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French youth teach Chirac a lesson
South Africa : Freedom Charter discussed
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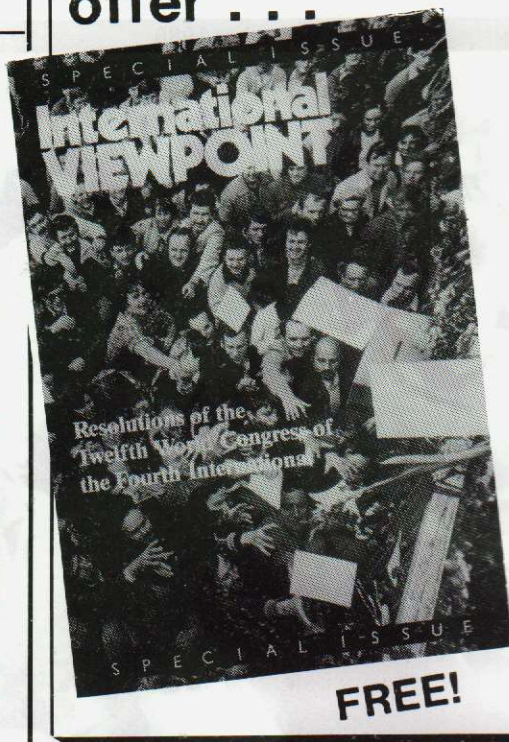
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Youth teach the Chirac government a lesson

AFTER THREE WEEKS of massive mobilizations, university occupations, school strikes and street battles, Jacques Chirac's right-wing coalition government was forced into a humiliating climbdown from its proposed reforms of higher education. The government's defeat, just nine months after their election victory in March this year, will have repercussions far wider than the education sector.

HILARY ELEANOR

Alain Devaquet, who as minister for the university sector gave his name to the reform bill, has been forced to resign — and he may be just the first casualty of the affair. The Devaquet bill was an attempt to reform the higher education system in accordance with the demands of French capital and industry. At the core of its proposals were increased selection of students and strengthening of the links between the private sector and the universities.

In a situation where youth unemployment stands officially at 11.5 per cent, with nearly 900,000 young people making up 36 per cent of the jobless, such a proposal to put up more barriers to entry into university met with massive opposition.

In France, the question of education has always been a political hot potato. Attempts by the previous Socialist government to reform private sectors of education were opposed by the right and dropped. Any student who passes their Baccalaureat examination at school has the right to go to university to try for a degree. Although this, in practice, creates massive overcrowding in the universities and a high rate of selection at the end of first year studies, the right to enter higher education is viewed as a democratic right.

Devaquet's bill provided a spark that ignited a massive movement of opposition among youth afraid of unemployment, many of whom had been radicalized through the mass anti-racist movement, SOS-racisme. The militancy and tenacity of the students took everyone by surprise. The media took great pains to describe how non-political it was (with endless comparisons to May 1968), while students occupied the universities, went on strike in the lycées (academic

high schools), organized monster demonstrations and appealed to workers for solidarity.

In Caen on November 15, a first coordinating meeting of ten universities was held. With a petition of just over 2,000 signatures, they called for the withdrawal of the bill, for a national demonstration and for self-organization of the students. In just over a week, the movement had snowballed into a massive opposition to the government. Teachers' unions had

Autre Chose, daily bulletin produced by the JCR



planned a demonstration some months earlier, and 150,000 turned out, led by the FEN (Federation de l'Education Nationale), a day after the students had put out an appeal for a general strike against the bill.

The first national student demonstration, on Thursday November 27, saw one million students, pupils and trade unionists on the streets in Paris and the provinces. The Student Coordination, a national body of delegates elected from each faculty and school, appealed for the occupation of the universities after this magnificent show of strength. They also appealed for a national strike in the whole education sector, and for a demonstration in Paris on December 4.

The occupations and the whole movement set a shining example for the labour movement of democratic forms of self-organization and unity in action. At each faculty, general assemblies (AGs) were held frequently, to discuss the next steps for the fightback, to take reports from delegates to the Student Coordination and to organize to build support among secondary school students and workers. Delegates to higher bodies were instantly recallable, and were mandated to vote by their AG. Commissions were set up to organize leafletting of workplaces, preparation for the demonstrations and so on. Some faculties also set up commissions to look into other governmental projects, such as the proposed racist nationality code, which attempts to limit rights to French citizenship.

This model of democratic functioning prevented successive attempts to sabotage and defuse the movement, by both government manoeuvres proposing to set up a commission to discuss the bill, and by media attempts to red-bait and divide the students.

The university occupations became a focus for the fightback in the build-up to the December 4 demonstration. But the strikes by secondary-school students gave an added depth to the campaign, broadening out the struggle and ensuring popular support for the demand for a total withdrawal of the Devaquet bill. Parents of the students organized in support committees, and demonstrated alongside their children. No-one was left untouched by the movement, and the tide began to turn against the government.

The national demonstration in Paris on Thursday, December 4 set in train the events that eventually brought about a U-turn by Chirac. One million people brought central Paris to a standstill, as the demonstrators wound their way for hours upon end between the Place de la Bastille and Invalides. The march itself passed off without incident — an impressive show of strength and unity. But events later

on that evening and the following day put the final nail in the bill's coffin.

Chirac had announced earlier in the week that the size of the demonstration would affect the government's attitude on whether or not to press ahead with the bill. On the evening of the demonstration, when protestors were still filing into Invalides, a delegation from the Student Coordination met with government representatives Devaquet and Rene Monory (minister of education). The result of the meeting was announced to the hundreds of thousands at the rally in Invalides: the government was going to press ahead with its reforms.

While Devaquet and Monory washed their hands of the affair, the minister of the interior, Charles Pasqua, took over by unleashing the CRS police, water cannons and tear-gas grenades on the demonstrators.

The news of government's intransigence provoked an angry reaction at the rally. But it was the provocations of the CRS that led to the bloody street battles that went on into that night. At least three tear-gas grenades hit human targets, gravely wounding one student, who lost an eye, knocking another unconscious and ripping off the hand of a third in full view of TV cameras.

It was clearly an attempt by the government to smash the movement by repression, and to turn the tide of public opinion against the students by labelling them "rioters". But this attempt to retake the initiative by tried and trusted appeals to "law and order" dramatically backfired.

Events moved rapidly against the government from this time on. On Friday, the day after the demonstration, they announced that the most controversial points of the Devaquet bill would be put on ice. The national Student Coordination responded by demanding complete and total withdrawal of the bill.

More street fights erupted on Friday night, around the Latin Quarter as the CRS moved in to evict students from the occupation at the Sorbonne university, one of the traditional strongholds of student militancy. Students acting in self-defence erected barricades, turned over buses and fought off the CRS with any weapon to hand.

On the heels of the CRS came the "voltigiers". These are a volunteer force attached to the police, who specialize in mopping-up operations — dispersing crowds by any available means. As a volunteer force, they are particularly riddled with extreme right-wingers. Mounted in twos on motor-bikes, the one at the rear carries a long club, and they proceed to chase

demonstrators, bystanders and anyone else who gets in their way along the roads and the pavements.

It was they who trapped Malik Oussekiné and clubbed him to death. Witnesses to the murder testified that Malik was unarmed. As news of his death emerged the following day, the government began to beat a hasty retreat.

Tens of thousands marched silently on Saturday in memory of Malik. In the afternoon, the Student Coordination called for protest strikes in workplaces on Monday, and another demonstration on Wednesday, December 10. The TV news reports identified an agent provocateur — who turned out to be a member of the transport police — throwing bricks at the CRS with no attempt being made to arrest him. They also showed the police letting crash-helmeted fascists pass a police cordon with the blessing of the officer in command.

Police cover up another murder

Late on Sunday, news leaked out that a young Algerian had been shot dead by police in an incident unrelated to the students. This event had happened on Friday, but had been covered up by the police and the government, who feared it would exacerbate opposition to the repression.

In spite of declaring that there would be "no retreat" by the government on Sunday, by 1pm on Monday Chirac made a public announcement that the Devaquet bill would be withdrawn.

After some confusion, the students decided to go ahead with a victory march on Wednesday the 10th, but given the death of Malik it was, as some of the banners said, "A sad victory". Again, a million demonstrators, youth and workers of all ages, showed their defiance to the government. Even though the union leaderships, with the exception of the communist-led CGT, had called off their support for the demonstration, tens of thousands of workers came out to support the students. The dominant slogan, referring both to Malik's murder and the introduction of education reform without consultation with the students, was "Plus jamais ca" — never again.

Following on from its defeat, the fragile coalition headed by Chirac is now in turmoil. It has had to temporarily withdraw its immediate projects, including the new nationality code, privatization of the prisons and criminalization of drug dependence. Although this retreat may be tempor-

ary while the government waits for things to cool off, the events of the past few weeks will have far reaching consequences.

The struggle exploded all the contradictions of the government. Within Chirac's coalition, members of the RPR (Rassemblement pour la republique) and the UDF (Union pour la democratie francaise) are falling over each other to look for scapegoats for the fiasco. Their fascist partners in the FN (Front national), who they rely on for a majority, are making the maximum mileage possible out of Chirac's "capitulation". Chirac not only has to salvage some vestiges of unity out of this mess, but also convince people that the "cohabitation" with Socialist President Francois Mitterrand has not turned into an unequal partnership, with Mitterrand pulling the strings. With an eye on the presidential elections due to be held in 1988, Jacques Chirac has plenty to worry about.

Although the Student Coordination has now wound up, there are plans to hold a new national delegate meeting in March next year. Aside from the immediate problems created for the government, the exemplary struggle of the students will no doubt inspire others in the future. After years of demagogic hot air and constant surrenders by the trade-union bureaucracies, the youth showed that it was possible to win a head-on confrontation with an aggressive right-wing government through democratic forms of mobilization and with determined leadership. It is an example that has already disturbed the European bourgeoisies. It should re-inspire the workers' movement.

Unlike the student upsurge of May 1968, the movement of December 1986 was marked by the numbers of young women who came to the fore in the leadership of the struggle. Anti-racist consciousness was also high, following from the successes of the SOS-racisme campaign, and this also added a dimension to the unity of the movement.

Any comparisons between recent events and those of May 1968 must be cautious. France, alongside other imperialist countries in Western Europe, faces an economic crisis as well as a social one. Mass unemployment, austerity and attacks on the workers are the order of the day. The international political situation appears relatively frozen by comparison to the turmoil of the late 1960s.

But young people in France have shown that battles can be won, even in this period of defensive struggles for the working class. And if battles can be won, so can the war. □

December 1986

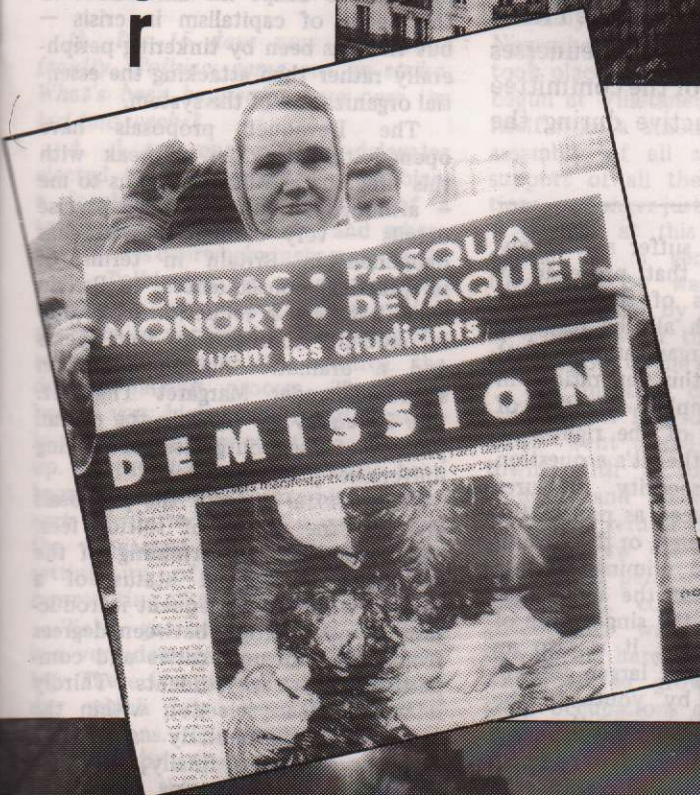


Photos (clockwise from top):
One of the massive student demonstrations in Paris
Teachers show their opposition to Devaquet

"Never again"

The CRS - moving in for the kill

"Chirac, Pasqua, Monory, Devaquet kill students - Resign"



Democracy and unity mark student strikes

THE FOLLOWING interview was done at the height of the student strike, before the government withdrew the proposed law. Sue Piercy talked to Christophe, a student at Tolbiac and member of the Jeunesses Communistes Revolutionnaires (JCR). He is a member of the committee at his faculty, which has been one of the most active during the struggle.

Question. How exactly did the movement start? After all, it surprised many people.

Answer. The movement started towards the end of October with the organization of a national day of strike action in all the universities. After this, the next notable move was that the students started to organize in response to a national appeal launched by the students at Caen, which was signed by 2,000 students.

The students at Villetaneuse were the first to go on strike. This was followed by a rapid extension of the movement — first to the bulk of the Paris universities and then to most of the provinces.

It is important to understand that although many people were surprised by the movement, there had already been several indications that it would be possible. In June, another law had been proposed by the right and the far right, putting forward an even more extreme "liberalization" of the universities. (1) In spite of the fact that this was right in the middle of the exam period there were some very big mobilizations in the provinces which paved the way for the response in the new academic year.

To understand why this generation has gone into struggle it is important to remember that they are the same generation who participated in SOS Racisme, the anti-racist movement, when they were lyceens [high school students]. They have, therefore, already had some experience of collective action, and it is to this experience that you can trace the confidence and ability to organize that you find today at the university level.

