

International VIEWPOINT

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SOMALIA: FROM BAD TO WORSE



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To all our readers

THIS will be the last issue of *International Viewpoint* this year and the last of our current fortnightly series. The next issue will be dated February 1993 and will be the first of a new monthly series — see back page for further details.

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Not the Salvation Army

ALL good Western Christian souls will now be able to sit down to their Christmas turkey in peace of mind. Instead of appalling images of Somali children reduced to skeletons, surrounded by flies, their TV screens will be filled with pictures of smiling United States Marines, cradling in their virile arms tiny Somali infants who have learnt once more to smile — at least for the duration of the shot.

SALAH JABER — December 10, 1992

WHILE the media treatment of the US intervention in Somalia is not the big scandal, it is nonetheless hard to stomach. Suddenly, there are far more reporters in Somalia to cover the arrival of the US troops than ever went there to report on the famine, despite the fact that famine has been endemic in the Horn of Africa for several years.

But, now, of course, media coverage has a special function; not to alert the world to the suffering of Somalis, but to back up an American military expedition, the third and last operation of its kind under George Bush — after Panama and the Gulf.

The hypocrisy is hitting new heights. "We will not tolerate armed gangs... condemning their own people to starvation", George Bush stated on December 4. This from a man who has made the Iraqi people pay for the tyrant that oppresses them by an embargo whose results in terms of hunger and the death of children hardly get a mention in the media. And we may ask how many press teams have covered the human impact of the US blockade against Cuba, the first country in the Americas to have done away with illiteracy.

The word "humanitarian" is entering the lexicon of great power doublespeak alongside "pacification". For the benefit of those who are tempted by the sound of this word, here are some facts that reveal the real meaning of this new American intervention and its predictable consequences.

Bush inaugurates Clinton

● The rather unusual decision by an outgoing president, two months before the inauguration of his successor, to send troops abroad on a mission that is not without risks, is not the gallant last stand some may imagine. This is not how the United States is run.

The operation has a far more devious motive: the military-industrial complex that Bush represents is uneasy at the coming into office of a man who has nei-

ther hidden, nor apologized for, his opposition to the Vietnam War.

Now, Clinton will take up office in the middle of a foreign military intervention, the main "achievement" of the Bush presidency having been the revival of such interventionism, after Reagan's rather unconvincing efforts in this direction. The pretext has been chosen with particular care and can be easily justified through a media blitz and the usual hypocritical speeches. The Somalia expedition has 66% public support, according to a *Newsweek* poll.

The intervention in Somalia, a country in the forefront of the arc of crisis of which the Gulf is the main prize, is in strategic continuity with the Iraqi operation. Somalia is a Muslim country and borders on Sudan, a key ally of Iran, the stronghold of Islamic fundamentalism — the new bugbear of the West after the "collapse of Communism".

An intervention in Somalia is thus highly significant at a time when repeated high-level leaks to the media seem to be preparing for an attack on Iran (which has opposed the intervention).

Consolidation of new world order

● The Somali expedition marks an important new step in the consolidation of the "new world order" inaugurated after the Gulf War. This has three key elements: (1) The US is the global cop; (2) it acts under United Nations auspices and (3) gets others, and particularly rich allies who benefit from US armed protection, to pay for its military operations.

The first element is blatant: once again the US has been more ready to intervene than powers much closer to the theatre of operations — France, for example, which moreover has a base on the neighbouring territory of Djibouti.

The second element is becoming a reflex. This is the second time since

August 1990 that the US has got the UN Security Council to legitimize its decision to send troops after the event. It is also the second time that the UN flag has been placed in the hands of US troops without even the formality of the latter donning blue helmets and with a highly elastic mandate, authorizing the use of force. This is also the first time that the "right to interference" in a country's internal affairs has been formally accepted.

Once more, the US has imposed its will on the UN's member states. The latter had already decided to establish a 3,500 strong force entrusted with the job of protecting the distribution of food aid in Somalia. The deployment of this force, which did not include American troops, had just started.

The 500-strong Pakistani contingent had just arrived when Bush decided to move in. The African states, knowing that they cannot prevent the intervention (since only the five permanent members of the Security Council have the right to veto), have (vainly, of course) asked that the US troops be put under UN command.

Lastly, contributions are being collected. As in the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia and Japan are first in line to pick up the bill. The cost of this expedition will surely be greater than that of the food aid sent to Somalia.

Heavy civilian casualties likely

● Taking this into account, it is clear that an intervention by Third World troops under UN command would have been far less expensive, even if no more "disinterested". Quite possibly the 3,500 strong force already being organized by the UN would have been enough to assure to distribution of food. And it is also quite possible that the intervention itself will claim more lives than it saves.

Unlike in the Gulf War, where the disposition of forces allowed the massacre of Iraqi forces and the destruction of Iraq's infrastructure without direct massacres of civilians, the Somali militias operate among the population and in the urban centres. The use of heavy weaponry by US troops in these conditions risks big losses and serious "mistakes", as was the case in Panama.

