

International VIEWPOINT

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Armenian protests reach new peak

AFTER a long silence, *Pravda* finally referred in its June 10 issue to a three-week long general strike in Stepanakert and other centers in Nagorno-Karabakh. The article was introduced in a peculiar way: "Lately, we have been getting significantly more letters asking us to report what is happening today in Nagorno-Karabakh. Readers are asking whether the situation there is becoming normalized."

GERRY FOLEY

ONLY after three weeks of an unprecedented mass mobilization did the newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union consider that it was necessary to report what was happening, supposedly to answer queries from readers.

By its own account, the situation was dramatic: "Today, in Stepanakert [the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh] and the local centers of Martuni, Mardakerte, Askerane, most of the industrial plants, as well as public transport, are at a standstill. Virtually all public eating places and supermarkets are closed. The sale of produce is severely limited. Economic ties with Baku have been broken. The strike — such a unusual and expected word for us! — is in its third week."

A strike of this sort is something that has not been seen in the Soviet Union since the establishment of the Stalinist regime, although the same could be said of event after event in the latest struggle of the Armenian people for the reintegration of Nagorno-Karabakh into the Armenian republic.

But the article went on to describe something that was evidently even more disturbing for the bureaucratic rulers: "Every morning tens of thousands of people move through the downtown streets of the city [Stepanakert] with slogans and banners; rallies take place. There is one idea — 'Hold fast until the end.' When night comes, in the streets and the alleys lights flicker in specially constructed guard huts. These are the so-called Self-Defence Posts. Small groups keep watch until the morning, in the belief that they are defending security and peace for their families."

Popular self-defence forces, whatever their origin, are a challenge to the power of the state, and the rulers of a bureaucratic dictatorship cannot but be ultra-sensitive to this.

Pravda blamed the new flare-up of the conflict on Armenians, who supposedly at-

tacked Azerbaidzhani residents. This version of the unfolding of the events contradicts what appeared in the international press, apparently based at least partly on dissident sources in the Soviet Union.¹ The latter indicated that the conflict began to heat up again around the trial of the Azerbaidzhani charged with participating in an anti-Armenian pogrom in Sumgait, and that the Azerbaidzhani authorities supported the Baku demonstrations, which they could not have done without the approval of at least powerful allies in the central Communist Party apparatus.

Specifically, the strike in Nagorno-Karabakh was touched off by a statement made by Yegor Ligachev, the leading bureaucratic conservative, at the plenum of the Central Committee of the Azerbaidzhani Communist Party. *Pravda* did not mention the the question of Ligachev's remarks, not even as a rumor needing refutation, although it did mention that the strike began immediately after the Azerbaidzhani plenum.

An entire nation goes on strike

Two days after the *Pravda* article appeared, something even more "unusual and unexpected" in the Soviet Union came on the scene, a general strike of an entire nationality, called at a rally of hundreds of thousands of people. *Pravda* has not yet either reported it or commented on it, although in the runup to the special CP conference starting on June 27 it has been full of general declarations of the importance of "democracy" and "openness."

Igor Muradian, leading representative of the Karabakh committees, which have been formally banned by the Soviet authorities, raised the threat of a general strike before a rally of hundreds of thousands of people in Yerevan on May 30 if the Soviet authorities continued to refuse

to grant the demand for the return of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. At the same time, he appealed to the crowd to give Moscow 100 days more to study the problem.

The decision to go ahead with the general strike before the deadline set on May 30 was made, Muradian told Agence France-Presse, after a report that the CPSU secretariat had again rejected the Armenian demands at its June 9 meeting. The session, as it happened, was chaired by Ligachev.

Although the strike was supposed to be for three days, it was called off after one day when the authorities in Armenia indicated that they would support the demands of the protesters. It should be noted that there is a clear pattern both in the Armenian republic and in Nagorno-Karabakh of the authorities yielding to the pressure of the masses and trying to catch up with them. Specifically, the protests have resulted in the removal of the party secretaries in both jurisdictions who were considered unresponsive to national demands, and their replacement by officials who have sought to demonstrate a more sympathetic attitude.

Local bureaucracy under mass pressure

The Armenian ex-secretary, Karen Dimirchian, is regarded as a bureaucratic conservative, and there have even been claims that he supported the Armenian protests as a way of defending his own corner. However, he was removed from his post on May 21 by the central authorities without a murmur of opposition from the movement for the return of Nagorno-Karabakh, or from anyone else in the Armenian republic.

The first official body to support the demand for return, the regional Soviet of Nagorno-Karabakh, did so after a mass movement had developed and under powerful pressure from it. The claim that somehow some faction of the Armenian bureaucracy may be using the protests has come, for example, from state capitalist dogmatists, for whom the active or passive identification of any element in the bureaucracy with them is fundamentally suspicious. For them, the bureaucracy is separated from the masses by an unbridgeable class gulf.

Of course, sections of a local bureaucracy may support national demands in order to increase their own autonomy and because such demands do not immediately pose the question of reorganizing society, but the dynamic of a mass movement under a bureaucratic dictatorship is something else again.

Moreover, there have been clear signs of the movement radicalizing. In the rise of the new wave of protests, the moderate Armenian representative Sil'va Kapoutik-

1. See *IV* 143, June 13, 1988.

yan made statements expressing bitter disillusionment with the Soviet authorities, whom she compared to the czar to whom the conservative leaders of the Bloody Sunday protest of 1905 appealed in vain. Like the czar, she said, the Soviet authorities had "fired" on their loyal Armenian petitioners. ("Fired on" was obviously poetic licence, as yet at least.)²

Reports in the international press have indicated that there was a notable absence of pictures of Gorbachev in the new wave of protests, as contrasted with the February and March rallies. In its June 10 article, *Pravda* pointed out that appeals for moderation from Kapoutikyan had been ignored by the Armenian protesters. At the same time, it avowed a more fundamental problem:

"Party bodies are not in control"

"The party bodies in the region are not in control of the situation. The appeal of the regional committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaidzhan for normalizing the situation addressed to the workplaces has received no response. Also unheeded was a similar appeal by the well-known Armenian writer Sil'va Kapoutikyan in the pages of the region's paper."

In this wave of protests, according to all accounts, the Armenian demonstrators have made clear their rejection of the half measures proposed by Moscow, that is educational and cultural reforms that would not challenge the political and economic jurisdiction of the Azerbaidzhani SSR over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Supreme Soviet of the Armenian republic voted on June 16, following the recommendation of the new Armenian secretary, Suren Aroutiounian, to appeal to the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaidzhan to cede Nagorno-Karabakh. That procedure is required by the Soviet constitution, which stipulates that the borders of the republics can only be altered with their consent. The request was rejected by the Azerbaidzhani Supreme Soviet a few days later by unanimous vote. In fact, some of the Armenian protesters demonstrated against appealing to the Azerbaidzhanis and therefore, presumably, in favor of putting pressure directly on Moscow.

In fact, the way forward for the Armenian movement is now far from clear. The demand that Moscow assert the right to draw the borders of the republics is not consistent with the principle of national self-determination and can only further aggravate and poison national questions in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Armenia in particular is likely to be the loser in such a game.

4 Azerbaidzhan has a larger population and greater economic importance for the Soviet rulers, who are also interested in good relations with Turkey. Furthermore, the Azerbaidzhanis are the most advanced

of the peoples of Islamic culture in the Soviet Union, who are mainly Turkic also. An affront to Azerbaidzhani feelings could fan resentments among a very large and dynamic population that is already worrying the Soviet rulers.

In the first phase of the struggle, at least some of the leaders of the Armenian protests seemed to be determined to avoid a conflict with the Azerbaidzhanis as such, and accused forces in central government bodies of trying to provoke communal clashes.³

On the other hand, the text of petition signed by 75,000 people and addressed to Gorbachev (which was a focus of the first protests leading up to the mass mobilizations in February) was politically contradictory, basing the claims of the Armenian nation both on its alliance with the Russia of the czars and on Lenin's national policy:

"Armenia's geographical position made it for centuries an extremely important strategic center for Russia. For centuries Armenia shed its blood, in particular in the Russo-Turkish wars. It progressively lost the space necessary for its national existence....In creating the Soviet state, VI Lenin took into account the political situation in which Armenians found themselves. He demanded that the Russian government resort to all means possible to put pressure on Turkey to get it to resolve the Armenian question. He demanded that western Armenia be attached to Russian Armenia and that Armenia be given access to the sea."

Further on, the petition said "The agents of pan-Turkism declare quite openly: 'What the empress Catherine took from us without a shot, the Communists have returned with more territories in addition'."⁴

More at stake than the territory itself

Such references to the historic alliance of the Armenians with the Great Russian state are hardly the sort of thing to appeal to the Azerbaidzhanis and other peoples of Islamic culture, who have suffered national oppression at the hands of Great Russians both under the czars and under the Great Russian nationalist regime of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Caught as the Armenians are between Turkish chauvinism and the Great Russian bureaucracy, there seem to be insurmountable barriers to achieving the national destiny to which they aspire unless they can link themselves to a broader movement for a just settlement of the national question in the Soviet Union. That cannot be done by trying to appeal to historic links with Russia or even by tactical alliances with a wing of the bureaucracy (say, with Gorbachev against Ligachev).

For the Armenians clearly much more is at stake in the fight for Nagorno-Karabakh than that territory itself. It is only the

clearest and most easily remediable case of a territory of which they have been deprived. What evidently dominates the national consciousness of Armenians is the genocide and the destruction of historic Armenia. When Armenians were first allowed to commemorate the genocide again at the end of the Khrushchev era in 1965, the slogan they raised was "Our lands!"

A nation that can never achieve national objectives

In an interview published in the *Armenian Spectator* Boston, Sergei Mikoyan, a Soviet Armenian personality, said in answer to a question about Nakhitchevan (another territory claimed by the Armenian protesters but now a Turkified part of Azerbaidzhan), "If we compare it with the Armenian lands that today belong to Turkey, it has to be understood that even if very few Armenians live on our territories, we think and continue to think that these lands are Armenian, in spite of the ethnic changes, particularly when these changes have been achieved by actions that we will never forgive and never forget."

In the same interview it was stressed that Soviet Armenia is too small and poor to accommodate a growing population or build a full national life. In fact, the Armenians have the peculiar problem of being a nation that alone could never, in any conceivable circumstances, achieve its real national objectives. To move forward requires an exceptional political vision.

Bureaucratic degeneration has created manifold obstacles that go beyond Russian chauvinism itself. Not a voice has been raised in Azerbaidzhan, apparently, to express a proletarian internationalist standpoint. That is a notable difference from the revolutionary period when Azeri communists recognized the national claims of the Armenian people, including their right to Karabakh.

On the other hand, the relaxation of bureaucratic repression required by the *perestroika* policy has allowed the question of a democratic settlement of the national question to be raised again in the Soviet Union. The Armenian events are only the most advanced form of this. (In fact, the Armenians may have been allowed more tolerance because Moscow is well aware of the tight corner in which they find themselves as a nation.)

It remains to be seen whether the Armenian movement will advance beyond its present political limitations. But it has already demonstrated the importance of a principled program on the national question for the anti-bureaucratic movement in the Soviet Union and given an unprecedented example of the power of a mass movement. ★

2. *Ibid.*

3. See *IV* 138, April 4, 1988.

4. *Le Dossier Karabakh*, Sevig Press, Paris, p.63.

Elections leave a murky picture

THE SOCIALIST Party leadership succeeded in demobilizing enough working-class voters in the final round of the presidential elections to avert the burden of a mandate for anti-capitalist policies. Although the rate of abstention dropped somewhat from nearly 35% in the first round, it was still a record 30%.

In parliamentary terms, the election was extremely close. If the SP leaders had been slightly more successful in convincing working people that they had no stake in the vote, the right would have re-emerged with a comfortable absolute majority. The close results have created a playground for backroom parliamentary wheeling and dealing likely to increase indifference to elections.

GERRY FOLEY

FEAR of the right seemed to have the most effect in mobilizing left voters, as in the presidential elections. But in the two rounds of the legislative elections on June 5 and 12, it did not operate so much on the national level. The right was on the defensive and appeared to have closed ranks against the National Front, except in the second round

Results of the June 12 legislative election*

	%	seats
(includes seats won June 5)		
SP and allies	49.05	276
Communist Party	3.06	27
URC and misc.		
right	46.80	271
National Front	1.08	1
Abstention	30.5	
Total left	52.11	298
Total right	47.08	272
[289 seats needed for an absolute majority]		

* Only 453 out of the total 575 seats were contested on June 12, the others having been decided by a clear winner emerging in the first round on June 5 (except for two seats in French Polynesia, where the vote will take place on June 26). With few exceptions, the CP and NF stood only in those districts where they came ahead respectively of the left and right on June 5.

** The only far left candidates were about 50 backed by the Committees around the Juquin campaign (see IV 141). The national total therefore is small, but many candidates got significant votes.

Results of June 5 (first round)

	% of vote
SP and allies	37.55
Communist Party	11.32
URC and misc.	40.52
right	
National Front	9.78
Far left**	0.36

in Marseilles and the rest of the department of Bouches du Rhône.

In the Marseilles area, the June 17 issue of *Rouge* (the paper of the LCR, the French section of the Fourth International) pointed out that, "you can really talk about a 'pink wave'...multiplied to the national level, the Marseilles case would have undoubtedly brought about a pink landslide." Following the presidential election, the polls had indicated a large victory for the Socialist Party in the legislative vote.

The traditional right's alliance (the Union du Rassemblement et du Centre — URC) in the Marseilles area concluded a shamefaced deal with the National Front, standing down for NF candidates where they came ahead in the first round. But of 16 national assembly deputies elected in the department, eight are Socialists and three are Communists. Moreover, the fortunes of the Socialist Party, on the decline for a long time in this area, showed a remarkable revival.

The abstention rate in Marseilles declined perceptibly more in the second round than nationally, falling by 6% as against the national drop of 4%, although it remained high in some districts. National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, who represented the entire right in the city's eighth district, was clearly defeated by his SP opponent, Marius Masse, 43% to 56%. All the nationally known leaders of the racist party were concentrated in Marseilles. None of them won.

However, the votes were close in some districts. The Socialist Philippe Sanmarco defeated his NF opponent Jean Roussel by 50.43% to 49.57%. Jeanine Ecochard defeated Gabriel Domenech of the NF by 51.38% to 48.61%. The flagship of the SP's "opening," Bernard Tapie, a flamboyant capitalist, was defeated by his URC opponent by hardly more than 80 votes.

Rouge's Marseilles correspondent, Patrick Ming, offered three explanations for the left's success. First, the transfer of

votes between the CP and the SP was especially good. "The perspective of the election of a Le-Pen supporter outweighed the years of violent polemics between the two parties. For example, Guy Hermier [a CP candidate] gave the NF candidate a drubbing, taking 63% of the vote." Secondly, the NF-URC deal repelled a fringe of the traditional right's voters. "Roussel, the local NF leader, lost 1,000 votes from the total right vote in the first round, or 15% of the URC vote." Thirdly, there were actual shifts of right voters to the left where the NF stood in the second round. Thus, the SP candidate Ecochard gained 5,000 votes in the second round, when the total additional vote was only 3,000.

National decline in NF vote

Since the "opening" was supposed to win over voters from the bourgeois parties, Marseilles is the one place that it can be said to have worked on the electoral level. The key factor was opposition to the National Front. This was obviously something at this stage that bourgeois politicians can accept. In fact, Tapie took a more outspokenly "anti-fascist" line than the SP itself. On the night of the election, he identified the NF with the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini and repeated his denunciation of the NF voters themselves as racists, to the evident embarrassment of SP premier Michel Rocard, who appeared on the same TV program.

The NF vote declined nationally in the first round to the level of its vote in the last legislative elections, 9.8% (9.9% in 1986), as opposed to the 14.4% that it got in the first round of the presidential elections. But it came ahead of the traditional right in eight of the 16 districts in the Marseilles area. Although the NF was prevented from getting seats in the second round, the danger of it winning the upcoming municipal elections has by no means been eliminated. If the NF could win control of the coun-

try's second largest city, that would make it far more of a threat than winning a large protest vote in presidential election or getting a few dozen deputies in the national assembly.