Although this generation saw 1981, it wasn't old enough to vote in that

year. So, it didn't suffer as strongly as the generation that preceded it from the betrayals of the Socialist government — with all the resulting disarray and disorganization. What stands out about this generation, in contrast, is its complete rejection of the first measures of the right-wing government — whether it's a question of racism, the security measures which were introduced as part of the anti-terrorism campaign, or the government's proposal to criminalize drug dependence. Even if the movement is concentrated on the single issue of the Devaquet project, it is also an expression of a much larger groundswell of reaction by youth to the Chirac government over the last months.

Q. How did the movement spread to the lycees?

A. The movement in the lycees grew incredibly quickly. At the beginning students spontaneously went to the school gates to explain what is contained in the law, because it concerns the lycees directly. It challenges the Baccalaureat as the qualification for access to university, and one proposal from Rene Monory [the education minister] would create two types of "Bac" — one for the elite, and one which no longer guaranteed a place in higher education.

It was noticeable that in the lycees the dynamic of the movement was much more rapid, even if its structuring was more hesitant. Very soon it was the lyceens themselves who took charge of their activities and set up their own strike committees and coordination, and we saw the massive mobilization of lyceens in the streets.

This fits in with the fact that it is youth who've suffered most from the repressive measures in general. The lyceens were much quicker to take up slogans challenging Chirac's "security" politics, the government's racist measures and their initiatives on the drugs question.

Q. What does the Devaquet law actually propose, and how does it fit into the government's project?

A. It's important to grasp that the proposals in this law mark a real break from previous policies. Since 1968 the reforms of the universities proposed by the bourgeoisie in France have been reforms intended to adapt the universities to the needs of capitalism in crisis — but this has been by tinkering peripherally rather than attacking the essential organization of the system.

The Devaquet proposals have opened the door to a break with this previous attitude. It seems to me — although I don't know the precise details — very similar to what has happened in Britain in terms of its practical consequences. In Britain there has been a reduction of 20,000 in student numbers in four years and a dramatic cut in education spending under Margaret Thatcher. The Devaquet law fits into the overall project of the bourgeoisie of making universities profitable.

The central axes of the proposals are first the raising of tuition fees, and second the undermining of the nationally recognized status of a degree, with the consequent introduction of competition between degrees from different universities and competition between students. Thirdly it would mean selection within the universities, particularly after the second year. And finally, it would introduce selection for entry to university, no longer automatically recognizing the Baccalaureat on its own as sufficient qualification.

There is a coherence to all these measures. It is the destruction of the present character of the universities and its replacement on the one hand with universities for the elite with high fees, selective degrees and big business sponsorship, and on the other hand "dustbin universities" offering lesser qualifications for the mass of students.

This reform comes at a time of real crisis in the universities. In France, as in the majority of indus-

1. The term "liberalization" means essentially the free-enterprise politics of the right. In relation to the universities, these proposals included selection of students entering higher education, increased links between the universities and private business, and so on.

trialized countries, there was a boom in student numbers in the '50s and '60s. The figures show that this rise was stopped completely by the crisis, and that a stagnation has ensued — so that student numbers have either followed demographic trends or regressed in some countries.

From this point of view the Devaquet project is an adaptation of the universities to the capitalist crisis instead of an attempt to deal with the real problems that already exist, such as "social selection". It is worth noting that in France the son of a worker has two and a half times less chance than the son of a middle-manager of going to university.

Q. It's 15 days now since your faculty, Tolbiac, came out on strike. What's been happening here over the last two weeks?

A. I am one of five delegates elected to the committee of Tolbiac, a faculty which is made up of a total of 15,000 students, and where the strike is overwhelmingly supported.

In Tolbiac, as in other faculties, there is a very strong desire by the students to participate in building the mobilizations and to control the decision-making process. There has been a very high level of participation in all the commissions that we've set up. In the main our structures have been concerned with examining what sort of university we want beyond the Devaquet proposals, and the setting up of a strike committee representing all the students.

We've got what, in my opinion, is a very democratic way of functioning. There is a general assembly every day which takes reports from the commissions. The students vote on all the principal issues, and on continuing the strike. For 15 days now the strike has been voted through with a huge majority — about 80 per cent of the students at Tolbiac.

Q. How are the students organized on a national level?

A. At the national level what is most striking is the reproduction on a large scale of the structures in each of the universities. There is a very strong desire for unity among all the students. So people wanted to set up a structure that the majority of students, whether unionized or not, could take part in and exercise control over.

Nationally each college set up a strike committee and a general assembly. They then elected delegates, with very precise mandates and the possibility of being recalled at any time, to the national Student Coordination of the movement. This body

brings together unionized and non-unionized students. That is to say that although union organizations like UNEF-ID — an organization made up mainly of Socialist Party members, but with several groupings of revolutionaries such as the JCR belonging to it — were able to play an important role in terms of launching the movement, it is not the movement of any particular organization.

We've seen that when these unions appear to be useful tools in the struggle then they are not rejected. Students accept their support, as long as there is no attempt to monopolize the movement.

The key thing for the structuring of the movement was the general assembly convened by UNEF-ID on November 22. This general assembly took place a week after the strike had begun at Villetaneuse. It transformed itself from a union body to a general assembly of all students, with the support of all the student organizations, no longer just UNEF-ID.

It was at this meeting that an appeal for a general strike from November 24 was launched. This was supported by all the universities in France with the exception of a few bastions of the extreme right.

The meeting called for demonstrations on Thursday, November 27. These went ahead in all the major towns with a total of 6-700,000 students and lycées involved. The continued refusal of the government to withdraw its project posed a problem of perspective for the movement. But, contrary to what the government was betting on, the movement hardened out and even continued to grow, with day and night occupations of the universities, organization of debates and the opening of the universities to the population.

Next, the Student Coordination called a national demonstration in Paris for December 4 which brought together 600,000 people in Paris and one million in France as a whole, because for financial reasons some couldn't come to the main march.

At this demonstration it was apparent that an evolution had taken place. The dynamic of the struggle had brought about a politicization in the movement, in the sense that a large number of students and lycées saw that the problems of education have broader implications, and that the intransigence of the government on this question was part of the general repressive framework of their policies.

Q. A lot of articles in the press have pointed to a distrust of politics among the students and have emphasised their dissimilarity with

the generation of 1968. How far do you think this is the case?

A. The distrust is real, but it is a distrust of delegating politics to organizations that have often seemed to betray. With the anti-racist struggle, and now with the student movement, we are beginning to witness a reversal of the tendency to individualism of the last few years. Young people are showing that they are interested in politics — but in the wider sense. They want to construct something new, and that is important. But there is a distrust of organizations that claim they will do it for them.

Another important factor is the economic crisis, and the high unemployment figures amongst youth. People have been looking for a way to challenge this and now there is an increasing recognition that unemployment is not the inevitable consequence of the crisis and that there are definite policy decisions involved.

In France there is a general ideological crisis, which weighs especially heavily on youth, who have a distrust of Marxism. Although there is the revolution in Nicaragua, it is not yet a major reference point for youth like Vietnam was in the '60s.

What is happening today is that the bourgeois press have tried to reduce movements — like the anti-racist movement — to the level of vague humanitarian concern. It is much more than this. It is part of the search by youth to find a way to intervene into the present situation. But they limit themselves to concrete demands which come out of the general political situation.

Q. What is the situation at the moment?

A. After two weeks of general strike in the universities and lycées there was a problem of what to do next. After Thursday's demonstration students got the message that the government had not only failed to withdraw the law, but that it would not hesitate to use force. The provocation of the government was seeking to destroy the unity of the movement. Over 100 students and lycées were injured at the end of the protest.

But what was noticeable was that this police violence, far from disorientating the movement, caused a radicalization. The students voted to continue the strikes until the project is withdrawn and to step up the occupations. We have also decided to make use of the widespread sympathy among the public and the working class for the strike, and to organize a day of support action bringing all those forces together next week. □

Bosses fight union growth

ROLANDO OLALIA, who was assassinated on November 13, was chair of the three-month-old People's Party (Partido ng Bayan) and of the May First Movement union federation (KMU). In the following interview Crispin Beltran, a 30-year veteran of the Philippine labor movement, describes the KMU's origins and its orientation since Philippines President Corazon Aquino's administration came to power. (1)

Beltran was secretary-general of the KMU from its founding in 1980 until his detention by President Ferdinand Marcos' regime in August 1982. He is today a member of its National Executive Council.

Felixberto Olalia, referred to in the interview, was the founding chair of the KMU. He died in December 1983, a few months after release from prison.

The interview was obtained by Deb Shnookal and Russell Johnson in Manila last August. It is reprinted from the November 28 issue of the US newspaper, *The Militant*.

Question. Could you explain how the KMU was formed?

Answer. In 1980, during the most repressive years of Marcos, we organized the advanced elements of the workers to celebrate May 1. We were about 35,000 at that time.

At that May 1 congress our old man, Mr. [Felixberto] Olalia, suggested we take the name Kilusang Mayo Uno or May First Movement. From then on we persevered in organization, expansion, and consolidation. Now, after a little more than five years, we have some 600,000 members.

On the other hand, there is the TUCP [Trade Union Congress of the Philippines], which was the principal trade union center up to now. The TUCP was organized in November 1975, with the assistance of the Asia American Free Labor Institute and the Ministry of Labor and Employment of the Marcos government.

According to initial estimates, 1.5 million members belonged to the federations that formed the TUCP. They provided a mass arena for the Marcos dictatorship to propagate its policies to the people.

Only now are we finding out how much it has declined. According to the records of the Ministry of Labor, the TUCP had only 221,000 members as of July 15. Its figure for the KMU was more than 480,000.

○ The KMU has definitely taken the

upper hand in the affiliation of unions in strategic enterprises and industries. Of the largest 100 multinationals in the Philippines, 42 are already organized by the KMU.

Q. Has the KMU any relationship to the new party that is being formed?

A. The KMU has a very integral relationship to the Partido ng Bayan because its program is similar to the KMU's. The KMU should be identified with it, so we can project our political objectives in a more organized and comprehensive way. In fact, I and other KMU national officers are founding members.

Q. The KMU frequently speaks of genuine and yellow trade unionism. What does it mean by those terms?

A. Genuine and yellow trade unionism are exact opposites. Genuine unionism recognizes the basic contradictory relations between the capitalist and the workers. Our experience shows us that the workers are always oppressed, repressed and deceived by management. And not only management, but in combination with the government.

The government in the Philippines is always represented by people who are either big capitalists or big hacenderos [landowners], so government policy reflects the interests of these

small groups of people.

Even the state machinery is operating to protect the interests of the capitalists rather than the workers. The bias is always against the workers. If we recognize this antagonism and work for the advancement of the workers on this basis, we call it genuine trade unionism.

Now, it doesn't end there. We have an additional principle, which is the militant character of the union. By relying mainly on the legal machineries of the government we go nowhere in our struggle for the betterment of the workers. The main thrust of advancing the workers' struggle is through its organized strength. We call this militant struggle.

The combined force of the elite and the government are also supplemented by US imperialism, by all imperialist countries for that matter, that deny the whole Filipino people its sovereignty. So we add to our orientation the nationalist framework.

"Yellow" means unions are used as instruments by the capitalists to subvert the interests of the workers. In fact, our yellow unions now are subsidized by imperialist and capitalist money in order to survive. This aid is given to these yellow unions in many forms. Even in the simple matter of a collective bargaining agreement between the workers and management, much money often changes hands. A predominance of this yellow unionism is found in the TUCP.

Q. How did you get arrested and how did you get to be released?

A. I was arrested on 18 August 1982, five days after Bert Olalia, chair of the KMU. About 100 local KMU leaders were also arrested.

At that time the KMU was very militant in protesting the dictatorship's repression against the workers and its anti-labor and pro-imperialist policies. Marcos ordered a clamp-down on the labor movement; that was how we got arrested.

This showed that, although martial law was allegedly lifted in 1981, all the structures remained. The labor code, for example, was never repealed, especially the anti-strike law. We said the lifting of martial law in 1981 was hocus pocus.

After our arrest my co-detainees from the labor movement were gradually released on a temporary status or under house arrest. After a while I was the only labor detainee left in the stockade. So, I began to think seriously about releasing myself.

1. See also "Founding of the People's Party", and further articles on the political situation in the Philippines in 'International Viewpoint' No. 110, December 8, 1986.

The opportunity came on November 21, 1984. It was not really a sensational escape. I used to give money to my guards and then ask them to go with me to my house on my trips to court. Clandestinely, of course, because if the higher-ups heard about this they would not allow it.

So on November 21, while I was drinking with my two guards at the house, I asked them to permit me to go to the toilet. Coming back from the toilet I jumped out of a window and ran as fast as I could towards the highway and hailed a passenger jeepney that drove me to Quezon City near the city hall, where we found a taxi.

After that I contacted some people in the underground who took me away from the Manila area into the provinces where they hid me from the military dragnet. While in hiding under an assumed name I helped organize the peasants.

After the new government was installed, I presented myself to President Aquino and she asked what I would like the new government to do about me. I told her nothing more than to be considered like the other political prisoners that had been released since she took office. She said it was okay and so I regained my legal status.

In the meantime, our lawyers filed a petition in the courts to dismiss my cases of rebellion and sedition, which were accordingly dismissed.

Q. What has the overthrow of Marcos meant for the trade-union movement?

A. The overthrow means much because it must be remembered that the trade-union movement was very much repressed and the workers were impoverished economically. When the new government took over, it promised liberalization in the policy on the trade-union movement.