The disquiet voiced by many in the humanitarian organizations has been hardly reported or actually repressed — this is the case with the Somali Rakiya Omaar who has been suspended from her post as director of the American organization *Africa Watch*.

In the current climate of systematic mystification, it is essential to relentlessly remind people that the United States army is not the Salvation Army! ★

The tragedy at Ayodhya

ON December 6, in the city of Ayodhya in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, tens of thousands of Hindu extremists tore down the sixteenth century mosque — which they claim was built on the ruins of a temple commemorating the “birthplace” of the mythical Lord Rama.

Thus far, the ensuing violence across the country has claimed nearly 500 lives, mainly Muslims.

While the Congress(I) government of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao has dismissed the Uttar Pradesh state government of the right-wing Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), arrested BJP leaders, pledged to rebuild the mosque and placed a ban on certain Hindu communalist organizations, its hands are far from clean in the matter.

RAGHU KRISHNAN — December 8, 1992

UPON taking power in Uttar Pradesh and three other northern states in the 1991 elections, which also made it the official opposition in the *Lok Sabha* (the national parliament), the BJP leadership toned down its militant Hindu fundamentalist stand — in an attempt to make itself a “respectable” candidate for power at the centre.

But faced with sagging popularity in the states it governs, internal divisions, and the spectre of the Hindu extremist Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) pushing its own mass base to the right, the BJP joined its Hindu extremist allies in striking a belligerent posture over Ayodhya.

At the end of October — right in the middle of the third round of protracted government-sponsored talks on the dispute — the VHP declared December 6 to be a *kar seva*, a call to its thousands of cadres to descend upon the mosque site.

One week later, the talks broke down, and those hoping for a peaceful outcome to the conflict were told to rely on Congress attempts to assuage the Hindu extremists and to pursue the matter through the Supreme Court.

In the meantime, the VHP and the semi-fascist RSS carried out a nationwide campaign to ensure maximum participation at the Ayodhya *kar seva*; they expected a turnout of one million of their supporters.

Whatever the celestial pretensions of the VHP's saffron-clad holy men may be, the Ayodhya dispute has served an eminently political and social function in the recent period, for the BJP as for the Congress Party and their largely wealthy and upper caste social base.

In the fall of 1990, the BJP made a triumphant entry onto the political scene with a country-wide mobilization to collect bricks

4 for the construction of a new temple at

Ayodhya. In the violence that accompanied the campaign several hundred Muslims were killed.

The campaign was an obvious response to the decision two months earlier of the then Janata Dal government of Prime Minister V.P. Singh to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Report — which prescribed a system of “reservations” (quotas) for certain areas of public sector hiring, for a large part of the country's lower caste population not already covered by such legislation.

Upper caste backlash

The legislation sparked an uproar among the Hindu high and intermediate castes. The BJP and Congress led a violent anti-Mandal agitation by upper caste students fearful that Mandal would further exacerbate their employment woes.

The BJP calculated that a campaign around the Ayodhya issue — which had received scant attention beforehand — would prolong the anti-Mandal agitation on another front, galvanizing the Hindus against the Muslims behind an upper caste leadership, increasing the BJP's political fortunes, and in the process nipping lower caste hopes and self-organizing efforts in the bud.

Much to the satisfaction of the Congress, the anti-Mandal and Ayodhya agitations quickly brought down the Janata Dal government, and tied up the Mandal legislation in the Supreme Court.¹

The Congress has gone to great lengths to avoid annoying the BJP and its supporters. On the one hand, its state of protracted internal crisis — deepened by last year's assassination of Rajiv Gandhi — has made it highly vulnerable to the BJP's forward march, having already lost three key states to the BJP's control.

On the other hand, as it plunges into the

turbulent waters of economic liberalization, the Congress wants to harness the BJP's political authoritarianism, aggressive Indian nationalism, economic liberalism and social base among the rural and urban *nouveaux riches* to full effect.

While distancing itself from the BJP's more fanatically anti-Muslim tendencies — for fear of alienating the support of the country's Muslim elites and jeopardizing India's relations with the Muslim world — the Congress has shown that it is not averse to playing this card either.²

Meanwhile, in the neighbouring Muslim state of Pakistan, the assault on Ayodhya has provided some much-needed breathing space for the embattled government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was facing rising protests led by the opposition Pakistan People's Party of deposed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Sharif was quick to call a “day of mourning and protest” on December 8, which was marked by outbursts of violence directed at the country's Hindu minority. There have been similar scenes in Bangladesh.

The West is showing greater concern than usual over recent events in India — primarily out of fear that the government's neo-liberal programme of economic reforms may be thrown into doubt.

