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## GROWING OPPOSITION TO ISRAELI OCCUPIERS

Chapters from Bernadette Devlin's new book

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## Increasing stakes and dangers in the siege of Beirut

Livio MAITAN

In launching its aggression against Lebanon, the Zionist government aimed at inflicting a decisive military defeat on the Palestinian resistance, creating a reactionary strong state in Lebanon, and thus changing the overall relationship of forces in the region to the benefit of the imperialists and all the reactionary regimes.

In its first phase, the Begin-Sharon *Blitzkrieg* scored unquestionable military successes. But in the second phase, which has been going on for several weeks now, the Zionists have found themselves in a political impasse.

First of all, Beirut, which has been transformed into a fortress city, cannot be taken by a simple rapid operation. This could be accomplished only at the cost of heavy losses, on the Israeli side as well.

Secondly, the imperialist countries and even the U.S. prefer a compromise solution avoiding a dramatic confrontation. Such a solution would be less fraught with dangers for the future of the conservative Arab regimes, with which they want a *modus vivendi*.

Finally, an opposition unprecedented in time of war has profoundly shaken the traditional consensus in the Zionist state itself.

In order to try to extricate themselves from this impasse, Begin and Sharon have come up with various plans. They have kept up heavy pressure on West Beirut, continually breaking the truces with murderous bombing. They have sought to gain international support for their push to force the total capitulation of the PLO.

In Israel, Begin and Sharon organized a demonstration of two hundred thousand of their supporters in an attempt to show that the majority of the Israeli population supports them and is still ready to mobilize for their goals. In the framework of this demonstration, they floated a proposal as demagogic as it was cynical that any Palestinians forced to flee Lebanon who find themselves unwelcome in any Arab state will be welcomed on Israeli territory.

The coming days will show to what extent the Zionist government will be able to achieve its objective, that is, to crush the PLO militarily and more generally to break up the Palestinian resistance. But what is certain now is that the Zionist threat still hangs over West Beirut. On July 18, Begin said that Yassar Arafat "will soon be liquidated."



Solidarity with Palestine demonstration (DR)

The situation in the region, moreover, may become still more explosive as a result of the resumption of military operations between Iraq and Iran. After long hesitations, the Khomeini leadership has gone on the offensive, hoping that it can deal a mortal blow to the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein and gain increased influence over the traditionalist forces in the various Arab countries. It seeks to be able to play a hegemonic role in the region, among other things, by presenting itself as the champion of anti-Zionism.

At the same time, the Khomeini leadership hopes to strengthen itself on the homefront in order to be in a better position to control and stop the process of social revolution, to be able to neutralize and repress all the oppositions. It is significant that there are signs of a new attack against the Kurds, who are fighting for their national rights; and that the weekly paper of the Communist (Tudeh) Party, which in fact is friendly to the regime, has recently been banned.

However, regardless of the aims and intentions of the Islamic Republic lead-

ers, the conflict that has flared up again can create an uncontrollable situation for the imperialist forces. And this threat is pushing them to redouble their efforts to impose their solution in Lebanon.

Precisely because of the existence of such an explosive situation and because of the fact that despite everything the Zionist government and the imperialists do not have a lot of room for maneuver, the Palestinian and Lebanese progressive leaders will bear a heavy responsibility if they accept a compromise that would amount to capitulation.

Such a compromise has not been achieved so far due to the exaggerated claims of Begin-Sharon. But at bottom a majority of the PLO leadership and the Lebanese progressives seem ready now to accept Israel's essential demand, that is, that they abandon Beirut and the key Palestinian military positions in return for the hope of getting some dubious political and diplomatic concessions.

Of course, even if the PLO were crushed militarily, that would not mark the end of the Palestinian resistance. With three million Palestinians left with no homeland, the resistance would spring up again from the ashes like a phoenix. But this does not take away from the fact that a capitulation in Beirut—even if it were covered up by the intervention of some international forces which would be imperialist—would be an enormous step backward, a major defeat. The defeat would be all the worse in conditions where resistance is still possible in Beirut and the regional situation remains explosive.

On this basis, there are forces in the Palestinian resistance as well as in the ranks of the Lebanese progressives who reject any capitulation and who are demanding that the struggle be continued. The Lebanese section of the Fourth International stands together with them. In a document disseminated in the last days (which marks a continuation of the statements previously published in IV), they call on all the forces involved in the fight to reject any capitulation and to continue intransigently the struggle against the Zionist army and to oppose any attempt by this army to occupy West Beirut.

*Hands Off Beirut!  
Immediate and Unconditional  
Withdrawal of Israeli troops from  
Lebanon!*

*The Palestinian Resistance is  
Continuing the Fight!*



# First Iranian offensives bogged down in Iraq

Gerry FOLEY

The Iranian invasion of Iraq in mid-July was preceded by some weeks in which the authorities of the Islamic republic prepared the population for an assault to bring down the Saddam Hussein regime.

In fact, the Iraqi government itself made it virtually impossible for the Iranians to stop their advance at the international border by continuing its shelling of border towns and bombing of civilian targets in Iran.

In some cases, the Iraqi bombing resulted in massacres of civilians that appeared to be deliberate atrocities.

For example, on July 14, the Iraqi airforce bombed Hamadan, a city of about 200,000 inhabitants. In this case, an Agence France-Presse correspondent was able to see the damage. "Three times, the Iraqi bombers struck this city, dropping quite powerful bombs in four different neighborhoods far from any military or economic target."

One of the bombs fell among a crowd of women and children outside a mosque. "The lawn was still covered with shoes, veils, and women's handbags," the correspondent reported.

In the fortnight preceding the launching of an offensive across the Iraqi border, the Iranian press was filled with stories of the shelling of border towns and the systematic destruction of towns by retreating Iraqi forces. Pictures of the ruins of Qadr Shirin, for example, appeared in virtually all the dailies.

The Iraqi attacks were generally interpreted in the Western press as a warning to the Iranian authorities of the losses they would face if they chose to continue the war. If this was the Iraqis' intention, such a course could only be the result of the political blindness of a degenerate military government. The Saddam Hussein regime should have learned better in a two-year war against revolutionary Iran.

Against a population that is still affected by the memories of mass mobilizations in the face of the shah's army and which is still being mobilized in the name of those experiences, such attacks could only be a goad that would make it impossible for a government such as the Iranian one, which still has to rule by appealing to the masses, to accept any compromise.

Thus, the likelihood is that Saddam Hussein's offers of peace were intended for the homefront and as international

cover, in particular to make it easier for the reactionary Arab regimes of the area to continue their support to his regime, or to increase it.

The Iraqi regime's essential aim thus does not seem to have changed with the shifting of the war onto its own territory. That is, its objective is to bleed and wear out the Iranian revolution. It is for that purpose that the reactionary Arab governments continue to pick up the tab for Saddam Hussein's war.

By retreating into Iraqi territory, Saddam Hussein could both shorten his supply lines and hope to strengthen his hand politically by appealing for unity against the invader. Since there is a large belt of desert between the Iranian border and the nearest target of any importance, the Iraqi forces have a certain margin for maneuver.

Indications so far are that the Iraqi troops have been fighting harder and that the Iranians have suffered considerable losses. Agence France-Presse has reported evidence of massive destruction of Iranian war material and large numbers of Iranian military prisoners. Two Iranian offensives have been stopped. U.S. military experts claim that the Iraqis have lured Iranian forces into traps.

Agence France-Presse reported on July 19: "It is apparent that the Iraqi tactic is to let the enemy units penetrate a sector and then try to encircle them and destroy them.

"This tactic offers the advantage of extending the Iranian lines of communications while shortening those of the Iraqis. This is important in particular for helicopters, which are heavy consumers of fuel. Since the zone of combat, with the exception of the banks of the Shat El-Arab, is a desert, the tactic offers few dangers.

"Helicopters are playing a major role on the Iraqi side. Most of them are the Soviet MI-24s, veritable air-borne destroyers, equipped with cannon, rocket-launching tubes, and antitank missiles." These helicopters, for example, have been the Soviet forces' most effective weapon in the war against the Afghan guerrillas.

By attacking now, the Iranian army assured itself of up to five months before the rainy season makes ground operations nearly impossible. But this is also the period of greatest heat, which is hardest on the forces on the move.

*Le Monde's* correspondent in Baghdad, Paul Balta, an experienced Middle East hand, wrote in the July 26 issue of the Paris daily that Saddam Hussein seemed to have succeeded in consolidating his homefront politically. Among other things:

"The regime has announced the release of Kurdish and Communist political prisoners 'to enable them to participate in the liberation of their country.'"

It was not yet clear, Balta wrote, how much Hussein's amnesty decrees amounted to. But in the face of the reconsolidation of his grip on the government, the divisions in the opposition, and the promises of democratic concessions: "The Iraqi population seems less ready to challenge the government, and still less to overthrow it, as Imam Khomeini is calling on them to do, than to defend their territory and their standard of living.

"It did not understand why the regime wanted to attack Iran... Today, seeing that the Iranians are refusing the offer of peace made by Baghdad in the name of the need to defend Lebanon and the Palestinians, it seems to them that the leaders of the Islamic republic are justifying the Baathist propaganda that accused them of acting not as Muslims but as 'hereditary enemies' and 'objective allies' of Israel."

The first days of the new phase of the war will clearly represent a crucial political test between the two regimes in which the main thing at stake is the loyalty of the Iraqi people and army to the present government and their readiness to fight against the Iranian forces. If Saddam Hussein wins it, the war could continue to wear down the Iranian revolution.

Unfortunately, the objective results of the first week's fighting, as well as the reports of correspondents such as Balta, indicate that the Baathist regime gained an early advantage.

The fact is that so far the Iranian victories and the Iraqi defeats have resulted in a relaxation of the repression against the Kurdish and Arab masses in Iraq and an increase in the repression against the Kurds and socialists in Iran.

On July 18, Radio Tehran reported that the weekly paper of the Communist (Tudeh) Party had been suppressed. The reason given was "the flagrant opposition of this journal with Islamic criteria and its line opposing the Islamic republic's policy of 'Neither East nor West.'"



Thus, this slogan that the clergy and those forces hiding behind them have pushed from the beginning of the mass movement that overthrew the Shah has now become official doctrine, with which it is illegal to differ.

In fact, the period since the occupation of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, when the rulers' forces turned mainly to demagoguery to keep their grip on the situation, has been marked by a concerted attempt to build up a new "Islamic" ideology to cover over the contradictions of a regime that rules in the name of the revolutionary masses but acts against their interests.

One of the main purveyors of this ideology has been *Jomhuriye Eslami*, the daily newspaper of Khomeini's Islamic Republican Party, which, for example, has run long articles arguing that Arab nationalism was a creation of British imperialism designed to divide the Muslim people.

An example of how this ideology is being applied now is the arrest of Hussein Sadeqi in Ahwaz at the end of January and his subsequent sentencing to ten years in prison. Sadeqi was a soldier fighting on the southern front against Iraq and from a working-class background.

Reporters for *Kargar*, the newspaper of the Revolutionary Workers Party (HKE), one of the three Iranian groups adhering to the Fourth International, investigated the case. They spoke to a court attorney named Salehi, who told them that Sadeqi was arrested for having copies of *Kargar* and for propagating socialist views. He was subsequently sentenced to ten years on five charges: 1. distributing *Kargar* and "heretical" books among the other soldiers on the front, 2. being in the camp of the counterrevolution, 3. holding "heretical" views, 4. holding the view that the government of the Islamic republic is not a government of the disinherited, and 5. listening to rumors.

The main charge was thus contact with *Kargar* and agreement with the views it represents, and there could be no doubt that that publication and its sponsor do not support the war and the revolution. No accusation that they did not was even made; "heresy" was apparently sufficient charge.

Moreover, in the sermons of the religious leaders at Friday prayers, a major political platform for the Islamic authorities, the theme has begun to appear that there is a danger of subtle perversion of Islam even by those who profess support for the regime and its values. Even those who seem to be "*hezb'ollahi*" ("members of God's party") may be "heretics."

The term "*hezb'ollahi*" that was first associated with the rightist gangs who attacked liberal newspapers and left and liberal parties is now used as a synonym for Islamic patriot by the government-controlled press.

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tle about them and still less about their concrete interests.

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Most of the slogans for the invasion are religious, the most common being "For the Conquest of the Kerbala," the Shi'ite holy place in southern Iraq. That slogan was featured on the front page of almost every issue of the Iranian dailies in the weeks before the invasion.

The invasion was generally defended in religious terms, as in the following editorial in the July 10 issue of *Jomhuriye Eslami*:

"In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent.

"Today the most important question relating to our struggle against the infidels is which is the surest road to achieve the condemnation and punishment of the aggressors.

"This question can be answered in two ways, by reason and by religious law. Both lead to the same conclusion. Because calm reason cannot diverge from a judgement in accordance with religious law. The principle on which this answer is based is what is 'right,' and both reason and religious law are based on what is 'right.'

"The judgement of the sacred religious law of Islam on these two questions is the very one that we heard from the blessed lips of the beloved leader of the Islamic revolution in his message on the retreat of the mercenary Saddam. We will continue the war to bring down Saddam and root out the infidel Baath party of Iraq.

"This is the fundamental judgement of the Koran. The Holy Koran commands, on the one hand: If groups of Muslims make war on each other, and one of these two groups is not prepared to stop the war on the basis of what is 'right,' Muslims are bound to make war on this group until it submits to God's commandments, and acts on the basis of the 'right' (Verse 9 of the *Hegira Chapter*).

"On the other hand, the Holy Koran commands that if a group of infidels proposes to Muslims an ending of hostilities, Muslims can accept this only if the infidels abandon their claims completely and their enmity and stop their harm and molestation. Otherwise, Muslims are obliged to make war on them until they are everywhere annihilated [Cites a second verse from Koran].

"So, if we recognize Saddam and his crew as Muslims, our behavior must be in accordance with the first verse of the Koran cited....And, if as the Imam has said, Saddam and his crew are infidels, then our behavior must be based on the second verse cited."

The Iranian press also played up a march of Iraqi exiles living in Tehran, which called on the Iranian government to "help the Iraqi people overthrow the

infidel Saddam Hussein." It was organized by the "Society of Militant Clergy of Iraq," and headed up by the exiled Iraqi Shi'ite Hojatollah Kerim, who has argued in the pages of the Iranian papers that Iran would be justified in overthrowing Saddam by armed force because Islam was spread through conquest.

In its July 13 issue, the Tehran daily *Keyhan* reported: "Today, on the first day of the 'Enslaved Iraq' week, militant Iraqi Muslims demonstrated in the streets of Tehran, calling on the Imam Ommat (The Guide of the Islamic People), the leader of the world Islamic revolution to give the order as soon as possible for the hero fighters of Islam to advance onto Iraqi territory, together with militant Iraqi fighters for the faith, to overthrow the infidel regime of Saddam Hussein and set up an Islamic republic."

Another Tehran daily, *Azedegan*, listed the groups participating in the demonstration as follows: The Iraq Bureau of the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Ad-Dawa Party, the Club of Residents of the City of Kazmin, the Islamic Councils, Iraqi Doctors and Engineers, the Committee of Residents of Najaf (a Shi'ite holy city in Iraq), the Movement of Iraqi Fighters for the Faith, the Islamic Students Movement, and also the Iraqi Army of Guards of the Islamic Revolution (Sepahe Pasdarane Enqelabe Eslami—the same name as that of the Iranian militia). *Azedegan* also mentioned a group of "Iraqi Kurds living in Tehran."

Apparently, both sides are making certain appeals to the Kurds, in the other country of course.

In Iran, since the decisive defeat of the Iraqi invasion, extensive repression operations seem to have been underway in Iranian Kurdistan. In the last weeks, the Iranian papers have frequently carried accounts of actions against "counterrevolutionists" in Kurdish areas. For example, *Jomhuriye Eslami* reported: "In the last three days, the Pasdaran have gained control of the Deh Fayel region around Bowkan, which was a stronghold of counterrevolutionists. In these operations, 80 counterrevolutionists were killed and many more wounded.

"For the first time the flag of the Islamic revolution was raised here, and the population of these villages were liberated from the despotism of the grouplets."

In other reports, such operations have been said to be part of a campaign to "remove filth and corruption from the earth."

The statements of the Iranian press and leaders about the war in Lebanon also are generally in a religious framework. The objective of the Islamic Republic is to reconquer Jerusalem. "The Road to Jerusalem Leads Past the Kerbala."