When the new president was the guest of the May 1 Labor Day celebration [of 200,000 in Manila] she promised to repeal the Batasang Pambansa 130 and 227 [Marcos' anti-strike laws]. This declaration, however, has not yet been implemented. It remains only a promise.

The new minister of labor, "Bobbit" Sanchez, however, has from the time he assumed office sort of implemented this promise.

Before, the arbitration system operated against the labor movement. Now, the ministry mainly relies on mediation efforts to really try and convince both parties to settle their grievances. This is in spite of the complaints of the employers, who accuse him of being anti-capitalist and pro-communist.



Crispin Beltran (left) with Rolando Olalia (DR)

The capitalists are using the ordinary courts to enjoin the strikes. When the ordinary courts issue injunctions, they immediately ask the assistance of the military.

There have already been several cases of military harassment and dispersal of picket lines resulting in injuries to picketers. These methods were the mark of the old regime.

Q. It seems that you can't walk down a street in Manila without coming across a picket line or pick up a newspaper without reading employer complaints about the strikes. What's behind this strike wave today?

A. The basic question is the workers' poverty and their promised rights. We are all aware of the long period of repression during the Marcos time against the workers. Now there is a promise by the government to return their democratic rights. And yet, as they are being promised this, the economic conditions have not changed at all. There is more unemployment now than before because of the closures of many factories.

These are the basic conditions that have resulted in the many strikes that we have now. For instance in Cebu 30 strikes were under way simultaneously. The political leadership in Cebu charged that the KMU was destabilizing the economy there.

But, we should consider the fact that the minimum wage under our statutes is not being respected. The minimum is 57 pesos a day for eight hours work, but many, many workers

in Cebu receive wages as low as 12 pesos a day. In US dollars that is only about 60 cents for eight hours. How can you live with this 60 cents in eight hours?

Hearing the president's pronouncements on their rights and then living in the conditions that they are, it would be impossible for the KMU to prevent them from striking.

Q. What's behind the closures of factories?

A. We see a combination of three reasons why factories are closing. First, there is really no capital, the government cannot lend additional capital to invest and support businesses. The credit is so tight. Interest rates are so high. So, for the small capitalists, it is very hard for them to continue in business.

Second, the backwardness of the economy that is the result of long domination and control by foreign monopoly capitalism is stunting business.

Third, there is no capitalist now in the Philippines that is interested in investing. They say they are afraid of the instability. In fact, Mrs. Aquino, during her dialogue with businessmen at the Manila Hotel, was forced to reprimand the investors for not helping her in the economic recovery program.

All the workers understand is that they are hungry and that they are oppressed. So they are demanding justice, both economically and in the recognition of their rights. □

New directions for labor

"NEW DIRECTIONS for Labor," a conference held in Detroit, Michigan in mid-November, attracted more than eight hundred participants, the vast majority of whom were trade unionists. This was the fourth conference sponsored by *Labor Notes*, a progressive monthly newsletter.

DIANNE FEELEY

The conference had three inter-related themes: highlighting international solidarity in the face of rising "protectionism" on the part of business, government and trade union bureaucrats; a focus on successful tactics for mobilizing the rank-and-file and carrying out successful union struggles; and a discussion of the strike against the Hormel plant in Austin, Minnesota by Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW).

The underlying premises of the conference were based on counterposing new directions for the old — and failing — program of US labor. Today only 18 per cent of the entire US work force is even unionized. The conference counterposed to "business unionism" a concept of "social unionism." That is, a unionism that understands that concession bargaining is bargaining away worker rights.

A second premise of social unionism is solidarity: an injury to one is an injury to all. For this to be operative, labor's social responsibility spans generations, racial and sexual lines, and even the boundaries of the nation-state. Another crucial premise is the concept of union democracy, for that gives the rank-and-file the vision, the training and the skills to grasp what the workplace and the society as a whole must become.

At the opening session trade unionists from around the world brought greetings:

* Amon Msane, chief steward of the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa in a 3M plant in Elandsfontein (near Johannesburg), spoke about the crucial role the trade-union movement is playing in the fight against apartheid. COSATU, the non-racial trade-union federation which has more than half a million members,

is almost a year old. Yet it has played an increasingly important role in integrating the struggle of the working class at the workplace with the community-based struggle.

* Leto Villar, leader of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU — May 1 Movement) in Manila, the largest labor federation in the Philippines, spoke about the role of unions in the fight for democracy.

* Octavia Lara of the September 19th Garment Workers Union in Mexico spoke of how the women workers in the textile industry began to organize themselves in the period following the 1985 earthquake. Their organizing takes place in the context of high levels of unemployment and the fact that all but the unions associated with the government in power are considered "illegal."

International trade union speakers

* Alberto Eulalio, director of the Brazilian Metal Workers Union, spoke about how to build a strong and militant union under conditions where both the employer and the state use strong-arm tactics, including occupying the factory and dispersing assemblies of the workers.

* Jose Geremias Rivas, of the Social Security Workers Union of El Salvador, now living in exile in the US, described the rise of the new trade union federation, UNTS, and their call for peace and justice in the face of the growing militarization of Salvadorean society.

Also present was Numonde Ngubo, founder of the South African National Union of Mineworkers, who came to the US in 1983. She is the director of the Shell Boycott — an increasingly

effective boycott — and an international representative for the United Mineworkers.

Following the international panel, the conference broke down into nine workshops, covering topics from the "AFL-CIO's global foreign policy," "How to take on the multinationals," to workshops on the labor movement in a specific country. In some cases, the network of trade unionists active in solidarity work was able to discuss specific solidarity activities.

More than a dozen activists of the battle against Hormel came to the conference. At this stage, the union has been placed in trusteeship by the international union, a weak contract has been negotiated and ratified by the scabs working in the plant, members of the union not working in the plant have been barred from meetings, and the United Support Group — the backbone of the strike support activity — was expelled from the union hall. The UFCW trustees in charge have dismantled the facilities the strikers had set up: the Santa's Workshop, the clothing exchange, and the food-shelf. The massive mural on the side of the union hall — the work of more than 100 rank-and-file members and their families — was sandblasted, although strikers obtained a temporary restraining order preventing further destruction of the mural.

But if people believed the P-9 struggle was over, the conference demonstrated that the strikers are still "P-9 proud." They are still fighting against the imposition of the trusteeship, and they have re-established the United Support Group in a nearby building.

In both the panel on P-9 and over a dozen workshops that followed up the presentation, it became clear that the struggle of P-9 has resulted in some important victories for progressive trade unionism. First, the preparation the P-9 local put into their strike and support work had led to establishing some excellent working class self-organization that has not existed in the US since the unemployed movement of the 1930s. They have organized their spouses, children and retirees into a support network. They leafletted working-class people not just in their own town or their own state, but fanned out in the months before they called the strike into all of the states bordering their own.

Second, the level of strike support activity — even in the face of attacks by the International UFCW, the trade union officialdom and the Communist Party — surpasses the level of national support that has existed before. For instance, the number of food caravans to Austin, the number of unions who have adopted a P-9 family,

and the sizeable rallies in defence of P-9 that have been held around the country indicate a sustained level of commitment.

Unfortunately the international union, although initially agreeing to sanction the strike, double-crossed the local, moving in to make a deal with the owners, and freezing out the strikers. The international union has been extremely vindictive towards P-9. It has attempted to paint its leadership as irresponsible in its demands and tactics; use its power to isolate P-9 from all trade unionists; and side with Hormel in ensuring that those who do go back to work in the plant disassociate themselves from the old P-9 and from any boycott of Hormel products.

The tragedy is that the P-9 strike could have been won. Although the meatpacking industry is in turmoil, the Hormel plant in Austin is an efficient and productive plant. It is the fact that the potential victory was turned into a defeat by the trade-union bureaucracy that has been the big blow to the labor movement here. The event has moved the soft underbelly of the trade-union movement more into the concessions camp, but at the same time there has been the emergence of a countervailing trend: the development of those who demand an end to concessions. And this is the development of a "hard left."

Need to develop a political arm

Clearly one aspect that needs to be developed by this newly-emerging social unionism is a greater understanding of the need to develop a political arm. In this sense, as in many others, the US trade-union movement can learn from the emerging unionism in the third world, and especially from the Brazilian experience, where the industrial unions have started the process of initiating a workers' party that reflects the needs of the entire working class, both organized and unorganized, both employed and unemployed.

Although eight countries were represented at the conference, the vast majority of participants were US trade unionists, followed by a significant number of Canadians. In addition to the three panels, there were a number of geographical meetings, meetings by industry, as well as Black, Latino and women's meetings. For the first time, the conference held a men's meeting to discuss how men, particularly in male-dominated industries, can fight effectively against the backward

attitudes of male co-workers.

One of the highlights of the conference was the Saturday evening banquet speech by Victor Reuther, one of the founders of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the 1930s. As an advocate of union democracy and in opposition to the UAW's concessions strategy, Reuther stands as a bridge between the rich and militant history of the US trade-

union movement of the 1930s and the developing anti-concessions movement of the 1980s.

The conference is not a decision-making one, but functions as an information-exchange. This year, however, one resolution adopted unanimously was a message of solidarity that one member will take to El Salvador to give to the UNTS-sponsored peace conference. □

Open work for Solidarnosc?

THE DECISION by the Polish regime to extend a political amnesty on September 11 to imprisoned leaders and activists of Solidarnosc led to an attempt by the union leadership to establish an area of open work for the first time since the crackdown of December 13, 1981.

On September 29, an open Provisional Council of Solidarnosc was formed. (See *International Viewpoint*, No. 108, November 10, 1986.) On the same day, statements were issued by Lech Walesa, chair of the union, and the Provisional Council. They were published in issue No. 182, October 1, of *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, an underground publication close to the leadership of Solidarnosc.

The following leaders of Solidarnosc were members of the new Council. Zbigniew Bujak from Warsaw, Wladyslaw Frasnyniuk and Jozef Piniar from Lower Silesia, Bogdan Lis and Bogdan Borusewicz from Gdansk, Janusz Palubicki from Poznan and Tadeusz Jedynak from Upper Silesia.

On October 12, Lech Walesa met with the Temporary Coordinating Commission (TKK, the underground leadership of Solidarnosc), and they issued a joint statement.

On October 6, the Regional Strike Committee (RKS) of Lower Silesia declared that union activity in that region would remain strictly underground. Two days later, the Regional Executive Committee (RKW) of Warsaw emerged from clandestinity and began to operate openly.

Its example was followed by the leaders of Solidarnosc in several major industrial centers — Lublin, Upper Silesia, Lodz, Szczecin, Poznan and Nowa Huta, the steel center outside Cracow, where open committees were established. The same thing happened in several smaller regions — Pila, Konin, Kielce, Opole, Radom, Gorzow Wielkopolski and Jelenia Gora.

This attempt to establish legal work is obviously a turn for Solidarnosc and has prompted considerable discussion within the anti-bureaucratic union movement. On the fifth anniversary of Jaruzelski's declaration of a state of war against the independent workers' movement, we are publishing below a series of statements and articles from publications and leading bodies of Solidarnosc on this operation. The first statements are taken from the October 28 issue of *Uncensored Poland*, the bulletin of the Information Centre for Polish Affairs in London.

The sources for the other statements following this material are marked at the beginning of each piece.

Joint Statement of TKK and Lech Walesa, 12 October, 1986

On 12 October a session of the Temporary Coordinating Commission [TKK] of Solidarity took place, attended by Chair Lech Walesa. Among others who took part were Jan Andrzej Gorny and Marek Muszynski.

The present situation of the Union was discussed. It has been agreed that recent events are not sufficient grounds for radically changing the clandestine character of Union activities. It has been the only feasible and efficient form of action in conditions prevailing since December 13, 1981, and, apart from certain changes, prevailing to this day.

The current organization of the TKK of Solidarity was discussed. Following a motion of the Chair of the Union, it has been decided unanimously that Jan Andrzej Gorny and Marek Muszynski will return to normal life. The consolidation of the structures and efficient forms of organizational action prevailing at present make it no longer absolutely necessary for them to remain in hiding. Lech Walesa and the TKK have expressed their heartfelt thanks for Jan Andrzej Gorny's and Marek Muszynski's long and devoted service to date.

In discussing the situation of the Union it has been stated that the wave of recent political events in Poland is causing a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding among members of Solidarity and sympathisers. Acting on the conviction that the good of Poland requires actions undertaken in a spirit of patriotism and democracy — which at present means respect for the principles and traditions of Solidarity — we declare the following:

1. Solidarity consists, according to the statute, of autonomous regional organizations.

2. Current activities are under the direction of the TKK of Solidarity, which coordinates activities of the regions, initiates actions on the national level, and represents the Union to the outside world.

3. The TKK of Solidarity is a collegial body consisting of chairs or appointed representatives of regional executive commissions (RKW, RKK, RKS, RK).

4. The TKK acts in close cooperation with the Chair of Solidarity, Lech Walesa.

5. The leadership of regional organizations of Solidarity is in the hands of regional executive commissions which coordinate and assist union organizations in individual enterprises, remain in contact with them, work out plans of action and represent them outside the region.

6. Basic units of Solidarity are factory (enterprise) structures directed by clandestine factory commissions (TKZ). Survival of the structures means survival of Solidarity. In present circumstances it has to be stressed once more and very firmly that it is necessary to maintain the formula of clandestine action as the only one

that is feasible in conditions prevailing since December 13, 1981 and persisting to this day.

7. The organ which represents the Union outside the country is the Coordinating Bureau of Solidarity Abroad set up by the TKK and based in Brussels.

8. Recently we have been witnessing attempts of widening the formula of action through open actions of groups of activists of Solidarity. While considering these attempts with interest, the TKK stresses the need to maintain security requirements and to protect the underground human potential, together with the material base, which jointly determine the strength and significance of the Union.