The spectre of the Emergency

The Congress Party — the only genuinely all-India party — is eager to overcome its chronic crisis of rule. With the emergence of an openly Hindu communalist party as a major player, with the frenzy of greed, corruption and gangsterism that have infected Indian life in the course of the “modernization” of the past decade — and with the repression that has greeted mushrooming working class protests against the reforms — the real threat is the eventual imposition of an authoritarian civilian regime like that of the Emergency period of 1975-77.

At that time, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi — invoking the supposed threat from the Hindu far-right — declared Emergency Rule and carried out a repression directed primarily at the trade union movement and the left.

Emergency Rule or not, the authoritarian drift of Indian politics continues unabated. ★

1. On November 16, the Supreme Court released its decision on the Mandal Report, largely upholding the 1990 legislation. The decision was followed by violent anti-Mandal protests throughout the north. *The Hindu International Edition*, November 28, 1992.

2. The BJP has waged an aggressive campaign for the expulsion of Bangladeshi migrant workers, particularly the Muslims. Not to be outdone, the Congress central government sent the army into a New Delhi slum in the middle of the night, where they packed 132 Muslims into a truck and shipped them off to Bangladesh. When it was later discovered that they had in fact been legal residents in India who had come from Pakistan, they were allowed to return. “Operation Pushback”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 7, 1992.

Angolan voters opt for lesser evil

ANGOLA has seen a renewal of hostilities after the holding of legislative and presidential elections which handed José Eduardo dos Santos and his ruling MPLA (People's Liberation Movement of Angola) a victory over Jonas Savimbi's UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola).

UNITA forces have recently taken the city of Uige, 300 kilometres north-east of the capital Luanda, adding it to the list of regions now under their control.

On December 2, after weeks of unfruitful talks with UNITA, the new MPLA prime minister, Marcolino Moco, released a proposal for a new government which would give five ministerial posts to UNITA, including the defence portfolio. UNITA has also been offered two posts in the Military High Command.

Nevertheless, having chosen the path of armed confrontation, UNITA seems unlikely to respond favorably to the MPLA's proposals.

In this issue we print the second and final part of an interview with Christine Messiant, a specialist on Angola, from where she has recently returned.*

HAVE there been forces operating independently of the Angolan regime in recent years?

There have been workers' actions, which were rather diffuse and have petered out. In sectors such as health and education there were united and repeated mobilizations, but these were suppressed. However, there has been virtually no political organization independent of the two big parties apart from tiny elite-based groups representing nothing but the individuals who form them.

UNITA prohibited any form of dissent in the areas it controlled. The MPLA regime used threats, abuse and force against its critics, and even in recent years placed innumerable obstacles in the way of any group wanting recognition. Thus the first autonomous organization, the Angolan Civic Association was only recognized in mid-1991, 18 months after its formation, months in which it was constantly denounced as subversive. The repression produced a self-fulfilling prophecy; there was no third force and what there was represented nothing.

The Catholic church has grown in strength over recent years owing to its repeated calls for peace and criticisms of the regime's violence — while the Protestant churches, politically lined up behind the MPLA and UNITA, have

been silent. The Catholic church has thus objectively fallen into the vacuum where the third force should be. However, it has not attempted to function as a political alternative and is now enjoying the benefits of the MPLA's new course. Furthermore, during and after the elections, its hierarchy has itself suffered the effects of the UNITA/MPLA polarization.

In these conditions, political struggle has largely involved former dissidents and oppositionists from the MPLA and UNITA. Their orientation has been one of forming parties for the elections and making deals without any programmatic basis. Former divisions have not been overcome and groups with their origins in UNITA have been unable to work with those coming out of the MPLA.

The small formations got some ten seats out of the 220 and have since aligned themselves with one or the other of the two big parties.

The failure of a third force ready to challenge the arbitrary rule of the regime and fight for peace and social and democratic rights to emerge also means a failure to open up politics. The situation remains stuck in the rut established by the violent polarization of the MPLA and UNITA.

This outcome is in part the product of the agreements which laid the basis for the elections. UNITA had demanded

early elections before accepting the ceasefire and the schedule leading up to the elections followed from this. The elections were thus largely a matter of UNITA gaining a democratic seal on the favourable relationship of forces it had established by spring 1991 in the eyes of the outside world. Furthermore, the means for verifying the elections results themselves were wholly inadequate.

The pre-election ceasefire was more or less respected, but this was simply a temporary freezing of the balance of forces on the ground, rather than a step towards peace. Many of the conditions had not been met by the time the elections arrived. For example, UNITA did not release all its prisoners, and held onto areas designated in the agreement as belonging to the government, the armies did not withdraw their armies while UNITA did not demobilize, the single army was not formed, hostile propaganda did not cease, and so on. Despite all this, it was made clear by UNITA and the USA that the elections must take place in the time span allotted.

Despite the violations, the international bodies supposed to be overseeing the implementation of the agreement remained neutral and just before the voting a solemn — and untrue — statement was made that the two armies were no more. In fact, UNITA kept its military positions and its captive electorate, while the government drafted former soldiers into its police force and security services.

