalunya and Euzkadi have a "no" majority.

In this second respect, these parties were probably mistaken. The victory of the "no" vote in Catalunya and,

above all in Euzkadi, where it was overwhelming, (2) has seriously weakened the "legitimacy" of membership in NATO and is fueling a nationalist radicalization that the bourgeois nationalist parties will have a hard time controlling. In any case, the PNV and CiU leaderships voted "yes" without hiding it, and it is a reasonable estimate that those who voted for these parties in 1982 split 50-50 between "yes" and "no."

In the referendum campaign, the peace movement reconsolidated its capacity to unite in political action millions of people belonging to the most diverse political currents, attracting the best, the most vital elements of the society, especially among the youth.

### The achievements of the radical left

The weight and political authority that the radical left has gained in the peace movement by its work since 1981 have been an essential factor in giving the movement the militant, active character and the profound antimilitarist and anti-imperialist content that distinguishes it for the most part.

2. In the three provinces included under the autonomous Basque government, 65.16% of voters voted "no." In the Basque province of Navarra, not included in the autonomous area, the "no" vote was 52.70%. In Catalonia, it was 50.64%. In the Canaries, it was 49.69%, as against 44.25% "yes"



On March 12, the peace movement won a moral victory in the full sense of the word. It demonstrated to the society, the immorality of those who won at the ballot box, which has helped to undermine the legitimacy that the PSOE wants to give the "yes" majority.

The peace movement has also exposed bourgeois democracy in a practical way, which is more useful than a ton of propaganda. A position supported by only 3% in parliament got 40% in a referendum, in which only the government's capacity for coercion kept it from getting what it really represents in the society, a majority.

In the Canary Islands, Catalunya and Euskadi, the victory of the "no" vote was not only political but complete. In the Canaries, the main reasons for this victory lie in the anti-militarist consciousness built up in the people of the islands by the outrages of the troops of the Legion [an elite military force] based there and the threats that the archipelago could be turned into a NATO aircraft carrier in the Atlantic.

In Catalunya and Euskadi, the press is trying to explain the vote as a result of the PNV and the CiU's tolerance of a "no" vote.

### Victory for the oppressed nations

It is true that Pujol [CiU] and Arzellus [PNV] avoided confronting the majority opinion of their respective electoral bases in favor of voting "no." But what really explains the results of the referendum in these two nations is precisely the existence within them of a deep-rooted national consciousness that gives the society a political cohesion, a capacity to resist the intimidations of central government.

Moreover, in Euzkadi, together with the extensive work of the anti-NATO coalitions, it is necessary to point up the role played by Herri Batasuna, an activist political force with mass influence. Having thrown itself into the struggle for a "no" vote, it was able to work for this in a consistent way, town to town, house to house.

These results in Catalunya and Euzkadi will reinforce the fight for national sovereignty, and that is cause for joy. At the same time, they have created new ties of sympathy and mutual respect between the "champions" of the "no" vote and the other peoples of the Spanish state. This is a valuable legacy of March 12 for the future struggles.

Finally, a rough estimate of the political makeup of the "no" vote

offers interesting and hopeful indications for the future. Some 3 million votes can be estimated to have come from people who voted for the PSOE in 1982; 1 million from the right; 0.5 million from the bourgeois nationalist parties; 1 million from the PCE [Communist Party of Spain] and the vote of the other far left parties in 1982; 0.5 million from revolutionary nationalist organizations and 1 million from young new voters.

The importance of the youth vote was confirmed in a particularly clear way where the "no" vote was in the majority. It can be said, therefore, that at least 3 million votes represented not just left opposition to the PSOE but a general political break from it. It can not be predicted today what will happen in this sector in the future, and still less what sort of electoral expression this may take. But when you remember the situation of prostration and marginalization in which the extreme left found itself after 1980, it can be said that a real recomposition has been set in motion, which is the most important contribution the anti-NATO movement has made to Spanish politics.

The deeper effects of the referendum, positive or negative, will only become clear in the medium term. This is not a good time to speculate about the future, especially when we are entering into a quite confused pre-electoral situation (general elections should take place next October).

The government is going to try to use the results of the referendum cautiously to gain time to recover from the loss of credibility it and the PSOE have suffered. It should not be expected, in any case, to be passive.



It will seek by every means to concentrate general attention, and especially that of the peace movement, on the buildup to the elections, which is the area where it is the strongest and the militant left weakest. It will probably also react in a tough way against a resurgence of the peace movement in the streets, which would give living proof of the limits of its victory.

### What next?

In the peace movement, there is massive sentiment for continuing the fight in accordance with the new conditions. A new campaign has already been decided on: "Bases out in the Spring!" [*En Primavera, Bases Fuera.*] It will include the Sixth March to Torrejon, the site of the main US military base and of the birth of the anti-NATO movement in 1982.

The great challenge we face is to maintain the peace movement as a united mass movement, militant and organized at the grass-roots level, when there is no central objective and means of getting Spain out of NATO, that is, without the referendum.

Moreover, the government's electoral victory in the referendum involves a change in the general situation that affects all of the tasks of revolutionists. It is obviously easier to respond to the immediate tasks involved in continuing the anti-NATO fight, advancing the aspects of opposition to militarism, solidarity, anti-imperialism and so on than it is to reach conclusions on this general level. That is a theme for another article, later, after there is time for reflection.

But one thing is already clear. There were some who thought that the referendum was the "last battle of the transition" [from Francoism to bourgeois democracy], and that if it was lost there would be a massive demoralization that would take us back to the worst times of 1980-81. But this is by no means the sort of mood that is in the air today in Spain.

In the hundreds of post mortem meetings held by the peace collectives, there has been, to the contrary, a lot of spirit and determination to continue the fight. The same fighting spirit obviously also exists in the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria, the Spanish section of the Fourth International. We summed up our attitude and that of the most militant section of the anti-NATO movement on the front page of our newspaper, *Combate*, in a phrase addressed to the electoral victors of March 12: "We will meet again." □



# Strike by Local P-9 stirs US labour

A MAJOR battle over the question of how trade-unions should respond to the capitalist offensive has been being fought out for the last eight months in Austin, Minnesota. Most of the American unions have followed a policy of "concessions" or "givebacks," that is, voluntarily surrendering gains made in the past by the workers in the name of preserving jobs.

A hard-driving management in the Geo. Hormel meatpacking plant in Austin finally forced the local union, Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union to stand and fight by trying to continue to cut wages, gut the seniority system and introduce a two-tier system for new hires.

The prolonged strike has attracted national attention within the US, as well as international attention, from the British business magazine, *The Economist*, for example.

Because of high unemployment in the area, scabs are a big problem, and the strike has been very hard fought. A national solidarity movement is growing up in the United States.

## ROGER HOROWITZ

A seven-month strike by 1,500 packinghouse workers in the small town of Austin, Minnesota, has produced the biggest controversy in the US labor movement today. Determined to resist concessions, members of Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) have travelled across the nation seeking support for their strike and have received a tremendous response from rank-and-file workers and union locals in a variety of industries. Yet, AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland has called the strike "suicidal." And the president of UFCW has attacked P-9 in the press, calling their main strike strategist the "Ayatollah of Austin."

At a national rally in Austin on February 15, supporters of P-9 came from the auto plants of California, the iron range of Minnesota, the machine shops of Detroit and the communication industry of New York City to support the P-9 strike. Instead of the mass-produced signs which predominate at "official" union rallies, these unionists carried a wealth of hand-lettered placards expressing support for P-9 and opposition to the Hormel company. Many told stories of being pressured by their international union to stay away from Austin

and the P-9 strike. Regardless, over 2,000 marched to support the Austin Hormel workers, including official representatives of dozens of local unions.

At the rally in Austin's high-school auditorium, President Henry Nichols of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Workers spoke for the workers who support P-9 when he declared "we believe that this strike is not only important for your industry, but is important for working people everywhere. The rank and file throughout these United States are looking with expectation for you to win because your struggle embodies their feelings, their thinking, and their commitment."

The strike began in August 1985, and the conflict escalated in January when the George A. Hormel Company tried to re-open their plant. For several days, massive picket lines prevented scabs from entering the facility; but when 800 National Guardsmen closed off the highway and created a safe corridor, the company was able to bring 1,000 workers back into the plant. The union has used other militant tactics to hinder the operation of the plant, but the presence of the military has tipped the balance of forces in favor of the

company.

Just as the Hormel workers in Austin face the most difficult moment of their strike, with the company clearly prepared to destroy the union, support for P-9 is mushrooming daily. Union locals, primarily in the midwest, and some union leaders have bucked the official line of the labor movement to offer substantial material support to the workers. Local P-9 is also holding firm, exhibiting willingness to compromise about wage rates but sticking to its primary contractual demand of retaining the seniority system.

The reason for the tenacity of this small local is that the Hormel workers are struggling to hold onto the basic benefits they won in the 1930s and prevent a return to the conditions of the non-union era. In the opinion of union founder Casper Winkels, the most important issue "is their seniority. I know what it is like to not have seniority. The only time you get a decent job is if you take the boss out and buy him drinks. That's the way it used to be in the old days before we had our union."

P-9 has joined a long line of local unions which have resisted the retreat of the labor movement before the combined pressures of business and government. Unlike many of these unions, however, P-9 spent months planning its strike and has stuck to its decision with extraordinary tenacity. Thus, workers in other industries have rallied to its defense in hopes that a victory could start to turn the tide to the side of labor.

## The origins of Local P-9

Union-organizing efforts at Hormel in the early 1930s were prompted not only by low wages, but also by insecurity of employment and abusive treatment by foremen. Periodic layoffs made it impossible for workers to maintain a regular income, and periodic "gifts" of liquor or free labor to supervisors were necessary to keep ones job and secure the better assignments in the plant. Women could do little about continual sexual harassment by foremen.

Sentiment for unionism first surfaced among workers in the hog kill, and crystallized when they established contact with Frank Ellis, a long-time member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Hundreds attended a series of mass meetings over the summer of 1933, and the union rapidly signed up virtually the entire workforce.

In November 1933 the union struck Hormel and shut it down for three days, removing all personnel from the plant and blockading the



entrances with union pickets. Subsequent negotiations resulted in union recognition, a wage increase, and establishment of a seniority system in promotion and lay-offs. A series of departmental sit-downs won a closed shop in 1937, and in 1940 the local and Hormel signed an agreement providing for a guaranteed annual wage and a mandatory one-year notice prior to layoffs.

Under Ellis' influence, the Hormel workers initially adopted the IWW form of "one big union." Austin unionists aggressively organized packinghouse workers in northern Iowa, southern Minnesota, and South St. Paul, as well as other workers in the towns of Austin and Albert Lee. After joining the future United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA) in 1937, the local continued organizing in this area, funded by donations from the Austin workers and not the UPWA central office.