9. The TKK considers that maintaining and protecting internal democracy in the Union is a fundamental condition of its efficiency.

Lech Walesa, Chair of Solidarity; Temporary Coordinating Commission of Solidarity; regional representatives: Lower Silesia, Gdansk, Crakow, Western Pomerania, Upper Silesia, Torun-Bydgoszcz, the Lodz area.

Statement by Lower Silesia (Wroclaw) region of Solidarity, 6 October, 1986

In response to many questions and doubts addressed to the Regional Strike Committee concerning, among other things, the problem of coming out into the open or dissolving units of Solidarity, we present our position in the matter, arrived at after consultations with Solidarity activists in factory and inter-factory units.

1. We welcome initiatives of trying to find and creating new forms of action for the benefit of Solidarity and the good of the country. We remain convinced that the Provisional Council of Solidarity is going to serve these aims.

2. We affirm that basic units of Solidarity are structures within individual enterprises headed by clandestine factory commissions. The survival of these structures means the survival of Solidarity, whereas their decomposition, disruption or dissolution would be tantamount to a cessation of union activities. No regional or national body can replace well-organized basic structures. The role and importance of these units is most clearly appreciated by union activists who remain in constant working relation with the factories. The fact that Solidarity has survived as an organization during five years of reprisals and persecution is very largely due to the fact that our Union has grown up from the grassroots, that is, in the most natural manner. The organizational structures developed in this way have the greatest chance of survival. The role and importance of Lower Silesia on the map of our Union is, in our opinion, the result of the fact that the RKS has always remained faithful to these two basic principles: the primacy of factory structures and independence from any political groupings.

3. The real strength and importance of any organization is determined by its human potential and material base. The RKS firmly holds that as long as there is no guarantee of safe union activity for Solidarity, that is, that no one will be persecuted for union activity, and that equipment and other material means in our possession will not be confiscated, then bringing factory structures out into the open or dissolving them cannot be justified. In fact, it would be suicidal for the Union. We hold, moreover, that as long as Solidarity remains de-legalized it is not realistic for factory structures, regional bodies or the TKK to attempt open union activity. This does not mean that it is impossible to carry out open actions for the re-legalization of Solidarity. We see a clear difference between the two.

4. We consider it natural that there should be rotations and gradual changes in the personnel of units at any level, which may be caused by capture, tiredness, leaves of absence, etc. This natural process, however is no reason to disband units, to bring them out into the open and to discontinue their activities.

5. Regional organs (in the case of Lower Silesia the RKS) coordinate and assist the work of union structures in the factories, remain in constant touch with them, consult them on forms of action, and act as their representatives outside the region. Similarly, the TKK, which consists of representatives of active regions, speaks for the whole of Solidarity. The chair of Solidarity is Lech Walesa, and the Coordinating Bureau of Solidarity in Brussels is duly empowered to represent the union outside Poland.

6. Acting on these premises, the RKS of Solidarity in Lower Silesia declares that it is not going to set up an open regional council. We say again what we have said many times before, that whoever wishes to be active in Solidarity can find his place and enormous scope for action in the existing structures of the Union, or in securing their extension.

7. The most important current tasks of regional organizations for Lower Silesia have been presented in the RKS resolution of 16 May, 1986. *The Programme's Theses* published in *Z dnia na dzien* No. 24/413 were intended to initiate a discussion on future ways of action, tactics, organizational forms and strategies. We ask the TKK to undertake a critical study of these documents and, possibly, to adopt them for the Union as a whole.

Statement by Gorzow Wielkopolski region of Solidarity, 6 October, 1986

Considering the decision to free political prisoners as a step enabling the establishment of genuine national accord and for all groups and social circles to join in the process of lifting the country out of the economic,

political and moral crisis; and also in response to the appeal by Lech Walesa and the Provisional Council of Solidarity, the Presidium of the Regional Board of Solidarity of the Gorzow Wielkopolski region decided to resume open activity as from 19 October 1986. We wish thereby to take the chance of agreement, opened by the decision of the authorities, but we wish to take it as an organization truly self-governing and independent, not losing our identity.

We regard the presence of Solidarity in the open social life as the central condition and guarantee of solving Polish problems. Our crisis is characteristic of a crisis within the system, and overcoming it requires changes in the system, freeing social self-government and initiative and unblocking all fields of economic activity. On our part we wish to join in this process. The attitude of the authorities to our initiatives we shall regard as a touchstone of their real intentions.

Edward Borowski, Chair of the Regional Board; Tadeusz Korodziejski, Deputy Chair of the Regional Board; Jerzy Gospodarek, Member of the Presidium of the Regional Board; Zbigniew Zieba, Member of the Presidium; Franciszek Konaszewicz, Member of the Presidium.

Statement by the Kielce Region of Solidarity, 12 October 1986

On 12 October, 1986, the Provisional Council of Solidarity for the Kielce Region has been formed. Its members are: Marian Jaworski, Member of Solidarity's National Commission and Chair of Solidarity's Kielce Region; Kazimierz Koruba, Board member of the Kielce Region; Bogdan Rys, Member of Solidarity's National Commission and Board member of the Kielce Region; Jerzy Stepien, Deputy Chair of Solidarity's Kielce Region.

Our only aim is the good of the country, which is affected by the continuing crisis. The crisis can only be overcome through a joint effort of Poles who work for a genuine national agreement.

Statement by the Radom Region of Solidarity, 6 October 1986

Acceding to the decision by Solidarity leader Lech Walesa, Nobel Peace Prize winner, to form Temporary Councils of Solidarity, regarding it as particularly important and valuable and directed by a deep concern for the good of Poland and the Polish people, we announce that the Temporary Council of Solidarity for the Radom region has been formed. After democratic elections in the years 1980-81 in independent union structures, we undertook the social responsibility for the sizeable, many thousand strong electorate of working people. We carry this responsibility still, because in our consciences we have not accepted the violent, overwhelming and one-sided method used to eliminate Solidarity from social life. The trust which we had then accompanies us now; five years after the tragic night of 13 December. This

is why we consider it to be a sufficient social mandate to present the authorities with another proposal for dialogue, which is the reason for our Council. The formation of the Council should enable all those responsible for the fate of our country to undertake effective and lasting action leading to the achievement of a meaningful national understanding. The existence of our Council should also at the same time be a motivation for finding, through sincere dialogue, mutual understanding, such solutions and decisions which will help to extricate our country from the many and still deepening crises. We want the work of our fellow Poles to bring happiness and for it to increase the beauty of our country. We want a Poland in which there are no people who drop out of life, living from day to day without hope; we want for it to be better, different. We are trying to show people the goodness of life without oppression, wherever it may come from. Our work for society will be carried out openly, because the violent methods employed to resolve social problems, so often used in our country and in our region, always brought with them the violation of rights to personal freedom and lowers human dignity.

We never want to see another Pole

raising his hand or arms against his brother. We do not wish to see prisons again filling up with people suffering for their convictions. We do not wish to see large social and professional groups finding themselves outside the mainstream of social and professional life. We do not wish to see young Poles resign themselves from working for Poland and country to casting their fates abroad. We are convinced this task of establishing a Council of Solidarity, which is a sign of the times for the country, will bring unity and solidarity for all Poles closer. We express the hope that our voice will be properly understood and that the authorities, after the July 1986 amnesty, will embark on the next, rightful step leading to pluralism in social and economic life. We await the return to a true realization of the August 1980 agreements. At the same time we express our support for the Provisional Council of Solidarity.

Witold Krol; Jerzy Pierzchala; Jan Pajak; Jan Rejczak.

Statement by the Opole Region of Solidarity

This is the fifth year since the imposition of martial law and the suspension of open activity of Soli-

Strike at the Gdansk shipyards, August 1980 (DR)



parity. The time which has passed has not brought the solution of burning social problems any nearer, neither where the economy and standard of living are concerned, nor in the field of human rights and dignity. The only way out of the deep internal crisis is the way of honest dialogue between the rulers and society. It is a necessary condition of such dialogue for society to have the possibility of expressing various opinions and views, particularly in a framework of open activity by Solidarity. For this reason we welcome the emergence of the Provisional Council of Solidarity and the resumption of open activities in the regions. In order to assist initiatives of the Provisional Council which aim to open a dialogue with the authorities, we have decided to set up a temporary Regional Council of Solidarity for the Opole Region.

Jan Calka, Member of the Regional Executive; Jerzy Gneciak, Chair of the Provincial Committee of Solidarity of Individual Farmers; Roman Kirstein, Vice-Chair of Regional Executive; Andrzej Kwiatkowski, Member of Regional Executive, Chair of Factory Commission of Solidarity in the Swierczewski Steel Mill; Janusz Sanocki, Chair of the Town Commission of Solidarity in Nysa; Stanislaw Tkacz, Member of Regional Executive, Chair of Factory Commission of "Renifer"; Wieslaw Uleja, Chair of the Independent Students Union in Opole, member of Solidarity; Franciszek Winiarski, Chair of Solidarity of Private Artizans in Opole; Eugeniusz Wyspianski, Member of the Inter-factory Committee, Rudnicki Area.

Statement by the Provisional Council of Pila Region Solidarity, 16 October, 1986

In view of the new socio-political situation in Poland after the freeing of political prisoners and the formation of the Provisional Council of Solidarity in Gdansk, the individuals gathered together today: Jaroslaw Gruszkowski, ZNTK Pila; Anna Kalamoniak, ZOZ Pila; Czeslaw Wysocki, Catering Schools Group Pila; Zbigniew Perka, POMET Pila; are forming, with the approval of the Regional Executive of the Pila Province Region, a Temporary Council of Solidarity in Pila.

We regard as our most important task the representation of union structures which have been in existence since 1980. On the basis of the programme resolution of the 1st Congress of Delegates of Solidarity we shall strive for preserving the principle of pluralism in social life, full implementation of economic reform on the basis of authentic self-governments in the enterprises, safeguarding and improving the living standards of those who have been the hardest hit by the economic crisis, and also in view of the ecological crisis, for preserving the environment.

Statement of the Poznan Region of Solidarity, 22 October, 1986

In order to facilitate the passing from clandestine action into open action, we are setting up a Council of Solidarity for the Poznan Area

consisting of: Wieslaw Chossa, Poznan; Marek Gaul, Poznan; Jaroslaw Gruszkowski, Pila; Anna Kalamoniak, Pila; Zdzislaw Lewandowski, Poznan; Bogdan Narozny, Wrzesnie; Janusz Palubicki, Poznan; Ryszard Stachowiak, Konin.

Statement by Nowa Huta Solidarity Board, 23 October, 1986

We, the undersigned, declare that after six years we are resuming activities of the Steelworkers Committee of Solidarity in the Metallurgic Combine in Krakow. The democratically elected Steelworkers Committee represented over 90 per cent of the workforce. Soundings of public opinion have shown that the Committee, though formally delegalized, is still considered to be the legitimate and trustworthy representation of the workforce. On this ground we have never ceased working for the restoration of union pluralism. The highly complex economic situation of the Combine, including problems of production, requires creative professional involvement of the entire workforce. The ongoing decline of the national economy, technological and civilizational backwardness and the serious ecological threat to the city of Cracow due to the vicinity of the Lenin Foundry makes our participation in the task of saving the country absolutely necessary.

Mieczyslaw Gil, Chair of the Workers Committee of the Lenin Foundry; Stanislaw Handzlik, Vice-Chair; Jan Ciesielski, Member of the Presidium; Edward Nowak, Committee Member.

The statement has been sent to Lech Walesa, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Cracow, the President of the City of Cracow, the Editor of "Tygodnik Powszechny", editors of the popular daily and union press.

Statement from Solidarnosc: Bulletin d'Information, Paris, No. 151-152, November 5, 1986

On September 30, 1986, the Regional Executive Commission of Solidarnosc for the Warsaw region, with the same composition that it had before the most recent arrests, resumed its open activity. The day before, September 29, Lech Walesa formed the Provisional Council of Solidarnosc. Moreover, stressing the great economic and ecological dangers threatening Poland, he declared that the union was ready to take the road of dialogue and mutual understanding.

Over the last 40 years, promises of liberalization to the society have often been followed by repression. The regime has always sought to stifle nascent pluralism. We hope that it will not be the same this time, that the authorities have understood that they can no longer run our country without the participation of the nation and against its will.

We are aware of the precariousness of the situation. Many unionists in our region have declared themselves ready to replace us within the Executive Commission if we are arrested. We think that in no case can we let a chance pass to act in an open way both in trade-union work

and more generally in the effort to improve the situation in the country. We are convinced that the course of events depends in large part on the population. As Solidarnosc activists we bear a heavy responsibility. We do not want to call for demonstrations. Nor do we want to see wretched living conditions drive workers to strike.

In many factories, our activities are ready to bring the trade-union commissions out of clandestinity. We must act with the greatest prudence. Where clandestine commissions have an action program and the support of the body of workers, the risk can be taken. But where this is not the case, it is better to form parallel groups responsible for presenting proposals to the plant managements concerning improvement in working conditions and in the health and safety conditions of the workers.

In this way, we can try, little by little, to restore trade-union pluralism. Today, the burden of trade-union work rests essentially on the underground factory commissions and on the structures of Solidarnosc set up after December 13, 1981. The course of events will show whether they must remain underground.

The most urgent thing today is to straighten out the economy. The union and the entire society must open up a debate on a genuine reform and on the future economic model. Only a vigorous social movement focused on reform can oblige the government to carry out changes that can open up the way for an improvement in the living and working conditions of the workers. It is the self-management councils that must give impetus to such a movement.

The workers and Solidarnosc activists must join in and participate in the self-management movement, launch initiatives in the factories but also on a bigger scale so that the field of action of the councils will be broadened, which is in conformity with the laws of September 1981.