In this respect, although the immediate results of traditional right's pact with the NF were thin gruel for both, the neo-fascists gained a new legitimacy in the Marseilles area in particular that could prove very dangerous. Moreover, the NF's setback could have paradoxical effects. It could deprive the SP to some extent of a bogieman for rallying the left and liberal vote. It could increase the NF's appeal to popular layers who feel cheated by the electoral game.

To a large extent, in fact the decline in the NF's national vote can be attributed to undemocratic changes in the election system. With nearly 9% of the national vote, the NF got only one deputy. Under the first-past-the-post system reintroduced by the traditional right majority elected in 1986, the smaller parties have little chance of getting representation commensurate with their actual percentage of the vote. So, French TV viewers have been treated to the rare sight of a neo-fascist strongman not denouncing democracy but protesting against the lack of it.

Socialist deals with centre-right

Moreover, the layers of the population who feel unrepresented by the present system will almost certainly grow. None of the basic problems raised by the capitalist crisis were settled by the elections. And the center of the political stage is now being occupied by parliamentary maneuvers

carried out in sovereign disregard of the voters. Even the traditional right is raising a hue and cry over the dealing by elements of the UDF with the SP government, which they can rightly claim was not at all sanctioned by the voters. In fact, some pollsters point to a sharp drop already in the popularity of SP government, although it has not yet had time to do anything.

Decline in CP's vote reversed

During the campaign itself, the bourgeois center righteously spurned the SP's advances. And the elections themselves showed that the centrists who ran on the SP's presidential majority slate were rejected by their past supporters, although in a number of cases they got a good vote from the left.

The Socialist Party itself got a sharp warning from left voters. The Communist Party centered its campaign against the "opening," against alliances with bourgeois politicians. That clearly paid off. First the first time in a decade, the decline in the CP vote was reversed. In the first round, it rose to 11.3%, in comparison with the 6.8% that the party got in the presidential election and the 9.8% that it got in the 1986 legislative elections. On the other hand, the CP vote must now be less certain than in the past, since a lot of these voters are not committed to the party and cannot be counted on to go along with opportunist or sectarian turns.

In the first round of the presidential elections, for example, the far left candidates got a total of around 4.5% of the vote. That is equivalent to more than 40% of the CP's vote in the second round, and it

seems certain that most of the far-left vote went to the CP. But, of course, that by itself does not explain the party's success. The apparatus of the CP has remained largely intact, despite the decline in the party's popularity, and it weighed heavily in the election of deputies in areas where the CP is rooted in local government. This also explains why the Communists suffered less from a system skewed against minorities than the NF.

The importance of the CP's local bases was indicated by the fact that 12, or around half of the CP's deputies are now also mayors. Of the previous CP parliamentary group of 32, only five were mayors. In the areas where the CP vote went up by more than 20% in comparison with the presidential elections, a number of CP deputies were elected, of whom seven were mayors. This makes the upcoming municipal elections even more crucial for the CP. And in a number of these areas, the far-left forces assembled around the Juquin campaign in the first round of the presidential elections got substantial votes.

To a considerable extent, the relative success of the Communist Party has deprived the SP of an alibi for concessions to the right. The CP deputies give the working class parties a majority in the assembly. The fact that the CP holds the margin of victory can put considerable pressure on the Socialist Party apparatus at lower levels, who can be expected to have a hard time explaining it to their base if the SP parliamentary leadership fails to bloc with the CP to pass pro-labor legislation.

Growing political and social instability

If the SP follows too right wing a line, it risks seeing its rivals regain a lot of the ground it has won from them since 1981. On the other hand, there will certainly be strong pressures on the CP to take a united-front approach, because of the support for working-class unity shown in the elections.

Furthermore, the elections have shown that far-left sentiment is already strong enough, if properly focused, to exercise a real pressure on the big workers parties. This potential has been recognized even by the Socialist Party, which ran a number of candidates with far left backgrounds (some of whom were elected) and offered places on its slate to the Juquin committees (which were rejected).

So overall the elections point to a new period of growing political and social instability, with both greater dangers and greater opportunities for the workers' movement. The hold of the reformist leaderships on the working class seems to have weakened. But political and trade-union alternatives have to be built to keep the resistance of workers and oppressed groups from being scattered and to counter disillusion. ★

For an SP/CP government!

THE FACTORY bulletins of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International, published a common editorial on the election results. The following are excerpts:

Since 1983 and 1984 all the elections have given the same signals — massive abstentions on the left, disillusionment and disgust, a rise of the National Front in the context of a worsening crisis and declining credibility of the parties. Chirac profited from this to retake the government in 1986 and deal still harder blows to wage earners, young people and the Kanaks. Two years later, he has bitten the dust! But in the legislative elections, the right-wing minority has nonetheless managed to save its face because the SP keeps bowing to it.

This has to end! The voters have clearly chosen a new Socialist and Communist majority. They have rebuffed the president's centrist cronies. So much the better. The left cannot be remobilized with such people. And that is what the situation demands. There is a political solution — an SP and CP government that meets the main demands of the people.

To the Socialists, we say, stop demobilizing our camp by overtures to the right. To the Communists, we say stop your zigzags and divisive maneuvers. On the basis of the unity of the workers and their organizations, we must demand the following urgent measures: a 6,000 franc minimum wage for all, including the unemployed; a 35-hour workweek; an end to militarism and French nuclear weapons; real equality between men and women; an end to the expulsions of immigrant workers and granting their right to vote; independence for New Caledonia.

This are the elements of a left policy that can mobilize, of a government that can fight the crisis. Mitterrand and Rocard are doing the opposite! Let us fight together to win our demands. ★

New French government offers nothing new to Kanaks

A MAJOR ISSUE in the French elections, the question of New Caledonia is becoming a test for the new Socialist Party minority government. On the eve of the second round of the presidential elections, the Chirac government staged a massacre of militants of the FLNKS [Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front] who were holding hostages in a grotto on the island of Ouvéa [see IV 141].

Mitterrand blamed the rightist government for the violence, saying that it was the result of an abandonment of the "dialogue" that had been the method of the left government from 1981 to 1986. Since the legislative elections, the Socialist Party government's policy toward New Caledonia seems to have been entangled in its overtures to the bourgeois center.

The following article examines what this is likely to mean for the oppressed native population, the Kanaks.

CLAUDE GABRIEL

YET ANOTHER status for New Caledonia is going to have to be discussed by the Kanak activists.

Once again in response to a sharpening conflict, the French government has found itself forced to propose a new deal. Every status has been presented as the best of all possible worlds, one that would open the way for "understanding between the communities" and preserve the interests of France. Every time, however, the new product has been launched in a blaze of publicity as a big improvement over the preceding ones. That was the story for the solutions previously proposed by Lemoine, Pisani, Fabius and Pons.¹

This time, Michel Rocard's project has been prompted to a considerable extent by the radicalization of the recent Kanak mobilizations. Raising the ante by carrying out an increasing number of resistance actions on the ground and taking hostages on Ouvéa, the FLNKS showed that it had a strong reservoir of activists.

On every occasion, it is the action of the FLNKS that has forced the rulers to retreat from certain schemes, to drop certain maneuvers and to come up with new deals. But when the struggle turns to the negotiating table, that does not mean that the task is any easier. The new relationship of forces on the ground does not necessarily make negotiations any easier. This could already be seen in 1984 in the discussions with Pisani.

For some months, the Socialists have had

the idea of two big regions administered separately under the control of a high commissioner to be set up in the framework of a ten-year plan. There is no doubt that on this point, as on others, there were dealings between the SP and the centrists even before the recent elections.

Colonist leaders' about-face

Already at the time of the parliamentary debate on the Pons scheme, a part of UDF [Union pour la Démocratie Française, a confederation of bourgeois groups and parties that in general claim to represent a middle-of-the-road position] dragged its feet with respect to the vote. So, it was no surprise that the mission led by Blanc that came back from New Caledonia included a certain Pierre Steinmetz, a collaborator of Raymond Barre [the leader of the UDF].

More surprising, undoubtedly, was the about-face of Lafleur [the leader of the hard right colonist party in New Caledonia, the local affiliate of Jacques Chirac's Rassemblement pour la République — RPR]. He announced that he might agree to this new administrative division and the formation of a federation. Several interpretations of this turnabout are possible.

There is talk about an economic crisis hitting the services in particular and allegedly forcing the RPCR [the Caledonian affiliate of the RPR] to take a more tactical



position. There is also mention of pressures coming from Paris from a part of the RPR aimed at getting New Caledonia out of the political game in France itself.

Land question is central

Part of the explanation of Lafleur's about-face at least comes from the ambiguities of the government's pre-project. The perspective is in fact not very clear at the moment, to say the least. Two regions for ten years in the perspective of a new referendum on self-determination. But what is the intention? To offer the Kanaks a chance for real national independence, or to preserve, as always, the interests of France in the region?

An assessment has to be made of the regional autonomy included in the Fabius plan. This policy in no way altered the unevenness of development between Nouméa [the colonialist center] and the interior. Adopting an objective of two regions instead of four is not going to make any miraculous changes in the mechanisms of capitalist colonialism. The question of the credit system and commercial circuits will remain a decisive point.

It remains to be seen also where the "frontier" will be drawn with respect to the nickel mines. There is every reason to think that Lafleur will want to keep these areas in the southern region, which would put the line of demarcation way up in the north.

Finally and most importantly, the land question will have to be considered. The balance sheet of the Rural Development and Planning Agency set up by the Pons

1. The first three plans, those of Lemoine, Pisani and Fabius, were put forward under the left government. Bernard Pons was the minister of the overseas territories under Chirac. For the FLNKS leaders Pisani personifies an approach of "dialogue," Pons one of repression. The massacre of FLNKS militants in the grotto on Ouvéa took place under Pons, and he was a fervent defender of it.

plan is disastrous. And in a country like New Caledonia, everything comes back ultimately to the question of the land. Will the Rocard project be bold enough to meet the land demands of the Kanaks? That is highly doubtful.

At the end of the stipulated period there is supposed to be a new situation. Maybe there will be. But Lafleur and his cronies no doubt think that the conditions will be riper then for a real partition of the country, with a still rich south remaining a French territory and a still dependent north, which could claim formal independence. This would be rather reminiscent of the history of the island of Mayotte in the Comores archipelago. Obviously, the Kanaks do not see things the same way. They want all of New Caledonia.

It is also possible that Mitterrand will go back to his scheme of a military base at Nouméa. The Kanaks would be independent but with four thousand French troops on their territory. This brings to mind Djibouti, with its naval base available for any French intervention in the region.

New surge of Kanak activism

All of this makes the stakes in the new negotiations quite high and the game will be an intense one. The FLNKS is enjoying a new relationship of forces on the ground, a new surge of activism from its base. This gain will be decisive, much more than the perspective of being able to win a referendum some years in the future because of the higher Kanak birthrate.

For its part, the French government must announce forthrightly what it wants to do — set a timetable for complete independence for the entire territory, or establish a shameful line of demarcation that will lead to a neo-colonialist partition. In no way can satisfaction of the Kanaks' demand depend on a referendum in France. The decision belongs to the Kanaks, and they made it a long time ago.

The FLNKS has to alternate pressure on the ground with negotiation. New Caledonia is not the sort of country that can be seized, especially against one of the main imperialist powers. In their usual way, the Socialists want to defuse the problem, to gain time, without understanding that the main question is the speedy satisfaction of the Kanaks' legitimate demands. In Pisani's time, the government did not do anything more than that, even though it had a parliamentary majority. Nobody can believe that, with the new deal with the center, the Rocard project can be any more radical.

There are, therefore, many pitfalls. It would be a shame if the solidarity movement in France demobilized for lack of a clear view of things, as it did at the time of the Fabius scheme. The Kanaks are not, unfortunately, at the end of their trials. That must never be forgotten. ★

PPS leaders face long prison sentences

TWO of the activists arrested during the strike wave that rocked Poland in April and May are still in prison. They are Czeslaw Borowczyk and Jozef Pinior, both leaders of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS).

Their offence is that they called on the workers at the Dolmel factory in Wroclaw to come out in a solidarity strike on May 5 when they learned of the brutal attack by the Polish police on the strikers at the Lenin steelworks in Nowa Huta. Since then a campaign for their release has been continuing in Poland. Two of their comrades who were arrested at the same time, Jolanta Skiba and Aleksandra Sarata were released at the end of May, after the bishop of Wroclaw intervened with the authorities. But they remain under indictment.

On May 15, the Central Executive Committee of the PPS published an open letter to European socialists. The following are excerpts:

SINCE its founding the Polish Socialist Party has been one of the one of the most harassed of the opposition organizations in Poland. The PPS is a political organization of independent trade unionists. It consistently campaigns for a program of defending the basic rights of workers and citizens. It advocates the ideas of democratic socialism, which are attractive for Polish society, for the workers organized in the independent self-managed union Solidarnosc. This is what makes the PPS a danger for the ruling Communist system in Poland.

In the April and May — days that were "hot" ones for Polish labor — PPS members took part in the protest actions and strikes in the factories and schools. They often played a leading

role. One of these actions has served as a pretext for repression against the PPS.

On May 5, on the grounds of the electrical machinery factory Dolmel in Wroclaw, Jozef Pinior, Czeslaw Borowczyk, Jolanta Skiba and Aleksandra Sarata were arrested. They were indicted on the absurd charge of assaulting a factory policeman and jailed for three months. The authorities are now preparing to try them and they risk sentences of several years in prison.

Founding member of the PPS

Jozef Pinior is one of the main Solidarnosc leaders. Before December 13, 1981, he was a member of the Lower Silesia regional leadership of the union. Later, in the underground Solidarnosc, he was chair of the Lower Silesia Regional Strike Committee (RKS) and a member of Solidarnosc's highest body, the Provisional Coordinating Commission (TKK). He was imprisoned for that.

A founding member of the PPS, he is one of its main leaders. As a socialist and trade-union leader, he has taken part in many protest rallies and actions in the enterprises and the plants. He enjoys a great authority among the workers of Lower Silesia.

Czeslaw Borowczyk was chair of the Solidarnosc underground plant committee at Dolmel during the state of war [the military rule proclaimed by Jaruzelski and company on December 13, 1981]. He was imprisoned and later became a public representative of Solidarnosc at Dolmel. He is the unquestionable leader of the workers in this plant. A founding member of the PPS, he is vice-chair of the party's Central Executive Committee (CKW).

Jolanta Skiba is a founding member of the PPS. Formerly an activist in the democratic opposition in Wroclaw, she has been imprisoned several times. She is secretary of the PPS's Regional Workers' Committee (OKR) in Wroclaw.

Aleksandra Sarata is a human rights activist and has been linked to the democratic opposition and the Social Self-Defence Committee KOR since the 1970s. She is a sympathizer of the PPS.

The trial that is being prepared against these militants smells of political vengeance against the main PPS leaders. The founding of the PPS on November 15, 1987, set a precedent in the Communist bloc.

If it survives, it will open up perspectives for the development of socialist parties in these countries....We are certain that European socialists will do all that they can to help our leaders regain their freedom. ★

Biggest strike in South Africa's history

THE OUTCOME of the general strike of Black workers against repression on June 6-8 was a major success, despite a wavering at the end and a poor showing by the miners. This three-day strike was the largest mobilization of its type in the country's history. It was the first time in South Africa that a strike announced for three days actually went the distance.

PETER BLUMER & NATHAN PALMER

COSATU and the National Congress of Trade Unions [NACTU, the confederation dominated by the Black consciousness current] did not formally issue a strike call, since that is forbidden by government regulations. The mobilization was also supported by the South African Council of Churches and the Black employers' association. It had a more than noticeable effect on the country's economy.

As was the case in previous national actions, the highest level of absenteeism was in the Johannesburg region, the country's industrial heartland, and Durban. On the other hand, numerically the largest participation was in the Cape region. Various estimates of the total involvement have circulated, some going as high as 3 million strikers for the first day of the strike, June 6.

According to the Federated Chamber of Industries, the white employers' organization, the absentee rate was 90% in the Johannesburg region on the first day of the mobilization, falling to 60% on the second day, while it remained at 90% in Natal.

The employers' organization claimed that the reason high absenteeism persisted in Natal was the paralysis of public transport. This supposedly counterbalanced the coercion policy followed by most of the employers, who decided to dock wages for the days of work missed.