The rapid success of the union was due in part to its relationship with company president Jay Hormel, a lifelong resident of Austin. The company was founded in 1891 by his father, George A. Hormel, who ruled it ruthlessly until retiring and passing the presidency to Jay in 1929. Thirty-seven years old at the time, Jay ran the company in the style of his father until the 1933 strike. Stunned by the workers' actions, Jay decided to reach an accommodation with the union soon after it was organized, rather than fight it.

The motor behind the amicable relationship that developed between company and union after 1940 was the combined guaranteed annual wage and group incentive system. The

basic hourly rate was automatically pegged at the level of the workers in the "Big Four" chains of Armour, Swift, Wilson and Cudahy, with the guaranteed annual wage calculated on the basis of 52 weeks of 38 hours at that level. In addition to this wage, workers could earn production bonuses, if their gang produced above a minimum, set by negotiations between union and company. For many workers this meant earnings of 50 per cent over the guaranteed wage, making them among the highest paid, as well as most productive, workers in the meatpacking industry.

### Roots of the current conflict

The company-union relationship started to deteriorate after the death of Jay Hormel in 1956 when a new corporate leadership took over the daily operation of the firm. Dubbed the "Nebraska mafia" by Austin workers, these new company officials were hard-nosed managers from newer plants in the plains states who held no particular loyalty to Austin. They rapidly expanded the Hormel chain and started to tighten controls over the Austin plant.

The Hormel local started giving concessions as far back as 1963, in the form of higher production schedules which reduced the incentive earnings of workers. This erosion in earning levels continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In 1978, in order to exact a company commitment to build a new plant in Austin, the local agreed to abandon the incentive system and signed an agreement not to strike for three

years after the completion of the new facility.

The pressures for concessions coincided with a vacuum of leadership within the local. Since the 1940s, the union had been led by local president Frank Schultz who recognized that bargaining with the company was a test of strength, and not a discussion between parties with the same interests. After a long illness, he was voted out of the presidency of Local 9 in 1969 and succeeded by a series of weak union leaders.

Accompanying these problems in Austin, turmoil in the meatpacking industry in the 1960s and 1970s transformed the structure of packinghouse unionism. In the early 1960s, new meatpacking concerns such as Iowa Beef Processors built new plants in rural areas and effectively destroyed the hold of the Big Four on the industry. Devastated by plant closures in its urban strongholds, the UPWA merged with its old arch-rival, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen, in 1968. Further consolidation in the meat industry prompted the Meat Cutters to merge with the retail clerks in 1978, forming the current United Food and Commercial Workers union. By this time, unionized packinghouses had been reduced to a shrinking minority in the industry.

These developments left the Austin unionists (as well as other packinghouse workers) with an international union overwhelmingly based in retail trade, not meatpacking, and hence less responsive to their concerns. Left without much assistance from their international, packinghouse unions have suffered one defeat

P-9 demonstrators in Austin (DR)





after another in the past five years. In the early 1980s, the James V. Guyette leadership stepped into this vacuum and tried to turn the Austin local against the concessions.

The ability of Guyette and his allies to move into leadership posts of Local P-9 in this crisis was due in part to a demographic transformation of the Hormel workforce. The company has hired in distinct waves, and prior to the strike had 300 workers hired between 1945 and 1952, 300 between 1965 and 1970, and 1,000 hired after the new plant opened (on the grounds of the old one) in 1982.

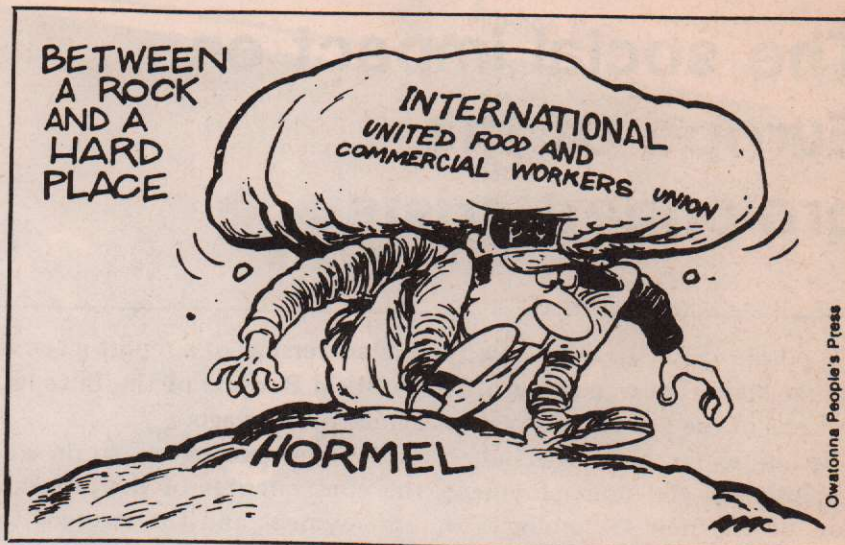
Guyette was hired in 1968, and his leadership team is largely composed of other "60s generation" workers plus a few older associates of former local president Frank Schultz. His main base, however, is the younger workers hired after 1982, who, along with the "60s generation," never experienced the collaborative relationship between the union and Jay Hormel.

Guyette reportedly began to make a name for himself in the 1970s by opposing the various concessions of the local. In 1980, he was narrowly elected to the local's executive board in a three-way race. In late 1983, Guyette became the local's president by defeating pro-UFCW administration candidate John Anker.

In his 1984 "State of the Union" address, Guyette sounded the themes which reflect the outlook of P-9 workers toward their struggle. Emphasizing the good treatment of the workers by Jay Hormel and how this had benefitted the entire town of Austin, he argued that in resisting concessions, the union was struggling for its members, their families and the future of their community. Union literature reflects this approach, with one button reading "For Your Future and Mine, Support Local P-9," and another popular sign stating simply, "Jay Hormel Cared."

The local started on the path toward its current strike when a rank-and-file meeting rejected concessions accepted by other Hormel unions in September 1984, and pulled the Austin local out of the chain. P-9 was unable to join in a company-wide strike at that time because it was still saddled with one more year of its no-strike agreement. As a result, Hormel unilaterally cut wages in Austin from 10.69 to 8.25 US dollars.

Throughout 1985, the union prepared for the seemingly inevitable strike. Leafletting teams travelled throughout Minnesota, Iowa and parts of Wisconsin, spreading information on the impending conflict. A special assessment raised a war



chest, and P-9 hired corporate campaign strategist Ray Rogers to handle strategic planning for the implementation of a highly visible strike.

When P-9 rejected Hormel's final offer and struck in September 1985, more than 69 cents was at stake. The proposal submitted by Hormel eliminated the main contractual provisions won by the union in the 1930s: the one-year layoff notice and job placement in accordance with seniority.

In addition, Hormel wanted to add a new clause prohibiting strikes for the duration of the agreement and allowing the company to discharge workers who engaged in job actions. The contract also provided for a two-tier wage system, a 30 per cent reduction in pensions and a common labor wage of 9.25 US dollars with no increases over three years. Maternity leave was also eliminated.

In effect, the company was trying to reassert the level of company control that had existed prior to 1933. In the opinion of Casper Winkels, "They'd be worse off than they were when they organized in 1933 if they took what their [Hormel's] last contract offered them. They'd be in worse shape than before we had our union. A lot worse."

With strikebreakers in the plant, P-9 has sought to escalate its confrontation with Hormel rather than give in. It has called for a boycott of Hormel products and sent roving pickets to other company facilities to shut them down. The P-9 pickets closed the company's Ottumwa, Iowa, plant for several days, and interfered with production for briefer periods at other facilities. Hormel responded by firing 500 workers in Ottumwa; the plant there is still shut down.

The ability of P-9 to avert a disastrous defeat is greatly hindered

by the resistance of the AFL-CIO to the local union's aggressive strategy. The UFCW has opposed the roving picket teams of P-9 and instructed local unions to ignore requests for financial assistance. The AFL-CIO has fallen in line by refusing to sanction the Hormel boycott and attacking P-9 in the press.

At this point, P-9's strategy is to cause enough trouble for Hormel to make it worth while for the company to rehire all the workers and retain the seniority system. Hormel currently is unable to operate the Austin plant at anywhere near full production, as the most important workers, the hog-kill and cut gangs, have stayed on strike. These are highly skilled jobs which take six months to one year to learn. Without big production from these workers, the company cannot make a profit from its Austin facility. P-9 hopes to make Hormel compromise through a combination of restricted production from Hormel plants and the boycott.

Win or lose, the P-9 strike is likely to be a watershed for the labor movement. It has inspired the unionized rank and file to buck their international union leaders and to use the resources of local unions in a variety of industries in order to support this one packinghouse strike.

History may bear out the opinion of South St. Paul packinghouse worker Bud Schulte, who said that the P-9 strike is "a turning point in the way labor views concessions. They no longer believe the corporate idea that workers must take concessions in order to see their plant survive. They found out that that isn't true. Workers have taken concession after concession, yet plants have still closed. They'd been lied to long enough and people just don't believe that anymore." □



# The social impact on Europe of the prolonged crisis

WE ARE PUBLISHING below the edited version of a report given by Ernest Mandel at a meeting of the Political Bureaus of the European sections of the Fourth International some months ago.

In particular, this article analyzes the questions having to do with employment and unemployment, the consequences of the introduction of the new technologies on employment and the state of the reorganization of the labor process.

The overall political and social project of the bourgeoisie is dealt with, both as regards its ultimate objectives and as regards the progress it has made so far in achieving them.

Finally, the article looks at the various elements of recomposition in the workers' movement and the resistance of the workers' movement to the attacks mounted by the bourgeoisie.

## ERNEST MANDEL

The long phase of economic depression in which the capitalist economy finds itself offers no sign of recovery. This depression is characterized by a structural rise in unemployment, which can be summed up by the following formula: The rate of increase in the level of unemployment is equal to the rate of increase in the productivity of labor. To that we have to add the rate of population growth and subtract the rate of economic growth. On the average, the productivity of labor continues to increase by 2.5% to 3% annually. Since the rate of economic growth is less than that figure, we see already, without even taking into consideration population trends, an increase in unemployment.

### West Europe's place in the world crisis

Obviously, this depression is not progressing in a linear way. The industrial cycle continues to operate. So, within the framework of this long-term depression there are successive phases of recession and recovery. At the moment, we are in an upturn in almost all the countries of capitalist Europe. But a new phase of recession is inevitable in 1986 or 1987, even if no one can predict the date exactly.

The scope of these conjunctural movements differs, depending on the

case. The place of Europe in the world market, the relative buoyancy of exports, plays an important role in this respect. Unlike what happened in the latter half of the 1970s, capitalist Europe is now benefitting to various degrees from all the structural weaknesses of the American economy — the high exchange rate for the dollar, the low productivity of American industry, the huge budget deficit and a higher rate of inflation in the United States than in some countries of Western Europe.

