

# International VIEWPOINT

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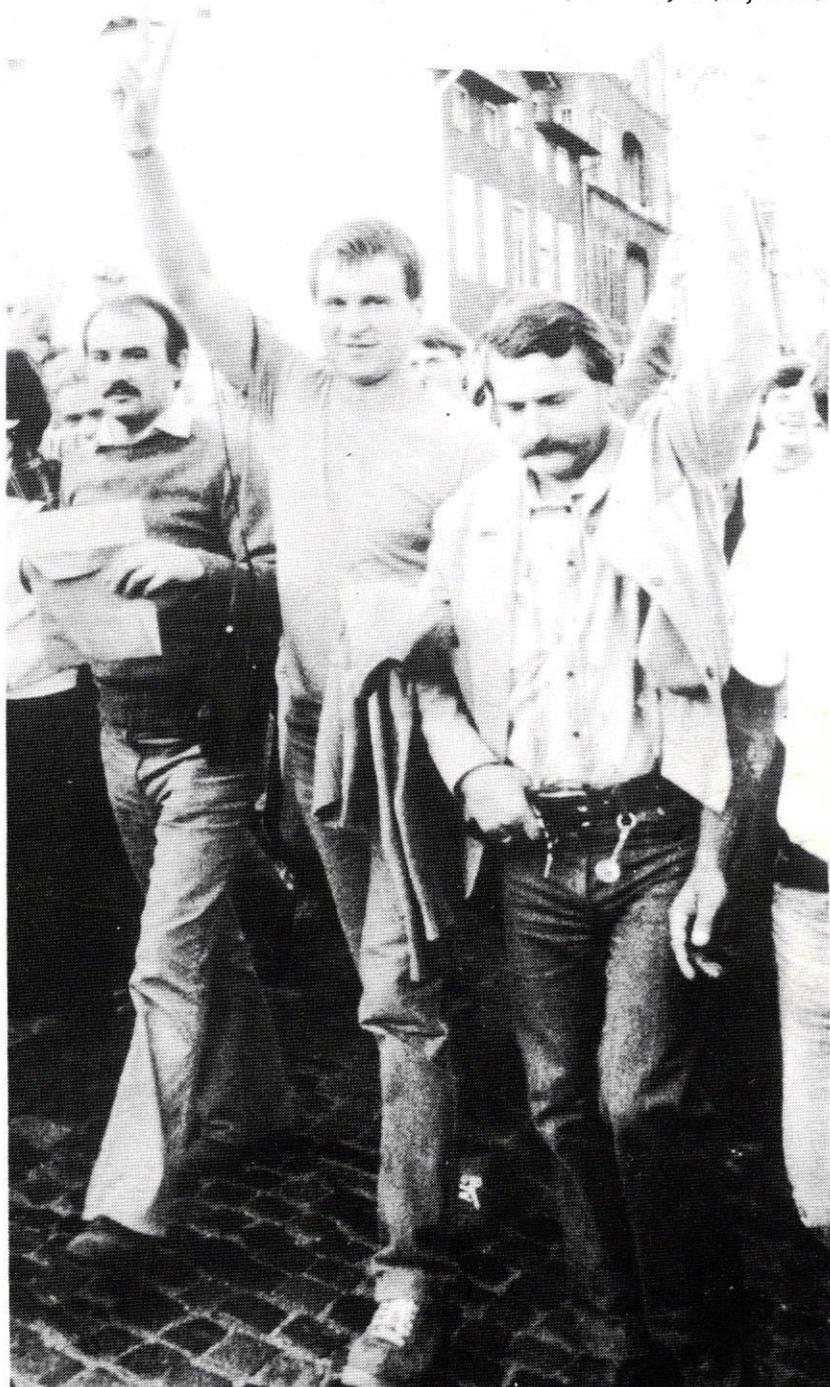


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**Corrections**  
TWO important errors found their way into the last issue of *IV*.  
*Firstly*, we lost the end of the final sentence in the article by Manuel Kellner on the East German PDS. The full sentence should read: "A Stalinophobic article in this regard would be anachronistic and would play the bourgeoisie's game".  
*Secondly*, we omitted Hugo Blanco's name as author of the article on the Peruvian elections.  
Apologies to baffled readers and infuriated authors alike!

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# Nationalists win in two republics

**THE FIRST FREE ELECTIONS** in two of the republics of Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia, have resulted in decisive victories for nationalist forces. The victory of the nationalists was particularly striking in Croatia, where according to still partial results in the second round, the Croatian Democratic Bloc is already assured of 158 out of 356 seats in the three houses of the republic parliament. The local Communist Party (which adopted the name "the Party of Democratic Change") has so far gotten only 42 on its own, and 13 in alliance with the Socialists.

A more moderate nationalist formation, the Coalition of National Agreement, was brushed aside, and will probably get only a handful of seats.

GERRY FOLEY

**T**HE CROATIAN DEMOCRATIC BLOC, dominated by the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) led by Dr. Franjo Tudjman, was reportedly heading for a two thirds majority in the parliament in the second-round elections of May 6. Tudjman is a well-known nationalist leader, who served nine years in prison for his "nationalist activities" and "hostile propaganda" in the 1970s and 1980s. He is also a former Communist Party member, and was a leader in the nationalist movement associated with the leadership of the Croatian Communist Party in the early 1970s.

The nationalist CP leadership's reign was likened to the "Prague Spring," because it involved a certain liberalization. For example, selected works of Trotsky were published in Croatia in this period. The Croatian leadership was removed bureaucratically by Tito, and a general turn toward repression followed. Along with this, Tito offered the minority nationalities a number of concessions, such as autonomy for the Kosovo Albanians, that have been largely taken away by the Serbian nationalist strongman Slobodan Milosevic.

## Thatcher, Bush, Kohl — and Tudjman?

In the official Yugoslav press and to an extent in the international press as well, Tudjman has been described as a rightist and an extreme nationalist. During the campaign, he made a statement now often quoted that "If Thatcher, George Bush and Helmut Kohl are right wing, then we are right wing too." However, *Danas*, the main Croatian news magazine (dominated

by the CP) noted that Tudjman characterized his formation as "centrist." In the aftermath of the second round elections, Tudjman proposed including "some Communists who have accepted the reform road" in the government to be formed by the Croatian Democratic Bloc.

As regards economic policy, the Communist Party claimed to be a more consistent exponent of free enterprise than the nationalists. One of its spokesmen, Mato Crkvenac was quoted in *Danas* of April 17 as saying: "Talk about a nation controlling its own income is deeply conservative and anti-market. At the heart of our program is not authority and control exercised by the state, even a national state, but the autonomy and freedom of the enterprises to determine the type and quantity of their production.

## Sovereignty of economic actors

"In the world today there is only sovereignty of consumers, producers, industrial actors. To rely on some economic sovereignty of a state or a nation leads to anti-market measures, closing Croatia to the worldwide processes of transformation and world capital flows."

*Danas* quoted Ivica Gazi to explain the HDZ's position: "Before the war, we had a stock market and free enterprise. But we did not have control of our labor and our money. A clear outflow of capital from Croatia emerged. Development was set back and the economy was impoverished." Asked whether the HDZ wanted a Croatian currency and tariffs, Gazi said: "We haven't really thought about that.

We are prepared to defend economic sovereignty by all means. But if we can rely on an agreement within Yugoslavia, then such extreme means would not be decisive. We don't think that there should be a border in Europe or that one is necessary in Yugoslavia. We believe that in any civilized unit, economic solutions can easily be agreed on."

On the question of relations between the Yugoslav republics, the HDZ, which proclaimed itself the "most Croatian of parties, called for a confederation in which "basic Croatian sovereignty will be respected." The CP leader Ivica Racan called for "a democratic federal Yugoslavia." And the National Accord Coalition argued that "Yugoslavia should be based on an agreement among all democratically elected, legal and legitimate representatives of the states that make up Yugoslavia." It declared that it was neither "for or against Yugoslavia a priori."

Tudjman, on the other hand, called for a greater Croatia, a Croatia that would include as nearly as possible the entire Croatian population, that is, including a part of the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina: "At a time when the Yugoslavia of the Liberation has been destroyed, and plans are being hatched for a greater Serbia," it was necessary to remember that "the Croatian people is not only within the borders of the Croatian Socialist Republic." This claim on part of Bosnia-Herzegovina would raise the question of the Slavic Muslim minority centered there, which was recognized as a nationality in the context of Tito's reforms after the crushing of the Croatian Spring.

## Opposition coalition in Slovenia

In the second round of the Slovenian elections on April 22, the DEMOS coalition won 126 out of the 204 seats in parliament. This is a coalition of seven parties, ranging from conservative Christian Democrats to Greens. It is for a confederal Yugoslavia, but reportedly sees this as a stage towards Slovenian independence.

The Communist Party leader, Milan Kucan, won the presidency over the DEMOS candidate, Joze Pucik. Kucan is identified with the constitutional amendments adopted in September 1989 that give the Slovenian parliament the power to secede unilaterally from the Yugoslav federation. He has been the pole of opposition within the federation to the policies of Milosevic, which involve "recentralizing" Yugoslavia around a "reunited" Serbia.

Apparently, as a result of its oppositional stance within the federation, the Slovenian CP came out of the elections in a much stronger position than the Croatian CP. The latter, the product of the "normalization" that followed the crushing of the Croatian Spring, has played a weak role in opposing Milosevic's projects. ★

# Solidarnosc: searching for a second wind



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**LECH WALES**A was triumphantly reelected as leader of Solidarnosc with 78% of the votes at the Union's second conference, held in Gdansk between April 19 and 25 — nearly nine years since the first congress. In this time Solidarnosc has changed profoundly, marked by the traumatic experience of the years of repression in the name of "defence of socialism" by General Jaruzelski's dictatorial regime.

Now, Solidarnosc has two million members rather than ten million in 1981. Furthermore, the programme adopted by the union this year contains only vague echoes of the project "For a Self-Managed Republic" adopted in autumn 1981. Finally, and above all, the Polish union movement has now to face not only the power of the bureaucracy but above all an unprecedented attack on living standards and the structural gains of a post-capitalist economy. These attacks, furthermore, come from a government that the union itself has helped to put in place and in which a leading role is played by some of its own most prestigious leaders and advisors.

"Solidarnosc has overcome. It has won the longest war in the communist part of Europe. The collapse of the totalitarian system in Poland and the beginning of the construction of a new democratic order is the measure of its success. This incredible victory has its price: the twilight of Solidarnosc." Thus wrote the central Solidarnosc weekly on the eve of the second congress. The report concluded: "The need for the ideologically diverse currents, grouped until now in the same anti-totalitarian movement, to find a new self-determination and choose their own political direction has given rise to a serious crisis of identity. This crisis also affects the independent self-managed union, Solidarnosc."

**CYRIL SMUGA**

**S**OLIDARNOSC is the direct product of the bringing together at the national level in September 1980 of the regional strike committees, themselves the result of a similar process of unification from below in the regions and cities. It has since its foundation been the dominant social organization in the enterprises, where it often organized 90% of the wage earners as well as in the broader society. All oppressed socio-professional groups — and everyone with the exception of the top levels of the bureaucracy had reason to consider themselves oppressed — saw in it the only force capable of creating a relation of forces that would allow them to realize their aspirations.

The union's structure has been shaped by its origins: the enterprise commissions have enjoyed real autonomy in relation to the higher bodies. They are coordinated horizontally at the level of regions, which have been designated according to the geographical spread of the coordinations of strike committees that appeared in August 1980 rather than the administrative boundaries in the country. Furthermore, the national leadership was at first a coordination of regional representatives and even today its ability to interfere in the internal affairs of the regional unions and enterprise commissions is limited.

Solidarnosc's bottom-to-top structure is reflected in the union's financing: the enterprise commissions keep the lion's share (80%) of the dues for their own use and the regions, in their turn send only a small amount (5%) to the centre.

## Shipyard negotiations held in public

The August 1980 strike was an example of workers' democracy, in particular in the Gdansk region, where the strike lasted 18 days. The workers ensured that the negotiations took place in the Gdansk shipyard itself where the inter-enterprise strike committee was based. The negotiations were entirely public, thanks to a system of loudspeakers throughout the shipyard.

The delegates of several hundred other enterprises recorded all the debates and these were then transmitted to workers in other workplaces. Each striker was able to control her/his representatives and intervene to modify their conduct during the general assemblies at which report-backs from the negotiations were given.

The efficacy of these democratic mechanisms was proved by the successful outcome of the strike and the rules of the

union were modelled on them. During the first national congress of Solidarnosc in September and October 1981, extensive reports were transmitted by telex to each region and large enterprise, and union militants were able to intervene by the same means and influence their delegates.

The birth of Solidarnosc owed a lot to the activity of the Polish opposition since 1976, in particular to the current around the Committee for Social Self-Defence, formerly the Workers Defence Committee (KSS-KOR), which popularized the forms of self-management and promoted the slogan of free trade unions. Its militants played an important role in the August 1980 strike in Gdansk.

Even so the main opposition leaders did not become leaders of the union.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary the great majority of the latter were rank-and-file workers who were selected through the strike. They represented both the concerns and consciousness of the great majority of Polish workers. For this reason, in the first period of its existence, there was little ideological or political differentiation in Solidarnosc.

It was only during the debates at the first Congress that the outlines of a strategic debate became apparent — between the defenders of the strategy of the self-limiting revolution formulated by Jacek Kuron and those who wanted a struggle for power. This latter recruited both among the combative wing of the self-management movement and currents referring to prewar political traditions.

### Radical ideas implemented at local level

The divisions that appeared over this question had not led to the crystallization of clear tendencies in Solidarnosc by the time of its defeat on December 13, 1981 with the imposition of the state of war. This was despite the fact that the radicalization of the masses in the face of the worsening of the economic crisis had led the union in practice to implement ideas coming from the radical currents at a local and regional level. We saw the preparation of active strikes in several regions, the organization of the expulsion of the representatives of the bureaucracy from some of the enterprises, sacking of managers and development of workers' control. In general the union leaderships were not in control of these radical spontaneous actions and were unable to coordinate them.

The largely spontaneous character of Solidarnosc's development in 1980-81 also gives us a good view of the evolution of the class consciousness of the Polish workers, the obstacles that this has confronted and the particular forms that it has taken.

In the social formations that have resulted from the degeneration of the Russian revolution, the process of the formation

of class consciousness has a specific feature.

On the one hand, owing to the centralization of political decisions in the hands of a bureaucracy which is itself extremely hierarchical and centralized, collective workers struggles lead rapidly to confrontation with the state apparatus and thus quickly come to pose the question of power.

On the other, since these formations are the result of a defeat of the working class in its first effort to build a socialist society, it is particularly difficult for the workers to grasp the historic meaning of their struggles. Furthermore, owing to the parasitism of the bureaucracy and its lack of roots in the productive process, it becomes the target not only of the working class but of almost the whole of society.

### State and society

Even if, as was the case in Poland in 1980-81, this clash is marked by the dominance of working class forms of struggle — occupation strikes — the workers' identity tended to dissolve into the amalgam of the apparent opposition between the state and "the society". This is all the more true in that decades of autarchic isolation have totally wiped out the collective memory of working class opposition throughout the world, including the notion of the contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat and the whole historic tradition of the workers movement.

Finally these regime have failed in the historic competition with developed capitalism regarding the development of the productive forces. They have failed to "catch up with and overtake Europe and America". The blatant character of this failure, after decades of bourgeois and Stalinist propaganda affirming that these social formations were socialist, has also had its effect on class consciousness in these countries.

The bureaucracy has never had a dominant ideology of its own with which it could justify its power in the eyes of the masses. Stalinist ideology was constructed out of distorted borrowings from the socialist tradition, patched up whenever reality could no longer be concealed — in particular during each mass revolt, of which Poland had had four before 1980 — by more and more blatant borrowings from classic authoritarian and elitist ideologies.

The totally illegitimate character of its rule produced a growing rejection of the bureaucracy's self-justifying language and contributed to the rehabilitation and idealization of the bourgeois ideologies that the former was meant to refute. Thus in Poland the renaissance of Catholicism, in particular its most irrational and backward aspects, such as the Marian cult, and the growth of its grip on the masses

has developed in close correlation with the collapse of the Stalinist ideology. The same can be said about the idealized resurgence of the most backward traditions of "Pilsudskism" and National Democracy<sup>3</sup>.

As Jozef Piniór has put it: "Since its birth Solidarnosc has not been able to cross the barrier of the language in which it has expressed its message. As it has organized against the nomenklatura and rejected the existing system, the workers have also rejected the left-wing vocabulary which in current consciousness — degraded by the years of bureaucratic indoctrination — is identified with the newspeak of the bureaucracy.

