

# International VIEWPOINT

ISSUE No 103

14 July 1986

12FF; £0.80; 1.50 US dollars



## Botha's battle wagon on slippery ground

The left that supported Cory Aquino

Belgium's massive workers' protests

**INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT**

Fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in conjunction with the French language *Inprecor*, which appears on alternate fortnights.

ISSN: 0294-2925

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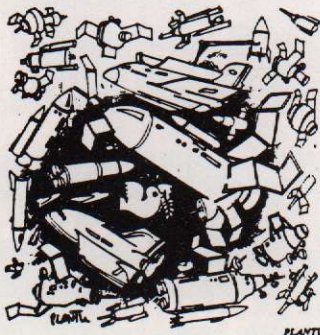
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# No IV next fortnight!

*INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT* will not appear again now until mid-September. As explained in issue No. 100, because of financial difficulties, we have had to cut two issues of the magazine, the one before the August vacation and one before Christmas. That seemed to us to be a way to minimize the effect of the cuts that we had to make. But it means that *IV* will not appear for nearly two months, which is a very long time in today's world. If there is a new war or revolution sometime in the next eight weeks, *IV* will not be there to report and comment on it.

We hope that we can overcome our financial difficulties quickly to avoid such a long gap and to expand our coverage. That is why we launched a fund drive and subscriptions campaign in our hundredth issue. There has been some response already. For example, a Canadian reader sent a cheque with the following note: "I'm very disturbed to hear of the financial problems facing *IV*. So, I am sending you a cheque for 25 dollars now and hopefully I'll do so again later in the year."

If we had a couple of hundred readers as enthusiastic as this our financial problems would be over. Ironically, our having to cut the next issue means that we will not be able to cover some important Canadian labor struggles until the fall.

Canada is only one of many countries that tend to get squeezed out. We are also unable to run a late-arriving article on changes in the situation in Northern Ireland, although the marching season of July and August may be a key test this year. Similarly we have had to put off an article on the meaning of Waldheim's victory in Austria.

Please do not forget *IV* during the summer break. So far, not many readers have been as forthcoming as our Canadian friend. And when we start publishing again, we will have to make a projection for the rest of the year. The number of contributions and new subscriptions we have received then will be the key to that.

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*IV*, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. Published by Presse-Edition-Communication (PEC) — Administration: 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. Directeur de publication: Christian Lamotte. Commission paritaire 64324. Imprime par Rotographie.

# New state of emergency assails the mass movement

UNDER THE national state of emergency decreed by the Botha government on June 12, several thousand leaders and activists from all components of the mass movement have been imprisoned for an unspecified period. This emergency rule has been used by Pretoria to perfect its repressive juridical arsenal. On June 20 two new laws were adopted by the presidential council: one extends the legal period of detention without trial from 14 to 180 days, and the other permits the authorities to declare "trouble zones" or regional states of emergency for a period of three months or more.

TONY ROUX

Through these repressive measures the government can put a quick brake on anti-apartheid activity, disorganizing the mass movement through massive arrests of its central leaders. The Pretoria regime thus intends to achieve a period of respite to try to unify its own ranks to face the political crises to come.

In so doing, it can count on near-impunity internationally because of the extreme complacency shown by the Western capitals toward the new decree. The West has scarcely gone beyond formal statements of position and verbal condemnations of the new repressive escalation. The European Economic Community (EEC) has refused to impose economic sanctions.

Since they have interests in South Africa and see no alternative to the apartheid regime, the capitalist powers are not going to get any tougher with Pretoria, except in so far as the solidarity movement supporting the struggles of the Black masses compels them to.

The South African regime did not succeed in pushing through the Coloured and Indian chambers of parliament the repressive measures that would have permitted them legally to suppress the commemorative demonstrations on the tenth anniversary of the Soweto riots on June 16, 1976. (1) It was therefore obliged to resort to a state of national emergency to prevent a public mobilization of the mass movement on this occasion. These measures, in contrast to those adopted in July 1985 and lifted a few months ago, apply to the entire country and not just to certain

regions. (2) They permit the police forces — without even a hint of a warrant — to arrest people and imprison them for 14 days; the imprisonment is renewable through simple notification of the prison officials and can be extended up to 180 days. Searches are authorized by day or night. The press is prohibited from publishing the names and places of detention of those arrested. And in the Port Elizabeth region a curfew has been imposed. The government, moreover, is encouraging informing on the most active anti-apartheid militants in the townships by promising pay-offs to informers.

## "Subversive commentary"

This emergency rule lays the press open to prosecution for any "subversive commentary." Evidently, it is the government itself that judges the subversive character of the articles, and an information bureau has been established for this purpose. Some South African newspapers have been seized, while most of them are practicing self-censorship so that they can continue publication. The foreign press is subjected to the same measures. Violations of the press laws include: "promotion of the objectives of illegal organizations; inciting the public to take part in a strike, a boycott, an illegal assembly, or any act of civil disobedience; incitement to break the state of emergency rules or to provoke or aggravate hosti-

lity in the public; weakening or undermining the confidence of the population in the purpose of the state of emergency; and encouraging disinvestment or the imposing of sanctions or foreign actions against the republic." (3)

This repressive offensive was begun just a few days before the planned demonstrations and the one-day general strike that were called for June 16, 1986, by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC).

Ten years ago, the riots in the township of Soweto marked a definite turning point in the political situation, which had been characterized until then by a downturn in the nationalist movement since the 1960s. The Soweto uprising demonstrated the enlistment of the township youth in the fight against racial segregation in education and against apartheid in general. The agitation lasted more than a year and was finally ended only by a repression that left more than 600 dead. But the Soweto riots, like the 1973 workers' strikes in Durban, were already establishing the premises for a renewal of the Black protest movement, which would appear more clearly at the beginning of the 1980s.

Ten years later, after two years of regular waves of anti-apartheid mobilizations, the anniversary of the riots was politically highly charged. The commemorative demonstrations and the June 16 general strike were going to illustrate the progress made since 1976 by the mass movement, both in its greater ability to mobilize and organize and in the forms of its public activity. Coming in the wake of the strike of nearly two million workers on May 1, June 16 would mark a significant step in the Black proletariat's entry onto the political terrain. (4) This date would also test the progress made in unifying the different components of the mass movement. The June 16 general strike was, in fact, the first action of national magnitude called jointly by the independent trade-union movement and the civic anti-apartheid organizations. The repression pre-

1. The elections for these fake parliaments were massively boycotted by the electorate in the communities concerned. Powerless and unrepresentative, these structures were condemned in advance and are barely functioning.

2. During these periods of regional states of emergency beginning in the middle of 1985, thousands of anti-apartheid activists were arrested and hundreds of others were killed during the repression.

3. 'Le Monde,' June 15-16, 1986.

4. See "COSATU targets one million members," 'International Viewpoint,' No. 101, June 23, 1986.



*Demonstrating against apartheid (DR)*

vented the full application of this test and thus deprived the people of an important experience of struggle. The strike was also the most immediate motivation for the imposition of the state of emergency.

Despite the ban on all of the anticipated demonstrations, the June 16 general strike was broadly supported by the Blacks through boycotts of transportation and work. Soweto on that day, like many other townships, was a dead city. But because of the state of emergency the general strike was not an active strike. For the moment that is the only success that the regime can claim.

The relatively massive character of the arrests that followed the imposition of the state of emergency is indicative of the goal sought by Pretoria: to deprive the mass movement of its leadership for a period of time so as to disorient it and sow confusion in the ranks. This explains why the repressive wave at the onset struck at all the anti-regime sectors: the independent Black trade-union movement, the anti-apartheid civic organizations and the progressive religious milieu.

This was made clear by the first list of arrested people published by the South African daily, *The Argus*, on June 12. It is a mixture of names of many national and regional leaders of the COSATU unions, of officials of the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) and of clerics belonging to the South African Council of Churches.

Among the chief leaders imprisoned since June 12 are Phiroshaw Camay, general secretary of CUSA, who has since been released; Jay Naidoo, general secretary of COSATU; Frank Chikane and Rashid Saloojee, UDF officials; Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of the Metal and Allied

Workers' Union; and the Rev. Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, general secretary of the South African Conference of Catholic Bishops. Several leaders of the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), including its general secretary, were also imprisoned. COSATU, moreover, noted that more than 70 of its national and regional officials had been arrested, along with several hundred members.

Press censorship makes it difficult to determine exactly the number of prisoners, but it is generally estimated at about 3,000 to 4,000.

### **Regime's institutions seriously challenged**

The imposition of the state of emergency throughout the country, however, is not a panic-stricken reaction of a government driven into a corner by protests. The recent confrontations in Crossroads township near Durban and the threat of a popular insurrection around the June 16 demonstrations are the justifications given by the representatives of Pretoria for resorting to a state of emergency. (5) These are only pretexts.

Of course, during this last year, the regime has seen its institutions seriously challenged in the areas where Blacks live. The municipal councils that it installed to administer the townships have become the target of mass Black denunciation. Most of the Black council members have been forced to resign or to seek the protection of the South African police. In some places the mobilization of the anti-apartheid civic associations has become so broad that the local structures (area committees) have appeared to take charge of the administrative tasks in the townships

that were previously undertaken by the defunct municipal councils.

Pretoria undoubtedly wanted to reassert its power and the authority of its institutions in the townships. To this end, the police manipulated the recent confrontations in Crossroads and the vigilantes' actions in other shanty towns in order to divide the Black communities and to try to re-establish some of the regime's collaborators. (6) Then too, Pretoria, looked askance at the unification process going on in the struggle, of which the Soweto riot commemorations would be a high point.

But the Botha government did not have its back to the wall. By itself, the level of development reached by the mass movement does not explain the recourse to the state of emergency. This is all the more true since the anti-apartheid mobilization is marked by regional differences that tend to be concealed today by the national character of the state of emergency.

The attitude of the Pretoria government has also to be seen in the context of the regime's own internal difficulties and the complacency of the Western powers, which Pretoria is capable of turning to its own advantage. In the last few years a part of the National Party's (NP) traditional base has been eroded. As soon as the Botha government made a show of modifying some of the apartheid measures that were deemed inadequate for the new needs of capitalist development in the country, part of the NP electoral base turned to the Herstig National Party or to the Conservative Party.

In the last few months there has been a spectacular advance in the

5. These confrontations between the inhabitants of different shanty towns in the Crossroads area in the last few weeks have left tens of thousands homeless and several dozen dead. In these conflicts groups of conservative Blacks living in the old sections of Crossroads clashed with progressive activists from the outlying shanty towns. Many witnesses vouch for the support given by the South African police to the conservative groups who initiate these confrontations. Beyond this manipulation and intervention by the South African forces to stir up divisions, the confrontations in Crossroads reflect numerous antagonisms between the opposing camps: conservatives against progressives, but also the old authorities against the young rebels and long-time residents against squatters.

6. The phenomenon of vigilantes appeared in several townships toward the end of last year. These groups called by different local names (Pakhatis, Amabutho, A-team), but known generically as vigilantes, are conservative militias that attack demonstrations and civic association activists in the townships. Enjoying tolerance, even the direct support of the white police, these groups are recruiting especially from the circles surrounding the Black municipal councilors and the Black police. They have been responsible for the assassinations of many anti-apartheid activists.

popularity of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging [AWB — Afrikaner Resistance Movement] of Eugene Terreblanche, who has adopted the NP's traditional themes and is demanding the establishment of an Afrikaner republic along the lines of the good old days of the Boer colonization. So the AWB managed to disrupt and even to sabotage several public NP meetings during May. This organization has at its disposal an armed militia, "Brandwag" (Sentinel), and enjoys the complicity of the regime. (7)

The Botha government is also under crossfire from this extreme right wing on the one side, and on the other, from the advocates of a rapid reform of apartheid, which is seen as a capitalist solution to the regime's present crisis by some South African employers. The South African government, then, is under multiple contradictory pressures that work against its cohesion. Its policies illustrate this state of affairs. At the same time that it was decreeing the state of emergency, the government was proposing to abolish some sections of the "pass laws."

The Botha government's tactic seemed to be to prevent these timid modifications from dividing the dominant white community and from opening breaches that could benefit the mass anti-apartheid movement.

Imposing the state of emergency may illustrate the repressive capacity of the South African regime, but it hardly constitutes proof of political strength. Rather, in the climate of confrontation with the Black masses, this measure reflects the difficulties the regime is having in laying out a coherent strategy to meet all of the contradictory pulls the Botha government has to accommodate — such as the demands by some factions in the capital to lift apartheid, international diplomatic pressure for self-reform of the regime, resistance to any change on the part of the white petty-bourgeoisie. It is not likely that the government will be strengthened by this situation. The contradictions riddling it can hardly be eased by this repressive interlude.

However, the outcome of this situation depends largely on the way the mass movement comes through this new ordeal. The most basic task of the solidarity movement is to break through the wall of silence that Pretoria has built up around itself, with the complicity of the international bourgeoisie. □

7. Last March, the AWB organized a meeting including Connie Mulder, a former member of the government who had been considered a possible successor to the prime minister in 1978, but who withdrew following a scandal known as Muldergate.

## An inglorious victory for the Socialist Party

**THERE HAS** hardly been a national election in recent times in Western Europe where a ruling party has had such a clear field as the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) did in the parliamentary elections of June 22.

Its only rival on the left were the splinters of a shattered and discredited Communist Party. On the right, it faced shipwrecked bourgeois centrists trying to find a new footing and the rightist rearguard led by Fraga Iribarne.

**GERRY FOLEY**

In this context, the big victory of the PSOE so celebrated in much of the international capitalist press was not so glorious. *Combate*, the paper of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (Spanish state section of the Fourth International), commented in its June 23 issue:

"The victory of the PSOE on June 22 is politically much weaker than the one in 1982 [when it came to power]. Then it was based on the strength of the illusions that the overwhelming majority of the left had in its promise of 'change.' In these last elections, it was based on the force of disillusion, resignation and the lack of alternatives, in the political framework created by the defeat of the referendum against NATO on May 12. It is true that about nine million people voted for the PSOE to make sure that 'everything stays the same' — a number similar to the pro-NATO vote in the referendum.

"But it is not all going to stay the same. The PSOE thinks that it holds two trump cards for continuing the road of modernizing Spanish capitalism — which has been built on the basis of unemployment, attacks on social welfare, political repression and corruption in public administration. One is sustained and stable economic recovery. The other is the weakening, marginalization and dispersion of the social movements.

"In all probability they will lose their first trump at some point during the life of the next parliament, when the expected recession in the international capitalist economy hits. . . . As for the second, that will have to be decided, and we will see who wins.

It is not the parliamentary relationship of forces that will decide that. It will be decided by the capacity and determination to struggle of the social movements, in particular their more militant, tenacious and imaginative sections."

The lack of enthusiasm for the PSOE was pointed up by the fact that where there were alternatives, they stole the social democrats' thunder. In the Basque country, the revolutionary nationalists who call for an independent Basque state, Herri Batasuna, made major gains. The same was true of the very tepid nationalists in Catalonia, the CiU. In Andalucia, the IU slate [United left, dominated by the official CP], headed by the charismatic and heterodox former Communist mayor of Cordoba, Julio Anguita, rolled up an impressive score, getting about 20 per cent of the vote.