Saddam Hussein is the same thing as the Israeli government, the conservative Arab regimes wanted the Israeli attack. Therefore, the best way to help the Palestinians and the Lebanese is to overthrow Hussein. In the early days of the



second phase of the war, Iranian TV showed a young Iranian soldier repeating over and over again "God is Great" with his last breath.

Against this background, it would not be surprising if most of the Iraqi population did not find the Iranian government's appeals either very convincing or very attractive. After all, the Shi'ite clergy gained the leadership of the revolutionary masses in Iran in quite specific circumstances. And at least a very large section of those who fought the shah did not expect Khomeini to impose the sort of regime he has.

The example of the Islamic republic seems to make it in fact less likely that the Shi'ite clergy can emerge as an alternative to the dictatorship in Iraq. Furthermore, the evolution of the regime in Iran is not unlike what happened to the Baathist regime in Iraq.

The establishment of a radical nationalist regime in Iraq in 1958 aroused great hopes in the masses and brought them important gains for a whole period, in particular the oppressed Kurdish people. This regime, however, like the Khomeini one, remained bourgeois and therefore ridden with contradictions. The explosion of these contradictions led to a repressive war against the Kurds, accompanied by the elimination of all democratic freedoms and the imposition of a regime patterned on totalitarian models.

In the Iraqi case, a variety of Arab petty-bourgeois nationalism served the function that Islamic nationalism has in Iran. The Baathist party played the role

now being filled in Iran by the Shi'ite clergy and the institutions it controls. This process of degeneration of a national revolution is still far from completed in Iran, but the conditions there undoubtedly remind many in Iraq unpleasantly of what happened in their own country.

It is not surprising that a nonpolitical opposition such as the Iraqi Islamic fundamentalists, faced with savage repression at home, should stake everything on a military defeat of Iraq by Iran. In similar conditions, the major opposition groups in Iran have made the same mistake in reverse. In both cases, this reflects a lack of perspective for organizing and leading the masses.

In the case of the Iranian opposition groups, this lack is grave because they claim to be socialist and democratic and are in a country where very large sections of the masses are still in motion. And most of the masses consider the government, at least to some degree, as representing their revolution.

Thus, defeat and decimation of the Iranian forces by Iraq would tend to demoralize major sections of the Iranian population. This is precisely the danger that is increased by the political framework in which the Iranian regime has put its military assault on Saddam Hussein. Those forces that oppose the repression and demagoguery of the Islamic republic in the name of socialism and democracy should be explaining this danger to the Iranian people, rather than taking the side de facto of Saddam Hussein by

claiming that Khomeini is responsible for the war, as is done by the groups that belong to the National Council of the Resistance. This unfortunately also includes the Mujahadin, who have fought heroically against the repression of the shah and of the right-wing Islamic forces under the Khomeini regime. But they have reacted to the government's massive and savage repression against them by making the physical destruction of Khomeini's state apparatus their supreme objective, separate and above all other considerations.

As the confrontation between the Saddam Hussein regime and the Islamic Republic becomes more total, it also becomes more directly political. The decisive battles now are for the support of the populations. Hussein's concessions to the Kurds and the left testify to that.

These pressures can open up the way for more political life in both states, and give the masses new opportunities to fight for their own interests and select a leadership that will genuinely represent them and lead them to the achievement of their aspirations.

Such breaks by the Iranian and Iraqi masses from their reactionary and brutally repressive governments are the best hope for a definitive end to the costly warfare that over the last two years has blocked the progress of the peoples of both countries, and which, if it continues much longer—especially if the Iranians attempt to attack major population centers against the resistance of the inhabitants—could result in exhaustion and demoralization throughout the area. ■

## Growing problems for Israeli occupiers

More than a month since they launched their *Blitzkrieg*, the Zionist rulers are still getting nowhere militarily in Lebanon and are losing ground politically.

The increase in Israeli bombing and shelling over the last week of July seems to reflect increasing frustration. It will not change the situation in the Israelis' favor. In fact, on the political level, such attacks seem to be becoming increasingly counterproductive, both in their effect on those sections of Lebanese that had been vacillating or hostile to the Palestinians and on international public opinion.

The most important events in the Lebanon war in the third week of July seem to be resumption of Palestinian commando attacks on Israeli forces both in the Beirut area and in southern Lebanon as well as the continued erosion of collaborationism among Christians and other sectors of the Lebanese population hostile to the PLO.

A *Le Monde* correspondent, Lucien George, wrote in the July 23 issue of the Paris daily:

"Two ambushes carried out by the Fedayin against Israeli patrols have demonstrated the vitality of the resistance. They occurred in the southern part of the Bekaa valley and in Tyre, deep inside the Israeli occupied area."

The same day, another Paris daily *Liberation* reported:

"Rocket fire hit upper Galilee (northern Israel) July 20. 'This fire,' the Palestinians say, 'shows that the emptiness of the Israeli claims that their army has established a security belt extending forty kilometers north of their border.'"

Actually, for an entire period before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon the PLO had ceased shelling positions in Galilee.

On July 25, *Le Monde* reported that the massive repression carried out by the Israelis in the areas they occupy forced even the Greek Catholic archbishop of Tyre, Monsignor Haddad, to voice a sharp protest and a warning:

"The arbitrary arrests are a barrier to the establishment of the just peace the

Israelis say that they want....At the start of the invasion, Mr. Meridor, Israeli economic charge d'affaires, visited us and was well received. If he came back today, everyone would turn their backs on him. People here have been embittered by the behavior of the Israelis."

At the same time, tensions have begun escalating sharply between the Phalangist Christian allies of the Israelis and the large Druze community, which has wavered between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

A July 26 Agence France-Presse dispatch quoted Druze leader of the village of Mukhtara, thirty kilometers south of Beirut, as saying:

"The Israelis have created the conditions for a civil war here."

At the Eid Al-Fitr feast ending the fast of Ramadan, the main Muslim leader in Beirut, according to *Le Monde* of July 23, said: "Any tendency to collaborate with the enemy is a danger to the integrity of Lebanon, its people, and its institutions." ■



# Mexican Trotskyists now the country's fourth largest party

The following interview with Edgar Sanchez, leader of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT—Revolutionary Workers Party, Mexican section of the Fourth International) was given to Jean-Pierre Beauvais. We have translated it and shortened it somewhat from the July 22 issue of Rouge, weekly paper of the French section of the Fourth International.

*Question.* It's more than a week now since the elections and the government has still published only fragmentary and apparently disputed results.

*Answer.* Since the polls closed on the night of July 4-5, a real war of figures and percentages has been raging.

The main opposition parties, including the PRT, set up facilities to total the results from a significant number of polling stations in various election districts. These totals were published quite quickly, along with estimates, based on them, of what the final outcome would be.

Although these calculations and estimates were made separately by the various opposition parties, and in general on the basis of the results from different polling stations—by right-wing opposition parties as well as left-wing ones—they generally converged.

As for the government and the official party, the PRI, they first kept quiet. Then they offered some "estimates," but without indicating on what specific partial results they were based. Finally, as the pressure increased and the protests multiplied, the results for some districts were given, but only for rural districts, which should take the longest to add up than for others. Needless to say, the figures given by the government were markedly different than those released by the opposition parties.

*Q.* Could you explain precisely what you are referring to?

*A.* For the top five political formations—the others got much smaller votes—the opposition gave the following estimates. For the PRI, 60%; for the Partido de Accion Nacional (PAN—the traditional right-wing party), 25%; for the Mexican United Socialist Party (PSUM, a coalition dominated by the CP), 6%; for the PRT, 3.5%; for the Social Democratic Party, 3%.

On the basis of its "estimates," the PRI claims 75%; it grants the PAN 15%, PSUM about 5% and the PRT and Social Democrats 2% each. All these per-

centages refer to the presidential vote. The vote for the senators and deputies is much more difficult to estimate with accuracy.

*Q.* So, do you think that there was massive fraud?

*A.* That's a tradition of the Mexican political system. There was a lot of fraud, on the polling day itself. In the state of Puebla and in the city of Puebla itself, which is one of the largest cities in the country, a lot of polls were installed an hour before the polling stations opened, without poll watchers being present. They already had ballots in them.

In Monterey, a big city in the northern part of the country, the home town of our candidate, Rosario Ibarra, the police expelled all the PRT poll watchers from the polling stations. A lot of soldiers and sailors had to vote "as a group" under the supervision of their superiors.

In a lot of rural districts, the PRI by itself organized the "vote" and the "count." There are many other examples and other forms of cheating, both crude and "sophisticated." But it would take too long to list them.

The obvious reason for the delay in issuing the results is to make it easier to rig the totals. It also reflects differences at the top of the state apparatus about which parties other than the PRI should be given a boost by the vote rigging, and which should be cut down.

For example, in the framework of its so-called political reform, the government has encouraged the formation of a series of little parties that generally accept its politics and are in fact satellites of the PRI. This is a pretty cheap way to put up a show of being "pluralist" and "democratic." According to the government's plans, these parties are designed to be both docile parliamentary allies and means of capturing opposition sectors.

However, it seems that none of these parties got 1.5% of the vote. In that case, they would automatically lose their ballot status. This is not an unimportant question. And so there are discussions going on about who is to get a rescuing "boost" and who is not. On problems of this sort, there are diverging opinions and interests in the government and especially in the PRI.

*Q.* Aside from these still unclear aspects, what initial political conclusions has the PRT drawn about the fact that a

much higher percentage of potential voters actually voted than in previous elections?

*A.* The reduction of the rate of abstention from the 40% to 45% of previous elections to 25% to 30% this time is a political success for the regime. One of the aims of the "political reform" instituted step by step in recent years was precisely to halt and reverse the growing disinterest in elections among large sections of the population. This apathy resulted from the fact that everything was decided beforehand.

By giving ballot status to several opposition parties and making it possible for a significant number of oppositionists to be elected to parliament—although all the necessary steps were taken to assure that the PRI would retain its dominant position—the government wanted to convince the voters that the elections were something more than a mere show. It wanted to give a new legitimacy to the electoral processes and thus to the system.

So, the drop in the abstention rate represents a success for the government. So, the "political reform," with all its limitations and contradictions, will be continued.

In the coming period, those political parties that have definitely won ballot status (by getting more than 1.5% of the vote in a national election) will enjoy important rights.

However, at the same time, struggles, mass mobilizations, social movements will be contained by every possible means, from restrictions on certain fundamental rights up to and including the most brutal repression. It is significant that during the electoral period itself, several strikes and peasant mobilizations were attacked and harshly repressed.

On the other hand, the extent of the government's political success should not be exaggerated. According to the data gathered by the opposition, the PRI gained very little from the increased vote. The gains were made essentially by the PAN on the right and by the PRT on the left, since the PSUM's vote was more or less the same as in previous elections.

*Q.* What do you make of the PAN vote?

*A.* In previous elections, it was about 10%. This time, according to the opposition estimates, it was about 25%. Its candidates played skillfully on two themes—the need to cast an opposition



vote that would count and to protest corruption.

Q. In what sort of shape is the PRT coming out of the elections?

A. We now have legal status. All the political parties regard this as an accomplished fact. The government does as well, despite its refusal to release the results.

Our organization is now considered the fourth largest party in the country. Among the manipulations going on now is the shifting of some vote to the Social Democrats, to make it look as if we are only the fifth largest. But this is basically a silly game.

On the other hand, the government may get away with rigging the vote on the congressional level. They are going to try to reduce our parliamentary representation to the minimum by rigging the votes for the deputies elected by proportional representation. We are preparing to wage a hard fight on this question.

The campaign not only made the PRT and its program known in the entire country. It laid the bases for a real national organization, which in a country as large and decentralized as Mexico represents a qualitative step forward. We now have organizations in 29 of the 32 states. Innumerable nuclei of sympathizers are working with us. More than 4,000 of these sympathizers registered as poll wat-

chers. They spent the day at the polling stations and kept scrupulous counts, which they relayed to our election offices. That is one of the most tangible signs of our increased support.

Our biggest failing up to now has been our conservatism about recruiting. We have not opened the doors of the organization wide enough for those who participated in the campaign and want to come into the party.

A lot of people today consider themselves members of the PRT whom we have not yet given a chance to become real members. They are more numerous today than the actual members of the party. The challenge that faces us in the next weeks and months is to turn this situation around, to bring these activists en masse into our ranks.

The tasks and responsibilities that fall on us today are incomparably greater than they were before this campaign. To give impetus to the struggles of the workers and the peasants who have been hard hit by the government's policies, to represent these masses at the national level and in parliament, to build mass solidarity with our comrades in Central America, to build the party of revolutionists that the exploited people of Mexico need, for all these tasks these new forces are desperately needed. ■

LAST ISSUE UNTIL  
SEPTEMBER

This is the last issue of *International Viewpoint* before the summer break. The first issue after the break will be dated September 20. It will contain a major article by Ernest Mandel on the developing threat of imperialist war and the growth of the anti-war movement.

To be sure of receiving this issue we ask you to subscribe or resubscribe now. If we receive a flood of subscriptions in September we cannot guarantee that they can all be processed fast enough to make sure you receive the first September issue.

This appeal is particularly directed to all those readers who took out the introductory special subscription. This issue is the last of that offer. Don't miss the next one.

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## A new dissident movement emerges in the USSR

Laetitia CAVAGNALS

On Tuesday, April 6, in Moscow, agents of the Soviet bureaucracy carried out rather widespread raids in "dissident" circles. In all, fifty searches were carried out, and twelve persons were arrested. The silence in Western Europe about this repressive operation shows how long gone are the days of the hypocritical sermons about human rights, accompanied by the shedding of many tears about the fate of the opposition in the USSR.

Another factor in this silence, perhaps, is that there were no well known personalities among those arrested, such as Andrei Sakharov or others. They were people like Andrei Fadin, Boris Kagarlitski, Yuri Khavkin, Pavel Kudyukin, and Vladimir Chernitski.

In their apartments, considerable literature was found. This included issues of the samizdat magazine *Socialism and the Future*, an appeal to the Italian Communist party made in the name of this magazine, documents on Poland, the replies of the editors of *Variants* to questions posed by the French magazine *L'Alternative*, issues of the magazine *Left Turn*, the Appeal to

Polish Workers (published below in a box). This material was confiscated.

These five "nobodies" were jailed in Lefortovo prison, probably charged on the basis of Article 70 of the Soviet penal code, which is unusual for a first offense. In accordance with this article, they face seven years in a prison camp and five years internal exile.

The following article points up the changes that have been occurring in the dissident movement and the repression that it faces. It shows also that support for the democratic movement in the USSR is important for more than humanist or moral reasons. It is becoming more than ever a political necessity. In fact, the repression is coming down not just against people "who think differently" (the literal translation of the word dissident in Russian) but also against people who are fighting to achieve genuine socialism.

The inspiring fight that they are waging has to be matched by an equally inspiring international campaign of solidarity with them.

A few lines sometimes have more value and meaning than a long speech or a spectacular action. This is true, for example, of the Statement to the Polish Workers that is published below.

This statement is both an exemplary declaration and an act of solidarity. It does not limit itself to evoking feelings of enthusiasm and admiration. It does

and expresses more, particularly about facts of life in the Soviet Union that are ignored by the mass media. These lines alone are enough to explode all the accepted Sovietology and the clichés about the dissident movement.

One of the first things about it is that it represents a postmortem of the dissident movement itself. The opposition in the USSR has in fact been buried

in the same coffin as the detente policy. Nonetheless, there has never been such systematic repression in the Brezhnev period as there is today—arrests and sentences are almost daily events.

In the West, the hypocritical tear-jerking speeches about the dissidents have been followed quite quickly by indifference. The silence that has now fallen on the oppositionists in the USSR is reveal-





Unofficial Soviet Historian Roy Medvedev (DR)

ing of two things: First, it says a lot about Jimmy Carter-type professions of "humanitarian" concern. The chess game between states in which they were pawns, has been dropped. But, most of all, this silence points up a profound inability to analyze the nature of dissidence in Soviet society.

The dissident movement was not simply the appearance of a variable but always limited number of conscious individuals. What it represented was a reflection of real and profound processes at work in Soviet society. In this respect, the dissident movement cannot be crushed for a long period. Without an understanding of this fact, it would be impossible to see and predict that, in the face of repression, the democratic movement would inevitably undergo a recombination that would require other forms of organization and action. This appeal for solidarity with the Polish workers is a tangible sign of this.