By the end of September, the conditions did not exist either for elections in which the Angolan people could freely express their will, or for the loser to accept the outcome. In these conditions, the massive and peaceful vote by Angolans which resulted in a victory for the MPLA represented a decision along the lines "between the UNITA which kills and the MPLA which steals, we prefer the latter". There is no serious evidence to back up UNITA's claims of "systematic and generalized fraud".

■ The fact that UNITA has refused to accept the results of the elections says much about that organization. However the new battle of Luanda is strangely reminiscent of what happened in 1975 after the MPLA and UNITA had been in a coalition government.

This is not the same situation. In 1975 UNITA lacked the military means to take the initiative in the confrontation. Now, after 16 years of war, it saw the

* Christine Messiant works at the Centre d'Etudes Africaines of the Ecole de Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. The interview took place on November 18. The first installment appeared in *International Viewpoint* 240, December 7, 1992.

agreement as a way of consolidating and extending its battlefield gains. Savimbi's objective is power in Luanda, not over just a part of Angola. Even at the time of the agreements, some in UNITA wanted to continue the war "until Luanda" fearing that the ceasefire would rob them of imminent victory. Thus a secession will be a prelude to a further war in pursuit of central power (or perhaps a desperate retreat).

Savimbi has often explained that "you have to win, since once you have won, you can write history to justify your victory, while history never pardons the loser". Thus the UNITA leadership cannot accept defeat in the elections, despite hypocritical statements to the contrary from Savimbi. In any case, UNITA is more than Savimbi. It is now a 20 year history of organization and military activity involving a large number of cadres. It is this essentially military history which makes it impossible for UNITA to turn itself into a political movement.

After the elections, the UNITA generals rapidly pulled out of the united army and UNITA began to occupy positions and encircle towns in the hope of preventing the publication of the election results. When the results had been announced and the elections pronounced "globally free and fair" by the international observers, who urged UNITA to accept the organization of the second round, UNITA began to regroup and strengthen its military forces and occupy territory to the accompaniment of incredible verbal violence. It talked of its ability to "turn Angola into another Somalia" and reduce it to dust even without the support of its former allies, who it accused of having sold themselves for oil and diamonds.

This was both a preparation for the resumption of war and an attempt to change the balance of forces in negotiations before the second round. Now UNITA demanded what it had itself refused at the time of the Estoril agreement in return for its re-entry into the single army and acceptance of the agreement's military terms: the formation of a coalition government to oversee the transition. Its presence in this would be supplemented by its integration into every level of the administration, control over the means of communication, the dissolution of the riot police, a reconsideration of the organization of the elections and increased international surveillance of the voting.

Besides giving expression to UNITA's claims of fraud, these demands break both the spirit and the letter of the agreements. In any case, the government, feeling strengthened by its election victory and a "diplomatic situation that is more

favourable than ever" was in no mood to accept any of UNITA's conditions.

An impasse was thus reached as UNITA advanced on the ground and its radio began to pose the problem of the regime in terms of the "north" versus the "south", demanding the participation of all ethnic groups in power.

While the government denounced UNITA's moves — and the international observers deplored it — it colluded in it by not convoking the elected parliament where UNITA was strongly represented, and by not appointing a prime minister and government of national union as had been agreed before the elections. Press statements about "waging the war that UNITA has already started" and appeals to "generalized popular mobilization" poured out, demobilized troops were being remobilized and arms were being distributed in Luanda.

The first effort was to decapitate UNITA in the capital and head off any attempt by the latter to take power by force — by no means an imaginary scenario. At the same time, UNITA was to be deprived of any possibility of negotiating conditions for the run-up to the second round and thus of, in effect, robbing the government of its victory.

These tactics have much in common with the repression of the attempted coup in 1977 by Nito Alves. This police response to "restore the authority of the state" certainly affected Savimbi's ability to influence the second round. But the same aim could have been achieved by convoking parliament and forcing UNITA to choose whether it wanted to be inside or outside the democratic framework and by the appointment of a prime minister and the formation of a government of national unity. Now, after the fighting, such measures have lost much of their meaning.

Since Savimbi is even less likely to win in the second round, UNITA may well decide to initiate all-out war. The outcome of such a war and the international alliances it will produce cannot be predicted. But what is certain is that it will be a mortal blow to this already devastated country and would lead to many of Angola's people fleeing.

But, even if international pressure compels Savimbi to accept the government's conditions for the second round, it is unthinkable that the whole of UNITA will accept continued MPLA rule; they will probably plunge the country into a chronic state of war, which will foster banditry fed by the worsening social and economic crisis, and which will be met by a reinforced repressive apparatus on the other side. The future for Angola is not bright. ★

Irish elections register swing to Labour

A GENERAL election and three abortion referendums took place on November 25 in the 26 counties, the formally independent part of Ireland. The Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat (FF/PD) government broke up because irreconcilable evidence was given to a tribunal by the two coalition party leaders, Des O'Malley and Albert Reynolds.