### Revolutionary nationalists gain ground

The PSOE vote went down a bit in the part of the Basque nation included in the Basque Autonomous Area. But the big loser was the bourgeois Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which has been in a pact with the anti-nationalist PSOE. For the first time it got a minority of the nationalist vote, and found the revolutionary nationalists of Herri Batasuna gaining on it.

The Euzkadiko Ezkerra group also increased its vote significantly. It has its origin in ETA [the Basque revolutionary nationalist movement], but moved to the right in the name of

seeking socialist political solutions.

In Navarra, historically a Basque area not included in the Basque Autonomous Area, the PNV collapsed, and Herri Batasuna went way out ahead as the major nationalist and left party in the province.

The Basque section of the LCR, the Liga Komunista Iraultzailea [LKI — Revolutionary Communist League] campaigned independently for a vote for Herri Batasuna. *Combate* commented:

"We feel especially happy to have contributed even modestly to the electoral success of Herri Batasuna, which was without doubt the best news of these elections."

*Combate* attributed the success of the official CP-dominated coalition in Andalusia mainly to the charisma of Anguita "who treated his fellow candidates, in particular those of the PCPE [Moscow loyalists returning to the fold of the official party] with Olympian disdain."

As for the IU results overall, the LCR paper said:

"The IU's results are poor in themselves and in comparison with what the PCE [Communist Party of Spain] got in 1982, which was a disastrous vote."

Moreover, the PCE failed to achieve its "central objective," which was "to make the IU the political expression of the anti-NATO vote in the referendum. . . . Here there are two fundamental aspects. The first is that the IU with its 930,000 votes cannot seriously claim to represent more than a section of the movement." Secondly, "the IU's seven deputies . . . will be in a poor position to manipulate movements that were not born yesterday, and whose objectives, organizations and traditions of mobilization have little to do with the IU, except for the Workers Commissions, which is a special problem."

Overall, *Combate* wrote, the election results confirmed the decision of the LCR to call for a boycott outside the Basque country:

"All calculations indicate that about four million of the anti-NATO voters were to the left of the PSOE. The slates that placed themselves in this camp however got less than 2 million votes on June 22. Even assuming that the PSOE regained a lot of these votes, it is clear that many hundreds of thousands of people in the anti-NATO movement opted for abstention, and a part of them — the number is hard to estimate, but it must be large — abstained for the same reasons we did, that is that none of the slates outside the Basque country deserved militant and radical votes, and this time the conditions did not exist to offer an effective alternative." □

## Belgian workers take on the Martens-Gol government

TO EVERYONE'S surprise, after four years of an extremely harsh austerity policy that has cost workers 13 per cent of their purchasing power, the rightist government led by Wilfried Martens and Jean Gol — a coalition of Christian democrats and liberals — emerged the winner in the legislative elections of October 13, 1985. The four parties of the governmental coalition together advanced by 2.2 per cent and gained two seats. (1)

This was a political defeat for the workers' movement and, especially, a new setback for the leadership of the Confederation of Belgian Workers [FGTB — Federation generale du travail de Belgique], which has Socialist Party (SP) politics. This leadership has not succeeded in changing the government's policies through extra-parliamentary mobilizations, and its electoral strategy has failed as well.

### FRANK SLEGERS

In fact, the FGTB leadership has supported the plan of the two socialist parties, the Flemish (SP) and the Francophone (PS). The scheme was to "nibble away" at the Christian democracy by opening their election lists to Christian activists and, in the case of the PS, to militants of the Walloon movement. The goal was to take the liberals' place in the governmental coalition with the Christian Democratic parties, in order to continue the austerity policy at the expense of the workers.

The FGTB leadership gave its blessing to this project. The Walloon interregional council of the FGTB had even entered into a common program with the PS based on this view. And in order not to impede the return of the PS to the government, the FGTB leadership "froze" any workers' struggles for a year and a half.

It might be expected that once the Martens-Gol government had won in the elections, it would feel stronger and would step up its attacks on the workers. But, paradoxically, this has not happened. The government, and especially its prime minister, the Flemish Christian Democrat Wilfried Martens, has gone on a campaign announcing that after the sacrifices will come the benefits. Martens had declared in particular in September 1985 that, "we have traveled

three-quarters of the way." There was light at the end of the tunnel. The Christian trade-union confederation [CSC — Confederation des syndicats chretiens], which is linked to the Christian Democratic parties, followed suit, demanding that the future government build on the results of the previous government to fight unemployment, maintain purchasing power, safeguard social security and so on.

Brandishing these demands the Christian trade union waged an unparalleled campaign for the candidates on the Christian Democratic lists who directly represented the Christian workers' movement. It seems that this message was heard by the electorate, since, although the governmental coalition advanced as a whole, its parts advanced unequally. The Christian Democrats throughout the country and the Francophone liberals advanced, but the Flemish liberals suffered a major setback. The latter party is the one most closely identified with austerity.

The weight of the Christian

1. The four parties of the governmental coalition are the Social Christian Party (PSC — Parti social chretien) and its Flemish equivalent, the CVP, which belong to the Christian Democratic tendency, and the Liberal Reform Party (PRL — Parti reformateur liberal), which is Francophone, and its Flemish equivalent, the PVV.

workers' movement in the new government is therefore greater and, at the same time, the pressure on the leadership of this movement from its own rank and file has increased. And, in the meanwhile, looming on the horizon are the "social elections" of 1987, the elections in the workplaces that measure the relationship of forces between the two large trade-union confederations.

Furthermore, the two socialist parties have advanced by 3.3 per cent and by six seats during these elections. The small parties, especially the linguistic community parties, were the losers in the October 13, 1985, elections. Immediately after the elections the general feeling in the factories was not one of defeat, but of annoyance with the "imbeciles" who let themselves be fooled into voting for the promises of the Christian Democrats.

The weakness of the new government was not long in appearing. Although it was, in principle, a continuation of the preceding government, the negotiations leading to its formation took a long time, above all because of the frictions between the liberals and the Christian Democrats. The employers moved onto the front lines in the battle to influence these positions, for example by disputing the idea that three-quarters of the course had been run.

At the end of November 1985, a governmental agreement was reached that in the next four years the budget deficit should drop from 11.5% to 7% of the gross national product. The main push would be made in 1986 and 1987, getting big savings by holding down wages, reforming social-security and dismantling social services.

However, the agreement did not include specific provisions. In order to make it concrete, more negotiations were necessary within the government. Its first step was to ask parliament for special powers "to take any measures necessary any time that exceptional circumstances jeopardized competitiveness" and to put public finances "in order." The special powers were voted at the end of March 1986, but not until May, eight months after the election, was the government able to give concrete form to an austerity plan that would pass the cost of the crisis on to the workers.

While taking the time necessary to reach internal agreement, the government was counting on the unions taking a wait-and-see attitude. The unions did not disappoint it.

In fact, on December 3, 1985, when the leaderships of the two confederations each discussed govern-

mental agreement, the attitude of wait-and-see set in. The CSC did not reject the agreement out of hand but asked for negotiations. Its newspaper commented: "The train is the party; the drivers are well-known: the MOC [Mouvement ouvrier chrétien — Christian Workers' Movement] is happy that its representatives in the government and in parliament have been reinforced, thanks to the elections. It is counting on its representatives to push its opinion on the travel plans, wherever necessary; the Christian workers' movement will continue to watch out that the policy indispensable for recovery should not lose its equally indispensable human face."

### Refusal to lead a general offensive

As for the FGTB, it rejected the governmental agreement but announced: "We are not going to move for the moment, we will wait until the unpopular economic measures amounting to about 225 thousand million francs (about 5 million US dollars) begin to come out. Until the social-service welfare recipients and the workers have lost their 2% by the index, until those who have opted for early retirement see that they must pay 40,000 francs (889 US dollars) more in taxes, until households see their unemployment benefits diminish. In short, until the bad intentions of this government come out into the open." The FGTB therefore refused to open up a general offensive against the government.

In industry, the workers showed throughout this period a largely intact capacity to resist. As early as November 1985, a few weeks after

the elections, the Limbourg miners had gone on strike against the plans of the coal-mine management to eliminate jobs. They won a provisional withdrawal of the plans, and a social-pact arrangement was set up, very much on the quiet, between the coal-mine management, the government and the trade union.

Some other sectors of the working class subsequently entered the fight, particularly the railroad workers at the end of January. They did not, however, form a common trade-union front, since the Christian trade union actively opposed this "premature" strike in a sector where there is a long tradition of unity between the two unions.

At Caterpillar in Charleroi, the workers in a joint trade-union front managed to block the introduction of variable wages. A four-week-long strike at the Jemeppe-Kessales steel plant was finally sold out by the trade-union leadership. We should note in particular a four-day strike against "flexible hours" at the Van Hool bus factory, a strike of a week and a half at the Honda plant in Ghent against the arbitrary behaviour of the bosses, a strike lasting several days at Tubemeuse (a steel plant in Liege) to defend jobs, a four-week strike at the FN armaments factory in Liege over a contract that ended in a partial victory, and the list goes on and on. But this will to fight on the part of the working class has not been sufficient to solve the problems presented by the general offensive prepared by the government.

Because of the policies of the trade-union leadership, a series of mobilizations against the previous Martens-Gol government failed to make it back off, even though the public-services strike in September 1983 did obtain some concessions. In this situation, marked as it is by the

*Strikes and demonstrations persisted in Belgium throughout May (DR)*



## Martens' austerity plan

THE AUSTERITY plan is very detailed and consists of measures that directly or indirectly hit every sector of the working class. Here are some examples:

- Public investment will be cut by 13,200 million Belgian francs (293 million US dollars). Most notably, this means less spending on the economic infrastructure such as road-building, ports and so on.
- Reductions in the budget for the railways, post, telecommunications, urban transport, ship-building, school-building and so on. In all of these areas there will be a knock-on effect for other enterprises that depend on these sectors.
- Proposed job losses are 4,700 in the mines, 10,000 in the textile industry, 1,500 in ship-building and 3,000 in the steel industry.
- In 1986, the total salary bill for civil servants has to be reduced by 1.75 per cent compared to 1984 levels, and reduced by a further 1 per cent in 1987.
- The profitable state-run telecommunications industry (RTT) has to immediately return 1 per cent of its profits to the state. All subsidies to RTT have been abolished, the aim being to eventually privatize it.
- In the hospitals, 6,000 beds are to be abolished.
- All new vacancies in the education system that have been opened up since 1985 are to be frozen.
- Benefits for those taking early retirement that have already been fixed will be more heavily taxed and new benefits will be reduced.
- All retirement pensions are to be lowered. The age of retirement for women is to be raised from 60 years to 65 years.
- Maternity benefits are to be reduced by 10 per cent.
- The Martens' austerity plan is not even going to leave the dead in peace — it is proposed that social security benefits will no longer be paid to help with funeral expenses.

effects of the crisis and of unemployment, it is illusory to bank on a spontaneous explosion capable of out-flanking the trade-union leaderships and setting in motion a new dynamic toward a general strike. More than in the past, the militant activists have a tendency to turn toward their trade-union organizations, hoping to create in them the conditions for the remobilization of the working class.

### A plan of action against Martens-Gol

The situation in the trade-union movement is extremely complex. On the one hand, the FGTB is officially fighting the government, but it cannot manage to develop a plan that can unify its forces. On the other hand, the CSC leadership supports the government, but it is forced to put some conditions on this support that are contradictory to the government's plans.

At the end of 1985, the FGTB leadership, facing the prospect of four more years of the Martens-Gol government with the socialist parties in opposition, began to speak of a plan of action against Martens-Gol. The Socialist Workers Party [POS — Parti ouvrier socialiste, the Belgian section of the Fourth International], without sowing any illusions whatever about the Socialist trade-union leadership's motivations or its willingness to follow through, decided to take advantage of the prospects opened up

by the willingness to act shown by a part of the trade-union leadership.

An important issue for remobilizing the FGTB is a policy of an outstretched hand offered by the Socialist trade-union's leadership to the leadership of the CSC, in the public services and throughout the union movement. This reflects the understanding by the POS of the vital importance of a common trade-union front for the success of the struggles. Such a tactic of the outstretched hand is based on the fact that the CSC will encounter difficulties in maintaining its support for the government.

The POS proposes and advocates this tactic to the most conscious workers and trade unionists. This involves an uphill fight against ultra-left and spontaneist reactions which are rooted in a certain tradition in the Belgian workers' movement, which are reflected in the political weaknesses of the workers' vanguard.

At the beginning of January 1986, the POS addressed an open letter to the CSC urging it to grasp the hand tendered by the FGTB and at the same time emphasizing the opposition inside the CSC to the leadership's policies. For example, the newspaper of the Francophone Christian white-collar workers stated: "As soon as the governmental program is made public, it will be necessary immediately to make a tough-minded analysis, to evaluate the degree of the responsiveness to the trade-unions' positions and to get started with the negotiations and actions to which the trade-union leaderships are committed. Four years of deception

are enough."

But on February 4, 1986, the CSC National Committee made no decision to take immediate action. In failing to do that the the CSC leadership provided the room the government needed to get special powers from parliament. Moreover, the CSC was putting its bets on social-pact negotiations with the employers planned for April 1986, which concerned private enterprises. Thus, the CSC was setting the stage for division, by separating the social services beneficiaries and public workers — the government's prime targets — from the private sector. But it was not yet all over, since the CSC leadership, while waiting for negotiations with the government, declared its hostility to the measures relating to youth, the unemployed, pensioners and so on. The CSC labeled these points "unacceptable," but the government did not seem inclined to make concessions that would weaken its internal cohesion.

For its part, the FGTB failed to come out with a real plan for mobilization. Youth, women and pensioners were supposed to serve as "shock troops," according to a union official. Then the FGTB public-services federation undertook a real mobilization by bringing together in Brussels several hundred trade-union officials on February 7 and printing 16,000 copies of a leaflet for activists to distribute. But the trade-union federations in the private sector did not seem ready to move, and were banking on social-pact negotiations with the employers and the government. Also, the Walloon FGTB and the Francophone PS continued their electoral agreement and launched a campaign that could only repel the CSC and give the Flemish Socialists a pretext to abstain.

Nevertheless, the FGTB congress, held on March 21-22, adopted a proposal for a national demonstration for May 31. While this proposal was modest in relation to the stakes — especially since the FGTB did not propose any other action while waiting for the demonstration — the decision for the action was nonetheless a defeat for those inside the FGTB who favored passivity or "falling back on the Walloon country". The latter strategy, advocated by the FGTB in Liege, fitted into the framework of an alliance with a Walloon modernist wing of the bourgeoisie.

But this strategy was being increasingly questioned inside the Walloon FGTB by leaders who have concluded from the past defeats that unity between the FGTB and the CSC, and between the Flemish and Francophone workers, is necessary to beat the government. This was true, notably, of the FGTB leader-





On May 31, over 150,000 marched against the Martens-Gol government (DR)

ship in Charleroi. A national FGTB demonstration was a move toward these positions. But this demonstration was to be bypassed by the evolution of the struggle, in which the FGTB's hesitations and divisions would be very detrimental.