#### A NEW OPPOSITION CURRENT

However, in reading the statement, the clearest break from the past that shows up is on the political level. It puts in perspective the picture of a Soviet opposition that, marked by the experience of fifty years of Stalinism, tended to reject everything connected with the word "socialism." This view was also promoted to a considerable extent by the Western press, which played it up. The opposition that fitted this picture was centered either on programs for moral regeneration or activity deliberately kept limited to defending human rights.

Now, it is no longer possible to identify the opposition as a whole with the big names such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Andrei Sakharov.

It was this one-sided view, moreover, that led to the presentation of a distorted image of "Poland as viewed from the Soviet Union." No alternative

current was seen. People talked about either a sympathetic current, but one that seemed to observe the events in Poland through a telescope (Poland is another "planet," it has another history, another sort of working class; therefore, its experience has little meaning for the USSR); or a bitterly hostile current, open to nationalist and "stomach-centered" arguments (these Poles, they go on strike and we have to feed them; that's why there isn't anything in our stores anymore).

But these Soviet dissidents not only express their solidarity with the Polish workers but also their "hope and confidence" in them. In this respect, it is important to point up a very significant detail, which represents another break from the past in this appeal. It is deliberately left unsigned.

We have become used to general statements by the opposition, almost always associated with familiar faces, signed by "big names." But here we have a concise, explicit, and committed statement, but a faceless one. And this fact must not be interpreted only as a technical and tactical response to the repression of recent years. It is the reflection of a new political decision.

All these features, which mark a clear difference from the conceptions of the "traditional" dissidents, are worth pointing up precisely because they are new. However, we cannot avoid the conclusion that it would be wrong to think that something unusual is necessarily "accidental." It would be wrong to think that the authors of this anonymous statement are exceptional individuals who have miraculously remained exempt from the laws that shape the lives of Soviet citizens, the imprint left by history on them. It would be wrong to think that they are atypical dissidents.

This statement, which indicates the rise of a new opposition current in the

Soviet literary figure Andrei Sinyavsky, persecuted for his ideas in the 1960s (DR)



USSR, in fact represents a balance sheet. And balance sheet means an experience. If this new current represents a break with the decimated generation of oppositionists from the 1970s, this does not mean that the new current should be counterposed to them. This break could only have taken place on the basis of a balance sheet of the experience and activity of the dissidents in the 1970s.

This balance sheet, which in fact marks a new departure, is not, it should be stressed, a balance sheet of the repression. Such a balance sheet would have served only to bring on repression. It is an expression of political reflection, which could not have developed without the gains and experience of the democratic movement in the preceding years.

Doubtless, it is still too early to define this new "post-human rights" generation. It seems possible, however, to see a number of projects related to the start of this new thinking. One is free unions. This represents a clear decision not to separate economic problems and demands from the question of human rights. Another is the Moscow magazine *Poiski*, which was aimed at bringing together the various democratic currents so as to make it possible to work out a program.

More generally, there is the development of "associations," such as the Initiative Group for the Defense of the Rights of Invalids, the Federation of Free Trade Unions (SMOT), the almanach *Women and Russia* in Leningrad. In fact, the logic of these organizations, which no longer have as their goal a "vague" defense of human rights but the defense of certain specific categories of citizens meant the emergence at a certain point of a political alternative, an alternative conception of organizing society.

#### REFLECTION ON THE PAST

It is only now that such reflection is assuming a definite form, a better defined political form. This is being expressed in several new samizdat journals, the majority of which criticize the Soviet regime from a socialist point of view. The names that might be cited are *Poedinok* ("Duel"), *Levyi Povорот* ("Left turn"), *Sotsializm i Budushche* ("Socialism and the Future"). We might also mention the Initiative Group for People's Democracy. But the most important thing is to look at the main lines emerging in this new "Results and Prospects."

In the first place, there is a definite end to the illusions created by the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956 about the government. It took more than a decade to get rid of these illusions, which were given impetus by the so-called return to "Leninist legality" for which the Twentieth Congress was supposed to have opened the road. In this sense, such hopes, illusory as they were, were a political factor, and helped promote the development of opposition Marxist currents.



Later, when the opposition understood that the ending of mass terror did not mean the ending of repression (it simply became more refined and rational) but was designed to provide security for the bureaucratic caste, when they understood that this caste would defend its monopoly of power with teeth and claws, this "oppositionist legalism"—which sought to gain the ear of the government, to "influence, change, warn" in order to change its policy—became a constitutionalism.

Thus, the movement advocated "limiting the struggle to exposing the abuses of the government, its violation of its own laws (1)." In exchange for this self-limitation, it hoped to achieve a certain legality. The results of this effort are now clear. One was repression that forced the human rights movement on the defensive. Another was a logic, arising out of the detente policy, which impelled the movement to direct all its activities and energies toward the West.

It is only now that these "new wave" oppositionists are coming to a clear understanding of the price that had to be paid for such an orientation, and that is what represents a real balance sheet. The legalism that was supposed to be nonpolitical concentrated on talking

to the government and made the movement almost totally dependent on the Western press. Most of all, it placed it "hopelessly outside of Soviet society."

This is the analysis in particular of the editors of the magazine *Variants* (who claim to have a Social Democrat, socialist, and "Eurocommunist" orientation). For example, they say: "The fact is, and we can only deplore it, a neighborhood party secretary is incomparably closer to daily reality than Andrei Sakharov and the Group to Monitor the Application of the Helsinki Accords."

The dissident movement found that it was largely closed in on itself and almost totally cut off from the masses and their concerns. The masses, bludgeoned by the regime's argument "It's them (the West) or us," lined up almost entirely behind the category "us."

Thus, drawing a critical balance sheet of a weakened, ineffective dissident movement living an enclosed life, that "politically disarmed itself vis-a-vis the government," the new oppositionists lay out the general framework for a new orientation.

Their objective is no longer to obtain certain legal rights from the government. They have stopped entirely directing their appeals to it. The days of begging are over. They no longer make it

their ultimate goal to make an impact in the Western press and gain the support of international public opinion. It is in this regard that their "faceless statement" takes on a political meaning.

Their objective quite clearly is not to orient themselves any longer toward the government and the Western regimes but "toward the masses." The way out of the crisis of the dissident movement is to create "in the near future various political organizations and to direct them to 'the people on the bottom' with concrete social programs." It is on this basis that the new forms of opposition are developing.

And this orientation requires in turn breaking with the conception of dissidents as "martyr enthusiasts," which unquestionably puts off the masses (2), breaking with the conception of "professional dissidents" who in daily life and their activity are not integrated into the life of the society.

So, the "new wave" are in favor of reintegrating dissidents into the society but also of a political reintegration, whose terms are still to be defined:

"Of course, we have to grow a lot more to reach the Polish level, but for us the main lesson to be drawn is the following: We have to try to find foundations for our activity in the real needs of the society (defined not 'in a general way' but on the basis of precise studies), by putting forward achievable programs. What we need is not a purely moral opposition or a reactionary utopian or communist utopian one. We need an opposition based on concrete social and political questions."

Thus, this emerging current, which says that "the fundamental task is to bring together all supporters of democracy and socialism" seems to be a promising successor to the dissident movement of the 1970s. This is undoubtedly the way that the "authoritative bodies" of the state also saw it. The only conceivable response from the bureaucracy was not long in coming.

Frightened by the Polish events, mired down in Afghanistan, incapable of remedying the growing economic difficulties, the bureaucracy finds itself obliged to lash out in a clumsy and unwontedly precipitate way. This is amply demonstrated by the recent measures severely restricting communication with the West, as well as by the extent of the police raids and the severity of the charges against those hauled in. ■

#### DECLARATION TO THE POLISH WORKERS

Dear Polish comrades, friends, brothers, and sisters,

Today when your country is passing through a difficult period, we send you this statement expressing our admiration and our solidarity. There is very little that we can do to help you; we can only place our hopes and our confidence in you.

Today, after a year and a half of revolution, the gains of the Polish working class, recognized by the Gdansk agreements and consolidated by the consistent struggle of the workers, are threatened.

The experience of history teaches us that when reaction suffers a defeat, it is quick to resort to military force. The terrible threat of military dictatorship hangs over Poland.

We are with you, friends!

All of us are with you in the public squares of Warsaw and Gdansk, in the factories in Katowice and Lodz, and in the prisons where the KOR socialists and leaders of Solidarnosc are languishing.

We are there, where for the first time in history a people has dealt a severe blow to a totalitarian regime, to a puppet regime. We believe that the workers can counter the force of bayonets and tanks with the power of their organization and their unity.

What happened in Hungary and in Chile must not be repeated in Poland.

We believe in the Polish working class, in its capacity to defend its gains. Today you are in the vanguard of the world workers movement, in the first ranks of those fighting for a democratic socialism. A defeat for Solidarnosc would be a catastrophe for the progressive forces of the entire world.

We socialists, Social Democrats, and honest people in Russia join with the millions of people who hope for your victory.

We repeat the prophetic words of Herzen (1): There are no longer frontiers between Russia and Poland. But Europe knows what Poland represents. It is a nation abandoned by all to a fight against impossible odds, which has since shed rivers of blood on every battlefield where peoples have fought for their freedom.

Everyone knows this people.

Poland can be destroyed but it cannot be forced to accept subjection.

-Long live the heroic Polish workers!

-Long live Solidarnosc!

-Long live democratic socialism!

-For your freedom and ours!

#### SOVIET DISSIDENTS

December 14, 1981

(from the Bulletin "News From the USSR," edited by Kronid Lyubarski, Munich, June-July 1982.)

1. This quotation as well as the following ones are taken from the interview with the editors of the magazine *Variants*, which appeared in issue No. 15 (March-April 1982) of *l'Alternative*, published in Paris.

2. In this respect, it is instructive to compare the statement published here with that of the editors of *Poiski i Razyshlenia*, published in Moscow in January 1981 under the title "How Shameful It is To Be Russian," which was republished in French in issue No. 12 (January 1981) of *l'Alternative*.

1. Aleksandr Ivanovich Herzen (1812-1870), born in Moscow, died in Paris. Editor of the first oppositionist Russian magazine, the *Polar Star*, later the *Bell*. A populist pan-Slav democrat.



# New situation in Mauritius after MMM/PSM election victory

In the last issue of International Viewpoint, we carried a short report on the outcome of the elections in Mauritius on June 11, 1982. Here Claude Gabriel, who was in Mauritius shortly after the elections, examines the new situation in more depth.

Claude GABRIEL

The incredible result of the elections on June 11 opens a new situation in this small island and in the southern Indian Ocean. The popular jubilation which followed the announcement of the results indicated the feelings of the toiling masses. For them, it was like a second Independence celebration and strengthened national feeling. A wide majority dismissed those who, for the last fourteen

The FNAS was set up at the end of 1981 to oppose unemployment and demand unemployment benefits. It has several hundred activists and draws between three and five hundred to its meetings. In December 1981 it organised a rally attended by over ten thousand people.

The FNAS was doubtful about the alliance between the MMM and the bourgeois PSM. However, as it called for ousting the right wing it finally had to call for a vote for the coalition, as there was no way of differentiating between the two parties in voting.

Since the election it has stated that it will support the positive measures put forward by the government, but will not follow them into an alliance with the bosses. There have been a list of urgent demands drawn up which go beyond unemployment benefits—to nationalisation

years, have sold the country, its resources, its soil (1) in order to get together with imperialism. The Mauritian workers voted en bloc against poverty, unemployment, and austerity. The level of participation in the elections reached 90 per cent—higher than the vote for independence in 1968 which signified the break with Great Britain.

The candidates of the left coalition Mouvement Militant Mauricien/Parti Socialiste Mauricien (MMM/PSM) gained between 55 and 80 per cent of the vote, according to the constituency. The electoral system in Mauritius is that each elector is presented with a list of names from which three are chosen. Analysis of the results demonstrated that votes were re-

gistered en bloc for the three candidates presented by the MMM/PSM coalition. Thus, there was almost no cross-voting among the different lists, the three elected being most often credited with very close scores.

The ex-majority was truly routed. The former Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam, was beaten by 6,000 votes in Pamplemousse and ended up behind the three members of the MMM/PSM. The former Minister of the Economy, Ringaloo, only came sixth in his constituency. The American advisors who organised the Parti de l'Alliance Nationale campaign did not in the end succeed in performing a miracle. The other reactionary formations, including the Parti Mauricien Social-Democrate (PMSD) of Gaetan Duval, also did very poorly.

of the sugar plantations, workers control, rather than co-management, and a law on the forty-hour week.

The main leaders in the FNAS belong to an opposition grouping in the leadership of MMM which calls itself revolutionary Marxist and publishes a bulletin *Lalit Travayer* (Workers Struggle).

Although this current is weak and unorganised it offers a possibility of preventing future demoralisation of the mass movement when it is confronted with the betrayals of the leadership, and a lead in rapid mobilisation when the right re-emerges.

The future of revolutionary currents in Mauritius depends on their ability to unite the youth and the unemployed to the union struggle of the working class in the key sectors of the economy.

Thus, the elections expressed a very clear feeling for unity and anti-imperialism among the toiling masses in Mauritius.

## DEEPROOTED CAUSES

The bourgeois press will undoubtedly explain the 'sixty to nil' result as a success for the MMM's policy of alliance with the small PSM which is reassuring and 'honest'. It will draw out from it all possible commentary on the new social alliances in Mauritius. However, two far more decisive facts explain the left's victory.

On the right, the crisis of the neo-colonial state has scattered the interests of the different clans and cliques of the

former coalition government. The economic and social crisis increased the centrifugal forces within the ruling Parti Travailleurs (PT—Labour Party). This party which, since 1969, had continually lost ground, which owed its hegemony to the phenomenon of 'communalism' (2) and to electoral alliances made at the last minute, had a crisis of decomposition throughout 1981. It would not be enough to interpret the PT defeat as the result only of an electoral battle. Seewoosagar Ramgoolam and his team have also felt the effects of an economic and social crisis which the new government are inheriting today. The same causes could tomorrow have the same effects on the new government.

On the left, despite the lack of mobilisation and organisation of the workers by the MMM over the past months, there was fantastic popular participation in the campaign against the right. The island was literally plastered with posters and slogans, not leaving the slightest space for the rightwing propaganda. Meetings were massive. It is significant that amongst the militants campaigning most actively for the defeat of the right there were members of the National Front Against Unemployment (FNAS, see box) who have made no secret of their feelings about the 'social consensus' proposed by the MMM. This can be explained by the political maturity and the class consciousness of a large part of the working and unemployed youth who understood the importance of the defeat of the right to improve conditions for the struggle to come. On the evening of Saturday, June 12, when the results were announced, one frequently heard workers stressing their desire to go further and impose the will of the *klas travayer* (working class). The meetings of the FNAS throughout the election campaign drew thousands of people. Young people, who comprise more than 50 per cent of the population, the abandoned victims of underdevelopment, retain a very high combativity. The new regime will have to take account of this social force at a time when it will be dif-

1. The island of Diego Garcia, for example, has been leased by Great Britain to the USA, who have installed the biggest military base in the Indian Ocean, having moved out all the inhabitants. All this was with the complicity of Seewoosagar Ramgoolam.

2. 'Communalism' is the basis of the reactionary Mauritian political system. It is a sort of political 'clientalism' on the basis of ethnic or religious groups. It is added to the Hindu caste system.



difficult to make people believe that the change they are waiting for will come.

### A NEW SOCIAL BLOC?

The election results on Friday, June 11, 1982, can only be explained by the popular vote. Other social layers also voted for the candidates of the MMM/PSM coalition, dropping their old sympathies with the PT, the Muslim Action Committee (MAC), or the PMSD. There is no doubt that even the big shopowners and industrialists have also made that choice, seeking to support—or contain—a new policy which would have the sympathy of the population. Paul Berenger, national secretary of the MMM, declared cynically to the newspaper *The Mauritian* on Monday, June 14, that their campaign had benefited from contributions of up to 5,000 rupees. (3) He said: 'There has been a movement of the petty and middle bourgeoisie and the intellectuals towards the MMM. This had more than political results.'