The authorities relied on the restrictions imposed by the state of emergency both to avoid commenting on the mobilization and to try to keep it from being reported in the liberal and independent press. But a certain sort of commentary did come from PW Botha, who announced that the state of emergency would be continued for a third consecutive year. That was a way of showing that the regime intends to continue its multi-faceted offensive against the opposi-

tion to apartheid — to ban both the activities of political organizations and political activities by the unions.

The year 1987 set a record in the number of strike days, despite the fact that Botha has kept renewing the state of emergency throughout the country since June 12, 1986. In 1986, the number of workdays lost was 1.3 million, which was already higher than in the preceding years. Now the figure has risen to 9 million. That figure alone would be impressive for a country of 33 million inhabitants. But several features should be noted in particular.

Independent unions extended

This record is the result mainly of several big strikes — those in the public sector (railroads and the postal service) in the retail trade, the metal industry and the chemical industry. But the figures were boosted above all by the mining industry, where 5.25 million workdays were lost in one miners' strike that lasted 21 days and reduced the value of production by \$145 million from the level of the equivalent period in 1986.

The conflicts in various industries have cost eight times more workdays lost than the stayaways, the national days of action in which the entire population was called on to participate, although the protest on May 5-6, 1987, on the eve of the elections to the white parliament, was undoubtedly the biggest political strike in the history of the country.

The independent unions that ten years ago were only local or at best regional nuclei have extended throughout the country, in both the public and private sectors, and to all areas of economic activity. Recently, they have also spread to domestic



and agricultural workers, although to an extent that is still modest. In 1987, workers belonging to COSATU averaged wage increases of 18%, more than for any other workers outside the confederation, Black or white.

Dominated by COSATU (with about 900,000 members, of whom 691,000 are regular dues payers) and NACTU (400,000 members, 150,000 dues paying), this trade-union movement embraces about 40% of the economically active population of the country, a figure well above the percentages of trade-union membership in some West European countries and in North America. This says a lot about the level of activity of the South African working class and the role of its organizations in the fight against the apartheid regime.

In the two years of the present state of emergency, about 30,000 people have been imprisoned and more than 2,000 killed. The pressure was stepped up on February 24 by a ban on all political activity for 17 political, community and trade-union organizations, including the United Democratic Front (UDF, which stands in the political tradition of the ANC), the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO, the heir of the Black consciousness movement), the support committee of relatives of detainees and COSATU.

Hard core of the resistance

Except for COSATU, it seems that the political structures that existed in the Black townships have not been able to keep going. (Even before February 24, the UDF was suffering a very grave decline in activism.) This, however, did not keep the March 21 commemoration of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre from being marked by a stayaway of nearly a million people!

The latest events show clearly that in the difficult phase in which the Black movement finds itself the industrial working class is the hard core of the resistance. De-

spite the repression, the trade-union organizations have been able to maintain their capacities for organization and mobilization. It is for this reason particularly that the question of unity in action is being posed more and more sharply. The repression has been so severe that no one can claim to have a short-term strategic solution on the ground for overthrowing apartheid. Facing longer-term perspectives than expected, the various political movements have to revise their tactics. In this context, the pressure for unity is growing, especially in the factories.

All the South African observers agree, moreover, that the regime has made a deliberate choice to win the confidence of the big industrial and financial liberal bourgeoisie, at the risk of gradually losing a part of its traditional Afrikaner voters. The recent elections showed that the English-speaking vote has shifted somewhat from the Progressive Federal Party to Botha's National Party, while a section of the National Party voters went over to the extreme right.

The economic reforms underway, designed to "deregulate" the system by privatizing certain key sectors, are an attempt to attract foreign capital and increasingly to share social control over Black labor with big capital. These measures have been accompanied by new, more restrictive labor laws and a renewal of the state of emergency.

Anti-labor offensive reopens unity discussions

Despite a few scattered criticisms, the big employers in general have backed all these measures. This changes the political context a bit from 1985-86, when the big employers went off to meet the ANC in a blaze of publicity. This turn by the bosses implies certain strategic shifts for the ANC.

A new version of the government's project has been debated in parliament. It involves a notable change on a specific point. Initially, the representative of the minister of labour could widen the brief of an employer/trade-union conciliation commission simply at the request of one of the parties. In the new draft, this will be possible only if the two parties consent. Aside from this change, all observers point out that everything that angered the unions and provoked criticism from various sides has been maintained in the latest version.

A strike "for the same or a similar reason" less than a year after a first work stoppage is considered an "unfair labour practice." The unions can be prosecuted for damages caused by a wildcat strike. Unless they can prove otherwise, union members involved in starting an illegal strike are regarded as having acted in the name of their union. Days of action will be illegal, and unions will be prosecuted if they call them.

The employers will be able to negotiate with minority unions in plants. Following

the same logic, the law puts back into question the right of a union representing the absolute majority of the workers to speak in the name of all the workers in an enterprise, according to the practice of closed-shop agreements.

Firing will be easier, and employers will no longer have to respect the "last in, first out" rule. The government will be able to name anyone of its choice to chair a conciliation commission, while up until now only experts in labor law could be appointed to such a position.

The scope of these attacks, coming in a context in which, since February 24, political maneuvering room is still more limited, is a real challenge. And the trade-union movement seems determined to pick up the gauntlet, even at the price of a confrontation with the government.

Even though the COSATU leadership is divided over this, the recent special congress of the confederation seemed to want to play the card of opening up to unity in action with NACTU. Combining the forces of these two confederations will undoubtedly be important in taking up the challenge that has been hurled at them.

Up until now, relations between the two confederations have been, to say the least, almost nonexistent. The dispute goes back in fact to the period of the unity discussions that led to the founding of COSATU in November 1984, without the participation of the unions that had been grouped in NACTU since October 1986. However, for about a year NACTU, which shares most of COSATU's objectives, has adopted a more favorable attitude to unity, and has made proposals several times to COSATU. Until now, the COSATU leadership has rejected them.

The current most closely linked to the UDF — or even to the ANC and the South African Communist Party, which represented the predominant line in COSATU's leading body — does not want to depart from a political/trade-union axis that assembles all the components that support the ANC's programmatic document, the Freedom Charter.¹ But this cannot help but be a serious obstacle to uniting the mass trade-union movement.

This position seems to have been pushed into the background during COSATU's May 14-15 special congress in Johannesburg. The congress issued an appeal for "a conference bringing together a broad range of anti-apartheid organizations to concentrate on opposition to repression and apartheid."

Such a resolution undoubtedly represents a compromise made at the conclusion of a congress that was marked by some quite



sharp clashes. It may satisfy those who want to see a hand extended to the white liberals of the extra-parliamentary opposition. But it also suits those elements in the confederation most favorable to unity, who see it as a basis for extending working-class unity over the traditional political lines of cleavage.

This new position is also a result of the determination of certain unions (in the chemical industry, where NACTU is the majority confederation, or in the metal industry) not to get locked into a fratricidal struggle and to show greater firmness toward COSATU's national leadership. In March 1988, an agreement for united work was already reached in the metal industry between NUMSA (COSATU) and two unions belong to NACTU.

NACTU meet ANC leadership

After two refusals, NACTU in effect got more or less what everyone else had had until then — from COSATU to the churches, and including the white students and the directors of the biggest South African firms — an official meeting with the leadership of the ANC. It took place in Harare in Zimbabwe at the beginning of May.

The event made a certain impact, not only because the ANC delegation was headed by the organization's general secretary, Alfred Nzo, but above all because it led to a joint communique from the two parties. In this declaration, Nzo said: "There is more uniting us than dividing us." He supported unity in action against apartheid, without making adherence to the Freedom Charter a precondition.

The question is not only a source of debate between COSATU and NACTU. It had already aroused sharp internal discussions during the preparation for COSATU's previous congress. While no one seems to reject the demands that this document contains, adopting it as a political

1. The Freedom Charter was incorporated as a programmatic guide at the previous COSATU congress.

guideline could not fail to raise problems of exclusion.

Elijah Barayi, chair of COSATU and leader of the miners' union, said again during the mid-May special conference: "We firmly urge all of those who genuinely want peace and security...to look forward to the future in terms we have spelt out through the Freedom Charter."²

Some newspapers have even judged that the ANC leadership seemed less committed to the Charter than the currents linked to them in COSATU. It is far too soon to draw conclusions on this point. But it seems at least quite positive that some shibboleths are starting to fade. The sectarian conceptions of the united front were defeated at the COSATU congress. It was proposed to open an anti-apartheid conference "on the basis of disciplined mandates, democracy and free and open debate."

Discussion will aid unity and solidarity

Obviously the question of unity will raise problems of interpretation. At the time of the congress, various points of view were already being debated. The final document took the form of a compromise. The *Weekly Mail* reported, moreover, the remarks of a delegate who thought "it allows for COSATU, together with its allies, to draw up a programme of action that will be consistent with its support for the Freedom Charter, while at the same time giving the executive a mandate to invite groups such as NACTU and the Five Freedoms Forum."³

Other resolutions may smooth the way in the future for unity initiatives, such as the decision to form Industrial Area Committees that could organize the local communities around campaigns led by the unions.

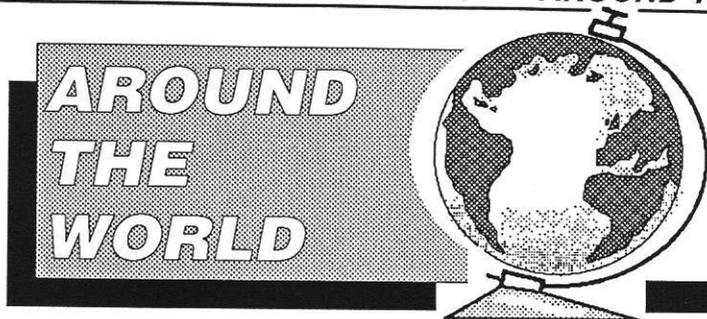
On the NACTU side, the new debate on unity should discourage dogmatic responses of refusing to participate on the grounds that some white liberal formation or other was involved. Exposing what the liberals are looking for in a grouping has to be done in front of all the participants and not by declarations from the outside.

If it is confirmed that participating in such a conference is not conditional on accepting the discipline of the Chartist current, there would seem to be no reason left why NACTU and all the formations of the South African left should not get involved in order to defend their point of view.

If these new political developments are confirmed, there is no doubt that this will greatly aid the solidarity movement abroad by knocking down the arguments, good and bad, that have traditionally been put forward to support claims that only one or another current in the Black movement should be supported. But, for the moment, this is only supposition. ★

2. *Weekly Mail*, May 20, 1988.

3. The Five Freedoms Forum is a grouping around a democratic project promoted by white liberals.



WESTERN EUROPE

Youth discuss European anti-militarism

THE Juventudes comunistas revolucionarias (JCR, the revolutionary youth organization in the Spanish state in political solidarity with the Fourth International) organized a debate on June 11 and 12 around anti-militarism in Europe. Young people also attended the meeting from Portugal, Switzerland, France and the Netherlands — all countries where military service is compulsory for young men. A public meeting in Madrid was also part of the weekend's activity.

In the Spanish state, the campaign of the civilian anti-military movement has really grown, especially through the Mili-KK movement, which denounces the principle of military service and opposes civilian services recruiting objectors. The movement fighting for democracy in the barracks disappeared gradually during the 1980s, but the mobilizations against NATO and for peace have created the space for a renewed denunciation of the army among young people. One of the extremely interesting aspects of this movement is the feminist structures that exist inside it, which put forward their own denunciation of the macho values pervading the military.

The weekend meeting also discussed

anti-military activity in Portugal, where recent accidental deaths in barracks have again sparked off a critique of the conditions of military service. In Switzerland, there is currently a campaign for a referendum to abolish the army; in the Netherlands a small union exists among conscripts; and in France the tradition of soldiers' committees continues.

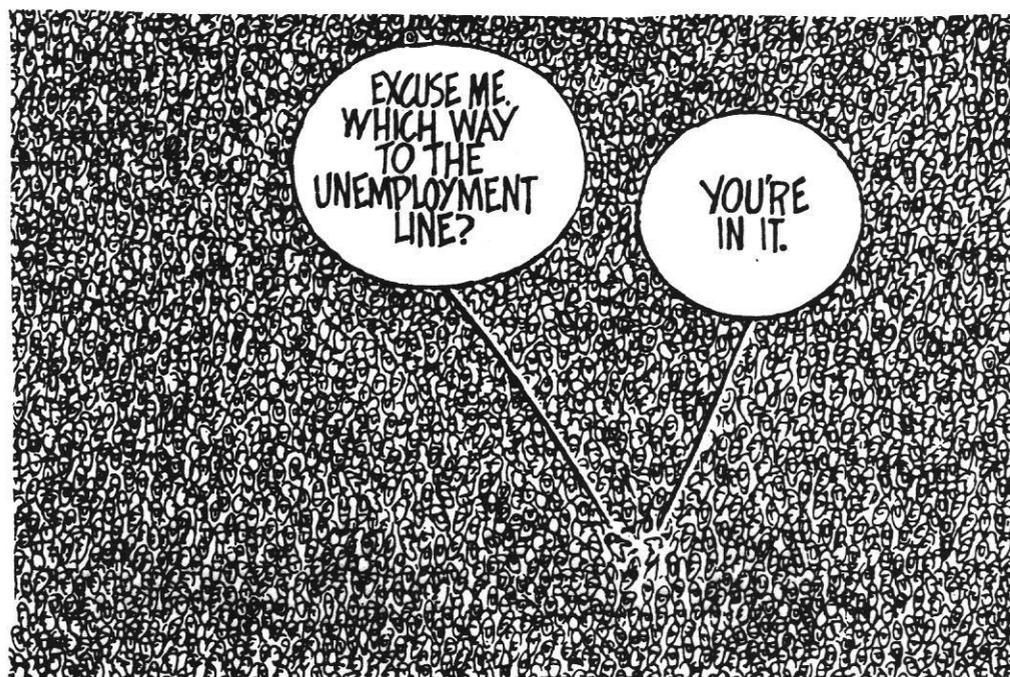
In spite of the big differences that exist between the various anti-military movements in Western Europe, it is necessary to find common ground for collaboration because the bourgeoisie is seeking to gradually unify some of its military objectives, as witnessed by all the debates around common European defence.

The conditions of youth conscription, chauvinist and militarist values continue to contribute young people rejecting the army and its leaders. ★

SOUTH AFRICA

Keeping apartheid ticking over

A DENSE network of complicity and backscratching between South African and Swiss capital exists. The information has been carefully covered up. Secret Swiss business is becoming the Helvetic red-cross for apartheid! It is certain that if the



truth about this came out in the press, Swiss public opinion would demand to see the accounts of the companies, banks and insurance houses that have been so well concealed.

Swiss investment in South Africa is considerable. No Swiss bank or multinational has ever opposed the laws of apartheid. Since apartheid was established after the war, no Swiss company has ever refused to implement the rules for South African factories that demand separate canteen and toilet facilities for the "different races".

But "cooperation" is not all one way, and South African capital has found juicy openings by investing in Switzerland in the various well-known de-luxe industries that have an international market

Since April 1988, the South African firm Rembrandt, the fourth largest financial group in the country, got its hands on the second biggest group of de-luxe watchmakers in Switzerland. The Swiss/South African alliance was henceforth ruled like a precision time-piece. Under the leadership of some young upstarts, the watch industry declined and money began to be invested in platinum, gold and diamonds. In the middle of the 1980s, prices plummeted. Competition in de-luxe watches sharpened.

Then, the French group Cartier arrived on the scene. It took control of Piaget, with a financial operation conducted through Piaget Holding International SA and Holding Luxco (Luxemburg), who had controlling interests in Dunhill, Montblanc (pens) and Cartier.