After obtaining special powers from parliament at the end of March 1986, the government withdrew into a "conclave" to translate into concrete terms the budget cuts provided for in the governmental declaration. With successive leaks, the workers became aware of the levels of the attacks, and the temperature of the working class rose rapidly. In mid-April the Limbourg miners spontaneously went out on strike in reaction to the news that the government was planning to close three of the five coal mines still operating and to reduce by half the number of workers employed in the mines.

Now, the province of Limbourg, where Belgian mining activity is concentrated, has one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe: one worker out of four has no job. After a few days, the union leaders, who did not want this strike because they did not believe that it was possible to save jobs in the mines, recognized the strike, and it rapidly brought pressure to bear on the government. But on May 4, after two weeks, the leadership called for a return to work. After

this stab in the back, some of the miners held out for two more weeks. But finally the trade-union leaders succeeded in breaking the strike, just when elsewhere in the country working-class mobilization was mounting. The disapproval in the unions of the attitude of the miners' trade-union leaders was reflected by a public appeal made by several federations in other industries condemning the miners' federation and calling for recognition of the strike. That constituted a violation of individual union jurisdiction rarely seen in the history of the Belgian trade-union movement.

### A second front opens

At the beginning of May, when the government was still in "conclave" and the miners were still on strike, the public-services unions opened a second front against Martens-Gol. The May 1 demonstrations served as a springboard. On May 6 the strike called jointly by the FGTB and CSC was a resounding success. Public transport stopped, and the common front between Socialists and Christians was strengthened. The strike was also massive in the post office, telecommunications, at SABENA [the

Belgian airline], at RTBF and BRT (radio-television), in state-owned marine transport, in Walloon education — in short, in all sectors seriously threatened by privatization and lay offs. The creation of a united trade-union front was a trump card. Everyone knew that they could not stop there. The railworkers of Charleroi wanted to continue the strike. At the time of the FGTB's cross-sectoral meeting at Charleroi on May 6 protests were being raised everywhere. The activists said the demonstration planned for May 31 was too late. The Charleroi FGTB bureau voted for a 48-hour national strike.

On May 7, more than 15,000 teachers in the Catholic network demonstrated in Brussels. This was a hard blow for the government. During the night of May 12, the railworkers relaunched their movement. The strike spread rapidly out from Charleroi. The two rail unions, those of the FGTB and the CSC, recognized the strike and decided on a 48-hour national strike beginning Thursday, May 15. The movement accelerated rapidly, with strikes all over the place — from postal workers to telecommunications workers. The FGTB leadership issued an appeal for solidarity by the private sector with the public services. It was a vague slogan, but it nevertheless gave official cover to the activists to initiate actions in

## Nicaragua solidarity gets a boost in Belgium

ON MAY 10 this year the Socialist Belgian workers' federation, the FGTB, organized a festival in solidarity with Nicaragua. It was a great success, bringing together hundreds of people — mostly trade unionists, including those from the important industrial sectors. One of the union militants involved in the solidarity work, Philippe Grignard, a delegate from the FGTB at Oterpilla, spoke about the work brigade he had organized to Nicaragua.

Nicaraguan solidarity work has depended for some years on a small group of committed activists, but now it has been revived with the support of a federation of more than a million members. The president of the FGTB, A. Vandebroucke, spoke at the festival and his presence was a sign of the progress of the campaign. It is even more significant given that the social-democratic International and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions are divided between the (barely disguised) Reagan supporters and those supporting Nicaragua. Below are some extracts from Vandebroucke's speech, which opens up the road in Belgium for an extensive campaign among FGTB militants.

“Because it has chosen its own path, Nicaragua has been penalized by a total financial and economic boycott and by a bloody war on its frontiers. A war that has already cost the lives of more than 12,000 people. And all that with the open support of the United States' government. What sin has this tiny country committed — which has scarcely three million inhabitants — to have stirred up such an anger in the most powerful nation in the world?”

“Is it the agrarian reform, which has given the small peasants and the agricultural workers land that was occupied by the Somoza family and its friends, Americans and others? Or is it the investments in education and health care, crowned by a massive, successful literacy campaign? Is it the democratization of political, economic and social life, characterized by free elections and the participation in decision-making by the trade unions and other mass organizations? Or perhaps it is the pursuit of a non-aligned foreign policy, the fight for fair prices [in the world market] and for a solution to the enormous debt burden?”

“This does not mean that we want to paint Nicaragua as being the model for the third world or for the socialist movement. Our solidarity is therefore a critical solidarity. Thus, we have a critical approach to the declaration of the state of emergency last October. Certainly, we understand the circumstances leading to this decision. And, in fact, we should emphasize that — unlike many other Latin American countries — this is not a state of emergency with a curfew and with special courts. But rights such as the right to strike, the right to freedom of expression and the right to meet are, for us, fundamental.

“We therefore insist to the Nicaraguan government that it should show its democratic intentions by relieving the pressure that there is today on these rights. That is why it is good that, in a spirit of critical solidarity, the FGTB is holding out its hands to Nicaragua. This is also why it is useful that we try to put into practice concrete aid projects in collaboration with the big trade union organizations in Nicaragua. This is a sign that Nicaraguan people can count on the involvement of women and men who know that the principles for which they are fighting are also, in large part, our own.”

the private sector wherever possible, and especially in the large metallurgical plants in Walloon. A demonstration of 10,000 workers in the central region served as the catalyst for a general strike there that would last until the end of May.

The temperature rose while the government kept on mulling over its plans, the bourgeois newspapers lost patience and the stock market dropped. The workers sensed that victory was possible.

In this context, on Thursday, May 22, the FGTB National Bureau met. The public-services strike was hardening. In Mons-Borinage it was general. In the central region a cross-sectoral general strike was developing, private and public together. On that Thursday and Friday, the big Walloon private industries went on strike for 48 hours with the public sector. Flanders was rather late in

beginning to act in the private sector, but there too things began to move.

That same morning, Marcel Schoeters, president of the Antwerp FGTB, offered before 8,000 demonstrators to go “to Brussels” to propose a national cross-sectoral strike of 48 to 72 hours as a prelude to the May 31 demonstration.

This constituted a firm and unifying battle cry for the whole FGTB in place of the vague orders that left it up to each regional section and each sector to decide. But Gillon, the “boss” of the Liege metal workers and an advocate of “falling back on the Walloon country” came out against this sort of battle cry. When Vandebroucke, the FGTB president, suggested moving in the direction of a common trade-union front and publicly inviting the CSC to participate in the May 31 demonstration, Gillon threatened to walk out. At a

moment when the national leadership of the CSC was most under pressure from mobilizations, the FGTB leadership remained paralyzed.

However, on Thursday, May 27, the CSC general council could not resist the pressure from the many regional federations and unions opposed to the government's plan. Jef Houthuys, the right-wing president of the Christian confederation, and the national leadership of the CSC were compelled to distance themselves from the government's measures. They demanded an emergency meeting of the government under the threat of generalizing the actions. Pressure was making itself felt from the Christian teachers and the Christian public-services federations, but also from various places in the private sector where the common trade-union front was taking shape at the base. Moreover, the government's attacks against the unemployed, women and social welfare recipients in general were in contradiction to the CSC's insistence on an austerity policy, but one that spared the weakest.

The May 31 demonstration organized by the FGTB was so successful that none of the bourgeois newspapers could hide their surprise at the strength of the mobilization. (2) This demonstration, originally intended to be just the first step in a plan of action, in fact, came in the midst of social upheaval. The success of the mobilization reflected the workers' desire for united action. But it also reflected the workers' perception that victory was possible — the government was hesitating; the CSC was having difficulties in maintaining unflagging support for the government's policies.

But it only took 24 hours after this historic demonstration for the FGTB leadership to break the momentum of the mobilization. From Monday, June 2 on, thousands of trade unionists were waiting for the word for a cross-sectoral national strike. That is what was needed — to strike while the iron was hot, to widen the rifts between the CSC and the government, not to let the public-service workers wear themselves out in the conflict. And that is just what was demanded by an official call from the central region of the FGTB, which had been involved in a cross-sectoral strike since May 22.

But the expected word did not come. The FGTB leadership decided on regional strikes, some to be on June 13 and others on June 20. Basically it was orienting toward negotiations. negotiations were begun all over the place: in education, the post office,

2. See 'International Viewpoint,' No. 101, June 23, 1986.

local transport, the railways and on the cross-sectoral level. The dynamic of the struggle was reversed. Instead of unification, there was division; instead of progress, retreat. And so the government and CSC leadership got a breathing space to patch up the dangerous breaches that had opened in their alliance. Vandenbroucke, the FGFB president, announced that he was giving the government two more weeks. Could the FGFB leaders really be thinking of launching the movement in the middle of the summer?

The government, however, is not yet in the clear. The CSC leadership has expressed its opposition to 17 of the government's measures. It remains to be seen how far the government can go in negotiations and still maintain its internal cohesion. The FGFB, whose goal continues to be the destabilization of the Martens-Gol cabinet, is pinning its hopes on the government's problems in this respect. It hopes to create favorable conditions for a negotiated return of the socialists to the government — perhaps even without elections. The situation remains unstable, and anything is still possible when the country returns to work in the fall.

The growth of struggles in recent months has considerably undermined the cohesiveness of the FGFB's trade-union apparatus. This weakening seems to be structural. Today this apparatus is far from demonstrating the power, the cohesion and the confidence that it exhibited for decades and which formed the framework within which the trade-union left has learned to act. The new relationship of forces offers new possibilities for the fighting trade unionists who have reacted intuitively, showing more initiative and audacity in action. But at the same time, the challenges facing this trade-union left are greater, and it cannot meet them simply through a spontaneous response.

In fact, because they are pre-occupied with solving the problems through action, the vanguard trade-union militants often underestimate the importance of being able to analyze situations beyond their own sectors. The trade-union left also neglects some other questions such as organizing struggles around precise demands and getting the active participation of the masses of workers. Especially they underestimate the importance of offering a political solution that can serve as a focus for the fight to unite the workers and their organizations. To be equal to today's tasks in the Belgian class struggle, the trade-union vanguard is going to have to resolve these questions by learning the lessons from this last wave of struggles. □

## How the right got back in

**PREMIER LUBBERS** managed to look a lot more credible in the election campaign than he is in fact. Lubbers' Christian Democratic-Liberal coalition has ruled the government in the last four years with a rough hand, and in the election campaign it was not shy about lying. Never before has a cabinet been hit by so many personal scandals involving ministers.

Nonetheless, heading the slate of the Christen Demokraties Appel [CDA — Christian Democratic Appeal, a Christian conservative party], Lubbers was able to score a decisive victory in the May 21 elections.

Lubbers' triumph was so great that the coalition government with the "free enterprise" liberal Volskpartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie [VVD — People's Party for Freedom and Democracy] will be able to remain in office until 1990. The slogan "let Lubbers finish the job" became a reality.

### RICHARD BASTIAANS

The left vote overall did not go down in these elections, but nonetheless the left took some hard blows. In comparison with four years ago, the relationship between the left and right vote remained the same. But the runner-up in the elections, the Partij van de Arbeid [PvdA, the social democrats], did not make its gains through attracting disillusioned former supporters of the government parties.

Rather, the PvdA made its gains at the expense of the more radical small-left parties. The Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN) suffered an historic defeat. In one blow it lost all three of its seats, and for the first time since 1918 it is not represented in the parliament.

The PvdA will make an evaluation of its election defeat (since although they gained votes, they did not achieve their goal of getting into the government). The party leadership has already given an advance instalment on its post mortem. That is, it says that a change of course is not needed. The path that it marked out can still be followed, the path of not polarizing against the government but of building up the party's credibility as a potential party of government.

The PvdA has thus already come out with a preliminary conclusion while the negotiations over the formation of the cabinet are underway. So, it does not matter what the government goes ahead and does.

It is obvious that another Lubbers government is coming, Lubbers II. Undoubtedly it will carry out a new wave of austerity measures. The right's election campaign very much resembled the one conducted last year by the Belgian Christian Democratic head of government, Martens. Like his Belgian counterpart, Lubbers laid the groundwork for his election victory a year before.

Lubbers started the 1986 election campaign by handing out a number of presents. The lowest benefits were in-



creased a bit. Last year, unemployment dropped, for the first time since 1979. Even youth unemployment went down. Lubbers promised to bring unemployment down to 500,000 in the coming year. The present total is still 730,000.

Both government parties, moreover, promised to maintain the buying power of the lowest-wage earners and those entitled to benefits.

Lying to get elected is nothing special for the right. There is no guarantee whatever that the promises will be kept. Everything indicates that Lubbers will step up his hard-line rule. Without taking account of the economic decline, the CDA and the VVD had made at least 16,000 million guilders (about 8,000 million US dollars) in cutbacks over the last four years.

The disturbing thing is that Lubbers has succeeded, with his "no nonsense" government, in winning a base for the CDA for the first time among younger and nonreligious people. The CDA is not just a party that plays on Christian values but it has become a conservative party.

The CDA clearly predominates over its coalition partner, the VVD. Lubbers has been able to represent himself as a "statesman," as the man who got the country out of the slump. The "business-like" Lubbers has been able to seduce a lot of older and younger people alike to vote for the CDA.

The PvdA came in behind the CDA. In the official election programs for economic growth for the Netherlands, reducing unemployment, increasing buying power and so on, the differences between the government parties and the PvdA were minimal.

The question of reversing the steps taken by the Lubbers government — cutting into the living standards of large groups of people in the last years — was not raised. The PvdA offered no alternative.

Not everyone might have noticed that there was little difference in the election programs. But in these elections, the TV played a clarifying role. The TV debates between the government parties and the PvdA worked to the disadvantage of the social democrats.

The old man of the PvdA, Den Uyl (who headed up their slate), could not arouse any enthusiasm with his watered down version of Lubbers' program.

Well before the elections, Lubbers removed one of the last pitfalls, the cruise missile question. On November 1, despite four million names on a petition opposing the missiles, the parliament "democratically" decided to go ahead and deploy 48 cruise missiles in 1988.

After that decision, a big part of the peace movement (including the

## SAP campaign wins supporters



SAP election poster (DR)

THE SOCIALISTIESE Arbeiderspartij [SAP — Socialist Workers Party, Dutch section of the Fourth International], waged a successful campaign for the May 21 parliamentary elections.

The SAP polled 3,939 votes, three times as many as four years ago, the last time that it took part in a campaign for the parliamentary elections.

In the election campaign, the SAP increased its contacts and its reputation enormously, despite the intense competition we faced. There was a record number of 27 slates in these elections — nine of them put up by left parties.

The mass campaign that the SAP waged provoked a good number of responses. Membership increased by over 15 per cent. The number of subscriptions to the SAP's paper, *Klassenstrijd*, rose by nearly 20 per cent. And the party won new sympathizers. Some 100,000 election papers were

distributed plus another 100,000 leaflets. On top of this, 10,000 posters were put up.

The SAP's campaign was by no means limited to disseminating propaganda. The SAP conducted an offensive campaign in which such questions as the shorter working week, reversal of the austerity measures, opposition to nuclear power and cruise missiles, as well as support for a left government without the right, played a major role.