The opposite also threatens to occur. Once the recession phase starts in the United States, there could be a sharp drop in European exports to the United States. As a result, the new recession may be worse in Europe than the one in 1980-82.

It is important to clear away a myth, the idea of a decline of Europe in the world. This notion is very widespread, and it has a clear political function, that is to encourage class collaboration and acceptance of an austerity policy. For the moment, without speculating about what the future might hold, this view of things remains a myth.

The share of the European imperialist countries in the world market, both in exports of industrial commodities and capital exports, has not declined. It is hard to establish a general trend, because there are un-

evennesses among countries and from year to year. But if there is a general trend, it is rather in the opposite direction — toward a slight upturn in Europe's share of commodity exports and a very clear increase in capital exports. The latter development could even be called sensational, but of course what it means is open to argument.

In Great Britain, there has been a real reorientation of finance capital toward financial operations, operations by the City, [London's financial center], and particularly, capital exports, which have reached record levels. This is not in itself positive for the British bourgeoisie, since, unlike the countries on the continent, this movement has been accompanied by an actual deindustrialization, at least for the moment.

Roughly speaking, the United States' share of the total capital invested abroad is now less than 40%. You would have to go back before World War II to find such a figure. The Japanese and the European shares have been continually growing. As for world exports of industrial goods, the West German share is about on the line of the mid-1970s, that is a bit over 15% of the world market. That, moreover, represents a slight rise over the level of the first years of the 1980s, when it fell to around 14%. The US share, on the other hand, is below the level of the 1970s. And for Japan there is a sharp rise.

Today, West Germany is the leading world exporter of industrial goods (15% of the world market, as against 14% for Japan, and 13.4% for the United States). This is not exactly a picture of European decline.

What is spectacular is the rise of the semi-industrialized countries as exporters of industrial goods. These countries' share of the world market has practically doubled in the past ten years. It has risen from 6.3% in 1975 to 11.2% or 11.3% today.

There is another myth that should be exploded. The industrial-goods exports of Third World countries are not essentially exports by US, Japanese or European multinationals relocated in these countries. This category of exports represents 20% to 25% of the total. The rest are exports by industrial firms whose capital is in local hands, either in the form of state ownership, mixed ownership or "joint ventures."

Let us take one of the most important high-tech industries, telecommunications. Today, Europe's exports of telecommunications material are the largest in the world. They amount to 6,500 million dollars a year, as against 3,200 million for the United





*In the dole queue in France (DR)*

States, and 5,000 million for Japan.

What is still more important is that Europe's trade balance in mechanical instruments and telecommunications equipment is substantially positive, as is that of Japan. On the other hand, the United States' trade balance in this area shows a two-thirds deficit, that is, it imports twice as much as it exports.

In electronics for mass consumption — not high-tech, military and space electronics — there has been a spectacular turn around in the situation to the disadvantage of the United States. The latter is importing twice what it exports, in particular from Japan but also from some semi-industrialized countries.

### **The pattern of unemployment**

Before coming to conclusions about the overall employment and unemployment trends, let us look at the trends industry by industry. Roughly, they fall into three categories: those where there has been a clear, absolute decline in employment, those where there is an intermediary situation, and those where there has been an increase in employment.

Very schematically, in the first category, those industries hardest hit by unemployment, there is a coincidence between declining demand and the impact of introducing the new technologies. Here there is a

considerable drop in employment. Such industries include ship building, mining, steel, textiles, shoes and — to a certain extent — petrochemicals and oil refineries, although in this latter instance the situation is a bit better.

The second category is that where demand, and therefore production, continue to increase, but at a slower tempo than in the past, and where there is also a strong thrust of technological innovation. These are key industries, accounting for almost half the total volume of industrial employment — auto, electrical appliances, construction and public works.

Here, in the medium term, there is no decline in demand. Demand continues to increase. But it is being accompanied by increased productivity, hence by the application of the new technologies. Therefore, there is a combined effect on employment that is hard to measure exactly, because competition plays a big role and the trends are, therefore, different from country to country.

Some countries are losing their footing in the market, which means a definite decline in employment. Other countries, to the contrary, are increasing their shares of the market, and may stabilize or even increase their levels of employment in these industries. For the moment, the Spanish auto industry seems to be expanding, like the German auto industry. They are hiring, while the British and French auto industries are laying people off.

Finally, there is the third category — that of industries that are enjoying a greater than average growth in demand and production. Paradoxically, in these high-tech industries, the new technologies are having far less impact on employment than in the others. The most important are the engineering industry, the entire machine and producers goods industry, electronics, scientific instruments, medical and pharmaceutical products. Electronics has an organic composition of capital (share of wages in production costs) below the average in other industries.

If we put all these data together, the first thing that emerges is that there is an increase in the numbers of unemployed and the rate of unemployment. But, except for Spain, Portugal and Ireland — and Ireland can be left aside because in reality it is a nonimperialist and nonindustrialized country — the unemployment rate is around 10%. In Britain, in the last four years the rate has gone from 10.2% to 10.9%. But in Spain, the rate of unemployment is double that. In that country, since 1977, job losses in industry have amounted to more than a fourth of the total, some 27%, which is quite exceptional in Europe.

Of course, these unemployment rates are based on the total economically active population, and therefore say little about the volume of employment. The unemployment rate can increase at the same time as the volume of employment. Everything depends, therefore, on the population trends. Overall, fluctuations in



employment are still weak.

Here there is another myth to be refuted — the idea that we are seeing full-fledged deindustrialization or “de-waging” in Europe and North America. The figures on the trends in the volume of employment in capitalist Europe are the following: a drop of 0.5% in 1983, stabilization in 1984, a slight rise of 0.2% in 1985. Over a longer term, it is the same, or about the same. For ten years, we have seen fluctuations on the order of +1.2% to -1.1%.

These are quite minimal fluctuations. If you compare them with those in the period 1930-38, the difference is striking. Then, there were nose dives in employment, on the order of 30%. The present drops are marginal ones. This does not mean that they are not grave or without social consequences.

The drop in industry properly speaking has been sharper. But the shift is not so extensive as it is felt to be in some circles.

The figures for France are quite representative. Between December 31, 1979, and December 31, 1984, the totally economically active population declined by 2.5%. The number of “self-employed” dropped by 280,000 persons, that of wage earners by 250,000 persons, or by 1.4%. In industry, the decline in the number of wage earners was on the order of 10%. But if we add telecommunications and the nontrading “tertiary” sectors, the decline is reduced to less than 1%. Employment in commerce and in the financial services has stagnated. Employment in the public sector has increased.

Nonetheless, some particular remarks have to be made about youth and female unemployment. Since the onset of the crisis, female employment has been rising, and this has even been rather marked. Male employment has been declining. The rates of the increase in female employment differ according to country.

In Denmark, the level of employment for women rose from 63% in 1975 to 72% in 1983, that is, by 15%, which is enormous for a period of crisis. In Sweden, the rate rose from 67% to 77%, an increase of nearly 15%. In Belgium the rate of employment for women rose from 44% to 50%, in France from 49% to 51%, in Germany from 49% to 49.6%, and in Italy from 34.5% to 40%.

The biggest rise has been in Norway, where the rate rose from 53.3% to 67%, which is an increase of 25% over ten years.

This observation of the rising rate of female employment has to be qualified immediately by taking into consideration the scope of unsteady

jobs. Most of the increase in female employment is accounted for by the increase in part-time jobs. Household incomes have declined because of the crisis, and women are trying to work to compensate for these losses.

Moreover, because of the crisis, less full-time jobs are available, especially for women.

But there is also a socio-cultural factor operating here, owing to the double workload of women — unpaid work in the home on top of work on the job — which results in working days of 13, 14, 15 and 16 hours when women have full-time jobs.

So, a section of women workers, at least in the northern European countries, are also opting deliberately for part-time work.

The increase in part-time work overall is very different from one country to another. Between 1973 and 1983, in ten years, part-time jobs rose to 25% of the total in Sweden, from 21% to 24% in Denmark, from 16% to 19% in Britain and from 8.7% to 21% in the Netherlands, which is the sharpest increase, if the statistics are correct.

For Belgium, the proportion of part-time jobs has risen from 4% to 8%, for France from 7% to 10%, and for West Germany from 10% to 12%. Italy is the only country that has shown a drop, from 6.4% to 4.6%, but here again there is a question about the statistics. In Italy, a large part of the part-time work is unregistered jobs, which therefore remain outside the official statistics.

The share of women in part-time jobs is enormous. In Europe, they hold more than 80% of the part-time jobs. In West Germany, the rate is even 92%, while in the other European countries, it is around 80% to 85%. Sweden comes after Germany, with 89.6% of part-time jobs held by women. In Britain, the proportion is lower, 70% women as against 30% for men.

Unemployment of young people between 16 and 25 is rising sharply. Long-term unemployment, in which Belgium holds the disreputable record, is also increasing sharply. In West Germany, the rate of youth joblessness went from 3.9% of total unemployment to 10% at the beginning of the 1980s, from 15% to 26% in France, from 14% to 22% in Britain, from 25% to 34% in Italy, and so on.

Only in Sweden has the youth unemployment rate remained practically stable, rising only from 5.1% to 6%. Among youth under 25 in Spain, the rate has gone from 28.5% in 1980 to 44.5% now. This is the highest rate in all of Europe. And what is more serious for all these countries is that in this mass of unemployment, there is a growing

number of young people who have never worked, who have never held any job since they left school. This phenomenon has obvious social and political implications, which represent grave threats for the workers' movement.

Long-term unemployment reflects the same trend of deterioration. Between 1980 and 1984, those unemployed two years or more have increased from 12% to 22% of all unemployed in France, from 8% to 15% in West Germany, from 8% to 32% in Spain, from 13% to 20% in Italy and from 39% to 49% in Belgium.

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### Skills and the new technologies

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Let us move on to the most delicate and also the most controversial question, the structure of employment as regards skills. We are clearly in the midst of a process that presents a complex and composite picture. It is impossible to know for the moment which of the trends operating is going to predominate. Any extrapolation of one of the trends at work in this complex process can lead to grave errors of prognosis.

We are still in an initial stage of complete automation. We are still largely in what is called the phase of semi-automation. There is no question of manual jobs or wage labor being radically eliminated from industry. In these conditions, the recomposition of the working class, the relations between laborers and skilled workers, old and new skills, fluctuate greatly according to industries and from plant to plant, depending on whether the new technologies are applied to a large extent, partially, or only marginally.

Any conclusion drawn by generalizing examples from high-tech industries, where robots are often used, assumes something that has not been proven, that is, that in the coming ten years all of industry is going to be reorganized on this model. No one can say that, because no one knows that, and, for the moment, it seems extremely improbable.