The tribunal, which is still sitting, is investigating one of the many financial scandals to hit the 26 Counties in the last few years. It concerns the activities of Larry Goodman, owner of Anglo-Irish Beef Processors (AIBP). This firm is under "administration", a legal device preventing liquidation, although it is insolvent to the tune of at least half a billion Irish pounds (about \$0.7bn — 5% of the state's Gross National Product).

JOHN MEEHAN — December 2, 1992

THE results were a major defeat for the traditional rightwing parties Fianna Fáil (FF) and Fine Gael (FG) and an unprecedented victory for the Labour Party (LP). The figures tell their own story (see table).

FF won its lowest share of first prefe-

General election 1992

	Seats (1989 result)	% (1989 result)
FF	67 (77)	39.2 (44.2)
FG	45 (55)	24.2 (29.3)
Labour	33 (16)	19.3 (9.5)
PDs	10 (6)	4.7 (5.5)
DL/WP	5 (7)	2.8 (5)
Others	6 (5)	9.6 (6.6)

rences since 1927 and its lowest percentage of seats in the Irish parliament, the Dáil, since the same date. FG got its lowest percentage of first preferences since 1948.

Labour got its best result ever. Even more telling, it has recovered from 1987, when it only got 6.4% of the vote, its lowest share of the vote in over 50 years.

Politically, the most significant point about Labour's success is the dramatic swing to the party in Dublin, the most urbanized part of the 26 Counties. Labour seriously underestimated the growth in their support and did not run enough candidates to take full advantage. In Dublin, the party's share of the vote rose from just over 10% to 33%. They ran only one candidate in nine of Dublin's 11 constituencies. Ironically, their caution saved at least two seats for their rivals, the Democratic Left, including that of DL leader Proinsias De Rossa.

Labour's growth is based on a line of opposing coalition with the big bour-

geois parties, but this is a purely tactical decision for the Labour leadership. In 1987, Labour abandoned 17 years of coalition with FG and their historic gains this year are the fruits of the independent policy.

Here is the Achilles Heel of the Labour Party's success. Indications are that party leader Dick Spring may try and use the spate of financial scandals as an excuse for some sort of "emergency coalition".

Unfortunately, the signs are that he will succeed. The DL, humbled by its battering at the polls is now a willing

participant in talks about a coalition with the rightwing FG party. The picture may be clearer by December 14, when the Dáil reconvenes, but there are no guarantees. Various combinations are possible.

The underlying cause of the extreme electoral instability is a massive social and economic crisis. Unemployment stands at nearly 300,000, 20% of the workforce according to official figures, but in reality closer to nearly 30%. There is a major cloud looming over the state airline Aer Lingus which stands to lose thousands of jobs. A similar catastrophe is threatening Waterford Glass.

The only policy tolerated by the ruling class is one of job-cutting and privatization. It is the only way forward for the

Changes on the left

THE Workers Party (WP), which originated in the so-called Official side of the split in the Republican movement in the late 1960s and has been under strong Stalinist influence, made spectacular gains from Labour in the 1980s being seen as an "anti-coalition" left party. Their main base was Dublin. Labour's turn away from coalition in 1987 gradually produced an identity crisis for the WP.

The Democratic Left (DL) split from the WP in 1991, producing significant organizational problems in the election. A couple of months ago, searches of the archives of the Soviet Communist Party revealed a £1 million begging letter, signed by De Rossa (now DL leader) and Séan Garland (then and now WP General Secretary). The letter also referred to "special activities" — that is, robberies by the "Official" wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

The WP/DL are British imperialism's favourite pet in the six Northern Counties still under British rule and as a result their "fund raising" activities have been indulged. However, in the 26 Counties they have recruited on a moderate social democratic basis, resulting in contradictions that eventually led to splits, especially in De Rossa's local area. ★

The abortion referendums

THREE referendums on abortion took place at the same time as the general election. Harry Whelehan, the Attorney General, unintentionally fired the first shot in this campaign at the start of 1992 when he began the "x" case, trying to intern in Ireland a 14-year old, suicidal, girl who had been the victim of a rape because her parents were organizing an abortion for her in Britain. A huge wave of popular protest defeated Whelehan and the religious far right.

The Supreme Court was asked by the politicians to save the state's neck by saying it was alright to travel abroad for an abortion. But the Court had already issued several judgements against people providing information and counselling (implying that travelling abroad for an abortion was unconstitutional).

So instead of looking like complete idiots, the highest judges in the land decided an abortion in the 26 Counties, in this particular case, was legal; in other words, the danger of suicide was a potential ground for an abortion in Ireland itself.