The success of this campaign has clearly strengthened the position of the SAP. The demonstration held just before the election against cruise missiles (see accompanying article) came about in particular because the SAP put its forces into it. The small-left parliamentary parties were too busy with their election campaign and played no role in building this demonstration.

In the actions that were carried out for a 36-hour week, the SAP had a strong presence in many factories. That won the SAP a lot of sympathy and aroused a lot of interest in the party, in particular because the SAP was the only party to do this.

The SAP also came to the fore as a party of action in the mobilizations against the US attack on Libya.

On June 1, the SAP held a meeting at which its whole election campaign was reviewed. The gathering radiated enthusiasm and confidence. Everyone was happy with the result, despite the fact that every one realized that this sort of work is a long-term thing. To get a socialist alternative off the ground takes more than just a few initiatives.

In any case, the SAP will now take an active part in the discussion of the reasons why the left suffered a defeat at the polls and how we can make sure that, four years from now, Lubbers will not get in again.

PvdA) announced that the time for demonstrations was over, and that it was now up to the voters. But precisely because of this position, the cruise missile question was to play little role in the elections. The real reason the social democrats pushed the cruise missile question into the background was to prepare the ranks of the PvdA for a possible failure to postpone a decision on deployment.

The PvdA leaders' objective was certainly not helped by a long-prepared mobilization held a few days before the election. The encirclement of the cruise missile base at Woensdrecht by about 10,000 people was a success, but no thanks to the social

democratic part of the movement.

Lubbers got his election victory by playing on the economic upturn. But in fact he also got a helping hand from the left. While the cruise missile issue was defused by the PvdA, the Chernobyl accident could have offered an opportunity to hit the right. Lubbers had just taken the decision to establish two new nuclear reactors. That was still fresh in everyone's memory. But nonetheless, the Chernobyl disaster did not spark off any reaction in the Netherlands. There was no mass demonstration. The left was too busy with the elections.

Lubbers' own fear that the Chernobyl catastrophe would cost him his

## THE ELECTION RESULTS

	1986		1982	
	%	Seats	%	Seats
PvdA	33.3	52	30.4	47
CDA	34.6	54	29.4	45
VVD	17.4	27	23.1	36
D 66	6.1	9	4.3	6
Small right	3.7	5	4.2	6
Small left:				
CPN	0.6	0	1.8	3
PPR	1.3	2	1.7	2
PSP	1.2	1	2.3	3

head did not come true.

The PvdA was so anxious to rule in conjunction with Lubbers' party that in the entire period leading up to the elections it did nothing to build up a militant base for another kind of government, by mobilizations and by supporting and reinforcing the struggles being waged.

The actions for a 36-hour week that were carried out in the election period were left very fragmented and received no support from the PvdA. Still worse, an action that had broken out in the Dutch railways just before the elections against a deterioration in working conditions was stabbed in the back by the PvdA.

The losses by the small-left parties came in this context. A lot of people who normally vote for the Pacifistische Socialistische Partij [PSP — Pacifist Socialist Party] and the CPN voted for the lesser evil. They thought that by voting for the PvdA they had a better

chance of getting rid of the CDA-VVD government.

Here, the PvdA's slogan of "vote for us in a new government" scored a success. But it could manage this only because the CPN and the PSP themselves clearly offered no alternative.

The divisions and conflicts within the small left also played a role. But the PSP and the CPN had undergone splits. Probably a common slate around a few main points could have limited the damage. But there still would have been losses. The fundamental problems were elsewhere.

In recent years, the CPN apparatus has largely disintegrated. But above all the role of the CPN and the PSP in action has steadily declined. They have become more and more parliamentary parties. That was also reflected in their campaigns.

Before the elections, they failed to wage an offensive campaign against the government's course, based on a

socialist alternative. Moreover, the small-left parties saw themselves as a sort of an appendage of the PvdA, that is, that they had to fight against the right along with the PvdA and that the social democrats needed the radical noise they make in parliament.

There was no aggressive campaign against a CDA-PvdA government, which was what the social democrats were out for. And thus, as small-left parties, which in any case would not get into the government, they dug their own grave because they encouraged people to "make their votes count."

The third small-left party, the Politieke Partij Radikalen [PPR — the Political Party of Radicals] lost less votes, among other things because they focused a lot of criticism on the PvdA's wish to rule the country jointly with the CDA.

The day after the elections, the index on the Amsterdam stock market went up by 12,000 million guilders. So the right sees the election results as a shot in the arm. Lubbers wants to finish his job, and now he can go about doing that.

But that does not mean that Lubbers can do whatever he likes. In recent years, at every turn the right had to face actions and resistance. As soon as a new economic recession hits and Lubbers drops his election promises, we can expect sharper and tougher confrontations. Even after this election victory, Lubbers won't be able to please everybody. A strong alternative to the right and to the PvdA must be built in the coming struggle. □

## Dim prospects for the right

A PARLIAMENTARY election is coming up in West Germany on January 25, 1987. Helmut Kohl and his government of Christian Democrats (CDU-CSU) and liberals (FDP) cannot look forward to it with any great assurance. The SPD [the West German Social Democratic Party] hopes to be able to win with its new candidate for chancellor, Johannes Rau. But the result will depend in large part on the attitude taken by the Greens, which is unpredictable.

The state elections just held in Lower Saxony on June 15 sum up the situation. Since 1976, this state has been covered by the right-wing CDU leader, Ernest Albrecht. In 1982, he won an absolute majority of 50.7%. At the same time, the SPD got 36.5%, its lowest score in 30 years.

Last week, the CDU fell back

to 44.3% (-6%). The SPD got 42.1% (+5.6%). The Greens got 7.1% (+0.6%). And the liberals got 6%, just enough to remain in the state parliament. And so, Albrecht was able, just, to hold power. But he has to deal with the FDP, which in any case can only give him a majority of one seat. Even this result was not achieved in an exactly above-board way.

Knowing that the FDP was in danger of falling below the 5% threshold and losing representation in parliament, the CDU got some of its own supporters to vote for the liberals in order to be able to form a coalition with them.

Despite everything, the trend looks bad for Kohl. In all the local elections since 1983, the CDU has been losing ground, and in four cases its losses have been above 6%. Since Kohl has been chancellor, 11 states have voted.

The CDU has lost ground in eight of them. The SPD has gained in eight, and the Greens likewise.

So, it is likely that the CDU-FDP coalition will lose in the elections at the national level also. But this perspective also frightens the SPD, because the social democrats have little chance of winning an absolute majority. They would then have to form a coalition with the Greens, which is a pretty frightening prospect for the intrepid German social democrats.

As for the Greens, they are no angels either. Some of them are already thinking about the opportunities for them in government, while others shrink from the idea of providing ministers for the world's second greatest imperialist power.

All of this offers the prospect of quite a poker game in January.

Guy Hendriks

# Hormel strike signals growing union militancy

THE TEN-MONTH-LONG strike by United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local P-9 at Hormel in Austin, Minnesota, has received exceptional attention from all sides concerned with the sharpening struggle between employers and workers in the United States. (1)

The 1,500 Hormel strikers are fighting proposals for wage cuts, changes in the seniority system and a plan to introduce a two-tier system for new workers. The strike represents a break with the majority of American unions that have been voluntarily following a policy of "concessions" or "takeback" — that is, surrendering gains made in the past in the name of preserving jobs now.

The following article, from the US newspaper *Socialist Action*, explains why this strike has been such a focus of attention and solidarity in the US labor movement.

## NAT WEINSTEIN

Hormel's meatpacking plant in Austin is one of the most efficient and profitable in the country. Up until this strike, the employers' campaign to reduce the living standards of US workers has focused on those ailing sections of the economy where the threat of bankruptcy, plant-closings and mass firings had some credibility.

The Austin local [union branch] is one of the industrial unions built through militant struggle during the mass labor upsurge of the 1930s. Local P-9's founders were the first in the United States to employ the sitdown strike to gain union recognition.

Their successful 1933 strike led to an outstanding contract, which included a guarantee that no layoffs could take place unless Hormel gave notice a year in advance. This was especially noteworthy in a period of widespread unemployment.

While other unions with comparable origins have also been victims of the current 15-year-long takeback campaign, this is the first time determined resistance on the picket line by such an industrial union has been challenged. When the United Auto Workers, for instance, gave historic concessions to the Chrysler Corporation in 1979, it was without a fight and thus without any need by the bosses to attempt to operate a plant with strike-breakers.

The union-busting attack on Local P-9 has developed into a test by the

employers to gauge the present fighting ability of workers and their unions. The capitalists, while systematically pressing their takeback campaign, are careful not to move too fast. They are concerned that their union-busting drive does not spark a strong reaction by the workers and blow up in their face.

Such a misjudgement was made when then-President Jimmy Carter invoked the Taft-Hartley Act in an attempt to break a strike of the United Mine Workers in 1978-79. Determined coal-miner resistance and an accompanying wave of support by significant layers of union militants across the country forced Carter and the bosses to retreat. Drawing back in time, the bosses limited their losses.

## Breaking with the strategy of the labor bureaucracy

Victory for the bosses in the current battle with labor in Austin will encourage the big corporations in future assaults against larger and more powerful industrial unions.

The Hormel strike has led Local P-9 leaders and members to take a step toward a de facto break with the prevailing strategy of the labor bureaucracy. This strategy is based on the delusion that employers (those who



have signed union contracts, at least) are in a "partnership" with their workers. This means, in practice, that workers must subordinate wages and working conditions to maintaining the profit rates of their capitalist "partners."

The US capitalist class has, over a long historical period, outproduced its competitors. After World War II, American employers reaped the largest profits from the capitalist world market, despite paying US workers the highest wages in the world. Before that, British capitalism had dominated competition for the greatest share of the world's markets and profits.

But British capitalism lost out to a more dynamic US capitalism after World War I. No sacrifices on the part of British workers could have changed that. And no sacrifice by American workers can save jobs in the current global economic war. Only a perspective of union struggle that points to solutions independent of company profitability can save jobs.

The Local P-9 strike explodes the myth that token picket lines can win strikes. During the years of "prosperity" after World War II, strikes often appeared to be little more than a peaceful waiting game to see which side had the will to hold out longest.

1. See "Strike by Local P-9 stirs US labor," *International Viewpoint*, No. 96, April 7, 1986.



The Hormel strike shows a new willingness to fight among US workers (DR)

The enactment of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 permitted employers to get injunctions against mass picketing. But until recently, while injunctions limiting picketing were routinely granted, token picket lines of a few workers were not directly challenged by the bosses in the major industrial unions.

The apparent ability of a handful of pickets to close down a plant had two adverse effects. It discouraged active participation in the unions — strikes became opportunities for workers to take extended vacations. Second, it eroded the memory of how the unions were built — through mass mobilizations on the picket lines to keep scabs from taking jobs and breaking strikes.

The P-9 strike spotlights the depths of treason to which the top labor officialdom is capable of descending. Both UFCW President William Wynn, Local P-9's parent union, and the President of the American union federation AFL-CIO, Lane Kirkland, have placed the American labor bureaucracy squarely on the side of the strike-breakers.

Wynn has offered, after withdrawing the strike sanction and meager strike benefits, "post-strike benefits" to members of Local P-9 as an inducement for them to scab. To qualify for these "benefits," striking members must put their names on Hormel's list of those willing to scab. Moreover, there is no guarantee that those who capitulate will ever be rehired if the union is crushed.

Furthermore, Wynn has initiated a "trusteeship" action to take over the striking local — remove its democratically elected leadership, entirely abolish P-9 members' democratic rights, confiscate its funds, property and records — and thus deal its Austin affiliate a *coup de grace*.

### Enormous pressure on union officials

The top echelons of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, moreover, have brought enormous pressure to bear upon union officials close to the ranks to keep them in line and counter the widespread sympathy for their beleaguered sisters and brothers in Local P-9. Despite these pressures, material support keeps coming in to the striking Austin packinghouse workers.

President Wynn rationalizes the betrayal of his membership with the argument that his intent is to "standardize" wages in the meatpacking industry. His record of having signed more concessions contracts than any other comparable union official — not to mention his current blows against Local P-9 — makes clear that by standardizing wages he means making them lower than the level his membership is willing to accept.

William Wynn and Lane Kirkland have shown by their open strike-breaking that they are committed to helping their employer "partners"

come out on top in the sharpening economic conflict among the world's major industrial capitalist powers.

These "labor statesmen" have put all their chips on winning the gratitude of the bosses in return for their collaboration. They hope to be permitted to continue to collect dues — higher dues from fewer members, no doubt — in exchange for their treachery.

They may also be under the delusion that their capitalist partners will gratefully give back what was taken away when, as they hope, US capitalism comes out on top over its capitalist rivals. There is not a shred of evidence to support this conclusion.

We need not look far to see proof to the contrary. Hormel, the recipient of a long series of concessions which contributed to economic success in its Austin plant, is now paying back the workers in its own inimitable way — with more take-backs!

This policy of collaboration with the employers, if permitted to follow its course to the end, will doom workers to ever-lower living standards, and eventually add millions more to the pool of permanently unemployed workers.

It should be remembered that since the end of World War II, the rise of long-term unemployment has occurred in a period of capitalist prosperity. When the economic bubble bursts — which is inevitable — the army of permanently unemployed will grow to new heights. A shorter workweek, with no reduction in pay, along with publicly financed works programs to provide jobs at union scale for the unemployed is the only real answer to capitalist unemployment.

In conclusion, new leaders are emerging from struggles such as the Hormel strike. As working people increasingly confront employers' takeback demands in the coming years, this process will continue. The old leaders with their strategy of collaborating with the employers will inevitably be replaced.

In the meantime, Local P-9's fight continues. The union can gain time and continue to bring pressure on Hormel with its boycott campaign. Every new strike confrontation will tend to raise the banner of Local P-9's struggle alongside its own. And reinforcements may yet come to turn the tide of the strike against Hormel.

But whatever the ultimate outcome of this strike, it will go down in labor history as a sign of a new willingness to fight, and of a growing consciousness of the bankruptcy of official labor strategy. □

# The trajectory of the left forces that supported Cory Aquino's campaign

AN ARTICLE entitled "The decisive tests facing the Aquino government" in the April 21, 1986, issue of *International Viewpoint*, described the political debates occurring in the revolutionary movement in the Philippines just prior to the February 1986 presidential election. In the June 30 issue of *IV*, the forces that called for a boycott, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the "national democrats," were considered. (1) The present article takes up the post-election evolution of the various components of the Philippine left that participated critically in the electoral campaign, calling for a vote for Cory Aquino, particularly the independent Marxists and the "social democrats." (2)

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At the center of the differences that emerged between December 1985 and February 1986 were differing assessments of the electoral campaign's dynamic — of the real political stakes. The unfolding of events proved right those who thought that the elections represented a day of major political reckoning, not a routine exercise.

But, once again, life proved more complex than theory or prognostications. No revolutionary group had, in fact, foreseen the rapidity with which the crisis opened up by the elections was going to be resolved in favor of the opposition, nor the particular coalition of forces that was going to be brought to power. Each current, therefore, has had to analyze the nature of the "February revolution," the Aquino government, the political situation and the immediate tasks before the country.