When a radically new technology is introduced, that brings on a reorganization of the whole labor process. But there are also a whole series of burdens that go along with this changeover, and it cannot be predicted in advance how long they will have to be borne. Learning and trying out the new technology and reorganizing the work process require a lot of labor power. Likewise, plants have to be re-equipped in a snowballing pattern as subsequent stages of the production process have to be brought into line with the new tech-



nology, which is no small matter. This requires building new plants and new machines, with corresponding effects on employment, effects that are very different than they would be if the technology were already in place.

The bourgeoisie, the bosses, the trade-union bureaucracy and obviously the bourgeois state and governments are deliberately using all this talk about robotization to frighten the workers. You can always make predictions about what the situation is going to be in ten years, but with respect to the present, such talk clearly has a manipulative function.

For example, the figures do not prove any deskilling of labor in France. Between 1975 and 1983, the number of skilled workers in industry rose from 2.8 million to 2.9 million. It is possible that this is a purely temporary thing, but that is what the figures are. In the same period, the number of unskilled workers declined from 4 million to 3.5 million. The percentage of skilled workers rose from 39% to 45% of workers in industry as a whole.

These figures do not give any idea of the relation between old skills and new ones. Obviously, employment of workers with the old skills has declined. The total number of new jobs has only gone up by 100,000 and there are a lot of people with the new skills. Thus, the conclusion is obvious — there has been a reduction in the number of employed workers with the old skills.

So, where is the real problem of assessment? It is that in most of the projections about the number of robots and the trend to robotization, the question of markets, that is, the volume of production and sales, is left entirely out of the picture. The argument is built up as if the new technologies were introduced and applied solely in accordance with the criteria of technical efficiency and reducing wage costs, without taking account of the fact that these new technologies involve an enormous increase in the volume of production and, therefore, require a big expansion of the market in order to be employed profitably.

In the production of the motor for the Fiat-Uno for example, the productivity of labor has more than doubled as a result of the use of computers and robots. Before, it took 250 minutes to make a motor, and now it can be done in no more than 107 minutes. The assembly line is organized so that a motor can be assembled every 20 seconds.

But the production apparatus is utilized only to 30% of capacity. Why? Because in order to run it at 100% of capacity, the company would have



Talbot-Poissy workers on strike (DR)

to sell two or three times more cars than it does today. And where is it going to sell two or three times more cars? Today, auto sales are increasing on the order of 2.5% to 3% a year.

Obviously, there is competition within the industry. Fiat can hope to increase its share of the market at the expense of the other automobile manufacturers, but only a little. This is what places limits on the introduction of the new technologies.

Overall economic growth, outlets, markets, buying power, overall sales figures have to be taken into account. The industrialists' own projections and perspectives are pinned on that. At an international conference of robotics industrialists a year ago, the figures advanced were quite modest. It was predicted that from now to 1990, 1%, 1.5% or 2% of the industrial labor would be robotized. This is an overall figure. It does not mean that in certain industries, the figure may not be much higher. But in general the trend to robotization remains quite marginal.

In the famous high-tech workshop at Fiat that I referred to before, in which there are 103 computers and 56 robots, the total number of workers employed dropped from 3,100 to 2,670, that is, a drop of 13% in employment. Even with the introduction of the new technologies, the factory is far from having been totally automated.

### Employment in industry compared with in the services

Generally over the last ten years a decline has been registered — although it is much less pronounced than usually thought — in employment in industry, and a net increase in employment in the so-called service

sector.

For all of capitalist Europe, employment in industry declined annually by 1.2% between 1973 and 1975, by 0.6% annually between 1975 and 1979, by 2.9% for the period 1980-82 and by 2.6% in 1983, which amounts to a cumulative decline of 17% over 11 years. At the same time, employment in the services increased annually by 1.8% between 1973 and 1975, by 1.9% between 1975 and 1979, by 1.2% between 1980 and 1982, and by 0.9% in 1983.

These averages conceal very sharp differences among countries. For example, in Italy, Spain, Finland, Norway and Sweden, industrial employment continued to increase between 1973 and 1975. In Greece, Iceland and Portugal, it even kept going up until 1982. In Italy, the decline was relatively gentle until 1984. It has been much more pronounced in Britain, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, France and West Germany.

Conversely, the increase in employment in the services is under the average in Belgium, West Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, Spain and Britain. It is slightly stronger in France, Sweden, and the Netherlands. It is quite pronounced in Austria, Luxembourg and Italy.

Nonetheless, these statistics have to be re-examined critically if we want to interpret them from a Marxist point of view. In fact, a number of enterprises that the official statistics put under the service sector actually belong under industry from the standpoint of production of value and therefore of surplus value. This is the case notably of the transportation sector; gas, electricity and water; the telecommunications industry and the electronics/software industry.

Once you make this reclassification,



the picture changes drastically. You realize that there is no question of any "deindustrialization." Late capitalism is rather characterized by a more pronounced industrialization of the whole of economic life, which is reflected notably by stepped-up mechanization (and therefore a tendency to declining employment) in the commercial and the financial sectors, service industries par excellence.

It is only in the public sector that we are seeing a net expansion of nonindustrial employment, one that is continuing. But here also we have to avoid extrapolation. The more-and-more pronounced crisis of public finances and the cutbacks this is leading to in all countries could rapidly reverse this trend.

These sectoral shifts in employment are undeniably bringing about a recomposition of the working class. Do they inevitably mean a weakening of the organized workers' movement? Here again we have to beware of extrapolations. The only constant that seems to emerge is that there is a relative increase in the weight of wage earners, and therefore of unions, in the public sector by comparison with the traditional sectors. But this does not automatically mean a weakening of working-class militancy or of the trade-union movement's striking power.

Today, paralyzing the telecommunications centers, the big transportation companies, the electricity generators, or even the banks can hit a capitalist economy just as hard as shutting down the mines, steel or even the auto industry could have in the past. In more than a few countries, some public workers' unions are today the spearhead of working-class combativity. There is no reason beforehand to exclude the possibility that this trend may grow.

It is another question whether what have been the traditional bastions of the workers' movement, owing to the concentrations of workers and the traditions of militancy they represented, can be replaced by new bastions. I will come back to that point. Let me note only that the concentration of wage earners in rail, the post office and telecommunications centers, the airports and the electronic industry is considerable. New bastions of the trade-union movement may well develop in such places.

What have been the long-term effects of the crisis on the level of direct real wages, social benefits, and on the problematic of pauperization? In this area, there has been a nearly universal decline in workers' buying power, except perhaps in the case of Norway. But this decline once again differs considerably from

country to country. Here again, the most pronounced decline has been in Spain and Portugal. It is also marked in Belgium, where the buying power of the average wage dropped by 16% in the space of seven years, which is quite a lot.

### Attacks on social benefits

In Britain and West Germany, this drop has been a little less steep. In Italy and in France, it has been still less sharp. In Britain, since 1979 a drop of 7.6% in the buying power of the average wage has been registered. For manual workers over the past ten years, the drop has been 10%. This means an annual decline of 1% to 1.5%.

In Italy, the decline seems to be on the same order of magnitude, with annual drops of 1.2% to 1.5%. In West Germany, it is similar, with annual declines of 1.2% to 1.3% since 1979.

What is harder to calculate is the decline in social security benefits. In this respect, two trends cross. First of all, there is the decline in individual benefits; but benefits overall are increasing, if only as a result of the increase in unemployment. In general, it can be said that social benefits have declined in terms of buying power, but less than wages.

There are two reasons for this. First of all, the bourgeoisie has estimated rightly that frontal attacks against social security would provoke sharper reactions than attacks against wages. For example, if they touched sick benefits, the response could be a general one rather than just from a limited group. The bourgeoisie wants to fragment the working-class fightback. So, it has an interest in moving more slowly to attack social security than in attacking wages.

Furthermore, the bourgeoisie obviously has a genuine and general interest in reducing real wages. It is more divided on the question of social security. Even Margaret Thatcher's cabinet in Britain is divided on this question. It is in fact thanks to the protective net of social security that the socio-political effects of the crisis have been more limited up till now than they were in the 1930s. In these conditions, tearing this net abruptly would obviously be playing with fire.

This does not mean that there will not be attacks against the social security system, quite the contrary. As the crisis drags on, the deficits in the social security system are growing. In these conditions, the system of social protection is going to be strongly challenged in the future,

even though the bourgeoisie will try as much as possible to cushion its blows and to apportion them.

As regards cuts in social benefits, once again the Spanish state is bearing the brunt of it, with a concentrated attack, on unemployment benefits hitting the more vulnerable minority of the working class that cannot defend itself. In this country, three-quarters of the unemployed get virtually no benefits. It has not yet reached this level in the rest of Europe, but the attacks on unemployment benefits are going to increase.

The result of all this is that even if overall social security spending is on the rise, the number of persons and households below the poverty line is markedly on the rise. There is a major debate over the definition of poverty. It is normal for us as Marxists not to accept the criteria of the bourgeoisie and its experts. But the real debate is not over the definition but the trend. However you define poverty, when the number of needy people increases, pauperization becomes worse.

Today, in most European capitalist countries, about 15% of the population are living in poverty. In Spain, Portugal and southern Italy, obviously this percentage is much higher.

In West Germany, the number of persons living on public benefits has practically doubled, rising from 1.4 to 2.5 million persons. The number of unemployed getting no benefits has risen from 800,000 to 2 million. If you add these two figures, they show that almost 5 million people today are clearly in circumstances of pronounced poverty.

In Britain the number of people who can be considered poor has also almost doubled, rising from 4.5 million in 1975 to 8.5 million in 1984. The number who get what is called the basic social benefit (payments given to the needy amounting to about 100 pounds a month) has risen from 3.7 to 5.4 million. And the number who get 10% more than the "social benefit," which is still miserable, has risen from 1 million to 1.7 million. Those who get less than this public assistance cushion have risen from 1.8 million to 3.2 million persons. This adds up to a total that has increased from 6.5 to 10.4 million persons for a country of 50 million inhabitants.

In the Scandinavian countries, the situation is much better. Belgium, the Netherlands and France are in an intermediate situation. Italy, Britain, Spain and Portugal are much worse off. In Italy, moreover, there are regional differences, in particular between the north, where there is more or less the same percentage



of needy people as in the rest of Europe; and the south, where the situation is close to that of Spain and Portugal.

There is an intermediate phenomenon between purely material impoverishment and the impact of the new technologies, which is wiping out the old skills, with all the implications this has in terms of moral destitution, uneasiness, fear, desperation, feelings of social uselessness and demoralization.

### Structural weakening of the workers' movement?

The impact of the new technologies on the organization of labor provides the bridge between descriptive analysis and the problematic of the relationship of forces among the classes.

In the history of capitalism, every time there has been a long depression, there has been a reorganization of the labor process, which is not only, or even primarily, technological. It is difficult to quantify the thing, but the essential part of what has happened in the plants in this regard is the result of rationalization *without* new technology.

This involves, among other things, the bourgeoisie taking advantage of unemployment and the fear of unemployment to take its revenge on the workers who were in the forefront of the fight in the preceding period. There have been, and will continue to be, selective layoffs of the more militant trade-union activists.