The bourgeoisie has, by the way, chosen a courteous approach to this new government. On Thursday, June 17, leaders of the Joint Economic Committee (JEC), the Mauritius Employers Federation (MEF), and the Mauritius Export Processing Zone Association (MEPZA) gave the new Prime Minister, Aneerood Jugnauth, President of the MMM, a favourable opinion. They even considered his first press conference as 'very positive', judging that it represented a 'first step in a good direction' and 'a sign of a new future'. The MEF confirmed its wish to collaborate with the new government. It is somewhat ironic to see an employers leader 'give his total support to the government, because the development of the free trade zone will mean a reduction in the number of unemployed' (4) when we recall that, up to 1978, the MMM had always attacked this 'state within a state'. (5)

The bourgeois sectors had therefore been divided on the eve of the elections and some have not hesitated to support the MMM/PSM bloc. The election result was all the more disastrous for the outgoing government. But, strangely, many people on Mauritius have interpreted these results as a defeat of 'communalism' and 'casteism'. The fact that Boolel, an old political schemer, lost the traditional vote which he used to get from Indian agricultural workers in his constituency, or that Yussuf Mohamed, the Muslim leader of the Mauritius Islamic Party, was defeated in his constituency which has a Muslim majority is, without a shadow of a doubt, indication of a change in the electorate. The popular unity around the MMM/PSM coalition could only reinforce national feeling against the traditional clientelism of the Hindu, Tamil, and Muslim candidates. But it would be wrong to rapidly conclude that communalism has been got rid of. The MMM/PSM coalition for example has very often chosen its candidates in relation to the ethnic and religious composition of the constituencies.

But the significant fact is the present crisis following the appointment of ministers. (6) Two MPs refused parliamentary posts that they were offered in place of ministerial portfolios, another protested that he had been forgotten in the distribution of prizes. (7) But, all these affairs smell of communalism. We saw a certain number of voters demonstrate to demand from their MPs that they refuse any post considered as insufficient or insulting. On the evening of the formation of the new government, the Prime Minister Aneerood Jugnauth declared that 'it had been necessary to take account of the reality of the country'. But it appears that the judicious ethnic dosages have been far from perfect. The presence, in force, of big shop owners and notables in the entourage of the new regime can only arouse communalist reflexes. Only a policy based deliberately on the workers could have a real chance of combatting this plague.

### FIRST MEASURES AND PERSPECTIVES

The government has first of all engaged itself to fight against corruption in political life. It announced that ministerial salaries, as well as those of the MPs, would be made public. Some material advantages (tax-free goods) would be reduced. More important was the decision to increase the lowest wages by thirty per cent. The Prime Minister has announced that he is initiating important discussions to have the Diego Garcia island, presently occupied by the largest US base in the whole Indian Ocean, returned to the Mauritian nation. Finally, the government has confirmed its desire to broaden democracy, amend the repressive law of the Public Order Act and the Industrial Relations Act, and respect the election dates, in particular the call for municipal elections.

In the more long term, it will be necessary to follow the implementation of the electoral promises of the MMM/PSM, notably as regards the nationalisation of the docks at Port Louis and two sugar plants. But we are far, very far, from a radical policy liberating the country from the imperialist stranglehold. Although we already know that the Speaker in the Assembly will no longer wear a British-style wig, we do not know if or how the constitution, making the country a member of the Commonwealth associated with the European Economic Community, and keeping the Napoleonic Code, will be amended. Is a republic going to be proclaimed, and the formal link with the British crown broken? In this case are we to take seriously the rumour, according to which the MMM will propose the former Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, as President of the republic?

On the evening the results were known, a sympathiser of the FNAS said 'They wanted three-quarters of the Assembly to change the constitution—they were given four quarters. Now we are

waiting.' This reflects the views of many. The workers are right to be anxious. The policy of Paul Berenger, now the Minister of the Economy and Finances, is classically reformist, finding its inspiration in the theses of Michele Rocard, French Minister of the Economy. The free trade zone is considered as an important means to reduce unemployment. Tourism is likely to increase the inflow of foreign currency (8); creating jobs remains dependent on the dialogue with the bosses and the development of private enterprise. The proposed nationalisations therefore only appear as instruments of rationalisation and to increase the public income. The nationalisation of two sugar plants, out of the nineteen existing, is unlikely to solve the problems of that key industry in Mauritius, and the nationalisation of the docks will no doubt help to better control the fighting spirit of the dockers.

Paul Berenger proposes therefore 'national unity' to build 'socialism with a Mauritian face'. Few workers share this ideology and their fear of a 'left austerity' is more widespread.

Significantly, the JEC gave up the idea of presenting its report before the elections. This report, only made public on Thursday, June 17, recommends a period of austerity lasting from three to five years in order to prevent Mauritius from 'definite economic bankruptcy'. The JEC report recommends, among other things, that the working week is extended to 45 hours, and that public holidays are reduced to 12 days per year. Are these recommendations going to be implemented? Is it not scandalous to put forward such a policy in a country where the large planters live like old-fashioned plantation owners; where there are still no property taxes outside the urban zones, which implies that all the bourgeois villas and sugar owners properties are run tax-free? Is it not scandalous to ask the workers to pay, when it is announced that Seewoosagur Ramgoolam will get a state pension as former Prime Minister and that the MMM newspaper, on Friday, June 18, announced under the headline 'National reconciliation' that he is going to be given an official motorcar?

If the policy of the MMM and the PSM follows such a pattern it is going to lead to failure. On the evening of Saturday, June 12, on television Harish Boodhoo, leader of the PSM, announced that 'there will be a Mauritian solution to the Mauritian problem'. It is certainly not

3. About £400 sterling.

4. *Le Nouveau Militant* (The New Militant), organ of the MMM, June 18, 1982.

5. Programme of the MMM (1970).

6. The new government has 19 ministers. The PSM has 5 of these, and one is a member of the Organisation of the People of Rodriguez, a political group close to the MMM on the island of Rodriguez.

7. *Le Mauricien* (The Mauritian), June 17, 1982.

8. 'I also make an appeal to South African tourists, saying to them that Mauritius is even more interesting to visit than in the past and that, if they would like to get to know an admirable people, of all colours, it is certainly Mauritius to which they should come.' (Paul Berenger, interviewed in *Le Mauricien*, June 14, 1982). One visits Mauritius as if it is a zoo....



by following the same type of policy that has been followed previously that such an ideal can be reached. Reducing corruption and temporary support by the workers have never been sufficient to solve underdevelopment. Mauritius is a neocolonial country.

The evening of the results, thousands of youth hovered the streets to celebrate their revenge. In contrast with this popular celebration, the leaders—that very evening and the following days—gave an incredible number of warnings. Paul Berenger at the Quatre Born polling station in the suburb of Port Louis, capital of Mauritius, went as far as to ask the crowd to listen to the 'comrades' from the PAN and the PMSD that had been defeated, adding amid shouts of disapproval that if it were not done he would leave immediately. Here are some examples of the cynical statements of the leaders.

'Already, I call upon all those concerned, not to give way to sectoral economic demands, but on the contrary that everyone help us to present the budget...Our priority is to reassure people.' (Paul Berenger *The Mauritian*, June 14, 1982). 'I can say that we shall not tolerate that people act against the law; we shall take the necessary action. The police will act against them, the judiciary will act against them without pity. I repeat—without pity. The opponents must be respected. We are all Mauritians.' (Harish Boodhoo, PSM, speaking on television June 12, 1982). 'I want to thank Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam for his wisdom, and for having passed on his powers smoothly...We expect the cooperation of our former opponents.' (Anerod Jugnauth, Prime Minister during a press conference on June 16).

And the rest is in keeping with that. The workers listened to these speeches in consternation. Spontaneous discussions very often took place around these declarations and everyone felt that they did not to be pleasant towards the vanquished, i.e., the bosses and the political schemers for the PT and the PMSD, as their leaders asked them to be. On the evening of Saturday, June 12, young people were carrying coffins bearing the inscription 'Here lies the right.' At the same time their leaders were sweating in front of the microphone calling on the people to calm down and reconcile.

### SOME HOPES OF STRUGGLE

On Sunday, June 20, a meeting took place in Port Louis attended by 200,000 people. This gigantic attendance had gone to hear the new leaders of the country. In spite of some militant speeches, the general tone of the meeting was below the expectations of the people. The speeches once again included calls to calm, to disciplined productive effort, and respect towards former opponents. The crowd only reacted enthusiastically when an orator denounced the former regime. The majority of the workers who attended that gathering wondered about the practical consequences of the ministe-

rial speeches. To produce yes, but for whom? Are they going to nationalise the factories? How are they going to reduce the arrogance of the bosses, now that their representatives have been thrown out of government?

Everyone was conscious that this immense gathering spreading over the Champs de Mars in Port Louis and the neighbouring hills was a symbol of struggle and unity. Young people, who once again had filled the streets to march towards the meeting, gave the impression of wanting to fight with the property owners and bosses. This tremendous potential for struggle found no echo in the behaviour and the speeches that they were offered by the platform. This contradiction was to be confirmed even more when on Friday, June 25, the 'speech from the Throne' (Mauritius as a member of the Commonwealth has a governor), that is to say the governmental programme for the year to come, (9) was presented to Parliament.

Militant of FNAS arrested (DR)



The general line of this programme can be summarised as a wish to rationalise the Mauritian neo-colonial economy. There were proposals to nationalise some companies without mentioning which ones, leaving little chance that these nationalisations be implemented in the year to come. The nationalisation of the docks was reduced to state control over the operations of loading and unloading ships, which more resembles a wish to control the dockers rather than a perspective of attacking the private interests of that sector. It is proposed to associate workers to the management of the public enterprises with the obvious idea of achieving co-management which will tie the hands of the union movement. Nothing was said of the nationalisation of the sugar plantations.

The positive proposals in the programme, not altering in any way its totally insufficient character, were about the struggle against corruption and the scandalous advantages primarily granted

to the ministers, e.g., tax-free goods, and also about a reorganisation of the transportation sector aiming at regrouping the small landowners in co-operatives, and a project of irrigation in the north which would benefit small planters.

In a general way the government programme is scandalously vague as soon as it begins to tackle central questions for the day to day life of workers: the proposal for a commission of enquiry into the sugar industry did not have nationalisation as its aim; unemployment benefit was simply mentioned without any further details; improvements in the fields of health and housing were reduced to mere promises.

In the field of foreign affairs non-alignment is to be maintained but it was stated that the country will improve its relations with its traditional friends—Britain, France, and the USA. The objective of demilitarisation in the Indian Ocean can be summarized into proposals of negotiation without mobilising the workers against the imperialist dangers.

Although the programme is nothing else than a vague reformist manifesto, it is interesting to fully grasp the illusions of its writers. It is fashionable today in Mauritius, including among the right wing and the bosses, to show confidence in the new government and to wish it well. The only one who wanted to have his doubts known was Gaeton Duval, leader of the PMSD, who stressed that such a programme cannot be fulfilled in one year... but in twenty years. In a way Gaetan Duval is telling some truth. If one is not prepared to overturn the neo-colonial economy of this country one cannot expect, through a long series of technical measures, to see it come out of poverty and under-development.

This project, already doomed to failure, will be all the more dangerous for the government as the large mass of the workers is expecting a radical change. Workers want nationalisation without compensation, and to get rid of the old bosses. They want an end to unemployment, improvements in work conditions and their lives, to work a 40 hour week, and an end to the shameful privileges of big white landowners and industrialists and the big shopowners. They do not want mere amendments to the repressive laws such as the IRA and POA, but their cancellation.

The first impression one has had on the island over these past few days is the desire to struggle shown by the young workers and the unemployed. This is a deeprooted movement among the dispossessed; a collective consciousness is being developed little by little. The MMM does not seem to be really decided to follow the mass movement, which it, in its newspaper the *New Militant*, now talks of as 'non-civilised' people (10)—the workers who whistled at the former ministers who came to Parliament on Friday, June 18.

9. *Le Mauricien*, June 26, 1982.

10. *Le Nouveau Militant*, June 26, 1982.



# Dutch antinuclear-war soldiers face jail: Interview with Trotskyist soldier

In mid-June, four Dutch soldiers active in the soldiers union and the peace movement were arrested and charged with stealing military secrets. The so-called secrets were already public knowledge, that is, they dealt with the role assigned to the Cannerberg base in a war between NATO and the Soviet bloc.

This case is the first major attack on the new West European peace movement. It is logical that it comes in the Netherlands, where the movement developed great strength early. Further information on this case can be obtained from the Dutch soldiers union, the VVDM, Holjelkazerne, Croeselaan 39, Utrecht, the Netherlands. A petition campaign has been started. Also see "Dutch Military Launches Attack on Peace Movement and Soldiers Rights," in the July 19 issue of IV.

The following interview with one of the arrested soldiers was taken by Robert Went of *Klassenstrijd*, the paper of the Dutch section of the Fourth International, who also wrote the introduction. The text has been translated and slightly abridged by IV.

\* \* \*

In the leadership of the Dutch soldiers union, the VVDM (Vereniging voor Dienstpligtige Militairen-Draftees Association), Oskar van Rijswijk is responsible for the actions against atomic weapons. On June 17, he was arrested and charged with being the ringleader in the theft of military secrets.

However, military officers directly involved in the operations the so-called stolen information relates to say that it does not touch on any secrets. The defense minister van Mierlo himself has intervened in the case, saying that the lawyers for the prosecution and the defense can see the drawings in question but only if they accept a vow of secrecy. We talked with Oskar van Rijswijk, who was unexpectedly released on July 7.

**Question.** Why do you think that you were released so suddenly?

**Answer.** I did not expect this either. A week before, I had asked for bail. It was refused. Instead, the detention order was extended for at least thirty days. Then, I was released seven days after that. That was a rather rapid turnabout. The week before the military prosecutor had been saying how dreadful a case it was, and he had been telling stories



Oskar van Rijswijk (DR)

about how the army was being undermined and about the International Communist League, the Dutch section of the Fourth International, to which I belong, and about the hand of Moscow, and all sorts of horror stories.

I think that there were two important reasons why I was released so suddenly. The first is that together with my lawyer, the VVDM lawyer and the VVDM started a suit for a summary judgement against the state, demanding my immediate release. The argument was that I and the soldiers union had been brought into serious disrepute by the detention order. In such a court case, the suspect and the lawyer could present and suggest a lot more supposed secrets. This would have led to at least a couple of big articles in the press. Because, except for the very right-wing *Telegraaf*, no one in the press believes their stories any more.

The second reason is certainly just as important. By picking on us, they were trying to strike at the soldiers movement and the soldiers involved in anti-

nuclear activities. They seemed in fact to be succeeding, when, under the pressure of the press, the VVDM leadership suspended us.

But on the Monday before our release (July 5), a very broad defense committee was set up for us on the initiative of the VVDM. Fortunately, the union leadership corrected its position. The committee was preparing to organize all sorts of actions on our behalf. That showed that they had not succeeded in criminalizing us.

Everyone supported us and said that our arrest was an attack on the soldiers union and the antinuclear activists in the army. All the major peace organizations joined in our defense. So, most importantly of all, did the FNV, the Federation of Dutch Trade Unions, with a membership of more than a million members.

**Q.** How secret were the drawings?

**A.** There have been a lot of conflicting statements about this by the mi-



litary experts. Moreover, our lawyers were not allowed to see them. Now the minister of defense has decided that they and we will be allowed to look at them next Monday. The military experts describe them as only "confidential," which is the lowest degree of secrecy. Absolutely everything in the army is confidential, even telephone books and the menu for the day.

From the conflicting statements, it is clear in any case that what we said in the beginning is true. The drawings were not classified. There were no stamps whatever on them.

A witness has said that they were intended for contractors so that they could know what was involved in bidding or a building or renovation project. It is they who define how secret something is. And we do not exclude the possibility, in view of the latest statements, that the drawings may have been tampered with to make them more secret.

The most important fact is that on the first day a high-ranking figure on the base where the drawings came from said that they were not secret. On the first day! And still there were the scare stories in the press and incredibly intensive searches. If that doesn't show what they're up to, I don't know what will.

Q. You meant that they took up this case to get at the VVDM and the

antinuclear activists in the army, knowing from the first day that what was involved were unimportant drawings and not secrets?

A. Exactly, from the first day they knew that nothing important was involved and from the first day they sent out scare stories that there had been a serious breach of secrecy and that we were going to get eight to fifteen year in prison. The aim of all this cannot have been just to get us but to get the soldiers union and tie it down, isolate the more radical section, and most of all get at the antinuclear activists in the army.