"Thus the whole left-wing and socialist tradition has been made responsible for Stalinism and the movement has rejected the natural language in which it could understand itself. The perplexed union leaders have been looking for inspiration in places outside the control of the state and party: in the Church and in the liberal intelligentsia which has been evolving ever further from its roots which it is forgetting.

"This has resulted in a curious incoherence between Solidarnosc's practice and the perspectives it has opened for the whole of society on the one hand and the consciousness of its leaders on the other. After the establishment of the state of war, this process has deepened from year to year as the leaders have become separated from their involvement in the enterprises, as was inevitable in conditions of clandestinity, with its attendant deformations and dependence on propaganda from the capitalist world."<sup>4</sup>

### Liquidation of democratic conquests

The defeat of the Polish working class after the establishment of the state of war in December 1981 meant the liquidation of most of the democratic conquests won in August 1980. Freedom of organization, freedom of the press (relative, given that censorship was never abolished), free speech and travel were called into question.

1. *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* no. 16, April 16-20, 1980, p.3.

2. With the exception of Andrzej Gwiazda and Bogdan Bonuszewicz from Gdansk, Karol Modzelewski from Wroclaw and some worker militants tied to the opposition of the time — such as Walesa himself and Anna Walentynowicz from Gdansk, and Zbigniew Bujak from Warsaw — the oppositionists were confined to the role of experts or technical roles (journalists and printers) in Solidarnosc in 1980.

3. Jozef Pilsudski, leader of the nationalist wing in Polish socialism before 1914, became head of the new Polish state after independence in 1918 and after the coup d'etat of 1926 established a Bonapartist regime comparable to that of Peron in Argentina. The National Democracy was a Polish right-wing, anti-semitic and semi-fascist party, that formed the opposition from the right to Pilsudski's regime after 1926.

4. *Nowa Lewica* no. 6 November 1989.

The losses were equally serious as regards living standards and social legislation. After the January 1982 and subsequent price rises real wages fell by nearly 30%. The social security system has been attacked — with the non-payment of the first days of sick leave — as well as the labour code. The eight hour day has been de facto abolished via a law on labour flexibility and the number of extra hours permitted per annum has been doubled. Finally, the powers of the self-management councils have been greatly restricted, notably by the militarization of a large number of enterprises.

Thus the most immediately perceptible social gains which originated at the time of the destruction of the capitalist system after the second world war have been to a large extent liquidated at the very moment when, under the pressure of the workers movement, they have been stabilized, or even extended (working time, paid holidays) in capitalist Europe.

Here also, the bureaucratic regimes have not "caught up with and overtaken" Europe. They have been defeated in the competition with the most developed capitalist regimes. These defeats have had a disastrous effect on working class consciousness, by undermining any hope for the construction of a society able to victoriously compete with capitalism.

Since 1982, the bureaucracy has been trying to implant market mechanisms in its economic system. It has done this in its own way — that is to say, with the aim of increasing the share of the social product at its own parasitic disposal<sup>5</sup> rather than in order to develop the circulation of goods.

### Reduction in circulation of goods

Thus a paradoxical situation has arisen: the start of a break with the centralized management of the economy — of Stalinist origin — has been accompanied not by an increase but by a reduction in the circulation of goods and a limitation of economic relations between the rural and industrial economies. Solidarnosc theoreticians have concluded from this that there can be no reestablishment of market relations without the reestablishment of private ownership of the means of production. Bureaucratic management thus nourishes the neo-liberal offensive.

This evolution has been reinforced by a drop in union activity in the enterprises, resulting from the repression after the December 1981 coup and by Solidarnosc's inability to find a strategy based on self-management and mass self-activity adequate to the new situation. As one of the members of Solidarnosc's clandestine provisional leadership (TKK) explained in November 1982: "The members of the TKK faced a dilemma. On the one side there were the expectations of the society, convinced that the junta could be beaten,

and on the other an awareness of the price that would be paid for such a victory or for a defeat. The absence of an unambiguous decision, the TKK's hesitations over the choice of methods of struggle (general strike or long-term activity) and fear of responsibility all meant that the WRON<sup>6</sup> broke the resistance and gained victories."<sup>7</sup>

After the failure of the appeal for a general strike made by the TKK on December 10, 1982, the line of long-term resistance and the search for compromise with the bureaucracy came to the fore among Solidarnosc's leaders. This choice contributed to weakening the union's enterprise structures, confronted by unspectacular but very efficient repression<sup>8</sup>. The weakening of mass activity in its turn led the majority of Solidarnosc leaders to search for ways other than that of class struggle to weaken the bureaucracy's power. Market mechanisms seemed to them a way of fragmenting bureaucratic control over the economy.

The conviction held by the majority of Solidarnosc leaders that only the large-scale introduction of private ownership of the means of production can permit an increase in the circulation of goods and get production moving again, has sounded the knell of the project of the "self-managed republic" that the union began to develop in 1981. In September 1985, the TKK published a document entitled "The Economic Demands of the TKK" which marked a fundamental break with the choices made at Solidarnosc's first congress. In this text, the TKK proposed the introduction of a capital market and the privatization of the enterprises as well as guarantees for foreign investment in Poland. One can also read here that "our union is not favourable to a price freeze" and that "investments must be subject to the criteria of market efficiency."<sup>10</sup>

### Historic compromise with bureaucracy

This economic orientation also marked the end of the evolution of the positions of the majority of the Solidarnosc leaders towards accepting a historic compromise with the bureaucracy to be obtained without a big social mobilization. Any such mobilization would be limited to creating the conditions for an accord between the leaders of the bureaucracy and the opposition.<sup>11</sup> The reorganization of the national leadership of Solidarnosc on the occasion of its emergence from clandestinity, and the choice of public spokespeople, allowed Lech Walesa and those who supported him to definitively stamp their authority on the union and get rid of insubordinate leaders.

The spontaneous strikes by the Polish workers in the spring and summer of 1988 signalled the emergence on the social scene of a new generation of workers not marked by the defeats of their eld-

ers. These strikes thus opened a new political situation in the country.<sup>12</sup> The Solidarnosc leaders — in the first place Walesa himself — were however able to get control of these movements. By showing his ability to stop the strike movement without the workers demands being satisfied, Walesa was able to appear as a valuable negotiating partner in the eyes of the bureaucracy. Negotiations were thus got under way on the conditions for the legalization of Solidarnosc, and this was finally achieved during the Round Table of April 1989.<sup>13</sup>

The union leaders then accepted the introduction of a clause limiting the right to strike into the rules of the legalized union, as well as the organization of parliamentary elections that would guarantee the ruling Polish United Workers Party (POUP) and its allies a majority in the future Diet as well as the implementation of an economic policy meeting the wishes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

This compromise, aimed at guaranteeing a controlled change in the mode of bureaucratic domination, was upset by the masses' rejection of bureaucratic rule. In the parliamentary elections, the bureaucracy suffered an unprecedented defeat in which only one of its representatives was elected — Senator Stoklosa, a very rich private entrepreneur — in all the seats where there was competition from independent candidates. This upset the mechanism of controlled transition and provoked new divisions inside the bureaucracy, diverse factions of the apparatus trying to save their positions by direct agreements with the Solidarnosc leadership.

### Solidarnosc regains hegemony

At the same time, the militants emerging from clandestinity grasped the newly acquired union freedoms with both hands. Solidarnosc's sections once again became the dominant force in many of the big enterprises, even if they did not regain the importance they had in 1981. Thus the process of reconstructing Solidarnosc

5. See *IV* no. 66, December 24, 1984.

6. WRON: the Military Council of National Salvation, which took power on December 13, 1981.

7. Quoted by M. Lipinski, M. Moskit and M. Wilk, *Konspira, rzecz o podziemnej Solidarnosci*, Paris 1984, p. 73.

8. For example, in Lower Silesia, Solidarnosc had to totally rebuild its enterprise network four times in 1982 after militants were arrested and/or sacked.

9. After collapsing in 1978-81, production stagnated for a decade, before starting to fall again after 1989.

10. *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, no. 141, 1985.

11. This evolution has been traced in articles by the editors of *Polish Inprekor*, reprinted in *IV* no. 81, July 29, 1985 and no. 89, December 23, 1985, as well as the article summarizing the debates in *Solidarnosc* in *IV* no. 125, September 14, 1987.

12. See *IV* no. 133, January 25, 1988.

13. See *IV* no. 159, March 20, 1989, and no. 163, May 14, 1989.

## The heritage of a workers uprising

**ACCORDING TO the Solidarnosc programme adopted at its first congress: "We demand the introduction at every level of management of a self-management and democratic reform establishing a new economic order connecting the plan, self-management and the market...It is necessary to abolish the command-distribution system of management of economic life which makes a rational economy impossible. In this system the party apparatus and the bureaucracy have accumulated enormous power in their hands. The structure for organizing the economy that serves this system must be destroyed...."**

**"It is necessary to abolish the hierarchical dependence of enterprise directors with regard to the ministries and liquidate the practice of nominating managers based on the party's nomenklatura system. The reform can only be carried through if its supported by a mass movement of workers...."**

**"A new structure for organizing the economy must be built. The basic unit of the economy must be the social enterprise, managed by the collective of the workers, represented by the workers council and led on a day to day basis by a director named by the workers council after a competition and recallable ...."**

**"The bureaucratic barriers that block the functioning of the market must be abolished. The central administrative organs of the economy should not be able to impose the regions and spheres of activity on the enterprises nor their commercial partners...."**

**"The reform must socialize planning. The central plan must reflect the aspirations of society and be accepted by it. This implies that all debates on this subject should be made public. It should be possible to guarantee the possibility of presenting all the plans in the form of variants, worked out by social and civic initiatives. This requires access to good quality economic information, which demands the establishment of social control over the Central Office of Statistics." (according to the supplement to *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* no. 29, October 16, 1981.)**

took place at two levels: at the top, on the initiative of the regional leaders supported by Walesa and the union's national leadership, and at the bottom, by the initiative of militants resuming the traditions of self-management unionism of 1980-81.

### Election of Mazowiecki seen as victory

The nomination of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a well-known Catholic intellectual and head of the Solidarnosc weekly publication, to the prime ministerial post was perceived by the workers as a victory. This fact has allowed the new government to get underway an economic reform which meets the IMF's diktats while partially dismantling bureaucratic control of the economy. For the workers the first results of this policy have been disastrous: price rises and a partial freezing of wages have reduced purchasing power by nearly 40% in eight months, while the suppression of subsidies to industry, limitations on credit and the general inflation have provoked a serious recession.

In March industrial production was 30% down on the previous year. Unemployment, unknown since the war, has steadily increased and in several branches of industry factory closures are on the cards. Finally — although for the moment

these projects have not yet been made concrete — the government has announced a big wave of privatizations, which, in the existing framework of Polish law, implies the liquidation of the forms of self-management in the enterprises in question. This at a time when, after eight years in which they had played a largely formal role, these bodies have begun once again to function as workers control bodies.

The programmatic project submitted to the vote at Solidarnosc' second congress<sup>14</sup> reflects the contradictions that are eating away at Polish trade unionism and the state of the discussion. It is the fruit of a situation where the working class has already lost to a large extent its capacity to control the struggle to defeat the power of the bureaucracy and liquidate its power as a privileged caste. This is despite the fact that the working class is the only force capable of carrying this struggle through. The programme is thus the result of the half victory, half defeat that the workers have experienced over the round table.

Some extracts from the draft show its main thrust: "The union will take part in the transformation of the political and economic system in Poland, but it will put the defence of the interests and rights of the workers to the fore [in its activity]. The transformation of the economy will

lead to hitherto unseen and dispersed conflicts. To adapt to this situation the union will emphasize the activities of its enterprise commissions and the freedom to create horizontal structures and flexible organizational solutions on the level of the region or the country. Without giving up the right to strike, the union will attempt to deal with conflicts by means of negotiations and agreements. Such methods of activity demand experienced militants, expert help and access to indispensable information.

"Opposing the reduction of the worker to a passive tool, the union is in favour of the development of diverse forms of workers democracy. It is thus going to endeavour to obtain the right for unions to participate, in the framework of their prerogatives, in the development and exercise of laws and in economic decision-making."

As can be seen, each proposition that expresses the fact that workers are to be subjected to a process in which they can play little role is balanced by a counter-proposition, reaffirming the importance of democracy and workers control in line with the tradition and symbolism of Solidarnosc.

The same ambivalence is found over the question of the economic changes the union supports: "The Polish economy must be based on models tested in the highly developed countries which guarantee the growth of the living standards of all the citizens. The main responsibility for the transformation of the economic system rests with the parliament and the government. The union will support the transformation, but it wants to consider its direction and influence its development in line with its vocation which is that of protecting labour and the workers."

"The economic transformation must aim for a market economy which will tie the freedom to accumulate capital, free economic initiative and freedom of employment within the limits set down by the laws, with elements of state intervention that will correct the faults in the market mechanism....We consider it a task of the highest importance to transform in a many-sided way state property into more efficient forms of property....The transformation of state property must be carried through with respect for economic laws and logic, under the control of state institutions, the social organizations and workers' representatives."

### Restoration of capitalism in Poland

The project is therefore clear: even if

14. At the moment of writing the author does not have the final version of the programme adopted at the Second Congress of Solidarnosc. The quotations that follow are taken from the draft programme, published as a supplement to *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, no. 13, of March 30, 1990.

the term is not employed, Solidarnosc has come out in favour of the installation in Poland of the capitalist economic model through the privatization of an important part of the state-owned enterprises.

But at the same time, the proposed programme states that "the workers must have the right to influence decisions concerning the organization of work, the use of enterprise property, changes in the disposition of the labour force and the choice of leading cadres. The union will support initiatives by workers aiming to develop wage earners' democracy in the enterprise, founded on diverse forms of property." To return to private ownership while maintaining institutionalized workers control over the economy; this is the circle to be squared.

Every sentence shows up Solidarnosc's contradictory nature. This union has a leadership that has broken free from its base over the years and has made a compromise at the expense of the working class. At the same time it is a working class organization with its origins in a tradition of self-organization that has to a large extent rebuilt itself on the basis of that tradition in a daily confrontation with the ruling bureaucracy. This latter process, furthermore, was the work of real worker militants, even if they did not fully understand the stakes.

The union's programme is thus a compromise between on the one hand the demands of the world bourgeoisie and its institutions — the IMF, the World Bank and the European Community — and on the other the spontaneous aspirations and reflexes of a layer of worker militants formed in the tradition of anti-bureaucratic resistance and the resistance to normalization, nourished by the rumbling discontent provoked in the country by the first effects of the Mazowiecki government's policies.

This contradiction was sharpened by the profound bureaucratization of Solidarnosc, around a workers aristocracy that held the key positions in the union. Now, however, the austerity programme leaves no place for such a layer of privileged workers. The maintenance of the very democratic structures of Solidarnosc shows this contradiction, even if the best democratic rules can become empty formalities in the absence of real mass activity.

### No credible alternative to Walesa

In the absence of an alternative political project to that of the Walesa leadership, these contradictions remained latent at the congress. The two candidates who stood against Walesa, Andrzej Slowik, a historic leader from the Lodz region, who has opposed Walesa for years over the issue of union democracy, and Tomasz Wojcik, spokesperson for the populist and extreme anti-Communist minority in

Lower Silesia, who obtained 9% and 4% respectively, made much of the inadequacies of the union's actions. Nonetheless, they accepted the basis of the government's policies — "no salvation without capitalism".

Given such a framework, the delegates could only see their radicalism as demagoguery, whatever their intentions might be. This was all the more true in that Solidarnosc remains aware that there is still a battle to wage against the bureaucracy, and this is no small matter. In this battle, currently expressed in the desire to get rid of Jaruzelski from the presidency, support for Lech Walesa appeared as the only serious way forward. His massive vote expressed this.

Without any political way out, the discontent of the workers — expressed by the behaviour of the delegates during the debates — can turn into a reactionary radicalization, confusing the conquests obtained under the nomenklatura's rule with the bastions of Stalinism that have to liquidated.

### Abortion vote raises danger of split

The vote at the congress — marked by a very high number of abstentions — for a motion demanding "the protection of life from its conception" — that is, the outlawing of abortion — is a first and very dangerous example of this. Introducing a division by sex into the ranks of the workers, Solidarity is undermining its own foundations.