It is urgent to undertake actions to defend the environment, to provide a healthy diet for the people and to improve the living conditions of the population. It is urgent to harness the territorial and professional self-management councils to the work of carrying out reform, reform that will make them a focus for the energies of the citizens.

Rebuilding the country, defending the standard of living of the workers demands the carrying out of deep-going institutional reforms. We can speed the accomplishment of such reforms and affect their nature through constructive actions and reasonable proposals, which will be adopted after a national discussion on the means for getting the country out of its present decline. This is the task to which the Regional Executive Commission of Solidarnosc intends to devote itself.

*October 8, 1986.
Konrad Bielinski, Zbigniew Bujak, Victor Kulerski, Ewa Kulik, Jan Litynski.*

Waves inside Solidarnosc

THE FOLLOWING is from the October 22 issue of *Tygodnik Mazowsze* No 185, a national underground paper close to the leadership of Solidarnosc.

Before August 1980, Henryk Wujec was one of the leaders of the working-class activity of the KOR [Committee to Defend the Workers]. Subsequently he was a leader of Solidarnosc in Warsaw. He is now a member of the regional leadership operating above ground.

HENRYK WUJEC

What is happening in the union I would call a real earthquake — the formation of an open Provisional Committee of Solidarnosc, the spontaneous appearance of several regional councils and the multiplication of often contradictory statements. All this turmoil is not without its dangers, but it can nonetheless be good for us, if the activists and bodies of Solidarnosc make an effort to act in concert and seek together solutions respecting the various tendencies and forms of activity. In order to be able to participate actively in the initiatives, all members and supporters of the union have to understand what is happening. I think that those who have taken part in the recent events must take account of this.

The setting up of the Provisional Council of Solidarnosc took public opinion by surprise but not many leaders. For a long time, discussions had been going to open up new forms of action for the union leadership. The problem was to give new momentum of Solidarnosc without costing it a single one of its gains (underground commissions in the factories, author structures, the TKK).

We had all observed that the movement was losing its momentum. The ranks were thinning and the losses were not compensated by new arrivals. There was a lack of youth in particular. This problem is inherent in all underground movements, which have to be based in reliable, determined and effective elites. You cannot just sign up people for underground structures! But to persist on this path would lead to becoming a fossil within a living social organism.

The situation was all the more dramatic because our colleagues had been living underground for years. I personally was imprisoned, and I knew that at the end of my term I would be able to resume a more or less normal life. But they and their families had no idea when their terms would end. A solution had to be found that would enable them to

come out of the underground without the union suffering or even better a solution that would enable the union to extend its impact.

Last May, after long discussions, the idea was born that is now being put into practice. The only difference is that in our minds the whole thing should have been carried out in the cohesive way, without conflicts. The idea was to set up an open Council of Solidarnosc made up of prominent activists in the union, including all the members of the present TKK. Once this council was set up, a new TKK would be formed, with representatives of regions whose names would remain secret.

The Council would be responsible for coordinating trade-union, political and social activities, and the TKK would be responsible for organizational questions — the allotment of technical resources, money, etc. All the union's structures were to be maintained, including its office in Brussels. The Council and the TKK were to act in close collaboration. Since the TKK would be anonymous, its initiatives would have to be endorsed by the Council and the chair of the union.

Wave of arrests

The accomplishment of this project was impeded by the wave of arrests that took place at the end of May. But on September 11, the great personalities of the union, whose names are known to every Pole — Bujak, Frasnyniuk, Lis, Borusewicz and Jedynak — regained their freedom. In the eyes of the population, this went without saying. It was they who embodied the union and it was they who were its leadership, with Walesa at the head of course. They had urgently to find a form of action capable of responding to the new

political situation.

Two projects were proposed at a meeting held in Warsaw on September 20, in which Lech Walesa participated.

1. Lech Walesa, Zigniew Bujak, Wladyslaw Frasnyniuk and Bogdan Lis made a joint statement on the new situation. Subsequently, this group of four issued statements of principle from time to time. Aside from that, nothing changed. Gorny, Kulerski and Muszynski stayed in the TKK, which remained underground.

2. Lech Walesa set up a Council of Solidarnosc, to which adhered, in addition to open activists, underground activists who put their names to the positions taken by the TKK. The latter could take advantage of this opportunity to come out of the underground, if they wanted to. The TKK would then be made up only of anonymous regional representatives. Two variants were envisaged for the Council: a narrow group, made up only of former TKK members; or a broader group made up of representatives of most of the regions (proposed by their region). In the first case, the Council would have ten members, in the second, nearly 60.

The first project was approved by Walesa and his advisors. The second by the former TKK members. After a long discussion in which an effort was made to conciliate the different points of view, it was decided that the TKK would be asked to set up the Council and that Walesa would simply approve it. The TKK then received a letter containing a slate of candidates proposed by the Council (broad variant) and a detailed account of the September 20 meeting.

The TKK members did not accept this proposition, on the grounds that the project was incoherent (a clandestine institution setting up an open one), that it was difficult to define the respective authorities of the TKK and the Council, and for ethical reasons. It was impossible for them to expose colleagues hardly out of prison to new arrests. The TKK thought that it was rather up to the chair of the union to establish the Council and it appealed to him.

The situation had to be analyzed yet again in Gdansk on September 29, and after a tempestuous discussion, Walesa decided to form a Council made up of seven people, all former members of the TKK.

In his public statement on the formation of the Council, Walesa said that it was necessary to "work out and define a new mode of action, an open and legal one." His statement, like that of the Council, was marked by a spirit of conciliation and dialogue, but in no way went back on any of the fundamental ideas of Solidarnosc.

Despite differences of opinion among the activists, the creation of the Council seems to me to have been a success for the union. It demonstrated that the will to cooperate to find solutions was still strong. It is

in fact in that spirit that the union has sought to respond to the new political situation. It is, moreover, in this way that this decision was perceived by the great majority of unionists.

The reaction of activists in the underground structures has not been entirely the same. As for the TKK, its reaction was diametrically opposite. The underground activists, surprised by the partial abandonment of clandestinity and not knowing how far that would go, feared for the union's gains. The TKK interpreted the creation of the Council as an attack on its position. It was able to make this interpretation because unfortunately Walesa's statement and that of the Council did not include a word about the TKK and the role it was called to play. Nor did these statements make it clear that the underground structures would remain in place until it was possible for the union to really operate openly.

Euphoria following the amnesty

This situation was further complicated by the spontaneous creation of open regional representative bodies in Warsaw, Lubin, Upper Silesia, Lodz and other cities. Obviously, the activists were only waiting for an opportunity to form these representative bodies, given the speed with which all this happened.

Undoubtedly, people acted in too precipitate a way, and this contributed to the confusion in the underground structures. We, the leaders of the Warsaw region, are partially responsible for this, inasmuch as the coming out into the open of our regional commission in the wake of the Council's formation opened up the way for other regions. This precipitance is explained by the euphoria that followed immediately after the amnesty, no realistic analysis of the situation having yet been made.

Nonetheless, the formation of open regional councils is a healthy and, in all, positive process because it makes it possible to activate the regions and carry out open trade-union activity (defence of the standard of living, health and safety on the job) as well as self-management and social action. The declaration of the regional executive commission of the Warsaw region (October 8) contains the outlines of such a program.

It is important that the creation of regional councils increase cohesiveness and not be the source of conflicts, that it not generate personal quarrels or rivalries among the groups. The Lublin and Upper Silesia regional councils seem to be positive examples. The former includes leaders not only from the city of Lublin but also from other cities in the region, such as Chelm and Zamosc. The situation is similar in Upper Silesia, Poland's

largest region, where the inclusion of leaders from various zones gives it a chance to unify its region.

The formation of regional councils immediately following that of the Provisional Council has somewhat been interpreted as meaning that there should be a followup — the creation of factories and open enterprise structures as well. Some clandestine commissions openly talked about this. It is clear, I think, to everyone that such a frenetic course would only put the activists in the factories in danger. It is not surprising that the underground activists felt very worried and that it was necessary to meet with them, to explain things, and so forth.

The Warsaw regional executive commission in its statement advised the factory commissions and base structures of the union against coming out into the open and suggested other forms of action — self-management councils and groups operating in the open in the factories to intervene in concrete questions important to the workforce.

The fears of the underground activists, particularly strong in those regions where communications between the underground and the "surface" leave something to be desired or where cleavages owing to different points of view are especially sharp, were reflected in statements marked by nervousness and incoherence.

The prime example was given by the TKK, which, rightly correcting the error of the Provisional Council, stressed the maintenance of the underground structures but expressed its position in such vehement terms that it created the impression that it thought that the entire union should take refuge in the underground. The Lower Silesia regional strike committee also did not speak softly.

While insisting on the need to reinforce its role and the role of the other clandestine structures, the TKK nonetheless pointed out in the same text that the two last persons to sign their names to its statements (Ian Gorny and Marek Muszynski), would come out from underground. It is difficult to find any consistency in all this.

All these events I have just spoken of sowed confusion among Solidarnosc activists, which is harmful in the long term. But in the negative consequences of the events, I can discern the seeds of a positive solution. Everyone went too far. It is time to re-compose our minds and harmonize our activity.

The responsible people in the union, who fortunately are many, have to explain calmly and intelligently the roles of the Provisional Council and the TKK and define their respective authorities. We need a TKK made up of representatives of the regions and a Provisional Council made up of people such as Bujak and Frasyniuk. We obviously need collaboration between these two bodies. It is also necessary to smooth collabor-

ation between the clandestine structures and open structures in the regions. Our objective, we should not forget, is to activate Solidarnosc, because only a strong and vital union will be able to respond to a changing political situation and impose changes that will get the country out of crisis. □

TYGODNIK MAZOWSZE

From the review of the underground press published in *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, No. 186, November 5, 1986.

The statement of the TKK has sometimes been interpreted in the union press as an attempt to undermine the role of the Provisional Council. In the article entitled "The Chair's Aboutface" [this refers to Walesa], *Przegląd Wiadomości Agencyjnych* of Warsaw (No. 73, October 26) writes that "not only has it killed the political initiative linked to the formation of the Provisional Council but — which will have still graver consequences — it has largely undermined the confidence up until now accorded to the public and the underground leadership of the union." Such a catastrophic judgement is isolated, but the disorientation seems general.

The magazines *Wola* and *CDN-Glos Wolnego Robotnika* have published a list of concrete questions. We republish the most important:

1. Why did the Provisional Council in its founding statement fail to make clear that it was going to work parallel to the TKK, and why did it not clearly define the respective authorities of both bodies?
2. Why did no delegate of the Warsaw region attend the last meeting of the TKK with Lech Walesa?
3. Why did not the statement issued at the conclusion of this meeting mention clearly the Provisional Council and the regional councils? Did it not put them in an ambiguous position?
4. Some regions are not creating councils but are reactivating organs that existed before the state of siege, and Wroclaw [Lower Silesia] has not created any open structure. Is this not proof that there is discord, confusion and a power struggle among the leaders of the union?
5. Why did the Warsaw Regional Executive Commission, formed in September, not include any known activists of the regional leadership except Bujak and Kulerski, although the co-optation of other persons had been announced?

We also in the editorial board of *Tygodnik Mazowsze* would like to be clear about all these questions. Likewise, we agree with the last question that we published: "Should all these statements, which are often contradictory and incomprehensible to readers, really be published? So many important news reports end up in the wastebasket for lack of space!" □

Discussion on the Freedom Charter

IN RECENT years, a series of independent magazines have appeared in South Africa devoted to describing and analyzing the anti-apartheid mass movement and in particular the independent Black trade-union movement. At the same time as reflecting the commitment of a current of radical intellectuals, this independent press is also a forum for certain political debates over the problems encountered by the mass movement.

In two of these magazines, *Work in Progress*, and *South African Labour Bulletin*, a debate occurred recently over the specific role of the workers' movement in the fight against apartheid and the struggle for socialism. (See box.)

This discussion is of interest to far wider circles than those directly involved, who are generally intellectuals working with the trade-union movement, on its fringes or involved in the people's movement. Both groups rather faithfully reflect the political points of view that exist in the mass movement. These magazines have published articles, moreover, that are read by hundreds of trade-union activists and leaders and by leaders in the various community associations.

While the immediate political impact on the mass level of such a public discussion should not be overestimated, it is interesting to study the reasoning and the arguments put forward in order to get a better idea of what is happening in the country.

PETER BLUMER

This discussion has essentially taken the form of a debate over the present place, function and social content of the Freedom Charter. This document, adopted in 1955, remains the basic programmatic reference of the African National Congress (ANC). It has also given its name to the Chartist current working in the mass anti-apartheid movement, which includes a majority of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and some unions belonging to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

The Freedom Charter's advocates have generally argued that it is useful on two levels. First, they maintain, it can serve as an instrument for focusing popular democratic and national demands that should serve as a basis in the immediate period ahead for unifying mobilizations and achieving the unity of all the political and social components of the movement of the oppressed. But the Freedom Charter is also often presented as an

actual governmental program, summarizing the main measures to be taken by a regime coming to power in the wake of the overthrow of the present one.

Above and beyond the discussion on the Charter's demands, some of the document's critics reveal that they have an assessment which differs in a more general way from the orientation supported in the mass movement by the Chartist current. The latter is often termed "nationalist" or "populist" in order to contrast it with an orientation that is claimed to be more focused on defending the interests of the working class.

The critics of the Charter

In all the arguments put forward by those who have a critical approach to the Freedom Charter, some general common features can be distinguished.

ARTICLES ON THE DEBATE

Duncan Innes: "Workers' politics and the popular movement", *Work in Progress* No 41, April 1986.

Karen Jochelson, Glenn Moss and Ingrid Obery: "Defining working-class politics", *Work in Progress* No 41, April 1986.