It is known that the Netherlands plays a role in NATO with respect to the Rapid Deployment Force. Last year in Belgium, it came to light that there are laws making it possible to put the country under military rule in an emergency. Such an emergency would obviously arise if the U.S. sent the 100,000 soldiers of the Rapid Deployment Force to the Middle East. Because the peace movement would certainly oppose this.

You can be sure that such plans also exist for the Netherlands. And these plans certainly include provisions that the army is to prevent the massive Dutch peace movement from opposing new NATO military actions. It is in this framework, I think, that this present attack on the soldiers union and antinuclear

activists in the army and the other attacks that are coming must be seen.

NATO is preparing for a new war, and therefore they need a reliable army. That is why it is so important that the entire peace movement participate in the defense committee that has been set up on our case. In this case also, an attack on part of the peace movement is an attack on the entire peace movement.

Q. So, all indications are that you will be acquitted when you come up for trial?

A. Oh no, that is by no means clear. They are still busy carrying out interrogations and searches in order to try to put together a case. We have a broad defense committee and almost no one in the press still toes the military authorities' line. But there is now another factor at work. They have blown up this thing so much that they would be humiliated if it became obvious that there was nothing to it. So, they want to avoid that at all cost. So, they want to fabricate a case to put us—especially me, since I am supposed to be a dangerous revolutionary—in jail for a while. That is why support in Holland and internationally is so vitally important. That is going to determine what sort of sentence will be handed down against us. That is going to determine how long they can keep up this wretched frameup. ■

## Increased repression against Chinese Democratic Movement

Jacques and Jean TOSSI

On May 28, 1982, Wang Xizhe, and on May 29, 1982 He Qiu—two Cantonese activists of the Chinese Democratic Movement—were sentenced to fourteen and ten years imprisonment respectively.

He Qiu, former Red Guard, a worker from the shipyard in Canton, was first arrested on June 18, 1973, for his 'non-conformist opinions' expressed in a letter to his brother. Released in October 1976, he was to join the Democratic Movement at its birth and become editor of the *People's Road*, a review published in Canton, which is one of the most widely read in the south of China. He was arrested a second time in August 1980, then released fifteen days later, and became, as from September 1980, the editor of *Duty*, the paper of the National Federation of Unofficial Journals, which he was one of the first to initiate.

Wang Xizhe, also a former Red Guard (both are slightly over thirty years old age), a worker in Canton, is a co-author of the famous *dizibao* wall poster entitled *On Socialist Legality* (1973-74). Arrested in 1975 and freed in 1978, he



Dissident Editor Wei Jingsheng (DR)

expressed his views in several reviews, such as *The Voice of the People* and the *Research Bulletin*, which he is in charge of. He is one of the few theoreticians of

the Democratic Movement. A radical Marxist, he does not hesitate to cite Trotskyist positions, in particular around the question of tendency rights. He has also written on socialist democracy and dictatorship of the proletariat.

Both Wang and He, who belong to the Marxist wing of the movement, had been arrested again in April 1981 with about thirty other editors of reviews. Without news from any of them for more than a year, their 'disappearance' seems to fit into the same pattern as that of Ren Wandong from the Human Rights League, who had been under arrest/disappeared since April 1979.

Both have been condemned for their counter-revolutionary activities as well as 'appeal to the masses to resist and sabotage, use of posters, articles, and other means to promote agitation against the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist system'. (Paragraphs 1 and 2, Article 102, of the Penal Code). Furthermore, Wang was accused of having 'set up counter-revolutionary groups'.

The prosecution did not find it necessary to respect its own legality—it is worth remembering that China has had a



Penal Code since January 1980. It was their activities in the Democratic Movement which were generally under attack, most importantly the initiatives taken when Liu Qing (editor of the *April Fifth Forum* published in Peking) was sentenced to three years labour education for having distributed the minutes of Wei Jingshen's trial. The Chinese bureaucracy was far from happy to have seen its decision challenged in the name of its own legality.

In addition, the same Liu Qing managed to smuggle out from his camp a long letter, which reads both as a defence case and a testimony, which has been published in September 1981 in Hong Kong and in France in April 1982. All those that could have been involved directly or indirectly in that affair, and particularly the transmission of this document, have been prosecuted by the wrath of 'popular justice'. We recently heard, for example, of the arrest of Liu Qing's brother.

Referring to the so-called 'counter-revolutionary crimes', Liu Qing talked of such an instrument in the hands of the bureaucracy becoming a royal sceptre—a symbol of unlimited authority. The Penal Code states that 'the acts of any organiser or ringleader of a counter-revolutionary clique are considered as counter-revolutionary'. Tautology reigns supreme, leaving the regime to interpret the law as it sees fit.

As usual, even the minimum of formal guarantees were not given to Wang and He. Even less were given to them than for Wang's trial, despite the implementation since then of the Penal Code and the Code of Penal Procedures. These 'public' trials were held in an almost clandestine way, wound up in a few hours in front of about forty carefully selected people, without public notification of the trial even to the family. One can but call such a procedure shameful—shameful, to the point that the media in China have given no information about the affair.

The fact that the bureaucracy has passed such heavy sentence indicates that it has succeeded neither in silencing the democratic aspirations nor in integrating young people. But one may wonder why the bureaucracy has failed to use these two sentences as severe warnings. But, if we look at it carefully, this discretion shown by the bureaucracy appears to be a result of both constraint and calculation.

In fact, for those social layers sensitized by the Democratic Movement, essentially the generation of the Cultural Revolution and the urban youth, the disappearance of the movement, and the suppression of democratic rights (by modifying the constitution to eliminate the four great freedoms, particularly the posting of *dizibaos*, (1) followed by the elimination of the right to strike in the 1982 version of the constitution) have shifted the focus of the struggle from the directly political terrain to the artistic and cultural field.



Million demonstrate after Hua Gaofang's election (DR)

Then, after the attack was launched against 'the back line' of the movement ('The Stars' group, arrest of an artist from Sichuan, prosecution of Li Shuang) at the time of the campaign against petty-bourgeois liberalism, which ended up with the self-criticism of the military writer Bai Hua, the focus has yet again shifted onto the terrain of morality, especially on the question of pre-marital relationships.

Contests for the selection of the model family with the five merits (a good relationship between wife and husband, between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, respect towards the elderly, and love for the children) are being organised. Hu Yaobang himself, chairperson of the Chinese Communist Party denounced 'the inconsistency in the matter of marriage' and advocated at the same time 'a sound social morality and a sound public opinion'.

At the moment, Yu Luojin, author of the *New Winter Tale*, who recently published *A Spring*, a woman twice-divorced, who had collaborated with the April Fifth Forum, is the target of a morality campaign. The Chinese youth have not yet been got into line. Worse, on this question mass resistance is rather tending to spread.

In these conditions it would not have been advisable for the bureaucracy to revive the memory of the Democratic Movement. On the contrary, it is important for them to disconnect the present forms of resistance from those that had appeared at a time of the 'Peking Spring'. The Chinese bureaucrats, drawing the lessons from the 'failure' of Wei's trial, which from their point of view was in fact counter-productive, very likely preferred to be more discreet.

It is very probable that other sentences have been passed without the rest of the world knowing. Thus, in spite of the proclamations on socialist legality, Wang's sentencing can be seen as a symbol—the Chinese bureaucracy continues to prefer the method of 'disap-

pearances'; the bureaucracy tramples on its new legality.

Wang and He are from Canton. This is the reason why these so-called public trials could not be kept secret. The links between Hong Kong and Canton are frequent. And when, on June 8, the vice-chairman for foreign affairs from the student union of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the chairperson of the student union of the University of Hong Kong, addressed themselves to the Cantonese authorities, the authorities chose to acknowledge the trials.

Anyway, the information that circulated and the two monthly papers *Contention* and *Seventies* (published by currents that have come out of the CCP), as well as the Chinese Democratic Movement Resource Centre would have largely echoed the trials. It is too often forgotten that most of our information on China reaches us via Hong Kong and that the activists fighting for socialist democracy have played, in particular since 1973, and still play an irreplaceable role, in particular in the support of the development of international solidarity with the Democratic Movement.

It is too often forgotten that being a militant in Hong Kong demands some courage. It is undoubtedly true that the problem of Hong Kong, for the Chinese leadership, is primarily the question of social control by the CCP over 'Hong Kong compatriots'. That control is *de facto* looser, despite the collaboration between the British Crown and the Chinese bureaucracy. This is a problem it is trying to solve.

Thus, two militants from Hong Kong, belonging to the Research Centre on the Chinese Democratic Movement, have disappeared in the Chinese gaols after being arrested while travelling towards Canton—Liu Shanqing in December last year (*International Viewpoint*, No. 11), Li Zhiyi in April.

The Chinese bureaucracy, profiting from the experience of the Soviet Union and the Eastern countries, is trying to prevent any expression of disobedience. With the heritage of Maoism, it uses all the implements of bureaucratic despotism: that is what it wanted to remind people of, in its own way, at the time of the fortieth anniversary of the 'Yenan talks on art and literature'—the first campaign of repression launched against artists and the intellectuals.

International solidarity is not a small thing. It can be used as a platform for those who have engaged in struggle for democratic rights in China or that are ready to do so; international solidarity must develop around the demand for the release of Liu Shanqing and Li Zhiyi, He Qiu and Wan Xizhe, Wei Ren, Liu, and their comrades. ■

1. The Four Great Freedoms are 'great contending, blooming, big-character posters, and debate'—Mao's four methods for carrying out 'struggle by reasoning'.



# Fifth congress of the VCP— time for self-criticism

Pierre ROUSSET

The Fourth National Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP), December 14 to 20, 1976, was the Congress of victory. The Fifth Congress, March 27 to 31, 1982, was the Congress of self-criticism. Le Duan gave the general political report and announced very officially that: "the Central Committee comes before this Congress with a harsh self-criticism." He added that: "following the congress, we will move to deepen criticism and self-criticism in the party and different levels of state administration and to devise effective means to overcome the very grave shortcomings and errors of these bodies." (1)

Like Le Duan (the general secretary of the Central Committee of the party), Pham Van Dong (the president of the Council of Ministers) included a highly critical balance sheet of the current situation and of the implementation of the line of the Fourth Congress in his report on social and economic problems. Le Duc Tho (who heads the Organisation Bureau) did likewise in his report on "party-building work." Pham Van Dong's task was to present the self-criticism of the Council of Ministers:

"The shortcomings and errors that have shown up in economic and social leadership and management over the last five years are serious. Following the harsh self-criticism of the Party Central Committee presented in the political report by the general secretary, Comrade Le Duan, I feel I must emphasise that direct responsibility for these shortcomings and errors—especially in the elaboration and implementation of the plan—belongs mainly to the Council of Ministers." (2)

Naturally, the reporters went over the enormous objective problems the country had to face after the April 1975 victory: the terrible poverty and great backwardness of the economy, the fearsome wounds inflicted by three decades of war, Vietnam's isolation, mainly as a result of the vengeful policy of American imperialism, and the magnitude of the new conflict between Vietnam and China.... For Le Duan:

"The underlying cause of the problems of our economy and everyday life is the fact that on the whole we still have a petty production economy that has suffered the devastating impact of long wars and colonialism. For three of the last five years, we had to wage a war of national defence (in Cambodia and on the

Chinese border). We had barely finished bandaging our old war wounds when new ones opened. Add to this continual and severe bad weather, and the ceaseless attempts of the enemy to undermine our work in many fields. The result was that our economy had to respond at once to three basic and urgent problems: defending the homeland, stabilising our people's living conditions, and gradually building the material and technical base for socialism. Under the circumstances, problems and imbalances were unavoidable." (3)

But Le Duan did not hide the seriousness and scope of the VCP's errors over the last five years. In fact his report noted that:

"The problems also arose because of the shortcomings and errors of various party and state organs, from top to bottom, in the field of economic and social leadership and management. In some respects, the shortcomings and errors in leadership and management were the main cause of the onset and sharpness of the economic and social problems of the last few years. Several Central Committee plenum resolutions have already emphasised these shortcomings and errors." (4)

## NATURE OF THE SELF-CRITICISM

This is not the first time the Vietnamese leadership has drawn attention to the party's "shortcomings." But the nature and harshness of the balance sheet put before the Fifth Congress supports the judgement of the editor of *Doan Ket*, the bimonthly of the General Union of Vietnamese in France:

"Without venturing into risky comparisons we can state that this is the second time in its fifty years of existence that the VCP has made such a solemn and harsh self-criticism—the other being the self-criticism it made in September 1956 on the errors committed in the course of the land reform." (5)

Reading Le Duan's and Pham Van Dong's reports (Le Duc Tho's is not yet available in translation), one gets the impression that presenting this self-criticism, recasting the leadership bodies (especially the Central Committee), and adopting a few measures concerning party-state relations, were the main reasons for holding the congress. The fact is that the reports said very little on several controversial questions (such as the exact scope of the economic liberalisation measures). The

presentation of the third five-year plan (1981-1985) was also very general, although theoretically this plan was already being implemented.

The self-criticism did not encompass all questions. In general, the regional and international policy pursued by the VCP since 1975 was defended in Le Duan's official report, especially the alliance with the USSR, the decision to join Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), the intervention in Cambodia, and the need to preserve the "special relationship" with Cambodia and Laos. As far as these issues were concerned, the purpose of the congress may have been to implicitly condemn VCP members who are critical of the international orientation of the leadership. It is also worth noting that the establishment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, as early as 1976, signalling that the reunification of the country as a state had been completed, was given vigorous endorsement:

"Our party and our people achieved a resounding success in rapidly unifying the country at the state level and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat over its whole territory." [Emphasis in the original. (6)]

Finally, the general analytical framework of the social and economic transition to socialism defined by the Fourth National Congress was upheld without any change.

The balance sheet's criticism focused mainly on: the judgement right after the victory, concerning the problems to be expected and goals to be realised by 1980; the party's ability to implement concretely the orientations adopted at that time; the policy for consolidating the party and recycling cadres; the evolution of party-state relations on the one hand, and masses-party-state relations on the other. A sombre description of the country's economic and social situation and of

(Note of translator: We do not have available some of the official documents in English. Therefore the page references are to the French edition.)

1. Le Duan, "Political report from the Central Committee, Fifth National Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party." Hanoi, March 1982, photocopy page 18.
2. Pham Van Dong, "The essential orientations, tasks, and objectives of economic and social development for 1981-1985 and the 1980s—Fifth National Congress, etc." March 1982, photocopy pp. 8-9.
3. Le Duan art. cit., p. 14.
4. *ibid.*, p. 14-15.
5. *Doan Ket*, Paris, May 8, 1982, p. 5.
6. Le Duan art. cit., p. 2.



the ideological level of the VCP was given as a background.

Turning to the economic situation, Le Duan noted, after referring to some positive achievements (especially the first steps toward socialisation in the South), that: "over the last five years, besides our victories and advances, there have been a great deal of problems, and our country now faces critical problems in the economic field. The results of the implementation of the 1976-1980 five-year plan were not able to reduce the serious imbalances of our economy. Production is developing slowly while the population is increasing rapidly. National income does not yet match social consumption and a part of the latter must rely on loans and aid. The economy is not yet in a position to allow for a process of accumulation. There is a lack of food, fabric, and essential consumer goods. The supply of energy and materials is posing a very acute problem. The same is true for the problem of transportation and communication. Many factories are operating below capacity (...) Trade and prices are not stabilised. The number of unemployed workers is still high. Workers are still confronted with numerous hardships in their daily life (...) In some fields, capitalist and non-socialist factors have encroached on socialist ground." (7)

Pham Van Dong re-endorsed the orientation of the Fourth Congress: for the *whole* transitional period to socialism, the key question is industrialisation and large-scale socialist production, heavy industry remains the priority. But in the *initial phase* of the transitional period, the concrete priority must be agriculture and consumer goods industries whose development is indispensable both for raising the standard of living of the masses and for building up a base for the development of heavy industry. But he recognised that the Vietnamese leadership has not: "yet clearly defined the strategy for the initial stage of socialist industrialisation which could serve as the scientific foundations upon which the state plan for 1976-1980 could be drawn up." (8).