"The Johannesburg daily, *The Star*, recalled that the principal shareholder in Cartier, with 46.5% of the capital, the London-based Rothman's International group (tobacco), was itself one-third controlled by

the South African group Rembrandt". Dunhill and Montblanc are also part of Rembrandt. Today, the two de-luxe watch firms of Piaget and Baume & Mercier have become a "Must" for apartheid. ["Must" is

the tradename of Cartier's most exclusive collection.] Platinum, gold and diamonds are keeping the Swiss/South African duo going; Rembrandt and Piaget are their two main accomplices. ★

4 NEWS FROM THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

CANADA

Gauche Socialiste/ASA fusion

TWENTY-NINE delegates from Quebec and English-Canada participated in the unification convention of Gauche Socialiste and the Alliance for Socialist Action in Montreal from May 20-23. The climax of the convention was the founding of a new organization, a sympathizing section of the Fourth International in the Canadian state, which adopted the name Gauche Socialiste/Socialist Challenge. The new organization will have bases in Montreal, Quebec City, Sherbrooke, Saint-Jérôme, Ottawa-Hull, Toronto-Hamilton, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver. It will continue to publish the newspapers of the founding organizations: *Socialist Challenge* (in English) bi-monthly; *Combat Socialiste* (in French) monthly; and the French-language theoretical magazine *Gauche Socialiste* three times a year.

The founding convention adopted the texts of six documents, submitted jointly by the leaderships of the two founding organizations, covering the following issues: revolutionary strategy in the Canadian state; the contemporary political situation; and the tasks, structures and Declaration of Principles of the new organization. The convention was concluded with the election of a Central Committee, comprising 11 comrades from Quebec and seven from English-Canada. Several people applied to join the new organization at the end of the convention.

After a number of years of labor and national liberation struggle setbacks, during which many of the most important left-wing groups simply disappeared, the creation of a new, Canadian-state wide revolutionary organization constitutes, in its own way, a remarkable event. The unification also constitutes a step forward beyond the fragmentation of the Fourth International's forces in North America during recent

OBITUARY

Fred Halstead (1927-1988)

FRED HALSTEAD, a longtime leader of the American Socialist Workers Party, died of liver cancer at his home in Los Angeles on June 2. He was 61 years old.

Born in Los Angeles in 1927, Halstead joined the SWP in 1948. He was a member of the party's national committee for many years and its candidate for president of the United States in 1968.

An active member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union until his death, Halstead participated in many labor strikes and organizing drives. He helped organize support for meat-packers who were on strike against Hormel & Co. in Austin, Minnesota, in 1985-

1986.

A top-notch journalist, Halstead provided on-the-scene reporting for the [SWP's paper] *The Militant* of the movement to boycott segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1956, and on other events in the civil rights movement. He was a central leader of the movement against the war in Vietnam during the late 1960s and early 1970s. His book *Out now: a participant's account of the American movement against the Vietnam war* was published in 1978.

In New York and Los Angeles, meetings are planned on June 18 and 19 respectively to honor Halstead's contributions to the worldwide struggle of working people. Speakers will include Jack Barnes, national secretary of the SWP, and SWP presidential candidate James Warren. ★

[From *The Militant*, June 17, 1988.]



years.

Of course, there remains a long road ahead towards the construction of a credible alternative to social democracy and bourgeois nationalism, which still largely dominate the workers' movement in Quebec and Canada. The construction of a revolutionary organization is a difficult task, especially in the developed capitalist countries, and even more so in multinational states such as Canada. Yet we are convinced of having accomplished an important step in that direction.

The entire history of the left and the workers' movement shows the extent of the hardships in constructing an organization which is rooted in both Quebec and English-Canada. In truth, no-one has really succeeded to this day. It is nevertheless essential to unite the revolutionary forces of both nations in the struggle against the common enemy, the Canadian state.

This is important not only for the conduct of immediate struggles against the Free-Trade deal, for freedom of choice and free access to abortion, or against the privatization of Crown corporations, but even more so in the perspective of the struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeois Canadian state, for the dissolution of the imperialist confederation, for the national liberation of Quebec and the other oppressed nations.

From the moment of its foundation, Gauche Socialiste/Socialist Challenge can count on the contribution of militant comrades in the workers' movement of Quebec and Canada, in the women's, youth and gay movements, and in the solidarity committees with the peoples of Central America. It's still not enough with regards to the historical tasks which we have set ourselves. But it's already something significant when compared to the period of setbacks we have just crossed.

We have turned a page; we must now write a new chapter in the construction of a revolutionary worker's party that will consciously lead to its conclusion the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism, for the national liberation of Quebec, for the liberation of women and oppressed minorities, for socialist democracy. ★

François Moreau & Barry Weisleder

CANADA

Rally celebrates 50 years of FI

MORE THAN 130 people participated at the public meeting held in Montreal on May 21 by Gauche Socialiste and the Alliance for Socialist Action on the theme "Socialism, an international struggle", to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Fourth International.

Comrades from Gauche Socialiste and the ASA, Ginette Lewis and Jill Lawless, announced the unification of the two organizations, voted a few hours earlier at a joint congress (see above). Following this, Keith Mann spoke, a comrade from the

Fourth Internationalist Tendency, an American organization linked to the Fourth International. He briefly presented the political situation in the US in the last year of the Reagan presidency, and particularly the contradictory meaning of the Jesse Jackson campaign...

We then heard Hector de la Cueva, a leader of the Mexican Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT), the strongest section of the Fourth International. The PRT is presently campaigning in the presidential elections, with Rosario Ibarra as its candidate. She is known across the country as a strong defender of democratic rights against arbitrary rule and repression. The PRT is leading its campaign by linking up with workers' and peasants' struggles, to develop a class platform independent from the bourgeoisie and its state....

The final speech was made by Livio Maitan from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The comrade didn't beat around the bush, and went head on with the question: Were we right in creating the Fourth International? Answering this question requires not only taking positions on the International, but also on the other currents in the workers' movement, most notably those dominant in 1938: the social-democratic and Stalinist communist parties.

In the first case, their non-revolutionary and pro-capitalist character was already clear for the vanguard of the working class of the 1930s and is becoming more and more obvious nowadays, even for the working masses. But the Trotskyist criticism of the Stalinist communist parties met with great misunderstanding and hostility in the 1930s, even in the working class vanguard, which was under the influence of widespread propaganda of falsification and lies.

Nevertheless, as time passed, the true situation in the USSR became clearer and with it the real nature of Stalinism, nearly unanimously rejected today in the world workers' movement.... The strategic judgement passed on Stalinism at the founding conference of the Fourth International has thus revealed itself to be fundamentally correct.

But, nonetheless, one could ask: Was it worth all the trouble to spend so much energy for results that, after all, remain modest, even 50 years later? We can answer that question by another: What should have been done instead? Remain true to social-democratic or Stalinist parties, hoping in a miracle that never came? Wait for the spontaneous development of new revolutionary parties? Or get to work immediately, with the forces available?...

But the need for a new revolutionary International was established as early as 1938 and its construction remains an essential task to this day. Our internationalist meeting was thus concluded by Comrade Maitan's vibrant appeal to construct and reinforce the Fourth International. ★

François Moreau



USA

Socialist Action rally

THE NATIONAL Committee of Socialist Action recently voted to hold the Third National Convention of Socialist Action in San Francisco on August 4-7.

A special convention rally celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International will be held on Saturday, August 6.

The initial list of rally speakers includes Esteban Volkov, Leon Trotsky's grandson; Jake Cooper, a leader of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes and bodyguard to Trotsky in Mexico; Livio Maitan, a representative of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International; Pierre Broué, director of the Leon Trotsky Institute; and Aura Beteta, former Nicaraguan Consul in San Francisco.

Other speakers from Mexico, Britain, France, Ireland and elsewhere will be confirmed shortly. ★

BELGIUM

Open letter to the PTB

ON MAY 1, the Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers' Party (POS, Belgian section of the Fourth International) wrote a long letter to the Belgian Workers' Party (PTB), an ex-Maoist organization. The POS proposed united electoral slates between itself, the PTB and the Belgian Communist Party (PCB), and a discussion on revolutionary unity.

The open letter had a big impact, especially among important trade-union activists, but also in the ranks of the PTB itself. What follows is the last part of this letter, dealing mainly with the question of revolutionary unity.

In a letter from the Central Committee of the PTB addressed to the PCB, these three parties are classified in the following way: the PTB and the PCB are communist parties; the POS, on the other hand, is an "anti-communist" party!

We do not think that this is a reflection of reality. There are clearly two errors in the

PTB's analysis:

- It is not true that the PCB is a revolutionary party that claims to prepare the socialist revolution. It says itself that its goal is "the application of a programme of reforms to advance towards a fundamental transformation [of capitalist society]".

- It is not true that POS was "the anti-communist party" that constantly used "an extreme-right terminology". The truth is that, in the present class struggles in Belgium, the POS defends a programme similar to that of the PTB. The truth is that all through the 1970s, the POS fought against the anti-communist and anti-USSR offensive of Belgium and international imperialism. The truth is that there are two revolutionary parties in Belgium, the PTB and the POS.

According to Marx and Lenin, the essential difference between revolutionaries and reformists is on the question of the state:

- Revolutionaries understand that the state apparatus is exclusively a machine for domination in the hands of the ruling class.

- Revolutionaries conclude from this that it is impossible to progressively reform this state apparatus, but that, on the contrary, it has to be dismantled.

- Revolutionaries are convinced that the transition from capitalism to socialism will necessitate the expropriation of the dominant bourgeoisie as a class.

- Revolutionaries count on the extra-parliamentary struggle of the masses for taking political power and understand, from that, the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat during a historical period of transition to socialism.

In applying these four fundamental criteria, we note that firstly the POS is a revolutionary party, and secondly that the programmes of the POS and the PTB are identical on these essential points.

That does not mean that there are no important political divergences between the PTB and the POS. The POS strongly insists on the workers' united front and the perspective of a workers' government. That is, a government of the big socialist and Christian workers' movements, without the parties of big capital.

The POS is firmly opposed to political parties manipulating the workers, and is therefore in favour of the largest possible workers' democracy in the unions and strike committees. The winning back of the unions will not be done by the POS alone, but by a large current of the union left, including militants from the socialist and Christian left, from the PCB, the POS, the PTB and the numerous independent and non-organized trade unionists.

The POS insists on the importance of democracy and social equality in building socialism. From this comes, for example, our hopes for the Sandinista revolution, our support for the democratic measures happening under Gorbachev's *glasnost*, but also our opposition to *perestroika* with its anti-social and pro-capitalist measures. From this comes our support for Lenin's

policies between 1917 and 1924, and our opposition to Stalinism in the 1930s and 1940s.

The POS considers the USSR, China and Eastern Europe as non-capitalist countries, "in transition towards socialism", but where a bureaucratic and privileged caste is in power. We therefore support workers and national minorities fighting for real socialist democracy, for example *Solidarnosc* against General Jaruzelski.

The POS considers the PTB to be a revolutionary party. During the years, our analysis of the PTB has changed.

When the POS held its third congress in 1976, the PTB (at the time still known as *AmadaTpo*) basically supported Chinese foreign policy and considered the USSR to be "social-fascist and social-imperialist", and as "the main enemy". The whole of the PTB's political line from 1973-1981 was saturated with the idea that the fundamental questions were the third world war and the imminent invasion of the Belgium by the Soviet army. That led the PTB to being politically close to the Belgian bourgeoisie, approving the military budget, demanding the construction of nuclear shelters, opposing Belgium leaving NATO, refusing to support the Nicaraguan revolution (because of Russian influence via the Cubans) and so on.

At that time we thought and feared that the PTB would sink into a counter-revolutionary and anti-communist stance, as was to happen to many Marxist-Leninist parties in Western Europe. Thus, the resolution at our 1976 congress concluded: "Without a radical political turn in its strategy, its developing sectarianism and, in the last analysis, its degeneration will be inevitable."

The PTB made a gradual strategic turn after 1981. Our eighth national congress in 1986 formally took account of this, noting that "the PTB has developed a considerable autonomy vis-a-vis China and is pragmatically moving towards a revolutionary programme for the class struggle in Belgium". And we envisaged a long-term perspective of a "unified, revolutionary workers' party", including the POS and the PTB, as well as other political currents.

The PTB's leadership chose to close its eyes to this development, to convergence in the class struggle and to the real Marxist programme that we defend.

For our part we want to say clearly that we continue to be open to unity and collaboration with the PTB and to be in favour of an objective and loyal debate between revolutionary communists, in spite of the violently sectarian attitude of the PTB towards the POS. ★

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A common struggle against oppression

A REPRESENTATIVE of the Committees Against the Occupation (*Hala Ha-Kibush*) in the Israeli state, Rémy Mandelzweig, spoke at the May 68 anniversary fête organized by the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR, French section of the Fourth International) on May 29.

On June 1, he was interviewed by journalists from *Rouge*, the paper of the LCR, and *International Viewpoint*.



WHAT ARE the Committees Against the Occupation and what have they done?

The Committees exist in Haifa and Tel Aviv. There are also activists in some Arab villages in Galilee and the Triangle¹ who work with us. The Committees were launched in Tel Aviv at the initiative of the comrades of the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL, Israeli state section of the Fourth International) and the activists of Ibn al-Balad (Children of the Land), a Palestinian nationalist movement in Israel. In Haifa, Ibn al-Balad played a considerable role.

The Committees include quite a number of unorganized people. There are many *ex-Matzpen*² members, but there are also a lot of new faces. They are organized around a single issue. We demand an immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all the Israeli repressive forces from the occupied territories. We declare our opposition to occupation in all its forms everywhere. That means first of all that, unlike some other movements, we do not make withdrawal conditional on the Palestinians recognizing something or other.

We think that if anyone really wants to live in peace with the Palestinians, the first thing they have to do is demand the withdrawal of the repressive forces. It is impossible to live together while the Palestinians are under the boot of the Israeli army. We also say that the repression of the Palestinian people is not only the occupation, it is not only in the occupied territories. There is a considerable Arab population within

the pre-1967 borders of Israel and they suffer repression as Arabs.

For example, when Palestinians from a village in Galilee or the Triangle are suspected by the police of raising a Palestinian flag during the night or during a demonstration, of expressing their national feeling, they are immediately arrested without any sort of trial. They are beaten up, if not worse. They end up in prison for six months and sometimes even longer. Here also we demand the right to national expression for every Palestinian, regardless of where they are — that is, also within the formal borders of Israel.

What sort of actions have the Committees undertaken in support of Palestinians living in Israel?

There are more and more expressions of racism in the street. The whole of Israeli society is pervaded by racism, both at the institutional level and also in the streets. There are attacks on Arabs. To give an example, recently in Haifa two young Arabs from the town of Um al-Fahum came to Haifa to do some shopping. They were subjected to an identity check. There is always an identity check when someone looks like an Arab.

This time it wasn't the police. It was the store guards. They were very aggressive and made racist remarks. The youths were taken into an office. The guards noticed that one of the young Arabs had a shirt with the name of our committee, *Hala Ha-Kibush*. Immediately he was beaten up, clubbed. The police were called. His shirt

was taken away. So, we organized a picket of the store wearing shirts with the Committees' name.

What have the Committees done concretely to support the Palestinian population in the occupied territories?

We were the first to launch a campaign to send food and medicine to the occupied territories. That was in January. At that time, there was the blockade of the refugee camps in Gaza. There was little talk about this in the press. We decided to break the wall of silence about this policy, which was really a systematic policy of starving out the refugee camps.

Even in normal circumstances, the people in these camps live on the verge of hunger. They live on poverty wages in real shantytowns, which I think are just like the shantytowns that exist throughout the Third World, as in Cairo or Calcutta. Obviously, when the breadwinners don't come out to work because there is a general strike order or because the army closes the camp, people are immediately left without resources. The biggest problem of the struggle is how to cope with this economic pressure.

So, we decided to launch the idea of a

1. The Triangle is a concentration of Palestinian settlements in the central region of the Israeli state. Most of the Palestinian towns and villages are in Galilee, the hilly northern area of the Israeli state.

2. *Matzpen* ("Compass"), the Hebrew paper of the Israeli section of the Fourth International, which is often referred to by the name of its publication. *Matzpen* was also formerly the name of the publication of a broader far-left grouping from which the section came.

food convoy for Gaza. Some groups joined in the project, especially the Ibn Al-Balad movement. Some Arab villages sent us trucks, even pickup trucks full of food, such as Um Al-Fahum and two villages in Galilee. We also tried to attract press attention. As we expected, the convoy was stopped at the entrance to Gaza. This made quite a stir in the international and local press. Subsequently, we tried to take food in by other means.

But we managed to break the wall of silence. After this action, several organizations, movements and parties, such as Rakakh, the Communist Party, took up the slogan of "Support the Palestinian population of the occupied territories." And collections of food began to be organized on a large scale throughout the Arab population. From that time on, trucks left quite regularly for Gaza and the West Bank.