Tony Karon and Max Ozinsky: "The working class in national democratic struggle", *Work in Progress* No. 42, May 1986.

Alec Erwin: "The question of unity in the struggle", *South African Labour Bulletin* Vol. 11, No. 1, September 1985.

Duncan Innes: "The Freedom Charter and workers' control", *South African Labour Bulletin* Vol. 11, No. 2, October 1985.

Jeremy Cronin: "The question of unity — a reply", *South African Labour Bulletin* Vol. 11, No. 3, January 1986.

Bob Fine: "The Freedom Charter, a critical appreciation", *South African Labour Bulletin* Vol. 11, No. 3, January 1986.

David Lewis: "Capital, trade unions and the national liberation struggle", *South African Labour Bulletin* Vol. 11, No. 4, February 1986.

David Lewis: "Recession and the working class", *South African Labour Bulletin* Vol. 11, No. 5, May 1986.

Rolan White: "Towards an assessment of the strategic value of the consumer boycott", *South African Labour Bulletin* Vol. 11, No. 5, May 1986.

Hugh McLean: "Capitalism, socialism and the Freedom Charter", *South African Labour Bulletin* Vol. 11, No. 6, June 1986.

Jeremy Seekings: "Workers and the politics of consumer boycotts", *South African Labour Bulletin* Vol. 11, No. 6, June 1986.

First of all, stress is placed on the historically outmoded character of a document adopted in 1955, in view of major economic and social changes that the country has undergone and of the changes in the configuration of the mass movement itself since that time.

These authors note, for example, that the Freedom Charter could not take account of the extraordinary growth of the Black proletariat that occurred in the last decades and which has provided the basis for the emergence of a new workers' movement, with the formation of big industrial unions in the 1970s. (1)

Thus it has been pointed out, and properly so, that any democratic program today has to give a substantial place to the working-class demands put forward by the independent trade-union movement. And the Freedom Charter does not do this, at least not explicitly.

It has to be recognized also that in the most recent examples of unity in action of the various components of the mass movement, these working-class demands have found explicit expression.

For instance, at the beginning of October the UDF, COSATU and the National Committee on the Educa-

1. Alex Erwin, *op. cit.* [See box for references.]

tional Crisis announced the launching of a united national campaign against apartheid and the state of emergency. They did this on the basis of a ten-point platform which included, along with general democratic demands such as freedom of expression and association, others that were more specifically linked to the trade-union movement, such as the demand for a decent wage for workers, an adequate system of social security and the right to strike. (2)

While these points in fact reflect the consensus that has developed — because they include specific contributions from the three components that initiated this appeal — it is necessary also to note the place of working-class demands in this platform. This is the direct reflection of the real role that the organized working class, mainly COSATU, is playing in the struggle and the unification process.

The point of view of the Charters' critics can be summed up by the formula used by one of them, Duncan Innes, who maintains that a "working-class vision of the future requires more than the Charter offers."

For most of its critics, the Charter is designed, in the nationalist tradition, to achieve the broadest possible unity, without any great concern for defending the long-term interests of the most exploited masses, the Black workers. That, they say, leads inevitably to a sort of "populism"

that would take the liberation struggle up a blind alley.

Against this, the critics argue that the specific demands of the workers' movement have to be accorded their full importance right now. And, if such demands are to be the objectives of the mass struggle, it goes without saying that this will in a way shape the sort of class alliances that are made within the people's movement.

It is at this point that one of the main criticisms of the Charter emerges: the social front must be clearly dominated by the working class. But the Freedom Charter, by seeking the lowest common denominator for all the oppressed classes and layers, favors the hegemony of petty-bourgeois sectors over the mass movement.

At this point, two elements are introduced into the debate. One is the example of the UDF, whose "multi-class" nature and the petty-bourgeois social composition of its leadership are often noted. The other is the very opportunist attitude of some Black petty-bourgeois and bourgeois layers that are trying to hide behind this form of anti-apartheid unity and take advantage of certain forms of action by the mass movement to satisfy their own economic interests. Thus, some see the boycott of white stores as offering business opportunities for Black merchants. (3)

The arguments advanced involve

a critical analysis of the social content of the various measures proposed by the Charter. One of the points often stressed in this debate is the question of the nationalizations called for by the Charter.

The Chartists' document is accused of having a vague formulation that fails to raise the question of workers' control and of the nature of the state that would carry out these nationalizations.

For example, Duncan Innes says: "Only when nationalization is linked to democratic workers' control of nationalized industries can workers' interests be safeguarded."

At the end of the day, the Charter would not set the mass movement on the road of struggling for socialism.

The place of the working class in democratic struggles

Some of these authors, however, do not reproach the ANC program for being only a minimum democratic program. They are, in fact, aware of the need for a program summarizing the democratic and national demands of the popular masses. But they consider that the general orientation of the Charter is in fact in line with the conceptions of class alliances and objectives simply of a national democratic revolution that would bring no decisive improvement in the fate and role of the exploited masses in the future society.

This first part of the debate is generally over the real place that the workers' movement must assume in the emancipation struggle. Is the problem simply to include working-class demands in a program for democratic revolution? Or is the problem to give the working class a role of social hegemony and political leadership in the movement as a whole? That is what is up for discussion.

This discussion obviously has not dropped from the sky. Its origins are rooted in the sociological changes that have taken place in recent years,

2. See 'International Viewpoint' No. 108, November 10, 1986: "New Campaign launched".

3. In this regard, Jeremy Seeking writes: "Consumer boycotts also necessarily bring organizers and township capitalists into relations of increased mutual dependence. The former require the latter to make boycotts viable . . . capitalists in turn depend on organizers for maintenance of sales levels as well as to promote their explicit demands and implicit interests. The more mutually dependent they become, the more responsible they become to each other's 'needs' or interests. Whilst this means that traders become more supportive of progressive positions, it also means that progressive organizations can become more tolerant of the position of traders."

An arrest under the pass laws in the late 1950s (DR)



An arrest under the pass laws. Photo: Bill Wenberg

and in particular in the spectacular growth of the trade-union movement.

The growth of the trade-union movement is the result of the numerical growth of the Black industrial working class over the past 20 years and the emergence of a trade-union leadership that has made a series of choices about building the movement and spreading its roots that have proved beneficial and effective.

A new type of South African workers' movement was born in the previous period, and its activity is the background to this debate. But its political expression properly speaking remains limited to trade-union activity. At the start, the main trade-union leaderships deliberately focused on building roots in the workplaces in order to stabilize their organizations as defenders of the workers' immediate economic interests on the basis of concrete gains won in struggles.

There was a real concern for organizing the trade-union movement in a democratic way. This gave rise to big unions in the main industries structured around tightly-knit networks of shop stewards experienced in fights for immediate demands and strikes.

At this stage of its development, the new workers' movement has intervened in the political field properly speaking through united campaigns with the civic associations and through many statements, interviews, resolutions of union congresses and through its press. To this, one should also add the internal work of educating trade-union activists. (4)

The bulk of the working-class vanguard has come out of the trade-union movement. Up until now it has been the crucible in which the class consciousness of the most advanced sections of the proletariat has been forged. Could this working-class vanguard have come directly from working-class political organizations rooted in the class? Given the recent history of this workers' movement and the characteristics of its development, this seems unlikely.

At this point it is useful to note the present state of the trade-union movement's reflection on this question of the place of workers' demands in the struggle. Maxwell Xulu is president of the metalworkers' union, MAWU, which belongs to COSATU. In the September issue of his union paper, *Umbiko we Mawu*, he said:

"A long time ago, some people used to say that there was no need for a workers' program, because we have a Freedom Charter. Well, all I want to say about this is that the Charter was drawn up 30 years ago. And many things have changed since then. Now we have a very large and highly developed working class. We also have

FREEDOM CHARTER

THE Freedom Charter was adopted on June 26, 1955 by the People's Congress representing the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, the South African Congress of Trade Unions and the Congress of Democrats. The following consists of major extracts from the Charter.

* * *

We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

** that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;*

** that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;*

** that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;*

** that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;*

And therefore we, the people of South Africa, Black and white together — equals, countrymen and brothers — adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes set out here have been won.

THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN!

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws.

All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country.

The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex.

All the bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.

ALL NATIONAL GROUPS SHALL HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS!

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races.

All people shall have equal rights to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs.

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride.

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime.

The people shall share in the country's wealth!

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

THE PEOPLE SHALL SHARE IN THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH!

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people.

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole.

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people.

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

THE LAND SHALL BE SHARED AMONG THOSE WHO WORK IT!

Restrictions of land shall be ended, and all the land redivided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger...

ALL SHALL ENJOY HUMAN RIGHTS!

The law shall guarantee to all their rights to speak, to organize, to meet together, to punish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children...

Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here:

"These freedoms we will fight for, side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty!"

big companies — monopoly capitalists like the Anglo-American Corporation, Barlow Rand and so on.

"There are thousands of workers organized in trade unions. They are pushing to make the working class stronger. One very great step forward for the struggle is this workers' program. It will also speak of what kind of society workers want to see after apartheid."

The present limitation of the political expression of the South African workers' movement, however, places certain limits on the political debate.

In South Africa today, the working class, in the broad sense of the term, cannot be reduced to the industrial proletariat actually in work in the industries that make up the backbone of the independent Black trade-union movement. An important part of the population of the townships (women, unemployed, youth) whose social status is very precarious can broadly be considered to form part of the proletariat. When these layers are organized it is through the civic

associations where they live.

The unity of all these components of the working class cannot be achieved simply through the extension of trade-union activity into the townships, even though that is essential. This problem objectively poses the question of an ongoing structured relationship between the trade-union movement and the community movement, which represent two complementary forms of mass organization.

Achieving working-class unity, therefore, requires thinking about forms of demands and organization that can build bridges between the union movement and the township associations. This obliges the trade-union movement to widen its program of demands beyond those expressing

4. Some authors wonder about the problem. Duncan Innes says for example: "When the working class movement re-emerged from the mass strikes of 1973, it did so specifically as a trade-union movement mobilizing around wages and working conditions. While no true working-class movement can afford to neglect these issues, neither can it confine itself to them."



A delegation to the ANC's 1955 Congress, which adopted the Freedom Charter (DR)

the aspirations of the industrial section of the proletariat. This is what COSATU wants to do by organizing the unemployed, the agricultural workers and domestics.

Proletarian hegemony cannot be achieved by the isolated action of that section of the industrial proletariat presently organized in the trade-union movement, even if that in a sense represents the vanguard.

Another problem is the difficulties of calling for political hegemony for the workers' movement without fully taking account of the specific features of this movement's present trade-union form.

In certain special circumstances and up to a certain point, unions can express the specific needs of the working class, including its political needs. However, given their distinct nature and mode of recruitment, it is much more difficult for them to play at all times and in all places the *actual* role of a political leadership of the struggle. That has been seen notably in certain townships, owing to the gap between the levels of consciousness and themes and methods of action proper to the various components of the population.

In this discussion, all those who have come out in defence of the Freedom Charter have done so while also calling for account to be taken of the special interests of the working class. Hugh McLean, for example, has said that the Charter is "to be understood as a set of minimum demands of the South African working class which provide the basis for the construction of a socialist program."

The majority also think that in

the criticisms made of the Charter there is a clear underestimation of the most immediate demands of the popular masses concerning housing, education and culture. (5) This reproach does not, however, seem founded if you look at the place given to these elementary demands in COSATU's program, which is taken as the reference point by the critics of the Charter.

Definitions of the workers' and people's movement

In reality, the main argument put forward in defence of the Charter has to do with the definition of the workers' and peoples' movement. From this point of view it would indeed be wrong and "workerist" to let it be understood that the mass movement today is a populist movement dominated by the Black petty-bourgeoisie. McLean says, therefore, that in his view: "These classes must be won to the mass movement on the strength of a socialist program that will guarantee their rights to work the land and participate in small trade and industry." Jeremy Cronin also specifies: "Workerism, while correctly calling for the leading role of the working class, fails to see that this leadership must be exercised on all fronts of the struggle, and not just in narrow 'pure' working class shopfloor issues."

However, if the differences lie essentially at this level, how can defenders of the Charter explain that this document offers no indication of

the social nature of the nationalizations to be carried out and of the future state that is to put them into operation? McLean answers this criticism in the following terms:

"For them, this omission and others which they regard to be crucial render the document ambiguous. The bulk of their criticisms are to do with the sections they regard to be incomplete or limited in their conception of the new society. However, there are many demands the Charter does not make: it does not demand an end to legal and social discrimination against gay people; or an end to pollution; or an end to nuclear power. Also there are many details that the Charter does not give about the make-up of the future society. This is because the Charter is not a thesis or even a program for change. The Charter is a set of minimum demands, rooted in the grievances and aspirations of the working class . . . The Charter is not written in stringent socialist rhetoric, but the endorsing of its working-class demands and their championing by the mass movement makes the Freedom Charter a necessary basis for building socialism."

Thus, according to this viewpoint, it would be unfair to criticize the Charter for being a vague and strictly nationalist program. Such criticism would be profoundly sectarian and would lead to rigidity within the mass movement. It would prevent us from seeing how such a democratic approach could manage to convince the petty-bourgeois layers to fight alongside the workers. For example holders of this view maintain that, contrary to certain analyses, the boycott of white businesses showed that the Black merchants could associate themselves with the movement and be persuaded not to take advantage of it to increase their prices in the townships. (6)

The broad united movement assembled on the basis of the Charter, they argue, is after all dominated by the working class, and therefore can put in place instruments of people's control and pose the question of power.

The unity proposed, therefore, is based on political and economic convergences, as is indicated by Jeremy Cronin, who says:

"It should be noted that common interests are not all political, and the divergent interests are not all economic in a popular, multi-class alliance.