To be more precise, the concrete conditions of newly reunited Vietnam were not sufficiently taken into account: "We did not fully perceive the problems and complexities that would arise in many fields during the whole historical stage in which we advance toward socialism on the basis of an economy where petty production still predominates. We did not appreciate the full magnitude of the economic and social upheavals of the postwar period and the deleterious effects of neo-colonialism. We did not predict, as we should have, the problems that the hostile policy of the Chinese expansionists would create (...) We did not fully realise the extent of the problems and complexities we would encounter when we tried to overcome the weaknesses of our economic and social management, or the problems that unfavourable changes in some areas of the world situation would cause. At the same time we did not perceive all the real potential that



Vietnamese Communist Party members (DR)

would permit us to meet the requirements of the initial stage of socialist industrialisation."

"Our inadequate and inaccurate assessment of the situation caused us on the one hand to display subjectivism and impatience when we set the tasks and goals of the plan too high (...) which led to a considerable wastage of labour power and goods. On the other hand we behaved with a great deal of conservatism and slowness in implementing the line (...), in appreciating and exploiting our opportunities in many fields." (9)

Le Duan also denounced: "subjectivism and impatience, conservatism and slowness." (10) He attacked the following evils: "bureaucratism, unrealism, lack of receptivity toward the realities of life (...) irresponsibility" (11). "Bureaucratic management of the administration" (12) and "a cumbersome apparatus that is excessively hierarchical (...) and run by a numerous but not very effective staff" (13) must be done away with. On balance, the criticism focused on the party itself, its relations with the masses and with the state, and the activity of the state.

Of course, Le Duan began by stating that the important victories that have been won since 1975 were only possible: "thanks to the firm leadership of the party, a party founded and steered by President Ho Chi Minh and unswervingly faithful to Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, to the destiny of the nation and the cause of the people." (14) Nevertheless, despite these successes:

"Over the past several years, the mass movement displayed a lack of uniformity and in some cases efficiency while the level of consciousness is very uneven among workers and youth." (15)

"The reason for these insufficiencies is that the full impact of the dictatorship of the proletariat is not yet felt in the mobilisation and education of the masses (...) Many party organisations and committees are not yet trying to understand the life and state of mind of the different layers of the population. They still

give too little importance to the task of making full use of the role and function of the mass organisations and are negligent in their work of leading the revolutionary movement of the masses. A not insignificant number of state bodies still act in bureaucratic, authoritarian, and arbitrary ways, and infringe on the rights of the people as the "collective master." The activities of the mass organisations are also bureaucratized, slow in being renewed, and no longer correspond to the new requirements of the masses. A certain number of party members and cadres who have been morally corrupted abuse their power, harass and insult the masses, and break the law, thereby undermining the party's prestige and bringing a nefarious influence to bear on the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses."

"In such a situation, our party must (...) find remedies to shortcomings in mass mobilisation work, eliminate bureaucratism in party institutions, state organs, and mass organisations, and urgently launch a truly powerful and broad mass movement. [Emphasis in the original. (16)]

Le Duan is particularly worried by the:

"evidence of a weakening in the revolutionary fibre, will to fight, and sense of responsibility of a part of the party members and cadres who are in charge of a variety of levels and sectors." with the result that "the prestige of the party among the masses has been negatively affected." (17)

#### A CHANGE IN PERIOD: FROM THE FOURTH TO THE FIFTH CONGRESS

There is quite a contrast between the triumphant euphoria of the Fourth Congress (1976) and the harsh and alarming picture given by the Fifth Congress reporters. Leaving aside the question of tone, this contrast raises a fundamental political question. The Fifth Congress mainly acknowledged criticisms, namely that the party was unable to resolve the difficult problems of the post-victory period and these still had not been satisfactorily resolved. By contrast, the Fourth Congress was a time for presenting the lessons drawn from the successful national liberation and social struggles. We note then that, while the Fifth Congress demonstrated that a wealth of lessons could be drawn from its experience, at least on several key questions.

This applies first of all to the question of the trajectory of the Vietnamese revolution. In the political report of the

7. *ibid*, pp. 13-14.
8. Pham Van Dong art. *cit.*, p. 6.
9. *ibid*, p. 9.
10. Le Duan art. *cit.*, p. 16.
11. *ibid*, p. 17.
12. *ibid*, p. 16.
13. *ibid*, p. 89.
14. *ibid*, p. 11.
15. *ibid*, pp. 98-99.
16. *ibid*, pp. 99-100. The last formula is emphasised in the original.
17. *ibid*, p. 132.



Central Committee given at that congress, Le Duan had noted:

"In the present period in which national independence and socialism are indissolubly linked, and since in our country the working class plays a leading role in the revolution, the victory of the national democratic popular revolution is also the beginning of the socialist revolution, the beginning of the period of the transition to socialism, the beginning of the period in which the historical tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat are accomplished. This historic turn took place in the North over 20 years ago [i.e., in 1954] and on a national scale after April 30 of last year [1975]." (18)

It is clear here that Le Duan was not only emphasising the link between national liberation struggles, democratic struggles and socialist struggles in the colonial revolution, but that he was also specifying that the decisive transition of the revolutionary struggle from the democratic popular stage to the socialist stage takes place when state power is seized, at the moment of victory. His statement is consistent with the fundamental conclusions of the theory of "permanent revolution." We should also note that the national bourgeoisie was no longer mentioned in Le Duan's description of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front: "It was led by our party," he said, and represented "a patriotic front of workers, peasants, youth, school students, intellectuals' organisations, religious organisations, and representatives of various ethnic groups." (19)

Le Duan's report also analysed the significance and depth of American imperialism's involvement in the Second Indochina War and therefore also of the impact of the victory of the Vietnamese revolution:

"For American imperialism, it is the greatest defeat in US history. While the victory of the August revolution (1945) and of the resistance against the French aggressors signalled the beginning of the collapse of old-style colonialism, that of the resistance against American imperialism demonstrated to the entire world that the demise of neo-colonialism was inevitable." (20)

Le Duan summarised the main features of the revolutionary war as it had been practised in the sixties and seventies. Because of their highly dialectical and political nature the Vietnamese analyses represent a substantial advance over the Maoist theory of "surrounding the cities from the countryside."

Finally, it is a fact that the overall economic policy proposed to the Fourth Congress for the transition to socialism drew the lessons of the problems and advances experienced between 1954 and 1965 (and after). It avoided the pitfalls of forced collectivisation, of absolute priority for heavy industry in Stalinist fashion, and Maoist ultra-voluntarism.

Nevertheless, on two occasions (in 1956 and today), this party, which was able to face the immense difficulties of the struggle for power, which assimilated

many lessons during its prolonged fight, this party which had been put to the test a thousand times, was plunged into a severe crisis a few years after taking power. As early as 1945, Ho Chi Minh had sounded the alarm against the "bureaucratism" of a party in government. The Fourth Congress in turn had called for a struggle against bureaucratism. Yet the bureaucracy is creeping up everywhere in Vietnam, now more than ever. How can we account for this failure of a party that was able to score so many impressive successes?

The problems of the transition to socialism—and of a party in power—are of the same type as those of the revolutionary struggle—and of a combat party. Moreover, the mould in which the party was shaped, the long and difficult military struggle for national liberation, can become an obstacle once the problem at hand is economic planning and the democratic organisation of the new society. The post-victory period constitutes a new test, which raises new questions as the Vietnamese historian Le Than Koi noted:

"In this struggle against bureaucratism which represents (...) one of the major obstacles to democracy as well as economic, social, and cultural development, will the Vietnamese party be able to display the creativity it so brilliantly demonstrated in the political and military field?" (21)

We are compelled to recognise that as of now the answer is negative.

#### SIGNS OF AN INTERNAL CRISIS

Certainly, as is the custom, the Fifth Congress appeared unanimous and the new leadership united: six former Political Bureau members, including General Vo Nguyen Giap, were not re-elected to this body, but they remained well placed inside the Central Committee. General Giap for some years now has no longer held a key position and the different, traditional 'sensibilities' within the Vietnamese leadership seem to be still represented in the leading bodies with Le Duan, Truong Chinh, Pham Van Dong, Le Duc Tho, etc. One could go so far as to think that the departure of six former members of the PB corresponds to a willingness to progressively renew the central leadership (the Political Bureau and Secretariat of the CC).

It is no longer the same at Central Committee level. The CC has been enlarged from 133 members (including 32 alternates) to 152 (36 alternates). There are 68 newly elected members (32 of whom are full members) which represents therefore 45% of the new Central Committee. Thirty-nine members of the previous CC were not re-elected—many of whom held key posts. Furthermore, for a long time sectors of the party have been asking for sanctions to be taken against cadre—including at the top—who are corrupt or worthless.

This demand had been formulated by the intellectual Nguyen Khac Vien, Director of the publication *Vietnamese Studies* and *Vietnam Courier*. In a letter to the National Assembly, he drew an alarming picture of the situation ("things cannot continue like this, important changes are necessary on all fronts") and denounced the policy of building up the apparatus, that is "a policy which assures the promotion of mediocre people to key positions", which pushes aside creative militants in favour of "intellectuals who specialise in opportunism and in grotesque flattery of the leadership." (22)

Nguyen Khac Vien demanded that guilty or incapable cadre should no longer be "protected by the apparatus." The same demand was expressed in the regional congresses of preparation for the National Congress, to such an extent that the government radio had to give it some airing. (23)

One meeting of the Central Committee was enough for the direct preparation of the Fourth Congress in 1976. The political report had been published in the press several weeks before the Congress in order to allow a public discussion. This time, on the other hand, it was necessary to have three CC meetings in four months (with a marathon session of 25 days in October-November 1981) and put back the date of the Fifth Congress in order to prepare it—a sign of the conflicts which have emerged. There was no public discussion.

On December 31, 1981, the VCP had 1,727,784 members. In five years, it is claimed that 370,000 new members have been recruited—86% of them from the Young Communists. This confirms (given the previous figures) that more than 100,000 VCP members were kept out of the party when membership cards were up for renewal during the last two years: "for incompetency, opportunism, illicit traffic, speculation, embezzlement,

18. Le Duan. "Central Committee Report—Fourth National Congress of the VCP." Hanoi, 1977. p. 27.

19. Le Duan art. cit., 1977. p. 24.

20. *ibid.*, 1977, p. 21.

21. Le Than Khoi, *Socialisme et Developpements au Vietnam*. IEDES, Tiers-Monde, Paris 1978, p. 51.

22. Paul Quinn-Judge has presented large extracts from this letter from Nguyen Khac in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 26, 1982.

23. Cf. Nayan Chanda, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 16, 1982, p. 15: "There have been open calls from provincial delegates

for the purging of leaders who have committed errors or who degenerated. A broadcast from Radio Hanoi in February mentioned that the provincial congress in Ha Bac 'had suggested that the Central Committee take measures to expell those who had degenerated, including those who held key posts because they were obstacles who broke up internal solidarity and weakened the confidence of the masses.'" In this article there is a presentation of the main leaders removed from the Central Committee during the Fifth Congress. Nayan Chanda estimated that about 200,000 party members had been expelled.



malpractices, or insulting behavior toward the masses." (24)

Despite this massive purge, Le Duan notes in his report to the Fifth Congress:

"There are people who, from all evidence, do not deserve to be party members but have not yet been expelled." (25)

Finally, it is clear that on many questions of national or international political line there is far from political unanimity today inside the VCP. It is certain that a sector of the expelled party members were excluded for being "soft" on the Chinese leadership. In his report Le Duc Tho moreover violently criticised "certain Maoist elements who have betrayed the enemy and had put themselves in the pay of the enemy" and "opportunist elements who have tried to divide the party." (26) But it must also be noted that the ambassador to Moscow (Nguyen Huu Mai), his predecessor (Nguyen Huu Khieu), and the president of the Vietnam-USSR Friendship Association (Xuan Thuy) were not re-elected to the Central Committee—which seems to confirm the existence of serious tensions between Hanoi and Moscow.

#### ONE-PARTY SYSTEM AND BUREAUCRACY

The Vietnamese leadership has called for a moral and ideological rearmament of the party. The door must be shut on the opportunists. The leading role of the party must be maintained but at the same time the masses' "right to be the *collective master*" must be defended. The party organisations have to be separated more strictly from those of the state in order to allow the latter to fully play its administrative role and to avoid the frequent accumulation of posts by the same person. According to *Doan Ket* (May 8, 1982), that was one of the main proposals contained in Le Duc Tho's report; and consequently the Council of Ministers has been reshuffled so as to slightly reduce the proportion of Political Bureau members on that body.

On the economic level Pham Van Dong recommended the adoption of: "A dynamic mechanism of management, capable of eliminating bureaucratic centralism" and able to "develop a spirit of initiative in local, regional, and sectoral structures, and at the same time permit the central structures to take control of and manage the business and coordination that are necessary." (27)

In a general way it is necessary to "stimulate the revolutionary mass movement" and initiate a "vast emulation campaign"... "the working people exert their right of collective master under the leadership of the party"... "in the first place through the National Assembly and the Peoples Councils at different levels." It is important therefore to fight against the "formal character" of certain of these "elected bodies" so that they really accomplish the functions, tasks, and attributions the Constitution has devolved to them. (28)

The reports given to the Fifth Congress thus, on these points, touch on real problems. But the general conception the regime has of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (and above all the role of the party in society) remains unchanged. Now *this* contributes to the socio-political problems that the Vietnamese leadership declares it wants to fight against. How, for example, do you block the entry of "opportunists" who infiltrate the party? During the revolutionary struggle for power, to join the Communist Party is to run a considerable risk, to accept severe sacrifices. Opportunists did not queue up to join. But once victory is achieved all the careerists flood the party with applications for membership. This inevitable tendency is reinforced and encouraged by the role the CP has in Vietnam, as in other "socialist countries."

In practice, Vietnam has a one-party system. Furthermore, the major debates on political line are restricted to the top leadership; they do not reach the Peoples Committees or even the party rank and file. Party members do not therefore gain experience or test themselves in the framework of a free debate among the masses. The party, which has the majority of political power, is generally "protected" and therefore cut off from "living" society. Except when there are very strong tensions, everything is sorted out between "comrades", in secret at various levels of the apparatus. The salary scale and the advantages (legal or otherwise) that go with positions held follow the party's political hierarchy. To join the party and to hold down a post there is still one of the most effective ways of climbing the social ladder, of having privileges. How then does one block the path of the careerists?

Perhaps the right of the masses to be the "collective master" must be guaranteed. Le Duan notes that the privileged arena for the action of the masses is the state (the National Assembly and the Peoples Committees). However, the leading role is assigned to the party and the role of "management" to the state. Furthermore, the power of the single party system is institutionalised in the Constitution itself; the state is subordinated to the party. Doesn't this mean that the masses are not only deprived in practice of the right to real discussion of the major political options, but further that they see themselves formally subordinated on the institutional level to the party? How can they therefore benefit from this in-violate right to be the "collective master?" So how can the arbitrary power of the cadres and administrators be broken, how can one stem bureaucratic developments?

What is involved in the development of a bureaucracy in Vietnam are very deepgoing causes which cannot be simple swept aside: the country's extreme backwardness and great economic poverty; imperialist pressures; dependency vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, etc. But

the Fifth Congress of the VCP nevertheless recognised that subjective factors (particularly the action of the party and state) also play a very important and occasionally determinant role in the development of a bureaucracy in Vietnam, in the demobilisation of the masses. The reports very much centred on the relationship between the party, the state, and the people; and this is indeed one of the key problems of the transition to socialism. But they did not question the party leadership's monopoly of debate, the single-party system, the subordination of the state to the party, the National Assembly being cut off from the People's Committees, nor the structures of salaries and advantages that go with the posts of top cadre. However, there seem to be differences even inside the Communist Party apparatus on these questions also.

More generally, the Vietnamese leadership presents a very restrictive analysis of the roots of the bureaucratic phenomenon. They see it as a legacy of the past and of the weight of small commercial production in society and of people's "mentalities" (which is not so very different from the first analyses of the Soviet Left Opposition). Therefore, the response to the danger of bureaucracy resides above all in an ideological rearmament, an organisational purge, a better leadership of mass work and in the long term the development of large-scale socialist production. Moreover, the experience of the USSR, China, and the "Peoples Democracies" show that the bureaucratic phenomenon has its roots also in the very contradictions of a society in transition to socialism. This is obviously exacerbated in the existing workers states by economic and social backwardness, poverty, and the relative international isolation caused by the failure of revolutions in the imperialist centres.

It is true that economically and socially, in the long term, industrialisation is indispensable for the stabilisation of a regime of real socialist democracy. But the example of the USSR proves that a progress in industrialisation does not necessarily result in a pushing back of the bureaucratisation process. The bureaucracy can perfectly well draw advantage from any economic development for a whole period.