The "February revolution" was not included in any pre-election scenario of the big bourgeois political forces — certainly not in that of Marcos, who hoped to catch the opposition on the wrong foot by abruptly moving forward the date of the presidential election. Nor was it foreseen by the White House, which was anticipating a temporary stabilization of the regime and a breathing space in which it could push through "reform with continuity" in the dictatorship. It was not even predicted by the bourgeois opposition, which was betting on either an earlier reversal of American policy or on the effects in the medium term of controlled economic

and political pressure.

As for the last-minute enlistees, Juan Ponce Enrile and General Ramos, they were pushed abruptly into this "rebellion" by the fear of being purged by a government with its back against the wall.

It was the dynamism and breadth of the mass mobilizations both before, and especially after, the elections, that turned the political picture upside down and invalidated all of the pre-established scenarios. (3)

The new Aquino government is unquestionably bourgeois. Pro-imperialist forces are predominant in it. But it also enjoys a legitimacy accruing to it from having been brought to power by an antidictatorial, albeit nonviolent, uprising. It is important to stress that this is a popular legitimacy more profound than one conferred by a normal electoral victory — a legitimacy given an additional sanctification by the powerful Roman Catholic Church. The Aquino government, therefore, is able to employ a populist style, symbolized by its references to "people's power," and by the moral authority embodied in the personality of the president.

The Aquino government is also transitional — not so much because it sees itself that way in the light of the present constitutional vacuum, but because it reflects an unstable and temporary coalition of forces, created by the convergence last February of a popular uprising with a military rebellion.

Coexisting inside the governmental structure are dignitaries of the former regime, particularly Enrile as minister of defence; businessmen who hold the important economic posts (4); more or less traditional politicians — those from UNIDO (5) being more traditional and those from PDP-Laban (6) being less so; some Jesuit ideologues around the presidency; and a certain number of individuals recognized by the Philippine left and mass organizations for their nationalist and democratic commitment.

Included in this last group are lawyers Jose Diokno, on the presidential human rights commission; Joker Arroyo, presidential executive secretary; Augusto "Bobbit" Sanchez, minister of labor and employment, who is especially valued by the radical trade-union federation KMU; and Mamita Pardo de Tavera, former president of the coalition of feminist organizations, Gabriela, and present minister of social services and development.

The government is therefore the stage for major confrontations, and it is interesting to note that no far-left political force is disinterested in this particular aspect of the present political situation. None is demanding the immediate resignation of progressive elements in the government in order that they will not be compromised. It is true that the stakes in these confrontations are limited, since they do not affect the country's social structure, but they are important nonetheless. They concern the scope of the dismantling of the dictatorship's physical, juridical and political apparatus, the actual freeing of all political prisoners, and democratic rights.

1. It is common in the Philippines to call "national democrats" those movements and militants that identify with the program of the "national democratic revolution" put forward by the CPP and the National Democratic Front.

2. The term "social democrats" is sometimes put in quotation marks, to avoid too direct an analogy with European social democracy. The Philippine social democratic movement in fact comes out of religious milieus (notably Jesuits) and lay Catholics. The history of this movement is therefore profoundly different from that of European socialism, and if some components of Philippine social democracy turn towards the Socialist International today, others are more reminiscent of Christian Democracy.

3. See "After the fall of Marcos," *International Viewpoint*, No. 95, March 24, 1986.

4. See "The decisive tests facing the Aquino government," *IV*, No. 97, April 21, 1986.

5. UNIDO is a coalition of a dozen bourgeois groups, generally conservative, represented by Salvador "Doy" Laurel, vice-president and minister of foreign affairs.

6. PDP-Laban (Philippine Democratic Party-Combat) is now represented by Aquilino Pimentel, minister for local administration. On the Philippine political parties, see the box published in *IV*, No. 97, April 21, 1986.



The entire left has already noted the contradictory aspects of the Aquino government. The declaration published on February 28 by the University of the Philippines Academic Community (UPAC) is representative. Recalling their appearance on the barricades February 22-26, the UPAC members assure Corazon Aquino of their support. But they immediately add: "To our people we pledge our continuing solidarity and our vigilance." In fact, if the hour has come "to rejoice with our people over the recovery of our self-esteem as a nation," it must also be noted that the February events "signal only the beginning of a revolutionary process," which "can be intercepted at any point and can even lead to the restoration of the old order rather than the emergence of a different social order."

The UPAC members express their "great apprehension" in view of the "reappearance of the pre-Martial Law politicians and oligarchs" and the presence of "propagandists, technocrats, military hatchmen of the Marcos regime. . . . We are convinced that the situation warrants renewed and sustained vigilance so that the clear gains of people's power are not lost." (7)

### "People's power"

The experience of "people's power" during the electoral campaign — that is, an unprecedented mass mobilization — the fragility of that power in view of the absence of adequate grassroots committees and the regroupments that have taken place, have given rise to the new political movements within the Philippine left.

Following in the wake of the events at the end of February came the birth of a new coalition: the Lakas ng Sambayan (People's Power), known also as Lakas and called initially Cory Aquino's People's Power (CAPP).

Lakas brings together different "alliances," like Bandila (8), the Independent Caucus (9), Families for Justice and Peace, Philippine Women's Solidarity and the Coalition for the Advancement of Popular Movements (CAMP). Lakas also includes some activist organizations engaged in sectoral mass work. Its spokespeople are Emmanuel Soriano (Bandila), Randolph "Randy" David (Independent Caucus) and Edmundo "Ed" Garcia (Kaakbay). (10)

In a declaration dated March 2, 1986, Lakas asserts that "the Philippine experience is unprecedented, unedited, yet unfinished. . . . For certain sectors the long popular struggle . . . began even before martial



Demonstrating against US policy in Manila (DR)

law was imposed." In February 1986, "the decisive factors . . . were the power of the people, the power of faith and the unwavering leadership of Corazon Aquino," to which should be added the position of the episcopal conference after the elections (11) and the rebellion of the army's reform movement.

"The popular revolution involved the seizure of state power by the people; it was essentially a political act. However, it remains unfinished. To become a social revolution, social relations and social structures need to be transformed. . . . To accomplish these tasks, the people's power must now be systematically articulated and translated into a cohesive, organized and sustained force, which will promote people's democracy, national sovereignty, justice and equity. The logic of the majority must prevail and the interests of the working classes must be advanced."

Lakas has set as its objective "to harness the power of the people." In order to accomplish this, the coal-

ition is aiming to rally the organizations that fought against the dictatorship and supported Cory Aquino's campaign, to consolidate the autonomous popular groups in various social sectors and regions, and to build a broad alliance of activist groups. "Lakas believes in a popular democracy which is pluralist and listens to the authentic voice of the autonomous people's organizations." (12)

In an interview in the magazine *Midweek*, Lakas' general secretary, "Ed" Garcia, clarified the politics of the coalition, its origin and composition. Queried about the relations between Lakas and the government, he noted that the coalition had supported the appointment of several ministers, such as Bobbit Sanchez and Mita Pardo de Tavera, and of assistant ministers such as Karina Constantino-David, a member of the Kaakbay movement. (13)

But Garcia made it clear that Lakas' goals require preserving its

7. UPAC, "From People's Power to a People's Government, a Statement of Concern and a Declaration of Renewed Support and Solidarity," February 28, 1986, reprinted in "Samahan Newsletter," No. 16, The Hague, January-March, 1986.

8. Bandila (Banner) is a coalition of groups launched by the social democrats in 1985, after the crisis in Bayan in May-June of that year. The full name is: *Bansang Nagkakaisa sa Diwa at Layunin (Will and Objectives of a United People)*. The organizations most active in Bandila are the Philippine Social-Democratic Movement and the wing of the 21st August Movement (ATOM) led by "Butz" Aquino.

9. On the Independent Caucus, see later in the article.

10. Kaakbay is led by the lawyer Jose Diokno, with the participation of independent Marxists. The full name is: *Kilusang para sa Kapangyarihan at Kasarinlan Sanbayanang (Movement for National Sovereignty and Democracy)*.

11. On the position of the episcopal

conference see the article in 'IV,' No. 93, February 24, 1986.

12. Lakas ng Sambayan: declaration reprinted in "Kasarinlan, Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies," Third World Studies Centre, University of the Philippines, Volume 1, No. 4, 2nd Quarter, 1986, p.50-1.

13. Karina Constantino-David, presently deputy minister for social affairs and development, was teaching at the Institute of Social Work and Community Development at the University of the Philippines (UP). She was the president of the UP section of Kaakbay. One of her recent articles, "Community Organization and People's Participation, the Philippine Experience" can be found in "Kasarinlan," Volume 1, No. 2, 4th Quarter, 1985. In the same issue and on the same theme is a study by Jorgette A. Honculada on the history of the organization of struggles in the huge shanty town of Tondo, in Manila: "Case Study: ZOTO and the Twice-Told Story of Philippine Community Organizing."

independence from the government: "To be able to fulfill our role of articulating the popular interests, we must have an independent position. We must not be beholden to the government. We must retain that distance." (14)

Lakas was formed, Ed Garcia explains, by bringing together about ten organizations. It represented a continuation of the dynamic toward unity that got underway after the August 1983 assassination of Benigno Aquino. During the election campaign, various left political movements formed the nationalist bloc (Sigaw ng Sambayanan), which included in particular Kaakbay, the Independent Caucus and the activist social-democratic organizations.

A number of local organizations, such as Cory Aquino for President, Cory's Crusaders and Victory and Moves, joined this bloc. It is possible that Lakas will open up to some groups that advocated the boycott, like Kadena (15), a member of Bayan, which has critically re-examined its electoral position. The national council of Kadena, which claims 20,000 members, has acknowledged that the decision to boycott the February 7 elections was a "tragic error," caused by a series of analytical errors concerning the dynamic of the electoral struggle:

"Our analysis of the national situation was way off the mark, thus our policy on the issue was expectedly incorrect." Therefore "we reneged on our commitment to the principles of mass line." Kadena's national council decided to make its self-criticism public, "so that the people may know that Kadena recognizes its mistakes and that it is willing to rectify." (16)

The important thing, notes Ed Garcia, is to develop a network of autonomous people's groups, to promote self-organization of the masses, to bring together those who engaged in political activity for the first time during the election campaign - and they are very numerous - and to maintain a unified viewpoint. "Lakas is not the only group. I think that we should be very, very modest. There are other movements and other forces which may be even more effective. If any group launches initiatives which should be supported and it can present its ideas in a credible manner, we can even follow its lead. It can be the Lions, it can be Cursillo, it can be the NDF, it can be the NPA." (17)

In the opinion of Francisco Nemenzo, president of Lakas' commission on foreign affairs, it is necessary to offer an answer to the country's basic problems: "We take a clear-cut stand on the US bases, for example,

and on the handling of the international debt problem. We are for selective repudiation of our country's debt. . . . We should not pay Westinghouse" for the nuclear power station in Bataan, which has been abandoned. More basically, "Agrarian reform is the most essential domestic task facing the government. Mrs. Aquino does not really have a clear agrarian-reform program. . . . As president she cannot avoid tackling the land problem."

### "The people's victory remains incomplete"

For deepening the popular struggle, the role of the underground revolutionary organizations like the NDF, the NPA and the CPP are crucial for Nemenzo. Facing the armies, both governmental and the still uncontrolled reactionary private ones, the underground organizations should not come out into the open or lay down their arms. (18)

The Independent Caucus (IC), a component of the Nationalist Bloc during the election campaign and of Lakas, arose at the end of 1985 after Bayan's May-June crisis. (19) In a declaration dated March 23, 1986, and entitled "From Rebellion to Revolution," the IC wrote that "no one could have foreseen that our political liberation would come swiftly or that it would take the form it did: a spontaneous outpouring of support to the military mutiny staged by the reformist elements in the military, by largely uncoordinated masses of unorganized individuals and organized groups."

After an analysis of the events that led to the dictatorship's fall - the experience of the "parliament of the streets" since August 1983, the defeat of the boycott campaign, the role of the Catholic Church, the mass intervention that

"transformed the military mutiny into an open rebellion against the Marcos regime" - the IC notes that "the people's victory remains incomplete." Not all of the people's enemies have been vanquished; there is a danger of elite rule being reimposed; a mode of dependent capitalist development continues to lead the country into economic crisis. "The initiative is still with the people." The Aquino government is sensitive to democratic pressure.

"The liberal atmosphere provides ample room of the assertion of the socialist agenda." It is therefore necessary to fight for a series of basic demands, such as people's committees, a nationalist economic policy, the social ownership and workers' control of the key industries, a genuine agrarian reform, protection of the environment, a fight against illiteracy and for the development of national culture. (20)

The formation of the Independent Caucus illustrates the evolution of the Marxist or socialist "little left" (independent of the CPP as well as of the old pro-Moscow PKP - the earlier Communist Party) in the Philippines, from fragmentation and paralysis toward regaining the initiative. In fact, the IC includes a wide range of little groups of different origins, which have now formed a new political movement, Bisig [Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa - Regroupment for the Development of Socialist Ideas and Action]. The IC includes some academics - particularly from the University of the Philippines and the Third World Studies Centre - won over to socialism through theory; community activists, won over by their practical involvement with the urban and rural poor; trade unionists; former CPP activists, some of whom were first brought together in the People's Liberation Movement (PLM) (21); and still others coming out of the social-democratic current or out of

14. "More Power to the People," interview with Ed Garcia, 'Midweek,' April 23, 1986, p.9. Ed Garcia, former Jesuit priest, began his political activity in 1970 when he founded Lakasdiwa (Spiritual Force). He radicalized partly through spending seven years in Latin America. He returned a non-Jesuit. After his return to the Philippines in 1981, he worked at the University of the Philippines. He became a member of Kaakbay having become again general secretary of Lakas.

15. Kadena: Kabataan para sa Demokrasya at Nasyonalismo (Youth for Democracy and Nationalism). Founded in 1984. Its president is Joey Flora, who authenticated the article cited below.

16. Article by Kadena, published in 'Ang Katipunan,' Volume XII, No. 5, April, 1986, p.10.

17. Ed Garcia, 'Midweek,' op. cit., p.8. NDF: National Democratic Front. NPA: New People's Army (led by the CPP). The Lions are a civic group. Cursillo is a religious movement.

18. Dr. Francisco Nemenzo, "Building People's Power in the Philippines," 'Direct Action,' No. 564, April 23, 1986.

19. See "After the election: re-assessment in the revolutionary left," 'IV,' No. 100, June 2, 1986.

20. Independent Caucus: "From Rebellion to Revolution," March 23, 1986, mimeographed document, two pages.

21. The PLM was set up in 1980, most notably with former militants of the CPP, often former prisoners, and some militants of Protestant origin. In the statutes adopted by its preparatory commission, the PLM declared itself in favour of armed struggle against the dictatorship and for a 'pragmatic socialism, where both 'co-operativism' and individual initiative and creativity were respected and encouraged." Constitution of the PLM, preparatory commission, March 1, 1980, 22 mimeographed pages. This organization has been linked with Dr. Nemesio Prudente, one of the prisoners released after the victory of Corazon Aquino.



Students demonstrate for a boycott of the February elections and against the US bases (DR)

the PKP, such as Francisco Nemenzo.

