

International VIEWPOINT

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Changing landscape for the Japanese left



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IV Price rise shock looms

As we announced in IV 177, rising costs mean that we have to put our prices up as from the next issue (184). The sterling prices will be increased by some 18%, the French franc and American dollar prices by about 12%. This means a cover price for one issue (without postage) of £1, 14FF and \$2.25. Postal subscriptions will rise in line. However, if we get your subscription before the end of May, you only need to pay the old price!

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International VIEWPOINT

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Lithuanian independence and the future of the Soviet Union

SINCE the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet declared independence on March 11, the country has suffered what amounts to an invasion and steps taken towards the establishment of an occupation regime. Up to the time of writing events have developed more or less "peacefully" in a region for which the Western bourgeoisie feels a lot more sympathy than for the Azeris and the Central Asian "Muslim" peoples. But, despite the lower level of brutality, due to the requirements of foreign policy, the result is the same, and the same repressive forces — Ministry of the Interior and KGB troops — are at work in Lithuania as in Azerbaijan.

SALAH JABER

HAVING taken control of key economic installations and the majority of Lithuania's strategic nerve centres, the Kremlin troops have put the country into quarantine, while creating a climate of intimidation through the multiplication of road-blocks and searches. The hunt for "deserters", who have refused to serve in the Soviet army and the order to citizens of the republic to surrender their arms, demonstrates Moscow's firm intention to prevent the Lithuanians from having the real attributes of sovereignty. The only freedom that remains is that of political self-expression — the Lithuanians are a people under house arrest.

They have thus discovered to their cost the limits of Gorbachev's tolerance. Many of them had illusions that what was happening in Azerbaijan had no relevance to them, when in fact it was a message to all the nations on the Soviet periphery. These illusions were nourished by another great self-deception: that the imperialist "Christian" West would do for Lithuania at least what it had done for their brother Catholics in Poland. The Lithuanians have had a bitter disillusionment in this respect. In fact Western capitals have hardly been able to conceal their irritation with the Sajudis leader Vytautas Landsbergis, this music teacher meddling in politics,

whose quixotic behaviour is endangering relations between the great powers.

The three million ethnic Lithuanians living in the republic do not count for much in comparison with what their challenge means for Moscow. They are opening the way for the dismemberment of the Soviet Union and the reversal of the liberalization process initiated by Gorba-



"Of course you can come out, but first you have to pay the fine for falling in"

(from the Estonian cultural weekly Reede)

chev, at least this is what the latter wants us to think. The Kremlin hardliners are becoming more and more useful to the new President-Bonaparte; from being the obstacle to overcome they have become an all-purpose argument against every kind of radical.

Nonetheless Gorbachev has to use the carrot as well as the stick to preserve his credibility. Preaching moderation and orderly change, he is trying to make the Lithuanians look like hotheads. He is even trying to use democratic sounding arguments against them; this is the meaning of his demand that there should be a referendum in Lithuania, in line with the newly adopted constitutional law regulating the right of secession of Republics from the USSR.

In fact the right of self-determination is severely limited in the new law. A two thirds majority is required for independence, and there is then to be a transitional waiting period of five years before it is implemented. Compared to this awkward interpretation of the right of self-determination of nations, even bourgeois decolonization was often less restrictive. And on top of this there is the spectre of having to pay "indemnities" to Moscow.

According to *Izvestia*, the bill that the Union will present to Lithuania before it can leave could be some 12.5 billion roubles. And this still leaves out of account acts of revenge such as the demand that Lithuania should pay the full price for receiving the raw materials and goods that it needs from the USSR (Lithuania gets 97% of its energy from the USSR). This is hardly the sort of settlement one would expect in an amicable divorce after 50 years of marriage....

Political independence not economic autarchy

It is necessary here to take up the widespread idea that independence would be economically absurd, an easy alibi for people who do not want to support peoples who make such a choice. From this point of view, which assumes that a state must live only on its own resources, every state that does not cover at least a large part of the earth's surface is a reactionary absurdity. But it is obvious that political independence does not imply economic isolation. It is merely one of the conditions that would allow a sovereign and a free choice of the economic relations that a country wishes to establish with the rest of the world, including the countries that used to rule them. It still remains necessary that these latter do not attempt to substitute economic suzerainty for their lost political power.

The Lithuanians would certainly be in favour of close economic

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cooperation with a Soviet Union or a Russia well disposed towards them. A different attitude on Moscow's part might leave open the possibility that, after a period of independence, the Lithuanians would decide to rejoin a union refashioned on a genuinely equal confederal basis. Despite all the announcements of the end of Leninism, Lenin's remarks on this subject remain more relevant than ever.

In his testament of December 1922, he underlined that in the existing conditions: "It is quite natural that the 'freedom to secede from the union' by which we justify ourselves will be a mere scrap of paper, unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is."

In this situation, Lenin put forward proposals that now seem prophetic: "the strictest rules must be introduced on the use of the national language in the non-Russian republics of our union.... A detailed code will be required, and only the nationals living in the republic in question can draw it up at all successfully. And then we cannot be sure in advance that as a result of this work we shall not take a step backward at our next Congress of Soviets, i.e. retain the union of Soviet socialist republics only for military and diplomatic affairs, and in all other respects restore full independence to the individual People's Commissariats."

Need to reestablish national units in the army

The only possible way today to maintain the USSR on an internationalist basis is to reshape it in the sense indicated by Lenin, including reestablishing the national units that made up the Soviet army until their dissolution by Stalin in 1938 into an ethnically mixed and thus Russian speaking and Russian dominated army. What has happened after March 11 in Lithuania shows the importance of this issue for real national sovereignty.

Unfortunately the option that is gaining ground in the Soviet Union today is not the internationalist one but a more narrow spirited nationalism such as that of the Sajudis leaders who have not even taken the trouble to coordinate their actions with that of the other Baltic states, not to speak of the other oppressed nationalities in the union, or with those of the Russian anti-bureaucratic opposition.

But the fundamental reason for all of this is the weakness of real internationalism in Russia itself, and the absence from the scene of a powerful independent workers movement capable of embodying such internationalism. The fundamental reason is that it is not the Leninists who are in command in Moscow but the "Great-Russian chauvinist, this rascal and tyrant such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is." ★

"Our programme is self-management and self-government"

Interview with leader of movement for a new Socialist Party in Russia

MIKHAIL MALYUTIN is a teacher at the central school of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow, and a member of the coordinating committee of the Democratic Platform Inside the CPSU. He joined the CPSU in 1987. He is a prominent figure in the preparatory committees for a new Socialist Party. The following interview was given in Paris on April 5 to Salah Jaber and Gerry Foley.

CAN you describe the origins of your organization?

Our groups began to work on a legal basis in 1987. The first name for the Soviet left groups was the Federation of Socialist Clubs. These were small groups, one of the main ones being the Confederation of Anarcho-syndicalists. It had 30 to 40 members in Moscow and some 300-400 throughout the Soviet Union. As a result of its last congress on March 25, another group called the Socialist Initiative, led by Boris Kagarlitsky, Vitaly Ponomarev, who is a specialist on the Asian Republics, Yefim Ostrovsky, one of the leaders of our work in the Komsomol and myself turned itself into the Moscow Committee of New Socialists. It is also not a big organization — 40 members in Moscow.

There are some other organizations who support our struggle for a new Socialist Party. There is the left-wing of the Komsomol in Moscow and elsewhere, who are called the Federation of Socialist Youth. Some provincial committees of the Komsomol stand on this position. Another group is the left wing of the Independent Trade Union, Sotsprof. One of its leaders, Lev Volovik, is a member of the preparatory committee of the new Socialist Party. There are Sotsprof workers groups with a socialist position in Prokopyevsk (Kuzbass), Vorkuta, Donbass, Narva and Moscow. Also involved are some members of the Democratic Platform in the CPSU as well as left populists, in Moscow, Irkutsk, Kazan, Kiubyshev and so on. There was a meeting of the preparatory committee on March 25 in Irkutsk, but I was in France

and I do not know what the position is in Siberia, the Urals and the Far East.

There are many different organizations that describe themselves as social democrats. The most serious of them is led by Oleg Rumantsyev and Leonid Volkov who are now members of the Russian parliament. It is a party of young intellectuals who want an electoral rather than a mass party. They call themselves a party of the middle class. Our idea is to have a mass party with working class roots. This is the difference between socialists and social democrats in the Soviet Union.

There are some other left groups but they are not real political forces. We have had some publicity in the Soviet mass media, but they do not like the Soviet left. There has been material in *Moscow News* on the social democrats but not on the socialists. Now there is a new magazine *Dialog* which comes out three times a month, whose first number contained a letter from me about an article by one of our left economists. In its sixth number there was to be an interview with me about the conception of the Socialist Party, but there is a problem about the publication of this interview. There is a real blockade of information about our organization.

■ What was the relation between the movement for a Socialist Party and the Komsomol?

The Komsomol has been destroyed. It was a long process. The left wing of Komsomol, the Federation of Socialist Youth, was not a mass organization. It was a part of the apparatus which turned against the apparatus as a whole. Soviet youth do not have a strong interest in politics, which is a

real problem. The leaders of the FSU are now members of the Socialist Party. We tried to publish our materials using this basis.

The Clubs do not exist now. They existed in 1987-88. Now the members of the Clubs are in the Popular Fronts, or are members of local government at different levels. Now we have three deputies in the Moscow Soviet, Boris Kagarlitsky, Vladimir Kondratiev and Sergei Baranov. We have one deputy in the Russian Parliament, Vladimir Makhanov, one of the leaders of the miners from Prokopyevsk. But there are about 30 other members of the Moscow Soviet who support our self-government programme.

■ How did the Socialist Party idea develop?

The idea was an old one. When Boris Kagarlitsky, Pavel Kudukhin, and Andrei Fadin began organizing, ten years ago, they were arrested. That was in 1982. But when *perestroika* began they were released. Thus we have only been able to conduct legal political activity for four years. At the start it was small groups of left-wing intellectuals in Moscow, Leningrad and other towns. After 1988 things became more serious. The Popular Fronts were founded throughout the Soviet Union — also by young intellectuals. Only after the miners' strike of 1989 did we establish a real party.

■ Do you have an unofficial publication of your own?

This was one of the most serious problems. We do not have xerox equipment and so we have to get our publication commercially duplicated in the Baltic Republics, particularly in Lithuania. Our magazine is called *Levy Povorot* (Left Turn) and is published in about 300-500 copies and each has between 100 and 200 pages. Over twenty numbers of this journal have appeared. We also get our articles published in Prokopyevsk and Donbass by the strike committees, but in this case there are a variety of forces involved.

■ Could you say more about your connections with these strike committees?

We did not have contact with the miners before the strike. At first the miners did not know why they were going on strike. But we were the only organization that supported them and tried to link up the different regions. Our West-orientated liberal radicals in the Democratic Union and our nationalist radicals in Pamyat did not want to have anything to do with the strikes. We began to make

links in July and August 1989. Now we are strongest in Prokopyevsk — Makhanov was one of the leaders of the regional strike committee there.

We are also supported by some regional committees of Sotsprof, from Donbass, Moscow, Vorkuta, Karaganda and Narva. Workers are in a minority in Sotsprof. The majority are intellectuals and supporters of cooperatives. They are not social democrats, but for popular capitalism. There are preparations for a new strike. The workers' representatives from the mining regions are saying that the government has not done any of the things that they promised. They are making links with railworkers and engineering plants. But it is difficult to decide when to begin.

I don't know the results of the conference of the official miners union which is under the influence of the strike committees. It was starting when I left for Paris.

■ You said that there were different forces in these strike committees. Are these organized forces or currents of opinion?

There were different forces from the beginning of the strike. Some wanted to solve their problems with the government, not against it. They did not like the reactions of the local *nomenklatura*, but they did not know the position of the central

model and so on. But is difficult to say what the mass of miners are thinking.

■ What about the Democratic Union? Are there different currents?

This is a problem which is interesting for the mass media, but is not a really important question in Soviet politics. There are Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the Democratic Union! The former want to boycott the elections, the latter want to participate. But it is all shadow boxing between the DU and the militia on Moscow's Pushkin Square.

They are like the early Church. They bear witness to their ideals but do not have a real policy.

■ How homogeneous is the Socialist Party from an ideological and political point of view?

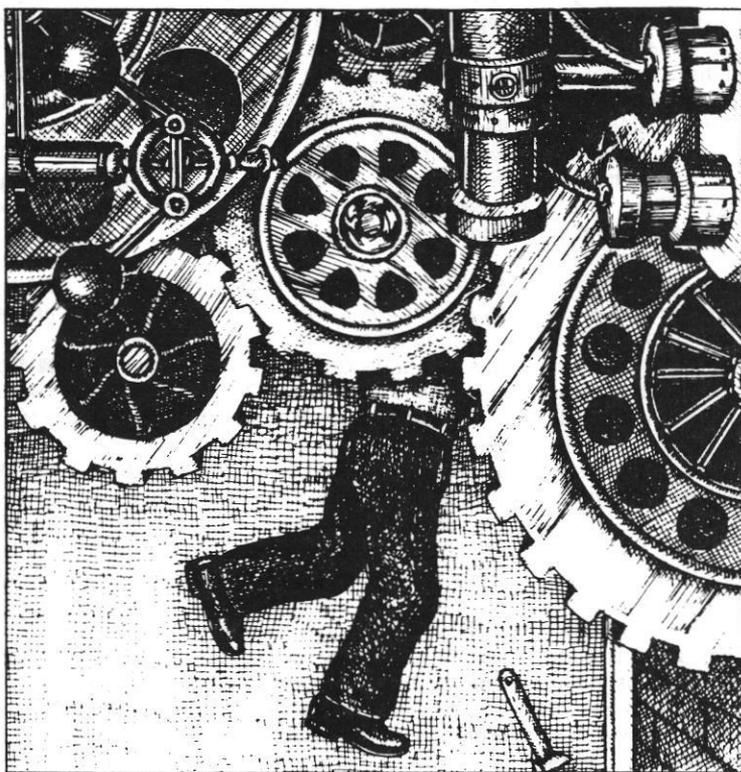
I can't explain this in English — you will have to read our programme. The ideas that unite us are self-government and self-management. Self-management for the workers, self-government in the municipalities and so on. The anarchists are for pure self-management, but we believe that the new government would have a serious role during the transitional period, within the framework of state property. The workers don't want to turn over state property to workers' collectives at this time.

I know of only one exception, the Vorgashorskaya mine in Vorkuta. They are in a very difficult situation — they don't have a rail connection. So they produce the coal but it isn't taken away. They were attempting to establish an island free from totalitarianism in the Soviet Union, but it isn't possible. Solidarnosc had a similar idea, believing you could get margins for manoeuvre, but it doesn't work.

Our ideas draw on several sources. One is revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International, another is the New Left current, another is ecological socialism, and a fourth

left Social Democracy. We are also very much influenced by the experiences of Solidarnosc. We think that in some respects the movement in Russia will take a similar form.

In the other so-called socialist countries



nomenklatura. Now there are all kinds of political groups in the strike committees — members of the CPSU's Democratic Platform, social democrats, socialists, militants of popular capitalism, supporters of independent unions on the Solidarnosc

there is no independent mass workers movement with decisive force, but we think that this is a possibility in Russia.

■ **Do you see the Socialist Party as a party for the whole Soviet Union?**

This is very difficult to explain. Some regions — the Baltic, Central Asia and the Caucasus — are going to separate from the Union soon. We are not trying to build anything there. We work amongst the Russian speaking peoples of the Soviet Union — but not only Russians. These are people of Soviet, not only Russian culture. Officially, for example, Donbass is part of the Ukraine, and Karaganda a part of Kazakhstan, but they are a part of this single movement of Soviet workers.

There is not much of a left in the smaller republics, such as the Baltic. Even the social democratic parties — with the exception of Lithuania — are small groups of intellectuals. There is an internationalist workers movement only in Riga. Everywhere else the workers movement is completely divided on national lines, and blocs with its own national *nomenklatura* (bureaucrats). The process will be the same in the other Republics, for example, Moldavia.

■ **Have you chosen not to work in the smaller republics or are you trying to work there?**

We have too few forces, and we cannot do anything where no potential support exists. Without a mass movement in Russia, there is nothing real that we can do in the smaller republics. We support Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Baltic Republics and so on and oppose military intervention by the Soviet government, but we can only do this in meetings in Moscow. When there is a mass movement, it will be able to take real decisions about the smaller republics.