Obviously, it is necessary to fight such moves, not just let them happen. But quite often, the bosses know that in such attacks they can count on the complicity of the trade-union bureaucracy.

Reorganizing the work process obviously has precise objectives from an economic point of view. Stepped-up intensity of labor is a general characteristic of a period of prolonged depression. It is the clearest way of increasing the production of surplus value. This is the purpose of a lot of the measures that are being talked about today in terms of flexible hours, more continuous use of the instruments of labor and the generalization of around-the-clock shifts.

There is dismantling of the gains made by the unions as regards control over the assembly lines, which has gone hand in hand with a revival of Taylorism (1) to use a term that is coming back into fashion.

Once again, this is not a purely technological phenomenon, but an evolution that also has a social dimension. It involves increasing the control of capital over labor, increasing the pressure on the workers, dismantling

the gains of the past.

In the preceding phase, elements of workers' and trade-union control had been introduced with regard to the speed of the line or the tempos of work. We are now seeing a major regression in this regard.

This question is bound up intimately with two other problems. Is there a deconcentration of industry? Is there a collapse, or at least an erosion, of the big working-class and trade-union bastions, the high points of working-class militancy that have dominated the class struggle in Europe for 20 to 25 years? The answer to these questions has to be a qualified one.

First of all, as regards deconcentration. This is a very marginal phenomenon. According to the statistics of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the percentage of total employment represented by enterprises of more than 500 wage earners increased in Sweden between 1975 and 1983. It decreased by less than 2% in Belgium in the same period, and by 3% in France. The percentage of total employment represented by workplaces with more than 100 wage earners increased in the Netherlands, but decreased by 2% in Denmark.

In Great Britain in manufacturing industry, the percentage of employment represented by workplaces with more than 500 wage earners declined from 70% in 1977 to 68% in 1982, which is after all only a minimal variation. In Italy, the often cited figure is 46.4% of all wage earners in the manufacturing industry working in 1981 in establishments with more than 500 wage earners.

If you take account of the increase in the number of enterprises in the service sector, where the average size is less than in manufacturing, you get a still stronger impression of near stability.

The reduction in the number of workers in very big enterprises is an important phenomenon that should be noted. But the difficulty in assessing this evolution lies in the fact that, even after this decline, these enterprises remain very large.

For the sake of comparison, let us take a figure for auto plants. If a very large plant is cut down from 80,000 to 60,000 workers, you can say that there has been a very sharp decrease in the concentration of workers. But a plant of 60,000 workers remains a very large enterprise.

Of course, some industries have gone into a nose dive, such as ship building and steel. But where industries have held up in general or grown, the enterprises that predominate continue to be very large ones. This is the case notably in auto, aviation,

electronics and chemicals in most countries. We have Fiat, Volkswagen, Ford, General Motors, Daimler-Benz, Seat, Renault, Volvo, Citroen-Peugeot, Siemens, Philips, GEC, Plessey, the "big three" in the German chemical industry, the "big three" in the Swiss chemical industry, Rhone-Poulenc, ICI, Montedison, and so forth.

But here is where a qualification comes in. There is no mechanical link between the size of the enterprise, the strength of the union and working-class militancy. It is quite possible in the short or medium term for a big enterprise to remain but for the rate of unionization to decline and for working-class militancy to decline even more. So, we have to make distinctions about these trends country by country.

Undeniably, some working-class bastions have fallen — British Leyland, the printing industry, steel and the shipyards in Britain; steel and the shipyards in Spain; the Walloon steel industry; and the steel industry in France. Others have been weakened but have not fallen, such as steel in the Ruhr and the Saar in West Germany.

Many bastions, nonetheless, still stand. In Britain, West Germany, in the Scandinavian countries and in most of the Benelux countries and Austria, there has been no weakening of the trade-union movement as a whole. There has been a decline in the rate of unionization, but it is less than the drop in employment, which is an exceptional fact, because it has to be remembered that in the comparable period of crisis, the 1930s the unions were terribly weakened. The British unions, like those in most of the European countries, sometimes lost as much as half their membership. This time in the countries mentioned above, the weakening of the trade unions is marginal.

There are the intermediate cases of Greece and Portugal, where there is a real deunionization but one that is not yet very pronounced. On the other hand, we have to take note of the nose dives in the rate of unionization, in particular in Spain and France. There you can talk about a disastrous contraction of the trade-union movement. The phenomenon is more marked than in the 1930s.

Nonetheless, there is no automatic and mechanical correlation between the survival of the traditional bastions of the workers' movement in terms of numbers and the economic weight of the enterprises, on the one side and the strength of the trade-union movement on the other. Nor is there any automatic correlation between the

1. Techniques for increasing the intensity of labor.



rate of unionization and working-class and worker militancy. Anomalies can appear on both sides.

For example, a drop in trade-union membership can be accompanied by a lesser decline in worker militancy, or even a rise. In Spain, the strike curve has been rather upward for two years, at least it was up between 1983 and 1984. In Britain, we see rather the opposite case. There, the rate of unionization remains high, but worker militancy is clearly on the wane.

The effects of the defeat of the British miners should not be underestimated. They are very serious. This was more than a symbolic battle. It affected the overall relationship of forces between the classes. The miners fought bravely but they remained isolated. An isolated struggle like that against a whole government and all the bosses is a very difficult one. Since the battle was very prolonged, it meant very onerous sacrifices for the workers. So, the effect of the defeat is quite palpable.

What is happening now among the miners — the split in the National Union of Miners (NUM) and the emergence of a new right-wing union that threatens to divide other sectors of the working class, if not the trade-union movement as a whole — has unleashed a very dangerous dynamic. The implications of this for the workers' movement as a whole should not be underestimated.

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### Chances for a fightback

There is no reason, under any pretext, to belittle struggles for individual, local, limited demands. On the contrary, any working-class victory, any victorious defensive struggle, even on the smallest question, is more important today than long speeches on general questions.

The working class has to relearn through experience that it can achieve successes, even in a period of depression and unemployment. It can achieve successes, but not in the immediate future on general objectives. If that has been understood, workers will fight doggedly even for limited objectives, when victory and success are so important. The pedagogy of success, demonstration in deed that struggle can pay, is the most important thing today.

The workers' skepticism about their chances of winning is much less in the case of small demands that are within their reach in the plants than in the case of big problems. No one thinks that unemployment can be fought in a single plant.

But stopping a change in wage scales or job classifications in one factory is actually within the reach of the workers in the factory concerned at a given time. And if in such struggles the workers gain satisfaction several times, that can begin to have positive effects on a larger scale.

Everything that I have been saying here is purely conjunctural. I do not in any way rule out a turnaround in the situation. The present situation has to be compared with analogous ones that the workers' movement went through in the early 1930s and early 1960s. Such a study needs to be made in each country, so as to determine how workers' struggles took off again after a long decline.

In general, the resumption of struggles did not come over spectacular questions, nor in all the plants at once nor even in whole industries. It started with small successes that began mounting up.

Obviously the political climate was very different then. Extra-economic factors such as the problem of fascism in the 1930s played a role. In the 1960s, with full employment, the social climate overall was much more favorable.

However, we are a bit quick to forget, for example, that after the putsch of the generals in Algiers, some activists in France were preparing to go underground. It should not be forgotten either how quickly the mood of the workers changed. In 1962-63 in France the atmosphere was hardly conducive to optimism, to say nothing of the one that existed in West Germany.

The bourgeoisie today, conservative and neoliberal — the adjectives do not matter — has an overall political and social project. It goes much further than simply gaining a few percentage points more of the national income at the expense of the working masses or increasing the rate of surplus value and getting the rate of profit back up.

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### What is at stake

By taking advantage of the economic depression and the relative weakening of the workers' movement — which is a general phenomenon, although uneven from country to country — the bourgeoisie is trying to achieve a lasting change in the relationship of forces among the classes and to institutionalize it. This means essentially dismantling the most important gains of the workers' movement over the preceding quarter of a century, if not over the past 50 years.

If we wanted to sum up these gains in a single formula, we could

say that the workers' movement managed to achieve a quantitative rise in the objective level of class solidarity through a combination of trade-union power, control over the work process and political weight. This formula may seem "objectivist" and vague, but it is quite sound and eminently Marxist. The weight of the workers' movement has been a force in society for better protection of all the underprivileged strata. That is the most general meaning of everything that has taken place since the crisis of the 1930s.

This gain was very important. Revolutionary Marxists have to be aware of this, because it concerns what Marx regarded as the definition of the proletarian condition, that is, fundamental insecurity as regards the conditions of existence. This is what is involved in the economic need to continually sell your labor power, a sale that is never guaranteed and whose financial result is never certain.

All of these gains obviously did not eliminate the insecurity of the proletarian condition, but they considerably reduced the scope of it for certain strata of the working-class population. The objective fact that an unemployed worker is better compensated than before, that sick people or retirees get more benefits, that the less skilled and unorganized are protected by a minimum wage (the Smig in France), has an objective effect on the cohesiveness and striking power of the working class, regardless of the consciousness of those who fought to win these demands or who profit from them without having fought for them.

Once these gains are partially or totally dismantled, solidarity objectively declines. Different layers are hit to differing extents and more or less left to their own fates, especially the weaker ones — immigrants, women, youth, the handicapped, the old. But the cumulative effect of this change on the working class becomes palpable from the moment that this development reaches a certain quantitative level.

Obviously, there is a question of transformation of quantity into quality. If 5% of the proletarians are marginalized, the effects on the class as a whole will not be dramatic. But if 30% or 35% are hit, then the cumulative effect becomes grave. And this is what the bourgeoisie is looking for, at least in the major countries.

Moreover, the bourgeoisie is not trying to hide what it wants. Its project is to deal a lasting blow not just to the incomes but to the status of a third or 40% of the working class. This is why the term "two-tier society" is justified as a characterization of the bourgeois project.



because if it is achieved, if a third or 40% of the working class is deprived of minimum protection and collective solidarity, then, for countries such as Belgium, we will go back to a pre-1914 situation.

What is most of all paving the way for such an evolution is the irresponsible attitude of the trade-union bureaucracy and the bureaucracy in the workers' movement in general. It is an accomplice of this policy, unconscious at the beginning. Then it was drawn into capitulating to the capitalist offensive, out of electoralism, out of all sorts of considerations, including office holders' self-interest, defence of its privileges.

In fact, this attitude is stupid because these petty privileges will be in danger in the long term, if the workers' movement is structurally weakened.

Finally, we have to take into consideration the objective effects of the crisis, of the retreats and defeats. A working class that sees that it has lost two, three, four battles and that unemployment is increasing will not react in the same way as a working class whose strength remains intact.

It has indeed to be noted that the class enemy has a much more determined political leadership, project, plan and orientation than the people at the top in the workers' movement, who unfortunately do not exhibit the same qualities.