The referendum results were a qualified victory for pro-choice forces and an unqualified disaster for both the governing Fianna Fáil party and the Catholic hierarchy. Two of the results were clear. In the wake of the "x" case, the government proposed to prevent anyone banning information on abortion and to prevent legal injunctions on women intending to have an abortion abroad. Both of these proposals were carried by two to one majorities.

A third referendum sought to modify the Supreme Court ruling in the "x" case. This proposal was defeated. It attracted opposition both from pro-choice forces and the far right. The far right wanted a "no" vote because they are campaigning for a constitutional amendment, even more draconian than the 1983 version they succeeded in winning.

The pro-choice forces preferred the limited victory represented by the Supreme Court verdict to stand. The Catholic hierarchy did not know which way to turn. It issued a very ambiguous statement, but individual bishops then called for all three proposals to be rejected. The result was a very big blow to them. ★

bourgeoisie which has sold itself to Maastricht, and has to meet the treaty's draconian timetable for economic and monetary union. This means reducing the national debt from 104% of GNP to 60% in five years. The cutbacks that have already taken place have laid the basis for the electoral earthquake.

Any DL/Labour participation in a coalition government will put the responsibility for such a policy squarely in their laps. ★

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY, Irish section of the Fourth International, ran Joe Harrington as a candidate in Limerick where he is a local councillor. The campaign highlighted opposition to the Maastricht treaty on European union, and the need for an opposition to the capitalist offensive based on mass struggles.

PD called for a vote for Sinn Fein "to help bring imperialist domination to the centre of the elections" and for Labour "without illusions". Joe Harrington expressed PD's firm rejection of deals and coalitions with the rightwing parties.

Defence of women's rights was at the centre of the campaign. According to the election statement:

"Anyone tuning in to media reports and discussions on the abortion issue in the 26 Counties can hardly avoid blushing with shame. Women are heaped with insult after insult as the most intimate functions of their bodies are discussed with gusto — usually by male "experts". The old medieval debates about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin are as nothing to the fine distinctions being drawn between a woman's life and health.

"Like the angels, women are to be silent and invisible in this discussion — even the threat of suicide is not to give them a voice. Nothing indicates more clearly that the major parties' records on women are totally incompatible with even the most minimal forms of equality and democracy.

"The present government policies are products of an alliance between church and state — the real face of a confessional state that has to be dismantled if Irish people are to know any real freedom and independence." ★

Why farmers are protesting

THE fragile compromise reached between European and US negotiators on November 20 concerning cuts in European Economic Community (EEC) farm subsidies as part of the current GATT negotiations, has been threatened by the vociferous opposition of French peasants to the accords. The issue has affected the French political scene both in terms of relations between the major political formations preparing for the legislative elections scheduled for early next year, as well as the French role in the European unity process.

KEITH MANN — December 8, 1992

In spite of US "concessions" on French production of oilseeds, the agreement still involves a 21% drop in subsidies paid to agricultural products destined for exportation. Approximately 15% of French land currently cultivated would be taken out of production. In human terms, the price paid for such an agreement by France's dwindling family farmers would be high. It is estimated that only 300,000 of the 800,000 farmers and their families who currently produce food for their livelihood, will still be able to live from agricultural pursuits by the year 2000.

Declining farm incomes

Farm revenues have declined by 5.9% in recent years. Today, the average family farm in France only earns about 153,000 francs annually (roughly \$28,000). Ironically, French farmers are victims of dramatic increases in agricultural efficiency. In 1950, each farmer produced enough food to feed seven people; today they produce enough for forty.

On December 1, 80,000 farmers from all twelve of the EEC countries plus Switzerland and Finland responded to a call by the National Federation of Agricultural Unions (FNSEA), the National Center of Young Farmers (CNJA) and other farmer organizations to demonstrate in Strasbourg against the accords. Though it is French farmers who will bear the brunt of the effects of the accords, other European farmers will also suffer. German and Irish livestock farmers are called upon to drastically reduce beef production. Dutch farmers who produce ten million tonnes of dairy products a year face a 25% loss in revenue and the elimination of at least 2,000 jobs. Contingents from Japan and

Korea also participated in the demonstration. Japan's 1,600,000 farmers are threatened by proposed agreements to allow imports of rice in a country which has traditionally protected its farmers against the vagaries of free trade for this staple.

The plight of the French farmers has received much public support — hardly surprising in a country where the majority of the population was still rural as late as 1934. A recent opinion poll indicated that 82% of the French support the farmers' opposition to the agreements.

However, those who rule France have spoken from both sides of their mouths, calling for rejection of the treaty for public consumption, but declining to take any measures which would actually lead to its rejection.

Presidential hopeful Jacques Chirac, the mayor of Paris and leader of the neo-Gaullist political party, the RPR, loudly denounced the treaty as an "Agricultural Munich" (a reference to the 1938 agreements that opened the door to the German invasion of Czechoslovakia). Socialist Party (SP) prime minister Pierre Bérégovoy and agricultural minister Jean-Pierre Soisson have also declared that they would block any deal that would hurt French agriculture.