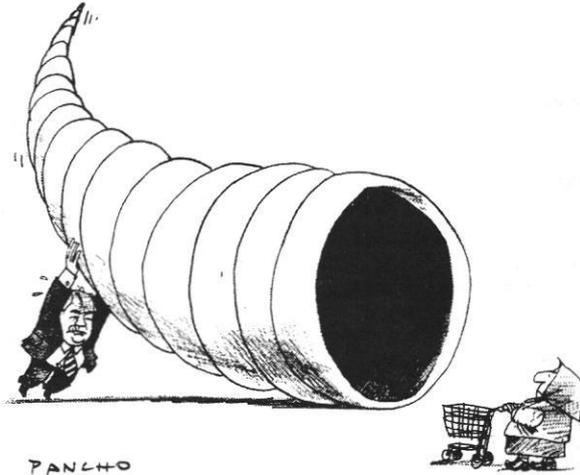
The majority of Russian workers in Russia itself are for the separation of these republics but with guarantees for the Russian speaking minorities. The problem is that the present leaderships in the Baltic speak about such guarantees but don't do anything real. They say "Russians go home!" Our position is that the sooner these republics leave the better. The problem is to minimize the sufferings of the non-native populations. These minorities also want self-determination and the right to separate. The nationalist movements accept self-determination for themselves, but not for others. Our position is quite sharply defined on this. If, for example, the Russian minority in the North-East of Estonia want to separate from Estonia — which at the present time they do not want to do — they have the full right to do it. This would leave Estonia without electricity. At the moment they are demanding autonomy, not separation.

We want a compromise solution but the reality is that there is a very sharp confrontation. In the absence of a mass movement

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in Russia, the most likely variant in the

Western Soviet Union is Latin Americanization — the emergence of banana republics — in the Caucasus, Lebanonization, and Afghanistanization in Central Asia. We must try to ensure that these problems are solved with the least possible bloodshed. That is why we think that separation should take place as quickly as possible. Otherwise there will be an extension of the Afghanistan experience. We will end



up with the Military Union of Soviet Republics.

■ **Do the nationalist currents have representatives in Moscow?**

There are groups but they are very small, and are rather like High Commissions of their republics. They are linked to the mass movements. They often have solidarity meetings with other republics and our comrades are often on the platforms, especially with regard to the Caucasus and Central Asia.

■ **What is your attitude to the Moscow People's Front?**

It continues to exist and intends to go on existing. In the elections there was something called the Bloc for Democratic Russia. It included liberals, socialists, social democrats and populists. The party committee was removed from power in Moscow, so now we will see what we have got. The Front has base organizations in ten districts in Moscow and these local groups cannot operate without some kind of front.

The Front has split into three separate parties; socialists, social democrats and constitutional democrats. So it's still unclear whether we should try to keep the Front as a united organization.

■ **What about Boris Yeltsin?**

He depends on the mood of the masses. On the television you can see that there is one Yeltsin in front of the cameras and another at the mass meetings. I didn't believe this at first, but it has been shown quite clearly. It is very difficult to define him politically. When there is a mass

movement he swells up like a balloon, but when the movement declines he deflates. He has no presence of his own.

In 1989 he made two big political mistakes. The first was when he didn't stand for president, as public opinion wanted. The second was when he didn't go to the mines during the strike. In fact he signed a statement saying that they should go back to work as soon as possible.

Now he wants to be Russian president. But the situation in the Russian supreme soviet is difficult for him. There are maybe 300 left liberals, and 500 representatives of the right. The rest, maybe another 200 plus makes up the "swamp", the independents, and to win Yeltsin has to keep the independents. He has to depend on his personal popularity. Furthermore he has to get two thirds to become President. He may well win the first ballot — he is in the

same situation as Gorbachev. It is not because he is so popular, but the others are much worse. If he can't become Russian president it will be his last chance.

■ **Yeltsin played a positive role for a whole period. You are saying that this is no longer the case.**

Yeltsin is a member of the *nomenklatura* who rebelled against the *nomenklatura*. It pleases the people to see a bureaucrat rebel against the bureaucracy, but they don't see him as an independent leader. He's good at destructive work, but he has no constructive programme.

■ **Can we say the same about the Democratic Platform as the Popular Front?**

The DP is not a mass movement. There are three tendencies. The most aggressive tendency are the social democrats, associated with Yuri Afanassiev. They are ready to split as soon as possible and establish their own party. But the majority are not ready for this. They are not social democrats because they don't know what that is. They see no need to break with the CPSU. It is impossible to define this group — they are not social democrats nor are they Communists.

There is a left group in DP, not just socialists, who want a new Marxist vanguard party. They want to merge socialism with the workers movement. The coexistence of these three groups is a temporary thing. In the true Russian style they agreed on who to unite against. At the moment the DP is fighting both against Gorbachev and the Stalinist and nationalist right-

wing.

The Russian CP is dominated by this right-wing. There are going to be three Russian CPs. On April 22, the anniversary of Lenin's birth, the Russian Communist Party — the party of the Stalinists — is going to be formed in Leningrad. There is no coverage of this in the press. In May there will be a conference of the Platform and they will unite with other social democratic groups. They won't leave before the CPSU conference. Some elements may leave and join the Socialist Party. Then in June Gorbachev will form his own Russian Communist Party.

Thus there will be three Russian CPs, the hard-line Stalinist CP, Gorbachev's CP and an independent CP including the social democrats. The SP cannot align with any of them. We can't form a Marxist workers party, which is what we aim to do, with these kinds of people. But there are possibilities. In the 1920s the largest part of the German Independent Socialists went over to the Communist International. They took tens of thousands of people and organizations with material resources. That is our optimum perspective. As a minimum we want to get some thousands of people. You cannot hope to win the CP from within and we don't want to form our own Russian Communist Party.

■ What is the balance of forces between the Stalinist forces and Gorbachev?

In my view Gorbachev wants to liquidate the CP, but in a controlled way, by stages. What would be very dangerous for him would be if the CP split up into a few big organizations one of which could emerge as a serious rival. In fact not all of the neo-Stalinists will go into the new Stalinist RCP. The latter will be the party of Nina Andreeva; Ligachev will stay with Gorbachev.

Gorbachev's party will have a Eurocommunist programme but a Stalinist personnel. Gorbachev and the CC want to expel the people who don't agree with them, but not all at once. They will be ruthless. Probably, but not necessarily, Gorbachev wants to keep a party of his own.

■ So the majority of the forces for the Sovlet Left will come from the CPSU.

Yes. In the coming year the left will leave the CP, as in Poland in 1981, but there is nowhere for them to go. There is no Solidarnosc. We do not want to repeat some of the mistakes of Polish comrades. We think they made two main errors. The first was that they didn't form a vanguard party before the mass movement and secondly there were the endless clashes between the left-wingers. We want to overcome primitive anti-Communism, and try to build the embryo of a mass revolutionary party. But, of course, we are just creating some preconditions; there is no guarantee that we will succeed. ★

High hopes and deep suspicions



DEMOCRACY in Prague. Walls and windows in the city centre are plastered with leaflets. Some advertise services, but most are political appeals from a myriad of newly formed political groups ranging from the libertarian Marxist Left Alternative to the Republican Union, promoting thoroughgoing free enterprise and "closely connected with Jacques René Chirac". There are also leaflets about specific questions such as the expulsion of the German minority from Czechoslovak territory after the Second World War. Posters of the founding father of the Czechoslovak Republic Tomas G. Masaryk are everywhere and many parties lay claim to his heritage.

COLIN MEADE

IN THE subways people are collecting for petitions. One for the outlawing of the Communist Party (KSC), another in opposition to the proposal from Slovak parties that the name of the Republic should be changed to emphasize Slovakia. In any case the word "Socialist" has been removed from the country's name. An appeal is being circulated calling for a token general strike on April 11 to demand that the KSC should hand back most of its property to the state.

The changes are not just cosmetic. On Wednesday March 28 the Czechoslovak government announced the following reforms: the convertibility of the currency; the freeing of prices and the ending of subsidies by the end of the year; elimination of central planning and the creation of an office of privatization. In a thoroughly nationalized economy such as Czechoslovakia's these measures will

have incalculable social and economic consequences on living standards, public services and employment.

There were reports that differences existed in the government on how fast to introduce these reforms between populist First Deputy Prime Minister Valtr Komarek, urging a slow approach and the Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus who wanted to move fast. Klaus wants to make the changes before the June elections, thus creating facts that the Czechoslovak people, should they wish to do so, will find hard to reverse. President Vaclav Havel is rumoured to prefer the Komarek approach.

Whatever the tensions in the government there is wide agreement, including the new leadership of the Communist Party (KSC), that the way to solve Czechoslovakia's grave economic and ecological problems is through some sort of market reform and an opening to Western capital. **7**

This is also the view of the population.

According to an opinion poll in the second half of January, 68% of the respondents expressed support for radical market reforms and 63% the rapid development of the private sector. Only 10% and 18% respectively firmly rejected such developments. Such figures express a heartfelt rejection of decades of bureaucratic mismanagement, which has led to growing backwardness and dilapidation in every area of economic life as well as a tremendous ecological crisis, apparent at the most superficial level in the air pollution in Prague. Every evening the news programmes end with figures on the level of toxic gases in the atmosphere, providing figures many times above accepted national and international safety standards. Despite 42 years of a supposedly socially conscious "socialist" system, the West seems, simply, *cleaner!*

Civic Forum produces depressing statistics

A booklet issued by Civic Forum entitled Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads, gives a depressing picture of the country's economic decline over the past decades. In 1937 production per head in Czechoslovakia expressed in \$US was 200, in Austria 220 and in France 255. The figures for 1987 are (estimated) 5,000 - 8,000 in Czechoslovakia, 11,647 in Austria and 12,739 in France. These figures, furthermore, do not include the amount of resources used for each unit of production or the quality and usefulness of the products. For example in Czechoslovakia some two and a half times as much steel is consumed for each unit of domestic product as in the West. As Vaclav Havel explained in his New Year's address: "Whole branches of industry are turning out things that no one is interested in, while what we need, we don't get."

It takes a Czechoslovak citizen two and a half times as long as her/his West German counterpart to earn enough for basic foodstuffs and the relative figures for electrical goods are vastly greater. Such figures translate into daily life as longer working hours for a lower living standard. To achieve the West's prosperity, it is necessary to use the West's methods. This simple proposition dominates all discussion of economic questions.

However underneath this pro-market consensus there are significant tensions within the society around questions of democracy, including economic democracy.

In November's "gentle revolution" millions of Czechs and Slovaks decided to take back control of their country from the arrogant and incompetent clique of bureaucrats who had run it for their own benefit for 42 years. Every institution and workplace was affected by this upsurge to one degree or another.

This democratic tide continues to flow. Hundreds of political and interest groups have emerged. The whole gamut of political parties exists, including social democratic, Christian democratic, green, liberal and conservative parties. An example of the political ferment is the appearance of both a cultural association and a political party to represent the interests of the country's large and much discriminated against Romany population. A strong nationalist sentiment has reawakened in Slovakia, complicated by the existence in the region of a large Hungarian minority, which is also organizing itself.

The Communist Party — which has both suffered a significant split and lost more than a third of its membership since November — has radically changed its programme and now calls for a multi-party system while opposing privatization.

An article calling for actions to win rights and social acceptance for the country's "forgotten minority" of homosexuals has appeared in a widely read independent journal. Strikes have occurred, often related to personnel issues. A bus and tram drivers strike in Brno took place about a disputed planning decision in the city. The action was organized by the enterprise committee of the independent trade unions that have developed out of the Factory committees set up to mobilize for the November 27 general strike that sealed the fate of the old regime.

Mass movement of conscripts develops

Pressures have been building up for changes in the conditions of military service — alternative service has at last been permitted, while there have been embryonic and controversial moves towards the formation of trade unions in the police force. It is reported that on January 20 this year some 650 delegates met to form a Union of Young Soldiers, although I do not know details of its programme. The January edition of the Bulletin of the Independent Peace Association (NMS), a group active in the dissident movement for some years, prints excerpts from letters from the barracks about how, even after November, conscripts have been unable to get newspapers other than the KSC daily *Rudé Právo* and the official armed services publication. It reports on hunger strikes in the army in favour of immediate application of a shorter period of conscription.

The NMS calls on local Civic Forums and students to make contacts with the barracks. The journal also complains that the central leadership of Civic Forum has been indifferent or even hostile to these developments. On December 18 the Defence Ministry issued a decree forbidding the activity of all political parties,

movements and churches in the army.

Throughout the country Civic Forums (OFs) exist in the districts and workplaces, attempting to give a voice to the demands of all currents and groups with no attachment to the bureaucracy. The OF in the Prague 3 Zizkov district, for example, organizes commissions on issues such as building — engaged in a survey of empty properties in the district — the environment and security. The OF is involved in a campaign for the removal of a radio transmitter (for jamming purposes I was told) that has been constructed on the ruins of a local park.

The Zizkov OF had taken seriously the Federal Assembly's decision to remove the leading role of the party from the constitution, and launched a campaign for the recomposition of the committee of the local National Committee (ONV). The existing Communist Party (KSC) dominated ONV refused to cooperate; by not turning up they made the meeting formally invalid.

Citizens assembly in Prague suburb

The OF invited local people to turn up to observe the meeting and the session became a "citizens assembly". After negotiations, the KSC finally backed down and now has only three out of the 15 seats on the committee. OF organizers however complain that there are not enough activists and that outside Prague the OFs are often dominated by recycled bureaucrats. The Zizkov OF also advertises the existence of the petition for outlawing the Communist Party.

Those involved at the grass roots are often suspicious of what is going on at the higher levels of the OF, in particular in relation to negotiations with the KSC.

Many of the tensions have been brought to the surface by an apparently minor dispute in Brno between two long-term dissidents, now leading members of the city's Civic Forum, Jaroslav Sabata and Petr Cibulka.

Sabata is the head of the Brno Civic Forum and, according to *Le Monde* of March 28, "had reached a *modus vivendi* with the town's KSC mayor Josef Pernica in the run-up to the June elections". Accusing Sabata of "government behind closed doors" Petr Cibulka organized demonstrations against him in the name of direct democracy. "The Civic Forum must listen to the voice of the people", Cibulka stated.

The incident was widely commented on in the press and by leading spokespersons of the Civic Forum and government. A meeting of Charter 77 applauded Cibulka when he accused the OF leaders of manipulation, but most of the speakers criticized his methods. Cibulka is now standing independently of the OF in the June elections.

There is a real danger that frustration at

the stalled progress of the democratic revolution will give rise to a strong current of right-wing radicalism, reflected in the petition to ban the KSC and in attempts to drive individuals previously in the KSC out of public life or even their jobs. There are many rumours about "crypto-communist" infiltration of new or renovated parties, with who knows what truth.

The networks of the bureaucratic elites — who executed a 180 degree turn after November, electing Havel unanimously to the Presidency as they would once have denounced him — are quite capable of finding new homes outside of the KSC. The discovery that many of new leaders in East Germany were working for the *Stasi* should remind us that, whatever their present policies, the old satellite parties of the Communist dominated national fronts were part of the old regime. But it is precisely these parties in Czechoslovakia — the People's Party (SL) and Czechoslovak Socialist Party (CSS) in the Czech Lands and the Democratic Party (DS) in Slovakia that are tipped to do well in the June elections.

Fingers of suspicion have even been pointed in the direction of the social democrats and greens as well as the newly formed Agrarian Party. This unease is intensified by the rumours surrounding the continued functioning of the secret police (StB). In the first post-November government the KSC attempted to hold onto the Interior Ministry, but was forced to cede it to a non-Communist Richard Sacher. A fortnight after his appointment the StB was abolished — long enough to get rid of incriminating material.

The danger is that justified anger that "they" are getting away with it, and that vital elements of the old order are being protected and preserved, will be channelled into rightist radicalism. This in its turn will give a new lease of life to the revamped KSC and its left unity projects.

The elements of the old democratic opposition who are now part of the government are aware of this problem. The new President, Vaclav Havel has expressed his opposition to a revanchist policy towards members of the KSC and in his major speeches, has eloquently emphasized political participation as the basis for the new order. Again in his New Year's address Havel insisted that the force which would allow Czechs and Slovaks to overcome the past was the human energy revealed in November. As he underlined "after centuries both our nations have straightened their backs by themselves, depending on no assistance from stronger states or on either of the great powers. It seems to me that this is the great moral investment of this moment: it has within it the hope that next

time, we won't suffer from the complex of those who must constantly thank somebody for something. Now it only depends on us whether this hope is fulfilled and whether our civic, national and political self-confidence will awake in an entirely new way."