These are the specific contradictions of a society in transition to socialism which bestows such an importance on the form of political regime—on the political content of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The existing constitutional regime in Vietnam facilitates the progressive strengthening of the bureaucracy's power instead of countering it. But this fundamentally important debate was not dealt with in the reports given to the Fifth National Congress of the VCP. ■

24. *Doan Ket*, Paris, April 14, 1982, p. 3.

25. *Le Duan art. cit.*, p. 145.

26. Quoted by Nayan Chanda, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 16, 1982, p. 17.

27. *Pham Van Dong art. cit.*, p. 67.

28. *Le Duan art. cit.*, 1982, pp. 87-88.



## Death sentences in Malaysia

Since March 1980, thirty-one people, most of whom are political dissidents, have been hanged under special security laws in Malaysia.

The Essential (Security Cases) (Amendment) Regulations 1975 (ESCAR), under which they were tried, carries a mandatory death sentence.

Tan Chay Wa, a Singapore citizen aged 33, is very likely to be the next to hang, according to his wife who visited him in prison. Tan has been detained by the Malaysian government since 1979 under the Internal Security Act (1960) by which the government detains its political opponents *indefinitely* and *without trial*. Two years later, without his having laid a foot outside the prison, the government charged him with possession of a gun and ammunition, and revoked his detention order.

Tan was tried under the special procedures provided by the ESCAR. There were serious discrepancies during the trial, one of them being that the serial number of the gun given by the prosecution when laying the charge did not correspond to that of the gun that the prosecution produced in court as evidence! Yet Tan was found guilty and sentenced to death.

The ESCAR is an exceptional law in that it does not safeguard, but *removes* the basic legal protection for the accused. It is a fearful law in that it lacks every single essential of justice. Among other things, the special procedure allows witnesses for the prosecution to give evidence *in camera*; it restricts the right of the accused to cross-examine prosecution witnesses; it admits hearsay evidence.

In ESCAR trials, the judges' discretionary power of sentence is removed and they are bound by law to impose the maximum penalty—the death penalty. Unlike other Malaysian trials, the judge is chosen by the Public Prosecutor and sits alone without a jury.

The irregular features of the ESCAR procedure are proof of the extremely political nature of the trials. Such a procedure constantly and almost inevitably leads to conviction of any person whom the police may name. The

most blatant outrage of justice is that all persons who have been, by chance, acquitted have been immediately rearrested and detained under the Internal Security Act (1960) for which there is no trial. There are only two outcomes to an ESCAR trial: death or continued indefinite detention.

There have been 31 hangings under the ESCAR in the last two years, after 11 years of none at all. There are another 33 people in Malaysian jails convicted under ESCAR awaiting their turn at the gallows. No one knows exactly how many more security cases are pending before the courts to be tried under the ESCAR.

Unlike military juntas or dictatorial regimes elsewhere who eliminate political dissidents through covert assassinations, the Malaysian government assassinates with legal finesse.

### CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ESCAR

A campaign has been initiated by the Federation of United Kingdom and Eire Malaysian and Singaporean Students Organisation (FUEMSSO) to save the lives of Tan Chay Wa and others convicted under the ESCAR laws, and to campaign against the law itself.

Despite the offers of foreign organisations to 'adopt' Tan the Malaysian government has not released him. This is in contradiction with their earlier statement that they would allow detainees under the Internal Security Act (which includes ESCAR) to leave the country if foreign organisations were willing to accept them.

The campaign has won the support of many individuals and organisations, who have called on the Malaysian government to repeal the ESCAR and stop the hangings.

Support has come from trade unions; church organizations, human rights organizations, including Amnesty International; the United States Congress' Human Rights Sub-Committee; and groups of members of Parliaments in Britain, Holland, and West Germany.

Telegrams protesting against the gross injustice of the ESCAR trials, calling for its repeal, and calling for the release of those sentenced under it can be sent to:

The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr  
Mahathir bin Mohamed  
The Prime Minister's Office  
Jalan Datuk Onn  
Kuala Lumpur  
MALAYSIA

Send copies to:  
FUEMSSO  
c/o NUS International Section  
3, Endsleigh Street  
London WC1

## Release Samuel Roche

The regime in Haiti is without doubt one of the most repressive in the world. Its thugs reach not only all opponents in Haiti itself, but they also undertake operations against Haitians who are refugees in other countries.

One of the worst cases is that of Louis Samuel Roche. He has lived for many years in the Dominican Republic and is a member of the Union of Haitian Democratic and Patriotic Forces. Roche disappeared on June 4, and every attempt to find out his whereabouts has proven useless. But a solidarity committee established in his defence has been able to find out the truth: Roche has been kidnapped, and forcibly taken to Haiti five days after his disappearance. He is now in the Croix de Bouquets Prison in Haiti.

A campaign is growing in the Dominican Republic to demand his freedom and his right to return home. The Dominican authorities have not till now made any official statement.

The Defence Committee for Samuel Roche asks for protest telegrams to be sent to: Presidente de la Republica, Palacio Nacional, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

## Black workers growing militancy

The independent black trade unions in South Africa are playing an increasingly important role.

The most recent indication of their strength was the strike which shut down Fords, General Motors, and Volkswagen car plants on July 15.

The strike was organised by NAAWU, an officially registered 'multi-racial' union. This union is part of the Federation of South Africa Trade Unions (FOSATU), which is the largest and most important of the independent black union federations, organising almost 100 thousand workers.

The strike was called in support of the demand for a wage rise from the present 2 rands per hour (£1 sterling) to 3.5



rands. The employers are only offering a rise to 2.15 rands.

This strike followed a wave of violent protests by black workers in the gold mines. Like the car workers, the miners were demanding increased wages, and particularly protesting against the immense disparity between black and white wages—whites earn about eight times the black workers wages.

Both sectors of workers also face increasing threats of redundancy. Five thousand miners have already been laid off. Projections for the next year forecast a marked drop in car sales.

However, the car industry employers have discovered that it will not be easy to put an end to industrial struggles simply by sacking the militant and unionised workers, as the mineowners

tried to do. The loss of the skilled workers would be a serious blow to the productivity of the industry.

The needs of the industrialists do not run in easy harness with the policy of the government. The recent declaration of independence for the Batustan and Ciskei homelands deprived black workers assigned to these homelands of South African citizenship, and thus made them liable to deportation. However, the loss of these workers would cause severe problems for industrial production.

This position of strength, combined with the growing organisational strength and history of struggle of the black workers (see *International Viewpoint*, No. 8) will bring future and increasing independent struggle by the black workers in South Africa. ■

## To all who refuse to capitulate

STATEMENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST GROUP,  
LEBANESE SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Comrades and Brother Fighters,

The last days have shown to those not already convinced that the official PLO leadership was serious about seeking a way "to surrender with honor."

It is in fact public knowledge that this leadership is prepared to accept the principal condition of the Zionists and their American sponsors—that is, to remove the Palestinian armed presence from Beirut.

It is also obvious that new Jarashes and Ajluns (1) to which the Palestinian fighters will be led if they follow the orders of the leadership to surrender will at best be a giant prison and at worst a graveyard.

We must emphasise that a very great responsibility for the present state of affairs, in which defeatist proposals are being openly or officially proclaimed, falls on the majority of the leaderships of the Lebanese national movement.

If the main fighting organisations of the national movement had adopted a firm patriotic attitude, rejecting the Zionist conditions, and insisted on keeping the Palestinian fighters in Beirut—as the Independent Masserian movement (the Murabitus) have done till now—no Palestinian leaders, regardless of their political views, would have been able to accept surrender.

However, the majority of the leaderships of the National Liberation Movement have shown that they are not only ready to countenance a withdrawal of the Palestinian resistance from Beirut but that they are even anxious to see this, and are bringing pressure to bear to assure that it is done as soon as possible, under the base pretext that it is necessary to 'save Beirut'.

Comrades and Fellow Resistance Fighters, time is running out, and we have to begin taking measures to block the surrender before it is too late. In order to do this, we have to bring together all the parties, forces, groups, and currents that are determined to fight on to victory and which reject the shameful capitulation that an evacuation of the entire Palestinian resistance from Beirut would represent. These forces must unite around a national accord that can be the basis for a Lebanese-Palestinian Patriotic Resistance Front. Such an accord must include the following points:

1. Rejection of all capitulationist solutions, especially a withdrawal of the Palestinian resistance from Beirut.

2. Continuation of an unrelenting struggle against the Zionist army of occupation, denying it a moment's respite, making it pay very dearly for every moment it occupies our land.

3. Announcing the decision to oppose militarily any attempt, by the American army or the official Lebanese army, to enter Beirut in collusion with the Zionist army.

This, comrades and fellow resistance fighters, is what we think represents a genuinely patriotic platform in the present period.

A historic responsibility falls on those forces that refuse to surrender. This responsibility demands that they demonstrate their determination and join their forces for the battle in which our national destiny is at stake.

Ever onwards to the victory!  
We will win! ■

1. In 1970, after the resistance had been evacuated from the towns in Jordan, it was concentrated in the Jarash and Ajlun plains.

## Union repression in Uruguay

Six militants are about to be taken to court in Montevideo. They are threatened with three to eighteen months imprisonment under the anti-union legislation of the dictatorship. They are Roberto Rodriguez Suarez, 60 years old, building worker; Jorge Frutos Oliva, 28 years old, textile worker from the Suitex factory; Angel Diego Nigro Ortiz, 24 years old, building worker; Ulises Marchall Nigro Ortiz, textile worker from the Alpagatus factory; Jose Bruzone and Miguel Matos Fangio, bankworkers.

Furthermore, Maria Cecilia Duffau Echevarren, 28 years old; and Alicia Locatelli Miserocchi, 33 years old—both clerks—have been detained since March in the headquarters of the Montevideo police, accused of 'illegal association'. They are accused of having had contact with Bibiana Duffau, a militant of Pax y Justicia (Peace and Justice) and with Gustavo Vasquez, a union militant in a textile factory. Amnesty International denounced the brutality against these comrades in its bulletin *Urgent Action* in April 1982.



Uruguayan 'disappeared' (DR)

A defence campaign has been set up in Latin America, notably in Brazil where a petition signed by a great number of union leaders is being circulated. The organisers of the campaign intended to present their petition on June 27, the anniversary of the military coup in Uruguay in 1973.

Telegrams and petitions demanding the immediate release of the detainees, total amnesty, and information on the condition of the Uruguayan disappeared in Uruguay itself, and in Argentina and Paraguay, should be addressed to: His Excellency The President of the Republic Lieutenant General Gregorio C. Alvarez, Casa de Gobierno, Plaza Independencia, Montevideo, Uruguay. ■



# Why I became a revolutionist

*The following is from the introductory chapters of Bernadette Devlin McAliskey's political autobiography, edited by Gerry Foley. (Copyright from a book to be published next year by Brandon Book Publishers, Dingle Ireland.) The final version that will appear in the book will be further edited. The subheadings have been added by IV.*

A long and complex historical development set the stage for the renewal of the fight for Irish national liberation that began in 1968-69. That in fact was what the Northern Ireland civil rights movement represented, although I was not aware of it at the time. Indeed, the leaders of the movement—conservatives, moderates, and the most radical socialists—were convinced and determined that it had to be something else. Their ideas of what it should be, of course, differed, but they were all agreed that it had to be a new “modern” sort of a movement that could avoid the quicksands in which all the attempts to resume the march of national liberation had become bogged down for the last fifty years.

Although I had grown up steeped in Irish history, I was far from understanding the historical forces that were being set in motion. I was shaped by that history and placed by it in a position to play a central role in the struggle that was beginning. The part I came to play was determined by an interaction between my understanding, rational forces that I did not understand, and blind chance. But as the struggle advanced, I had to try to gain a conscious understanding of the forces that were at work. I had to in order to survive and move forward. And the same is true of all of my generation who became involved in the fight that started in 1968-69 and who remain in it. This book is a history of that process more than it is a history of the civil rights movement or of the last ten years of struggle.

In the decade preceding the start of the civil rights movement, the largest IRA military campaign against British rule in Northern Ireland since the war of Irish independence had flickered to a demoralizing end. It was officially concluded in 1961, after it had in fact faded out. The war had failed to rouse the oppressed community even though the majority of the oppressed people showed their sup-

port for the IRA in the 1955 elections in Northern Ireland. The IRA leadership itself decided that there was something wrong with the traditional approach. It began to explore ways of using its organization to build mass social struggles around concrete, immediate demands.

In the late 1960s in Ireland, there did seem to be real possibilities for winning social reforms without directly confronting the national issue. The 1960s were a period of rapid economic development in the twenty-six counties that make up the formally independent part of Ireland. There was a rise of trade-union struggles and of demands for bringing the backward social welfare system into line with the standards existing in the rest of the British Isles. On this basis, the long moribund Irish Labour Party began to take on some life as a Social Democratic alternative. The major Irish unions affiliated to it, and it began to attract youth and other elements interested in reform and progress.

In the six counties that make up Northern Ireland, a British province, the 1960s were a period of “liberalization.” We were led to believe that we were finally going to enjoy the benefits of being “British subjects.” The people of Northern Ireland are supposed to enjoy both the “advantages” of British citizenship and “home rule.” A local parliament was established in Stormont Castle outside Belfast in 1920, during the war of independence, allegedly a part of a British plan for extending “home rule” to the entire island. There was also to be a local parliament in Dublin to administer the areas where there was a large Catholic, nationalist majority. These two local governments were to be linked in a Council of Ireland, which has never met.

In fact, what happened was that the British overlords handed over to their historic auxiliaries, the pro-imperialist Protestant ruling class, as much of the country as they could effectively control.

“Home rule” in Northern Ireland meant the rule of a completely reactionary combination of sweat-shop bosses and landlords, whose social and economic position depended on the oppression of the Catholic population, the descendents of the Irish people who were robbed of their lands and rights by the English conquest and settlement. This “home rule” was based on forces that were the equivalent of racist gangs in other colonies—the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and

“special” auxiliary constabulary, known as the “B-Specials.” Oppression of the Catholic minority was an integral part of the system.

From the standpoint of the Protestant rulers and those who identified their interests with them, the oppression of the Catholics was necessary to keep the latter from becoming the majority. They had to be forced to emigrate in larger numbers than Protestants. From the standpoint of both the Protestant rulers and their British overlords, the Protestants had to be given privileges at the expense of the Catholics in order to assure their continued support for British rule.

The meager advantages granted the Protestant masses paid off twofold for the rulers. The Protestants were given a feeling that they had a stake in the status quo and therefore had something to lose from social change. They were also kept in constant fear of the Catholic population that they knew must resent the privileges they had and be plotting to take them away.

## FROM ILLUSIONS OF REFORM TO REVOLUTIONARY MILITANCY

So, all that “home rule” for Northern Ireland was in reality was a license for repression, an excuse for maintaining a more repressive and reactionary setup than existed in any other “part” of the United Kingdom.

But in the 1960s, this system seemed to be changing. The Stormont prime minister, Terence O'Neill, began making friendly faces at the Catholic middle-class. He actually let himself be photographed with nuns, and informed Protestants that if the living standards of Catholics were improved they “would live like Protestants....They will refuse to have eighteen children.” The world seemed to be changing so rapidly that the Catholics in Northern Ireland could hope that the anomaly of a stagnant, bigoted, repressive enclave in the United Kingdom could not much longer be maintained. Northern Ireland society would have to become more like the rest of the modern European world, more like Britain.

My generation of Catholics was the second to gain some real access to higher education. The first were the new Catholic middle class leaders such as John Hume, who were also the first leaders of



the civil rights movement. They had expected to be accepted into "respectable" circles, but found themselves still excluded by the traditional pattern of discrimination. That was what turned them back toward their own community and toward organizing protests. We were the second wave, a broader social layer, more ready to fight. We also had higher aspirations than the older generations of Catholics, more of an awareness of what was going on in the world outside, and also more illusions. It was possible for us, even the most radical of us, to believe that we could win major changes in the system through peaceful mass protests alone.