If this vote is followed up by active involvement by the union in the campaign against abortion being conducted by the most backward forces and directed from behind the scenes by the Catholic hierarchy, Polish trade unionism will be faced with a split.

The search for ways to finally liquidate the tenacious resistance of the bureaucracy at every level obscures the issue of making a positive social choice. The mechanism of a semi-democratic transition that has resulted from the Round Table, and the apparent successes gained along this road, have contributed to the workers conceiving of anti-bureaucratic strategy as somehow separate from the question of social project.

Given its origins, Solidarnosc has found it hard to squeeze itself into the framework of this compromise. The victories won keep it in this framework, but the material defeats being inflicted on the workers by the application of the IMF plan are pushing it to revolt. The resulting crisis of the union's identity can only be resolved through the struggle for the defence of the rights and gains of the workers and through the experience of the attacks that the bourgeoisie — through the mechanism of the Polish government — are making and will make on them. ★

**F**OR THE FIRST TIME, in an interview published in *Libération* of May 10, the Lithuanian president felt it necessary to make a distinction between Moscow and the Kremlin. "I say the Kremlin and not Moscow because the Kremlin is no longer Moscow. Today, we were visited by democratic deputies from the Moscow Soviet who came to bring us their support. You know we are not the only ones who are having problems negotiating with the Kremlin. It is a huge stone block. To budge it requires enormous efforts, and little Lithuania cannot do it alone."

*Libération's* correspondent asked: "Latvia voted on May 4 for a return to independence. Estonia has just resumed its prewar name. Is the evolution of the Baltic countries confirming your idea that Lithuania was correct to take the lead with its declaration [of independence] on March 11?"

Landsbergis replied: "It is likely that we will soon adopt a common Baltic position. Lithuania has not had to convince its neighbors. They were pushed to join us by the logic of the situation itself. The Latvians and Estonians have already been threatened with economic sanctions.

"Such moves are in fact quite likely. The question we are asking ourselves now is whether to expect the worst before or after the Bush-Gorbachev summit. Mikhail Gorbachev feels that his hands are free in the Baltic crisis, and the summit may strengthen his hand still further. Anything is still possible, even military intervention. After all, the Westerners assured us that military and economic reprisals against Lithuania would be intolerable, but they have done nothing against the economic blockade imposed on us."

### The mysteries of big politics

Landsbergis even blamed the Kremlin's retreat from negotiations on Washington: "I have a definite impression that Washington did not want negotiations to start so quickly. Why? Well, such are the mysteries of 'big politics,' but in any case after this trip [by Soviet foreign minister Shevardnadze], the Kremlin's tone changed."

The nationalist president had accused the West of selling Lithuania to the Kremlin in a Munich-like deal. The Kohl-Mitterrand letter of April 26 calling on the Lithuanians to "suspend" their moves toward independence in order to facilitate "dialogue" with Moscow was clearly a calculated stab in the back. There should be no mistake about that, and Landsbergis's statements to *Libération* make it clear that this is his general view, despite the fact that the Lithuanian government has chosen to try to use this letter to "internationalize" the conflict, to make it appear as if the French and German chiefs' call for "dialogue" is also a challenge to the Kremlin.

This type of diplomacy is apt to prove politically counterproductive, but the

# "Lithuania cannot shift the Kremlin alone"

**TWO PROCESSES** more and more shape the confrontation between the Lithuanian nation and the Kremlin bureaucracy.

One is exposure of the Western capitalist states as false friends of the Baltic peoples. The other is the increasingly important support of the anti-bureaucratic movements in the Soviet Union as a whole, including in Russia.

According to the list published in *Libération* of May 2, six of the 27 slogans shouted by oppositionists in the May Day parade in Moscow, when Gorbachev was forced to leave the platform, were in defense of Lithuania. They included "Freedom for Lithuania," "This is a blockade of Freedom," "the Blockade of Lithuania is the president's shame" and "Russian soldiers are not the gendarmes of the empire."

GERRY FOLEY

Lithuanians in the short run are in a very tight spot and are trying every maneuver possible.

In his *Libération* interview, Landsbergis said his government was "multiplying contacts with the governments and peoples of the world." The lessons of the conflict so far are that contacts with the latter are far more important in the long run than negotiations with the former. This example is also sinking in in East Europe. I noticed in a discussion with a Solidarnosc factory commission in Lodz in April that, along with the application of the IMF economic plan in Poland, the Western attitude toward Lithuania was a major source of disillusion with the "Western democracies" for Polish workers.

## Impact of the Lithuanian experience

The Lithuanian experience has had a visible effect on the Latvians, whose declaration of intent to move toward independence on May 4 was accompanied by statements that they placed no hopes in support from the West. In its April 28 issue, *Literatura un Maksla*, the weekly paper of the Latvian creative workers' unions, ran a feature of news from Lithuania including an item headlined "Little hope of foreign help." It began by saying: "In recent years, Lithuania's leaders have talked about proposals for aid from Scandinavian and other Western states. While several Western states have advised Moscow against using force against the republic, not one has given any sign of offering concrete help against a blockade."

*Libération's* May 11 weekly feature on Europe was devoted to the Baltic coun-

tries. It stressed the indifference of the Scandinavian states, including Finland, to the fate of their small neighbors annexed by the Soviet Union. The main article, by Christian Lionet and Bernard Cohen, noted that when the Lithuanian premier Prunskiene pleaded with the Norwegian authorities for oil, she was advised to appeal to the tender mercies of the oil companies, with predictable results.

As for the Finnish bourgeoisie, its prosperity depends on special links with the USSR. On May 9, Finnish representative Mauno Koivisto told the European parliament: "The USSR is our big neighbor, which has become our big friend. My country is very small and poorly placed to give advice to the great." Some Finnish

businessmen were quoted to the effect that the Baltic countries, like Finland, could become intermediaries between the Western world and the Soviet Union. Indeed, many Baltic nationalists evidently hold that idea.

In recent weeks, the Estonian literary weekly *Reede* has carried articles arguing that although Estonia was economically on the same level as Finland before the second world war, it fell decisively behind after incorporation into the Soviet Union. These articles overlook the extent to which Finland's development has been bound up with the country's special relation to the Soviet Union.

## Finnish bourgeoisie limits "anti-Soviet" activity

Moreover, the Finnish bourgeoisie accepts political subordination to the Kremlin bureaucracy and imposes limits on "anti-Soviet" activity. The Baltic national movements, on the other hand, come out of the struggle against Stalinism and bureaucratic rule, and thus cannot be regarded by Moscow as politically acceptable partners. The future of the Baltic countries depends on the overthrow of the bureaucratic regime in the Soviet Union as a whole.

In Estonia also, the lessons of the Lithuanian experience seem to be being taken to heart. Even the *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR* (May 4, 1990) noted that "Instead of inspiring more caution, Gorbachev's sanctions and the absence of Western opposition to them may radicalize rather than moderate opinion." It quoted a recent article in the daily *Paevaleht* by Enn Poldross, chair of the Estonian Supreme Soviet's Commission on Culture and Education, who said, among other things:

"The powers of East and West are not especially concerned with justice. All of this was apparent before, so there is no reason to panic over the ambivalence of the



West or threats of pressure from the East.”

Poldross argued against accepting any partial solutions, because of the problem of keeping the issue of Estonian independence clear in the minds of public opinion. The Estonian Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution on March 30 expressing intent to restore full independence.

In April, the Latvian Communist Party split over the question of national independence and independence from the all-Union Communist Party, as the Lithuanian and Estonian parties already had. The Moscow loyalist section, however, was relatively larger, since Latvians made up only about a third of the party.

In the April 26 issue of *Tiesa*, the organ of the independent Lithuanian CP, Ivars Kezbers, the chief of the independent Latvian CP, said that “The former Latvian Communist Party had about 177,000 members. The results of a sociological study show that 67,000 support the independent Communist Party and agree with the project expressed in its programmatic documents. Today it has about 32,000 members. I harbor no illusions, that number could quickly decline.”

### National composition of Communist fragments

As for the national composition of the Moscow loyalist and independent CPs, he said, “according to incomplete data, the CPSU territorial [Moscow loyalist] organization is 12% Latvian. Our party is 89% Latvian. The others are Jews, Poles and Lithuanians.” When asked how many Russians there were, he said: “Since the congress, I have not met any Communists of Russian nationality living in Latvia. Among the Russians, there are supporters of our program, who have decided to support us concretely, but they don’t want to show this publicly.”

In the April 21 issue of *Literatura un Maksla*, Guntis Valujevs, wrote that the formation of the Latvian CP (for the program of the CPSU) had both tragic and comical elements. With regards to its claims to be a Latvian organization, he was inspired to cite a Russian proverb about a pig that had been dubbed a carp during a church fast, but could not grow fins. The party’s self-designation included a two-fold lie, he said, first that it had anything to do with the Latvian people, and secondly that it had anything to do with the “program of the CPSU” after 1985.

“In reality, it is clear that the result of the Twenty-Fifth Congress of the Latvian CP was that the party transformed itself into the Interfront [the neo-Stalinist unionist organization based on elements of the Russian population]. Henceforth, its separate existence has become senseless.” He wrote that the three Moscow loyalist parties in the Baltic had become “part of a crown of thorns,” rather than of laurel for the CPSU.

In his interview in *Tiesa*, Kezbers pointed out that the center of the unionist movement in the Baltic was in Latvia: “It is most difficult to work in Riga, which has become the center of the Baltic internationalist fronts. Their activity is coordinated with the strong ‘United Council of Workers’ Collectives.’ A Baltic Military District staff has been established. Tens of thousands of retired military officers live in the Latvian capital, belong to the CPSU territorial organization and unconditionally support its program.” Nonetheless, Klebers said, “the Internationalist Front and CPSU bloc cannot dictate its conditions in the republic’s newly elected Supreme Soviet, because it has only about 50 to 55 seats out of 201.”

### Conservative majority in Latvian CP

At the Latvian CP congress at the end of the first week in April, reportedly about 55% of the delegates were conservatives, 12% moderates, and 33% reformers. On April 7, some 263 of the 791 participating delegates walked out. Kezbers tried unsuccessfully to persuade them to return. The majority consummated the split by continuing the congress behind closed doors. It elected Alfreds Rubiks, rated the most unpopular politician in the republic by polls carried out by the youth magazine *Liesma*, as its new first secretary.

The independent CP was formed later, according to Kezbers, by about 600 delegates, of whom about 200 had been delegates to the united CP congress. The independent CP supports the perspective of an independent Latvia. The moderates were for autonomy for Latvia within the framework of the USSR and for the Latvian CP within the CPSU.

Among the moderates are the former CP leadership, including the former first secretary, Janis Vagris. The latter was the least pro-nationalist of the Baltic first secretaries. He was appointed in 1985 before any major political changes occurred. The other two first secretaries, Brazauskas in Latvia and Vāļas in Estonia, replaced unpopular leaders who tried to suppress the rise of the national movements. In *Literatura un Maksla*, Valujevs paid tribute to Vagris as a man of moderation who had avoided violence but been totally out-distanced by events.

The breakup of the Latvian CP and the Latvian declaration of intent to restore independence represent a continuing rise of the demand for national freedom in the Baltic republics, and a growing challenge to the Kremlin’s attempt to maintain the continuity of the Stalinist state. With the support of other national movements, such as the one in Ukraine in particular, and of the anti-bureaucratic opposition in Russia, this defiance cannot easily be broken by Gorbachev, even with the imperialist powers lining up to support him. ★

## WHY the name, Izquierda Sindical (Trade Union Left)?

Because it corresponds to what we are — the left wing of trade unionism. The IS sets out an alternative vision of unionism to that of the traditional reformist union leaderships. It aims to be more combative and also more democratic. A sector critical of reformism emerged as a part of the reorganization of the union movement in the 1960s and 1970s. In the Workers Commissions (CCOO), which have always been pluralist since their formation as a big socio-political anti-Francoist movement, there has always been a left wing. Our current represents the continuity of this left.

The point when this current appeared most clearly was in the third congress of the CCOO in 1984, when, for the first time, the left opposition presented an alternative list for the election of the Executive Commissions, obtaining 2.5% of the vote and one place on the executive. Three years later, in the fourth congress, the current consolidated itself with 8% of the vote and four places on the confederal executive.

### ■ During this time, how has this more combative and democratic unionism, of which you are speaking, expressed itself?

At the end of the dictatorship, there was a clear choice confronting the left — we were for a radical break while the reformist forces defended a process of gradual reform. This process of reform shaped the transition from the dictatorship. It was characterized by a consensus between the right and reformism which also had its trade union aspect — the social pacts. It should be remembered that, at the end of the dictatorship, there was a big mass movement on the rise, which had to be demobilized in order to stabilize the reformist regime.

This was also the sharpest period of the economic crisis, which meant that the workers were to accept sacrifices and take co-responsibility for the austerity policy. This was the double role of the social pacts. The attitude to these pacts divided trade unionists between those for and those against. The trademark of the trade union left during the decade from the end of the 1970s to the end of the 80s was its opposition to the pacts and to austerity, offering as an alternative a line of fighting back against the aggressive policies of the government and the bosses.

A whole section of trade union activists and cadres were separated out by these positions. The position in relation to the pacts was one of the reasons for the split in the Spanish Communist Party and the majority current of the CCOO at the beginning of the 1980s. One of the reasons that led the leadership to propose to the fourth congress in 1987 the abandonment of the policy of pacts was the need

# A left alternative in the Workers Commissions

**WE PUBLISH below an interview with Joaquín Nieto, a leading member of the Corriente de Izquierda Sindical (IS), a left current inside one of the main trade union movements inside the Spanish State, the Workers Commissions (Comisiones Obreras, known as the CCOO). The interview was conducted in April 1990.**

**Nieto is a member of the Federal Executive Commission of the Workers Commissions.**

to improve the internal climate and to overcome the contradictions contained in the policy of "national solidarity", which was the official name for the policy of supporting pacts.

Our balance sheet of this stage is positive, because on the one hand it made it possible for us to accumulate forces and on the other to exercise a real pressure on the whole of the trade union movement. We demanded that it give up the policy of pacts, and actively participate in all the struggles of resistance, some of which were very radical. Now, fortunately, times have changed — there are no longer social pacts as such and the trade union left has other concerns.

■ **Before going into the present profile of the current, let us talk about the split in the PCE. The section which called itself pro-Soviet, which left the CP, was also opposed to the social pacts, but did not in any way consider itself a part of the trade union left.**

What happened was that the trade unions abandoned the defence of elementary demands — to maintain them would have meant becoming a sector critical of the leadership. Thus the CCOO divided between those who defended these demands, who were against the pacts and for a line of fighting back, and those who abandoned them and were for the pacts and "national solidarity". When I say elementary I am talking about things as simple as whether or not to defend the purchasing power of the workers.

To pose the struggle in such limited terms made it easier to link up with others who were critical.

There was thus a lot of convergence,

which was very positive because it made possible a very broad and numerous opposition. But these convergences did not mean we shared the same conception of trade unionism. When the situation changed and the CCOO leadership abandoned the policy of social pacts, adopting a more combative position, this made it easy to recuperate the great majority of the pro-Soviet activists and cadres who returned to the PCE.

■ **After the social pacts were abandoned, the CCOO became more active and militant. First it called, by itself, a general strike in 1985, and later, on December 14, 1988, it called another jointly with the UGT (General Workers' Union, the social democratic union confederation). One year later negotiations began again and the government seemed to have made some concessions to trade union demands. Why? Is this a question of new pacts?**

The change is due precisely to the fact that there had been a general strike and the result was a greater attrition of the government and a more combative spirit among the workers. The government thought that something would have to change for everything to remain the same.

Before it had only been ready to concede some crumbs in return for the trade unions taking co-responsibility for its social and economic policy, but the result was a big confrontation with the trade union movement. Therefore it changed its tactics. It preferred to have the trade unions negotiating than organizing general strikes, although this required some concessions. It thus wanted to buy a climate of social peace and as

it could not get the trade unions to take co-responsibility for its socio-economic policy it was seeking to at least demobilize the confrontation.

The trade union-government agreements thus meant some important gains for the workers, the most relevant being the right to collective negotiation for the 1.3 million government employees, who had not previously had this right, with a clause on revising wages which is a type of annual sliding scale. These gains were made without giving anything in return, that is to say, without having to accept sacrifices. This is what makes them different from the social pacts.