Furthermore in his visits abroad Havel has not hesitated to mention issues such as the withdrawal of American troops from Europe. However his belief that "politics is not simply the art of the possible" will be drowned in short order by the realities of political power if it is not backed up by a global democratic conception, which is not tender towards the powers that be anywhere on the planet.

Havel may well become increasingly isolated within the government — or his enthusiasm for playing the presidential role simply

German orbit, leaving Moravia and Slovakia behind.

Another area where the optimistic prognoses of the new government will face a major challenge is in relations with its neighbours. According to Havel, the East European "approach to the West must be coordinated". The feasibility of such unity will be tested by how the new Hungarian government deals with the issue of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.

Furthermore there is a contradiction between the desires of the democratic movement for open government and demilitarization on the one hand and the pro-capitalist programme on the other.

On the economic front belief in the market as the just measure of the value of human activity excludes conscious control over economic policy. It also means tolerance of speculation and the use of political positions for profiteering. Furthermore at the political level the preservation of a "liberal" state separate from and above society requires that the repressive forces are not too seriously disrupted.

Will the need to make the human being the centre of politics, which Havel expounds so eloquently, prevail when it comes to a conflict with the interests of potential foreign investors or the demands of domestic profiteers? And will the government "open the books" of the police to ensure that the old networks are unable to operate in secrecy and admit the validity of demands for the demilitarization of society?

The answer to such questions does not lie solely or even mainly in the government itself. The small forces, such as the Left Alternative and others, who believe in a consistent democracy and are not prepared to sacrifice the gains of November on the altar of *realpolitik*, can have an impact far beyond their confirmed supporters, attracting the radical discontent away from the right.

But the answer lies also in the ability of the rest of the European left to propose their own forms of aid to the East which are both more effective materially and respect the right to self-determination of these countries. Anti-militarism and the whole range of issues relating to an enriched concept of human freedom raised by the womens liberation, lesbian and gay, and anti-racist movements will find a definite audience.

For a period of time the — real and genuine — attractions of access to the world market will probably overshadow the attraction of such themes. But the Czech and Slovak nations will find themselves let down by their rich Western "friends" before the end of the century and the possibility of a second, more profound stage of the democratic revolution will open. ★ 9



overcome his radical democratic instincts — especially if, as seems possible, the Civic Forum movement starts to fragment.

Already the social democrats have stated that they will stand independently of the OF in the June elections while a broad Christian Democrat regroupment, with backing from the West German CDU (party of the FRG's Chancellor Helmut Kohl) has been formed. If recent elections in East Germany and Hungary are anything to go by this latter force has a strong chance of capturing the popular mood for a rapid alignment with capitalism — and above all West German capitalism.

But desire is one thing, reality another, as East Germans are already finding out. Apart from the obvious economic and social problems attendant on full scale-marketization and opening to the West, Czechoslovakia may also face in the medium term a crisis of the unity of the state, as Bohemia moves into the West

Poll tax riot underlines crisis of Thatcher government

ON MARCH 31 the hated poll-tax was introduced into England and Wales with the biggest demonstrations and battles seen in Britain for decades. 200,000 people marched through London and 40,000 in Glasgow. The London demonstration ended in pitched battles and hand-to-hand fighting with the police. London's West End was smashed up as demonstrators fought back after being attacked by the police in Trafalgar Square.

THERESA CONWAY AND ALAN THORNETT

WHILST in the past the Tories have attacked one section of the working class at a time, with the Poll Tax they have attacked and united a big majority of the population against them. The London march was extremely broad in scope — packed coaches arrived from the remotest parts of England and Wales, with banners from Bikers against the Poll Tax, Middle Class Moderates Against the Poll Tax, Individuals Against the Poll Tax — even groups of Tories against the Poll Tax. One banner was carried by Finchley Tories Against the Poll Tax — from Margaret Thatcher's own constituency. It was a genuine mass popular movement ranging from disaffected Tories to anti-poll tax groups from every part of the country, the far left and anarchists. It was overwhelmingly young, working class people who have not previously been involved in demonstrations.

What made the size of the demonstrations even more impressive was that they were organized not by the trade union movement or the Labour Party, but by the National Anti-Poll Tax Federation — a loose federation of thousands of anti-poll tax groups. Many of these groups are organized by the far left outside the structures of the labour movement. As a result there were comparatively few trade union banners.

The main slogan of the march was "Can't pay — won't pay", in sharp contrast to the position of the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress (TUC), who believe that the tax is wrong but that nonetheless people should pay it and wait for the election of a Labour government. Even then the Labour Party has said that it will not scrap the tax for two years after it

comes into office.

The police and authorities completely underestimated the size of the demonstration and its explosive nature. They refused requests from the organizers earlier in the week to re-route the march to Hyde Park on the basis that Trafalgar Square would be too small. The result was chaos and a series of deliberate, brutal and unprovoked attacks on the demonstration, by both mounted police and police in vehicles, which triggered the main battles and involved thousands in them. Since the demonstration there have been many reports in the press complaining about the behaviour of the police and pointing out that it was police actions that started the violence.

Fury of most deprived sectors boils over

The fighting was qualitatively different from previous battles, such as during the miners' strike or the printers' strike at Wapping, in that there was clearly a layer of people who had little regard for the consequences or for their own safety and who engaged in hand to hand combat with the police over a prolonged period. In some ways it was like the inner city uprisings in Britain in the early 1980s. Many of the demonstrators were from the most deprived section of young white society living on the margins of the economy and in squats. Not only do they now have to pay the poll tax, but being forcibly registered for the tax is a huge infringement of both their civil liberties and their economic position.

Tony Benn MP, the traditional leader of the Labour Party left, spoke at the Trafal-

gar Square rally and got by far the biggest reception — bigger before he spoke than anyone else afterwards. He took a strong line on breaking the law and non-payment. He said "there are times when conscience comes above the law and this is such a time." He went on to say that although non-payment is an individual decision, those who refuse to pay should be given full support and their houses defended when the bailiffs come. He also pointed out that if the demonstration had been called by the LP and TUC there would have been a million people on the streets.

Benn's position is in complete contrast with the statements following the march made on behalf of the Labour leadership by Roy Hattersley. He not only called for those charged to be convicted but for them to be given "exemplary sentences". No wonder the Birmingham Six¹ went to jail under Labour! In reality, it is Thatcher and her poll tax that have created the conditions for violent confrontations, and the provocations of the riot police and cavalry that made it virtually inevitable.

Mechanism for attacking Labour councils

The poll tax is the centre-piece of ten years of Tory attacks on local government. It is designed to destroy local services and whatever local democracy remains, and provide a mechanism by which central government can attack Labour councils by manipulating government grants. The Tories have sold off public industries to give tax concessions to the better off. Now that there is not much left to sell, they are shifting the burden back onto the poor via the poll tax.

The tax has become the catalyst for an escalation of hatred of the Tory government which has been brewing up for years — and it is an effective catalyst because it affects and mobilizes so many people. Many of those fighting with the police were people at the bottom of the heap economically who are furious at the bills they are going to get and the regressive principle of the tax, according to which a millionaire is charged the same as someone on the dole.

The reaction against the tax has triggered a major crisis in the government and the Tory Party. Mrs. Thatcher is now the most unpopular Prime Minister since opinion polls began in 1937 and Labour are some 24% ahead of the Tories in the polls. Tory MPs with marginal — and not so marginal — seats are in a panic. The resignation of 18 Tory councillors in West Oxfordshire, and others elsewhere, over the poll tax has been extremely damaging.

There is now much speculation in Britain as to whether Thatcher herself can survive and whether the Tories can continue until the next general election which is still over two years away. Thatcher herself is now an electoral liability and Michael

Heseltine, a previous Tory Minister of Defence who has distanced himself from the government since resigning from the Cabinet, is waiting in the wings for his chance to challenge for the leadership. Many Tories see a switch to Heseltine, and some substantial concessions in the structure of the poll tax, as the only chance of winning the next election.

But it is not as easy as that. The Tories remain split over Europe. Heseltine represents a wing of the party and ruling class who look towards Europe. Thatcher represents Atlanticism and is opposed to further European integration. They are on opposite sides of the fence. A switch to Heseltine would involve a major realignment of Britain's foreign policy and one which a major section of the British ruling class would oppose. Any challenge to Thatcher would therefore be bitterly fought with this issue at the centre. Already Norman Tebbit, who represents the extreme right of the party, has said he will stand.

There is therefore no easy way out for the Tories, and their problems are still escalating. They lost the recent Mid-Staffordshire by-election in a spectacular Labour victory. They now face local elections in May, which will again be a referendum on the poll tax, at which the Tories will crash again. Swathes of Tory councillors are going to be swept from office and dozens of Tory Councils will go from Tory or Alliance (the centre party) to Labour, bringing more panic and confusion to the Tory ranks. They may well lose as many as a thousand seats. At the same time the economic situation gives the Tories little room for manoeuvre. The squeeze through interest rates is not working, the balance of trade problem is not resolved, inflation is on the increase and the official inflation rate may soon be

in double figures, with the actual rate much higher.

Nor is the poll tax going to go away. With the opinion polls predicting that between eight and nine million people intend to refuse to pay, the issue is going to run and run. The government has now charge-capped some councils (put a legal limit on what they can spend) but this is fraught with problems since it denies their own stated assertion that the tax "improves local democracy".

The Labour Party response to the poll tax has been as weak at local level as at the national level. Although the left has fought for Labour councils not to set the rate for the tax or implement it, in every case they have done so. At the present time, however, the bulk of the population see it as "Maggie's Tax" and mainly blame central government for it, although this may not last when local authorities begin enforcing it.

Mass non-payment is now clearly the driving force behind the campaign to defeat the tax. It is in itself a major challenge to the government and could in the end affect its stability. In Scotland, where the tax was introduced earlier, there are still 850,000 people refusing to pay after a year and there is serious destabilization of the regional administrations there.

Huge gap between official unions and demonstrators

The domination of "new realism" in the trade unions is a big problem in this campaign. The TUC organized a rally against the tax recently which was by invitation only and at which people were told that non-payment was wrong. The gap between the union bureaucracy and those on the streets opposing the tax is now huge. But the left cannot accept this situation.

The poll tax poses big problems for the unions which have to be tackled. Trade unionists in local government are expected to administer and collect the tax. Post Office unionists are expected to deliver the bills and the threatening letters. The government has taken powers to force employers to deduct the tax from the wage packets of those who refuse to pay — a huge issue for the unions. The tax will generate massive attacks on local authority jobs as local authorities attempt to balance their books or to comply with charge-capping.

Some trade union branches have already passed policy in opposition to this, committing themselves to strike action if deduction of wages is enforced. Some employers are unhappy about it as well. The Engineering Employers' Federation is objecting to attachment of wages on the

basis that it will worsen labour relations in the industry. Within the civil service unions, opposition has been focussed on possible deductions for non-payment from claimants' benefit and in a number of areas limited strike action has already occurred.

Within local government trade unions the battle over the poll tax has been particularly fierce. Over many years the amount of money given by central government to pay for local services has been drastically reduced. The Labour leadership and its local minions have argued against councils not setting the poll tax and individuals not paying it on the grounds that without this money the wages of council employees will not be paid and services not maintained.

This position has found support within the unions too, with Liverpool City NALGO demanding that the council set the poll tax to protect jobs and services. Such arguments are familiar — they have been consistently used over the last ten years in debates on how to combat central government attacks.

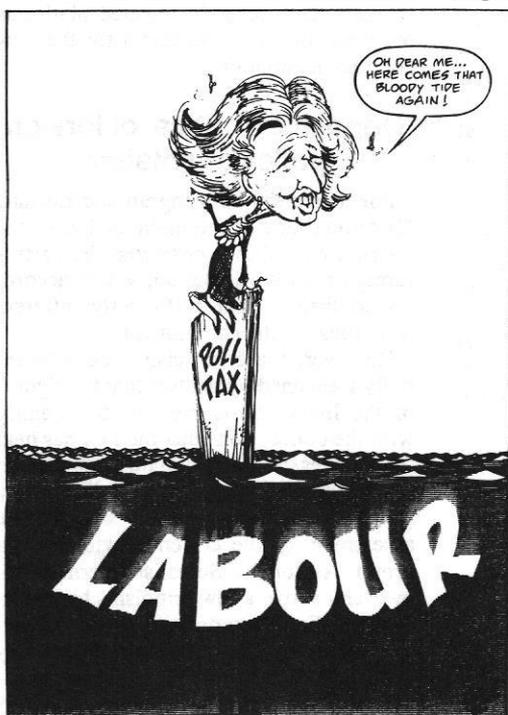
"Dented shield" strategy divides unions from community

This position — known as the "dented shield" — denies the possibility that if the unions and community stand together, and are supported by local councillors, the government can be defeated. The answer to this is: to oppose the poll tax, defend jobs and services and to demand money from central government to pay. It is the Tories that have created the situation by bringing in the poll tax and reducing the money provided for local services and they can resolve it by abolishing the tax and restoring the money.

Without such a fight there is a real danger that it will be local government trade unionists and the local community that are made to pay for the poll tax, a danger that becomes greater after charge capping. And within the anti-poll tax movement there will be forces that do not immediately understand the importance of the fight against cuts in jobs and services. The slogan "no cuts—no poll tax", and the building of strong links between local anti-poll tax campaigns and the trade unions to pursue this line, can help combat this danger.

The Tories have lost their mandate to govern. People are not prepared to wait two years to get rid of this tax. A campaign is needed to get the Tories out now and that means building non-payment on a massive scale alongside trade union action against all the effects of the poll tax. ★

1. The Birmingham Six are serving life sentences for IRA pub bombings carried out in 1974. The evidence against them has since been totally discredited, but the state has refused to release the men.



PCI Congress paves way for new transformations

FORMALLY, the Bologna congress was not called on to decide about the transformation of the party or changing its name. But the delegates did have to decide about the party embarking on a programme of profound reforms (the "foundation phase") that, according to the PCI general secretary, Occhetto, are supposed to lead to the formation of a new alternative political force.

The majority of the delegates (67%), along with the majority of the Central Committee voted for the motion put by Occhetto, while 33% of the delegates voted for the Ingrao-Natta motion and 3% for the one presented by Cossutta.

According to Occhetto, the objective is "to build a force able once again to set in motion a process bringing together the reform currents in Italian society on the basis of a program for social and political renewal designed to redefine the identity of the left on the eve of the year 2,000" and to "reestablish politics on the foundation of distinguishing progress from conservatism on the basis of program and ideals."

The PCI first secretary's report to the congress pointed out that "the process of building the new political formation will advance not through a fusion with other parties but through the contributions of individuals, groups and sections of society that operate in production, in the liberal professions, in the cultural world and in the institutions and want to associate themselves with, and participate in, our foundation process."

PCI bids farewell to workers' movement

The conception of the party championed by Occhetto bids farewell to the traditional view of the organization as the party of the workers' movement. According to him, the PCI must transform itself into a sort of progressive party fighting the conservative bloc for the leadership of society with a view towards gradualist reform. Even though there is nothing new about this approach, which was adopted years ago by the PCI, the scope of the change projected should not be underestimated.

In fact, what is proposed today is to "surmount" the traditional approach of the social democratic parties and replace the contest between the parties and organizations of the workers movement and the bourgeois parties and organizations with one between "progressives" and "conservatives."

IT'S BECOME something of a tradition. All the congresses of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), especially since the death of Enrico Berlinguer, have been lauded by its leaders as major turning points. But for once, it has to be acknowledged that the PCI's Nineteenth Congress, held in Bologna March 7-10, opened a new chapter in its history. Indeed, what was at stake at the congress was the continuity of the party as it has existed for nearly seventy years.

LIVIO MAITAN

Such a view goes beyond the traditional policy of collaborating, including on the governmental level, with the bourgeoisie or sections of it. The references to the fundamental role that the workers are to play in the new political formation, which seem to be a concession to the minority tendencies, in no way alter the substance of what is proposed.

Occhetto cannot be unaware of the fact that without the support — especially the electoral backing — of the workers, no "progressive force" is going to get anywhere. But in his eyes this in no way involves a need to reaffirm the political independence of the working class and the struggle that it has to wage for hegemony.