Finally, I should add that the militant forces in the unions and the political far left, regardless of the fact that they are growing, do not enjoy the sort of credibility that would enable them immediately to counterbalance the growth of the other factors. Even though these forces are on the rise, they remain modest and cannot by themselves neutralize the negative effects of everything that has been cited above.

Thus, there is still no credible general political alternative, that is, not one credible for a significant fraction of the working class that would see it as a perspective it could mobilize for, with some chance for success in the short run. The absence of such a credible general alternative is itself a factor in the situation.

The only exception on this score may be Britain, but even that is not sure. Obviously, the left in the Labour Party and the trade-union movement represents a considerable force that exercises a weight on the situation. But it is not certain that it amounts to a credible alternative for the working class. There may be an analogous situation in Denmark.

So, in such conditions the bourgeoisie's project cannot be underestimated. It is pushing the entire workers' movement onto the defensive. Most of the forces in the traditional moder-



*During the 35-hour week strike in West Germany (DR)*

ate workers' movement are evolving toward the right, but this does not mean that the bourgeoisie's project is automatically going to succeed. That depends on the present relationship of forces and not the relationship that the bourgeoisie would like to create five or ten years from now.

At present, the relationship of forces is such that in most countries it creates major obstacles to the realization of the bourgeois project. In West Germany, in Italy, in Britain, in the Scandinavian countries, in the Benelux countries, the working class retains a sufficient capacity for fighting back so that when the provocations go beyond a certain limit, you can see that the bourgeoisie is obliged to retreat, to maneuver, to calm the protests. It cannot push through all its solutions day after day, month after month, in linear fashion.

### **Divisions in the working class**

Nonetheless, we have to be aware of the dangers and implications of its policy. All the bourgeoisie's projects aim at increasing and institutionalizing the divisions within the working class — divisions between native and foreign workers, between men and women, between young people and adults, between adults and retirees, between skilled and unskilled workers, between declining industries and high-tech ones, between the public and private sectors and between the workers of different countries. In this latter case, it is trying to accomplish this by getting the workers to drop international solidarity and instead accept wage cuts for purposes of international competition, supposedly to "protect

jobs." This leads to lower real wages in all countries.

On all levels, the bourgeoisie's policy aims at provoking, broadening, and institutionalizing such divisions. It proposes different measures, suited to each case, to freeze such divisions and increase their weight in the relations between capital and labor as a whole. Some successes have already been achieved; it would be wrong to deny it. Despite the very positive reactions by young people against racism, in a whole series of European countries antiforeignism and racism have had real effects on the adult working class.

We could argue about the scope of this phenomenon, it has now been confirmed by election results, such as those for Le Pen's National Front in France or those for the extreme right forces in Geneva, Lausanne or Brussels. These developments cannot be underestimated, and they do not involve just the petty bourgeoisie. This reflects the impact not only of the crisis, but of the crisis combined with all the political factors enumerated previously.

One of the big problems in this area is organizing the unemployed. When you compare the attitude of the workers' movement today with that of the communist movement at the beginning of the 1930s, which was very active among the unemployed and had considerable success in organizing them, the regression is striking. It is in Britain that this phenomenon is most prominent. If you study attentively what the bourgeois call "violence in the inner cities," if you study what is going on among the unemployed youth in the pauperized industrial neighborhoods, the least that can be said is that a qualified assessment has to be made of this



phenomenon. The radicalization of young Blacks is a positive fact, but the "radicalization," if one can use this term, of the young football hooligans is quite another thing.

If you listen to the explanations that the football hooligans themselves give on the radio and television, they are more reminiscent of a fascist mentality than anything else — the assertion of virility, the need for physical combat, the exaltation of violence for violence's sake. Those were themes that the fascists played on in the 1930s.

We have to be very attentive to everything that may happen among the demoralized youth who have never worked, who have been unemployed for four or five years, who have no prospects, for whom the workers' movement provides no perspective and to whom the revolutionary organizations only offer solutions within the limitations of their still very small size.

In general, for the moment we can see three kinds of reactions by the working class in capitalist Europe to this situation. There is a minority that is resigned to it. There is a minority that has radicalized. The majority may fight back in specific cases, but is hard to mobilize for general objectives. This is obviously very schematic, but it seems to represent the situation in most of the countries concerned.

The weakening of the hold of the bureaucratic apparatuses on the working class does not necessarily mean regression. This may have happened

in France and Britain, but it is certainly not the case in Spain or Denmark.

Let us take for example the threats of repression and layoffs that hang over the most militant activists in a period of crisis. In the past, in the 1930s and even at the start of the 1950s, such activists were virtually defenceless. Today, for the union bureaucracy it is an adventure to come out openly in support of firings of union delegates by the bosses. They have to maneuver, since the relationship of forces has changed. You cannot say that this is exactly the same situation as in the 1930s.

The recomposition of the workers' movement, the weakening of the bureaucrats' control over the whole of the organized working class, is a very complex process. Of course, as long as this coincides with a defensive retreat of workers' struggles, this does not have the same impact and dynamic as when it coincides with a rise in struggles.

We are, therefore, in a difficult intermediate stage. To assess the dynamic country by country in harmony with the real situation and behavior of the working class, our organizations have to have roots and substantial knowledge of what is happening in the working class. In this regard, we cannot be satisfied with generalities, abstractions, and above all not with speculations.

The only general indications we have at the moment are big defensive mobilizations by the working class. In this respect, the balance sheet

differs according to the countries. In the big Italian mobilization to defend the sliding scale, which was initiated by a "self-convened" assembly of factory delegates and led to a demonstration of a million workers in Rome, there was a loosening of the control of the bureaucratic apparatuses, although the bureaucracy subsequently regained its hold of the mobilization.

In the general strike of the public services in Belgium, as well as in the general strike in Denmark, a weakening of bureaucratic control was apparent at the same time as the close dependence of the movement on trade-union initiative.

In Spain, the general strike was also marked by a real reduction of the control of the trade-union bureaucracies. On the other hand, in West Germany, the big mobilization of the metal workers, first for the 35-hour week and then in defence of the right to strike, remained under tight trade-union control. The same is true of the long miners' strike in Britain and of the various mobilizations of workers in Portugal.

The mobilizations that have occurred over the last 18 months, moreover, confirm the very cautious definition I gave of the reaction of the body of workers. These struggles can hardly be characterized as reactions by radicalized minorities. They confirm that major sectors of the working class, if not its majority, are still prepared to wage militant fightbacks, but in every case this is in specific

A DGB-sponsored youth demonstration against unemployment (DR)





cases and special circumstances. In this regard, France is the exception and not the rule. We have to follow the evolution in West Germany with special attentiveness. There, the capacity of the working class for fighting back is on the rise by comparison with the situation in the other major European countries.

For several years, there have been tendencies toward a recomposition of the organized workers' movement and a shift in the weights of the various political currents in it in several countries in capitalist Europe. Let me note some of the more striking phenomena — a spectacular decline in the electoral influence of the French Communist Party (PCF), while the decline of this party among workers in the plants is less pronounced; a no less spectacular decline of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE); the collapse of some small Communist parties (Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands); a spectacular rise of the left reformist and centrist organizations in Denmark; the rise of the Labour left in Britain; the rise of the Greens in West Germany. (2)

We are still at the beginning of this recomposition. Its general outlines remain fluid. It would, therefore, be at least premature to draw general conclusions about a universal decline of the CPs, a universal rise of the social democracy, a working-class radicalization within the social democracy, or a general drift of the workers' movement to the right.

To take a single example, the phenomenon of the Greens is very different from country to country. In Belgium, it is even palpably different between Flanders and the Walloon country. We cannot solve the problem of this political phenomenon by an abstract formula characterizing the Greens as a "petty-bourgeois current," or claiming that "they are not part of the organized workers' movement."

In West Germany, for example, it is impossible to explain what has happened by saying that the rise of the Greens reflects a rightward political evolution. Quite the contrary. Not only in the eyes of the broad masses but also objectively, the electoral and parliamentary breakthrough of the Greens has exercised a leftward pressure on political life, on the social democracy, and even partially on the unions.

The rise of the Greens has represented a recapturing on the electoral level of the elements of radicalization in the preceding decade, elements that the social democrats were unable to capture precisely because of their policy of class collaboration and shameful capitulation to the bourgeoisie on the questions of the antiwar struggle, defence of

the environment, women's liberation demands, and so forth.

One may regret that these "new social movements" have developed outside the organized workers' movement, and often not even in a united front with it. But the fault lies with the traditional leaderships of the workers' movement. They proved unable to take up quite legitimate and progressive demands, which in fact are being perceived as such by growing sections of the working class itself.

The increasing impact of these questions on workers is confirmed by the peace movement and the anti-NATO movement in Spain, in West Germany, in Britain, in Italy, in the Netherlands and in Belgium, and by the influence of ecological questions in West Germany, Austria or Switzerland.

This does not mean that I am making an optimistic prognosis for the dynamic of the Greens. The most likely prospect for West Germany is that they will evolve in a reformist direction, becoming transformed into a classical social democratic tendency, and this may happen in the form of governmental collaboration. In other countries, more right-wing tendencies may manifest themselves, as is the case in Austria. But such a transformation will provoke reactions and differentiations within these currents, to which revolutionists must be sensitive.

As for the antiwar and anti-imperialist mobilizations, youth protests, and all the autonomous movements, they are the result of a double desynchronization. On the one hand, there is an objective desynchronization, resulting from the fact that the various social layers are being hit in different ways by the crisis of bourgeois society.

On the other hand, there is a subjective desynchronization between the reactions of the organized workers' movement and various other strata of society. The workers' organizations were backward on these questions. It was inevitable that others would take them up. What happened in the youth radicalization should have prepared the workers' movement to understand what has happened in other spheres.

Now the question arises of reuniting all these components of a potential challenge to capitalism in crisis into a fighting bloc against bourgeois society. It is easy to make such a reunification on paper, but in practice the relationship of forces is decisive, and the revolutionary currents are still weak, while the bureaucratic apparatuses are still very strong. In these circumstances, reunification in deed will be long and arduous. This requires, moreover,

that the socialist project, the socialist program, again gain credibility in the eyes of the broad masses.

Revolutionary Marxists must fight systematically for that. That is one of their principal tasks, even though they know that they cannot by themselves change the present relationship of forces. So, in relatively unfavorable conditions, this reunification of the forces fighting capitalism will not be achieved quickly. A trend in that direction may, however, develop, especially when there is a new rise of general mass struggles.

In all these conditions, the great risk is that all these social movements may take a reformist turn. But this cannot be a reason for breaking the united front or turning away from these movements. Quite the contrary. The reformist temptations of these "new social movements" open the way for revolutionary Marxists to strengthen themselves. Wherever the youth go into action, they do not spontaneously adopt reformist attitudes. They are often rebellious against reformism, unwilling to accept it.