But these same forces have made it clear that they refuse to actually take the necessary measures to block the accord. The most obvious measure would be for the French government to use its right to veto the agreement as provided by the 1966 Luxembourg agreement. A recent poll indicates that 69% of the French population favours the invocation of the veto. However, the political and media organs of the French bourgeoisie refuse to consider this option. The French daily *Le Monde* in an article in its November 22-23 weekend edi-

tion expressed opposition to the accord, justifying any measures except the use of the veto. The right wing daily *Le Figaro* wrote that "a new spectre is haunting Europe: the French veto". The National Employers Federation, the CNPF, declared that a veto would "provoke a very serious European crisis". The reasons for this refusal to invoke the treaty have to do with considerations far more important to the French bourgeoisie and their Social Democratic partners than defense of the farmers: their plans for European capitalist integration.

The rocky road from Maastricht

The use of the veto — which has never been invoked — by one of the pillars of the European system, would create a dangerous precedent that could contribute to undermining the fragile European edifice already weakened by the Danish "no" in last June's Danish referendum on the Maastricht treaty and further bruised by the narrow ratification of the treaty in the September referendum in France as well as the mounting turmoil around the exchange rate mechanism.

Other news organs came to the aid of the government like the weekly news magazine *Le Point* which wrote that "it is not at all clear that the accord will hurt the French farmers". Likewise, when faced with the actual prospect of a veto Chirac and former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing stated that they were "not ready to die for the Beauce" — in reference to one of France's major agricultural regions.

President Francois Mitterrand and his Socialist Party are hoping to deflect attention away from the agricultural aspects of the treaty by pointing out that it is only one of fifteen aspects of the GATT treaty. They are stalling for time in an attempt to put off decisions around the accords until after the legislative elections. Those elections are expected to result in a right wing parliamentary majority which will allow the SP to shift the onus for dealing with these problems onto the shoulders of the right.

The French Communist Party (PCF) has given strident support to the farmers. For over a week, its daily newspaper *L'Humanité* devoted front page coverage to the plight of the farmers. Both *L'Humanité* and the PCF parliamentary delegation loudly called for the veto. Its appeals have an unmistakable protectionist and nationalist tinge. Many PCF declarations end by claiming that the treaty goes "against the interests of France".

More generally, in an era where the old Cold War divisions have disappeared, the US-French conflict reveals the potential for sharp inter-imperialist conflict in the context of a world-wide recession.

Proponents of the treaty maintain that it will lead to a \$200bn expansion in world trade. In reality, there is no evidence that anything of the kind will result from this treaty. The sharp tone of the US and French negotiators reflect a sharp struggle over the division of the market as it currently structured. The United States and France are respectively the two largest agricultural exporters in the world. By demanding that the EEC reduce by 21% its agricultural production, the US is merely trying to grab a larger share of the already existing agricultural market.

The US currently produces one third of the wheat and 75% of all corn on the world market, as opposed to 19.9% and 1% respectively produced by the EEC. The portion of the market currently controlled by France and other EEC countries that would be reduced by 21% would be taken over largely by the United States but also by Canada, Argentina and Australia.

US penetration into the European food market also takes more subtle forms. For years now, French livestock has been fed cereal products imported from the US. These often include products of questionable nutritional value like corn residue and other agro-industrial waste products.

"Unfair competition"

The arguments advanced by the US negotiators in the calls for reduced French and EEC subsidies centre around the claim that the level of these subsidies amounts to "unfair competition". In reality, subsidies paid to US farmers are nearly as high as those paid to French and other European farmers. In 1991, wheat importing countries paid \$103 per ton of wheat. American wheat producers received \$147 per ton in subsidies as against \$151 for their European counterparts.

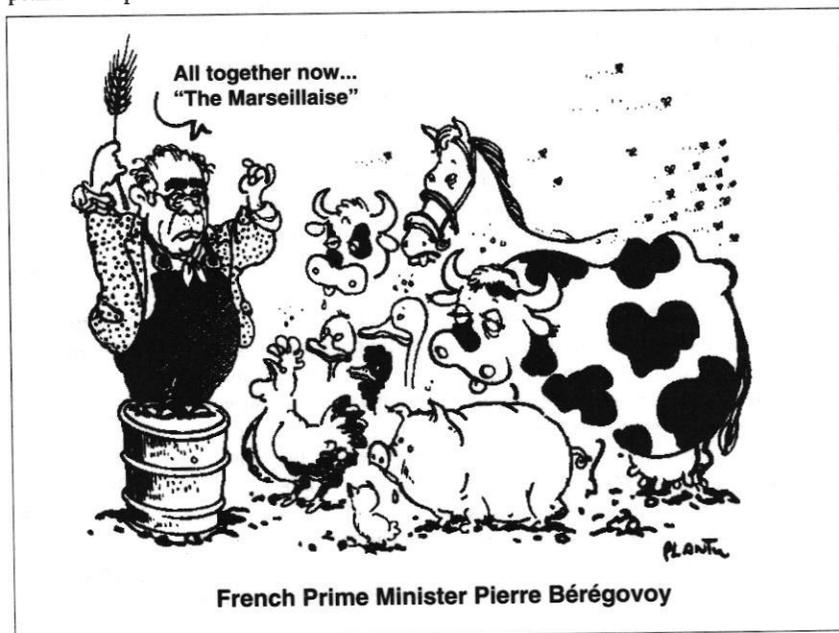
US farmers do face serious problems, but it is not EEC farm subsidies that threaten them. Rather, it is US agricultural policies that favor huge agribusinesses at the expense of family farmers. US price supports have been cut nearly in half since 1986 and at least 26,000 farmers currently face foreclosure and eviction. Half of all US grain exports are controlled by giant companies like Cargill and Continental.