The very concept of "hegemony" has vanished from the plans of the Communist Party. On the ideological level, the notion of "new politics" involves completing the break from Marxist, or even just materialist, conceptions. In the first place, this leads Occhetto and company to systematically favor politico-ideological themes over social and economic issues.

Dilution of critique of capitalism

In the second place, this approach is reflected by an extreme dilution of their critique of capitalist society and even of the differences between the various political forces. Occhetto explains that "the

problem today is not to oppose Christian anti-democrats and anti-Communists....It is to unite, for the first time in human history, two great ideals that in our century have remained at loggerheads, the ideal of freedom and that of equality."

To complete the picture, the PCI is going to apply for membership in the Socialist International. Moves toward achieving that objective were made immediately after the congress.

As all of the international press has stressed, Occhetto's project ran into quite strong opposition in the party. For the first time since the 1920s, we have seen the formation of real tendencies clashing not only in the internal debate but also publicly, and which now have proportional representation in the new Central Committee.

The main opposition tendency, led by veteran leader Pietro Ingrao and the former first secretary, Alessandro Natta, has tried to maintain a class-struggle approach and defend the traditional reformist conception, with a, to be sure, very vague perspective of "surmounting" capitalism.

The reporter for this tendency at the congress, Aldo Tortorella, explicitly condemned the majority's tendency to bury any idea of social and political conflict. He criticized the party for being late to take a position toward the mobilization that rocked the Italian universities for two months (see *IV* 180), and chided the unions for using not very democratic methods. In fact significant sections of the workers have recently rejected platforms proposed by the bureaucrats for the new contract negotiations.

Opposition critical of foreign policy orientation

For their part, both Ingrao and Luciana Castellina (one of the main leaders of the internal opposition) criticized the party's foreign policy orientation, which according to them is not sufficiently different from those of the government.

However, these criticisms are substantially weakened by the fact that the signers of the Ingrao-Natta motion still identify with the conceptions that the PCI has held for decades, both in Togliatti's time and in that of Enrico Berlinguer. In addition, they share the majority group's favorable assessment of the current Soviet leading group. As for the Socialist International, over and above a few criticisms by Luciana Castellina, they do not oppose Occhetto's proposal. They also do not draw any historical balance sheet of that organization or of what it represents today. In this

area also, they remain prisoners of their past. Indeed, at the 1986 congress, they accepted the idea of integrating the PCI into the "European left," or in plain terms into the international social democratic current.

Analogous remarks can be made about the other minority, the one led by Cossutta. He and his associates, making apt criticisms of the approach championed by the majority, have correctly pointed out that the PCI has been in decline for more than ten years. "At bottom, there is a superficial, sugar coated view of reality, an absence of not only a class analysis but even a materialist analysis of the phenomena of our time," Cossutta said in his report. And he added "there is a theory that there are no longer any enemies."

In the trade-union field, Cossutta also advanced correct criticisms, as well as demands that could constitute a basis for united-front actions. But, as he has done in past congresses, he presented the period of Togliatti and his gradualist reformist strategy in a favorable light and also expressed a favorable assessment of Gorbachev. As for the Socialist International, this third current also did not go beyond a few partial criticisms.

The oppositionists had an easy time pointing out that so far Occhetto has not found many interlocutors inclined to take part in building the new political formation, aside from a few Radical Party members and some small sections of the Greens.

The only ones who have come out for Occhetto's project are some left intellectuals and independents. Before and after the congress, they have started to form clubs and committees for the celebrated "foundation phase," often referring explicitly to the clubs that prepared the way for Mitterrand's "refounding" of the French Socialist Party in the lead up to the Epinay Congress.

As Ingrao has noted, "the real target of Occhetto's initiative is the Italian Socialist Party [PSI]." But that party's secretary, Bettino Craxi, has answered by proposing "socialist unity,"² which seems to imply a "return" of the PCI to the old "common home," while Occhetto, for the moment at least, rejects such a perspective. In fact, he claims to be aiming for a more ambitious

objective. He describes this as going "beyond the traditional conflict between the Socialist and Communist movements," including broader "progressive" forces in his operation.

In the coming months, we will probably see how far this goes beyond a mere conjunctural tactical move. The fact remains that while the PSI leaders are showing signs of greater flexibility than in the past, they are by no means ready to clear the path for Occhetto.

Finally, over and above the vicissitudes of the process that is supposed to lead to the celebrated new foundation, what will be the nature and dynamic of the new political formation, if it really sees the light of day? The intentions of the PCI's new leading group have to be distinguished from the party's real political practice. If this new foundation really

Occhetto's operation will encounter serious obstacles, not to say very knotty contradictions.

On paper, it is easy to be ecumenical and to propose big openings. In practice, things do not happen like that. For example, a few weeks before its congress, the PCI found itself in an awkward position with respect to the student movement. But one of that movement's main objectives was the withdrawal of a law that the party had not fought.

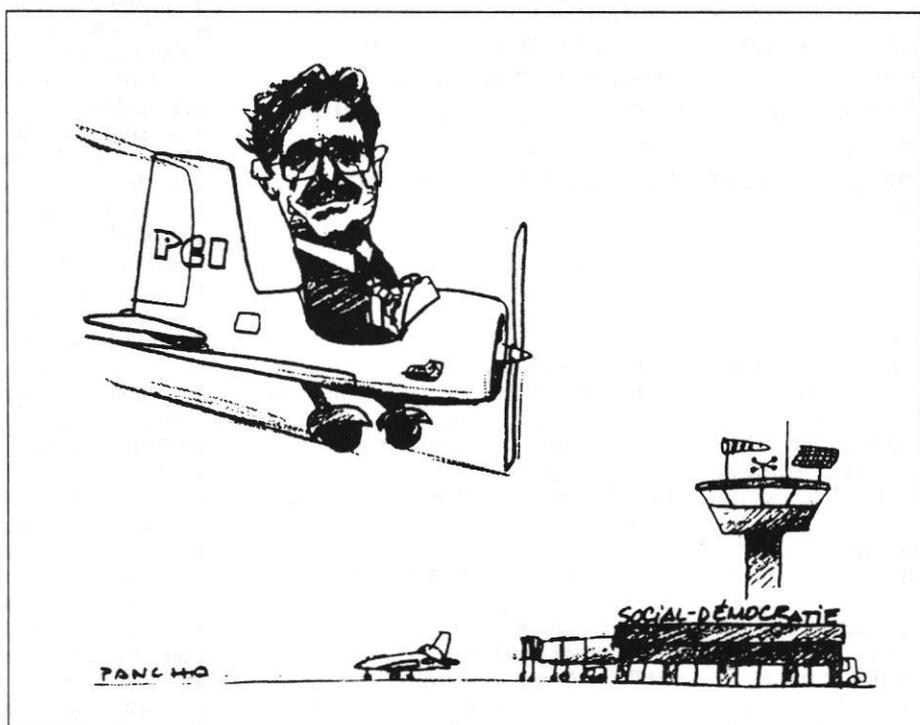
The rectification that the PCI carried out at its congress, lining up partially with the student movement, immediately created tensions with intellectuals and professors favorable to the "new foundation," and the crisis did not spare the "shadow cabinet."³ In the trade-union field, the PCI claimed in its documents to be in favor of democracy, but its members include the choicest

specimens of the sort of trade-union bureaucrat that the workers are more and more turning thumbs down on.

On the other hand, the party wants to win the sympathy of the peace activists, and more generally those who have given impetus to the anti-war mobilizations.

Some major federations even adopted proposals for Italy's withdrawal from NATO. Concerned about its respectable international image, however, the party rejected all the points that went in that direction.

Secondly, even if the role the "new" CP plays in practice may depart from its ideological proclamations, its ideological regression will not fail to have consequences. In fact, the damage wrought will be still graver than in the past, setting back the political consciousness of broad sections of the working class and thereby creating additional obstacles on the road for rebuilding the Italian workers' movement on revolutionary bases. ★



gives rise to a fundamentally new political formation, of which the PCI would only be one component, albeit the largest one, that would mean the emergence of a "progressive" party with a qualitatively different configuration from the traditional outlines of an organization of the workers' movement. In my opinion, that is an unlikely variant.

If, on the other hand, the new formation is essentially a new incarnation of the PCI, with traditional liberal-social or liberal-democratic features, with a more fluid and more eclectic political profile, it will play a role similar to that of the social democratic parties in other countries of capitalist Europe. Its strength will still lie in the electoral support of wage earners and in the influence it retains, more or less directly, in the trade-union movement.

In conclusion, whatever happens,

1. See *International Viewpoint*, No. 163, May 15, 1989.

2. In reality, the "socialist unity" perspective is undoubtedly shared by some supporters of the majority tendency.

3. About a year ago, the PCI formed a "shadow cabinet," a sort of parallel government presided over by Occhetto himself. The "minister" in this government for university questions, a left independent, resigned in protest against the congress's rectification with respect to the government law fought by the student movement.

The left in a changing landscape

IN 1989, Japanese politics was marked above all by corruption and sex scandals. On February 18, 1990, in spite of opinion polls which showed it slipping and the rise of the Socialist Party (JSP), the Liberal Democratic Party, which has ruled for 35 years, won the legislative elections to the Lower House.¹ At the same time, the retreat of the militant union movement was sealed last autumn by the formation of a new united union confederation, Rengo no Kai.

Apart from the women's movement, which is on the rise, the Japanese far left finds its perspectives in crisis. I've asked Osamu Hino, member of the political committee of the Japan Revolutionary Communist League (RCL — Japanese section of the Fourth International) for his view of the political situation. The interview was conducted on April 3 by Erdal Tan and Colin Meade.

WHAT is the general political situation after the elections? For a time it looked as if the ruling Liberal Democratic Party was losing support, as a result of the scandals, but they came back to win.

The LDP lost their majority in the Upper House, which they have controlled since the 1950s. After this the focal point of Japanese politics was whether the LDP would lose control of the Lower House in this year's general election. During the election campaign the LDP fought around the idea that the choice was between capitalism and socialism.

On the other side the Socialist Party formed a sort of coalition with the Komei (Clean) Party — a Buddhist petty bourgeois party and the right-wing social democrats of the Democratic Socialist Party. The Socialist Party fought its campaign around the idea that this coalition would form the next government.

There were three reasons behind the LDP's crisis. The first was the Recruit corruption² and sex scandals, the second was the introduction of a new tax system which taxed all commodities. Their less well-off supporters are totally against this tax. The third question was the freeing of rice prices, after a sharp conflict between the US and Japan on this question. Most Japanese farmers are against the liberalization of rice prices. Officially the LDP have announced that they too are against this, but most of the peasants know that

this is only a pose. They know that the LDP government will be obliged to make concessions to the US. As a result a significant number of peasants, who have been a pillar of the LDP regime, no longer trust it. This November there will be a GATT meeting which will finally decide the issue of rice prices.

These were the immediate reasons behind the LDP's problems, but there is also a longer term trend. There is a new development of the women's movement in Japan. As you know, the Japan Socialist Party elected Mrs. Doi as its chairperson and a lot of women's groups are attracted to the SP because of this.

In the six months between the elections the LDP revised the new tax system to protect small shops and so on and replaced their chairperson to get away from the scandals. They also spent a lot of money — three billion yen — on their campaign. As for the opposition, Komei and DSP tried to attract forces further and further to the right, and there was no real consensus between these two parties and the SP. Furthermore Chairperson Doi announced that, although the party programme contained a phrase about launching a socialist revolution, the next party congress was going to revise this phrase. For the Japanese masses there was no real alternative in the opposition camp, given the splits and the unclear line of the SP, and they could not have confidence in the opposition. The LDP was therefore able to recover somewhat after the Upper House election and avoid

defeat.

At the same time, as a result of the women's groups and other new movements and continuing criticism of the new tax law, the SP was able to make gains and win seats, while Komei and DSP lost seats. Now the LDP is in the minority in the Upper House and in the majority in the Lower House, so there is still a very unstable political situation. The LDP is using the argument that since there is a severe economic conflict with the US, there has to be a national consensus. The SP cannot resist this kind of logic and there is no real confrontation between the LDP and the opposition. There are secret negotiations between them.

■ What is the state of the workers movement?

In 1989 there was a new unification in the Japanese labour movement. A big national trade union centre called Rengo no Kai was set up last autumn. It is the product of a fusion between the Sohyo union confederation, close to the SP, the Domei confederation, connected with the DSP and the independent Churitsu Roren union. Rengo has some eight million members and organizes the overwhelming majority of the working class. This is a historic event. It marks the end of the left reformist trade union movement that has existed since the 1950s.

Apart from Rengo there are two other union confederations. Firstly there is the pro-Communist Party Zenroren which claims a million and a half members, and Zenrokyo with about half a million. This third group is not an official national confederation — it includes a number of independent groups. There are pro-CP and pro-SP people in it. For example the Tokyo municipal workers union couldn't decide whether to join Rengo or Zenroren because half are pro-SP and half pro-CP. So they decided to participate in the third current. It is not a very militant trade union. The real class struggle current is very small, with maybe 50,000 union members in the third group.

The background to this situation lies in the 1960s, when most of the trade unions in the key private companies split to the right from the left reformist Sohyo. The latter was then largely restricted to the public sector. Then during the "oil shock" of 1974-75 which posed serious problems for the Japanese economy, Japanese capital carried through a major rationalization involving layoffs and so on. There was a general ruling class offensive which the trade union was unable to resist and con-

1. In these elections, despite losing 25 seats, the LDP got 46% of the votes and retained an absolute majority with 275 of the 512 seats. The SP got 24.3% of the vote and gained 51 seats; the CP got 8% and lost 10 seats; the (Buddhist) Komei party got 8% and lost 11 seats while the SDP got 4.8% and lost 12 seats.

2. A political and financial corruption scandal in which many LDP — and opposition — ministers and personalities were implicated. These included the then Prime Minister, Takeshita. He resigned in April 1989.

stantly retreated before. Sohyo lost whatever had remained in the private sector. But the offensive was also extended to the public sector. In autumn 1981 a new unification took place in the private sector that was a prelude to the formation of Rengo.

After that the Japanese government, in collaboration with the labour bureaucrats, concentrated their fire on the public sector. Key to this was the privatization of the national railways, where there was a militant trade union. In the mid 1980s the rail union had 250,000 members, but now it has only 35,000. The overwhelming majority of the railway unions are participating in Rengo. The national railway union was the last stronghold of the reformist leftist movement.

The minority union is still resisting layoffs and has held strikes, but they are no longer able to have the paralyzing effect on the Japanese economy that they had in the past. The situation is very difficult for the independent leftist trade union movement.

■ **Can you say more about Rengo-style unionism? Is it possible for militants to work in Rengo?**

The leaders of Rengo are divided into two types. The first are from the big private enterprises, including the multinationals, for example in the car industry.

In these sectors the labour bureaucrats are totally behind the company. They are for the freeing of rice prices, not for internationalist reasons, but because what is involved is the ability of their firms to sell on the American market. They have organized a network of reactionary trade union leaders in Asian countries where their companies have penetrated. When the International Free Trade Union Federation passes a resolution against some dictatorship, these bureaucrats are against this, because they totally support the reactionary dictatorships in the Asian region.

The union structures are interwoven with the enterprise management and trade union bureaucrats often move on to managerial positions. In other words there is no real trade union movement at the factory level. The companies give some concessions on such things as leisure time and housing, but there is no real trade union activity in the factory. If militants begin to work in these factories they are immedi-



"Women are raising their voices more and more, both in the factory and the home"

ately expelled from the trade unions and there are some cases in the car industry where union bureaucrats have made violent attacks on militants.

The reason why the Japanese industry were able to expand in the world markets since 1974-75 was because they had succeeded in their attacks on the labour movement. This gave them an advantage over the West European countries. They had a free hand for rationalization and layoffs. The other reason for their economic success has been the establishment of a hierarchically structured economic zone in Asia.

■ **What is the relationship between the workers and the SP?**

Socialist Chairperson Doi is a very popular figure. She was a scholar of the Japanese constitution and had defended it against the new military build-up. Thus she is very famous in the pacifist movement. Also as a woman she has been able to attract support from women's groups. But in reality she is a figurehead and not the real power in the SP. Most of the real leaders of the SP have close connections with the Rengo bureaucracy, especially in the private sector. Five years ago within the party the reformist left had one third support. Now this leftist current has declined to one tenth. Now with Gorbachev and the economic reforms most of the leaders say that socialism is over and so on. The SP can win seats in the Diet but there is no real mass movement behind them. There is a current within the women's movement that wants to support Doi and the SP, while the other wants to remain independent.