■ Do you collect exclusively among the Arab population?

We tried to collect everywhere. But very rapidly, we realized that it was impossible. We had to concentrate on those areas where we had some success. The only areas to give were Arab. Aside from the people who are more or less linked to the left and who come to the rallies, we had no success among Jewish people. This is no accident. It is very revealing of what is happening among the Jewish population. The situation today is very different from during the Lebanon war. There is no mass opposition in Israel to the repression in the occupied territories.

■ Why do you think that the situation among the Jewish population is different now?

The Lebanon war was very clear. It was a dirty war. People did not see the point of it. It seemed to be a sort of adventure of Arik Sharon, Rafael Eitan. For these reasons a real mass movement against the Lebanon war developed. Today, with regard to the insurrection of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, the reactions are different.

For the first time, I think, most of the Jews in Israel have understood that the real problem is not a confrontation between the Israeli state, the Israeli army, and the Egyptian or Jordanian state or army, that it is not a conflict among states; that the real problem, the root of the problem, is the Palestinian people, who are oppressed, who have been uprooted. And this problem is not limited to the occupied territories. In fact, the insurrection of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories has also provoked important developments among the Arab-Palestinian people in Israel. The first general strike in January, and the general strike on March 30, saw very important mobilizations of the Arab-Palestinian population in Israel.

All of a sudden everyone realized that the real problem was the Palestinian people, and that put back into question the very



foundations of the Zionist state. At the time the question was raised, people could see that the Palestinians were being oppressed in the occupied territories, and then all of sudden in Galilee and in the Triangle, they were demanding their rights.

On the other hand, what the army was doing in the West Bank was what the extreme right has always said should be done. So, the extreme right could say to movements such as Shalom Arshav [Peace Now, dominated by the Labor Party], "You are totally hypocritical. What we are doing now in the occupied territories is what you — the Kibbutzim, the Zionist left — did in Galilee and in all of Israel in 1948."

Then, all of a sudden, many articles began appearing in the press describing what happened in 1948. Many things have come out that for a long time only Matzpen talked about. They have written about the destruction of villages, the expulsion en masse of whole towns, like Lod, Ramle, about entire regions where the population was expelled by force. These are things that have been hidden for more than 20 years. Their denial was the real big lie of the Zionist regime. Today all this is appearing in the papers, all the papers. Why is this all coming out in the open? It is the answer of the right, which is saying that in fact the liberal and left Zionists are hypocritical.

Since the revolt of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories has put back in question the very foundations of the Israeli state and of Zionism, the reaction of the Jewish people in the street is one of fear. They understand that everything has been put in question again. And they feel real, personal danger. So, the expressions of crude racism are often reactions of fear, panic. Not everyone has a good answer to this.

What does the Zionist left say? At best, they say maybe we should leave the occupied territories. But what lies behind this? Organizations like Ratz or Mapam, or sometimes those even further left, say frankly, "Yes, the Palestinians have to be given a state in the territories, and then if

Arabs dare open their mouths, or raise their heads inside Israel, we will kick them out and send them there." In fact, there are lot of people who say, "Yes, we'll let them have a state there and we'll get rid of the Arab population." Again, they don't attack the heart of the problem, the racism that underlies the Israeli state.

■ Are these expulsions of Palestinians accused of being "ringleaders" of the insurrection the first steps toward mass expulsions?

These were not the first expulsions. There is a lot of attention on this today, because all the press is there. In fact, it is a method that has been used very frequently. The government says all the time that there are no leaders on the Palestinian side that it can talk to. In fact, it is trying to prevent the development of a national leadership in the territories. Every time some cadres manage to educate themselves, become representative of the population on the ground, it tries to get rid of them. It can't always put them in prison. So, it follows a consistent policy of expelling these people to prevent a real Palestinian national leadership from forming in the territories.

Even in Israel, often young Palestinians who have gone abroad to finish their studies abroad are arrested when they come home. Sometimes they are expelled, sometimes the authorities prevent them from coming back. Every time young Palestinians leave the country, they know that it is not at all certain that they are going to be able to get back.

■ Are the Israeli authorities moving toward mass expulsions of Palestinians?

Today, they cannot afford to do that. But I think that they are beginning to consider it concretely, and this is one of the important points about what is happening now. A few years ago, the phenomenon of Kahane [a neo-fascist American rabbi who calls for expulsion of the Palestinians] suddenly appeared in Israel, and everyone talked about it. Kahane is there. He has even been

elected to the Knesset [parliament]. It is estimated that in the next elections he may double his vote.

But in the last months, nothing has been heard about Kahane. When racism is everywhere in Israel, when there is the worst sort of repression, we aren't hearing about Kahane. And this is no accident. In fact, Kahane's proposals are being raised by a whole fringe of the Israeli political establishment. This starts with the party of Rafael Eitan, who was the commander of Israeli forces during the Lebanon war. It includes Geula Cohen of the Tehiya party, a party of the fascist extreme right which more or less represents Gush Emunim [Bloc of the Faithful, an organization devoted to Jewish settlement of the West Bank] in the Knesset.

For example, Geula Cohen in the Knesset told an Arab, Miari, who represents the Progressive List for Peace, "We have to resettle you outside Israel." This term, "resettle," is being repeated also inside Likud, by the Mafdal [*Miflegeth Datit Leumith*, National Religious Party]. There was a symposium a month and a half ago including both reserve generals and academic figures on the question of resettlement: Is resettlement possible? How can it be carried out? In what conditions?

This means expulsion en masse of the Palestinian population. Today this is really the answer of a whole section of the Zionist institutions, which are beginning to consider this possibility in a very practical way. It is not exactly for tomorrow. But I think that it is a concrete, serious danger. They may be thinking about it in the framework of a future conflict, perhaps a future war that will be an opportunity for the regime once again to organize mass expulsions.

On the day before the March 30 general strike, the security minister issued quite a clear threat to the Arabs in Israel itself. He said that if they continued in that direction — demonstrating, striking, solidarizing with the West Bank and Gaza — they could provoke something similar to what happened in 1948, that is, a mass expulsion of the Palestinian population.

■ Are there any signs of conflicts arising in the Israeli army over the role it is being called on to play?

At the beginning, when the Intifada [insurrection] broke out, they sent the elite units of the regular army, which from their point of view were the best trained and controlled. Very rapidly, when they realized that it was a deepgoing movement that would continue for a long time, they were increasingly forced to send reserve units. Everyone serves in the reserve in Israel. This is supposed to involve 30 to 40 days active service a year. They announced recently that the reserves have to do 60 days active service a year, two months a year, which is enormous.

They are sending such units into the territories more frequently. There are several reasons for this. First of all, a lot of higher

officers have been saying that the fact that our elite units are in the West Bank and Gaza all the time is damaging the professional level of the army. This is a serious problem for the Israeli army, which constantly seeks to maintain its high level against the Syrian army, a highly trained army. Also, the northern frontier has heated up recently and they have had to send elite units there.

Moreover, there has been discussion by psychologists and sociologists about the way the soldiers react on the ground doing the dirty work of repression beatings, torture and so on. They have had to recognize that there is a danger of a development similar to what happened in the French army in Algeria and the American army in Vietnam: a moral rot, a sort of mental illness. So, their conclusion was that people could not be left there too long. They started a constant rotation. And so they resorted to reserve units, which led to opposition on the part of reserve soldiers to being sent to the occupied territories.

There are the two aspects to this, a non-political reaction and a political one. On the political side, there is the movement called Yesh Gvul, a movement of reserve soldiers who refuse to go to the occupied territories. This movement was formed during the Lebanon war on the basis of refusing to go to Lebanon. And today, it has resurfaced around the slogan "We are not going to the occupied territories." This movement had a very big impact. It is not a mass movement. You should have no illusions about that. But it had a very big impact, and every time this movement organizes something, it attracts attention.

For example, recently [American singer] Joan Baez came to Israel. She wanted to express her solidarity with Yesh Gvul. We organized a demonstration with Joan Baez in front of the prison where the soldiers who refuse to go to the territories are held. There were Kahane people there, and we had a physical confrontation with them. All the demonstrations of the Yesh Gvul movement have an impact. They make a big impact in the Israel press. Up to now, 600 people have signed the petition refusing to leave for the territories.

■ Is there opposition to doing the two months active service?

Yes, but it's always been like that in Israel. In the Lebanon war, a lot of reservists did two and three months service. A large part of the population have to spend time in the army, you have to do it regularly twice a year. At that level, there is no change. But most organizations and parties have had to respond to the fact that there are people who are refusing to go to the territories. An example is the army itself, which has reacted very violently, obviously.

Army officers regularly go into the schools, that is part of the regimentation of the youth. They give speeches explaining what the army is, what they expect of young people — in fact political speeches

Jewish anti-Zionists arrested

THE GRAVEST attack yet on Jewish anti-Zionists is the prosecution of members of the small organization known by the name of its Hebrew and Arabic papers, *Derech Ha-Nitzotz/Tariq Ash-Sharara* ("The Way of the Spark").

This group is of far-left origins and is currently a member of the Communist Party-led coalition, Hadash. On February 18, its publications were closed by the Israeli authorities. On March 8, an editor, Ribhi al-Aruri, was placed under administrative detention, and has since been adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience. On April 15, leading member Ya'akov Ben-Efrat was arrested and held incommunicado for two weeks.

On April 23, Roni Ben-Efrat was arrested at Tel Aviv airport. She was on her way to an anti-fascist conference in Bologna, Italy. Two people accompanying her, a young man of 16 and young woman of 15, were subjected to internal searches.

On April 27, Michael Schwartz was arrested. Hadas Lahav was arrested on May 5. On May 3, the police searched the office and home of Abed al-Assali, a lawyer representing the arrested members of *Derech Ha-Nitzotz* and confiscated files related to the case. A sixth member, Asaf Adiv, the publisher of *Derech Ha-Nitzotz*, was arrested on May 17.

Charges were filed against Roni Ben-Efrat and Michael Schwartz on May 23 in the Jerusalem District Court. They were accused of having joined the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) in London in late 1983 or early 1984. It was alleged that they had set up *Derech Ha-Nitzotz* on the basis of an agreement with the DFLP and that the Palestinian guerrilla organization had financed it. They were charged specifically with four security offenses: "contact with a foreign agent, membership of an illegal organization, serving an illegal organization and membership of a terrorist organization."

These charges bear potential penalties of up to 40 years in prison. The jailed activists have denied all of them. This is clearly an important test of the rights of anti-Zionist Jews in Israel, and the severity of the penalties threatened indicates how high the stakes are. ★

● Protests against the arrests should be sent to: Eli Swissa, Jerusalem District Commissioner, 1 Queen Shlomzion Street, Jerusalem 94146, Israel.

to prepare them for the army. And in such speeches and statements in the press, they never fail to mention the Yesh Gvul movement. They attack it in very violent terms, to keep the youth from joining.

Moreover, movements like Shalom Arshav or parties like the Mapam, the Kibbutz movement, the whole left wing of Zionism, don't tell people not to go to the territories. Very much to the contrary, they try to convince people to go. For example, in the Kibbutzim, they try to convince their youth who ask questions to go. During the Lebanon war a good number of young people on the Kibbutzim refused to go to Lebanon. Today, they are trying to convince them to go to the territories by every means possible. The pretext they use is to say, "We can't let just the sadists go to the territories. People like us have to be there too." In other words, the repression has to be clean. That is another thing that shows that the movement today is more difficult than in 1982-83.

■ Does that mean that at least temporarily the Israeli national consensus has been rebuilt?

I think so. Even a movement like Shalom Arshav does not go against the national consensus. They have had very few mobilizations. That is very revealing. When different movements arose, for example our committee in Haifa, the committee backed by Rakakh (Dai La-Kibush), and all sorts of other groupings of academics and so on, we tried to develop common work. Constantly people kept asking what Shalom

Arshav was doing and looking to it. The Communists in particular keep hoping that Shalom Arshav will reappear. They would be ready to subordinate themselves entirely to Shalom Arshav and integrate themselves into it. That is what they did, for example, in 1983. But there was no sign of it.

In Haifa, Shalom Arshav does not exist. There are a few people who still meet in the name of this movement. But they are not ready to come into the street. They were not even prepared to come to meet us to see what we could do together.

For months they have done absolutely nothing. They have mobilized only once to support an international conference. And I have to say that pressure is beginning to build up on Shalom Arshav. They see that there are various movements that are mobilizing, that they are losing their base. So, a few days ago, they organized a convoy of cars through the West Bank. But there again, what did they do? They distributed a leaflet. The army wanted to stop them, and asked the High Court to rule against them. It did, but what sort of leaflet did they want to distribute? What do they say to the Palestinians? They tell them simply to stop demonstrating, to stop the struggle, that we have to have dialogue between the state of Israel and Palestinian representatives. They refer in a veiled way to the PLO, but above everything they say stop the struggle. That's all they have to say to the Palestinian population!

That is why I say the Shalom Arshav movement does not break the national consensus. Yesh Gvul is another matter. It is a

problem for Israeli society. It touches the most sensitive point, which is the army. It touches another pressure point that is a great gain for us, the phenomenon of opposition in the army. This is a minority phenomenon. But simply the fact that it exists is something new in Israel. This never existed before the Lebanon war. The fact that this is growing is a very important development.

When reservists are called up to go to the occupied territories for their second and third time, that's when we will see how people react. It won't be because they are for Israel leaving the occupied territories, but simply because they are sick of going there. During the Lebanon war, there were a good number of people who evaded service. They did not say, "We are against the war in Lebanon," but they tried by all sorts of means to get out of it. Fear was a factor, of course.

There is also fear about going to the occupied territories. The soldiers face an entire population — women, children, everyone demonstrates. They curse them. They spit in their faces. This is hatred of the entire population against the occupation forces. A good number of Israeli soldiers are already beginning to hesitate.

■ What position do you take toward the Zionist left?

Our slogans are "No to the occupation! Unconditional withdrawal of all Israeli forces from all of the occupied territories." On the basis of these slogans, even Zionists can join us. It is true that most of the activists come from the far left, are anti-Zionists or Arab Palestinians. But we have managed to organize broader mobilizations and rallies. For example, in Haifa we had a function with people who came from the territories. There were about a hundred people. I don't think that there are a hundred anti-Zionists in Haifa. Most of the people there were not at all anti-Zionist.

What we say, and what distinguishes us from the other committees — especially those dominated by the Communist Party, called Dai La-Kibush (Enough Occupation) — is that we do not want to build a movement in solidarity with the Palestinian people in the same way as was done during the Vietnam war, for example, when there was a movement in solidarity with the Vietnamese people. We say that we are in the same struggle against oppression, that it is the same struggle on different fronts.

This is why there are Arab comrades working with us in our committee. And when we go into the occupied territories and meet people there, for them it is clear that we are not people coming from outside — obviously the conditions are different in Haifa and on the West Bank — but for them it is entirely clear that we are part of the same struggle against repression, against the occupation.

We tell Jews who would like to oppose the occupation and are looking for ways to struggle, "If you really intend living togeth-



er on a basis of equality with the Palestinians without any oppression, without racism, without discriminatory laws such as those that exist today in Israel, what is important above all is to fight together. This is how we will develop a real confidence between the Palestinian Arabs and Jews.

This is quite different from saying that we should have dialogue or maybe withdraw from the territories. After all, from the standpoint of the inhabitants of the occupied territories, they have suffered 21 years of oppression. Today it is a repression that can only be compared to that inflicted on the Algerians during the Algerian war. The Israeli army is establishing real concentration camps. There is mass torture. Naturally this oppression is creating hatred, hatred in any case against the Israeli uniform.

■ Doesn't this hatred tend to extend to all Jews?

We haven't experienced any resentment against us as Jews. To give just one example, I was in a village called Kabatiya, with which we in Haifa have had fairly continuous relations. I was there when we took a convoy of food for the People's Committee of this village. There was a demonstration while I was there. The army opened fire. I heard shots. I was in a house with members of the local committee and other people who had come from Haifa. I was the only Jew. I never saw any sign of hostility or hatred. On the contrary, everyone told me, "You have to explain in Haifa that we are fighting against the Israeli army, not against the Jews."