The "little left" has made a remarkable comeback. Since the end of the 1960s, in fact, the Marxist political scene has been dominated by the rapid decline of the PKP and the rapid ascent of the "new" CPP. (22) The PKP never recovered from the 1967 expulsion-split of Joma Sison and its best youth in the famous Kabataan Makabayan [KM — Nationalist Youth].

After the imposition of martial law in 1972, the PKP engaged in a process of open political capitulation, which ended in 1974 with a "political agreement" with Marcos and a "reconciliation" meeting in the presidential palace. Jose Lava, the best-known of its leaders, has a post in Prague. Some other PKP cadres were integrated into the very same administration that had decreed martial law. Not until 1980, at its eighth congress, did the PKP, probably extremely weakened, timidly take its distance from the regime. In the February 1986 elections, the PKP called for casting a "blank" vote by writing slogans on the ballots. (23)

The fifth PKP congress, held in 1973, 27 years after the fourth congress in 1946, confirmed the line of capitulation. One opposition faction — the Marxist-Leninist Group, particularly powerful in the youth organization and in Manila — opposed this course. In May 1973 most of this faction's cadres were physically liquidated on the order of the party's leadership.

Francisco Nemenzo, a member of the political bureau and head of the opposition, escaped. The Marxist-Leninist Group (MLG) was set up as an independent organization. But it was very late in the day. Repression under martial law was severe, and the CPP had been capturing the revolu-

tionary energy of the radical youth for some time. The MLG forces remained slender.

The other Marxist groups of the period were incapable of holding up against the martial-law system. This was true, notably, of a very small Trotskyist organization, Samahan ng Kabadaang Sosyalista (SKS — Young Socialists' Association) (24), which was linked to the Fourth International. In 1971, it published a bulletin called *Philippine Socialist Review*, which was printed in Los Banos, Laguna, some 40 miles from Manila. The group apparently disintegrated completely in a very short time.

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, with the broadening of the struggle, various Marxist and socialist groups resurfaced or sprang up. It was these that took the initiative in launching the Independent Caucus, after the failure of unity moves toward the CPP.

The groups involved were in agreement about a democratic conception of socialism, the use of Marxist and non-Maoist analytical categories (for example, they did not use the category "semi-feudal" to describe the mode of production dominant in the Philippines), about defending a non-manipulative use of the united front; and they shared a willingness to present socialism openly as the historic solution to the country's crisis. The latter was something that the CPP refused to do, insisting upon an initial national-democratic stage.

It seems that these forces were joined by the "democratic socialists" or "dem-socs" — some of the more radical elements of the "social democrats," or "soc dems" — who defined themselves both by socialist and Christian principles.

The origins of the "social

democratic" current date back to the start of the 1950s, when Jesuit priests (especially American but also some Filipinos) helped to launch the Free Federation of Workers (FFW) and the Free Farmers' Federation (FFF). The project was clearly anticommunist and the views of those involved were reflected in the magazine, *Philippines Studies*.

On the political level, Raul Manglapus started his Social-Christian Movement in 1968. It never succeeded in becoming a "third force," either between the two large parties — liberal and nationalist — or between the traditional bourgeois parties and the Marxist left.

Among the youth this "social-democratic" project had the support of very large Catholic educational institutions, whose student councils held a majority in the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP), founded in 1957. The youth organizations Xi Rho and Kasapi belonged to this tendency. (25)

Very quickly, however, the social-democratic current was to undergo

22. See on this subject "Rectification Process in the Philippine Communist Movement," Francisco Nemenzo, *Institute of South-East Asian Studies, Singapore*, November 17-19 1982. See also the very interesting study by Armando Malay Jr: "Maoisme, loi martiale et insurrection aux Philippines (1966-1980)" ("Maoism, martial law and insurrection in the Philippines"), thesis presented for the 'diplome de doctorat' for the third semester at the University of Paris VII, December, 1985.

23. See "Primer on the Snap Election," *communiqué of the PKP*, January, 1986, printed leaflet, 4 pages.

24. The SKS polemicised mainly against those that it thought had a rightist line on the "popular front" of the CPP.

25. Kasapi: *Kapulungang ng Sandigang Pilipino (Forum of Filipino bases)*. This organization, having become clandestine in 1972, entered into negotiations with the PDSP (see later in this article) in 1976, but finally decided to remain organizationally independent.

differentiation. A large wing of the youth (as well as of the clergy) radicalized, shocked by the evolution of the FFF. Under the leadership of Jeremias Montemayor, a law professor in the Jesuit faculty, the conservative character of the FFF assumed particularly serious forms. On June 29, 1973, Montemayor turned over to the army seven FFF cadres, including Father Zacarias Agatep, accusing them of plotting against the life of President Marcos.

### Young cadres radicalized

Montemayor was to become a member of the National Assembly under martial law, while Father Zacarias underwent a long process of radicalization that led him to join the NPA in 1980. He was killed by the army in 1982.

Among the many young cadres who radicalized was Edgar Jopson. A vociferous anti-Marxist polemicist and president of the NUSP in 1969-1970, he came into contact after martial law with the underground milieu. He was soon heading up the propaganda commission of the National Democratic Front. Captured in 1978, he immediately escaped and joined the guerrillas. He was killed by the army in 1982 at Davao (on Mindanao Island). Others, like Ed Garcia, who is today a member of Lakas and who was a founder in 1970 of Lakasdiwa (Spiritual Force), also broke away from the idea of a "peaceful revolution." After a long stay in Latin America as a press correspondent, he became an important personage in the independent left.

Under martial law the social-democratic current became fragmented and divided along lines of cleavage that are not always easy to trace. Although the movement's ideology at the beginning was that of the "peaceful revolution," as opposed to "Marxist violence," the social-democratic movement spawned some armed groups such as the April 6 Liberation Movement (A6LM) and Sandigan. (26) But none of these groups were able to stabilize themselves to the slightest extent.

The best known of the social-democratic political organizations is the Philippine Democratic Socialist Party (PDSP), organized in 1973 and inspired ideologically by two Jesuit priests, Jose Blanco and Romeo Intengan. Anti-Marcos and endowed with a fairly radical socio-economic program, the PDSP was at that time more anticommunist than anything else. In a 1978 internal bulletin,

the party's leadership affirmed that "under no circumstances will we maintain any ideological, strategical and tactical relations with elements of the extreme left. Moreover, we shall exert our utmost effort at isolating them through concerted and continuous criticism of their materialist dogmas and their manipulative praxis." (27)

This position was still held by the PDSP leadership in 1984, to judge from a document published by the Centre for Philippine Concern, established in Spain (where the Rev. Intengan is a refugee). Analyzing the "dilemmas" of the "democratic left," the document notes that "some elements in the dictatorship are preparing to protect their interests by force, and likewise, Communist guerrillas are extending their control over considerable areas of the countryside. The democratic opposition forces would then have to choose between simply capitulating or engage these two enemy forces under highly unfavourable conditions." (28)

Religion has been used as a weapon against Marxism. Monsignor Francisco Claver, who is connected to the "social-democratic" current and who fought against the dictatorship, refers today to the "miracle of EDSA" (from the name of the Avenue E. de los Santos in the capital, where in February, the people built barricades to protect the rebel officers): "The revolution took place in a short 77 hours between February 22 and 25. The miracle of EDSA. Unarmed men and women . . . their only weapons were rosaries, crucifixes, religious images of the Virgin and the Holy Child, and an invulnerability born of faith." (29)

But generally, as PN Abinales writes, "the soc-dem's ideology is eclectic. One political scientist (Francisco Nemenzo) refers to it as a 'hodgepodge of Marxism and Christianity.' It appropriated many of the 'nat-dems' (30) political categories, while appearing to have an original contribution in the concept of 'domestic capitalism' and its own version of 'socialism.' Much of this is due to the late development of the social-democratic tradition and the struggle it had to undergo to shed off its reformist past. The eclecticism in ideology reflected an erratic political program, especially during the martial-law years, where the movement was split over revolutionary strategy." (31)

It is true that the PDSP has never succeeded in becoming a real party or in establishing control over grassroots groups. Social democrat Agapito "Butz" Aquino, the president's brother-in-law, notes that, in fact, once gone underground the

PDSP "didn't consolidate anymore. So, different groups operated in different parts of the country. Now, I think they're trying to consolidate again to form a national organization." (32)

A wide range of political splinter groups and groupings involved in more or less autonomous sectoral work are to be found operating under the name "soc-dems," and making common references to democratic socialism and Christianity. Besides the PDSP, there are the Philippine Social-Democratic Movement and Youth for the Advancement of Faith and Justice (YAFJ), which belong to the "dem-soc" "left." The origins of some present social-democratic factions can be traced to pre-martial-law organizations: Lakasdiwa and Kasapi. Under the repression a number of social-democratic groups opposed the anticommunist first-principle of their ideological leadership and defended the principle of an active alliance with the NDF forces.

The heads of the movement — and especially the anticommunist ideologues — were firmly ensconced in the social elite and in bourgeois politics. But the activists rooted in mass work, on the contrary, are identified with the people's cause. The same was true of some well-known individuals in the nationalist left. It is probable that in the near

26. *The April 6 Liberation Movement (A6LM) made itself known in 1980. It seems to have been chiefly led by militants living in the United States. Sandigan: Philippines Liberation Army, set up in 1981 by the PDSP, chiefly in the Davao region. Sandigan has always aroused a lot of suspicion among extreme-left militants.*

27. "Political Directive No. 1, Series of 1978 re: Internal Consolidation No. 5," Circular published just after the elections in 1978, where the problem of unity between the CPP forces and the moderate opposition currents has been at the centre of intense debates. Cited by Mario Bolasco, "Marxism and Christianity in the Philippines: 1930-1983," published by the Third World Studies Centre (University of the Philippines) in *Marxism in the Philippines*, Quezon City, 1984, p.122.

28. Lingap Bayan Centre for Philippine Concern, "Spectrum of Political Forces and Current Issues in the Philippines," November, 1984, p.6.

29. "The Miracle of EDSA: Reflecting on the People's Shallow Faith," Francisco F. Claver, *Institute on Church and Social Issues*, March 13, 1986, typewritten document, 1 page.

30. The term "nat-dem" is currently used in the Philippines for the "national democrats," who identify themselves with the program of the NDF. (Similarly, "soc-dem" stands for "social-democratic.")

31. P.N. Abinales, "The Post-Marcos Regime, the Non-Bourgeois Opposition and the Prospects of a Philippine 'October'." *Kasarinlan*, Volume 1, No. 4, 2nd Quarter, 1986, p.40. This issue of *Kasarinlan* is entirely devoted to analysing the events of February and the post-Marcos era in the Philippines.

32. "The Social-Democrats Will Have a Party Soon," interview with Agapito "Butz" Aquino, *Philippine News and Features*, Volume II, No. 31, p.2.

future, a lot of ambiguities will have to be cleared up between those who will continue to look for bourgeois solutions to the socio-economic crisis and those who will seek working-class and popular solutions.

The situation opened up by the "February revolution" is objectively favorable to the popular forces. Economic crisis continues to impel social mobilization. The democratization of the regime is enlarging the arena for the mass organizations. New experiences of unity are therefore possible. And debate is flourishing in a welcome ideological springtime. The Philippine left — all tendencies of it — can remodel their political thinking based on current experience.

### CPP caught off guard by events

But the subjective situation remains difficult. The CPP was caught off guard by events; the ideological and political initiative passed to the bourgeois reformist forces. As to the "little left" and the social-democrats, they must prove themselves capable of solving a lot of problems that are new for them, such as building organizations sufficiently unified and solid to conduct a coherent policy on a national scale. In the case of the social-democrats, they have to

make a clear class choice. These tasks are all the more pressing since no one knows how long the present situation will last. Repression could, tomorrow, descend again on the country.

Indeed, repression has not disappeared. Despite the wave of releases of political prisoners that followed Corazon Aquino's victory, perhaps nearly 500 political prisoners still remain in the provincial jails. This was at least the case at the beginning of May, according to the report of Franciscan nun Mariani Dimaranan published for the Task Force Detainees defence organization. (33) In order to avoid complying with the presidential order freeing all political prisoners, the military simply juggle the formal status of the prisoners, describing them as common-law prisoners, held, for example, for unlawful "possession of weapons." The testimony of several journalists — such as that of Deb Shnookal and Russell Johnson in Negros (34) — has just confirmed this fact. It is therefore urgent to continue the fight, in the Philippines as well as internationally, for the release of all political prisoners, even ordinary workers or farmers unknown to the general public.

The armed forces, too, have continued their numerous antiguerrilla operations. They are activating the agents they have infiltrated into the

NPA — the "zombies" — to discredit the revolutionary movement. (35) And finally, on the ideological plane, the fuss made over an article by journalist Ross H. Munro in the December 1985 *Commentary* entitled "The New Khmer Rouge" — that is, the CPP, the NPA and all the forces linked to them — is symptomatic. A broad anti-Marxist offensive has been mounted. It would be dangerous to underestimate it.

In the face of these attacks, international solidarity must not flag. All left forces, progressive, popular and revolutionary, ought to unite on this issue, despite whatever political differences they may have. They should do this first of all out of an elementary commitment to solidarity, and second because the CPP and the NPA, although the first to be threatened, are not, in fact, the only ones targeted. In the end, the anti-Marxist offensive underway concerns the independent mass movement and all socialist forces. □

33. See the articles in the Philippine daily 'We Forum,' March 25-31, 1985, and the article in the 'International Herald Tribune' on May 5, 1986.

34. Deb Shnookal and Russell Johnson, 'Repression continues in 'Sugarland', 'Intercontinental Press,' May 19, 1986, p.310-312.

35. See 'The 'Zombies' in Mindanao,' in the bulletin 'Chronology of Events,' Manila, April, 1986, No. 20, p.14.

Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) May Day rally, 1984 (DR)



# The Irish language and the fight for national liberation

TO A LARGE extent, the movement that led to the Irish revolution of 1916 and the revolutionary war of 1918-21 passed through and was moulded by a cultural movement around the revival of the Irish language and traditional arts.

The president of the provisional republic proclaimed by the Dublin rising of 1916, Padraig Mac Piarais (Patrick Pearse), was an Irish revivalist and poet who ran an all-Irish school, to which the revolutionary socialist and trade-union leader James Larkin (also a pioneer in the American Communist movement) sent his son.

Most of the main leaders of the war of independence looked to the revival of the Irish language as one of the primary goals of independence. But the movement lost its momentum in the civil war of 1921-22, and to a certain degree the failure of the language revival became identified with the small and sour fruits of the Irish neo-colonial state.

However, by the late 1970s, the question of language had again assumed a notable place in the new revolutionary nationalist upsurge in the six counties of British-ruled Northern Ireland. The H-block prisoners became exemplary students of Irish. Irish graffiti began appearing on walls in West Belfast (such as "*Sinn e fear fior nar umhlaios don Ghall*," "He is a true man who has never humbled himself to the foreigner"). And Irish-language signs appeared in H-block demonstrations.

In the local government elections in Northern Ireland in the spring of 1985, Sinn Fein published a manifesto and a poster in Irish. One of the candidates was Mairtin O' Muilleoir, who came to the revolutionary nationalist movement from Irish-language circles and became a leader of Sinn Fein cultural work. He gave the following interview to Gerry Foley in Belfast in February.