■ **A complex situation for the trade union left, which either had to reject the agreements, thus marginalizing itself from the workers who saw them as a gain, or welcome the line of the majority of the trade union leaderships.**

I think that the trade union left has been able to see the trees without losing sight of the wood, to see the positive side of the agreements without forgetting the gaps and problems. Where is the problem in these agreements? It lies in that they gained only a part of the trade union demands, that fundamentally the socio-economic policy of the government remains in place, and, at the same time, since December 14 they have gained an undertaking from the trade union leaderships to maintain social peace, which may be prolonged indefinitely.

In short, the gains are a product of the general strike and what has not been won is because of the social truce. If we want to win all the demands, there will have to be new mobilizations and a turn to a global confrontation with government policy. This is our position, which is easy to understand. There is currently a second phase of negotiations starting in which things will be much more difficult for the trade unions. Our call to return to the path of mobilization could find a broader echo.

■ **What is the profile of the left in the CCOOs today?**

The first thing which identifies us is our position in relation to mobilization by workplace, by sector or general strikes. Reformism always claims to avoid them. We are always organizing them or making pressure for them to be organized, because we are conscious of their value not simply for taking forward immediate demands but as a sort of apprenticeship for the workers and a path for changing the relationship of forces.

When they are called, reformism always tries to have them as short and as much under control as possible. We always try to have them as militant and as long-



lasting as possible. We also have our own profile in terms of the more radical content of demands, as much as regards a thoroughgoing economic transformation as on the more basic demands: the 35 hours, elimination of temporary contracts and other questions that the reformist leaderships do not take up as immediate questions.

Participation from below and trade union democracy is another key element defining us. The reformists, when they talk about participation, mean passive participation. We want it to be active. Thus the leadership would like informative meetings where only the leaders talk. We would like everybody to be able to talk and decide and the decisions to be respected. We have had experiences like that of the bankworkers, with 150,000 workers, where the workers, following the call of all the sectors of the trade union left to vote no, rejected in a referendum the signing of a contract which was however signed by the trade union leaderships.

And finally there is our socio-political conception of trade unionism. Faced with institutionalized reformist trade unionism, which is loyal to the system, which sees the trade unions as one more cog in the state machinery, considers the trade union base as an electoral clientele, the trade union left wants a transforming trade unionism.

We think that the trade unions should be active on all emancipatory questions. Therefore we should be involved in the feminist and eco-pacifist struggles. In these fields, our current has been a real vanguard in the Workers Commissions, because it was open to feminism, anti-nuclear criticism and defence of the environment, to anti-NATO pacifism and the anti-militarism of the conscientious objectors and to active and not simply diplomatic solidarity with Nicaragua and El Salvador.

In the Spanish state there is a particular aspect which defines us. The trade union left unlike the trade union leadership doesn't recognize the reformist government or the Spanish constitution, because left wing trade unionism should intransigently defend all democratic freedoms including the right to national self-determination.

**■ When you talk about left-wing trade unionism, sometimes it seems as if you are talking about your current, the Izquierda Sindical, and sometimes about something broader.**

Left-wing trade unionism, as distinct from reformist positions, cannot be reduced to our current within the CCOOs. This is particularly true in some oppressed nationalities, including Euskadi, Galicia or the Canaries, where the majority of radical combative trade unionists are in trade union currents

linked to radical nationalism. There are also different isolated collectives in workplaces or branches which do not see the need to work in the majority trade unions, a phenomenon similar to that in many other countries.

There is also a small organization which comes from the historic CNT (the anarchist trade union federation). Thus there is a big dispersion of forces. The big advantage of the trade union left in this panorama is that it brings together a very significant sector of left-wing trade unionists, active in a big trade union, which in its turn organizes the majority of combative trade unionists, and which enjoys big prestige in the working class.

**■ Is there any perspective of regrouping these dispersed forces?**

No. If it was possible we would be working towards it. What is possible — and is positive — is practical convergences in times of struggle. If, for example, the CCOOs abandon a struggle, the people of the IS and these other groups support it together. But there is no possibility of forming a group of all these people, given the diversity of these trade union projects — some for working in the CCOOs, others against — and political projects.

**■ Coming back to the IS of the CCOOs, what is its implantation?**

To give objective data: our representation in the fourth confederal congress was 8%. In the main industrial zones, and in the most important bastions of trade unionism, our implantation is solid: Madrid, Catalonia, Euskadi, engineering and transport. We are present in almost all the executives of the regional organizations and sectoral and branch federations of the confederation.

Our representation is growing through the presentation of alternative lists in the different congresses, which win around 10% support. Recently, in a conference of the public sector (which coordinates the teaching, health, public administration and postal federations), our representation was around 15%. These figures show that we have an implantation throughout the trade union.

Another objective fact is the support for the manifesto that, on the eve of Mayday 1989, was signed by 2000 cadres of the CCOOs, to demand that the union leadership put an end to the truce made with the government and that there should be new mobilizations, including a repetition of the general strike. 2000 cadres, activists with leadership responsibilities in the trade union, is small in relation to the whole of the trade union movement, but significant. A good number of these cadres are not new, but hardened through many struggles and recognized as leaders by the workers in the workplaces.

**■ In 1991, the fifth congress of the**

**CCOOs will take place. Do you think that the current will maintain the growth of 1987?**

The IS will maintain its implantation and its militants and its standing in the eyes of the workers. In addition, sensitive as we are to the specific situation of young workers, we have led some of the struggles of young people who have entered the labour force as temporary workers. Our real representativeness will continue to exist although I don't know what it will be in the congress.

This will depend on the congress rules which are usually unfavourable to the minorities and whether the attitude of the majority is more tolerant or more bureaucratic. If it acts bureaucratically in a fashion hostile to us we could have some difficulties in maintaining our representation. We could see them being hostile to us because today the IS has become the only real opposition in the Workers Commissions.

The other critical sectors are the sections of those who broke with the PCE that have either returned to the party or do not represent a real opposition. This leaves a section of the so-called pro-Soviets who have combative positions — we would like to come together with them to form a left wing current for the future congresses. We will see if this possible.

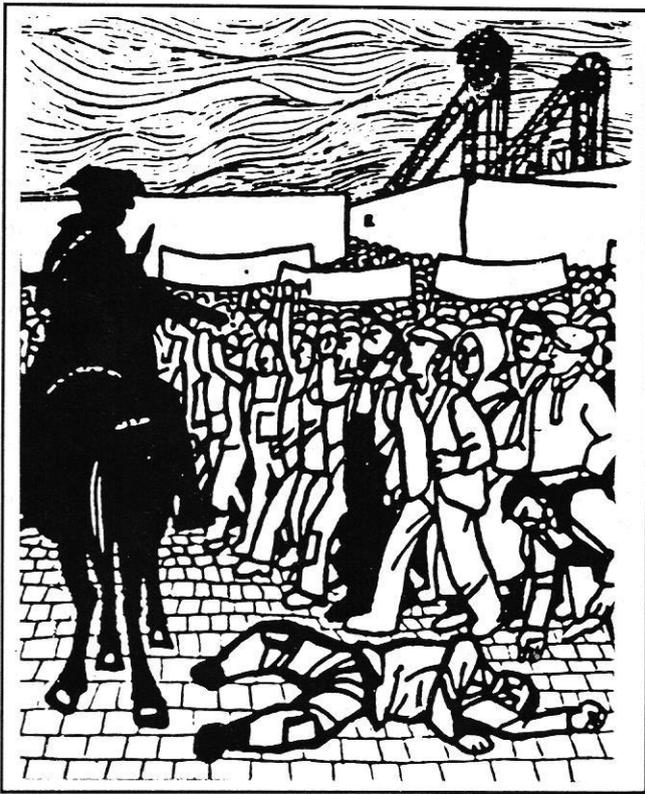
**■ What forces are today involved in the Union Left?**

It is necessary to understand two things: firstly, that there is an input from the revolutionary left, and secondly that, while the current is not a political force inside the CCOO, it also does not consider itself a strictly trade union option. The majority current is supported by the PCE and the great majority of the union's cadres belong to this party.

There are two revolutionary parties whose militants work in the CCOO and support the IS — the LCR and the MC (Movimiento Comunista — a current of Maoist origin). Evidently distinct political conceptions — reformist or revolutionary — translate into different trade union practices. But the IS is not a mechanical transfer of the LCR and MC into the union — it has been a pole in all the union battles that have taken place in the Commissions in the course of 20 years. There are many excellent militants who are not in the LCR or MC, but who share the IS's positions and fight for them.

**■ The Union Left puts itself forward as a defined current and the Workers Commissions recognize the right of currents to exist. Nonetheless, the IS is not recognized. Why? What is the scope and the limits of the rights according to the statutes of the CCOO?**

Effectively, the IS is a current *de facto* and not *de jure*. Everybody recognizes



our existence as a current in fact. This is true in the media, among the workers and also in the union itself. But the leadership is resisting recognizing us formally. This is perhaps the result of its patrimonial view of the union. The majority current considers the union to be its own and thus it is only them who can be considered good and legitimate in the union. The right to form currents is not automatically granted to members who want to exercise it — it depends on the decision of the majority. Thus there exists today in the union a tiny current, the Socialist Self-Management Current (CSA), which is officially recognized. Why is the CSA recognized when the IS is not? The answer is simple: the CSA is to the right of the leadership and allows it to appear as if there is a Socialist element in the union. The CSA poses no threat and even improves the union's image.

The IS is a quite different matter. It is radical, presenting an image of the union that the leadership wants to avoid and it is dangerous because it questions the domination of the majority current. But what is important is that we exist.

It is a characteristic of the CCOO that it allows a degree of pluralism. Alternative lists can be presented in the congresses for the leadership elections and its organs are composed on a proportional basis. If a current participates and obtains posts in the majority of the 300 to 400 assemblies that take place in the pre-Congress discussion process, the recognition of the current in fact is undeniable. This is what happens in our case.

■ From what you say, it seems as if

there are activities of the current that are allowed and those that are not. The limits are unclear. How do you operate? How do you ensure that your ideas are heard, both inside and outside the union?

Internally, we take part in all the debates and bodies of the union, from the assemblies of delegates and members to the Confederal Executive. Our current plays a vital role in these debates. We enjoy wide freedom of expression. The problems begin with the right to public expression. This right is set

down in the statutes, but only for individuals. I, for example, can go the press and give my opinion on any action or decision of the union's executive. I can publicly criticize the leadership without any problem.

The difficulty is in expressing ourselves as a current rather than as individuals, and this is precisely because we are not recognized as a current. But we are taking steps to give the current a public profile. Thus, for example, when we speak as individuals in the media, in fact we function as spokespersons of the IS.

We also promote initiatives with public repercussions, such as the manifesto of the 2000 that I mentioned earlier. In Euskadi, the IS puts out a bulletin that is circulated among the union members. Finally, we do not want our opinions to be confined inside the union, still less that they should be heard only in the four walls of the rooms where the leadership meets, without the workers knowing them.

■ That is to say that you are behaving in such a way as to appear as a current that is avoiding direct conflict with the bureaucracy.

Yes, but this is not always possible. In the Commissions, as in the Italian CGIL, there are certain democratic rights that are hardly to be found in other European unions. But even so, we are up against a key problem — the patrimonialism of the majority current which will not tolerate the IS winning the majority in some important organization of the union and that organization acting on IS lines. We have had some very bad experiences in

this regard. When the left was in the leadership of the provincial union in Navarra in Euskadi, this leadership was dissolved bureaucratically. The same thing happened in Gijón, the most important industrial city in Asturias, where the IS-led executive of the union in one of the SEAT-VW factories — the Spanish State's main industrial enterprises — has recently been dissolved. The leaders had already been expelled.

The big issue as far as internal democracy in the CCOO is concerned is this: to accept that not all the union's organizations are going to be led by the confederal majority and to accept that the IS can, in fact, lead important organizations when the members give us their support and can develop left trade unionism. This is also the big challenge for us because we can hardly aspire to conquer the majority in the union if we are victims of bureaucratic repression in the areas where we have already won.

■ But if you are meeting this problem — which is not a small one — there are sectors of the left that are not in the Workers Commissions. Why have you persisted in working in the CCOO?

Because we are part of that union. Workers know and recognize us as militants and leaders of the union. It is not the property of the majority alone but of us as well — we have been there since the beginning. But, moreover, if we look at what has happened to those who are outside the CCOO, we can see the dangers of isolation that could await us. Experience shows that it is not the same to undertake an action or start a strike as such and such a collective rather than as the CCOO.

In general, it is much less likely that the workers will heed calls to action if they come from outside the union. Our medium and long-term project cannot be blocked by sporadic clashes with the bureaucracy.

We know that our project will inevitably run up against the bureaucracy since reformist trade unionism requires strict control over the workers and cannot tolerate spontaneous expressions or autonomy on the part of the base organizations, and much less that a left current can challenge for the majority.

But we also know that the historic development of the union movement and its left in the Spanish State means that our project of drawing a significant part of the workers towards our leftist orientation should be conducted through the CCOO. The bureaucracy's room for manoeuvre will be determined by the relationship of forces. Pluralism will be secured insofar as the left gathers forces. Today the CCOO are more democratic than they were ten years ago, and if we do our work well we will ensure that the Izquierda Sindical becomes a reference point for the workers. ★

# "I'm sure they were planning to kill me"

**A MEMBER of the National Executive Committee of the organization *A Luchar* [To Struggle], the lawyer Daniel Libreros was kidnapped by soldiers at Cali airport on March 27. He had gone to the Colombian provincial city to defend over 70 members of *A Luchar* who were jailed and mistreated in the course of an offensive against the organization by the army. He narrowly escaped being murdered. After his release, he gave the following interview to Eric Toussaint.**

**C**OULD you explain the form taken by the offensive that the army mounted against *A Luchar* activists in the Cali region?

On March 2, Manuel José Bonnet, commander of the Third Brigade of the Southwestern region, headquartered in Cali, unleashed a campaign of persecution against members of *A Luchar*, a campaign organized and coordinated by the shadowy Army Intelligence Service (AIS), and which the brigade commander himself built up through the mass media. This campaign was directly related to *A Luchar's* position toward the present electoral process, in which it is calling on people not to vote.

The campaign of persecution led to raids on trade-union offices and homes of trade-union and political leaders in the region. In all, about 70 *compañeros*, in groups of 20, passed through the brigade's facilities. These premises are fitted out for torture. The walls are lined with tractor tires, and the roof is made out of zinc. The space is divided up into small rooms.

One is set up for electrical torture. In the early morning hours, they strip people, put them into baths and apply electric shocks. Another is set up for torturing people on a wooden horse. They set on people, tie them up and begin to spread-eagle them and beat them. There is another that serves for simulating executions. They bring people there blindfolded, and begin to fire into the air or poke an empty pistol into their chests and pull the trigger.

All the *compañeros* were beaten, and some, especially those with higher ranks in the regional union and leaders of the regional leadership of *A Luchar*, were tortured. They were all kept blindfolded for three days, their hands and feet tied,

without food and exposed to the sun, which in this climate can mean temperatures of around 34 degrees centigrade. As a result of all this, on the second day, some *compañeros* fainted, and in this condition they were kicked and trampled by elements belonging to the AIS.

On the third day, when they were given food, pentothal (otherwise known as truth serum) was put in the hot chocolate given to some. Under these conditions, in which people's physical faculties are worn down (above all those that have to do with their consciousness) and in which under pressure they may say whatever you want them to say, the *compañeros* were interrogated.

One of the *compañeros* most tortured was Harold Weiss, a prominent member of the regional leadership of *A Luchar*. On one occasion, they took off his blindfold to show him that they were putting a bullet in the pistol. Immediately putting the blindfold back, they took out the bullet or changed the pistol, an operation that Harold of course could not be aware of. Without a bullet in the chamber or with another pistol, they started "playing" Russian roulette with him.

Another *compañero*, a highly respected trade-union leader in the region, was buried up to his neck and tortured by the head of the AIS, a truly sinister figure, whom everyone calls "the priest." When he tortures people, he puts on a priest's robe and resorts to mystical language in order to justify his human wretchedness.

*Compañera* Elizabeth Suárez was tortured and raped. Other *compañeros* were taken from the Battalion headquarters in vehicles that use various license plates (which makes them hard to recognize) and which have polarized-glass windows (which makes it impossible to see who is inside). In these vehicles they were taken to high points in the city, and then their

captors pretended that they were going to throw them into some precipice or execute them.

Furthermore, the *compañeros* were held entirely incommunicado. To justify this, the military used Decree 1892 (also called the Anti-Terrorist Law), a totally reactionary decree issued in the context of presidential powers under the state of siege. It allows the army to arrest and hold incommunicado for seven working days (including Saturday and Sunday, that can be extended to nine) any person suspected of being a "political criminal," without those affected having the least opportunity to obtain legal assistance.