If the leaderships of these big movements slip down the reformist slope, a political space opens up for the revolutionary Marxists. There is no contradiction in that, so long as you keep a sense of proportion. A mass movement of 100,000 people may evolve toward the right, while at the same time we can win 500 to 1,000 people for our revolutionary project and our organizations, especially our youth organizations.

The revolutionary Marxists must, furthermore, arm themselves with a concrete and precise program for dialogue with these movements. We already have such a program for the antiwar, women's liberation and youth struggles, and the last congress of the Fourth International set the goal of formulating one on the ecology question.

More important than these "new social movements" and their political impact on the working class are the phenomena of recomposition in the organized workers' movement itself. Here it is necessary to reaffirm two constants in our analysis.

On the one hand, it is impossible in all the countries where the traditional organizations remain politically dominant within the working class for phenomena of mass radicalization to occur without having repercussions on these traditional organizations themselves.

On the other hand, predictions or speculations about what might

2. See the special issue of 'International Viewpoint' on the West European Communist Parties (Issue No. 69, February 11, 1985).





Fiat workers gather to fight sackings — 1979 (DR)

happen tomorrow or the day after tomorrow in these traditional organizations must not prevent us from seizing the opportunities for strengthening ourselves today from the no doubt smaller forces that radicalize outside these organizations or in breaking from them.

Not only is there no contradiction between these two analyses but from the standpoint of building the revolutionary party, the second to a large extent conditions the first. In fact, outside of Britain, the final result of such a future radicalization within the traditional parties depends to a large extent on the numerical, organizational relationship of forces between the revolutionary Marxists and the other political tendencies.

The more we gain today in organizational strength and autonomous political influence, the better will be the chances to prevent a future mass radicalization in the SPs and CPs from being diverted again to left reformism or centrism.

This only makes clearer the great, the decisive importance of trade-union work in a series of countries. Through demonstrating the usefulness of their organizations in the defensive struggles now underway, revolutionary Marxists will gain an opportunity to win militant worker activists in the unions and in the plants.

On the level of the trade-union movement as a whole, this seems to be beyond our strength, but in certain sectors and in certain enterprises it is quite feasible. This is also linked to our capacity to wage a

systematic fight for a long-term political line pivoting around a general program against the crisis. This is an essentially propagandistic fight, which will not lead in the short run to mass mobilizations.

Revolutionary Marxists are not on the point of organizing a general strike for a 35-hour or 32-hour week. But the propaganda battle is very important. The problem is not only to restore the confidence of the working class. It is also necessary to restore the confidence of the vanguard. The militant vanguard itself does not have a great deal of faith in the socialist project. That is the least that can be said. It is disoriented, it has lost its footing.

The fight to restore the confidence of the vanguard is, therefore, a very important propaganda battle, over a program, over how we can beat the crisis, how we can beat unemployment, how we can drive back the market economy, how we can fight division in the working class, if we have the political will to do so.

It is necessary, therefore, to top off this program for an overall anti-capitalist orientation with a political objective that can be formulated precisely in a number of countries. This central political objective must not be kept in the background. Otherwise, we would fall into pure syndicalism, economism, and we would lose credibility both for the vanguard and for the masses.

No one really thinks that it is possible to oppose unemployment and the economic crisis sector by sector, plant by plant, industry by industry. Thus, the existence of a

political solution, even if it is not "realistic" in the short term, remains more than ever the precondition for the credibility of a general program against the crisis.

We can and must discuss the questions of timing, of tempos, the possibilities for battles intermediate between immediate defensive struggles at specific points and these big objectives in the light of the social, political and economic relationship of forces in each country, which are very different. I am not going to propose any specific analysis in this respect for all of capitalist Europe.

I am not going to conclude on a common political slogan for all the countries of capitalist Europe, with a formula or a common model for the recomposition of the workers' movement for all Europe. This would be deeply wrong, because the real structure of the organized workers' movement is too different in all the various parts of Europe to allow for such a common model.

However, every one of the European sections of the Fourth International has to incorporate the conclusions of such an analysis in its action program. And every one of them has to be aware of the fact that the international dimension of the class struggle has been objectively increased rather than diminished by the crisis, regardless of how conscious the workers may be of that. The need for international coordination of the workers' resistance to the international offensive of capital is greater than ever. Growing sections of the working class will come progressively to realize that. □



# Mineworkers carry on their fight for justice

THE FIGHTING SPIRIT of the miners and their supporters has not abated since their year-long fight for jobs. As we reported in our last issue (No. 95) the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign is still active in defending miners sacked or imprisoned during the dispute and is looking for international support.

Peter Cooper, an activist in the campaign, examines the situation in the coalfields and explains what the campaign aims to achieve.

PETER COOPER

The campaign in defence of the mineworkers was originally launched at a 1985 Labour Party conference fringe meeting, jointly called by the left-wing Campaign Group of Labour MPs (Members of Parliament) and *Trade Union Briefing* (a group of trade unionists active in the left of the Labour Party and within the journal *Labour Briefing*).

The campaign based itself on a resolution carried at the 1985 TUC (Trades Union Congress — the main union confederation) and Labour Party conferences against the vehement opposition of the Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock, calling on this government and a future Labour government to reinstate miners sacked during the strike; to reimburse the funds of the National Union of Mine-workers (NUM), sequestered during the strike; and to review all cases of miners jailed as a result of activities carried out in good faith during the strike (about 12 such miners are currently serving sentences).

Neil Kinnock and the centre-right of the Labour Party and trade unions effectively scabbed on the miners during their year-long strike. They now claim that retrospective legislation indemnifying miners for funds seized by the courts undermines the rule of law (that is of course, capitalist law). This ignores the fact that the current Tory government retrospectively legislated to give Ian Smith and his cronies immunity from prosecution for his crimes against the Zimbabwean people as part of the 1979 Lancaster House agreement.

The current situation in the coalfields is inevitably demoralizing. Over 30,000 jobs have already been lost and at least another 20,000 are in the pipeline.

The National Coal Board (NCB) is using the situation to put more and more pressure on the NUM. For example, it is closing pits not on grounds of "economic viability" but as punishment for militancy during the strike. This is the case with the proposed closure of Kinsley Drift colliery in Yorkshire which only opened in 1980!

Many of those sacked are union officials and the Coal Board has systematically refused to reinstate them even when their cases are supported by Industrial Tribunals. This is especially true in the militant Scotland and Kent areas.

One of the main attempts to smash the NUM has been the formation of the breakaway "Union" of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) based on the Nottinghamshire area, where the majority refused to strike. Despite triumphant press predictions that a majority of miners would leave the NUM to join the scab outfit, it has been unable to recruit significantly outside of the Nottinghamshire area. In fact the NUM has made something

## French workers solidarity

OVER 250 activists attended a gala evening to raise money for sacked and imprisoned British miners in Paris, France, on March 22.

The gala was organized by the French collectif d'information et de soutien aux mineurs britanniques which is sponsored by several trade union branches in the Paris area.

Those present at the gala were addressed by Terry Harrison of Kent NUM, Liz French, wife of a gaoled Kent miner and member of Women Against Pit Closures and Larry Hyett, a SOGAT member currently involved in the print workers' dispute.

of a comeback in Nottinghamshire. Recently about 100 NUM members led a walkout of NUM and UDM members for NUM recognition at Bevercotes colliery and recruited many UDM members back into the NUM despite management harassment.

Despite the UDM being clearly a scab outfit with NCB and Tory Party connections the TUC has equivocated over whether to recognise the new formation or not. This is in line with its general capitulation to the EETPU (electricians union) -led, pro-business-unionism right wing in the trade union movement. The EETPU has clearly developed links with the UDM. Its leader, Eric Hammond, is actively collaborating in the smashing of the print unions in their fight with Rupert Murdoch's News International group at Wapping in London.

Also, despite the fact that being a member of a TUC-affiliated union is a condition of Labour Party membership some right-wing Nottinghamshire Labour MPs have open links with the UDM and there are UDM local Labour councillors. The Labour Party National Executive Committee has not lifted a finger against them. This is a far cry from its witch-hunting of socialists in the Party.

The National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign has therefore added the demand that the TUC or Labour Party does not recognise or have any dealings with the UDM. *Trade Union Briefing* supporters in the campaign are therefore arguing for the Campaign to organize a march in the summer in the Nottinghamshire area in support of the beleaguered NUM members.

The campaign has also proposed the launch of a petition to the TUC and the Labour Party NEC to implement and campaign for the policies adopted. Such initiatives are a way in which the left within the labour movement can express active opposition to the EETPU-led right.

Such a perspective of mass action combined with pressure on the TUC and Labour Party leaderships will meet opposition from many quarters, not least from the Communist Party/Kinnockite alliance which now dominates the NUM National Executive. The campaign works closely with the NUM, however, and in particular with the rank and file of the union. Its supporters believe that it can play an important role, not only in stemming the inevitable demoralization in the coalfields, but in rallying the forces of the left nationwide. □

*Trade Union groups and political organizations wishing to affiliate internationally should send donations to 49 Milner Square, London N.1.*



# Balancing the national and feminist struggles

*NEWS FROM WITHIN*, an English language bulletin on the Israeli state published by a collective in Israel that includes defenders of Palestinian rights, devoted its March 11 issue to the position of Palestinian women living under Israeli rule. In its introduction the bulletin explained: "March 8 is not celebrated, or even recognized as a day of celebration by the vast majority of Israelis." Nonetheless, there was a rally in Tel Aviv sponsored by Women Against the Occupation and the Movement of Democratic Women, the women's organization of the Communist Party. It was attended by thousands of Israeli and Palestinian women.

Unlike the situation in Israel itself, on the West Bank there were many activities to mark women's day, but they tended to focus on the national question. Marxists sponsored a forum that examined the question of the specific oppression of Palestinian women and its relation to the national struggle. The following article describes it.

To mark International Women's Day, Matzpen (an anti-Zionist Marxist Organization) held a discussion on March 4 on the struggle of West Bank women. Dr. Rita Giacaman, a lecturer at Bir Zeit University and the director of the Public Health Project gave a detailed history of the

women's movement in the West Bank and analysed the present position of women. The meeting was well attended by Palestinian women from the West Bank, Palestinian women from inside the 1948 borders, Israeli women and a number of Palestinian and Israeli men.

Dr. Giacaman explained how the present West Bank women's committees were set up during the 1970s in response to the realization by certain sections of the Palestinian movement that there was no mobilization of West Bank Palestinians at a grass-roots level. The impetus was national rather than feminist, but all the committees subsequently formed included feminist demands in their theoretical aims. The women's committees have concentrated solely on building constituencies for their respective nationalist ideologies, but have never the less had an important effect upon the lives of West Bank women. For the first time, women from rural and refugee backgrounds have been able to participate in a wide variety of activities which have improved their social and economic positions. Women have learnt how to organize themselves, have become politicized and have created a number of vital services for all women in the form of literacy and health classes, clinics and nurseries. Dr. Giacaman stressed the need to create a balance between the nationalist, class and women's struggles for liberation. Each struggle is essential, and no aspect should



be given precedence at the expense of another, although combining these three aspects of struggle was problematic and the way forward was not clear.