As much as we see a fear of the Arabs and a racist hatred in the Jewish population — and that, unfortunately, is one of the successes of Zionism — in the Palestinian population there is a confidence, a real hope, sometimes even illusions about the Jewish community. For example, many still have illusions in Shalom Arshav — not the politicized people, but everyone who is mobilized today, including workers, ordinary people, youngsters who are not so politicized.

Many of these people think that Shalom Arshav is a movement that really wants to work with them, really extend a hand to them against the occupation. They have a lot of illusions in many left Zionist establishment figures. They think that a whole section of the Jewish population is really against the occupation, that it really wants to live with them on the basis of equality.

■ What is the outlook of the politicized people in the Palestinian communities, then?

The politicized elements, all the cadres of the insurrection, know who they can count on. And this layer includes thousands of people. It's a real mass movement, and the people's committees are genuinely representative. In every locality, they can mobilize thousands of people. They don't just have experience of organizing demonstrations; this is an insurrection.

Warschawsky trial

THE TRIAL of Michel Warschawsky and the Alternative Information Centre has been postponed until July 5. In a surprise move, the prosecution decided at the last minute to hold the trial before a panel of three judges rather than just one, thereby opening the way for imposition of the maximum penalty. The Centre was raided, its equipment seized, and Warschawsky arrested in February 1987. (For the history, see *IV* 115-118.) The May 31, 1988, issue of the Centre's bulletin, *News from Within*, described the status of the case:

Mikado [Warschawsky] and the Alternative Information Centre are charged under the Emergency (Defence) Regulations (1945) with rendering typesetting services to a prohibited organization [the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — PFLP] and with possession of material belonging to a prohibited organization, and under the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (1948) with the support of a terrorist organization. Now that the case will be heard before three judges, the full sentence of 23 years could be passed on Mikado, if convicted.

The witnesses in the trial will be six members of the "special branch-minorities division" of the Jerusalem police, five Shin Bet [intelligence service] personnel — who will testify *in camera* — and a Palestinian secretary who used to work at the Centre.

Following repeated protests and an appeal to the High Court for a judicial review, the authorities finally released part of our confiscated material on May 19. About eight boxes of published material were returned, including the 1986 Jerusalem telephone directory, an English-Arabic dictionary, and back issues of *News from Within*. The photocopier, too, was returned, but not in working order. We also received back a bag of confiscated rubbish — cigarette ends, tea bags, tissues. However, we have not received back our computers, printer, FAX machine, subscription and address lists, or any manuscripts. They are still held "as evidence" in the trial. ★

● *Solidarity messages and contributions towards the defence should be sent to: Alternative Information Centre, PO Box 185, West Jerusalem, Israel.*

During the night, they go to distribute food to needy families. If there is a curfew in a camp, food has to be smuggled in from the nearby villages. This is very dangerous, because the army shoots at everything that moves. Especially under a curfew, they fire without any warning. There are actions like putting up flags during the night. This is a deep-rooted movement. It is these cadres who are the real leaders of the insurrection.

■ Did this layer exist before the insurrection and play a role in unleashing it?

We have to ask ourselves why the insurrection is happening now, why not a year ago? I think there is a real reason why it is occurring now. The racism that is developing in Israel more and more openly, the raising of this slogan of resettlement, is not something that began just in these last months. This sort of thing is growing more now. But it has been increasingly open in Israel for about a year. The expressions of racism and talk about mass expulsion as a solution have been appearing more frequently in the past year in the press, on the radio, everywhere.

These young workers who are the real cadres of the insurrection come to work in Israel, they know Israeli society, I think they led a self-defence reaction against this aggression, that is, the aggression that is coming against their people. These cadres of the insurrection know what the story is. When we come into the villages, when we come into a refugee camp, they greet us like comrades in struggle, and while there

are Muslim fundamentalists of course, especially in Gaza, nowhere, but nowhere have we had problems of rejection because we are Jews. On the contrary, we are constantly accepted with open arms, and not just as visitors but as people who are working together with them.

■ You mentioned the Muslim fundamentalists as an exception. Is Islamic fundamentalism anti-Jewish?

First of all, we do not seek contacts with such a movement. When we go into a village like Kadatiya, we go to the People's Committee. The committees include everyone, all the movements. They are genuinely representative of the entire population. There are fundamentalists in them. The Communist Party is there, although it does not have so much of a mass base. And above all, obviously, there is Fatah, the Popular Front, the Democratic Front. We don't try to make contact with any specific political movement.

But if we go into an area, it is obvious that it is first of all the Palestinian left who are the most open, who are the most politicized. They are the most conscious of the need for common work within Israel. The fundamentalists are generally inward looking. But again, I have not seen real reactions of rejection. At least, if it exists, it is not allowed to be expressed. In general, the real cadres, I am thinking of the most politicized, are the Palestinian left, and in a conscious way they seek to develop work with us. ★

Drinking from a bitter cup

RONALD REAGAN's trip to Moscow, and his haste to reach a last minute arms agreement with Gorbachev before the end of his second presidential term, cannot hide the republican administration's poor foreign policy record.

ARIANE MERRI

A CLOSE look at the USA's "backyard", Central America, shows US foreign policy in this region to have been a complete failure.

A failure in Panama where Reagan, in spite of trying everything, has not been able to dislodge General Noriega, a past ally who has become a real nuisance.

A failure in El Salvador, where the Christian-Democrat's "civil" plan has received what is undoubtedly its death-blow with the victory of the extreme-right ARENA party in the March elections. Divisions are rapidly eating into the Christian-Democrats. Duarte's imminent death (he is suffering from cancer) assumes a symbolism that nobody could have imagined when the dashing president took office in 1984.

The democratic face-lift in Guatemala, of which Cerezo was the kingpin, recently went awry when a section of the army plotted a putsch in May.

Even Honduras, that caricature of a banana republic, has not been left untouched. The national feelings of the people exploded in recent weeks in violent anti-American riots. They are no longer prepared to be the living backdrop for the USA's annexed military base, or for their mercenaries, the contras.

Lastly, even if there is nothing notable to say about Costa Rica itself — at least for the time being¹ — the accord signed on March 23 between the Nicaraguan government and the contras is without any doubt a setback for the Reagan administration. More than anything else it represents the failure of the military option strategy chosen by the US in the region. Although this strategy has not been totally abandoned, the simple fact that the repeated demands



for military aid made by the contras have been rejected by the US Congress shows that the USA has to look for other ways to destroy the Sandinista revolution.

Objective is still to overthrow Sandinistas

The reasons for this defeat can be found in internal American politics as well as in its relations with Latin America.

To take the internal reasons first, because everyone knows that for a very long time Central America in general, and Nicaragua in particular, have been considered to be a domestic problem by American politicians, whether they be Republicans or Democrats. For a whole period the Democrats were concerned above all not to distance themselves from Reagan, for fear of being accused of opening the door to communists in the region. This policy was to culminate in June 1986 with the vote for giving \$100 million to the contras. After Irangate and with the development of the anti-war movement, the Democrats finally realized that the military option in the low-intensity war was not necessarily the best, especially on the eve of elections. Until now, the disadvantages of this strategy have clearly outweighed the advantages.

But this does not mean that the final objective of overthrowing the Sandinista regime will be put aside in the future. It is simply a question of accomplishing this by other means. As the contra military leader Enrique Bermudez opportunely recalled, what is at stake is the "direct defence of the security interests of the United States". (*El Pais*, May 29, 1988.)

Among the (numerous) disadvantages, in particular attention should be given to relations between the imperialist metropolis and the Latin American regimes. "Democracies" under strict surveillance from their respective armies, these regimes are facing an economic crisis without any foreseeable end. And this is provoking a growing mass

movement focusing against the IMF, synonymous for many with the "yankees". In this respect, the relative autonomy of these governments' foreign policy — expressed in the Contadora group process, and also in the recognition of Cuba by countries such as Brazil — has both internal and external benefits. The Latin American regimes' foreign policy aims to prove their nationalism to the masses, who criticize them violently for their submission to imperialism. At the same time it is a warning to the United States in a period when the European Community, as well as the Soviet Union, is mounting a diplomatic and economic offensive towards Latin America.

Accords are an expression of the balance of forces

It is in this context that the Nicaraguan government's signing of the Esquipulas II accords in August 1987, followed by the Sapo accords in March this year, must be understood. The accords are the product of the balance of forces that the Sandinistas have been able to establish at a diplomatic level, exemplified by the ruling of The Hague international tribunal in June 1986.² The same is true at a military level: the USA's armed gangs have been incapable of carrying through their project of overthrowing the regime, or at the least setting up a provisional government with some sort of legitimacy in part of the "free" Nicaraguan territory.

Esquipulas took the Americans by sur-

1. All the same, the (relative) social peace in the country is deteriorating. In March and April, for example, there were a number of strikes, called by the Permanent Workers' Council (CPT), protesting against the government's economic policies dictated by the IMF.

2. The judgement of the international court of justice, whose headquarters is in The Hague, Holland, declared that the mining of Nicaraguan ports by the US in 1984 was illegal. That said, this judgement was without any practical consequences, even though it had a high symbolic value in terms of legitimating the Nicaraguan government.

prise and put them on the defensive. Then, making the best of a bad job, their policy consisted of exploiting all the possibilities opened up by this accord to bleed the Sandinistas dry. Everyone knows that a treaty is simply an expression of the balance of forces — and this is even more true of one that is opening up a process. Nothing is ever static and given for all time. The cynicism of the United States in this case was a real lesson.

Contras' military collapse

They did not exactly hesitate to remind their allies, in the crudest way, of the aid lavished on them and that this implied, in return, a certain code of ethics in relation to foreign policy — not biting the hand that feeds you. Nicaragua was put in the dock and ordered to apply the accord to the letter, whereas the other countries could treat it as a scrap of paper, regardless of the fact that one of the Esquipulas accords' main points stipulated that it should be applied simultaneously. The prize once again went to Honduras, which went as far as refusing to allow the International Verification and Follow-Up Commission (IVFC) to enter the country. The IVFC was charged with checking with its own eyes the open secret of the contra presence on Honduran territory.

But alternating spectacular political measures and military offensives, the Sandinista government proved that it was capable of turning the double-edged weapon called Esquipulas against the Central American regimes, which were beset with internal problems that cannot simply be sorted out with American dollars.

It was this same political judgement that led to the signing of the Sapoa accords. The Congress vote refusing military aid to the contras sowed panic in the ranks. The "freedom fighters", as Reagan liked to call them, had seen their financial life-line severed. (In passing, it should be remembered all the same that contra leaders like Bermudez or Calero earned some \$7,000 per month; that intermediary grades like commandants Toño or Tigrillo (who rebelled against Bermudez) earned around \$1,000; and ordinary soldiers not even \$30 (although it is true that they were fed, housed, given everything necessary and armed for free).)

Held together by anti-communism and dollars, the mercenary leadership began to be torn apart between the armed-struggle hardliners and the partisans of the line "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush". Sapoa is at the same time the product of this crisis and a factor greatly accelerating it. The contras' military collapse increasingly resembles an American soap opera. There have been armed feuds in the Honduran camps, a battle at the top between the "hardliners" (Bermudez) and the "negotiators" (Calero), mutual accusations of cor-

ruption, junkets by the CIA to pick up the pieces and constant comings and goings to the USA to get Big Brother's advice. In addition, Honduras expelled contra commanders who were "traitors", according to Bermudez, because they signed the accord.

In other words, if one section of the contras wants speedy negotiations today, it is because it is a question of life or death for them, with "looking out for number one" taking precedence over ideological considerations, if ideology ever mattered. From this stems the consternation of the Reagan administration and its barely hidden contempt for this truly despicable spectacle offered by its proteges.

On May 23, the correspondent of the Spanish newspaper *El País* reported the following anecdote: "The hotels in Tegucigalpa [the Honduran capital] are full of Americans of doubtful profession, before whom Honduran soldiers snap to attention. We even overheard this joke from a US functionary addressing a member of the contras who was taking a drink in a hotel: 'So, you're spending the humanitarian aid?'"

Peace for Nicaragua is a life or death question

From this also comes the Sandinistas approach, who make a point of blowing hot and cold towards the contras. From this point of view, their number one objective, divide and rule, has been 100 per cent successful, inasmuch as their intelligent policy applied to the cease-fire zones regarding "rank-and-file" contras is bearing fruit. Many of the contras have watched their leaders squabbling and may be amenable to the idea of going quietly back into the country to see their families, especially because of the amnesty that wipes the slate clean on their recent warlike exploits. Whether a section of the Nicaraguan population that has directly experienced these "exploits" views the same perspective with as much peace of mind is another problem, and not the least.

This being said, it does not mean on the one hand that the Front did not have an urgent need to negotiate, or on the other that the United States threw in the towel and resigned itself to the existence of a revolution that, simply by its presence, is a fire-brand in this region of the world.

For economic and political reasons, Nicaragua needs peace — and even peace at any price, however high — if it simply wants to live. On the economic front, everyone knows the situation. We will not go into details of the consequences of a small country like this having to devote over 50 per cent of its budget to the war, and by the same token diverting a considerable part of its available labour power. In fact, there is a cruel labour shortage in the productive sector. In large part the success, even limited success, of the economic reforms set in motion last February depend on such a

peace.

However, for the time being, inflation is nowhere near disappearing, even if it has slowed down (in relation to the 1,500% of 1987!). Inflationary pressure is shown by the two successive devaluations since the introduction of the new currency and the growing discrepancy between the official exchange rate and the black-market rate. While the official rate is 12.3 new cordobas to the dollar (against 10 last February), it is still 110 cordobas to the dollar in the currency black market.³ Similarly, nothing indicates that the drastic cuts effected in ministerial jobs has led to movement towards the productive sectors, as was its objective. Beyond the psychological impact of this or that measure, many have noted that there is no question of improving the Nicaraguan economy while the war continues.

Speaking about the consequences of the Sapoa accord, the vice-president of the republic, Sergio Ramírez, declared: "We think that there are risks, that there will be tensions in the future. But any risks or tensions that appear outside the framework of a war are preferable to the continuation of a war that is bleeding the country dry".⁴

Although there was no automatic connection between the depth of the economic crisis and a political weakening of the regime, nothing can guarantee that this situation will go on forever without having consequences. The large-scale mobilization of the population against speculators at the time of the introduction of the new currency was in this respect much more of a political than an economic campaign. The restructuring of the FSLN and the attention given to mass movements are designed to meet this need to put politics and political explanations up front. Particular attention has been paid in this regard to the Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS), which have been in crisis for some years, and which have just been taken in charge by commandant Omar Cabezas.

Everything negotiable except political power

Obviously, negotiations mean concessions. What is negotiable now? It is not being cynical to reply everything, excepting political power. Replying to one of the demands of the contras and the internal "civil opposition" on the separation of the Sandinista Front from state institutions, the vice-minister for foreign affairs, Victor Tinoco, said: "I don't think that one would lose a lot by changing the army's name [getting rid of the adjective "Sandinista"], but I ask myself if anyone loses anything with the present name?" (*El País*, June 3, 1988.) In fact, while the Sandinistas could change the name of their armed forces it would not

3. *Latin American Weekly Report*, June 15, 1988.

4. *Agencia Nueva Nicaragua* (ANN) 105, March 29, 1988.

change one iota the nature of the army, but it would be another thing to do as the contras want and to fuse the two armies.

But this does not mean that the number and scope of the concessions made, and the way they are proceeding, has no importance. Underlining the remarkable political intelligence shown by the leadership of the Sandinista Front in all this business does not mean ignoring the disarray that could follow this or that decision taken — of necessity — in a hurry.

“The cup is bitter...but we must drink it”

Of course, a number of militants and even leaders of the FSLN were sick to the stomach when they saw the ex-Colonel of the National Guard, Enrique Bermudez, land at Managua airport for negotiations after having neatly ousted his old friend, Calero. Replying to a journalists' questions on the dialogue with the contras, commandant Omar Cabezas said: “Listen. The Guard killed my father and three of my brothers. The Guard eliminated half the family, and they would have exterminated everyone, me included, if the revolution had been delayed. Humberto Ortega used an apt phrase to describe the situation — ‘the cup is bitter’. But if in order to win the liberation of this country, so that peace rules and the martyrdom of our people is ended, we must drink this cup, or even two, I am prepared to swallow three if that could bring happiness again to Nicaraguans”. (Agencia Nueva Nicaragua, April 11, 1988.)