■ **What has been the impact of**

East European events on the Communist Party?

The CP is in a serious crisis. They lost a lot of seats in the last elections, in spite of the LDP's crisis. In the 1970s when the LDP retreated a little, the CP gained, but this is not happening now. One reason is the international situation. In the 1980s there were two summit meetings between Miyamoto of the CP and Romania's President Ceausescu. They proclaimed that they were the only two independent Communist Parties in the world. They have tried to defend their policy, but it is not convincing.

In the last election campaign all they said was that before the war they were the only party that defended freedom. They had nothing to say about the current situation. In the trade union movement they are not very militant. They say in the teacher's movement that teachers are not ordinary workers and shouldn't launch strikes. In local government they say that the first aim of local government is to provide services and they are against strikes and so on. They also support nuclear power programmes. After Chernobyl they have had to change a bit on this, but they do not have any real influence in the anti-nuclear movement.

The party is monolithic and votes at national conventions are unanimous. They call this real democratic centralism. To the masses it looks like Ceausescu's system. They say that Gorbachev is against scientific Communism and things like this.

■ **What are their relations with the Chinese Communist Party after the Tiananmen massacre?**

The JCP broke their ties with the CCP

during the Cultural Revolution. They were thus able to criticize the Tiananmen incident saying "we have been against this party since 1968 and have been proved correct."

■ **What are the main activities of the trade union left?**

The main force in the independent trade unions are the 35,000 railway workers. The other groups are very small from middle and small sized enterprises. They are groups that are expelled from or not allowed to participate in Rengo. There are also public sector unions that were against the formation of Rengo. Even in the railway union there are right-wing currents. The left is in the majority in Tokyo.

The main activities of this union movement are firstly the struggle against the layoffs of railway workers. The second is an international solidarity campaign with Asian workers, especially in South Korea, where many workers have been laid off by Japanese companies. Representatives of the South Korean workers came to Japan to organize actions against these companies. We are now trying to set up an international network to support protest actions against Japanese firms. We are also trying to unionize workers especially working women who are part-time and so on.

We have also taken up the problem of immigrant workers. There are many workers from other Asian countries, from Bangladesh, the Philippines, Thailand and elsewhere. They don't have any real rights — they are illegal. Often Japanese bosses don't pay them for the work they do but they can't go to the authorities. There is also the problem of women from Asian countries who have to become prostitutes. Such workers often live in very cramped conditions — ten to a room and have very bad working conditions as well. Furthermore there is a strong reactionary nationalist feeling amongst the Japanese people against these workers. Rengo is officially against them coming, saying that by taking this position they are defending the interests of Japanese workers.

Generally speaking the independent unions can launch strategic campaigns on such issues, but they do not have the strength to take up problems such as housing problems and the land crisis, which are central to the concerns of Japanese working people. We would like to take up such issues but it is very difficult.

■ **What state is the far left in?**

There are three main currents. The first group is the so-called revolutionary Marxist faction, Kakumaru. They are very sectarian. They support and participate in the Rengo unions. The second is the Chukaku — the so-called core faction. Along with other small groups the Chukaku launched the independent trade unions. As a result the first and second groups attacked each

other as enemies of the working class and agents of the state.³

They went so far as to kill each other. The third group, us and other independent groups, split from the CP and the SP at the end of the 1960s and formed a spontaneist current in the 1970s. This group works mainly in the trade unions and publishes a journal twice a month. It has a circulation of 6,000.

Another activity has been the campaign against the new international airport⁴. A third campaign is against the military build-up and the Imperial system. And then there is anti-imperialist solidarity with, for example, South Korea, work with immigrant workers and so on. Solidarity campaigns with South Africa or the Nicaraguan FSLN are very weak in Japan. The final activity is to spread some ideas about what is socialism, what is *perestroika* and so on; we hold nationwide discussion meetings three times a year.

■ **What has happened to the struggle against the international airport at Narita?**

Because of the resistance, the international airport has still not been completed, although after 25 years it is now 50% finished. But the government has now bought 98% of the necessary land so that the peasants only retain 1 or 2% of the whole area. Only one of the three runways has been completed. Last year the airport authority built a fence around the whole area, which makes it very difficult to get in.

In May 1978 a special law was passed for the new international airport. According to this law the government can remove any building in this area. As a result some small houses of supporters of the anti-airport struggle were smashed up. The government was able to divide the peasants from the outside supporting groups. They offered a dialogue with the peasants, but there was confrontation with the supporting groups. Obviously the whole struggle depends on the resistance of the peasants, and the nationwide balance of forces is not in their favour. At one time the SP supported the struggle at least on paper, but now their present position is very vague, and this has undermined the peasants' confidence.

The Chukaku group conceives of this struggle in terms of guerilla-war type tactics. They set fire to installations of construction companies, and with such tactics they cannot mobilize mass support. Furthermore the Peasant League split into two groups in 1985. One group are with the Chukaku and the other, majority group work with other far left groups. The pro-Chukaku group has also split. The perspective is not favourable, but we cannot abandon this struggle



alongside the peasants. To abandon the struggle now would lose us the sympathy of those who have come to join the struggle. We do not want the reputation of people who give up easily and betray their allies!

■ **There is also a rising tide of protest against nuclear power plants....**

Yes. In Japan the anti-nuclear movement became very strong and popular after Chernobyl, especially as a community struggle. There was fallout from Chernobyl in Japan and food was polluted. Some housewives began to organize and in Spring 1988 there was a big nationwide mobilization mainly organized by these women's groups. Another big mobilization took place last autumn. Half of the public are now against nuclear power plants. Previously only leftist groups were against nuclear power, but that has changed again. The electricity companies are very worried by this.

In the past the anti-nuclear movement was based on the experience in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but this movement had become rather hollow. It was split between a pro-CP and pro-SP wing and a few years ago was on the decline. But it has revived now. There is a debate within this movement on its perspectives. The movement is widespread but they have not won concrete gains. Some say that we should organize direct action to stop the

3. The Japanese section of the Fourth International (LCR), arose from a split in the Communist Party in the 1950s against a background of student radicalization. Chukaku, Kakumaru and the LCR were all at one time in the same organization. Later, Chukaku and Kakumaru underwent a sectarian degeneration. Chukaku in fact went so far as to launch a "war" against the LCR at the start of the 1980s.

4. In 1978, the Sanrizuka Peasants League opposed the construction of a new airport at Narita, near Tokyo — which would have required the removal of many peasants from their lands. The struggle against Narita became the main focus for the activity of the Japanese far left for more than a decade, including a spectacular occupation of the Narita control tower in 1982.

construction of power plants, others that there should be a nationwide campaign to introduce an anti-power plant law.

■ **You mentioned earlier the new importance of the women's movement in Japanese politics.**

The feminist movement is an important element in the situation. Last year problems of sexual harassment were widely taken up in the mass media. The present policy of the Japanese ruling class is to introduce more women into jobs — especially part-time jobs. At the same time they are training a small elite of working women. All this has led to a new rising tide of the women's movement, effective at the level of the votes for the Socialist Party. Women's voices are becoming heard in the factories and offices. This is a contrast with the decline of the trade union movement. The feminist movement is very important for the reconstruction of a militant trade union movement and in the communities. As you know patriarchal traditions are very strong in Japanese society and there are problems between the women and the trade union movement where the leaderships are often not ready to take up women's problems. This includes the independent leftist unions and our own organization.

■ **How are you responding to the remilitarization plans of the Japanese ruling class?**

The bourgeoisie began to address this issue in the 1970s. It wants to restructure the whole of Japanese society according to the imperial model. Before the Second World War, Japanese militarism took the form of the imperial system and the bourgeoisie was closely linked to the imperial family. After their victory the Americans imposed changes, but the growing strength and international scope of the Japanese economy, has seen the revival of the idea of the imperial system as a form of national and international domination. There are once again attempts to create links between the imperial family and the upper social strata via marriages and so on.

The question of the imperial system is today a real issue for the whole left. Unfortunately the majority of the left only noticed this about three years ago. The attempt to rebuild the imperial system has very important implications for the feminist movement, for example, given the system's patriarchal character and without a struggle against the imperial system there can be no solidarity campaign with the immigrant workers or other Asian peoples. They are not in the family! We have to destroy this ideology that the Emperor is the father of the people and all the Japanese his children.

■ **What is the outlook for the Japanese left?**

In general the Japanese far left has not-

been really independent from the leftist reformist movement. When this movement collapsed we did not have our own independent basis. A typical example was in the 1974-75 economic crisis. We thought that the Japanese ruling class offensive would arouse the working class — we had spontaneist illusions and an economic approach. We did not take up things like the imperial system or understand the feminist movement.

Now, with Gorbachev and the whole

East European situation, the international context has drastically changed. There is this campaign that socialism is over, and most people think that the far left is to do with terrorism. We have to re-organize and promote a real socialist ideology. We have been activists and have not taken theoretical problems seriously enough. From an international point of view, solidarity with the Asian peoples is very important for us as well as work towards women workers and immigrant workers. ★

Tupamaros consider changes in the Soviet bloc

WHAT IMPACT have the changes rocking the USSR and Eastern Europe had on revolutionary currents in Latin America outside the Fourth International? The following is a summary of a long discussion with Eleuterio Fernández Huidobro, editor of *Mate Amargo*, a publication of the Uruguayan Tupamaros. We have taken it from the January issue of *Tupamaros*, another publication of the movement.

IN HIS BOOK *Perestroika*, Gorbachev analyzes some worldwide problems, such as the existence of nuclear weapons, the development of just as deadly conventional weapons and dangers to the environment. He takes up as well the terrible conditions of hunger and poverty that afflict the majority of humanity. He argues that Von Clausewitz's statement that "war is a continuation of politics by other means" has lost its validity. War, he says is not a continuation of anything because it would wipe out the human race.

With violent confrontation between the two camps ruled out, there remains the economic field. But the environmental question comes in here, because unbridled economic development is causing grave levels of damage to the world.

The essential fact is that he is looking for a new relationship with the imperialist camp, which would involve an elimi-

nation of the cold war and détente in the most dangerous focuses of tension, such as Afghanistan, Angola, Kampuchea and the frontier between the two Europes. He is also looking for a relaxation of tensions in Central America.

Some economic factors underlie *perestroika* and the crisis of many socialist countries. But such problems also afflict the capitalist countries, because an invasion as crude as the Panama operation is a striking expression of the crisis of a system. You have only to look at the Argentine situation, which is the same as throughout the third world; the problem of the debt, which will certainly never be paid; as well as the pushing and shoving between Japan, the United States and the EEC.

Discoveries not applied owing to bureaucracy

The greater internationalization of economic life and the advance of technology have created a new economic situation. The socialist camp lost ground in the technological race, not because it did not make discoveries but because it did not apply them rapidly, owing to bureaucratic sluggishness.

An economic battle is being waged. Gorbachev refers to it, when he says "either we will make this revolution, or we will be left behind." When the USSR gives priority to world peace, there is a problem of tone, or degree that often borders on major errors. This is because this general line, which has undeniable justifications, involves the problems of the third world, the liberation struggles and economic relations.

You cannot remain indifferent to a problem such as the invasion of Panama and say that we are going to have a relaxation

of tensions, as if the aggressors and their victims were the same. You cannot remain indifferent to the situation of the FMLN in El Salvador, to that of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. You cannot remain indifferent to the situation of Cuba, which has been isolated and blockaded since time immemorial.

Moreover, when some economic measures begin to sour relations between countries like Cuba and the socialist camp, giving them a character similar to those between the capitalist and the underdeveloped countries, we have to say that this is a tremendous error. If they are starting to renew socialism on such bases, it is a bad start, a setback.

If we criticize the rich countries of the capitalist world for their exploitation of the poor, we have to do the same when a socialist country establishes relations of this type. Those advancing the cause of their liberation ought to get a helping hand of solidarity, even though this has nothing to do with the laws of the market.

Imperialists seek new excuses for Interventions

The cold war is ending, and with it many of the ideological concoctions of the capitalist theorists. They are going to have to renovate their theories in order to justify their imperialist activity. To invade Panama, the United States could not resort to tales of Communism, as it did when it invaded Guatemala. Today, it talks about drug traffic and democracy. The National Security Doctrine is beginning to be undermined.

There are going to be major ideological repercussions in the old Communist parties. Perhaps their relations with other sections of the left will change, because many ideological dividing lines are beginning to disappear. Or perhaps others will appear that have to do with current problems.

In the short run, a setback may occur, a revitalization of social democratic ideas, of hopes in reformism, considering the latter to be a real strategy. But in the medium and long term, practice will take care of showing that a new society cannot be built through petty reforms, that this is an illusion.

Referring to what is happening in the East European countries, the social democrats say that Marxism-Leninism is the longest road to capitalism. As for the social democrats, they claimed to be headed for socialism. But have they done



this, or simply dressed up capitalism? The social democrats see *perestroika* as a danger because it steals their clothes in many areas.

In particular, Stalinization was a total paralysis of theory, the transformation of theory into a catechism to be followed automatically everywhere in the world and at all times. When Stalin wrote his manuals, that was the end of theoretical elaboration, of analyzing practice, concrete reality, of the production of theories to advance the revolutionary struggle for building socialism.

Revolutions accomplished outside of schemas

Practice has shown this. Many revolutions have been accomplished outside the schemas handed down, including bypassing those who claimed to be applying them. History found the roads that the theoreticians could not see.

Confusion and doubts are characteristic of a period of change. This is going to settle. In the medium and long term, this change is going to give rise to its own theory. Today, all of us are up to our necks in practical work.

We will have to see how Stalinism arose, because if we do not analyze its causes we may fall victim to a similar process. We have to explore old theoretical problems of Marxism, which may not have been entirely worked through, or on which the time has come to say who was right.

For example, is it possible to build socialism in one country? Isn't this one of the causes of Stalinism? The slogan of the Communist Manifesto was "workers of the world unite," and in the original version of Marxism socialism was conceived only as a worldwide enterprise. When they tried to build it in one country, maybe they were creating the conditions for

what came after.

For imperialism is going to encircle you, it is going to wage a terrible economic war on you, and you are going to forget about proletarian internationalism. Instead of the withering away of the state prophesied by the theoreticians, there is going to be a strengthening of the secret services and the armies, the quintessential and supreme forms of the state, in order to oppose aggression from the outside world. And this, inevitably will lead to Stalinist forms.

Another fundamental question is whether you can propose building socialism in an underdeveloped countries. Let us

consider China and Nicaragua, where there never was a real capitalism. Proposing to build socialism there is a daring thing. The problem is losing sight of the limitations, having illusions that it is possible, falling into forced collectivizations.

There is industrialization, backed by a state, but this generates another problem that eventually emerges.

Power sufficient but not necessary

Formerly, out of over-simplification, it was said that what defines an organization as revolutionary was the question of power. Today, it has been demonstrated that this is necessary but not sufficient.

The question has to be answered in theory and practice of what power is taken for, what sort of socialism we want, whether human rights, freedom and democracy are going to be respected under it, whether there is going to be a multi-party system. This has to be defined for each country and for each historical moment, because it is not a question of schemas.

Moreover, the methods for building this new society are important. We think that the people have to participate in it and lead it through people's power.

It is possible to have a process of democratization, of struggle against bureaucratic forms of activity, against alienation and intermediaries between the working class and the state.

This aspect of renewing socialism — greater participation — can be seen in the revival of the slogan "All power to the soviets," of giving decision-making and management, to the rank and file, to the workers.

This critical view of a bureaucratic and authoritarian structure is recognized today; it is something that we as part of a non-Stalinist left have maintained for many years. ★

AT THE END of his term, on August 7 of this year, President Barco will leave behind him the most overwhelming series of economic, political and social problems in the history of Colombia.

An economy in full recession; a foreign debt which obliges the country to devote 50% of its export earnings each year to the payment of interest and amortizations; difficulties with the production of coffee, the principal export product; these are just some of the sharpest problems that the next government must deal with in the short term.

The sole solution proposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank is the application of an adjustment plan and a total economic opening. Until now, the Colombian economy has resisted this pressure, essentially because most of its products are not destined for export and are sold directly on the national market. However, the necessity of obtaining new credits to maintain the budget has obliged the government to give way to the demands of the IMF and the World Bank and has led it to privatize state enterprises and sanction the import of all kinds of goods.

In this context, money from the drug trade has played an important role in stabilizing reserves and stopping the waves of devaluations which have caused chaos in the other countries of the region. In the midst of the sad panorama provided by the other countries of the area, Colombia has been able to stay afloat. Today, the drug trade continues to be an important source of revenues and the drug traffickers are the biggest financial group in the country (see IV 170, October 2, 1989).