The situation I have been describing lasted from March 2 to 15. Immediately afterwards, the *compañeros* were accused of being active elements of the National Liberation Army (ELN) in the area. On this charge, they were transferred to the Villahermosa jail here in Cali. The majority of them were released on Saturday, April 14.

However, ten people are still being held, and an operation has been mounted against them based on the claim that they were caught "red-handed," that is, with guns and dynamite. The situation is extremely strange and confused, because, in fact, of the ten still in prison, only nine are members of *A Luchar*. The other seems in fact to be linked to the drug traffic. The army is using his arrest to besmirch the *A Luchar* members. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that the place where this person was picked up (with arms and dynamite) happened to be very close to the union headquarters in which the *A Luchar* leaders were arrested.

The campaign of persecution has led also to the confiscation of the organization's publication, which had legal recognition from the Ministry of Administration, and to considering any person with a copy as liable to arrest.



■ **What was the response of the various political and social organizations?**

The solidarity of the trade-union movement proved to be extremely important. There was a public outcry; marches were organized, and there was even a strike in the first week of these events. The unions in the factories most affected — Good Year Oxo and FIDELPA (which makes metal frames) — managed to organize one-hour strikes. The regional organization United Confederation of Workers (CUT) organized many mobilizations.

We think today that the mass movement is strong and can do a lot. After the general strike of October 27, 1988, the movement went into a defensive phase. In these conditions, this was a good show of solidarity.

International solidarity also played an important role. The compañeros say that during the trial they were told that international pressure (from bodies that defend human rights, Amnesty International and so on) worked in their favor. The judge himself recognized this fact.

■ **What happened to you?**

I was assigned by the *A Luchar* Executive Committee to offer legal help to the compañeros arrested. In carrying out this duty, I went to the civilian authorities to demand better treatment for the compañeros. In the beginning, I managed to

avoid being arrested for circumstantial reasons. But they started following me.

At 7:45 a.m. on March 27, I was getting ready to take Avianca Flight 202 from Cali to Bogotá. I even managed to check in and get through the screens. The line was very slow, however, and at one point I needed to go to the bathroom. When I entered, I was surrounded by three men armed with machine guns. They were dressed in civilian clothes, and identified themselves as belonging to the Third Brigade. "You are Daniel Libreros," they said, adding immediately, "We have come for you." I reacted according to the advice given for such cases. First, I asked on what charge they were arresting me, and when we left the bathroom, I shouted, "I am Daniel Libreros, and they are arresting me arbitrarily."

Unfortunately, when we came out the people were already in the airplane. Moreover, although it was a national flight, the plane left from the international runway, a part of the airport normally deserted. As a result of all this, no one heard me (although the investigation that the compañeros carried out that same afternoon showed that a worker laying blacktop had been aware of the events). The military were able to take me out of the airport quickly.

I was put in the cab of a 1981 Chevrolet pick-up truck with polarized-glass

windows, and an open back. Two of them got in with me, and the third rode in the back. They started driving around through the whole city and trying to intimidate me. "What should we do?" they asked each other. "Should we kill him once and for all?" After about half an hour of driving around, they took me to the Battalion Headquarters.

I had a bag with books and some magazines (*Newsweek*, *Time*, *Inprecor*, *International Viewpoint*), as well as a copy of the writ that we had presented to the civilian authorities in protest against the treatment to which the compañeros had been subjected. The military men started going through the bag carefully looking for telephone numbers and addresses. Luckily, I had neither.

Then, they took down my personal information, and made me sign a form normally filled in by everyone who is going to be tortured. It is a document in which you state that you are in perfect conditions in the Battalion headquarters. So, when people ask for you, the military just say something like "We cannot present this person, but you can see the form in which the one concerned declares that he or she is perfectly well."

Since I was aware of the way they use this form, I told them that I was not signing it, that I would do so when I left the Battalion. I told them besides that I demanded guarantees, and that I wanted to

know the legal circumstances of my detention in the Battalion headquarters and what I was being charged with.

The characters who had arrested me and another one who was in the headquarters shut themselves up in the office of a Colonel Alvarado (I managed to read the name on the door) to discuss what to do after my refusal to sign the form. Shortly afterward, they came out, and along with three others put me in the same pick-up truck and took me about two kilometres to the end of the Battalion base. They put me in an abandoned room (as shown by the dust everywhere). It was sound-insulated, like a radio room, that is, insulated so that the screams of those tortured cannot be heard outside.

They took out a table and made me sit in front of it. A man in civilian clothes began to interrogate me. I found out later, after asking the imprisoned compañeros who



"Are the arms ready?" "Ready!" "And the script?" "That's ready too" "LIGHTS — CAMERA — ACTION!"  
(from *A Luchar* — referring to Colombian military frame-ups of leftists)

had directed the interrogation, that it was the notorious "priest." When this character questioned the *compañeros*, he never showed his face. He questioned them while they were blindfolded, or wore a hood. But he always showed his face to me. I think that was because, in one way or another, they had already decided to kill me. I think they made that decision when they shut themselves up in this Alvarado's office, because there were no witnesses to my arrest, a fact that would have made it very difficult to prove that I had been arrested by the army.

■ **So, why didn't they kill you?**

Well, the character started asking me personal questions again. That day, I had a meeting planned with the minister of the interior to discuss the case of the arrested *compañeros*. When I mentioned the date, my interrogator smiled. "If you like", I told him, "call and check that we were going to meet". To that, he answered by saying that he wasn't going to ask me any more questions, because he was convinced that I was not going to implicate any *compañero*. In fact, I reiterated that I had no intention of making any kind of statement as long as I was not given guarantees and as long as I was held incommunicado.

The "priest" then started going through my books and magazines, asking me questions and making comments. Immediately afterwards, he said, "Look, we are holding you here as the political boss of the ELN in the whole area. If we torture you or kill you, it is because that suits us. It is not to get information. I am not going to ask you anything more about the ELN. I am convinced, and that conforms to the experience of the Battalion, that guerrilla chiefs never 'sing' because they are conditioned for that. What we do is torture the intermediate cadres to get them to say who the political leaders are. And all the intermediate cadres we have tortured have told us that you are the ELN's regional political leader. We are going to act on this information. Right now we are discussing with the brigadier general what decision to make."

Afterwards, he asked me what I thought about the political situation in the country, and then he started making comments trying to show me that he really knew what was going on in the country, the situation of the left and so on.

In the midst of this scene, another character came in with two pepsi colas. Just seeing them reminded me of what they often do to hide their crimes. They get detainees to take a drugged drink, take them out on the highway, murder them and then claim they died as a result of criminal attacks. So, I only pretended to take the drink (imagine me at 34 degrees centigrade, shut up in a wooden room and with my nerves on edge). Even after just wetting my lips and tongue I began to feel that my interrogator was moving away

from me, to start to see him as if he was 50 meters away and surrounded by circles and stars. Imagine the sort and quantity of drug that they put in!

This lasted about 20 minutes, 20 very difficult minutes, because they were a struggle between consciousness and unconsciousness. I knew that if I lost consciousness, I was finished. I concentrated all my physical and mental capacity so as not to lose consciousness. The "priest" saw what was happening, and started asking me stupid questions about *perestroika* and *glasnost*. Really, the only thing he wanted to do was to see whether the drug had started to take effect.

After about 20 minutes — think how strong the instinct for self-preservation is! — the character said that he was going to stop me. He did that, and led me to the only spot in the room where a bit of fresh air came in. I breathed deeply, and finally felt that the worst was over. I went back to the table and asked him why he didn't drink his pepsi cola... "I am not thirsty, he said, but you can drink yours."

In a little while, a terrible meal arrived (I suppose it is the same thing they give the soldiers). Obviously, after the experience of the soft drink I had no intention of taking even a mouthful.

The interrogator resumed the conversation, talking in generalities about the situation in the country. I talked in the same terms. Suddenly, he told me: "The problem with this country is that people have not thrown themselves into the arms of the Lord, Christ our Lord." After this, he plunged into a really violent mystical religious state. He started to talk to me about the Epistle of Saint Paul, about St. John, the Baptist; about the Apocalypse, Sodom and Gomorrah (he said that Colombia was a sort of Sodom and Gomorrah and that I was going to turn into a statue of salt), and so on.

Uncovering his face (which reconfirmed my suspicion that they were thinking of killing me), he confessed to being the head of the AIS; he said that he was 44 years old and old enough to retire but wanted to continue in the Service "because God, our Lord, has put me in this Service." Suddenly, he asked me, "And you, Daniel Libreros, do you know why God manifested himself in this base at just this moment and not before?" I answered that I didn't have the slightest idea. "Because you have been called to the realm of eternity."

In view of this situation, I asked if I could pose a question. "Ask it," he said. "You are going to kill me, isn't that so?" "Yes, we are going to kill you. We have to kill you. You know that this is a war. The decision has already been made." He went on to say that he was going to give me Extreme Unction, and took out a book normally used by people who belong to a Protestant sect that has its center in Los Angeles, California (I imagine that it is linked to the Ku Klux Klan and the right-

ist groups in the US.) He opened the book, and asked me to read a selection from Saint Matthew on death.

I was shocked by his answer that they were really going to kill me. You join the revolutionary movement thinking that as a revolutionist you may die at any moment. But it is something else to accept it as an imminent reality. So, I was faced with a personal dilemma, a process, you might say, of self-destruction, of having to accept dying in full physical and psychological health. In these circumstances, I refused to read the indicated passages.

Then, he blessed me in the style of a Catholic Extreme Unction, saying that he hoped that the prophets would go with me, that I would achieve freedom in the Divine Judgement, and so on. He promised to make sure that my family would not suffer at the painful moment of getting the news of my death. He also said something very significant. He recognized that excesses had been committed on the premises but that "the Lord will understand it because this has happened in the context of a war." Finally, he asked me to bless him. In the state I was in, my answer was that I was not going to do it. In the face of my refusal, he flew off the handle and walked out of the room.

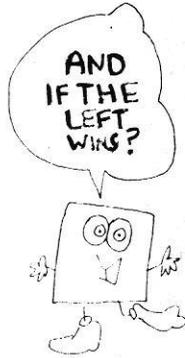
Immediately, another person came in (who I later identified as the chief of torture and one of those who raped Elizabeth). He started to go through my books and magazines (I suppose in search of some clue that would connect me with the ELN). After this, he told me that he had also finished his task and asked me to keep my things in the bag.

As soon as he had finished, a man came in who said his name was Martínez and that he was a visiting lawyer for the regional prosecutor's office. He asked me, "Under what charge are you being held on these premises?" I answered that I did not know under what charge they arrested me. "They are holding me totally incommunicado."

"But what are they accusing you of?" he insisted. "I don't have the slightest idea," I reiterated. "Personally," he said, "I am opposed to the army assuming powers that don't belong to it. What do you want?" I asked him to get in touch with my family and my *compañeros* of A *Luchar* in Bogotá.

■ **How do you explain the fact that a lawyer for the prosecutor's office turned up right away?**

Well, it's a bit complicated. The A *Luchar* *compañeros* were waiting for me at Bogotá airport. When they saw that I did not come on the Avianca flight, they got worried and immediately called my mother (who had accompanied me to the Cali airport). Later, they asked in the Avianca offices, where they denied knowledge of me, although my name appeared on the screens. They went to the civilian authorities and to the army. Both denied



holding me.

The *compañeros* put on pressure and got the prosecutor's office lawyer to come directly to the Battalion's base. On arriving, he went first to Hernández, the secretary general of the Brigade, who denied knowledge of me. He said that they had not arrested any Daniel Libreros, and that he should look somewhere else. Then he went to Alvarado, who also denied knowing about me.

The lawyer then asked them to let him into the detention cells. Obviously I was not there, because they intended to "disappear" me. Then he asked them to let him look into the little parallel room, where he knew that they held people from the April 19 movement (M-19) and other left groups, when they had a presence in the region. I wasn't there either. He went back with Hernández, and asked for a card saying that Daniel Libreros was not being held in the Battalion base. And Hernández gave it to him! His intention was to make me disappear! (Later I asked the lawyer to give me the card, and of course he didn't. They have even threatened to kill the prosecutor).

When Martínez left the Brigade base, he met a noncommissioned officer, who asked him what he was doing there. The lawyer answered that he was "looking for Mr. Daniel Libreros." The soldier, certainly unaware that a decision had been made to have me disappear, told him that I had been held here since 9:00 a.m. Did the lawyer find me totally by chance? As we say here, it was a real miracle!

Immediately, Martínez went back to Alvarado's office and told him that he knew perfectly well that they were holding me, and that there was no reason to go on denying it. In view of this situation, Alvarado had no alternative but to accept the fact and to start making up stories ("we are drawing up a memorandum to clarify his juridical situation") in order to justify holding me for eight hours without producing me.

Martínez then drew up a statement for the DAS (the secret police), took responsibility for me, and took me to the DAS offices. There they locked me up for four

days in a horrible dungeon (a tiny cell, without a mattress, with a toilet inside, which forces you to eat while breathing the odor of excrement, infested with mosquitos, and so on.)

Finally, they could not find anything to accuse me of. There is no charge against me. The arrest was therefore totally arbitrary. Even so, the DAS took a very strange attitude. It recognized there was no problem, and that they were going to release me, but they only did so four days afterward. I suppose that their objective was to wait for a relaxation of the political pressure brought to bear by the *compañeros* of *A Luchar* and by various social and political organizations.

Once they had managed that, I believe their intention was to take advantage of the weekend — when all the legal authorities are closed — to take me back to the Battalion base to torture me and perhaps "disappear" me. On Friday, the DAS chief, a retired colonel, told my mother that if the Brigade wanted me, he could not object, because it had ordered my arrest.

Fortunately, there was never any let up in the pressure brought to bear by the *A Luchar* *compañeros*. They went to the offices of the Ministry of Administration itself and to the doors of all the Colombian and international organizations that defend human rights. The trade-union movement took the same attitude through the CUT. The *compañeros* of the Fourth International played a very important role, because they organized an international campaign with wide repercussions, getting statements from governmental bodies in several countries as well as from organizations that defend human rights. Under all this pressure, without authorization from the Brigade, the minister of the interior took responsibility for releasing me.

When I came out, nonetheless, the DAS offered me a personal escort, arguing that the army unit that had arrested me might kidnap me again. I suspect that this same unit is behind the activity of the paramilitaries in the region. After my release, two trade-union leaders from the Yumbo

region (outside Cali) "disappeared." I am sure that they are in the clutches of the kidnapers, torturers and murderers of trade-union, political and people's leaders, of defenders of human rights, the same people who have even threatened to kill the prosecutor.

I refused the personal escort and left accompanied only by Martínez, the lawyer who rescued me and in effect saved my life. He went with me to my home. In the following days, however, I continued to get various sorts of threats. There were telephone calls, and the truck in which they held me was parked outside the door of my mother's apartment for the whole weekend following my release.

I think that my situation remains precarious, since they started out with the idea that I was going to disappear. They are perfectly aware of the fact that I know the chief of the Intelligence Service, the chief of torture. They never took precautions; they never took the trouble to use a hood. They even gave personal information.

When I made my statement, I gave a description of these people, and the *A Luchar* *compañeros* who had been held agreed that these were in fact the people who headed the campaign against the organization, who arrested them, kidnaped them and so on.

We reported this whole situation to the governmental authorities in Bogotá. In fact, the problem is not confined to individual persecution. It has to do with restricting the rights of *A Luchar* to exist as an organization. We want to remind international public opinion that in Colombia there are no guarantees of the right of political activity outside the bounds established by the regime, that is outside murderous para-militarism and militarism and a bipartisan system closely linked to them. Setting up a union in Colombia is an act of real heroism, because union leaders are persecuted and murdered. Recently, a common grave was found in Córdoba containing the remains of 20 peasant leaders. Three *A Luchar* *compañeros* have also been arrested and wrongfully accused of being involved in burning a bus. ★

# New attack on abortion rights fails

*"WOMEN [have been regarded] as little more than flowerpots in which future generations of children, preferably boy children, are reared". (Conservative MP Theresa Gorman during the parliamentary debate on abortion.)*

ON APRIL 24 the British parliament voted for the first time for 23 years on women's rights to abortion. Prior to the votes, which took place because the Thatcher government made a concession to the anti-abortion lobby by allowing government time for new legislation to be considered, the pro-choice movement feared that a substantial attack on the existing law might be carried. In fact the outcome was not a restriction of legal abortion, but in some respects at least, a liberalization of the law. This result was a massive defeat for the anti-abortion lobby.