Of course, those who fought in the guerrilla forces are not happy about plans to free the “beasts”, the ex-Somoza guards, imprisoned since 1979. This is true even though Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge declared: “in all negotiations one must be flexible, and for us Sandinistas it does not seem to be too much to concede the release of these 100 people, at a moment when all this can contribute to peace”. (ANN, March 29, 1988.)

These are points that upset more than one person, above all when you consider that since the start of the war direct negotiations with the mercenaries had always been vigorously rejected by the leadership of the Front. “In no way, in no place, by no intermediary, will there ever be a political dialogue, either direct nor indirect, with the chiefs of the counter-revolution” (declaration of the Sandinista Assembly, 29 October, 1987).

To all these factors must be added the discreet pressure exercised via the infallible friendship of the number one sister country, the Soviet Union. The USSR, and more generally the Comecon countries, are propping up the Nicaraguan economy. This is a secret to nobody, and they deliberately remind people of it more or less amiably: “In a subtle and diplomatic way, they [the USSR and the FRG] point out that we

could have better results with the resources at our disposal” (Henri Ruiz, minister of cooperation, ANN, September 8, 1987).

This dependence is not wanted by Nicaragua — because it is not desirable — but it is a fact. Owing to the effects of the American trade blockade and US blackmail in international credit organizations, 80% of the ready cash needed by the Sandinista regime comes from the Comecon countries. Thus, Nicaragua only received 7% of the loans it negotiated in 1987 from multilateral organizations — mainly the EEC and the UN. The remainder comes from bilateral organizations in the capitalist countries (24%) and the “socialist” countries (69%).

The overwhelming majority of Nicaragua's trade is with the Comecon countries, including nearly all oil products (760,000 tonnes a year). Taking only the USSR, while between 1982 and 1984 exchanges with the Soviet Union on average represented 10.9% of external trade, in 1986 this figure grew to 32.5% (figures from the Nicaraguan minister of external trade). Soviet aid climbed to around \$2 billion since 1979, without speaking of donations in kind (wheat and rice).

Continuing the war by other means

However, in the time of the Reagan-Gorbachev discussions, it is not possible to dismiss the Soviet leader's determination to “decentralize” certain regional conflicts and to subcontract out economic aid for Nicaragua to others (Latin America, for example). Even if this is negligible for the Soviet Union, for Nicaragua it is no less than a matter of life or death. There is no question at the moment of seeing a pure and

simple “desertion” by the USSR, which has, for a number of reasons, no interest in burning this particular card. Moscow has every interest in reducing the pressure in this region, even at the price of the Nicaraguans having to swallow some affronts.

US playing its “Chile” card

So, if everybody wants peace — for good or bad reasons — is there a chance it will (at last) see the light of day? It is not certain. At the least there is a strong risk that peace will only mean the continuation of the war by other means, to paraphrase Clausewitz

The internal opposition is playing a wrecking role. Weak and without much legitimacy nor autonomy, everything points to the fact that it wants to push the Sandinistas to the limit, and for the time being they must accept all the provocations uncomplainingly.

How long can this situation last? The FSLN correctly denounces the attempts at “Chileanization” made by the right: to create a stifling atmosphere so that afterwards they will be hailed as saviours. But they remember that Allende died because he had not armed the workers and peasants when they demanded weapons. This is more than a nuance — it is a fundamental difference between social-democracy in power and a revolutionary government. The American administration has not had its last word; today it is playing the card of the democratic counter-revolution. And this is a choice that will be maintained regardless of who wins the presidential election next November, Democrat or Republican. ★



Socialist democracy and revolution in the Americas

ORLANDO NUÑEZ, a 40-year-old Nicaraguan, is director of the Research and Study Centre on Agrarian Reform (CIERA). He was also involved in all the discussions around autonomy for the indigenous Miskito population on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast. In 1987 he wrote a work entitled "Democracy and revolution in the Americas", in collaboration with an American, Roger Burbeck, which received the Carlos Fonseca prize last year.

This book deals with the need to combine socialism and democracy, from the viability of Marxism as a frame of reference for the revolutionary process to the importance of the values of civil society. Eric Toussaint talked to Nuñez about his book in Managua in April this year.

WHAT WERE your aims when you wrote the book?

My motivation was political. First, to analyze and explain some of the elements of the Sandinista revolutionary model, in particular because there are other analyses and interpretations that are only ideological. In the second place, my book is a response to the critical and difficult situation of Marxism in Latin America.

It is hard to conceptualize the series of political positions that the Sandinista revolution has put into practice without setting them adequately in an overall framework. The Sandinista vision emerges from various scattered statements, and I wanted to attempt to present our way of seeing things in a more coherent form, starting from practice and from revolutionary possibilities.

My aim is to open a debate on certain theoretical positions that create problems for Latin American revolutionaries. In reality, left theoretical thinking in Latin America is frozen, and this is an obstacle to making the revolution. I point out in the book that practice is much more advanced than theory. I don't claim to conclude the discussion, but rather to clarify a problematic that has been outdistanced by revolutionary practice.

■ Was the book discussed by the Sandinista leadership before being published?

Absolutely not. Until now, I haven't asked for authorization at that level. In fact, my intention was to go for a debate by sending a draft of 100 pages to my revolu-

tionary friends in Latin America and Europe (political leaders and Marxist theoreticians), to let it circulate freely so as to provoke a discussion.

But the Nicaraguan Association of Social Scientists (ANICS) took the draft and entered it for a Latin American competition. From then on, I was eager to go back over the draft and improve it. The jury, made up of Martha Harnecker, comrade Casanova and others... understood that it was unfinished. While disagreeing with some points, they thought that it was an excellent text as a tool for discussion. The jury decided, for reasons partly scholarly, partly political, to give it the Latin American prize, the Carlos Fonseca award.

Following that, it stimulated discussion at a Latin American forum in Managua in June 1987, organized by the Research and Study Centre on Agrarian Reform (CIERA) that I head up. Participating in the forum were around fifty political leaders of the Latin American left and left intellectuals. Half of the participants are working in clandestinity, in the guerrilla struggle, the other half being comrades who work more or less publicly.

■ What was the discussion like?

Along with person chairing the discussion, I was surprised because I thought at the beginning that the book was a bit unorthodox, and that because of this I was going to have problems with the thinking of the Latin American left — especially because of the pluralist composition of the assembly. There were at least ten different political positions represented, differences

over tactics and the strategy for winning power. The Communist Parties were present, as well as national liberation movements. I was surprised to note that there was a real consensus in Latin America, with a lot of convergence at the level of politics and of individuals.

What was lacking was an ideological convergence between the groups, parties and movements. So there was a much bigger consensus than I had thought possible — at least as concerns the need for discussion — even if each participant had their own vision in relation to national particularities.

Indeed, I felt a little conservative insofar as I had underestimated the richness of the Latin American political consciousness. The main problem is with the weaknesses of formulation. There was also agreement in noting that there was a weakness of conceptualization of Latin American Marxist thinking, and that there was a lack of books to spread these ideas. There are millions of students and trade unionists who cannot find revolutionary literature in libraries because there is so little of it available.

■ But in spite of this consensus, weren't the large divergences between the different currents expressed — for example, around a critical appraisal of the Stalinist current?

I remember the position of the Argentine Communist Party (PCA). In the first place, the PCA made a public self-criticism regarding Nicaragua. That's the first time I have seen anything like that from them. It was a self-critical statement regarding its anti-Guevarism, and it confirmed the need for a broad discussion. Beyond this, the PCA proposed to organize a new Latin American meeting in Argentina, similar to the one in Managua.

I cannot say that there was absolute agreement, but there was a consensus on the need for an open discussion between the different currents. I am talking about those people who represented the PCA at the Managua forum in June 1987.

■ Are the papers from this forum going to be published?

Yes, very soon. This meeting has not had such big repercussions as those of the Organization of Latin American States (OLAS). But, nevertheless, it is important.

■ Was the Managua forum an attempt to revive the process embarked upon by the OLAS meetings?

Indeed, it was a question of picking up the threads of a meeting between Latin American revolutionaries so as to work in a more unified manner and confront US policy.

■ How would you describe the range of Latin American revolutionary currents? Who is the discussion between?

In the book I present the discussion that seems to me to be most significant, which

is on one hand the difference between the strategy for seizing power (I call this political revolution), and on the other the strategy of social-economic change.

When traditional Marxists think of the revolution, they envisage the socialist revolution, social-economic change and the strategy for these transformations. On the other hand, little thought has been given to the concrete struggle for taking power. It is clear that there is a link between the two, but an over-preoccupation with historical changes has made it difficult to address political changes. This was a sort of trap, a misunderstanding at the level of what was understood by revolution. Some Marxists thought that the revolution meant solely historical transformations, and accorded little importance to the political revolution.

Consequently, when I talk about revolutionaries, I am thinking in particular about political organizations and movements which, without necessarily expressing themselves in an overtly Marxist way, have a programme that leads to political and historical changes, that leads to a confrontation with the class enemy (I include in this Zapata and Sandino). So, I don't limit the definition of revolutionaries just to those who have a Marxist doctrine.

I include all organizations whose reference point is Marxism in the Marxist current, while at the same time pointing out that there are a lot of Communist Parties who have not worked for the revolution, even if they make revolutionary noises. I also include other organizations who have had a very radical political practice, but in spite of that have not succeeded in taking power.

The fact of taking power is not the criteria or parameter that can distinguish between revolutionaries and others. If it were,

we could only talk about victorious revolutionaries. However, there are revolutions that have failed: struggles are not easy. There you have, broadly, what I understand by revolutionaries, even if I am no specialist in Latin American political history and my book is incomplete. I have not had the time to produce a thorough work, that remains to be done. Other comrades who have more time and more capacity must contribute to this in a collective way, making a critical balance sheet with the goal of unity and not handing out bad marks or punishments. In terms of those things that unite us, a minimum consensus has to be achieved. Until now, Latin American revolutionaries have put their differences before anything else.

■ This division and sectarianism is just as bad in Europe...

I talk about Latin America because that's where I am. Dogmatism and sectarianism are harmful... The Sandinista revolution was based on unity, and we want to try and transmit this part of our experience as well, particularly around the question of alliances.

■ I think that you put forward the idea of a bloc of the proletariat, different sectors of the peasantry and those you describe as the third social force. This is not a concept that is looking to introduce the bourgeoisie in the alliance.

In the first place, the struggle is against the bourgeoisie's project and we are discussing among revolutionaries. This book is not addressed to the bourgeoisie, it was written for revolutionaries. The struggle is against the both the projects of the bourgeoisie and imperialism. I agree with speaking about a bloc between revolution-

aries and the third force — that is, there is a first force, the proletariat, and a second, the peasantry.

The notion of a third force is a way of provoking a discussion. I do not pretend to be formulating a finished concept. I want to make revolutionaries understand that if you want to carry through a political revolution — involving the simultaneous use of politico-military struggle on the barricades, and the ideological struggle — the broadest possible social forces must be won over.

We cannot leave anyone on the sidelines in the struggle against the bourgeoisie's plan. We must not be purist. The bourgeoisie has no scruples when it comes to drawing proletarians, peasants, women and students to its project. The bourgeoisie never says: "Only those who are bourgeois can struggle on our side". And we have spent years discussing the purity of social forces who can participate in the struggle for the seizure of power.

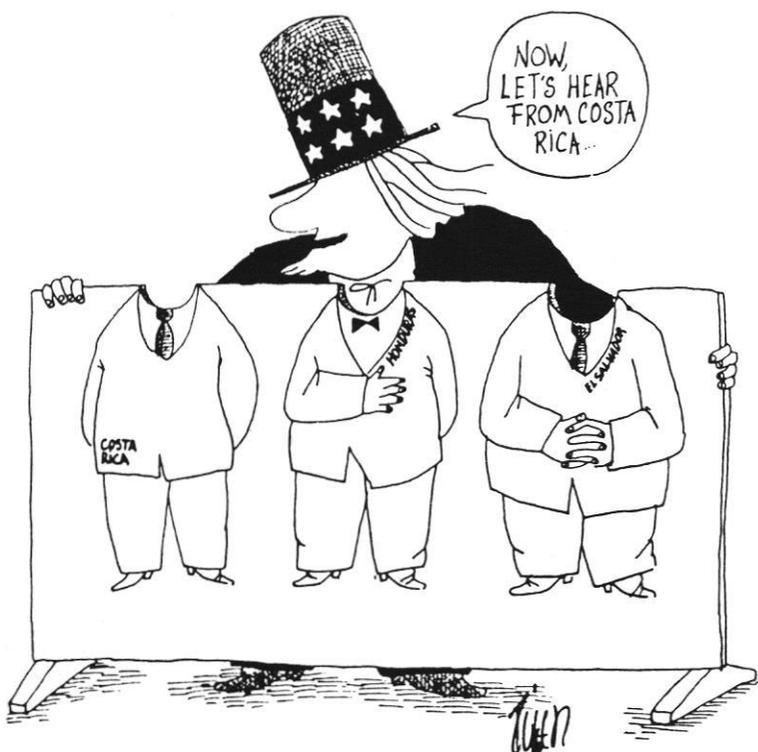
Another thing is the question of establishing which forces will participate in the historical changes after the seizure of power and, at this level, the proletariat must gain more strength than it had at the time of taking power. After the seizure of power, I would become orthodox again. I would put the proletariat to the fore and talk about the alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry as the most important question.

But for the political revolution, for taking power, I have to speak to the largest possible part of the population. Everyone who found themselves on the front line against Somozaism, against the plans of the bourgeoisie and imperialism, were revolutionary forces. What class you belong to is not a criterion for selecting revolutionaries. Here, there are workers and peasants who are part of the counter-revolution and there are students and petty-bourgeois forces who were with us in the struggle and who defend the revolutionary power. Class situation assumes a primordial importance in explaining the contradictions in the struggle and for carrying out a strategy of historical change. But in the struggles for taking power, everybody has a revolutionary potential against the sort of political regime we had in Nicaragua.

I try to be "provocative" by giving the rightful importance to the numerous movements, such as those of women, students, the indigenous peoples and local communities. The third force is not just actors, but it is also demands and banners.

■ Revolutionaries in Latin America who did not succeed in doing mass urban work (struggles for housing, water, electricity, neighbourhood committees and so on) may find it difficult to establish a large revolutionary bloc for the seizure of power?

Exactly. As revolutionaries, workers don't have set hours. As you said, working in the localities, as in the centres of capital reproduction, is an area of activity with the workers. Their activity is not just limited to



their factories. In our case, just before the seizure of power, the factories were closed, and it was through work in the localities that close contact could be kept with workers, with their working experiences, with their class instinct. Consequently, local work is doubly important.

In Brazil and Nicaragua, for example, the working class will remain the primary force. When I say that there is a third force, it is because it occupies third place. But there is also the ideological struggle: the revolution occurs with an ideological detonator. And, as Carlos Fonseca said, the revolution begins in the most advanced sector of society. In Nicaragua, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) thought that it was students that constituted this detonator.

In Brazil, the proletariat, the working class, remains the first force from a conceptual and structural point of view. But we must carry along ideological forces, who have a big capacity for mobilization and who can play a detonating role. And from that viewpoint, there should be no prejudices against students, intellectuals or the petty-bourgeoisie. Those people in revolutionary organizations and who go to the factories come from these sectors.

You know, I was in France during the May 68 "revolution". After a few days, as student revolutionaries we went into the workplaces to rally the workers around this big movement, to extend the struggle, the object being to be able to count on fundamental forces for making the revolution.

At this level, it was a question of alliances. The problem is not quantitative, it's a totally qualitative problem: how to act in conjunction with social forces that have a big ideological potential — students, journalists, professors, intellectuals. If these sectors "carry" a revolutionary flag, they are revolutionaries, even if they are of petty-bourgeois origin. To make the revolution it's necessary to add forces to those of the workers and peasants. And, in both Brazil and Nicaragua, the weight of the urban population is enormous, independently of the fact that in Brazil, the number of workers is clearly much greater than here.