The battle between the traditional bour-

War against drugs — or against the left?

THE ELECTORAL predominance of the Liberal Party (PL) has been confirmed by the municipal, departmental and national elections held in Colombia on March 11. Whilst the repression has intensified with the assassination and arrest of several militants of the Colombian left, notably with the arrest on March 27 of Daniel Libreros and several other comrades of A Luchar (see IV 182, April 9, 1990) — Daniel was released several days later although the other comrades remain in detention, the promises of a "total war" against the drugs trade made last July by the government of President Virgilio Barco have not been fulfilled. Indeed, the true objective of the government's war has now been revealed for all to see.

LIBARDO GONZALES

geoisie and the drug traffickers is directly linked to a conflict of interests between the banking, commercial and industrial sectors (who wish to maintain their domination and have no desire to share it with the newcomers) and the big landowners enriched by the cocaine trade.

Despite its repeated intentions, the government has no firm line of march as far as the cocaine trade is concerned. First, it allowed two years to lapse without extraditing any of the arrested drugs traffick-

ers, except Ledher. Then, at the beginning of 1990, it suspended extraditions in exchange for the liberation of certain members of bourgeois families kidnapped by the Medellín cartel. The revelation of this "agreement" by the former Minister of the Interior, who has now resigned, provoked the biggest scandal of recent times and has thrown doubt on the reputation for unceasing struggle against the drug trade that the government had acquired.

Barco has played the same game as his predecessors, Betancourt and Turbay Aya-la. Successive presidents have never been more than the arbiters and agents of the conflict between the White House and the drugs mafia. The brunt of the repression has been borne essentially by the peasants, the workers and other sectors of the masses. Today, the demobilization of the armed insurrection (with, for example, the accord made on March 9 between the Barco government and the Movement of April 19, M-19), through pacts like those of Betancourt and Barco, is not totally excluded by the government. But these agreements in the final analysis, contain no serious proposals for peace or for dismantling the repression.

The elections of March 11 decided the fate of the two traditional parties, the Liberals and the Social Conservative Party (PSC). The Liberals organized a conference to choose their candidate for the presidential election which will take place at the end of May. The final choice was César Gaviria, a former minister in the Barco government, who defeated Hernando Duran Dussan, faithful representative of the right and of the landowners of mid-Magdalena, and Hernesto Samper, linked



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to the financial sector and to international social democracy. Gaviria represents the landowners of the big coffee plantations, traditional agrarian capital and sectors of medium capital.

The candidate of the PSC will be Rodrigo Lloreda, representing small and medium industry. His candidacy is marked by two factors which will work to the disadvantage of the PSC; industry is experiencing the worst period in its history (its share of gross national product has fallen from 22% to 19% over the last few years) and the PSC has lost the dynamism which characterized it in other times to the point where it now represents only 30% of the electorate.

A Colombian equivalent of Mexican ruling party

Thus the PL seems ready to convert itself into an equivalent of the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), a party that, at least until the presidential elections of 1988, returned to power each time without any great opposition. Despite its internal conflicts — which reflect some very powerful contradictions — the PL is strongly united around the bureaucratic control which it holds over the key posts of power.

So far as the left is concerned, it is represented electorally by the Patriotic Union (UP), which lost several of the parliamentary seats and seven of the sixteen municipalities that it won in 1988. Moreover, a wing inclined to social democracy has split from the Communist Party of Colombia (PCC) — Bernardo Jaramillo, the recently assassinated presidential candidate of the UP was linked to this wing.

The Movement of April 19 (M-19) has openly declared its sympathies for social democracy. Sectors of the PL linked to Samper Pizano (defeated challenger for the candidacy of his party) and even the official candidate, César Gaviria, have done the same, as well as the president of the United Federation of Workers (CUT), Jorge Carillo.

In these conditions, the left is divided between the social democracy and the traditional currents which seek to unite around the proposals of the CUT and around a program of government. It is precisely this latter possibility which is being discussed today by the PCC, the Communist Party of Colombia-Marxist-Leninist (PCC-ML) and A Luchar.

The Colombian situation is changing and there could be some surprises. Today, unlike at other times, the cards are on the table. Without hiding behind the pretext of combatting the drugs traffic, the military organize "disappearances", the assassination of targets and blind massacres outside and inside the barracks; on the other hand, the drugs traffickers have indicated that they do not want to continue to play the role of surrogates of the regime charged with the assassination of the lead-

ers of the left.

The traditional left finds itself faced with a dilemma — either to take the road offered by the social democracy and move towards liberalism, or to stay within its traditional framework, which has led it to its current political stagnation.

But there is another alternative; the unification of the forces which continue to struggle around the demands of the workers and peasants and which are still ready to challenge the regime, the bourgeoisie and imperialism. This road is opened today by the generalized conviction that it is impossible for the organizations to continue to function in isolation from each other. This must be rapidly concretized, before the social democratic option takes root and leads to the creation of a Colombian version of the Venezuelan Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), with the pretence of going beyond the guerrilla movement and the traditional bourgeois apparatuses.

Nearly two thirds abstain in elections

The abstention rate at the March 11 elections remained at its traditional level — between 60 and 65% of the electorate. This percentage encompasses those who have not been integrated into the clientelist system of the regional bosses and those for whom the candidates on offer represented no political future. But it also includes those who decided not to vote in order to reject an electoral process that took place during a state of emergency, as well as the corruption of the liberals and conservatives and the parliamentary inefficiency of the UP which, with the Popular Front (FP) and the M-19, represents the traditional left. These three groups have ended up by throwing themselves into the arms of the electoral "barons", thus removing all credibility from their propositions.

To denounce this and the absence of any serious popular alternative at the next election, A Luchar has launched a campaign for a boycott of the vote. This campaign has received a certain echo in the popular neighbourhoods of the big cities and in the villages. It has also provoked an important reaction from the military which is reflected by the imprisonment, torture and trial of ten of its militants in Cali, by the preventive detention for four days in a military fort of Daniel Libreros, and by the recent assassination of bank employee León Dario Jimenez.

The circumstances of the death of Jaramillo (the candidate of the UP) are fairly confused, and have even gone so far as to provoke a ministerial crisis with the replacement of Carlos Lemos as Minister of the Interior by Horacio Serpa.

Some days before the assassination, Lemos had accused the UP of being the political arm of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Moreover,



he made this accusation at a time when several members and candidates belonging to this organization had just been assassinated. Thus Diego Montana, president of the UP, and Jaramillo himself, had accused Lemos of drawing the vengeance of the paramilitaries down on them. The assassination represented a kind of confirmation of this whilst Lemos attributed it to an unhappy coincidence. Political opinion, however, has attributed this action to a strategy against the left.

Faced with this situation, Barco has had to break with his minister and declare that the UP was not the political arm of the FARC. For his part, Lemos presented his resignation with an angry letter in which he accused the government of negotiating an agreement with the drug traffickers so that they would cease kidnaping and other outrages directed against notables. In this way, he has revealed in broad daylight what had until then remained hidden and has still not been clarified by the President and his ministers.

Responsibility of government for murders

Finally, everything that has been said by Lemos and the general Miguel Haza, director of the Administrative Department of Security (DAS), according to whom the Medellín cartel was responsible for the murder of Jaramillo cover up numerous doubts about the true responsibility of the government. Immediately, Pablo Escobar, the principal leader of the cartel, denied the accusation, and with him all the key figures in the drugs trade who had no wish to be implicated in this crime.

Besides, Barco has also withdrawn his support for Lemos because his replacement Serpa could accomplish something that Lemos could not; the participation of a large sector of the left, including the leadership of the UP, the FP, the M-19 and other groups which define themselves as civil and democratic, in the agreement which they have just signed in support of the presidential candidature of Carlos Pizarro, the leader of M-19. ★

Coalition breaks up under blows of Intifada

IN THE following article prominent Israeli revolutionary Marxist Michel Warshawsky describes attempts to form a new government in Israel against the background of the continuation of the Palestinian *Intifada*. Since the article was written, the process of forming a new government had still not been carried through by April 11.

The possibility of a government led by Labour leader Shimon Peres talking — even in a roundabout way — with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has, furthermore, brought warnings from the right-wing of outgoing prime minister Shamir's Likud Party that they would regard any government that engaged in such negotiations as illegitimate.

MICHEL WARSHAWSKY

THE PALESTINIAN *intifada* had impelled the two big political formations to set up a government of national unity, with the goal of confronting the growing danger of peace. But the tenacity of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip provoked a polarization inside both Israeli society and the government.

In order to maintain the "Sacred Union", and throw responsibility for the refusal of peace back into the Palestinian camp, in May 1989 Prime Minister Shamir accepted the broad outlines of a "peace plan" drawn up by his minister for defence. This involved the opening of negotiations with a delegation of Palestinians from the occupied territories to prepare for elections, which would lead to a status of enlarged autonomy for the territories.

For Shamir — and this is something he has never really hidden — this plan was not to be put into practice; it was simply a means of buying time, in the hope that the Palestinians would sooner or later reject the plan. For Labour, on the other hand, it became more and more obvious that Israel's interests demanded an unblocking of the situation, and that the Rabin-Shamir plan offered the optimal conditions for a political solution. One plan, two readings, two strategies.

Labour had an important advantage; their policy fitted in perfectly with the needs of Washington and the Egyptian president. Weizman, who represents the Labour left inside the government, and

who believes that the PLO must be openly integrated into the process of negotiations, even undertook to coordinate the Israeli initiatives with Yasser Arafat. Shamir's attempt to exclude Weizman from the government, indeed to indict him for contacts with the enemy, proved unsuccessful.

Large coalition to remove Shamir

This reinforced the right wing of Likud which has for a long time affirmed that Labour's interpretation of the plan is the more realistic, and that the peace plan will not lead to an impasse but to indirect negotiations with the PLO. It became more and more clear that the "misunderstanding", as it became known, around the Israeli peace initiative, could not go on for much longer. While Shamir and Rabin have continued to seek formulas capable of preserving the unity of the government, they have increasingly come up against a large coalition of those, both in Labour and the Likud, who want to get rid of Shamir as head of government.

Shamir's alleged moderation has become the target of all those inside the Likud who covet his post as head of party and government, and in particular of Ariel Sharon and the vice prime minister David Levy. Already, at the Likud Central Committee 6 months ago, they succeeded in imposing a series of

qualifications to the Shamir plan which rendered it practically unworkable. From then on, the Labour leader Shimon Peres began to manoeuvre for the setting up of a coalition government between Labour and the religious parties. Caught between the far right in his own party and the Baker-Mubarak-Labour bloc, Shamir has reinforced his alliance with Rabin, who in no circumstances wishes to see the government of national unity fall and Shimon Peres become prime minister.

Shamir, world champion in the field of conservatism and prevarication, has played for time; like a schoolboy who does not know how to answer an examination question, the Israeli prime minister asked for a whole series of clarifications, then demanded guarantees, then added new conditions to the plan that bears his own name, up until the day when the U.S. Secretary of State finally said "enough of this, is it yes or no?"

This is exactly what both Peres and the Likud hard-liners expected. Peres demanded a vote in the cabinet, Sharon and Levy demanded a rejection of the U.S. ultimatum at the Likud central committee. Shamir prevented the debate at the central committee, sabotaged the vote of the delegates of his own party, and, back in the cabinet, twice postponed the vote demanded by Peres. Rabin, for his part, considered seeking a compromise between the leader of Likud and the leader of his own party, until March 11, when Shamir decided to shake off his typical torpor and expelled Peres from his government.

Rabin was obliged to go along with the other Labour ministers who resigned in solidarity with Peres. Shamir was convinced that the promises given by the religious parties to Peres, to the effect that they would vote for the fall of the Shamir government, were only bluff. There, once again, he was wrong.

Religious parties decide fate of government

While Shamir was not certain of the support of all the Likud deputies, let alone the extreme right who think he is too moderate, Peres could count on the votes of all the left formations who wish to put an end to the Shamir government. But this was not enough to have a majority in the Knesset; once again, the votes of the religious parties were to decide the fate of the government. The National Religious Party, which has been on the extreme right for several years, supports Shamir. The fundamentalist Agudat Israel party had for some months promised its support to Peres, after Shamir had cynically refused to respect the agreements he had signed with it — "you can put them in the museum" — and had thus provoked their departure from the government 8 months ago.

There remained two other fundamentalist formations whose voting intentions were uncertain; the 2 deputies of Deguel

Hatorah, and the 6 deputies of the Chass party.

Subventions for religious Institutions

For five days, the politicians flocked to see the rabbis; Labour ministers succeeded Likud ministers, skull-caps on head, in the waiting rooms of the old men — who for the most part do not even speak Hebrew — and explained to them the broad outlines of their respective strategies, without forgetting to promise alluring subventions for their institutions. But for the fundamentalist parties, it is not the leaders who decide, but the councils of sages composed of venerable — and often senile — rabbis.

The height of this farce was reached five minutes before the vote on the motion of censure, when Shamir demanded a suspension of the session so he could call on the Grand Rabbi Ovadia Yossef, uncontested authority of the Oriental Jews and spiritual patron of the Chass party. This latter had submitted an ultimatum to Shamir and Peres; the first must agree to accept the propositions of the U.S. Secretary of State and reintegrate the Labour ministers in the government, in which case the Labour leader would promise not to attempt to form an alternative government until the next elections. In accepting the proposition of the Grand Rabbi, Shamir would lose face; in rejecting it, he would lose the support of Chass, and thus the majority. He chose the latter course, and for the first time in the history of Israel a government fell through a motion of censure.

After the fall of the government, it became clear that neither Shamir nor Peres had a parliamentary majority for the formation of a new government, and Rabin pressed for the formation of a new national unity government, which is the best way to stop Peres from becoming prime minister. But contrary to what happened a year and a half ago, the president of the state, Chaim Herzog, would not attempt this easy solution and instead nominated Peres as candidate to form a new government.

The reason for this is simple; since the formation of the government of national unity, the *intifada* has not been neutralized, and has led to a political polarization inside the Israeli ruling class. The options are the military solution, that is massive repression, deportation by the hundreds if not the thousands, and detention of tens of thousands of Palestinians, or the opening of negotiations, even if only indirectly, with the PLO; a middle path no longer exists, and the 12 months grace which the Americans have given to Shamir to manoeuvre are reaching their end. In this sense, Yasser Arafat was right when he affirmed in his greetings to the Tunisian president that "the uprising in the occupied territories has led to the collapse of

the enemy front. For the first time an Israeli government has fallen thanks to our struggle and thanks to the Palestinian peace initiative". The question now is who will form the new government, and what its policy will be.

Majority in Knesset for negotiated solution

As has been confirmed by the declarations of the rabbinical authorities controlling the fundamentalist parties, there is a clear majority in the Knesset for a negotiated solution. If Peres succeeds in neutralizing his fraternal enemy Rabin, he will have good grounds for hoping to be the next prime minister — in which case, the new government will reply positively to Baker's recent propositions and, after a meeting with the Egyptian foreign minister, negotiations will be opened with a Palestinian delegation ratified by the PLO.

It is in the interest of Peres not to drag things out too much in the first stage, so that the Palestinians on the one hand, and Israeli and world public opinion on the other, can be persuaded that the "peace process" has emerged from the rut in which Shamir had buried it. To the extent that the first stage is crowned with success, the Israeli government can then turn to the difficult task of neutralizing the *intifada*, creating thus a new status quo which, according to the old Labour tradition, will be presented as temporary but will last indefinitely.

What neither Peres, nor Rabin, nor even the learned rabbis can predict is the extent to which the Palestinian population in the occupied territories is ready to play their part in the game, and put in jeopardy the gains of two and a half years of exemplary struggle and very heavy sacrifice. ★

ARAFAT BACKS PERES

THE KNESSET, the Israeli parliament, failed on April 11 to agree on a new government headed by Shimon Peres. On April 5, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat, took a further step in his policy of alignment with the requirements of Washington.

In Rome, before another meeting with the Pope, he stated: "I have asked the Arab deputies in the Knesset to vote for Peres; this is the first time such a thing has happened."

The Vietnamese army that intervened in Cambodia in 1978 to overthrow the Khmer Rouge was up to 200,000 strong. In the years since, its role has remained decisive. It is the Vietnamese army which has allowed the new government in Phnom Penh to consolidate and develop itself, and which has pushed back beyond the Thai frontier the forces of the tripartite coalition².