ANNE KANE

**W**HILE the new abortion law lowers the general time limit for legal abortion by four weeks, to 24 weeks, other amendments adopted mean that later abortions will continue to be available to exactly the groups of women who receive them now. They are covered by the two exceptions to the 24 week limit adopted by parliament — for foetal abnormality and "grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman" — which are allowed with no upper limit.

Possibly the most significant step was the vote to separate the 1929 Infant Life Preservation Act from the new abortion law. The 1929 Act's statutory ruling on "viability" of the human foetus puts the onus on doctors to prove that a foetus was not viable, and that the abortion had taken place before the 28th week — the 1929 Act's limit for the "presumption of viability". This has been used to threaten doctors, who might perform an abortion in good faith under the 1967 abortion act but then be challenged legally under the 1929 act. This has limited the willingness of many doctors to perform late abortions.

The 24 week limit with exceptions had the backing of the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, on the grounds that, due to advances in medical science, a presumption of viability should have been more accurately fixed at 24 weeks. While the pro-choice National Abortion

Campaign (NAC) clearly rejected these arguments about viability, as not relevant to women's right to terminate a pregnancy, the medical profession's view did initially push a substantial section of moderate pro-choice opinion — for example the charities that run abortion clinics — in the direction of favouring a cut in the existing time limit from 28 to 24 weeks. However lack of clarity in the debate meant that it was not at all clear that this same section of opinion understood that the medical profession also favoured wide exceptions to this limit and the decriminalization of abortion.

## Tactics of anti-abortionists backfire

The anti-abortionists were both hoping for and expecting a major victory. The scale of their subsequent defeats led to public recriminations among anti-abortion MPs. For twenty years this lobby has attacked the 1967 act in parliament, waged gory and expensive propaganda campaigns outside and demanded government time for an abortion debate in parliament. This time some of their tactics backfired — in particular many MPs and public opinion were alienated by receiving realistic plastic models of a foetus through the post on the eve of the vote.

The votes of April 24 were sufficiently decisive, in particular in rejecting all the proposals of the anti-abortionists — who



voted against the final amendment proposed to the abortion law — to set back the anti-abortionists for a number of years.

This success for the pro-choice movement lay in bringing the reality of the majority view that women have a right to decide on abortion, to bear on parliament. This was achieved despite difficult odds arising from the confusing context of the attack, the weight of medical opinion supporting a cut in the abortion time limit, considerable hostility from the leadership of the labour movement, and initial public apathy.

It involved a major campaign involving pro-choice women's groups, backing from women in the trade unions, and support from Labour MPs. It built on previous campaigns on the same issue — for example against the attempt two years ago to introduce an 18 week limit on abortions by Liberal-Democrat MP David Alton.

This battle was the sharpest test for legal abortion in Britain since the passage of the 1967 abortion act, which substantially decriminalized abortion and made it possible — though it was not a "right" — for women to obtain legal abortion with the agreement of two doctors on a wide range of grounds.

The ferocity of the attack on abortion rights this time came from the fact that the anti-abortionists were given backing by Thatcher herself. She had personally intervened to ensure that a vote on abortion could be attached to a bill on the government's "Human Fertilization and Embryology Bill", which meant that unlike previous attacks raised by individual MPs, this time the amendment was ensured time in the legislative proceed-

ings of the House of Commons, and there would therefore be a definitive vote on the matter.

Previous anti-abortion proposals had been procedurally defeated before reaching the stage of being voted into law. Thatcher's intervention to attach a vote on abortion to a bill on a different topic was carried out against the opposition of even some of her own ministers and the medical establishment.

The Embryology Bill was introduced in parliament to establish a legal framework for scientific and medical techniques around human embryo research, artificial insemination by donor, in vitro fertilization, surrogate motherhood and related matters.

### Embryo research holds key to medical advances

Scientific pressure behind the legislation was immense. Enormous vested interests supported continued research and the development of the reproductive technologies. Embryo research holds the key to advances in knowledge and treatment of congenital and inheritable disease, of infertility and into safer forms of contraception. Continued research has great potential for improving the quality of human life.

The techniques with which the bill is concerned also have crucial implications for expanding women's reproductive control. To take the example most attacked by the right, artificial insemination by donor, the Warnock Report commented pointedly "the various techniques for assisted reproduction offer not only a remedy for infertility, but also offer the fertile single woman or lesbian couple the chance of parenthood without the direct involvement of a male partner." The bill is a compromise between the interests bound up with the advance of scientific

research and the concern that such research, and the associated reproductive techniques such as insemination by donor, be only permitted in the most restrictive way. The Tory government wanted to allow scientific developments without creating greater reproductive choice for women and without weakening the anti-abortion lobby.

The fact that the essential proposals in the bill were likely to be carried — particularly that allowing embryo research, albeit with a limit of 14 days from conception — meant that scientific opinion had won out over the so-called "pro-life" lobby in the Tory party, giving Britain among the most advanced laws in Europe on the matter. The "right to life" lobby demanded retribution.

The government sought to pacify this lobby and score some counterbalancing attack on women's reproductive rights by facilitating restrictive amendments to the bill. The outcome of one of these, to restrict access to insemination by donor to women in a "stable heterosexual relationship" is still to be decided. The other was that on abortion. Government support for a parliamentary attack on abortion was unprecedented.

In British parliamentary practice abortion has traditionally been treated as a matter of conscience, not subject to party discipline. Even the 1967 act was introduced by an individual member of parliament. No government, or political party as a whole, has since backed a restrictive abortion bill. The persistent attempts at parliamentary attack on the abortion law have always been by individual MPs, in the form of Private Members Bills.

The government's move provoked wide condemnation by the scientific and medical lobby, rightly fearful that this would turn a bill with a strong chance of making its way into law into an abortion minefield. Baroness Warnock, chair of the

committee whose recommendations led to the bill, and very much an establishment figure, denounced the government's move as "evil". However, it was clear at the end of the struggle over the last parliamentary attack on abortion law, the Alton bill, in 1987-88, that there was a parliamentary majority for some restriction in the abortion law, at least a restriction to 24 weeks in line with majority medical opinion. Anti-abortion MPs exploited this sentiment, arguing that a debate would allow a new consensus to emerge.

Anti-abortionists knew that a debate in government time could not be defeated by procedural manoeuvres. They were therefore hopeful of a substantial restriction on existing law, and right up to the final vote publicly stated their belief that a restriction to 20 weeks was possible and at least 22 weeks was certain.

### Abortion rights and individual conscience

Although the Labour Party has a clear policy in favour of a "woman's right to choose" on abortion, and a majority of Labour MPs support this, the party leadership has traditionally not demanded adherence to this position in parliamentary votes, claiming abortion to be a matter of individual conscience. In reality the party leadership, while formally opposing attacks on abortion, refuses to confront the party right on this matter. Although only a small number of Labour MPs are hardline anti-abortionists, there was concern that these numbers would be boosted by some who support some restriction in the law, swinging the overall result further in the direction of the anti-abortionists.

Central figures in the Labour Party, as early as October 1989, were suggesting that restriction in the abortion law was inevitable and therefore the task was to promote support for a 24 week restriction. Such tactics by the Labour Party — and they were not even urged upon the whole pro-choice movement — would simply have shifted the terms of debate massively in favour of the anti-abortionists and helped prepare a defeat.

The campaigning organizations outside parliament, in particular the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) and the ad hoc coordinating group, the Stop the Amendment Campaign (STAC), established by NAC to fight this particular attack on abortion rights, took the view that the only way of minimizing the damage was to hold firm against any change. At the same time, correctly estimating the relationship of forces, they did not make those who thought a 24 week restriction was inevitable the main target of attack, understanding that many who supported it were far from being anti-abortionists.

It was this course, followed by NAC and STAC in particular, which made it possible to build up the maximum alliance



of forces, in very difficult circumstances, which was key to the success finally achieved. The first step in the campaign was to emphasize the damage to the discussion on the vital issues in the Embryology Bill that would result from attaching abortion legislation to it. A public appeal was launched calling for abortion to be kept out of the Embryology Bill, which won support from the medical lobby in both the embryo research and abortion fields, and across a wide range of political and public opinion.

The support of the trade unions was decisive. The campaign, being established on the basis of opposition to any restriction in abortion rights, was able to win the active support of the TUC and national trade unions. The support of national trade unions, particularly the women's structures, was essential in ensuring the maximum expression of opposition in the time available.

In terms of practical support for example, the local government white collar union, NALGO, printed thousands of leaflets and posters for the campaign, the TGWU, the largest general union, paid for the public address system for the April 23 demonstration, the print unions NGA and SOGAT paid TUC women's conference expenses and provided considerable organizational help, and several regions of the MSF (white collar technical workers) and NCU (telephone workers) gave substantial donations.

### National union officials sign public appeal

A wide range of national union officials signed the public appeal, calling for abortion to be kept out of this bill. Several national trade unions affiliated directly to the campaign. The NGA, SOGAT and NALGO, in rapidly organizing the submission of resolutions, ensured that this attack was the central debate at TUC women's conference in March, backed up by one of the best attended fringe meetings for years. The March TUC women's national conference took a position in support of the embryology bill, against the abortion attack and against restrictions on donor insemination.

When the campaign had less than three weeks notice for the decisive parliamentary vote and called for a demonstration and lobby of parliament, the trade unions, notoriously slow to move, responded in a big way. An evening demonstration on the Monday before the vote brought several national and regional trade union contingents, including the local government workers, NALGO, the public sector unions GMBATU and NUPE and the print unions SOGAT and NGA onto the demonstration. At very short notice 3000 people turned out. This demonstration was referred to repeatedly in the following day's parliamentary debate.

There is no doubt that this expression of

opinion affected the vote which followed, especially by Labour MPs. Given party policy, it is scandalous that any Labour MP voted for a 22 week limit or even lower. But that only 30 of them did so is directly attributable to the campaign.

In the debate itself, the implications of the massive change in women's position in British society and the basis for the strong support for women's choice on abortion was clear. While only one in 16 MPs is a woman, of these the great majority were firmly against this attack on abortion. These included women Tory MPs like Theresa Gorman, whose intervention included a strident attack not just on anti-abortionists, but on misogyny, male sexuality and Christian hypocrisy.

This attitude, from an MP who on other matters is very much on the right of the Conservative Party, was not isolated and can only have added to MPs fears of a popular backlash against the anti-abortionists of the kind seen recently in the United States.

The overall vote, however, strictly reflected class interests. Conservative MPs voted by almost 2:1 for the more restrictive 22 weeks; only 30 Labour MPs voted for 22 weeks. The final version of the clause was carried with 335 votes for and 129 against, the latter being the hard-line anti-abortion vote.

### Pro-choice movement on the offensive

The outcome has shifted the relationship of forces substantially in favour of women. For the first time since the 1967 act, the pro-choice movement is able to move onto the offensive. During the remaining stages of the bill in parliament for example, moves will be made to attempt to gain abortion on request in the first 12 weeks in line with many other European countries. The argument that this would reduce the need for late abortion was heard more clearly than ever in this campaign.

Following the vote on April 24, Conservative government minister Kenneth Clarke indicated his sympathy with making early abortion easier to obtain, possibly by only requiring reference by one doctor rather than two.

Given the tremendous counter-offensive by the anti-abortionists, it is unlikely that any further positive change will be won, but for such demands to now be part of the mainstream debate is itself a major shift. The last remaining threat to women connected with this bill is the possibility of restricted access to donor insemination. While this is less widely understood than abortion, and the anti-abortionists will certainly be desperate for some success after their two defeats, the odds against a successful attack are greatly improved by the victories won so far. ★

## Towards a revival of working class activity?

**BALA TAMPOE** is general secretary of the Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU), a major union in Sri Lanka. The following interview on the current political situation in Sri Lanka was given to Salah Jaber and Bernard Gibbons in Paris on April 25.

### CAN YOU describe the circumstances leading up to the recent withdrawal of the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) from Sri Lanka?

There was a presidential election at the end of December 1988, and a general election in February 1989, and this has resulted in a fairly important change in the governmental setup. In the first place, President Jayawardene, the man who invited the Indian troops to come into Sri Lanka, had to drop out because he had served two terms.

The former prime minister, Ranasinghe Premadasa, was elected, but with a very small majority, and with a very large section of the electorate not voting, due to terrorist threats. In fact the election itself is now being challenged by his main political rival, Mrs. Bandaranaike of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP — the main bourgeois opposition party), and this is now before the Supreme Court.

Premadasa has taken quite a different line from his predecessor, particularly regarding the situation in the north and the east. He was not in favour of the so-called accord between Jayawardene and the former prime minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, which brought in Indian troops. So after he became president there was a gen-

eral election in which his party, the United National Party (UNP), once again got a majority. But they lost their two thirds majority, which is an important development, because they had to have the election on the basis of proportional representation.

Now there is a fairly substantial representation of the opposition parties in parliament, which was not there in the previous parliament, and they cannot change the constitution without a two thirds majority, so that is an important limitation on the powers of the president and the present government.

But in June 1989, President Premadasa suddenly and unilaterally called on the Indian troops to withdraw by the end of July 1989. That would have been exactly two years since they originally came in July 1987.

Of course the Indians were not prepared to withdraw just like that — they said that in the first place they had to make sure that the situation in the north and east was stabilized as far as the security of the Tamil people was concerned, and in any case from a logistical standpoint they couldn't pull out nearly 50,000 Indian troops within a space of two months. There was a bit of a deadlock over that but in December 1989, they agreed to go by the end of March 1990, and they in fact left on time on March 25, one month ago. That's a major change in the whole situation.

#### ■ Why did Premadasa suddenly demand the withdrawal of the IPKF?

Premadasa made the call to the Indian army to withdraw after negotiations with the political representatives of the main armed group in the north, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). They said that they were prepared to consider laying down their arms, if the Indian troops withdrew completely. So in other words he joined forces politically with the LTTE on the demand that the Indian troops withdraw.

By that time the terrorist situation in the south had become very acute, due mainly to the activities of the so-called People's Liberation Front, or JVP (Janata Vimukthi Peramuna). Having entered into talks with the Tigers in June 1989, Premadasa also invited the JVP to come to the talks, but the JVP rejected this. Stabilizing the situation in the north and east gave Premadasa a freer hand to liquidate the JVP through a process of counter

terror.

#### ■ How has the Indian withdrawal affected the balance of forces in the north and east?

The president has entered into some kind of a deal with the leadership of the Tigers, to give them virtually a free hand in the north and east, and firstly to eliminate the other groups, which have now completely withdrawn. In fact, when the Indians left, the head of the provincial administration, who was the leader of another group, the EPRLF (Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front), also went to India. Most of the EPRLF cadre are now refugees in India. They left with the IPKF. So there is in that sense a kind of peace restored because one armed party, the Tigers, is now in control.

The Sri Lankan armed forces are staying in barracks and avoiding contact with the Tigers on the basis of a cease-fire that Premadasa announced when he started the negotiations in June.

An important factor that contributed to the Indian withdrawal was the change of government in India. The new prime minister Singh had criticized Rajiv Gandhi for sending the Indian forces into Sri Lanka, and after Premadasa's ultimatum, Singh's government decided it was best to withdraw and let Premadasa handle the situation with the Tigers as best he could.

The Tigers are claiming that they have won a victory with the Indians withdrawing. But until the Indian army withdrew

the Tigers were in hiding in the jungles. As long as the Indian army was there they were beaten, powerless. Now Premadasa has got them out of the jungle through the withdrawal of the IPKF.