The problem is therefore not a question of specific points, it is an ideological problem. If working-class forces in São Paulo are revolutionaries, then there is hope. One shouldn't just consider the number of workers, but also their ideological potential. And it is very clear that the ideological potential of workers in São Paulo is extremely high. But, there as well, if there are other forces willing to struggle — and there are — they have to be integrated into the revolution without any purist prejudices. So it is absolutely necessary to distinguish between the political revolution and the social revolution.

■ When you talk about the political revolution, are you talking about bringing together the conditions and adopting a correct strategy for taking power and



carrying it out?

Yes, taking power for an alternative project to capitalism. The laws of the political revolution are distinct from those of the social revolution, whose laws are found in Marx's *Capital*. For the political revolution, other laws come into play: first, the ideological factor; second, the social factor. The political revolution's outcome is the taking of power, which makes the social revolution possible. Consequently, this puts into place economic transformations that lead to ideological changes.

■ This question of the third force seems to me to be important in understanding the current practical strategy of the revolution in El Salvador, and in order to act. The National Union of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS), for example, attempts to ally itself with small shopkeepers, artisans and so on, those who could be useful in a strategy of seizing

power.

Exactly. I would draw your attention to a provocation that I indulged in when I wrote my text, paraphrasing a quotation from Marx's *Manifesto*: "In our struggle, everybody has a place including bourgeois individuals who, understanding the meaning of history and feeling themselves swept along by events, become involved in leading the fight". That's what happened in Nicaragua. Important sectors of the bourgeoisie were ideologically opposed to Somozaism and also against imperialism. But it was also because many revolutionary values can carry along a bourgeoisie that knows its project is fragile and failing.

■ The alliance with a sector of the anti-Somozaist bourgeoisie was useful, then. But that goes for Nicaragua. Looking at the example of El Salvador, one cannot see a sector of the bourgeoisie that could participate in the

struggle.

It's possible that they are not visible, but one should not exclude the possibility of it in the future. If there is the chance to make such an alliance, it must be exploited.

■ **Yes, but it's a very concrete question...**

Certainly, that's why accepting or rejecting it should not be made into a principle.

■ **It would have been dangerous if the Sandinistas said to other Latin American revolutionaries that an alliance with the bourgeoisie was a principled necessity.**

That is always a danger. I have been very prudent in relation to the Nicaraguan experience so as to avoid this danger. Each organization must decide. There are some general principles concerning alliances and the hegemony of the vanguard. If one talks of an alliance with the bourgeoisie, that implies that it will occur under the hegemony of revolutionaries. In our case, the alliance was realized under the hegemony of the FSLN and its project. If this hegemony is guaranteed, everybody can find their place in the alliance.

■ **I'd like to discuss the second part of your book now, the part devoted to the transition to socialism.**

Until now, the banner of democracy has been carried by the bourgeoisie, while revolutionaries have had reservations about this question. But I think we have to take on board the question of democracy. By the way, I think that from its origins Marxism itself is democratic. Political pluralism is an integral part of democracy. The existence of a single party is not an indispensable condition for maintaining, nourishing and developing revolutionary hegemony. I think that revolutionary hegemony can perfectly easily be maintained with a pluralism of parties.

Of course, this assumes that we are in a society which has a revolutionary project and in which the masses are revolutionary. Then no parties, even of the right, are problems for us because the bourgeoisie is a minority class and draws its strength from the manipulation of the masses. Nor, of course, should the existence of several left-wing parties worry us. Political pluralism is part of the revolutionary project. The left itself should be pluralist.

Class differences continue during the period of transition. So the revolutionaries who are hegemonic should strive to arrive at a synthesis of the contradictions. Even the working class is not homogeneous. For example, it is not sure that the workers' interests in one particular factory correspond to the strategic interests of the revolution. The same goes for sections of the peasantry, students....So there is no automatic identification between sectoral and strategic interests.

Of course, there is a danger when I say this because I could change into a left dic-

"If socialism is grey and sad, the masses freeze up and grow weary"

tator, giving my own definition of strategic interests.

Maintaining a plurality of parties on the left is necessary, even if it is not easy. We weren't used to this either, but we have succeeded in making it a reality. The pluralism I'm talking about also means the right to have differences. It is through a process of discussion that a synthesis is forged, a decision made. Collective leadership is part of pluralism. It makes it possible to bring together different assessments of the situation, which no one person can do.

In addition, this all refers back to a negative history of socialism which did not allow pluralism. This meant a divorce between criticism and hegemony, between science and politics, between critical discussion and defence of the revolution, and this ended badly, whether in Grenada with the assassination of Bishop, or elsewhere with many intellectuals who disappeared, or got a bullet in the skull, or with Trotsky himself. This confusion between hegemony and dictatorship is negative.

The discussion should be opened up. I don't think I have the last word on the question, but I look at the revolutionary process of this century from the left. We have a rich experience here in Nicaragua because, in the middle of a war, despite the limits of the people's consciousness (the Nicaraguan masses do not have a fully socialist consciousness), we have succeeded in developing a pluralist process which at least exists, despite important limitations.

This pluralism is guaranteed by three things: institutions like the National Assembly; the fact that the masses want pluralism; and, finally, the existence of several standpoints within the left. I am not going to say that this experience is only valid for Nicaragua, because if it is positive in our country, then it could also be so in the Soviet Union or Argentina, for example.

■ **According to the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) or the Nicaraguan Communist Party (PCN) [the two Nicaraguan CPs] pluralism is necessary in Nicaragua because it is not yet a state in transition towards socialism. For them, in a really revolutionary state, we could do without pluralism. This type of position is still continues to be taken up, including in Europe, and comes down to an acceptance of Stalinism.**

Of course this is a Stalinist conception because it starts from the standpoint that society is monolithic. According to them, in the "real" transition to socialism everybody would be workers, and they think that as there is only one working class there should only be one party.

But it is not certain that the working class

is monolithic. Within the working class there are several components which have total freedom to hold different opinions and to express them. In socialist societies, aside from the working class in the strict sense, there are teachers, students... There are different ethnic or national groups, whether the Miskito Indians in Nicaragua or the Armenians in the Soviet Union. Therefore there is not only a difference between those who are workers and those who aren't, there are also racial and sexual differences and so on. In Nicaragua now, or even later, the right to differences will have to exist and therefore the right to pluralism. Revolutionaries should not be afraid of this. We should not put a bullet in the skulls of those who don't agree with us. We should convince them. Being the vanguard of the masses is something earned day by day. The vanguard cannot live on income from its "property".

If we are not democratic and pluralist we will end up being separated from the masses. You start by shooting the bourgeoisie, then the "deviant" revolutionaries, and then you end up by saying that the masses are shit and that you are the only ones who are right. So there has to be collective leadership, a public discussion between the different left organizations — and even the right-wing ones if they don't take up arms.

■ **Concerning the institutions of the revolutionary power, you characterize the Nicaraguan regime as "participative, consultative and representative", and you add that it would be useful to set up a popular assembly elected by secret universal suffrage alongside the national assembly.**

At the moment, mass organizations are being represented by some of their leaders being elected as deputies in the FSLN's parliamentary group in the national assembly.

We really want to have a participatory, representative and consultative democracy, and we have already a great deal of experience for this. The national assembly is the instrument for representative democracy. Regarding consultative and participatory democracy, we must set up various bodies or structures, perhaps a popular assembly. But I don't rule out the possibility that the national assembly can serve to represent the masses. When I think of a popular assembly, I think above all of discussions that are in the masses' interests.

Concerning consultative democracy, that can take place via committees in the localities or factories, by self-management in workplaces, cooperatives, or the university. There is no blueprint to follow. The possibility must exist to create instruments that can guarantee the possibility of exercising power.

When we are free from imperialist aggression and when we have advanced further in the transition, perhaps a popular assembly would have more sense than the national assembly, where contradictory

class interests are represented. In this case, the sort of popular assembly that exists in Cuba could perhaps be useful, without excluding other experiences.

■ **The present national assembly is made up of left-wing and right-wing parties, the parties of the right representing the bourgeoisie that has been ousted from power. If, alongside this national assembly, a popular assembly was established it would represent the masses and their organizations — neighbourhood committees, unions, women's organizations and so on.**

...Ethnic, religious and student's groups...recognizing that this popular assembly must not be a substitute for rank-and-file committees, otherwise it would be a bit bureaucratic. But my proposition aims above all to start a discussion; I don't have a finished formula. The experience of having a popular assembly has been tested in Cuba — but there was also a certain level of bureaucratism, which we must discuss as revolutionaries. In Nicaragua, we haven't had an experience like this except during the period when the Council of State existed [up until the 1984 elections].

■ **Do you think that the Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS) are sufficiently developed?**

In the context of the imperialist aggression, the CDS serve partly for military defence and the struggle against the right. With a democratic rank-and-file structure like the CDS — with their potentiality, but also their current weaknesses — they focus on the question of supplies and the distribution of basic consumer goods. At this level, the CDS have also played an important role in relation to price control, for example.

I think that they have a big potential that must be consistently encouraged, both through these concrete tasks and through other sorts of activity. It cannot be said that they have a real tradition of political discussions.

■ **What is the FSLN's relationship with the state? How do you confront the danger of an amalgamation of party and state?**

Why is it a danger?

■ **I am referring to the Soviet experience. There was a debate on this even in the early years of the USSR. A debate that not only Stalin and Trotsky contributed to, but also Lenin. One of the questions raised was how to avoid bureaucratization, especially in conditions of economic shortages and difficulties. Bureaucratization doesn't just depend on past heritage, such as lack of cadres and education...**

Yes, there is a danger of bureaucratization if there is an amalgamation of the state apparatus and the party. The state tends to defend the interests of its own apparatus. The danger exists in Nicaragua and is not

been eliminated. It is always possible that sectors of the state apparatus will defend interests contradictory to the strategic interests of the revolution.

I think that the fact that were commandants of the revolution outside of the state apparatus has contributed to avoid the most threatening danger. The existence of a collective leadership in the FSLN is a second line of defence. Every Friday, it discusses everything starting from the respective responsibilities of its members — who will deal with international relations, the economy, distribution... That avoids having a single person taking decisions and so the collective leadership contributes to avoiding a situation where the danger of bureaucracy becomes catastrophic.

Today, we are reducing the state apparatus. It is probably the most radical reduction there has ever been in Nicaragua and in Latin America in general. We are going from having over 30 ministers and secretaries of state to 11 ministers. Hundreds of vice-ministers and general directors are leaving their posts to get involved in tasks linked to production. This is not provoking big upheavals or bureaucratic resistance, because a large section of the FSLN's cadres belong to mass organizations and not to the state apparatus.

One other reason is that many of our Sandinistas come from a multiplicity of Maoist, anarchist, radical social-democratic, Castroist or Trotskyist groups.

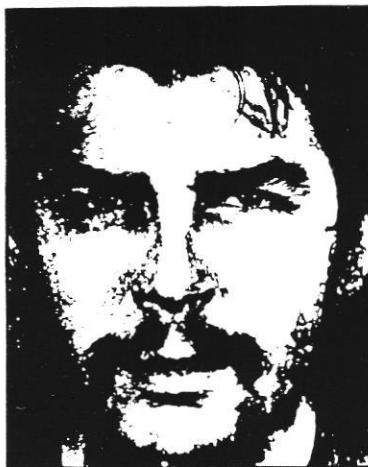
We have everything here, you know! And we are from a generation, that of the 1970s, that has made many criticisms concerning the socialist regimes. Many of the cadres have been to Vietnam, Cuba, Korea, Chile and France, and that explains why there is a widespread anti-bureaucratic culture here. A consciousness of the danger of bureaucracy exists.

The collective leadership, the right to criticism and pluralism are important anti-bureaucratic tools. Especially pluralism, allowing criticism of a state/party amalgamation. The journalists' unions, even if they are Sandinist, are very critical of the state. If there were no democracy and pluralism, who could criticize the state?

Finally, the arming of the masses is very important, because it is easier to confront bureaucracy when you have 300,000 people carrying arms. The masses have the power, they have guns, they can have a union, a self-management committee....All that is much more effective in the struggle against bureaucracy than a thousand speeches!

We want a socialist project that culturally enriches the activity and daily life of the masses. The masses are in fact tired of state socialism, of economic socialism. To encourage the self-activity of the masses, there has to be a socialist project that is affected with popular rejoicing and excitement. If socialism is grey and sad, the masses freeze up and grow weary. ★

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Campaign against threats of repression in Slovenia

“UNDER THREAT of being seized for ‘revealing’ military secrets, on May 13 *Mladina*, the weekly publication of the Slovenian Socialist Youth Alliance, “was prevented from publishing excerpts from the minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. In this material, which was to have been published in issue number 19 of *Mladina*, [Slovenian party head] Milan Kucan disputed the Military Council’s assessment of the political situation in Slovenia.”

This was the introduction to a petition that began circulating recently in Belgrade calling for the release of Janez Jansa, one of the official candidates for membership in the presidium of the Slovenian Youth Association, who was arrested on 31 May in Ljubljana and handed over to the military, on the grounds that he was in possession of secret military documents. A similar petition campaign was also organized in Zagreb. However, by the time that these petitions started circulating, two more prisoners were being held in military prisons in Slovenia — Ivan Borstner and David Tasic.

All three arrests occurred within the space of five days. In Ljubljana, the Com-

CRITICISM of the authorities has been particularly outspoken in Slovenia, a northern republic in the Yugoslav federation.

The following article indicates the extent to which this has created a focus for the fight for freedom of expression in the land of Tito’s heirs.

MICHELE LEE

mittee for Justice was formed to demand their release. This committee has received broad support from all walks of Slovene life, including workers, journalists, local government and party officials, the Church, the Writers’ Association and so on.

The party youth organization itself has intervened energetically demanding an explanation of the arrest of Jansa, who is an outstanding activist, a member of the peace movement, author of many noted articles about the Yugoslav People’s Army and theoretician of people’s self-defence. Many of Jansa’s articles were specially written for *Mladina*. In fact, he is one of the journal’s editors. The arrests, therefore, represented a blatant attack on *Mladina*, the Slovenian Socialist Youth Alliance and on Yugoslav democracy as a whole.

It seems clear that the Yugoslav public across the country has awakened to the danger of the army being used against “undesirable” critics. In this way, under the convenient pretext of protecting military secrets, the local republic or provincial authorities can be bypassed. The possibility of a “Kosovization” of Slovenia is now being discussed. [Kosovo is an autonomous region with an Albanian majority and long-standing national tensions.] This means deliberate criminalization of demands embarrassing to the

authorities and liberal use of the gaols.

The petition quoted above expresses “our solidarity with [Slovenian] protests and demands.” Also, “in order to prevent further possible abuse of legal provisions relating to state, military and official secrets,” it urges the Federal Assembly to initiate a thoroughgoing debate on the implication of what has happened in Slovenia. The instant responses in Ljubljana, Belgrade and Zagreb show an admirable degree of solidarity on the part of Yugoslavia’s democratic forces, be they inside or outside the League of Communists.

This swift reaction is also due to the fact that at the beginning of May well-founded rumours spread through Slovenia that last March the army had called for sweeping arrests in the republic (the figure of 300 was mentioned in this context) that would have removed all major figures in Slovenian public life. The meeting of the Yugoslav party presidium to which the petition referred, and the minutes of the meeting that *Mladina* was prevented from publishing, all related to this incident.

The circumstances of this affair have not been properly clarified. Those who initially rejected the idea of a military intervention in Slovenia must now be reassured about their “rational” attitude. In fact, statements made by people who witnessed the search of Jansa’s premises, and by the chief and acting editors of *Mladina* (Robert Botteri and France Zavrl, respectively)¹ show that no incriminating material was found during the searches. For example, the piece of paper confiscated from a folder lying open (!) on top of Tasic’s desk in *Mladina* bore no stamp indicating that it was a secret document.

The last thing Yugoslavia needs is an army out of civilian control. On the contrary, what the country needs above all is democracy. According to Yugoslav law, people accused of revealing military secrets can be held without trial for six months without being charged.

The time has come first for a critical re-examination of the law and/or custom that allows informal bodies like the Military Council to intervene in politics; and second to take away the army’s right to hold and try civilians. ★

1. France Zavrl is himself involved in court proceedings brought against him at the insistence of the Federal public prosecutor for publishing an article on a junket of Branko Mamula, who was minister of defence at the time. It was entitled “Mamula go home,” and condemned Yugoslav sales of weapons to the Ethiopian government.