Certainly, Hanoi has kept numerous civil and military advisers in Cambodia. In November, some elite Vietnamese units were sent again, albeit in limited numbers, to Battambang, in the west of the country³. But the Hun Sen regime must now provide the essentials of its defence itself, and this represents a real turning point in the internal situation. The Paris Conference which met in August 1989 adopted a plan for a negotiated settlement of the conflict, but it would be much more true to say that it ended in an impasse. This diplomatic defeat was confirmed at the Djakarta conference in February 1990.

The field was then left free, after the Vietnamese retreat, for an intensification of the civil war. Phnom Penh must show its own independent capacity for combat, while the tripartite coalition must, to remain credible, win control over a part of the country.

Inasmuch as the military situation remains unclear, it is probable that the negotiations will not notably progress.

Stalemate in the military confrontation

The evolution of the military struggle since October 1990 seems to indicate that there has been no radical transformation of the situation, at least in the short term. The Phnom Penh forces have had to cede some ground in the north and west of the country, which was predictable. However, they have made some significant counter attacks, like the reconquest of the town of Svay-Check on February 23, profiting from the dry season which allows them to use some of their heavy weaponry.

The Khmer Rouge rapidly conquered the mining center of Pailing, (an important strategic and economic position central to the trade in precious stones) in the Cardamom mountain range, near to the Thai frontier. The tripartite coalition controls a strip of territory along the western and northern borders of Cambodia. But in general these are very thinly populated areas.

Insecurity reigns sporadically in numerous regions of the country and Khmer Rouge units can operate in the environs of Phnom Penh. But no important urban centre has as yet been really menaced — not even Battambang where there does not seem to have been any real fighting, (at the end of 1989), despite alarmist

Imperialist diplomacy and the Cambodian civil war

IN MARCH 1990 the United Nations Security Council attempted to work out a plan for the resolution of the Cambodian conflict which for ten years has opposed the Phnom Penh regime, supported by Vietnam, to a tripartite coalition including Prince-President Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge, supported by China and the West. This plan accords a predominant role to the UN which is envisaged as administering the country whilst general elections are organized. But certain essential questions are far from being resolved and the Cambodian factions have not been able to reach agreement on the implementation of the plan.

The rapid change in the international situation, in Eastern Europe and the USSR, as in South East Asia, has profoundly affected the Cambodian negotiations. Nonetheless, what happens in the country itself is no less important. The key question there is the extent to which the withdrawal of the bulk of Vietnamese forces in September 1989 has affected the relationship of forces.

PIERRE ROUSSET

rumours.

The evolution of the military situation seems to confirm the analysis of the forces on the ground which could have been made before the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops.

THE Khmer Rouge; More than ten years after the fall of their regime, they maintain their cohesion and remain, on the ground, the principal component of the tripartite coalition. Originating from the Cambodian Communist movement, they underwent a profound evolution during the 1970s. Radical nationalism, of a fundamentalist and racist character, became an essential ideological cement. Behind the egalitarian facade of their program, a command structure (simultaneously secret and unchangeable) assured victory over the other factions of the Communist Party of Cambodia, giving rise to the perpetuity of the leadership identified with Pol Pot. From before 1978, their social base, for a long time genuine, has been shrinking through a series of purges and has progressively become identified with their armed forces.

After their defeat in 1978-79, they were

able to rebuild their army and command structure, thanks to the refuge they found in Thailand. They have made good use of the massive aid which they have received above all from China, but also from Bangkok, other countries of ASEAN⁴, from the West and, via the refugee camps that they administer, from the UN. Today they comprise between 30,000 and 40,000 combatants, often battle-hardened, disciplined and well armed. Their principal zone of operation is located in the west of the country in the Cardamom mountains.

Their weakness is obviously at the political level. It is difficult to forget, in Cambodia as in the wider world, the regime of terror that the Pol Pot faction of the Khmer Rouge unleashed from 1975-76, once it had defeated US imperialism and the other components of the Cambodian Communist movement. This explains why the Vietnamese army was welcomed by the population, with suspicion certainly, but also with relief, when it intervened in 1978 — it explains also why the recent return of Vietnamese units to Battambang seems to have been welcomed by the inhabitants of this town

located near the front line⁵.

The Khmer Rouge undoubtedly retain a network of contacts and sympathizers in Cambodia. Around the Thai frontier, they control a refugee population of around 100,000 people — the families of the soldiers. From here they can recruit a steady supply of porters and back-up workers, as well as youth who decide to join their army rather than languish in the camps without jobs or hopes of emigration. The guerilla units can easily penetrate deep into the country, under the cover of the vast jungle in the west and north. The Khmer Rouge have not disappeared and will not disappear, at least while they receive effective international aid and can operate from the refugee camps.

THE FNLPK and the Sihanoukists;

The two other components of the tripartite coalition benefit from both the political support of the West, primarily the United States, and, in the case of the ANS, from the symbolic authority which the prince-president Sihanouk maintains. They control immense refugee camps, which contain altogether as many as 200,000 people, in Thailand. They have received considerable material aid. Nonetheless, their armies, estimated respectively at 16,000 and 21,000 men, remain militarily weak. Their principal zone of operation is in the north west of the country, beyond the town of Sisophon which they have not yet succeeded in capturing.

The pro-western components of the anti-Phnom Penh coalition, and notably Sihanouk, must, in the eyes of the United States, play a central role in any negotiated settlement of the conflict. But, weakened by factional struggles, and engaged in too much corrupt racketeering, they have been unable to prove themselves. They remain incapable of effectively fighting the Phnom Penh troops and are marginalized on the ground by the Khmer Rouge.

THE Phnom Penh regime; Ten years after its foundation, it remains fragile, but survives on the military and administrative levels. The government army comprises 30,000 to 40,000 regular soldiers

1. On the Khmer Rouge regime and the Vietnamese intervention, see *IV 76*, May 20, 1985, and *IV 77*, June 3, 1985.

2. In addition to the Khmer Rouge, the forces of the tripartite coalition include the Sihanoukist National Army (ANS) and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) of Son Sann. The differences between the Sihanoukist movement and that of Son Sann are more to do with clique and personal differences than politics.

3. Jacques Bekaert, *Le Monde*, February 9, 1990. Jean-Claude Pomonti estimates at 2,000 the number of Vietnamese soldiers who were sent to Battambang in November 1989, after the fall of Pailing. He believes that perhaps 700 Vietnamese advisors are still in the country (*Le Monde*, March 10, 1990).

4. ASEAN; Association of South East Asian Nations including, in addition to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Brunei.

5. See in particular the article already cited by Jacques Bekaert.

— the same number as the Khmer Rouge but much less battle-hardened — and around 150,000 men in total, taking account of provincial forces and local militias. The quality and the discipline of these troops is very uneven. The regular forces possess heavy arms (artillery, tanks, planes) superior to their guerilla adversaries, but these are not fully utilized, for fear, in particular, of provoking a frontier incident with Thailand through the use of fighter planes.

An administrative structure, although flimsy, has been built down to village level. The regime bases itself on the fear of the Khmer Rouge and the weakness of the Sihanoukists. It receives a kind of passive support from a significant part of the population — to the extent, above all, that it respects Buddhism (once again the state religion) and laissez-faire in economic matters. It could, on the other hand, lose this passive support if it is unable to convince people that it is doing all in its power to obtain peace.

The liberalization of trade has favoured an extraordinary development of trade and trafficking of all kinds. Cambodia has become a crossroads between the ASEAN countries, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, on the one hand, and Vietnam (indeed the south of China) on the other. It has attained self-sufficiency in rice, whilst exporting forest products, seafood, animal skins and precious stones. It imports consumer goods, from second-hand motorcycles to brand new limousines. For now, the government is benefiting from this economic awakening. But the fortunes being made reinforce a social layer of big traders who could tomorrow turn against the government. Corruption is growing amongst (very badly paid) government functionaries and cadres, which could also strongly alienate the government from the masses.

In times of war, peace negotiations can never be reduced to a simple totting up of the balance of forces. They are a field of battle and influence — more or less — the very evolution of the conflict. This is particularly true at a time when the consequences of the recent international transformations in this part of the world have not yet been worked through, and when no movement can claim for itself an assured legitimacy.

Hun Sen regime is not just a slave of Hanoi

This essential question of legitimacy poses in difficult terms the concrete question of the Cambodian people's right to social and political self-determination, for this is what is above all at stake. The forces on the ground are all Cambodian, even if each has its own system of international alliances. The Khmer Rouge are not the simple creatures of Beijing, any more than the Hun Sen regime is the slave of Hanoi — or Prince Sihanouk that

of Paris or Washington. Even though the tripartite coalition justifies its existence in the name of the struggle against "the Vietnamese invader" theirs is not a national liberation struggle. There is, in Cambodia, a civil war.

The sovereignty, present or future, of Cambodia, is obviously not secure. Part of the Indochinese entity, the country could see itself subordinated to Vietnam. Situated next to the ASEAN countries, it could just as easily, if not more, find itself subordinated to Thailand. Under the Khmer Rouge, it was inextricably linked to China's anti-Vietnamese diplomatic policy. Administered by UNO, as seems to be envisaged by the Australian negotiations plan, it would be subject to the agreements of the great powers. Without a popular base and historic legitimacy, no regime can guarantee the independence of the country.

Cambodian history provides weak basis for democracy

Legitimacy can come from the ballot box. That has never been the case in Cambodia. The contemporary history of this country makes the holding of genuinely representative elections highly uncertain, even under the control of the UN! French colonization was no school of democracy, far from it. Neither was independence. After having dispersed the principal resistance movements, Sihanouk carved out his own legitimacy within the tradition of the divine right of monarchs.

Outwardly transforming himself into a modern prince, he remained an autocrat. The CIA-sponsored coup that overthrew him in 1970 opened a sombre period — that of the police state regime of Lon Nol, the U.S. war and the aerial bombardments. The victory of the Khmer Rouge, in 1975, unhappily opened up another period, still more sombre, of massive displacements of population, bloody purges, and physical liquidation of elites and of the work force.

With the brutal abortion of the Cambodian revolution through Khmer Rouge terror, the second modern source of legitimacy was emptied of all meaning — that which proceeds from a revolutionary struggle for liberation, in which the commitment of the population can affirm itself still more clearly than through democratic elections. The contemporary history of Cambodia and the double collective trauma provoked by the U.S. war and the Pol Pot regime explain the absence today of representative organizations. The situation is different in this respect to the prevalent one in Eastern Europe. The Hun Sen regime is far too weak to suppress all open opposition. The general impression of a political vacuum stems from more profound causes. The very fabric of Cambodian society seems to have been torn apart during the

1970s. Over the latter period, the process of rebuilding this fabric has begun, on the religious and economic planes particularly. But we are a long way at the moment from seeing any notable part of the population engaging anew in socio-political action.

In such a situation, the question of administrative and military power poses itself particularly sharply. The weight of a coherent well-armed movement, like the Khmer Rouge, can be very much more real than its effective military force or its limited implantation might lead one to suppose. It is on this question that the negotiations have until now stumbled.

Coalition formula is diplomatic stumbling block

The most significant disagreement is probably that touching on the composition of a transitory administration, charged with organizing elections. For China and the coalition it supports, it is necessary to establish a government where the four Cambodian factions are equally represented. The Hun Sen regime will thus find itself a small minority and the entry of the Khmer Rouge into the government will be legitimized, which will give it a great freedom of action.

For Vietnam and Hun Sen, it is necessary on the contrary to recognize the two existing governments — the tripartite coalition government on the one hand, that of Phnom Penh on the other. On this basis, a cease-fire on the ground could be organized, which, in the present situation, would leave the Hun Sen regime in a position of strength.

The Paris conference on Cambodia ended, in August 1989, in a failure to agree on the definition of a transitional government. To escape from this impasse a key role is now being assigned to the United Nations. The permanent members of the UN Security Council have met several times to discuss this⁶. All the parties concerned say that they are agreed on this principle. But the Djakarta conference, in February 1990, showed that the fundamental problem had still not been settled.

For Vietnam and Phnom Penh, the intervention of the UN could allow the avoidance of the insoluble question of the recognition of the Khmer Rouge. The UN would be charged with the implementation of the negotiated agreements and organizing the elections. The two existing governments (that of the tripartite coalition and that of Phnom Penh) would delegate their responsibilities to the international authorities while remaining in place and continuing to administer the zones under their control.

For the Chinese and the Khmer Rouge, on the other hand, the intervention of the

6. The permanent members of the UN Security Council are China, the United States, France, Great Britain and the USSR.

UN must be accompanied by the dissolution of the Hun Sen administration and the formation of a quadripartite Cambodian governmental organism.

It is in this context that Australia has proposed that the UN should not confine itself to verifying the implementation of the accords and organizing the elections. The international authority would have the task also of temporarily administering the country, that is replacing the existing administration in every field. In the absence of a quadripartite government, China could accept such a solution.

It would be the Phnom Penh regime that would lose out. Hun Sen is fully aware of this; as he explained at the end of the Djakarta conference, he was "prepared to discuss the organization of the UN civil administration in the transitional period" but he "would like to make it clear that this does not mean the dissolution of the Phnom Penh government"⁷. Nguyen Co Thach, the Vietnamese Foreign Secretary, has for his part said that "the UN cannot place Cambodia under UN managerial control because Cambodia is an independent country"⁸.

The UN Security Council has more or less endorsed the Australian solution, which speaks volumes on the distant attitude of the USSR to its Indochinese allies. But it has not stipulated at what point the international authority must replace the Khmer administration, nor indicated what means it will dispose of.

For the implementation of the Australian plan would demand human resources which are difficult to find (a qualified international personnel which can speak Khmer) and prohibitive financial resources. In particular, it is doubtful that Washington would be ready today to undertake an engagement of this kind in Cambodia.

The US administration has up until now shown no inclination to accord priority attention to its Cambodian dossier. It is certainly not indifferent to the fate of Indochina and has not forgotten the humiliation of 1975. It continues to make Vietnam pay as dearly as possible for its victory. Despite having urged Moscow to intervene last year in Romania to overthrow the Ceausescu regime, it continues to use the pretext of Hanoi's intervention against the Khmer Rouge in 1978 to isolate the country.

The Vietnamese hoped that the uncondi-

tional withdrawal of their troops from Cambodia would put an end to the diplomatic and economic blockade organized by the United States. It has done nothing of the sort. Washington still vetoes Hanoi's request for International Monetary Fund loans. Last October, the UN reaffirmed its recognition, by an overwhelming majority, of the coalition government — thus its recognition of the Khmer Rouge representation⁹.

The spirit of imperialist revenge and the priority accorded to China still domi-

for testing the balance of forces in Cambodia itself. The impact of the current transformations in Eastern Europe and the USSR will become more clear. Deprived of the assured support of its traditional allies, the Phnom Penh regime will be economically dependent on the uncontrolled development of the market. On the diplomatic level, it will seek to improve its relations with certain governments in the region. All this will weigh heavily on its evolution in a manner which is as yet difficult to predict.

Taking into account the US position of relative withdrawal, the regional powers are beginning to play a more important role than in the past. This is the case with Japan, of course, but also Australia which is trying to supplant France on the terrain of diplomacy, to the great displeasure of Paris which continues to think that Indochina belongs to its zone of influence.

As for the USA, pressures from the right are coming to bear pushing Washington to intervene more vigorously to promote the "democratic counter-revolution" in Asia and thus put in jeopardy its Chinese policy¹⁰.

Thai diplomacy has changed notably since the accession of Chatchai Choonhavan to the post

of prime minister in 1988. On the Indochinese question, Bangkok maintained a strict alliance with Beijing and the army unsparingly aided the Khmer Rouge so as to exercise the maximum pressure on Vietnam.

The Thai position on the question of negotiations has today become more flexible and closer to that of the Indonesians, who have always maintained that it was undesirable to reinforce unduly the weight of China in the region, at the expense of Vietnam. Soon, then, the proposals of ASEAN could be modified.

The context of the negotiations on Cambodia is undergoing substantial changes, albeit gradually, as much on the international plane as on the regional or national. In this area, 1990 will perhaps prove to be a turning point of major proportions. ★



nate US Indochinese policy. The attitude of Washington on the Khmer Rouge question is striking from this point of view. The latter constitute a useful means of pressure against Phnom Penh and Vietnam. But they also represent an obstacle to the implementation of a pro-western solution to the Cambodian conflict. They constitute a force that neither Bangkok nor Sihanouk can pretend to control.