5. See McLean, *op. cit.*

6. See R. White, *op. cit.*: "One of the most important objectives and effects of the consumer boycott has been to alienate further the Black commercial petty-bourgeoisie from the state, and to consolidate an alliance between this class and other classes/class fractions of the oppressed."

In South Africa, for instance, while oppressed Black traders and Black workers have common political interests (the removal of group areas, pass laws, etc.) they also have certain common economic interests (the struggle against monopoly domination, for instance)."

However, while all these contributions defend the Freedom Charter by talking about an actual hegemony of the working class over the popular masses grouped behind this document, none specifies the political content and the concrete organizational means for exercising this hegemony.

No doubt few in South Africa are unaware of the need for unity of all the oppressed in the struggle. But the question that is generally raised in this regard is the political content of such an alliance and its organizational form.

On this point, Tony Karon and Max Ozinsky, two partisans of the Charter, accuse those on the other side of the debate of failing to understand that "unity in the struggle is not principally based on mutually accepted concepts, nor, ultimately on a shared program for reconstruction. It is dependent on a willingness in different organizations to struggle together in the field for the achievement of mutual objectives despite programmatic and conceptual differences."

These authors argue that programmatic questions should not be seen "only with reference to the task of reconstruction in a society already liberated from minority rule." Otherwise, one would neglect "to confront the questions, both programmatically and practically, of reaching that stage of liberation."

Karon and Ozinsky maintain that the critics of the Charter fail to grasp the importance of a broad democratic battle encompassing all the social forces with an interest in national liberation. Moreover, they think that the Charter brings together the working class's immediate demands. While it is not in itself a socialist program, in their view, it is at least the programmatic base for a stage leading toward socialism.

Replying to a critical analysis made by certain contributors to the debate on the reasons for the failure of struggles in other parts of the world (the Spanish civil war, Allende's Chile and others), these two authors state: "Although there have been a number of instances of popular fronts suffering defeat, there has never been an instance of working-class victory without the working class having engaged in popular alliances."

To back up their statement, they do not hesitate to rewrite the history of the international workers' movement to suit themselves. Thus, with

regard to republican Spain, they say: "If the working class had abandoned the Popular Front and proceeded with a socialist program, this would have brought the collapse of the republic a few years forward. The defence of the republic was the most immediate and vital task of the Spanish proletariat."

As regards the Chilean experience under the presidency of Allende, they note: "Random worker occupation of small and economically unimportant business was promoted by the ultra-left, who were unhappy at the pace of nationalization undertaken by the popular unity government. This contributed directly to the alienation of the petty-bourgeoisie from the popular unity, and strengthened domestic support for imperialist intervention."

Despite their general condemnations of "ultra-leftism," these authors do not fail elsewhere to make some far-reaching statements about the conduct of the struggle in South Africa, in particular when they say: "To speak of the working class seeking allies in its struggle acknowledges that while these allies share some of the interests of the working class, they also have important differences in outlook. The working class seeks these allies because it is unable, on its own, to complete tasks which are vital to its advancement. If we accept that the unity of the different classes in the national democratic struggle is not an identity of interests, how can we propose that unity be based on the complete program of the working class?"

But precisely because there is not an absolute identity of interests among the various oppressed social classes involved in the movement that is struggling against the regime, the need for working out a national democratic program common to the movement as a whole does not exclude drawing up a revolutionary workers' program.

In a parallel way, seeking alliances in day-to-day struggles does not eliminate the need for a working-class vanguard fighting for socialism. Are not these essential elements for asserting the role of the working class in the mass movement, which all of those involved in the debate claim to support, in one way or another?

It is easy to understand the reasons why this discussion is turning around the Freedom Charter and the interpretation of this document. Banned in South Africa, the ANC is present primarily in the form of a very broad popular movement, whose banner is the Charter. On this basis, notably, the UDF reflects the adherence of a section of the civic organizations to the program of the ANC.

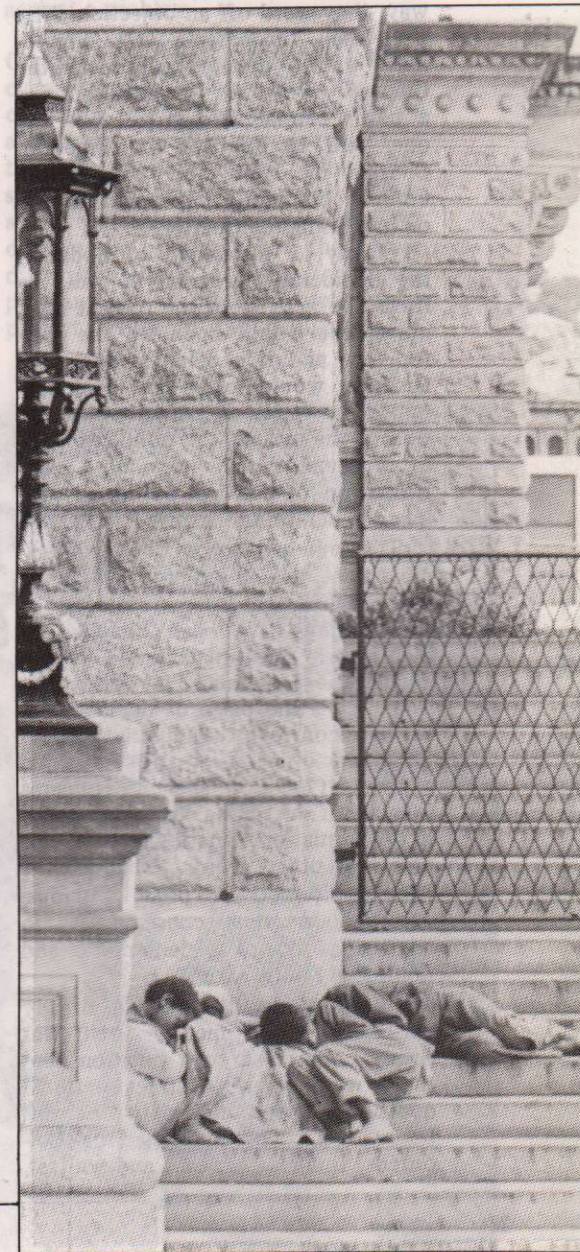
For all those who want to debate the ANC's political line, it seems quite proper from a pedagogic standpoint to start by taking up the Charter. But then such a discussion can take a rather abstract form.

National consciousness and class consciousness

The defenders of this program are not unaware of the fact — often they even stress it — that the Charter has at least the "defect" that it was written 30 years ago. It is possible to defend the general method but hard to say today that every line of it corresponds to the present needs of the masses.

To take only one example, contemporary capitalist development in South Africa makes carrying out the economic measures projected by the Charter itself a far more complex matter.

Homelessness in Cape Town (DR)



However, if the Charter is an outmoded program, how can we explain the unswerving adherence to it declared by the ANC and by a major current in the mass movement? To understand this, you have to look at the particular use the ANC makes of this document. In its eyes, it has a function over and above its actual content as a symbol of the ANC's continuity and historical legitimacy.

The Charter expresses a history, the history of the struggles of the 1950s and the repression of the 1960s. By using it today as a symbol, the ANC wants to highlight a continuity and present a certain legitimacy to the mass movement as a whole. As the "natural program," the Charter is supposed to implicitly express a natural, spontaneous hegemony of the ANC in all the sectors involved in struggle.

However, the authors cited here who defend the Freedom Charter do so while evoking the special role of the working class and therefore recognize the social changes that have taken place in the country. In this way, they ward off an objection. Why not, then, propose a vast, united, mass public debate to amend the Charter? Why not propose holding a new "People's Congress" like the one held to approve the Freedom Charter in 1955 and include the unions, community movements and so on in revising the Charter?

Clearly, a discussion of updating the democratic program in order to focus the activity of the present mass movement would open up the way for new and rich debates. Such discussions would offer an invaluable opportunity for increased politicization of the masses, the public exercise of workers' democracy and a confrontation of political points of view in a democratic framework.

The emergence of the workers' movement has posed two new sorts of problems that the activists of the 1950s may have been unaware of but which are unavoidable today, and therefore must be discussed. The first is the place of demands for workers' control over industrial production and over social and economic choices. (7) The second concerns the role of the toiling classes in general in the formation of national consciousness. In other words, what is the relationship between class consciousness and national consciousness in advancing toward a democratic and non-racial South Africa?

In the 1950s, this debate already existed. At that time, the ANC was firmly committed to a position that there were several distinct national questions corresponding to the different racial communities (the Coloureds, Indians, Africans and whites).

It therefore proposed a political solution of a federal and plurinational type. In this context, the ANC saw itself representing the Africans.

Even those who, at the time, had a less formalistic view of the national question could not thereby jump over the average level of consciousness of the various sectors of the oppressed population. The divisions in the mass movement along the lines of the racial classifications were not only the result of the apartheid policy of the government brought to power in 1948 by the election victory of the Nationalist Party. These divisions also rested on old prejudices firmly anchored in the entire colonial history of the country.

Today, despite the persistence of such prejudices, a national consciousness is forming gradually in the experience of day-to-day struggles that bring all the oppressed communities closer together. The converging mobilizations of recent years are the reflection of that.

ANC has evolved from its original positions

But from this standpoint, the Charter continues to bear the imprint of the atmosphere prevailing when it was drafted. If it had been necessary to give it legal and statutory expression then, it is not at all certain that this would have led to non-racial governmental institutions. On the contrary, a form of multi-racial federalism could have followed very easily from the Charter's formulations.

Such an outlook is no longer at all in line with the dominant orientation in the mass movement today. The demand for a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa is accepted virtually unanimously by the various political currents.

Aside from some sectors coming from the Black consciousness movement, who still advocate a type of African nationalism, everyone has come over to non-racialism — a social scheme in which any racial or religious classifications, even if proposed in the name of democracy, would be banned.

Respect for the cultures and beliefs of various communities is indeed an element in the democratic program. But guarantees cannot be based on racial classification. The latter is precisely the distinctive feature of the apartheid system that is being combated.

The ANC has also evolved from its original positions. It has adopted non-racialism, and no longer poses the national question in the same terms as in the 1950s. Other currents have followed a similar trajectory. But the impetus toward the ripening of a

national consciousness came from elsewhere. It came from the factories.

This evolution in the consciousness of the South African popular masses is not therefore simply the result of a debate over ideas among political currents and leaderships. It is changes in the South African social formation that have been the driving force in this ideological evolution.

Of course, the scheme of a unitary, democratic and non-racial society has existed for a long time in the programs of small political groups. But it really took on flesh in the workers' movement, in the trade-union movement in particular with the emergence of organizations such as the Federation of South African Unions (FOSATU). (8)

It is not difficult to understand the reasons for this. In particular in regions such as the Cape province and Natal, the workers' movement had to unite Coloureds, Indians and Africans in order to be able to build its influence and wage its struggles for immediate demands. Independent class-struggle unionism could only be also non-racial unionism. It is this in practice that has launched a long cultural revolution which will continue. It involves the forging of a new national consciousness, a South African or Azanian identity, without reference to skin color.

Practice has shown that this development of national consciousness is not independent of the development of class consciousness. More than any other social stratum of the oppressed, the working class is thus the crucible in which the unity of the oppressed masses is being forged, including on the level of their national consciousness.

The UDF reflects this process in a different way. This front includes a substantial part of the civic associations that have formed on the basis of place of residence. So, because of the housing discrimination systematized by the Group Areas Act, the UDF coordinates structures that follow the lines of racial classification. This may only be a transitory thing, if you think that it is possible to extend relations rapidly among all

7. See in particular the resolutions of the Metalworkers' congress, MAWU. In reporting the congress, MAWU's newspaper, 'Umbiko we Mawu,' of July 1986 wrote: "MAWU is totally committed to the principle of worker control. This is non-negotiable. But workers must not only control their union — they must also lead the struggle for liberation in South Africa. If workers are not at the head of the liberation struggle, then there is no guarantee that the Botha government will be replaced by socialism."

8. For the main unions that developed at the start of the 1980s, in particular for FOSATU, the question of non-racialism was a fundamental programmatic question.

of the oppressed population. But the problem is different once you take up the question of the associations of Black merchants or small bosses whose sources of income and accumulation are rooted within the narrow limits of their own racial community.

Some authors have pointed to the problems that have arisen in Natal between Indian and Zulu profiteers defended by Chief Buthelezi's party, Inkatha.

In these circumstances, we are seeing a process inverse to the one described above for the working class. In this case, class consciousness — that is bourgeois class consciousness — poses an obstacle to the development of a de-racialized national consciousness.

The Freedom Charter is a program that gives a concrete political horizon to the democratic struggles. The national question in South Africa makes it necessary to offer the mass movement an action program whose immediate objectives are democratic and national in character. From this standpoint, it would be wrong to criticize the Charter on the grounds that it does not *explicitly* say that it is necessary to fight for socialism.

Making the Charter the target of criticism designed more generally to express differences with the ANC's strategy thus has certain disadvantages. Some of the Charter's critics, in this context, have perhaps tended to discuss essentially what forms the future society should take, and, in so doing, to underestimate a problem

of some importance — taking power. But it is precisely in the context of such a perspective that a unitary and democratic programmatic approach is absolutely indispensable.

There is, then, some truth in the criticism made by Karon and Ozinsky. It is not enough to debate what forms the future society can or should take. The question of taking power has to be resolved. And this problem can only be solved by assuring the support of a broad democratic front for the workers.

Of course, it is not unimportant for the future of the struggle whether this front is led by the working class. Nor is it necessary to keep quiet about the social nature of the future state that is to be built. But political credibility in the mass movement today depends on formulating a *concrete* strategy posing the question of power. However, the debate over the Charter bears mainly on the future society. This does implicitly pose the question of socialism, but it offers little to those who are looking for advances in developing an immediate revolutionary project.