#### ■ So the Sri Lankan army is staying out of the north and east?

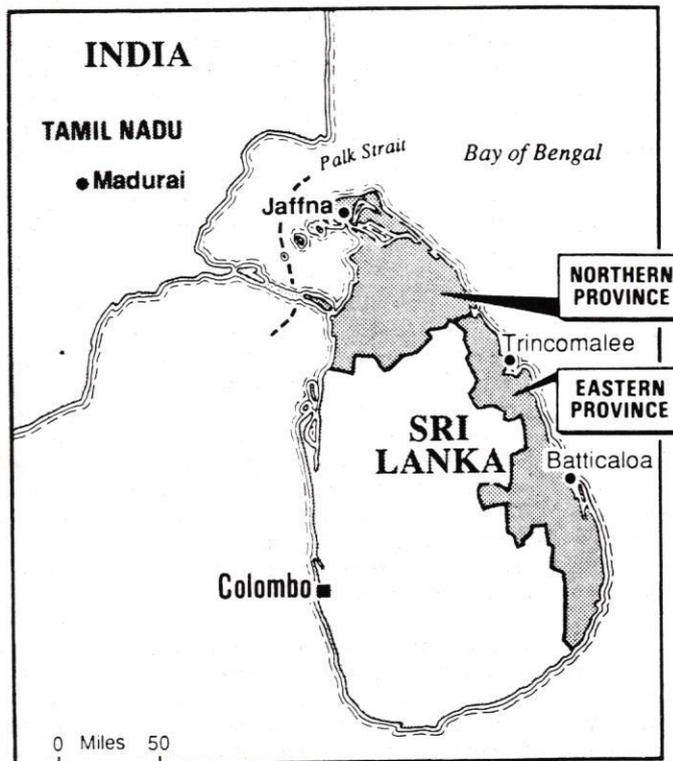
Yes. The Tigers have been asked to surrender their arms but they have refused on the grounds that they need them to guarantee the security of the Tamil people. So the government is temporizing with them. I would think that in any case the government is not at all anxious to start another war in the north and east. For one thing the Tigers are very well armed, for another it is a very costly business, and the fact is that now the government can really use the Tigers to control the area. This is becoming a very dangerous situation from the point of view of democratic rights for the people of the north and east, because the Tigers don't recognize the right of any other group to function independently.

In fact right now my union is coming face to face with the Tigers in relation to its right to exist in the north, in a big chemical factory where we've had a well established union branch for over 20 years.

The factory had been shut down due to the state of war, and now that the situation has begun to ease our union began to demand that production in the factory be restored. In February this year they organized a public campaign with posters all over Jaffna, the northern capital and open picketing on the streets. The Tigers didn't like this at all because now the other armed groups have disappeared they want to make it appear to the world that only they exist in Jaffna and no other organization whatsoever.

#### ■ You had already had problems with their predecessors, the EPRLF....

Yes, they tried to get the CMU members to join a union set up by them which is not a genuine trade union at all.... which they refused to do. Now the Tigers have done the same thing, they have set up a political organization, parallel to their military organization. On January 23 the local Tiger leader came into the factory and, with the permission of the management, addressed the entire workforce, boasting about the achievements of the Tigers, and telling them that there is no need to



have any contacts or links with organizations in the south, and that they should leave such organizations and join an organization that the Tigers are setting up.

To the eternal credit of the workers — we have 2 branches there, 190 members — they were not at all willing to leave the CMU. Then the president of the branch turned to the Tiger leader and asked him in front of the workers if he was not aware that our union had defended the rights of the Tamils to self-determination. When he said yes, our branch president asked him why he did not respect the right of self-determination of the workers in this factory to decide what union to belong to. The Tiger leader was silenced, and mumbled something and left.

But last week a whole group of Tigers came back to the factory, both political and military leaders, and called all the union representatives together to try again. Now the situation is critical because the members of my union are not going to leave. But this will become a critical issue of self-determination, and if the Tigers resort to any kind of violence against our people we have to make the issue nationally and internationally known, because only the CMU today exists as an independent organization. We are planning a trade union demonstration and meeting on May Day, and I think the Tigers want to prevent this.

I don't know what is happening now, the Tigers are pretty ruthless but they are anxious to show they have become peaceful. Whether or not they will resort to direct violence remains to be seen. It is significant that a group of workers from an independent union like ours has up to now been able to withstand this pressure, totally unarmed. This affirms my belief that the working class can be effective in responding to terror like this when it responds on a mass basis, even if unarmed, as my members are.

**■ Are there any contacts or links between the Tigers and the Singh government in India?**

Yes, the Tigers have said that they want to restore relations, and I think Singh decided to withdraw the troops to restore some kind of political relationship with the Tigers. But the situation is very uncertain — in the meantime the opposition parties in Sri Lanka are demanding that the government publish details of its negotiations with the Tigers from June last year until now, because it is very clear that some kind of a political deal has been made.

**■ What is the present state of relations between Colombo and New Delhi?**

They are trying to restore good relations. Premadasa thanked the Indian government for withdrawing their army. Premadasa is being praised for finally

persuading them to withdraw but it was really due to a change of government and a change of policy in India as far as I can see. The two governments are now talking of a treaty to replace the former accord on some negotiated basis.

**■ So you think there will be an Indian-sponsored agreement for a settlement of the conflict between Colombo and the LTTE?**

No. Premadasa took the initiative in entering into negotiations with the Tigers, and the Tigers, who were in a really tight corner, tied up in the jungles by the Indian army, turned to Premadasa. Now they have become his biggest champions. In fact when representatives of the NSSP (Nava Sama Samaja Party, a Trotskyist group formerly linked to the British Militant Tendency) and the SLFP tried to raise the question of human rights abuses at the UN commission on human rights in Geneva, the Tigers mobilized all their resources to ensure that the complaints were not raised. The Tigers are praising Premadasa as a man to be trusted.

Whether they will actually ultimately turn on each other remains to be seen. So long as the Tigers guarantee political support for Premadasa to be president in the south he will allow them a free hand in the north and the east. Because it is not a separate state, economically the two areas are completely tied up, administratively the main functions of the administration have to be carried on in the north and east where the Tigers are roaming about freely.

They have started collecting taxes although the government has now told them to stop, and they are not showing much armed force. In fact even in their showdown with the CMU, they have not up to now made any open threats whatsoever. So it remains to be seen whether they will show their claws.

**■ So the present situation in the north and east is one where the provincial councils do not function anymore?**

Yes. In fact the Tigers have asked for the councils to be dissolved so there can be elections and Premadasa is considering this. And I think they will be held and the Tigers will win them — for the time being definitely they will have general mass acceptance because the Indian army has gone and the Tigers have virtually eliminated their opponents. What the people were longing for was an end to the killing and there is now some degree of restoration of normal life.

**■ Have the Tigers introduced or agitated for any social measures?**

No, nothing of the kind, they have no program. At the moment they are openly collaborating with the repressive Premadasa government, at a time when the cost of living has soared nearly 200 points

since Premadasa became president a year ago.

The World Bank and the IMF have pressed for the complete withdrawal of all subsidies, the agricultural subsidy on fertilizers has been completely removed, all subsidies on flour and bread have been removed, as have price controls on bread. It will be a very hard situation for the masses.

**■ What kind of shape is the economy in the north and east in after all these years of conflict?**

A large number of young Tamils have left the country. It's estimated that 100,000 Tamil youth have gone abroad, to Europe, Australia, Canada, and so on, so now you have the northern and eastern people receiving substantial assistance from people who have gone abroad. In this way they can sustain themselves even though the economy has broken down.

**■ The same can be said of the whole of Sri Lanka...**

Proportionately less so. Historically even in British times quite a number of Tamil youth went abroad, mainly to Malaysia, and many northern Tamils found jobs in the government service in the south. So the northern people were sustained not only by their own local economy but also by the remittances from government servants in the south as well as those who had gone to Malaysia. Now there is a much larger number who have gone to Europe, Australia, Canada and so on. A large number have established themselves with jobs and they are sending money back.

Also there is now a lot of international aid being promised for the north and east and this is another factor in the rapprochement between the Tigers and the government. The Tigers are also being offered jobs in the police force, though I don't know if they would fall for that, because if they go in the police force they will be under the direct control of the state forces, and they want to maintain themselves as an independent armed force.

**■ Turning now to the situation in the south of the country, can you describe how the Premadasa government has dealt with the JVP?**

After the JVP had rejected Premadasa's proposals for negotiations, the government set about the complete liquidation of the JVP by a process of ruthless counter-terror, using specialist squads of mainly paramilitary forces but also including the army and the police, to kill them and burn their bodies.

By November 1989 they were able to capture and kill the two top JVP leaders, Rohana Wijeweera, the political leader, and Upatissa Gamanayake, who was supposed to be the military leader. They were then able to eliminate nearly all the top members of the JVP politburo as well as



Tamil tigers in training

their district leaders and others, and I would say by the beginning of this year, one year after Premadasa had become president, they had virtually eliminated the JVP as an organization.

Now there are only remnants, still hiding out, scattered in certain parts of the country, really reduced to a form of banditry — they no longer function as an organized and national force at all. So conditions have been largely normalized from the point of view of the killings.

#### ■ Could you say something about the political trajectory of the JVP?

The JVP degenerated into a terrorist organization raising basically Sinhala nationalist demands for the withdrawal of the Indian army. They denounced the Tigers also as the agents of Indian imperialism. They didn't directly attack the liberation struggle of the Tigers but said that they were agents of India. They have been liquidated, that issue is now over and the Indian army has withdrawn.

#### ■ What about the populist slogans and leftist phraseology of the JVP?

By 1989 they had virtually dropped all talk of socialism or Marxism or anything. They have used strikes, like the transport strike, as a method to disrupt the government, but it was not for the benefit of the workers. They employ a radical petty bourgeois kind of rhetoric. As an opposition force to the government they won a lot of popular support to begin with, from the disaffected youth, particularly in the rural areas where there is large scale unemployment and so on.

#### ■ There is a mistaken idea amongst some people that a kind of Lebanese situation exists in Sri Lanka, where the central state has collapsed..

That idea may have gained some degree

of support in 1989 when the JVP terror in the south had paralyzed transport and medical services and there was a fear that there would be a general breakdown of the whole state administrative structure. But with the counter terror the JVP was liquidated and that showed the state was quite effective.

#### ■ What has been the reaction of your union and other progressive forces to the anti-JVP terror in the south?

Of course we have mobilized a lot of opposition to these emergency regulations that permitted the killing and burning or disposal of dead bodies without an inquest, without identification and anything like that. My union, the Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU), focussed attention particularly on regulation 55FF, which permitted the armed forces to dispose of dead bodies without an inquest.

Significantly enough this regulation has now been revoked. I would say it's not just our intervention because even the opposition parties and Mrs. Bandaranaike have been mounting a national and international campaign, calling upon western and other governments not to give aid to Sri Lanka unless they improve the human rights situation. I think the government is today sensitive to this, so having liquidated the JVP they can definitely relax the more brutal and stringent measures of the emergency.

Just before I left Sri Lanka a week ago the minister for defence announced that now they are ready to relax the emergency itself, after they bring in some legislation with regard to the people now detained. There are about 10,000 people currently detained under the Emergency Regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

They don't want to release all of them,

they want to keep them until they can bring charges and so on, but they are releasing others. So they are holding out the promise of an end to the emergency, this will be the issue that we ourselves are going to focus on in our May Day resolutions and demonstrations.

#### ■ What kind of political evolution do you foresee in the near future?

The Premadasa government is now going all out to try to restore some kind of appearance of stability in the north and south in order to get more aid and to counter this opposition campaign on the issue of human rights. They want to show that they are ready to withdraw the emergency and things like that. They need foreign aid more than ever before, they cannot sustain the economy under the present conditions without foreign aid. The foreign debt is very large.

I think that the Western countries and others want to sustain the Sri Lankan state with aid on their conditions, but those conditions will definitely be adverse from an economic standpoint for the masses. Fortunately there is now a growing demand from European trade unionists that in third world countries there should be protection of working class rights and wage levels and so on, and they are demanding a social clause in the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) negotiations in 1991. So we feel that western workers can play a role in protecting the situation of the workers in countries like Sri Lanka if an effective campaign is mounted. We feel our links with these international trade union organizations are a vital factor in the struggle against repression.

Our theme for May Day, which we will celebrate this year with 11 other unions (three national unions — the bank employees union, the Union of Post and Telecommunications Officers, and the nurses union — as well as some other smaller unions), is defence of human and democratic rights and defence of mass living standards.

#### ■ So we are entering a period of a kind of stabilization. Will this present a new opening for class-based politics?

I think so. There are definitely signs of a reawakening of working class consciousness. It has not previously been there with the new generation, I can tell you. I can see this reflected in large numbers of workers in our own union, the younger workers, who are showing, after a long period, some positive response to working class concepts and so on. We will see to what extent this is reflected on May Day.

But of course the failure of the left to even agree on a united May Day demonstration indicates that there is still no general movement that can win the confidence of the working class. ★

## Interview with Filipino union leader

# Working for labor unity

### INTRODUCTION by Pierre Rousset

**W**E REPRODUCE below an interview with Ernesto Arellano, vice-president of the National Federation of Labor and deputy general secretary of the KMU — the Kilusang Mayo Uno or May 1 Movement, the most important class struggle trade union federation in the Philippines. This interview originally appeared in issue 26, May-June 1990, of *Against the Current*, a publication sponsored by "Solidarity", a U.S. socialist organization.

In this interview Arellano reviews the circumstances that led to the military uprising of December 1989, the sixth and most serious of the coup d'états attempted since 1986 against the Corazon Aquino regime (see IV 176, December 25, 1989). He also outlines the policy pursued by the KMU on the question of trade union unity.

Ernesto Arellano also explains the radical change of position made by the KMU in relation to the Tiananmen Square massacre of June 1989. The initial communique of the KMU, dated June 11, 1989, largely accepted the official explanation of events presented by the Chinese government. The KMU affirmed itself "deeply concerned with what is happening in Beijing" and hoped for a decisive end to the bloodshed and chaos. But it also expressed "its full support to the Chinese people under the able leadership of the Chinese Communist Party". It declared itself "glad that despite the efforts of the imperialist governments" (U.S. and British above all), "the CCP and the People's Liberation Army have been able to moderate the conflict and are now moving toward resolution of the underlying issues".

This position provoked a good deal of opposition and emotion in the Philippines and elsewhere, amongst those who

had always supported the actions of this trade union federation, born in 1980 under the Marcos dictatorship and itself hit many times by repression. As the second communique of the KMU notes, its initial position had "disconcerted its members, friends and supporters". Moreover, some international organizations seized this occasion to reduce or interrupt their assistance to the KMU.

The events in China have a particular importance for the militant left in the Philippines. It has been, historically, profoundly marked by the Chinese revolution. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its guerilla army,

their struggle for reforms to strengthen socialist China". As for the clandestine organizations — the CPP, the NDF and the NPA — they have not published any declarations on the subject. The KMU was thus the only important left organization, inside the national democratic current, to have publicly supported the Chinese government and Communist Party, after the repression of the democratic movement.

There has been general condemnation of the Tiananmen massacre by the other currents of the Philippine left. The socialist organization Bisig, for example, declare itself "outraged" by the massacre and expressed its "solidarity and support for the Chinese people in their struggle against a despotic and beastly gerontocracy."

The publication of the June 11 communique came, according to Arellano, as a shock even to many members of the KMU leadership. This statement had not in fact been discussed by more than a handful of people, and even then no firm conclusions had been drawn. On top of the basic problem — the attitude to the

Chinese events — the publication of the communique thus raised questions of democratic functioning. The federation of which Ernesto Arellano is the vice-president, the NFL, which is a member of the KMU, forcibly and officially condemned the repression.

These were the circumstances in which the leading bodies of the KMU met to publish a new communique in which the statement of June 11 was retracted. In this second declaration the KMU: "strongly disagrees with the way in which the mass protests at Tiananmen Square were quelled. We hereby denounce the killing of workers, students and soldiers."

Besides the interview with Arellano, we are also publishing the NFL's communique and the second declaration of the KMU according to the versions in *Against the Current*. ★



the New People's Army, are of Maoist origin. They are an influential driving force in the main current of the left in the Philippines, the so-called "national democratic" current, which includes a clandestine element, organized in the National Democratic Front (NDF), and a legal component, organized in the coalition known as Bayan (the New Nationalist Alliance).

The KMU is part of this latter, legal grouping. The Bayan coalition's position on the Chinese events was cautious, but overall critical of the regime. It "deplored the indiscriminate use of arms in dispersing the students and civilians" in Tiananmen Square. It also "reiterated [its] solidarity with the Chinese people in



**T**HERE have been six attempted military coups against President Corazon Aquino, the latest of which might have succeeded if not for U.S. air support for her government. What is the attitude of the KMU and the popular movement toward the coup and possible future ones — what would happen if Aquino were overthrown?

The December coup was the most serious so far. This came about because of a series of betrayals by the Aquino government of what the 1986 uprising has meant for the oppressed of the Philippines. The "people's uprising", as it was called, involved various people's organizations in the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship. Some of these had been organized following the assassination of Benigno Aquino, Cory's late husband.

Also, however, in that uprising, a faction of the military participated — the Revolutionary Armed Forces Movement (RAM) headed by Gregorio Honasan. The new president Corazon Aquino failed to cultivate her base among the popular organizations that had helped her to power, opting instead to embrace the military component of the 1986 uprising.

This was manifested after the first coup attempt, when the two progressive personalities whom she had appointed to executive positions, Joker Arroyo, a top Aquino aide, and Labor Minister Augusto Sanchez, were the first to go, as the military demanded.