Khmer Rouge receives Chinese support

However, the US administration does not seem to have profited from the difficult situation of Beijing, diplomatically weakened after the Tien An Men Square massacre in June 1989, to put a decisive pressure against its interests in the area. The Khmer Rouge maintains its force, largely through the political and material support the Chinese leadership accords to it.

The negotiations on the question of Cambodia are now in an impasse, but it is possible that certain important variables will be modified in the course of the year.

The coming months will be decisive

7. Summary of World Broadcasts, FE/0703 A3/1.

8. SWB, FE/0705 A3/1.

9. The resolution sponsored by ASEAN obtained 124 votes for, 17 against and 2 abstentions. As a significant indicator of changes currently underway, Hungary withdrew its traditional support for the resolution sponsored by the Indochinese countries.

10. See for example Carl Gershman (president of the National Endowment for Democracy), "The United States and the World Democratic Revolution", The Washington Quarterly, Winter 1989.

International Trotsky symposium

AN INTERNATIONAL scientific colloquium on Leon Trotsky was held in the West German city of Wuppertal March 26 to 29 under the auspices of the town's university. More than 120 scholars from throughout the world attended. There were 18 experts from the Soviet Union, four from the People's Republic of China, 12 from the GDR and a dozen others from the Eastern European countries. The rest were from Western Europe, North America and Latin America.

ERNEST MANDEL

EVERY participant had prepared a written contribution on the subject, which together amounted to some 1,500 pages. Some at least will be published in book form, probably in several languages.

The colloquium addressed three main themes; Trotsky's role in the USSR from the October revolution until his expulsion from the country; his contribution to the analysis of Soviet society; and his place in the development of Marxism.

A number of contributions, however, dealt with other subjects. Thus, a British scholar talked on Trotsky and the Spanish revolution, an Austrian scholar on Trotsky and morality and several Soviet scholars on Trotsky and literature. Gregor Benton from Leeds University dealt with Trotsky and the Chinese revolution, a theme that was also taken up by a university lecturer from Peking.

The scientific level of the contributions was very high. The tone of the reports and the numerous controversies that took place during the four days of debates was undogmatic and relaxed. There were no bitter polemics or personal attacks. The debates were lively but characterized by an open and pluralist spirit. Soviets often argued with other Soviets, westerners with westerners, Trotskyists with Trotskyists, non-Trotskyists with other non-Trotskyists.

Here it is only possible to indicate the principal contributions at the Colloquium.



Highlights were the remarkable paper from Kerstin Herbst from East Germany on the treatment of Trotsky in Soviet historiography over the past five years; Professor Felshinsky from Stanford University on the validity of Trotsky's conception of the world revolution in the light of the evident failure of "socialism in one country"; Prof. Firsov from the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow on the key role of Trotsky in the elaboration of the Comintern's united front policy; V. A. Kozlov from the same Institute and Prof. Britovtsek from Ljubljana University on Trotsky's conception of the Soviet Thermidor.

One of the most important contributions was certainly that of professor Vitaly Demishev from Moscow on the relevance of Trotsky's ideas in resolving the problems confronting the USSR today.

The colloquium got the first look at the first doctoral thesis about Trotsky from the USSR. It was the work of a young literary historian who said that "Trotsky has become my idol".

The participants from the People's Republic of China were notable for the very objective tone of their remarks. They had, in general, a very positive, although at the same time very critical judgement of Trotsky. The same could be said of the Western participants. Although there were plenty of social democrats who are hostile to Trotskyism and critical of Trotsky, everybody recognized the historical importance of him and his ideas.

The Colloquium was also marked by

many revelations. Thus, Dr. Podshekoldin from the Moscow Institute of Marxism-Leninism told of the discovery of archive material that seemed to show that Stalin had falsified the results of the vote in the capital's Communist Party organization in 1923 on the first theses of the Opposition. It seems that the latter in fact got the majority.

Several Soviet experts revealed previously unknown facts about the close collaboration between Lenin and Trotsky in 1922-23. Other communications revealed that an important part of the "moderate" Stalinist leaders, perhaps around Kirov, were in favour of calling Trotsky back to the Soviet Union in 1932-33.

Trotsky biography to be published in Soviet Union

N. Vasetsky, one-time specialist in anti-Trotskyist publications for the *Novosti* Agency announced the appearance in a few weeks of a large edition of a volume of selected works from Trotsky, edited by himself. Prof. Pierre Broué announced that it had been decided in Moscow to publish a Russian edition of his massive biography of Trotsky.

There were a number of communications from scholars who are members or close to the Fourth International, such as Manuel Aguilar (Mexico), Jesus Albarra-cin (Spain), Mike Goldfield (USA), L. Hass (Poland), Gregor Brenton (Britain), H. Lauscher (FRG), Michel Löwy (Brazil/France), L. Maitan (Italy), E. Mandel (Belgium), J. Moneta (FRG), and F. Moreau (Canada).

Other currents describing themselves as Trotskyist were represented, including Pierre Broué (France), Tom Kemp (Britain), J-J Marie (France), M. Raptis (Greece) and H. Ticktin (Britain).

Also at the colloquium were Esteban Volkov (Mexico), Trotsky's grandson, and V. Antonov-Ovseenko (Moscow), author of a well-known work on Stalin's crimes and the son of the Antonov-Ovseenko who led the assault on the Winter Palace in Petrograd during the October insurrection, who was one of the founders of the Left Opposition in 1923 and who was murdered on Stalin's orders in 1937.

Among those at the colloquium were people who had spent between them more than 200 years in the Stalinist Gulag, and in Nazi camps and other capitalist prisons. There was an emotional moment when the young leader of the Bukharin Club of Komsomols in the Kamaz tractor factory (the largest factory in the world with 140,000 workers), V. Pisigin, called on the hall to rise in honour of Léon Trotsky, his son Léon Sedov, N. Bukharin, Zinoviev, Rakovsky and all the victims of the Stalinist terror. A minute's silence was observed for all the victims of the Stalinist terror. Both by the victims and the one-time apologists of the murderers. Such is history...★

AROUND THE WORLD



GERMANY

Anti-Semitism and the GDR elections

ON JANUARY 29 1989, the West German extreme right party, the Republicans, entered the Berlin Senate in triumph with 11 representatives and 7.5% of the votes. Comparable results were recorded in other regions. The principal leader of this neo-Nazi movement, Franz Schonhuber, a former SS instructor, is overtly anti-semitic. In his public declarations he limits himself to affirming that "the history of Germany should not be reduced to Auschwitz", but racist and anti-semitic slogans such as "Liquidate the Turks" and "Turn the Jews into smoke" suddenly appeared on the walls of Berlin (see *Le Monde*, February 10, 1990 and *El Pais*, February 5, 1989).

Today, with the perspective of German reunification, the blustering propaganda of the Republikaners has become even louder, and, unhappily, could find a certain echo. For Schonhuber, the return to the Greater Germany of pre-war times is a "divine mission" for the German people. If this is accompanied by a new mounting of anti-semitism "it is the Jews who have asked for it".

In an insidious form, anti-semitism has begun to impregnate the West German media. Prior to the East German elections of March 18, the target of this campaign was Gregor Gysi, the secretary of the reconstituted East German Communist Party, the PDS. Never implicated in the shady affairs of the old regime, benefiting from a reputation for moral integrity and an image as a sincere democrat, Gysi could not be attacked as a new Honecker. But he was a left intellectual and a Jew, two elements which were sufficient to revive the old anti-semitic clichés.

At the end of 1989, the weekly *Der Spiegel* painted the following portrait of Gysi; "a 41 year old lawyer, divorced with two children, he has an aura of coldness. The motivation of the artful intellectuals from the families of the big Jewish bourgeoisie situated in the leadership of the SED [the former name of the PDS] was not generosity but selfishness" (*Der Spiegel*, number 51, 1989). What kind of political design lurks behind such phrases? The aim is, according to a well known anti-semitic cliché, to present the Jews as

strangers, non-Germans, indeed "enemies" of Germany. It is then necessary to identify them with "Communism" to show that the reunification of Germany must overcome the resistance of two "anti-national" forces — the Jews and the Communists. Hitler used to make hysterical speeches against "Judeo-Bolshevism", the mortal enemy of the "Aryan race". Today other expressions are used — the language of racial biology is no longer fashionable — but the logic remains the same.

The terrain for this anti-semitic offensive had already been prepared, by the revisionist historians of the Federal Republic — Ernst Nolte, Andreas Hillgruber, Klaus Hildebrand, etc. In the columns of the most prestigious conservative daily, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, they have expressed their desire to "normalize" German history, finally considering Nazism as simply a stage of the national past. They stress the importance of going beyond "a past that does not wish to pass" so as to reaffirm the will of Germany to play the role of a great power "at the heart of Europe".

According to E. Nolte, the true responsibility for the genocide belongs rather to the October Revolution, which gave birth to "Bolshevik totalitarianism" and unleashed a spiral of violence and "Asiatic barbarism" culminating in the Second World War (see "Before History", Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1988). If Auschwitz

was undoubtedly the work of Hitler, it would never have seen the light of day without Marx, another well known nasty Jew!

And in the GDR? Here, anti-semitism has "officially" disappeared since the end of the war. For Walter Ullbricht and Erich Honecker the only enemies of the Nazi regime were the Soviet Union and the German Communist Party (KPD). Auschwitz was only a "detail" of history. But the November revolution brought to light some of the more sombre pages in the history of Stalinism. In a pathetic effort, the reformed SED changed its point of view on the Jewish question but, alas, chose the worst way to do it.

On February 8 of this year, the then Prime Minister Hans Modrow declared solemnly that the GDR recognized "the responsibility of the German people in its entirety" for the crimes perpetrated against the Jews by the Nazi regime (see *Le Monde*, February 9, 1990). Now, this declaration is fairly grotesque, for several reasons. On the one hand, it only reverses the idea of a "negative essence" attributed by the Nazis to the Jews, attributing it to the Germans instead.

On the other hand, it appears as all the more grotesque in that it is made by a party which, far from representing "the German people in its entirety", no longer even represents its own members. What would the old German Communists — there are still some left — who suffered first Hitler's prisons and then the cells of Prussian Stalinism, make of such a declaration?

More modestly and more honestly, the leaders of the PDS could recognize — which they have never done — their own responsibilities. Between 1928 and 1933, their ancestors — the KPD of the "heroic comrade Thalman" — did not hesitate to ally themselves with the Nazis to combat "social fascism". According to *Die Rothe Fahne*, the KPD daily, it was not necessary to unite against Nazism, because Hitler's victory would open the way to proletarian revolution. ★

Obituary: Oskar Hippe

OSKAR HIPPE was born in 1900 and in 1917 joined the German Spartakusbund in Berlin and subsequently the German Communist Party (DKP). As a supporter of the Left Opposition he resisted the Stalinization of the party and collaborated with Leon Sedov (Trotsky's son and co-thinker) when he lived in Berlin after February 1931.

As a member of the leadership of the German Trotskyist organization, Hippe took part in clandestine activity against the Hitler regime until his arrest by the Gestapo and imprisonment from 1936-38. He suffered a second and in many respects crueller spell in prison between 1948 and 1956 in the jails of East Germany's Stalinists.

At the repeated insistence of his friends and comrades he undertook to relate his struggle and experiences in a rich and poignant book, *Et notre drapeau est rouge* (And our banner is red) published in French by La Brèche in 1985.

Oskar was present at the fall of the Berlin Wall, but died on March 13, a month after the death of his companion.

4 NEWS FROM THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

FRANCE

East wind in the sails

ON Saturday March 31 some 3,000 people came to Pleine St. Denis in the suburbs of Paris for a day of discussion and debate on the recent historic events in Eastern Europe organized by the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International. The day brought together socialists from both Western and Eastern Europe, as well as Latin America and Africa. In particular, left and democratic activists from the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria were present. The afternoon was devoted to a series of sessions and debates on various aspects of the crisis in Eastern Europe — these included the future of Gorbachev and the USSR, the situation of youth in Eastern Europe, the national question, and the worldwide implications of the collapse of Stalinism.

The main rally was introduced by songs from renowned Czech singer, Marta Kubisova, silenced for twenty years after 1968 by the Husak regime. Marta explained that she was not a political supporter of the FI but was there to express her support of all democratic movements.

Janette Habel, speaking for the United Secretariat of the Fourth International explained that "today the main task of the FI is no longer to combat a dead or dying Stalinism, but to revive socialism, and thus to extend a hand towards the regroupment of those who remain faithful to the analysis of Marx, who think that the history of humanity has not yet ended (...).

"The time has come for the regroupment of such forces because today there is no longer a so-called socialist camp opposed to imperialism to assist, in its manner, revolutions in the underdeveloped countries. The rearguard — or, at least, that which was perceived as such — no longer exists. It is up to the international workers' movement, and thus amongst others, to us, to bring relief. For, as the appeal of nationalism grows, internationalism is not just a moral task but, more than ever a practical necessity".

Mikhail Malyutin, a supporter of a movement for a new Socialist Party in Russia (see interview on p. 4) told the meeting; "This year will be decisive in the Soviet Union. *Perestroika*, as we

know it, is living through its last days and, perhaps, its last months. All kinds of variants are possible in its wake. We will maintain our positions in these circumstances because we know perfectly well what our defeat would signify, not only for the world revolutionary process, but for the whole of humanity".

Herbert Miszlitz, leader of the East German United Left, commented on the March 18 elections; "The people have voted for the deutschmark because both the right wing and the social democracy

promised them that this would immediately improve things. Today, they no longer have confidence in the parties that call themselves socialist. To some extent, that is understandable. (...)

"The perspectives of the left will only be credible if we are capable of creating links, without dogmatism, with the different social movements which are beginning to develop (...) These groups are ready to participate in the preparation of a popular congress which will allow all its participants to defend their demands in an effective manner and on the basis of a broad unity of action".

Ruth Tapia, representing the Nicaraguan FSLN, Petr Uhl from Czechoslovakia, Josef Pinior from Poland, a representative of the Salvadoran FMLN, Chawky Sahli of the Algerian PST, Florence Capron of the French Revolutionary Communist Youth (JCR) and Alain Krivine of the LCR also spoke.

The evening ended with a rock concert with Little Nemo and East German bands Die Vision and Herbst in Peking. ★

PORTUGAL - A Trotskyist on Lisbon City Council

ALFREDO FRADE, a 38 year old doctor, and leading member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR — Portuguese section of the Fourth International) was elected last December to the Lisbon city council. He stood on the list of the left-wing "For Lisbon" coalition. This coalition including for the first time both the Socialist and Communist parties as well as other left-wing forces, overturned the previous right-wing majority that has controlled the council for the past ten years. IV talked with Alfredo Frade about how he intends to work on the council.

"THIS victory in Lisbon is very important. It is the first time the Socialist Party and Communist Party have united against the right. Previously and even this time in other towns, they have run separately, and even in alliance with the right. These elections were marked by a general defeat of candidates of the governing Social Democratic Party (PSD) and a nationwide rise in votes for the SP, which benefited from the tactical voting to the detriment of the CP.

The municipal assembly is the city's parliament even if it has less powers than a full parliament. We are now trying to make it work more effectively and increase the access of the public. All the representative parties take part in the Municipal Assembly and the PSR has now for the first time the possibility of commenting on the policies of this body, on city affairs and on regional policy.

I want to try to intervene in all the debates. On the other hand I have to prioritize certain questions. I want to

take up the question of the struggle against racism and neo-Nazism. The existence of such things in Portuguese society was denied until the assassination last October of José Carvalho, a member of the PSR's leadership (see IV 173,174).

I intend to propose a "round-table" at which all the parties can discuss this problem. There are constant attacks against Africans and a discussion in the Chamber would be a focus for autonomous mobilizations by the population. I want to question the existence of military installations (to be precise, NATO arms and installations) in the town. Big social questions can thus be addressed in a concrete way.

Our experience in organizing big campaigns around concrete issues, such as racism or the struggle against militarism, has given us a wide audience and important points of support from sections of society and the left. It will be very interesting to see how the experience of a united CP/SP administration works out. This will have implications above all in the unions, which are still divided. I believe that unity is necessary to prepare the next social mobilizations against the government. Unity in these mobilizations and an electoral front of the left would set an important example and could unleash new forces that can change the present defensive situation.

Finally, the most important thing for us is to gain a concrete understanding of questions, to intervene at the side of the population and in winning a new authority for our proposals and for the establishment of a left alternative." ★