A lively discussion followed Dr. Giacaman's presentation. Participants questioned whether the occupation had not in some senses been beneficial in pushing forward both the national and women's struggles. Dr. Giacaman answered that it had certainly hastened social change, with the breakdown of the old class system and the extended family. The position of women on the West Bank was almost certainly better in some respects than that of women in most other Arab countries. On the other hand, the entry of West Bank women into the wage-labour force in large numbers tended to impose a double burden on women without liberating them economically. Partly because of this double burden of work outside and inside the home, family size was decreasing in spite of strong nationalist pressures to use demographic factors in the struggle against Israel.

Dr. Giacaman was asked to compare the position of Palestinian women inside Israel with that of women on the West Bank. Contrary to the popular image, Dr. Giacaman suggested that whilst individual Palestinian women from inside the 1948 borders may have achieved a high degree of personal liberation, in general they were probably more oppressed. This was attributed to the lack of any independent women's movement and to clinging to the tribal traditions in the face of the imposition of modern Israeli society. Finally, Dr. Giacaman stressed that the liberation of Palestinian women could not succeed without radical changes in society, which would mean a restructuring of traditional gender roles and the active involvement of men in women's struggles. It was important however, that the women's struggle *not* be organized along the male-dominated factionalist policies of the present nationalist movement.

Further meetings of the three groups of women are planned for the future. □





# Social Democrats make gains in municipal elections

AMSTERDAM — March 19 municipal elections in the Netherlands showed a growing support for PvdA (Partij van de Arbeid, Labor Party). In the big towns, especially in the traditionally Catholic south of the country, it registered gains of up to 12 percentage points, compared with the municipal elections four years ago.

The losers were, first of all, the Liberals, and, in the south also, their coalition partners in the national government, the Christian Democrats. But the PvdA also gained on its left.

Although in many cases, the small left reformist parties — the CPN (Communistische Partij van Nederland), the PSP (Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij) and the PPR (Politieke Partij Radikalen) — presented common slates, they lost to the PvdA. Sometimes, their losses were heavy, as in the towns where the CPN used to have its strongholds.

The slow decline of the PSP and the PPR accounts for part of these losses, but the bulk of them came from the CPN. In all probability, this will reopen the crisis of the CPN, which had hoped to be able to stabilize itself after a pro-Moscow split two years ago.

The new pro-Moscow party did not make any headway either gaining only one seat in a small provincial town where it had taken the whole CPN branch.

A similar phenomenon, the PSO (Partij voor Socialism en Ontwapening, Party for Socialism and Disarmament), a split from the PSP claiming to be more radical also failed to secure any substantial results, let alone win seats.

The only party to the left to make progress, other than the PvdA was the SP (Socialistische Partij), a populist party of Maoist origins. It obtained seats in 17 municipal councils, showing gains both in votes and seats in most cases.

The SAP (Socialistische Arbeiders Partij, Socialist Workers Party, Dutch section of the Fourth International) participated in some cases in coalition slates. It had its own slates in Amsterdam and Deventer. In Rotterdam, the SAP members on the Links Rotterdam coalition slate got more preferential votes than any of the other

parties.

In Amsterdam, the SAP got 428 votes (0.14%) and in Deventer, 167 votes (0.45%). In both cases, the SAP vote went up as a result of a relatively good campaign.

Politically, the municipal elections were completely overshadowed by the build-up for the national elections, which will take place on May 21. In this context, the results were more or less predicted by the polling institutes. But the gains of the PvdA and the corresponding losses of the incumbent right-wing coalition were less than expected.

The ruling coalition has maintained its intention to continue with its austerity program, its attacks on the social security system, and the installation of cruise missiles.

The PvdA is the only big party that has clearly opposed at least the latter two elements of the program of the right. In the surveys done in the fall, it approached 40%. But since then it has dropped to nearer its traditional high of just under one third.

## The immigrant vote

The reason for this is clear. Because of its fear of having responsibility for an all-left government, of having to depend on the votes of the small left parties in parliament, and of the pressure of the mass movements, the PvdA has toned down its policies. Its avowed aim is to weaken the ruling coalition sufficiently to force the Christian Democrats into a coalition with the PvdA.

But paradoxically, this road has only led to weakening the PvdA's power of attraction, thereby enabling the Christian Democrats to hold part of the waverers and keep their major-

ity, together with the Liberals, who will lose in any account.

The outcome, however, is not yet decided. If in these coming months the peace movement and the trade unions mobilize on the issues of the missiles and the shorter workweek, and if voting for the PvdA seems at least to be a way to give political expression to these mobilizations, the party might get better results in May. But, if the PvdA continues on its present road, working-class voters will stay away from the polls, and the party will gain less.

Another interesting aspect of these elections is the participation of immigrant workers. Some of the immigrants, those from the former Dutch colony of Surinam and the present Dutch colonies in the West Indies, had the right to vote as Dutch nationals. Others did not, such as the several hundred thousand Turkish, Moroccan and Yugoslav immigrant workers, as well as immigrant workers of other nationalities. Those who have lived legally in the Netherlands for at least five years had the right to vote in the municipal elections. They will not be allowed to vote in the upcoming national elections.

Partial data on the voting behaviour of immigrants have been collected by various researchers. It is estimated that 47% of the Turks entitled to vote actually voted, which is only a few percentage points less than the voting rate for the Dutch in the municipal elections.

The Moroccan voters were intimidated by groups linked to the Moroccan embassy. King Hussan II had called upon his subjects not to participate, and this call was backed up with threatening actions by the Amicales, the "cultural associations" linked to the Moroccan regime. The result was that only 17% of the Moroccans entitled to vote actually cast a ballot.

In the case of the Surinam and West Indians entitled to vote, about 37% did so.

The immigrant voters showed a strong preference for the PvdA. In Rotterdam, 83.6% voted for the PvdA, and in Utrecht it was 87%. There were no clear differences among the nationalities.

It had been known before that among the Surinam and West Indian voters support for the PvdA was strong. This time 92% of them voted for the social democratic party. □

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# Biggest demonstration ever for abortion rights

ON INTERNATIONAL Women's Day over 100,000 people, mostly women, demonstrated in Washington, D.C., to keep abortion safe and legal. A week later in Los Angeles, on March 16, another 30,000 marched in defence of abortion rights. The three-mile long march in Washington was composed of contingents from most of the Eastern states and from many college campuses. People arrived by 400 chartered buses, by train, car and even airplane. It was the largest demonstration in support of women's rights since the July 9, 1978, rally, which was crucial to winning an extension date for the Equal Rights Amendment campaign. (However the amendment itself was later defeated.)

DIANNE FEELEY

The Washington demonstration was the largest action ever held in defence of legal abortion. To date there have been 37 clinic bombings; some clinics have been forced to close after their buildings were damaged two or three times and they could no longer obtain insurance. Yet these are not the sort of terrorists Reagan is concerned about.

Over the last several years women seeking abortion — who must run a gauntlet of harassment from opponents of abortion as they enter major clinics across the country — have been protected by feminist-organized escort services. Clinics are particularly threatened on January 22, the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. Last year the National Organization for Women (NOW) held a 24-hour vigil at the clinics during the anniversary. The right wing also annually demonstrates in Washington, D.C. on that date. However TV commentators pointed out that the International Women's Day demonstration was twice as large as the right-wing one held two months earlier.

With 1.5 million abortions performed in the United States each year — 90 per cent of them performed within the first twelve weeks of gestation — it is clear that millions of women have exercised their right to abortion, and are prepared to defend themselves against the right-wing attacks. More than one sign at the march testified to this spirit.

Any women over 30 can remember what it was like when abortion was a back-alley operation and some women paid with their health or even their lives. Recalling the terror of an unwanted pregnancy and an illegal abortion, demonstrators carried coathangers coated with red paint.

The spirit of the demonstration was militant. Speakers emphasized how women had to rely on their own power and continue to "stay in the streets." They talked about the need to defeat the right wing not through clever maneuvers but by challenging them politically.

ANN MENASCHE

LOS ANGELES — Thirty thousand people, mostly women, braved torrential rains on March 16 to march in the west coast "March for Women's Lives", called by the National Organization for Women (NOW). The demonstrators demanded safe and legal abortion and birth control.

It was an impressive sight to see — a seemingly endless stream of umbrellas and purple, gold and white banners — colors of the old suffrage movement — printed with the names of the hundreds of organizations in attendance.

There were NOW chapters there from as far away as Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Hawaii and Fort Worth, Texas. Also present were the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, numerous chapters of Planned Parenthood, and women from campus groups, women's clinics, and several unions, including Service Employees International Union (SEIU), International Association of Machinists (IAM) and a group of striking TWA stewardesses.

At the rally, NOW President Eleanor Smeal expressed the feeling of everyone present, when she said "We won't be going back one inch". She referred to attempts to make abortion illegal again.

Both demonstrations were the first major response of the feminist

There was also a feeling of solidarity with women on an international scale, underlined by references to events in the Philippines, Nicaragua and South Africa. There was a sense that women are fighting against their oppression globally — despite the different forms that oppression takes — and that we are linked to this community of women.

This sense of sisterhood and solidarity was most clearly expressed in a contingent that linked the right-wing agenda on women with the right-wing agenda in Central America. The contingent changed slogans such as "Choice, yes, contras no, the right wing has got to go!" and "No bombings, no war, in women's clinics or El Salvador!"

Both demonstrations were called by NOW. In recent years NOW has sought to become more of a "mainstream" organization — with an emphasis on lobbying — but this demobilization has lost the organization members and weakened the movement. This demonstration was built by mobilizing the ranks of NOW and appealing to a grass-roots sentiment. It could be an important building block in revitalizing the movement in defence of women's rights. □

movement to the escalating right-wing attacks on abortion rights. The compulsory pregnancy forces, led by the Catholic Church hierarchy and Christian fundamentalists with the open support of President Reagan, have become increasingly violent and dishonest in their tactics in recent years.

Since the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1982, the women's liberation movement in the United States has been in a state of demoralization and demobilization. The leadership of NOW, along with the leaderships of other social movements of the oppressed and the trade unions, became more deeply entrenched in the Democratic Party, particularly around the 1984 Presidential elections. The marches in Washington D.C. and Los Angeles for abortion rights are evidence that things may be beginning to turn around again.

These significant demonstrations also show the strong pro-choice sentiment of the American population. In addition, they attest to NOW's continuing ability to mobilize large numbers of women in the streets for women's rights. Despite weaknesses in much of NOW's leadership, NOW remains a significant organization of the women's movement that cannot be ignored. □