Whatever assessment you make of the present tempos of mobilization, it is necessary to respond to what is already the expectation of decisive sections of the mass movement. Failing to do that would amount to saying that you are in fact putting off any idea and any discussion of a revolutionary crisis to an indefinite future.

The problem is not simply to analyze the various democratic pro-

grams issued in South Africa since the start of the century. Despite ambiguities pointed out by the various sides, the Freedom Charter in its method is no more "right wing" or "left" than other programs of this type. Like such programs, its formulations and certain of its demands show the marks of time.

It is important not to reduce the discussion to a mere interpretation of the Charter, and to that end any fetishization of the document has surely to be avoided. The ANC leadership itself uses the Charter more often as a symbol than as a concrete political project.

In itself, a program referring explicitly to proletarian revolution and socialism would offer no absolute guarantee about the future of the struggle. When you have to take a position on any action program or any democratic program, the real problem lies elsewhere — in the nature of the political leadership that puts it into practice. But on this point, all those involved in the debate, regardless of the side they take, run up against a problem.

Those who defend the Freedom Charter in the name of the working-class struggle, consider that the left criticisms of the Charter are sectarian and that in reality this document is the primary link in the democratic struggle of the proletariat. They argue that the Charter is a minimum democratic program. But they have difficulty citing a more complete program or any more concrete social project either in the documents of

A shantytown in South Africa (DR)





The Botha government steps up its repression (DR)

the ANC or the South African Communist Party.

Karon and Ozinsky state, for example, that "the national democratic struggle is the path necessarily followed by the struggle for socialism in South Africa." It is clear that in this framework, for them, the Charter has an essential role in achieving the unity of the popular masses that is indispensable for a revolutionary victory. But if it were only a question of relying on a minimum democratic program to unify the mass movement, then the transition to a socialist perspective that they claim to support requires the existence of a political leadership that has been won to this idea and a revolutionary political program popularizing this strategy.

In that case, these authors find themselves obliged to make clear how they analyze the ANC, no longer just as a mass movement but as a political leadership. And they then face unavoidable questions. Is the ANC or a part of it the working-class leadership? What should be said about the South African Communist Party and its own activity?

However, on these precise points there are no clear answers. For example, Hugh McLean writes about the mass movement's level of consciousness: "This militancy is reflected in the revolutionary songs and chants at mass funerals and meetings and the display of Congress and South African Communist Party flags. The popularity of the South African Communist Party and the red flag are to be understood in the widespread association of these symbols with revolution and workers' control, however inaccurately this may represent the SACP's position."

In their article, Karon and Ozinsky argue, "The Charter is the common program of all the classes in the national liberation struggle . . . This is not to suggest that the Charter

inhibits the development of working-class leadership in the national liberation struggle. Working-class leadership in that struggle has to be built; it cannot be guaranteed by any charter."

The repression obviously makes this debate complicated and faltering within South Africa's borders. There it is impossible to have a free and open discussion of such general questions as the political structuring of the mass movement. Organizations such as the ANC and the Communist Party are banned. But this problem cannot be simply reduced to that.

The question of political leadership

Those authors who criticize the Charter, on their side, run up against the same question. Contrary to certain assertions by Chartists, it cannot be said that they are just a bunch of ignorant ultra-leftists. They know well enough that in South Africa you have to have an arsenal of elementary slogans to unite the mass movement. The real discussion is not over the need for such a program but over the political nature of the leadership putting it forward. So, over and above their criticisms of the basic document of the Chartist current, they are faced with a twofold question: What political alternative can they propose and how can they forge it on the organizational and programmatic level?

A few years back, some trade unionists publicly raised the idea of the need to build a workers' party, indicating the real stakes in the debate. But the process is extremely complicated. As a mass movement, the ANC represents in a way the *average* level of consciousness prevailing among the bulk of the Black population. We are,

however, in a watershed period in which political consciousness is evolving in tempo with manifold day-to-day experiences. Nonetheless, the question of a workers' party remains an eminently propagandistic one.

For its part, the South African Communist Party is trying within the Chartist current to combine its support for the Freedom Charter and for the ANC leadership with putting forward the need for a vanguard leadership, which it claims to represent (See box.)

When the question of a workers' party was raised in 1982-83 from the ranks of the trade-union movement, this idea could only be put forward in the perspective of forming a mass party based on the factories and the popular neighborhoods. This question is far from settled, because such a political leadership would in all likelihood not emerge by gradually substituting itself for the ANC. It would appear as an alternative to it, as a rival political leadership. The ANC leadership, moreover, is quite conscious of that. It knows that the question of COSATU and of the industrial working class remains decisive for anyone who wants to establish hegemony over the vanguard of the mass movement. (9)

The debate within the independent left generally concerns the leading role that should be accorded to the proletariat. The idea is in each struggle to push the working class

9. In its March 1986 issue, the ANC organ 'Sechaba' explained: "The formation of COSATU represents the strengthening of the legal, above ground structures of the trade-union movement. While the majority of the working class of our country recognize this relationship [between the trade-union movement and the ANC], some imperialist forces and arm-chair revolutionaries are seeking to undermine it. They do this in order to help develop an alternative force to the ANC, the leading force in our liberation struggle."

forward bit by bit into the front lines and to enable it to play its role as the real leading force in society.

However, this process is neither spontaneous nor natural. Proletarian hegemony cannot be established by proclamation. It has to be built in the course of the struggle in which tactical choices play an important role. (10) For example, it is necessary at times

to be able to mount actions of strictly working-class unity but at others to broaden out a front of the oppressed masses even to the small Black employers, or even, for example, to be able to maneuver with some sections of white liberals in the Progressive Federal Party. These examples, of course, should not be put on the same level, but they are all included

in the gamut of tactical options that are possible at a given moment.

In order to be able to exercise such tactical options and draw political advantage from them, there also has to be a political leadership with a national implantation and a well-defined political project.

While in the discussion many people put forward the question of the need for working-class hegemony over the mass movement, very few mention the corollary of this, that is, the need for giving form to a political leadership capable of serving as the pivot of this process.

This reserve is not explained only by reasons of caution linked to the repression or to risks incurred. It is also explained by the fact that the practical answer to this question is extremely complex and the possible responses have not yet ripened.

The advocates and the critics of the Charter are all in the same boat when it comes to the central question, which is what political leadership is to put into practice a democratic program to promote working-class hegemony. (11) Those who reject attacks on the Charter that they consider sectarian or formalistic end up facing the same question: Can you have a correct proletarian democratic program without a proletarian leadership?

It is important to note that in the debate I have described programs, social movements and forms of action are discussed in the name of socialism. This discussion is therefore incomparably richer than that which is generally offered outside the country.

The importance of this ideological debate also lies in the fact that it is directly linked to the problems that have arisen in various social movements in the most recent period, whether the schools boycott, the boycott of white shops or the general strikes.

This discussion emerges naturally from a body of new social and political experience. It is no accident that it is taking place in the columns of independent magazines that for several years have taken great care to recount, detail and study the various mass struggles unfolding in the country. □

10. Among the most important examples of the role of tactics, I could mention the attitude of the main unions to the registration rules and industrial councils imposed by the state. There were important debates on these questions around 1982 and 1983. It was subsequently demonstrated that the flexible attitude taken toward these questions were not a "betrayal" of the working class.

11. The need for a workers' charter or a workers' program has been mentioned several times. See Duncan Innes' op. cit., and the MAWU journal for September 1986.

Position of the SACP

IN A RECENT interview published in *Marxism Today*, a journal of the British Communist Party, the chair of the South African Communist Party (SACP), Joe Slovo, who is also a member of the national executive of the ANC, answered a question about his party's own role in this vein:

"The answer in one sentence is because there is a need in South Africa to work for the ultimate achievement of a socialist South Africa. And I emphasise the word *ultimate* because the main content of the immediate struggle is centred on what our programme describes as the national democratic revolution, which involves the winning of people's power based on the broad demands of the Freedom Charter.

"In regard to these immediate objectives and the strategy and tactics connected with their achievement there is broad agreement between the African National Congress and our party . . .

"But despite this similarity of approach, we as a communist party have a special responsibility, both in relation to the immediate struggle and to our objective of socialism. We regard ourselves as the class party of the working people. And we have a special historic responsibility to ensure that this class, the working class, plays its rightful part in the alliance of class forces which the immediate struggle demands. It's necessary to ensure that the working class and its aspirations are not swamped by other social forces who may see liberation as consisting solely of replacing the white face by a Black one in the seat of exploitation.

"The ANC is an expression of the class alliance. It is a national movement embracing all classes and groups within and among the Black oppressed, and is now even open to democrats among the whites who are prepared to make common cause with it. The ANC cannot, and should not, tie itself to the aspirations of a single class, which we communists say we represent. And it is the party's function to assert and jealously safeguard the role of the working class in the alliance at this stage,

not in some future millenium.

"But apart from this there is still the socialist perspective, which although not on the immediate agenda of the struggle, cannot be filed away until the so-called first stage has been reached. As far as we are concerned as communists, there is no Chinese wall between the first stage, so-called, and the second stage, so-called. The revolution is going to be a continuous process, and it is our task to make sure that even at this stage we continuously place before the working people the long-term perspectives of socialism, the vital connection between the whole concept of national liberation and social emancipation."

While proclaiming itself the vanguard of the working class, however, the SACP spokesperson in this interview remained silent about his party's relations with the independent Black trade-union movement in South Africa. Some light was shed on these relations by a statement of Joe Slovo in an article published in issue No. 197, fourth quarter of 1986, of the SACP's journal, *African Communist*.

"It should also be stressed that participation of workers (whether communist or non-communist) in the national movement itself and the role played by an independent radical trade-union movement like COSATU are very much part of the process of asserting the role of the workers. But we reject the organizational populism of those who see the shop floor as the only terrain of class struggle and who counterpose the Party and the trade-union movement as competitive organs for the political leadership of the working class. We are at one with Jay Naidoo, General Secretary of COSATU, when he said: 'Organized workers (in the trade-union movement) are not representatives of the working class as a whole, but they constitute its most powerful weapon,' (*South African Labour Bulletin*, April 1986, p. 39.) The representative of the working class as a whole is a political vanguard which we claim to be; a title which is of course earned by the calibre of leadership on the ground and not by mere proclamation."

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Defend the Jazz Branch Seven

EIGHTEEN YEARS after the throttling of the Prague Spring, the Husak regime is still pursuing its policy of "normalization" and ideological rehardening up. In Czechoslovakia, there is no sign of the "liberalization" that Gorbachev is applying in Moscow in order to carry through a reform of Soviet economic and social life directed and controlled from above.

ANNA LIBERA

With an unconscious humor seasoned with the bitter salt of cynicism, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party explained to those who might be wondering that Czechoslovakia is not a Russian colony and therefore is not obliged to follow all the turns decided on in Moscow.

The government's rigidity in economic and social affairs is equalled only by its systematic repression of all those who think differently from it. Nonetheless, while it has sent many defenders of human rights to prison, forced many others into exile and made life difficult for those who are continuing the struggle within the country, it has not managed to silence the voice of the opposition.

Ten years after its birth, Charter 77 is indefatigably pursuing its political and cultural activity. At the same time, Catholic circles are building up sustained activity, and are today the favorite target of the police.

Perhaps more worrying for the regime, cultural circles are proving very resistant to normalization, and protest is developing in thoroughly official bodies such as the Czechoslovak musicians' union.

To curb this process, the authorities decided to arrest seven leaders of the jazz branch of the musicians' union on September 6. For some years, this section has been a cradle of cultural non-conformism, looked upon with disquiet by the authorities.

Formed in 1971 as a subsection of the musicians' union, the jazz branch quickly became a refuge not only for musicians but also for authors out of step with the ideological normalization.

Taking advantage of the fact that musical publications, which were thought harmless, were not subjected

to a strict censorship, the jazz branch started publishing in its magazine *Jazz* writings rejected by other official publications.

This activity soon extended to two collections of books called *Jazz-petit* and *Situace*, which touched on a lot of subjects other than music. The impact of the activities of the jazz branch testify to the hunger for cultural freedom that exists in the country. At the beginning of the 1980s, the jazz branch had 7,000 members, and its books were read by 80,000 to 100,000 people.

This was a thorn in the side of the authorities, who for several

years have been stepping up their attempts to silence the jazz branch. Standing on certain articles in its statutes, the musicians' union refused several times to dissolve the jazz branch. In 1983, it yielded, but immediately took the jazz branch into its Prague organization.

Finally, in July 1984, the musicians' union itself was suspended until it eliminated all members of the jazz branch from its ranks. But as soon as it was authorized to resume its activities, the musicians' union continued to give refuge in fact to its turbulent jazz branch.

To put an end to this continual defiance, the authorities decided to arrest the seven main leaders of the jazz branch on the charge of tax fraud (supposedly they failed to pay the taxes due on their publishing activity).

Obviously, no one was fooled by this, as is shown by the protests issued by a "Committee of Jazz Branch Activists" and a petition signed by several thousand people that is circulating in Prague to demand the immediate release of the Jazz Branch Seven.

It seems that the authorities struck a blow at a much broader layer than the traditional opposition, against whom it seems more difficult to "justify" repression. This is doubtless why they are dragging their feet about coming to a decision (the two months of pre-trial investigation have already gone by.) The time thus afforded must be put to use to organize the broadest possible solidarity with the Jazz Branch Seven. □



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"THE Place of Marxism in History" is the title of a new educational pamphlet prepared by Ernest Mandel on the basis of a course he teaches at the International Institute of Research and Education (IIRE), a Marxist school in Amsterdam.

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IN HISTORY

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