*Question. What was it that led you from the Irish-language movement to Sinn Fein?*

*Answer.* The involvement of young Irish speakers [this means those who have learned to speak Irish, since no natural Irish speaking communities remain in Northern Ireland] probably has its roots in 1969. At that time a number of Irish speakers in Belfast started saying to themselves that they could not remain apart from the community, that they had to get involved.

Two very important things happened in 1969. One was that Irish speakers began building a settlement of their own on the Shaws Road in Belfast. They decided that it was no longer enough to have your wee

club where you could speak the language and be an intellectual elite. It was much better to get into the community and start living with the people and start bringing up your children speaking Irish. [That became the Shaws Road Gaeltacht, or Irish speaking community.]

The other thing was that when the Loyalists burnt down Bombay Street [in the Catholic area], these Irish speakers decided they would do something about it. They opened up the Cluan Ard [an Irish-speaking cultural center] to the refugees for the few nights it was needed. In some people's eyes this was sacreligious. The refugees were speaking English. And the other thing was that they organized to rebuild Bombay

Street. That seemed strange to people. It did not have anything to do with Irish classes. But these activists had made the tie-in between what was happening to the language and what was happening to everybody else.

At the end of the 1970s, a number of young people started becoming aware of the link between the cultural struggle and the fight for independence and freedom. The latter has been going on alongside us, it was the republican struggle, the IRA struggle. But it rarely touched us. We started to examine ourselves and our attitude.

So, we started in our own amateurish way, without any guiding ideology, to set out a new path. That was the start of the Irish graffiti on the walls, and of a weekly paper in Irish, *Gael Beal Feirste* ["Belfast Gael"], of taking the language into the community.

Then the H-block struggle catapulted us into political action. A number of us set up *Gael Beal Feirste*, which was a group of Irish-speaking activists who supported the demands of the H-block prisoners. It was one of a number of distinct groups in the movement, such as the teachers group, etc. And we started communicating with prisoners and organizing marches.

Then, when the second hunger strike came, we continued that sort of work and accelerated it. I and some other Irish speakers would have been almost full-time workers. By the end of the hunger strike, I had made my mind up that there was no longer any choice but to join the republican movement in order to work effectively. A number of people joined about the same time.

*Q. What did you do after you joined Sinn Fein?*

*A.* The people in Sinn Fein at the time had the wisdom to say that cultural activists like us should not abandon what we were doing and just do Sinn Fein work, but that we should be developing cultural policies for Sinn Fein, developing the cultural aspect of the struggle. So, they set up a cultural department in 1982. This was something that had previously existed in Dublin, but at that time it had only existed on paper.

In Belfast, they started by bringing together older republicans, who all spoke Irish as a matter of course, since it was sort of a sacred principle in the 1940s and 1950s; some ex-prisoners, who had learned Irish in jail; and ourselves, who were basically gaeilgeoiri [Irish-language enthusiasts]. They asked us to start doing the work of a Gaelic League branch but doing it much more vigorously and at the same time to Gaelicize the organization.

*Q. How far advanced is the work of Gaelicizing the republican movement?*

A. The work inside the organization is only starting. English is still the language people speak and we still put out publications in English only. But progress has been made, mainly in the Six Counties. Recently I was at a meeting of Belfast Sinn Fein with about 130 people at it. The number of Irish speakers at it, people who had learned Irish in the jails, people who were involved with the Irish-language nursery schools, was huge. Probably 80 per cent of them were Irish speakers.

Getting people to understand the importance of the cultural side of the struggle is another thing. But people who are not involved in the activities of the cultural department are sending their kids to Irish-language schools.

But if you put that in an all-Ireland 32-county context, it becomes a lot less. In the 26 Counties, our cultural work is virtually nil. It is also less in other parts of the Six Counties, except for Derry City.

On the other hand, we did influence the Ard-Fheis [Annual General Meeting] of Sinn Fein this year. For the first time there was a bilingual clar [list of resolutions]. And we managed to get through a resolution, against some opposition, that makes the post of cultural officer an Ard Chomhairle [National Executive] position. The fact that Gerry Adams [Sinn Fein president] has been so strong on the cultural question helped a lot.

*Q. How much is Irish used as a vehicle of work in the movement? The Welsh nationalists at least do that. The Plaid Cymru office in Cardiff does work through Welsh to a considerable extent.*

A. It is limited in the republican movement. The Dublin office is probably better than any of the Belfast offices. I have been to meetings of the West Belfast officer board where all are learning Irish and maybe ten out of twelve would be fluent. But it would never occur to them to conduct everything in Irish. For many people, it is a jail language. They haven't adopted any of the new terminology.

Using Irish is the final step. We have to keep working on them to take it. Everyone we win over is a victory, and then if they send their kids to an Irish school, that's something; and if they buy *Saoirse* [Sinn Fein's Irish-language journal], that's something.

*Q. How many copies of *Saoirse* do you sell?*

A. In Belfast, we sell 400. And

that's the bulk of *Saoirse* in all Ireland. We print 1,500 copies and we probably sell about 1,100. Another way to measure progress is that more people use Irish greetings and so forth.

*Q. It seems to me that republicans, at least in the last 16 years, have generally used a few Irish phrases at meetings such as ending speeches with "go raibh mait agaibh" ["thank you"] or calling for "ciunus" ["silence"]. What seems new is Irish on posters, Irish graffiti, things that indicate that the language can now be used as a means of political communication. To what extent is that true?*

A. Well, we have to be selective. We don't have big Irish speaking areas, like the Welsh speaking ones. But at every election, we deliberately pick out the gaeilgeoiri and canvas them and give them Irish leaflets. There is what we call an Irish-language vote. It's about three per cent; it is small but it exists. The older Irish speakers say that never has more Irish been spoken in Belfast.

*Q. About how many people do you think speak Irish in West Belfast?*

A. About 5,000. There may be 10,000, because a lot of Irish speakers keep quiet about it. All the major

political figures have some Irish. John Hume [the leading Catholic bourgeois politician] can speak Irish. John Cushman [of the green unionist Alliance Party] can speak some Irish. Fergus O'Hare from People's Democracy [the Irish section of the Fourth International] is a fluent Irish speaker.

*Q. International youth culture has obviously spread to Belfast in the last ten years or so. How much of a barrier is this to the Irish cultural revival. Do you get these kids in punk outfits saying "What does this old Celtic thing have to do with us?"*

A. Well, we probably would if we did more youth work. But we haven't run up against it in the republican movement. It certainly exists outside, alongside the republican movement. But usually if people accept a basic "Brits out" position, you can get them sympathetic to the language.

*Q. Is there such a thing, for instance, as an Irish-language rock group?*

A. We brought an Irish rock group to Belfast in December. But it is the only one that exists. The Irish language is too weak to generate that sort of thing. So, the pop culture is a barrier. But the

*British troops in Northern Ireland (DR)*



big advantage we have that overcomes the pop culture and overcomes TV to some degree is the existence of the struggle. It doesn't matter if the kids are mods or punks or whatever.

They don't like Brits. They know that the Brits shouldn't be here. There is a basic understanding that unemployment is wrong, and that something should be done about it. And they tune into those things. They might listen to their mod music and they might dress up like punks, but at the end of the day, they're still republican punks. And that's good for us.

We have one Irish teacher who is a professional soccer player, and he has two-color hair. We can accept that because we still do not know where we're bringing the Irish language revival. We haven't said discos are a bad thing.

*Q. Is the revival of Irish associated with a revival of traditional music?*

A. Not in Belfast. But in areas like Tyrone, where the language revival is weak, traditional music is strong.

I would love to see Irish rock and Irish discos take off, that would take government backing. Irish rock would have to be as good as commercial rock. We're up against the TV and professionals.

*Q. There seem to be two views on that. The Welsh, Cymdeighas yr Iaith Gymraeg [Welsh Language Society] think that the only way to keep the language alive is to transfer the pop culture into Welsh. The objection that is made is that if the only thing about it is that Welsh is the language, what is the point? After all, the original Irish revival brought a new style into Irish literature, music and art.*

A. The point is that if we had pop in Irish, it would be a big advantage for the Irish revolution. It would be a big advantage if we had kids at Irish discos speaking Irish, even if it was only another point of conflict with the British troops.

It's a big problem that there is no Irish youth club, there is no place where the youth can go through the whole rebellion of adolescence in Irish. You're not going to win that unless you win funding, and you're not going to win funding without protests. We're moving in that direction. We also need a secondary school in Irish.

*Q. What about the youth clubs that exist in the Divis Flats. Is it possible to take Irish into them?*

A. No. The cultural department's work is a fair reflection of Sinn Fein's youth work in Belfast, which is very bad. There has been a demand for Irish classes from youth. But those are difficult classes to cater for. The majority of our classes are adults who are mad to learn Irish. But the youth are not sure, and they're a bit boisterous. I'm sure we could build the demand among youth, but at the minute we haven't tried it.

We did set up a youth club in 1982, but it collapsed after a while for various reasons.

*Q. Don't you get people asking where is all this going? Are you going to try to make Irish the language of the country again? And how are you going to do that?*

A. Among supporters and members of the movement, there is very little debate about what we want for the language. Here we just think about when we can set up the next Irish nursery school, put up the next Irish sign, and so forth. There is a debate in the 26 Counties, all right. The official Irish language bodies have taken a position for bilingualism, while the traditional position was for the restoration of an Irish-speaking Ireland. If you mentioned that to people here, they wouldn't know what you were talking about. That debate has passed them by.

*Q. What about people asking about why the revival has failed in the South?*

A. Well, again, there is very little debate among Irish speakers. Although the revival is strong, the Irish language organizations are weak. The last time there was a debate about the Irish language was in 1984 when we brought about a hundred students and teachers together and started talking about it. Since then, no one has tried it. We have answered some such questions in various press statements, why we think the revival has failed in the South, or rather why it hasn't succeeded to date, because I don't think it has failed.

*Q. It seems to have failed in the sense that after more than 60 years of independence, the language has not been restored as the language of the people, and at the moment it is clearly on the wane.*

A. O.K. But it hasn't failed completely. You do have a million people in the 26 Counties who say that they can speak Irish.

*Q. Yes. But there is the question of the historic strategy and implications of revival. In Irish nationalism, to some extent, revivalists have re-*

*resented a radical current, since reviving the language implies a radical reorganization of Irish society. Without that the chances of the Irish language in the long run are nil, given the economic power behind English and the international commercial culture in English. Even the Welsh-speaking communities, which are much larger, are crumbling under the assault. The question is to what extent do Irish language workers still offer radical perspectives.*

A. We are trying to combine the old values of the language movement, the ideas of Pearse, which we support, with a latter-day revolutionary or republican analysis of what is happening in this country and the need to create a new society in this country. Without saying that we want to go back to "Celtic communism" or "comhar na gcomharsan" [the tradition of co-operative work], we are saying that there is much to be said for the Irish nation retaining our dignity and identity through reviving the language, through reclaiming what has been taken from us. We don't want to go back, but we want to reclaim our heritage, and at the same time to rebuild it, to recreate it, and build a society that will offer people justice and equality.

We also say that if we don't resist cultural imperialism, we won't have a revolution in Ireland, if you don't resist cultural imperialism, you're going to end up with a halfway house, a neocolonial state.

People who say that we don't need the Gaelic, that we don't need the language, are ignoring the fact that all over the world, people are starting to realize that if you don't defeat cultural imperialism, if you don't defeat the massive communications industry and the brain-washing industry, you're not going to succeed.

*Q. So, how do you defeat it?*

A. One way is to get people to speak Irish. That's a strong weapon. We're getting people to think for themselves, we're getting people who never had an education to speak Irish. Here, if you start speaking Irish, you step right outside the system.

We are also fighting cultural imperialism through republican education, in which we are criticizing the Western powers.

Some Nicaraguans were here recently, and they explained that since their country is small they have to import. Ireland is a small country too, and for a while at least we would have to import. But we would be selective; we wouldn't do what RTE [the Irish TV service] does, importing over 50 per cent of its material and having only two per cent of its pro-



grams in Irish.

There is a huge communications industry based in America that is holding values and an ideology that are definitely alien to Irish freedom and detrimental to the Irish struggle.

*Q. Do you see cultural imperialism as it affects you as primarily American rather than British?*

A. It's a Coca Cola culture, which the British have accepted almost entirely. It is something that originated in America, and it is being hammered at us from Britain too. It is this Coca Cola culture that is the dominant culture in Ireland at the minute. It is one of the major forces against us. Conradh na Gaeilge [the Gaelic League] says that the 26 Counties imports more TV programs than any other country in the world except Singapore.

Here in the Six Counties, locally made programs are a very small percentage of the total. There are two 15-minute news programs a day, and the rest is British.

*Q. How does Sinn Fein relate to the broader cultural movement?*

A. A lot of cultural activists consider us Johnny-come-latelies, with some justice. When I and some other people went into the Ardoyne in 1983 to try to set up an Irish-language nursery school, we specifically said, "We know what you think we are, we know that you think we are here to get votes. You think we're going to be away in a year. But I'll tell ye that we're not." And we managed to win those people over. The nursery school still exists.

In the South, there is another problem. There is a tremendous fear of Sinn Fein. So, we have to combat that. Among the Irish-speaking establishment, there is that fear to a certain degree. There is also the attitude common to all establishments, that we are too radical, that we are taking the language out into the communities.

In the Six Counties, Sinn Fein now runs more Irish classes than any other organization. I was talking to a fellow tonight at the Divis Flats [the most concentrated and deprived neighborhood in West Belfast] who goes around the flats tutoring families in Irish. So, that's too radical, and they don't like it. We are also making the connection between the cultural struggle and the political struggle, and they don't like that, they say it's wrong to take politics into culture. But the British made it political by taking the culture away.

*Q. Let's take a concrete case, such as this ban on books in Irish in Long Kesh concentration camp.*



*Can you get protests against that broader than the layer of people who support Sinn Fein?*

A. You get a muted response. What we lack, and this is a big weakness of the Irish language movement, is a strong organization. You have a lot of individuals doing their own thing. But there is not one strong organization that could run a campaign against the book ban, or against the media.

*Q. Is there a significant layer in the North who would support the language but not necessarily support Sinn Fein?*

A. Yes. In the protests organized by the IM campaign, Irish in the Media, you might have had 70 per cent Sinn Fein supporters and 30 per cent apolitical or pro-SDLP. And that is not entirely an accurate gauge because Sinn Feiners are used to protesting and ready to come out.

So, we had a picket of the BBC at Christmas. There are new things starting. There is a very healthy committee of nursery schools, which hopefully will start hammering the Department of Education. The visit of the Welsh Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg was helpful. And I was saying that I had to go out and do an Irish class or put up Irish signs or help out at an Irish nursery school. And they said, "We don't do any of that. We sit down and we organize protests."

We're not ready for that, but we are progressing somewhat. We're taking a slightly different road that

is going to lead to more and more court cases protesting the lack of forms in Irish, and why should we be paying taxes when there's no tax forms in Irish. That's the sort of thing they did in Wales from 1964 on and finally we're latching on to that.