This already indicated that she was leaning more and more to the right. She com-

### National Federation of Labour's Statement on China

THE National Federation of Labour, through its National Executive Board meeting on July 14, 1989,

- Condemns the killing of great numbers of students, workers and sections of the civilian population in early June and the subsequent crushing of the democracy movement;

- Decries the recourse to repressive measures by the state to contain social unrest rather than facing up to the challenge of systemic reforms;

- Deplores the tendency of the media to sensationalize what is complex reality and to fall back on black-and-white moralizing of the Cold War era;

- Affirms the inviolability of human rights and human dignity in all socio-economic systems, whether socialist states such as China or underdeveloped countries such as the Philippines; and

- Demands the release of all political prisoners in China, the institution of fundamental reforms to enhance political democracy, and the recognition of basic rights such as the freedoms of expression and association and the other trade union rights.

While recognizing the flaws and even aberrations in the attempts to establish socialism in various countries, the National Federation of Labour reiterates its critique of capitalism as a dehumanizing system and reaffirms its commitment to the vision of a new order of freedom, justice, equality and peace. ★

pletely forgot the sectoral organizations that were long involved in the struggle against Marcos' one-man rule, organizations started at the very time of the 1972 martial law decree, longstanding organizations of workers, farmers, student and church organizations who fought in the 1986 uprising.

After every coup, the president became the captive of the ultra-right sector of the military. Whether from naivete or whatever other reason, she didn't realize that

the military had made and unmade Marcos, that it also made Cory Aquino and could unmake her. This is the long term effect of the martial-law regime, where the military became a decisive force in the country's political life, and now they won't simply go back to the barracks and submit to civilian power.

Vigilante violence against the popular movement has continued, as reflected by Executive Order 264, creating the "Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units" (CAGFU). Instead of dismantling the paramilitary units, Aquino legitimized them.

The same year that Cory Aquino came to power saw the assassination of KMU chairperson Rolando Olalia, and a few months later the notorious massacre of farmers in front of Malacanang, the presidential palace. These events isolated the once-popular Aquino from the sectoral popular organizations, from which she could have derived the support that could have effectively neutralized the military.

Even those who supported her campaign for the presidency have had to move out. The resignation of the former director of the National Economic Development Authority, Solita Monsod, came over the program the government submitted to the International Monetary Fund/World Bank. This whole chain of events isolated Aquino and emboldened the military to attack.

■ **Did the U.S. intervene on her side in the recent coup attempt in order to protect the future of the American military bases in the Philippines?**

I think so. The Aquino government is simply interested in increasing the rent and the military aid it gets from the United States — it's been very clear from the start that she is willing to extend the bases agreement. Sovereignty isn't for her the



issue; it's just a matter of setting the price.

Washington could have easily allowed the coup to succeed by not intervening. But I think this would jeopardize its position, because for a junta to take over by a coup will eventually be repressive, forcing the people to look to other alternatives represented by the growing guerilla movement.

So while Aquino is seen as very weak by the Washington policy makers, she remains their best bet to maintain the legitimacy of government. If she is deposed by the military, whatever military or military-civilian junta took over would be unable to rule, would have no legitimate mandate.

The experience of the people under Marcos with the military was quite horrible, and they would resist. It might not be immediate, but I think that they are prepared to resist, given the strengthening of the sectoral organizations and the presence of a growing armed underground movement. So the military solution or coup d'état will be simply a disaster for the Washington policymakers.

■ When you spoke at a public meeting last night, you mentioned that the KMU has made progress in breaking down a "Berlin Wall" between your labor center and other unions in the Philippines. I'm interested both in the KMU's strategy for building unity of Philippine workers, and in the terminology you used. As a labor center in the context of a third world struggle, do you feel that the enormous changes in the world, the so-called end of the cold war, the upheavals in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, China, etc. create better or more difficult conditions for your struggle?

In the main, the climate for organizing and doing coalition work with other trade-union groups has become more permissive. That's how we feel, because the developments in Eastern Europe show that the socialist system has the capacity to recognize the people's demands. This is also shown in Latin America by the Nicaraguan experience. The [liberation] movements that the capitalist countries perceive as inflexible or sectarian have the capacity to accept others' political views.

In the Philippines, I think we started on this process even earlier. The uprising in 1986 provided us with a little breathing space. At least, we entered into a coalition with other labor groups, which was unthinkable ten years ago — unthinkable on both sides, both the conservative unions and our own.

The rivalries between unions then were very sharp. In 1986, I think we realized the need to unite the labor movement in the Philippines. It has been so fragmented. Many of the labor organizations were

## KMU issues new statement on Tiananmen massacre

THE National Executive Committee of the Kilusang Mayo Uno retracts the KMU statement last June 11, 1989 on the Beijing incident.

Seriously concerned over the fast unfolding events last June 3-4 in Beijing, the shock they created in the world, and the malicious attacks imperialists were hurling at socialist China, we issued a statement in defence of the historic achievements made by the Chinese people.

However, the reference to "the able leadership of the Communist Party of China" in our statement of support to the Chinese people and the implication that we supposedly support the Communist Party, its current leadership and its actions last June 3 and 4 was unintended and uncalled for.

The KMU is a genuine trade union center, its first and foremost concern is the welfare of the people and specifically the workers here and abroad. The unfortunate implication that KMU condones the killing has been distorted in some quarters and has disconcerted its members, friends and supporters.

The KMU national leadership spent a lot of time discussing the statement and considered the reactions from member unions and all concerned friends here and abroad. We thank all of them for their serious concern with the developments in China and for drawing the attention of the KMU to the implications of its statement.

Therefore, the KMU National Executive Committee headed by its Chairperson, in the name of all its members, issues now the following statement concerning the Beijing incident:

The KMU is deeply saddened by the social unrest and crisis that has gripped China today. We extend full support to the Chinese people during this period of difficulty and wish them success in rooting out the causes of social unrest and in resolving the crisis.

The KMU strongly disagrees with the way the mass protests at Tiananmen Square were quelled. We hereby denounce the killing and wounding of workers, students and soldiers.

We grieve with the families and friends of the victims and mourn the deep wound the incidents have created in the hearts of the Chinese people.

We are worried and disturbed by the unfolding of events after the June 3 tragedy. We hope that the factors in the sociopolitical structure and economic relations that underlie the social unrest in China will be addressed immediately. We also hope that the Chinese people will be successful in fending off imperialist meddling in China's affairs. The Chinese people, especially the workers, have a big task ahead in defending and pushing forward the gains of socialism and democracy in China, which the KMU wholeheartedly supports. ★

highly centralized. A number of them were considered the personal property of their founders — positions were even inherited by the children of the organizers.

On the basis of our analysis we formulated three basic principles — for genuine, militant and nationalist trade unions. "Nationalist" refers to our desire to involve the workers in analyzing the economic and political conditions in the Philippines and adopting a position on them.

The conservative unions remain suspicious of us. The "Berlin Wall" between the unions is still there. This is further reinforced by the international policy of the AFL-CIO and some other international trade secretariats. The AFL-CIO is telling union leaders, "Don't talk to Arellano".

It's encouraging in the Philippines that the two labor centers, the Labor Advisory Coordinating Council (LACC)<sup>1</sup> of which the KMU is a member and the

Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) can meet and discuss certain issues, particularly wage issues. This is a very limited area of discussion, a modest step towards unifying the labor movement.

Of course, we still hold the view that many unions in the Philippines are "yellow" (company unions), and a number of their contracts are below minimum standards. But our experience has been that workers' awareness is growing regarding the company unions, forcing them to consider their role as unions.

Atlas Copper Mining and Development Corporation provides an example. For more than a decade, workers there were under the Associated Labor Union (ALU), the biggest federation within the TUCP. KMU's affiliate, the Southern Philippines Federation of Labor, was able to conclude a contract there, with far better benefits than the ALU contract. So, even though the repression was tremendous in



the last union representation election, SPFL still won by a landslide.

Even the yellow unions are being forced to develop a more pro-worker stance and drop their role as company unions. This factor requires the development of a certain amount of tolerance on our part for these unions, even though we won't drop our observation that they maintain sub-standard contracts.

As we discuss with them, issues that they traditionally consider non-trade union problems — such as the foreign debt, American bases, right-wing vigilantes and agrarian reform — have been raised. Little by little, they understand the need to address these issues, because, I think, the actual conditions in the Philippines are pushing them.

For instance, workers last year obtained a 25-peso increase in the daily minimum wage, but in six months this has been completely eroded. This compels them to rethink their positions, and at this point KMU's alternative agenda becomes acceptable to these groups.

But certain labor groups and leaders have always redbaited KMU. We've grown accustomed to that from the time we first organized KMU. And the red-baiting is still there.

■ There has been considerable negative publicity surrounding the first statement by the KMU on the Chinese events, supporting the Chinese Communist Party in the Tienan men massacre, and questions regarding the subsequent reversal of that position. Can you comment on the substance and the process of the KMU's policy?

The first statement of the KMU supporting the Chinese Communist Party leadership, did not reflect the majority view of the National Executive Committee or the National Council.

The NEC is composed of 15 members or less, the NC of 45. It is the National Council that is the policy-making body between national conventions, while the NEC is the policy-making and implementing arm in between meetings of the NC.

There was a limited discussion first, on the NEC level but without a quorum. We have a secretariat, which is charged with overseeing the daily activities of the KMU, and one of these tasks is to prepare statements after discussion of a certain issue. So the release of the first statement was a shock to the majority of the NEC, and more so to the members of the National Council. For this reason, we had to call for a full-blown discussion by both bodies, the NEC and the NC.

I took the position that the massacre of the pro-democracy demonstrators in Beijing should be condemned, but that we should at the same time be aware that our commitment to the people's socialist struggle in the Philippines, China and worldwide is unwavering.

However, the convening of the NEC and the NC took some time. My organization, the National Federation of Labor, informed the KMU that we could not identify with the statement issued by the KMU, and we issued our own statement.

The NFL, organized in 1947, had been a union dominated by one family, but it was transformed by the infusion of new blood. All of our KMU-affiliated federa-

tions have overcome the phenomenon I spoke of earlier, of one-man domination and of splitting when there is any disagreement over leadership. The KMU leadership in fact tolerated our statement — we encouraged all the member federations to present their positions.

To me and to all my colleagues, the process that followed the first statement was very encouraging. We underwent a vigorous process of discussion. It's unfortunate that the first KMU statement is being exploited by our detractors, because the process we underwent demonstrated our capacity to correct our own errors through our internal processes, without breaking up the organization.

What isn't known to trade unions here in the United States and Europe is the internal debate that went on immediately after the first statement was issued. Some territorial and industrial alliances of KMU (another part of the KMU's organizing structure, linking up with peasants, the unemployed, and so on) also issued statements that differed from the first KMU statement.

The absence of information about this process and the heated debate among the members and within the committees, has led many unions abroad to be skeptical about the genuineness of our statement retracting the first one. It is important to make these things known. ★

1. The LACC, formed shortly after the 1986 uprising, includes the KMU and three other labor federation groupings. The TUCP, supported by the AFL-CIO, broke with the LACC when its demands for representation equal to that of the other four groups combined was rejected. The TUCP was conciliatory to Marcos' martial law regime and received preferential treatment under the dictatorship. The TUCP also demanded the removal of Labor Minister Sanchez after the first coup attempt.





## SOUTH KOREA

**The latest strike wave**

IN OUR last issue we published an article by Enzo Traverso on the new union movements in South Korea. No sooner had we gone to press than new massive protests erupted.

On April 25, a new strike sparked off by the arrest of many union militants broke out in the Hyundai naval shipyards at Ulsan, which are the biggest in the world — of the city's 700,000 inhabitants, some 100,000 work for Hyundai. The factory, which was occupied by the workers, was cleared out the following day by 12,000 police. In the course of the week, the clashes became more and more violent with battles in which 20,000 workers armed with molotov cocktails fought with police who were unsparing in their use of teargas.

The clashes resulted in the arrest of 600 strikers, 24 wounded (including 10 police) and the burning of 22 police vehicles (according to the *Financial Times*, May 1, 1990). The seriousness of the situation is shown by the sacrifice of Lee Yung Ik, a young union leader from the Hyundai car factories. Aged 28, Lee Yung Ik set fire to himself on May 3 after several days of strikes and fighting. The following day, the South Korean information minister, Choe Byung Ul, explained the government's attitude in the clearest possible way: "The use of force is inevitable. We cannot tolerate a situation which is seriously damaging our industry and our economy." (*Financial Times*, May 2, 1990)

This time, the Ulsan workers' struggle has not stayed isolated, but has set off a wave of mobilizations, involving not only workers, but also other wage earners and students, which culminated in a general strike on May 1. The independent union organizations, notably *Chonohyop*, played a key role in the preparation of these actions. Their political character showed itself in several ways — through the demand for union rights and in the denunciation of the repressive and anti-democratic methods of the government, which increasingly resemble the period of the military dictatorships.

Even before the start of the Hyundai naval shipyard strike, the personnel of the main state television channel, the Korea Broadcasting System (KBS), launched a

strike to demand the resignation of the director, a government appointee, who had restored censorship to what it had been in the period of the dictator Chun Doo Wan. The workers occupying the TV company's buildings were evicted by the police, sparking off a protest strike in the country's second, privately owned TV channel, the Munhwa Broadcasting Company.

The state of the country's economy, which is still flourishing, allows the bosses and the government to maintain an intransigent line. They have refused to negotiate and have instead gone for head on confrontation with the various social movements. However, with a worsening of economic perspectives — a fall of rates of growth and exports — the fusion of workers strikes, the student radicalization and the broad democratic movements could lead South Korea towards a crisis and major social explosions. According to police estimates, between 80,000 and 90,000 people participated in anti-government demonstrations on the night of May 9-10.

At the present time, the workers movement and union organizations have called for urgent and concrete international solidarity with the South Korean workers. They are calling on us to:

- Organize meetings and send motions of protest against police repression;
- Demand the release of all the arrested workers and union militants and the recognition of union rights;
- Denounce the censorship and lack of freedoms;
- Journalists and media professionals must show solidarity with their South Korean colleagues;
- The independent unions at the centre of the present struggles must be supported, not only by making their activities known, but through concrete material aid.

**Protests to:**

President Roh Tae Woo  
The Blue House  
1, Sejong-No, Chongno-gu  
Seoul

**South Korea**

**Support to:**  
Chun No Hyup  
142-77 Kuro 6-dong  
Kuro-ku  
Seoul 152-056  
South Korea ★

## SOVIET UNION

**Oil and gas workers threaten strike**

ON MARCH 10, 1990, *Tjumenska Pravda*, the Communist Party daily in the Tjumen region (which produces 60% of Soviet gas and petrol and a good proportion of its exports), published an open letter to the Soviet Prime Minister, Ryzhkov, and the president of the Central Council of Soviet trade unions, Shalayev, in which the president of the regional committee of trade unions threatened to call a strike of 700,000 gas and petrol workers if their demands were not satisfied. The demands centred around grave delays in the building of housing, a freeze of prices of consumer goods and wage increases.

The workers added: "If the government is not able to satisfy these demands in full, it should put at the disposition of the extractive enterprises 10 to 15% of gas and petrol extracted, for sale inside the country or abroad, at contractual prices, without deductions for the state budget, so that the region can deal with urgent problems through its own means".

The indignation of the workers is understandable if it is borne in mind that 200,000 amongst them do not have adequate housing, that one in five does not receive normal medical assistance, and that there are schools where, because of the lack of premises, children must attend in relays of three teams each day. ★

## ISRAELI STATE

**New attack on Palestinians**

FOR THE second year running, the Israeli military has launched an indiscriminate attack on Palestinian Moslems celebrating the religious feast of 'Id al-Fitr. In the early morning of April 26, thousands of residents of the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip who were going to the local cemetery to pay their respects to the dead were pelted with CS-gas canisters by the military. When the crowd responded by throwing stones, soldiers immediately opened fire, killing a 35 year old man. In the violence which followed as the crowd attempted to fight back against the attack, three more Palestinians were killed and dozens injured. Further violence followed through the day as the military attempted to impose a curfew through indiscriminate violence. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, at least 214 Palestinians were injured, 46 of them seriously.

Meanwhile, right wing settler leader Rabbi Moshe Levinger has been sentenced to five months in prison for killing a Palestinian in the West Bank town of Hebron in September 1988. Passing sentence, the Israeli judge declared that the severity of the punishment "had to reflect the value of a human life". ★