We were part of the general reformist ferment that was opening up the Catholic community to new ideas, new forms of action and organization, and new hope. This ferment was also breaking down the traditional political structures in the Catholic community and thereby opening up the way for us to take a leading role. But the circumstances of the time and the influence at work made us especially iconoclastic and self-centered. We tended to look down on the nationalist tradition, which in the long impasse since the War of Independence had become more and more reduced to sterile sentiment, if not empty bombast and hypocrisy. We were not interested in the traditional nationalist organizations, which seemed to us to be just survivals of the past. The republican forms of organization—the antiquated rituals of nineteenth century military conspiracy—particularly put us off. We were not much interested in organization. We were attracted by new ideas and action, by the chance to take initiatives, to express ourselves.

However, in the space of a few months, we opened up the flood gates of the long dammed up Irish revolution. It swept us along as it did all the political forces in the oppressed community. We were forced to learn to navigate in it by being tossed on reef after reef. Those who refused to go with the current, the 1960s leadership of the IRA (which came to call itself the "Official" IRA) were politically destroyed by it, eventually becoming a disgrace to their own former principles. In order to maintain their predetermined course, they had to turn on their own revolutionary members, murdering some and driving most away.

Ireland became an unparalleled laboratory for studying the dynamics of mass movements. We saw the price that had to be paid for political mistakes. We learned. A new Irish revolutionary generation came of age. And the components of a new mass revolutionary movement began to come together for the first time since the 1913-1922 period, a movement that can achieve the freedom of Ireland.

The new upsurge of the national liberation struggle since 1969 has in fact borne the imprint of the changes in Ireland that we saw, of the consciousness of my generation, and of the forms of mass

action that we promoted. In this generation, the activists in the struggle have been led rapidly to an understanding that a social revolution is necessary for liberation and that it must be based primarily on the working class and must be part of a world movement against capitalism and imperialism. The pressures impelling activists to this understanding have been extremely powerful. Even those who started from the narrowest and most conservative point of view have been rapidly obliged to accept this outlook if they wanted to stay in the struggle.

#### THE TRAINING OF A REVOLUTIONIST

I was a very hard working student through grammar school. I did not think about politics in a conscious way. My idea was to get through, get to university, and get into a position where I could support the rest of the family. My first three years in the university I concentrated exclusively on getting a first-class honours degree in psychology.

Most of the students I knew ran out of their grant by midyear and sent home for money. I not only lived on my grant, I actually sent money home from it. That meant that I basically lived to work. In those first three years, I did not attend one single political meeting.

In January 1967, my mother died, leaving me responsible for the rest of the family. So, in the summers of 1967 and 1968, in return for their material assistance, I worked for my mother's brothers, who kept a public house. But I wasn't prepared to ask them for money without working for it. Actually, this experience furthered my political education, taking me out of the close, protective atmosphere of the university. I learned more about the society in which I lived.

Working in the bar, I could see the restrictions that there were on people. It became obvious that it was possible for Catholics and Protestants to maintain friendships only by blocking off parts of their lives. That was most noticeable around the Twelfth of July, the time of the big Orange marches. The Catholic patrons quietly endured the insult of their Protestant friends, however unintentional or unconscious. Apparently, they believed that after the Twelfth, it would all go away again.

I remembered that as a child living on a mixed housing estate, our Protestant friends were not allowed to play with us during the month of July. All friendships were temporarily suspended. This was accepted. The month would pass, and they would all come sneaking back, and be welcomed again as friends.

The first civil rights march was in August 1968. It started in Coalisland, near Cookstown, and went to Dungannon, about five miles away. I was never very clear about why I went. I was at home, away from the university, and so I did not go as a student. I did not go either because I was involved in political

activity in the university. I was not. But I was aware of the issue that sparked the demonstration.

The issue was discrimination against Catholics in the allocation of council houses, specifically what was known as the Caledon incident. A house had been given to an unmarried Protestant woman and denied to a Catholic family that had been waiting for years. The march was organized by the Social Justice Campaign. Austin Curry was involved. He was a young Catholic politician, a school teacher. He was regarded at the time as an outsider and a radical by most of the clergy and the established Catholic politicians. He later became one of the main figures in remodeling the bourgeois Catholic party so that it could survive in changing times.

There were probably some people who went to that march and never went on another, but these must have been very few. I was determined at the end of that first march that I was going to be on the second and the third and all the rest of them, even though I was still not very clear about what I wanted.

The speakers were Gerry Fitt, a member of the British parliament for the main Belfast Catholic ghetto, Betty Sinclair of the Communist Party, and Erskine Holmes of the Liberal Party. I remember nothing that any of them said, except that Gerry Fitt promised that he would lead us through the police, who refused to allow us to enter the town; and that of course he did not.

What I remember is the solidarity of the people who were there and the feeling of pride and determination that they communicated. I remember the confrontation with the police and the sort of reaction it produced in me. The realization hit that you could not even walk on your own street and state your mind, that the police would stop you. That made me feel determined that whatever else I might be prepared to put up with, I was not going to let the police keep me from saying my piece. I thought that all my life I had let people walk over me and then once I went onto the street to say my bit, the whole apparatus of the state came down on me to try to shut me up. I could not put it in words. But I realized then once and for all what my place was in this society and that I was not going to accept it.

The bulk of those who marched that day were from the immediate area. Most of them were probably unemployed young people. There were also a lot of people in their forties, fifties, and sixties. In later years when I came back to live in this area, I found out that they were the people who were maintaining the resistance here. They were the fighters of the 1940s. They were the layer who became involved in the struggle at the age of seventeen and eighteen in the 1930s and 1940s. Some of them had become active on the question of unemployment. But most of them became involved as republicans.



There were a large number of women on that march, although they were not organized as women. Most of them were members of political groups, or were there with their husbands. There were a lot of families. Many people brought children on their shoulders. They were very lighthearted. It was not such a big crowd, I think, looking back on it, maybe two or three thousand. But people had never gathered before in this area in such large numbers. This created energy, enthusiasm, and a spirit in the people. This gave them confidence that now they were really off their knees. And it was only once they were off their knees, that they realized that they had been on them for so many years.

I remember that I was surprised to see people from the university in Belfast such as Michael Farrell and Patricia Drinnan, people that I'd seen around the university and known to be political people. I remember being surprised that they had come to Coalisland and that they all had banners.

The next march was held in Derry City on October 5. I had a male friend, English by birth and Irish by parentage. He was a strong republican and wanted to go. I was determined to go myself. So, the two of us went there on our own. Many of the same people were there—students from Belfast. There were also the young Derry activists, people like Johnnie White and Eamon McCann, whom I didn't know at the time.

I remember that there had been a running argument in the papers about whether the Derry march was going ahead or was going to be banned. It was banned. But that made me even more determined to go.

Even after all the things that have happened in the last ten years, the memory of that march still stands out in my mind. I can still see it clearly when I close my eyes—the police wading into the marchers and beating them, the water cannon coming down. It was terrifying. I was terrified, and I think everyone was terrified. But terrified as you were, something made you know that you were going to come back for more. And from that day on, people kept doing that. They kept being beaten off the streets and coming back on again, then being beaten off again and coming back. It seems like a kind of madness when you look back on it. You ask yourself in hindsight why you kept coming back for more. Well, you just did. You knew that you had to. You knew that if you let them beat you down, you would never be able to lift yourself again. You would have to accept that having discovered your place in society that it was good enough for you. So, everytime they tried to drive us off the streets, we became more angry and determined, and that anger and determination started to put Northern Ireland into the headlines of the world press.

The new term at university started the week after the Derry march. A meeting was called by the Young Socialist

Alliance, the Liberals, and the Republican Clubs. Its purpose was to organize a march to city hall to protest against the brutality of the police in Derry. A lot of students became strongly involved in it. Of course, the march was halted by the police before it got to city hall. A rally was held in front of the police lines. I remember Michael Farrell speaking. I did not know Farrell personally, but I knew that he was involved with the Young Socialist Alliance. He was obviously the best speaker there. He could articulate what we felt. I do not remember what he said particularly but I remember that it was what we felt. Someone said that we would stay there until hell froze over. I think that it was Farrell, although he later denied it. I know that I was quite prepared to stay sitting there as long as necessary. But after a while we marched back to the university.

The crowd moved in a spontaneous way. We filed in orderly ranks back into the student union building, which had a big assembly hall in the basement. The leaders went down there, so the rest of the march followed. There were several thousand students. The hall was packed. A very impromptu meeting started. People got up to speak. A chair was elected. We discussed the whole question of the march, why we had been stopped, and police brutality. The only ones with any clear idea of why it was all happening was the group of people around Michael Farrell.

Yet, I remember thinking at the time that these people were the Young Socialist Alliance. My Catholic training told me that these people were subversives. They were going to jump on this bandwagon and lead us all down the dreaded road to Communism, rape all the nuns, and burn all the chapels. So, I sat there listening to Farrell and thinking that what he was saying was right and that it was what I felt but also being very suspicious because it was Farrell who was saying it.



Bernadette Devlin McAliskey (DR)

It was at that meeting that People's Democracy was constituted. It began as a very loose organization. It was decided that there would be another march. This was the first political meeting that I ever attended. I was sitting there like all the other people feeling excited about the march.

The question of filing for the march came up. And one after the other, the students who had organized the initial march got up and explained why they couldn't file for the next one themselves. Their fathers wouldn't allow it. The dean of their faculty would make trouble for them. I got so angry that I stood up in the middle of the crowd and said: "I'll file for the march." I'm not sure why I did it. I think that it was an instinctive reaction. All these people who were making excuses were middle class kids to me. I had a gut reaction against them. They were all too nice to go any further now that the going was getting tough. And so I said: "I'll file for the march." I don't have anything to lose. And, of course, that was greeted with cheers and sighs of relief, that some idiot had been found who would do it. (The person "filing" for the march was legally responsible for anything resulting from it.)

#### COMBINATION OF NATIONALIST AND WORKING CLASS TRADITIONS

My personal background put me at the crossroads of the tendencies that were developing. I had absorbed the Irish revolutionary tradition as a child, but I grew up outside the world of the republican movement. Along with this, I gained a strong consciousness of being part of the working class and of the social and economic problems faced by working people in Northern Ireland.

I was the middle child of a family of six. My father died when I was about nine years old. What I remember most about him is that when he was home he



did not work. That was because there were no jobs in our area. The only work to be had was in England.

My father, I suppose, was not typical of the men of his generation in that when he was not working, he helped a lot in the home. He took me to school as a child. It was my father who put us to bed and told us bedtime stories. As a child, though, I wasn't aware that the stories I was told were not the same that English children of my age would hear.

I was not brought up on the tales of Hans Christian Anderson or Little Red Riding Hood but on tales of the mythical Gaelic heroes Finn Mac Cumhail and Cuchullain, of the People of the Goddess Dana, the gifted ancient folk, who, it was told, retired under the hills when iron-using warriors first occupied our country. I was brought up on tales of the Irish struggle, of the Peep O'Day Boys, Connolly, and Larkin.

These stories were very simply told. It was not until I went to grammar school that I realized that I had been given a grounding in Irish history. It was not until I was an adult that I realized that I had been given a republican version of Irish history and a labour-oriented one as well. For an Irish child like me, getting a basic political education was as natural as growing up in an Irish family. It was part of this also that as a teenager I became interested in Gaelic, the old language of our people, and came to spend my summers in west Donegal, where the continuity of the language and tradition has been maintained to this day. (This was contingent, of course, in the "education" system. Young nationalist/Catholic people not selected for "grammar" education had no such opportunity.)

The role of the language, by the way, indicates something about the way tradition works in Ireland. The Irish language and the lore and attitudes associated with it make up the oldest stratum of tradition in our country. But the language only really became a generally accepted part of nationalism in this century. It was made so by the generation that prepared the way for the 1916 rising and the war of independence.

More than any other leader of that generation, Patrick Pearse, the leader of the 1916 rising, was responsible for the fusion of the language question and nationalism. He explained what he thought about the role of the language in a speech he gave in 1913, called "The Coming Revolution":

"I have come to the conclusion that the Gaelic League, as the Gaelic League, is a spent force; and I am glad of it. I do not mean that no work remains for the Gaelic League, or that the Gaelic League is no longer equal to work; I mean that the vital work to be done in the new Ireland will be done not so much by the Gaelic League itself as by men and movements that have sprung from the Gaelic League or have received from the Gaelic League a new baptism and a new life of grace. The Gaelic League was no reed shaken by the wind, no mere *vox cla-*

*mantis*: it was a prophet and more than a prophet. But it was not the Messiah. I do not know if the Messiah has yet come, and I am not sure that there will be any visible and personal Messiah in this redemption: the people itself will perhaps be its own Messiah, the people labouring, scourged, crowned with thorns, agonising and dying, to rise again immortal and impassible. For peoples are divine and are the only things that can properly be spoken of under figures drawn from the divine epos.

"If we do not believe in the divinity of our people, we have had no business, or very little, all these years in the Gaelic League. In fact, if we had not believed in the divinity of our people, we should in all probability not have gone into the Gaelic League at all. We should have made our peace with the devil, and perhaps might have found him a very decent sort; for he liberally rewards with attorney-generalships, bank balances, villa residences, and so forth, the great and the little who serve him well. Now, we did not turn our backs on all these desirable things for the sake of *is* or *ta* [the two different aspects of the verb "to be" in Gaelic]. We did it for the sake of Ireland. In other words, we had one and all of us (at least, I had, and I hope that all you had) an ulterior motive in joining the Gaelic League. We never meant to be Gaelic Leaguers. We meant to do something for Ireland, each in his own way. Our Gaelic League time was to our tutelage: We had first to learn to know Ireland, to read the lineaments of her face, to understand the accents of her voice; to repossess ourselves, disinherited as we were, of her spirit and mind, re-enter into our mystical birthright. For this we went to school to the Gaelic League. It was a good school, and we love its name and will champion its fame throughout all the days of our later fighting and striving. But we do not propose to remain school-boys forever."

Thus, the language became part of the program that armed an entire generation of Irish men and women for war, the war that established the principle of Irish nationhood, although it failed to achieve real national liberation.

But before my grandfather's time, the Irish language and lore were not a major part of the national tradition for most Irish people. Our tradition is a growing, constantly changing thing. Ideas that become accepted yesterday are mixed up with the most ancient heritage of our people; and forgotten and half-forgotten deeper layers are continually being ploughed up and reincorporated into the living tradition. In this way, the Gaelic language and myths become a basic part of my education.

I had reason to reflect on the nature of the Irish nationalist tradition later in my life when I had to deal with the main organizational embodiment of this tradition—the Irish republican movement.

However, what made the strongest impression on me growing up was not the

experience of being a Catholic and a nationalist in Northern Ireland but the problems of being dependent on the Welfare State. It was not that we were poverty-stricken in the worst sense of the word but that we had to go to the state bureaucracy for clothing, food, education, shelter, everything we needed to live. It may be, on the other hand, that because we were Catholics and nationalists, that we were always part of the ungrateful poor, that we had a pride in ourselves and a feeling that we had been robbed and a feeling of being morally superior to the power that had robbed us and now deigned to give us back a few necessities of life.

I don't ever remember being grateful to that great body that gave us the money to keep going. What I remember is always resenting the bureaucracy, hating to have to go to that office and state how many pairs of shoes you possessed and whether or not you had a change of underwear so that they could decide whether you needed more. Of course, they never believed you. And this bureaucracy represented an alien power that had conquered us and made us second-class citizens in our own country.

I was nurtured on stories about the evils of British rule. But in my case, like that of most republicans as I later learned, not all these stories were about what the British had done in Ireland. I was also told about the wrongs of British rule in other countries. Our consciousness of our own oppression led us to sympathize with other peoples who suffered similar wrongs. It gave us a basic grounding in practical internationalism.

The history of the land agitation in the nineteenth century and the work of Connolly and Larkin in building the modern Irish labour movement was interwoven in my education with the older traditions and myths. I learned it the same way I learned the old songs, and the new ones.

My parents made me particularly aware of being part of the working class. My father came from a working-class background. But my mother did not. She came from the lower middle class. Her people were farmers and shopkeepers. It was generally considered in my mother's family when I was a child that she had married beneath herself.

My father was always looked down on by my mother's side of the family. So, our reaction was to identify particularly strongly with our father, to take a special pride in his background. My mother, who was a very unpolitical person, reinforced that attitude in us after his death. She refused to rely on her own people. She made us very aware of the difference between them and us. We were working people. What we looked to in order to improve our situation was education. That led me to the university. It made me a very serious student. But it led me finally further than that, into involvement in the Irish struggle for freedom, into becoming a conscious working-class revolutionist, a Marxist. ■



# INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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