At our protest at the BBC at Christmas, we had all these people who had been involved in the language movement for ten years and had never been at a protest, alongside all these Sinn Feiners, who every week were on protests. That was a new development. I don't think the Brits liked that at all. That's why we're getting some concessions from the BBC.

*Q. Presumably the provision in the Anglo-Irish agreement about allowing street signs in Irish is also a concession.*

A. The signs are already up. We are not interested in making them legal. We have said that 1986 is going to be a year of protest. We have built a base for the language. It is solid. We have pushed the revival more effectively than any generation in the twentieth century. We said that this year was going to be one of action, and it got off to a good start on the first day of the year with the setting up of Raidio Beal Feirste, which is illegal but it is exposing the BBC and UTV, which say that it is impossible to broadcast Irish programs, although UTV did a survey showing that 70,000 people want them. □

# AROUND THE WORLD



## Ecuador

### Big gains for the left

THE RIGHTIST government suffered serious setbacks while the left made important gains in the June 1 elections. The opposition parties altogether got 47% of the vote, and the far-left more than doubled the total that it got in the 1984 general elections, from 8.4% to 19%. Because of anomalies due to the local character of the elections, the opposition vote in fact added up to more than that of the pro-government parties. The rightist coalition backing president Leon Febres Cordero got only 20%, and the right-wing populists of the Concentration of People's Forces and the Alfarista Radical Front only 12%.

The far-left vote almost equalled that of the president's coalition. On the slate of the coalition that got the bulk of the far-left vote, a member of the Ecuadorian section of the Fourth International, the Revolutionary Workers' Movement (MRT), was elected as a deputy for the largely Quechua-speaking province of Canar.

In a referendum to change the electoral laws, the government went down to a resounding defeat. Its attempt to gain more maneuvering room was rejected by a vote of 68% to 22%.

In office only since August 1984, the government of President Cordero already seems to be sinking fast. In March, he was forced to jettison his minister of defence, General Luis Pineiros, who was responsible for waging a dirty war against "subversion" under the pretext of combatting two urban guerrilla groups.

General Frank Vargas led a revolt of the soldiers and airbases under his command to demand Pineiros' removal. He accused the minister of having sold out to the US and of having formed death squads and paramilitary gangs.

Some of these groups, such as "the Brothers of the Sun," tortured and assassinated left activists. They had extensive files on political activists supplied by the police and the army.

The government hoped to repair its facade in these elections, but its moves backfired. The proposed change in the electoral law was to permit independents to run without the endorsement of recognized parties.

The proposal had a democratic appearance and the government and its backers put all their weight behind it. Nonetheless, it was seen as a maneuver by the voters and buried in a landslide of "no" votes.

Moreover, the right-wing populist parties, very strong in the past, suffered big losses.

Within the opposition, the left gained at the expense of the bourgeois centrist parties: the Democratic Left, which is linked to the Socialist International; People's Democracy, linked to Christian Democracy; and the Roldosista (a populist center formation); and other small formations. These parties had the majority in parliament and controlled the judicial branch, as well as the constitutional court. But they did not show effectiveness in defending democratic rights.

The far-left was represented in these elections by three fronts, the People's Democratic Movement (MPD), a pro-Albanian formation, got 4.2% of the vote. The Broad Left Front (FADI), organized by the Communist Party, got 3.4% of the vote. And the Socialist Party-Socialist Front (PSE-FS) got 10.1% of the vote. The three fronts got respectively three, two and six seats as provincial deputies, who are re-elected every two years in between national parliamentary elections. Thus, the far-left now has 13 deputies out of a total of 71.

The FS represents one of the historic socialist currents in Ecuador, comprising the Ecuadoran Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSRE), the PSE, and the Ecuadoran People's Party (PEP). These groups also have their forces in the Ecuadoran Federation of Free Trade-Union Organizations (CEOSL).

For these elections a tactical alliance was concluded between the FS and the MRT, as well as with two factions of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left.

Formed in 1977, the MRT is active in ten out of the country's twenty provinces. Although the MRT asked to join the FS several months ago, its application has not yet been accepted. Nonetheless, many class-struggle leaders of the MRT ran on the PSE slate, and one of the deputies it elected, as well as several municipal and provincial councillors, are members of the MRT. Some MRT members are also in the provincial committee of the FS for the city of Guayaquil.

In Canar province, Segundo Serrano, a member of the MRT, got 65% of

the vote, becoming the first Trotskyist deputy in the Ecuadoran parliament.

In this mountainous region in the south, the peasants are organized in Indian communities and are fighting for their own culture. One of their demands is for a literacy campaign in Quechua, as well as Spanish.

The Indian people also see defence of their culture as including the fight to regain the lands that have been taken away from them and the opportunity to develop their specific forms of work organization.

In this province, the candidates were selected by people's assemblies in the rural communities and urban neighborhoods from among the most militant activists who enjoyed the confidence of the people's organizations.

[Summary of an article by Alfonso Tavares which appeared in our French-language sister publication, *Inprecor*, No. 223, July 7, 1986.] □

## Britain

### 250,000 rally against apartheid

JUNE 28 saw the biggest anti-apartheid demonstration in British history. A quarter of a million people attended a rally and concert in south London. A hundred thousand people marched four miles from Hyde Park to the concert. The enormous size of the demonstration reflected the fact that at the moment South Africa is continuously at the centre of political attention in Britain.

The march itself was dominated by young people — predominantly young women. There was also a significant Black presence on the march. This included the Black Section of the Labour Party, the Black Workers Group from the local government workers union NALGO and community-based Black organizations. There were large contingents from the Labour Party in the London area on the march, with a smaller presence from the rest of the country.

The trade union banners represented in particular teachers, local government workers, telecommunications workers and engineers. This was in addition to Rail Against Apartheid, an organization of supporters of the anti-apartheid struggle in the rail workers' union, the NUR, which received full support from the NUR's annual conference. Large numbers of students also joined the march.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement's platform at the rally was draped in the banners of the African National Congress and the South West African People's Organisation who provided the main speakers.

The political background to the march was the huge impact of the struggle in South Africa on Britain and, linked to this, splits inside the ruling class on the question of sanctions.

Thatcher has been holding out strongly against sanctions. The ruling Tory Party almost certainly realise that in the end some economic sanctions will have to be applied against South Africa, but they are aiming to keep these to a minimum. Other sections of the ruling class, as well as the Labour Party leadership, believe that a more rapid imposition of sanctions is necessary in order to head off public demands in Britain and an uncontrollable development of the struggle in South Africa itself.

A split has also developed between Thatcher and various governments in the Commonwealth, particularly those in Africa. These divisions are being utilised in the fight inside the ruling class over the sanctions issue. The Eminent Persons Group — including ex-prime minister of Australia Malcolm Fraser and General Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria — came out strongly in favour of sanctions, much to Thatcher's surprise.

Also hitting the headlines in Britain was the visit of Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), who addressed the British NUM conference and demanded the imposition of sanctions. Ramaphosa not only strongly attacked the policies of the Thatcher government, but also the inadequacies of the TUC, the national trade-union federation, for its role in the fight against apartheid. Cyril Ramaphosa also met with the general secretary of the TUC, Norman Willis, Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock and other leaders of the labour movement in Britain. □

## Britain

### Printworkers continue fight

PRINTWORKERS in London are stepping up their fight against the mass sackings of 5,500 News International workers by Rupert Murdoch. Murdoch sacked the printworkers when he moved his four titles — *The Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Sun* and *News of the World* — to a new high-technology plant at Wapping in East London.

There has been an escalation of

flying pickets and bigger mass pickets at Wapping following on from a rejection of Murdoch's £50 million offer to buy-off the sacked workers by the print union SOGAT 82. Rupert Murdoch's affidavits to the high court in his legal action against SOGAT, now postponed, reveal the demoralising impact this picketing is having on the electricians and journalists scabbing in the Wapping plant.

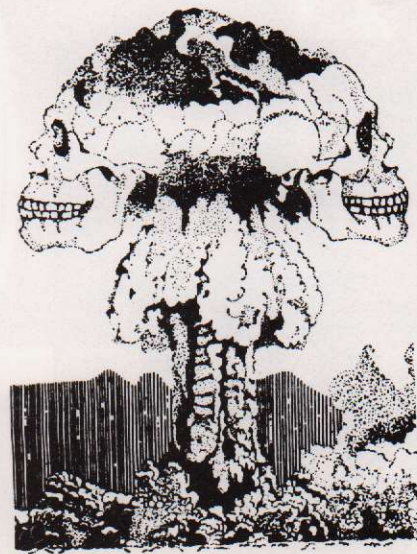
*The Times* and *Sunday Times* journalists are also balloting on taking strike action against the sacking of eight journalists who had refused to move to the scab plant.

But instead of taking advantage of the difficulties Murdoch is facing, and calling for stepped up support and solidarity from the rest of the labour movement, Norman Willis, general secretary of the TUC [national trade-union federation], is chiefly demanding that the scabs intercede on behalf of the sacked workers! Willis has asked the electricians' and journalists' unions to "use their best endeavours with their members at Wapping and with the company to bring about a resumption of talks."

The "best endeavours" that the electricians and journalists could make would be to strike in support. This should be the axis of the TUC's call.

We already saw what the "best endeavours" of the *Sun* journalists amounted to when, after voting to strike, they were bought off by Murdoch for an extra £2,000 a year each. Only appeals based on class solidarity, not on Murdoch's supposed good nature, can deal with such bribery.

An attempt to put together another sell-out package with Willis undoubtedly lies behind Murdoch's decision to postpone until July 7 his court action against the print unions. In the



context of the greater self confidence of the sacked printers such a legal move at present would only stiffen their resolve and bring greater solidarity action from the rest of the movement.

The key to preventing any new sell-out deal being accepted is to continue the mass meetings which discuss and decide the conduct of the dispute — together with the liaison committee of representatives of the striking chapels. Building these, together with stepping up the picketing, is the key task in the coming days.

[From the British newspaper, Socialist Action, June 27] □

## Peace

### Fifth END Convention

AFTER BEING held in previous years in Brussels, Berlin, Perugia and Amsterdam, the fifth convention of European Nuclear Disarmament (END) was held this year in Evry, France, from June 5 to 8.

Some 650 persons attended, mainly peace-movement, political, and trade-union figures, as well as representatives of the churches. There was even an official representative of the Soviet peace movement, along with representatives of the independent peace movements in Eastern Europe.

Also present were the mayor of the city of Esteli in Nicaragua, a representative of the South African ANC, of the PLO and Oscar Temaru, leader of the Polynesian Liberation Front.

Unlike the previous conventions, where there was an attempt to reinforce, enrich and deepen the peace movements, this time the 40 or so workshops on diverse topics did not make it possible to give a new impulse to the peace movement. To the contrary, the Evry convention marked a regression, with the debate focusing mainly on European security, dissuasion, arms policy and Eureka [an EEC space project].

Moreover, there was a noticeably greater presence of institutional forces that helped to shift the discussion to the right. The Danish Social Democratic Party, the British Labour Party, the Spanish state Socialist Party (PSOE) and the Italian Communist Party tried to propagate their general positions on disarmament, NATO, Central America, the Mediterranean and the Strategic Defense Initiative. But they showed no concern about mass mobilizations, even on limited objectives.

[From the July 3 issue of Rouge, newspaper of the French section of the Fourth International.] □

# A new war on the horizon?

THE FOLLOWING interview with Michel Warschawsky, a leader of the section of the Fourth International in Israel, was given to E. Van Cutsem and E. Tan in Belgium in June.

*Question. There has been a lot of talk recently about Israel preparing for war against Syria. How much substance is there to this?*

*Answer.* From reading the Israeli press, war appears inevitable. Syria is portrayed as the world center of terrorism. Every week some politician declares that a war against Syria would be a preventative war, that it is a question of life and death, and so on.

We are in the midst of psychological and ideological preparations for such a war. The strategic question is vital for the Zionist state. In fact, Israel cannot permit a neighboring country to go beyond a certain level of strength and military preparation.

*Q. Does that mean that war with Syria is imminent?*

*A.* If it depended only on the Israeli government, yes. But there are two kinds of problem that arise. First of all, it is not clear that the Israeli army is in a position to win an easy victory. The Syrian army is no longer what it was in 1967 or in 1973. A report by General Wald, still held under wraps, reportedly shows a series of weaknesses in the Israeli army. This is making the general staff hesitate. The second problem is latent opposition by a section of the population. The government knows that a lot of Israelis are not convinced that this war is

being imposed on the country from outside.

*Q. That is the continuing effect of the Lebanon war, no doubt?*

*A.* Yes, the Lebanon war created a schism within Israeli society, a breach in "national unity" for the defence of Israel. The Labor Party has, in fact, been very adroit in its statements. It talks about peace initiatives without, however, taking any. I am profoundly convinced that any new war lasting more than a week would bring this split to the surface again. That is why the government is hesitating, while trying to make sure that it has the maximum number of trump cards in its hand.

*Q. Where do the Israeli workers stand on this question?*

*A.* There is no hope for the Israeli working class apart from a Palestinian revolution. The Jewish workers face a fundamental choice. They can defend the Zionist state, and pay a higher and higher price in terms of their living standards, "fascistization" of daily life, and loss of human life. Or they can join the revolution on the basis of their class interest. There is no third camp between Zionism and the Arab socialist revolution. Only a consistent democratic struggle challenging the ideology and practice of the Zionist

state can meet the needs of the Jewish workers. This involves, therefore, total support for the Palestinian fighters.

*Q. What is the situation today in the occupied territories?*

*A.* There is a marked decline in the capacity for mobilization in the territories occupied by Israel. This is linked mainly to two factors. One is a much cleverer repressive policy on the part of the government. It is being very selective in arresting and deporting resistance cadres so as not to touch off a mass response. In addition, there is a real disarray caused by the crisis of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] and the impasse of Arafat's line.

Under the impact of the Zionist aggression in Lebanon and maneuvers by the reactionary Arab regimes and US imperialism, Arafat decided to reorient his policy. He accepted the framework of the Jordanian-Egyptian-Saudi initiative and recognized the United States as the key to solving the Palestinian problem. He is prepared to pay the price of such a policy and has been making one concession after another. He has given King Hussein the right to represent the Palestinian people in all negotiations and has given up the demand for an independent state. The result of the Arafat line has been a general weakening of the PLO and a reinforcement of the pro-Jordanian current in the occupied territories. This line has split the Palestinian movement and weakened the vanguard. Arafat has laid out all his cards. He now has to choose. He could make a 180-degree turn and break with the reactionary Arab regimes. But he is not able to do that because too many material interests link him to those regimes. Or, he can go to new compromises!

*Q. What about the Palestinian dissidents?*

*A.* The Palestinian patriotic currents have formed a "National Salvation Front." They reject Arafat's pro-US line. But it is not enough just to return to the slogans of the past. That is not sufficient to overcome the present crisis. The people of the occupied territories have to be seen as the principal force in the struggle. This mass movement has to be built up over the long term, without this being incompatible with military or diplomatic moves. The Lebanon war showed that the support of the Arab regimes for the Palestinian cause is weak or non-existent. It is necessary to rely above all on mobilizing the Arab masses, especially in Jordan, where the Palestinians are in a majority. □

*The Israeli army in Jerusalem (DR)*