Struggle for agricultural markets

The accords clearly reflect US hegemony in an inter-imperialist struggle to grab a larger share of the agricultural market at a time when US industrial products face stiff international competition. In fact, the US negotiator Edward Madigan openly rejoiced over the agreement characterizing it as favorable to the US. However, by limiting their demands to protests against the US "diktat" and "free trade", farmers risk falling into the protectionist trap whose logic leads to alliances with one of the main forces attacking them — their own bourgeoisies.

French farmers are also hampered by agricultural organizations that do not distinguish between small family farmers and larger agricultural producing units. The current treaty proposes to replace agricultural subsidies for some products with across the board payments which will exacerbate the gap between small and large farming units.

Demands for the reduction of food production at a time when the world is focused on the tragic spectacle of famine in Somalia is an eloquent testimony to the absurdities of the capitalist system. Never before has the land produced so much food, yet never have there been so many starving people. ★



French Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy

The end of the federation

UNLIKE in former Yugoslavia, the ruling elites in both the Czech and Slovak republics hope to gain from the peaceful break up of the Czechoslovak federation on December 31, 1992. In the first of two articles, Adam Novak looks at the dynamics of separation in the richer, Czech Republic.

ADAM NOVAK —December 9, 1992.

EVER since the elections this June, *Lidove Noviny*, the one-time dissident newspaper still considered closest to ex-President Vaclav Havel, has led the Czech press in a campaign to present the Slovaks as primitive, Balkan, over-religious, communist and lazy.

Slovak complaints that the federation was dominated by Czechs were countered by the simplistic claim that the Czechs subsidized Slovakia. In fact, the Slovak economy was built up by the Stalinists to produce primary and semi-finished inputs for Czech factories. New orders for Czech firms in Germany and Austria are dependent on cheap petrochemicals, steel, aluminium and labour from Slovakia.

The market-oriented economic reforms have meant unemployment of 6% in the Czech Republic, but over 13% in Slovakia. What little foreign investment there is is concentrated in the Czech Lands, while nine out of ten foreign tourists come to the Czech capital, Prague.

For all these reasons, many Slovaks began to see a de-centralization of the federation and a more interventionist economic policy as in their national interest. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) of Vladimir Meciar won the July elections on such a programme.

The Czech right, however, reduced the choice to "the present federation or separation" while starting the anti-Slovak media campaign described above. Once Czech premier Vaclav Klaus understood that the Western powers would blame any split on the Slovaks, he began openly talking of Czech statehood, calling for national unity. He has paralyzed the Czech National Council (parliament) by insisting that all important decisions be negotiated by his ODS party directly with the strongest party in Slovakia, Meciar's HZDS. The Czech national interest is now defined by Klaus as a series of neo-liberal and police measures designed to contain "Slovak" leftism.

Separation fever is legitimizing a whole

range of reactionary schemes. At the same time, opposition to Klaus is presented as anti-Czech, communist, anarchist. The mid-November vote of the federal assembly to change the federation into a loose union rather than destroy it was presented as an "attempt to sow confusion" by Klaus, who has no intention of respecting a federal parliament he considers irrelevant.

The lure of the West

The Czech right is convinced that without Slovakia, the Czech Republic will be more quickly integrated into Western Europe. As the Czech weekly *Respekt* commented after the elections, "Alone into Europe or together into the Balkans". Klaus repeats after all his foreign visits that "Germany understands us". Prague's Western business community expects the Czech Republic to benefit from the split, once it adjusts to the smaller size of the economy.

The bureaucracy's new attitude was summed up by Czech member of parliament, Vrata Votava, a Fourth International supporter, in his maiden speech to parliament in July: "The new government of the Czech Republic is made up mainly of politicians who hold direct responsibility for the sharpening economic, political, social and moral decline of society in the last two years. The way they see it, the Czech lion should threateningly gnash its teeth to the east over the river Morava, while peacefully bending its spine and waving both tails to the west".

Intolerance is slowly spilling over into violence in the Czech Republic, with fascist demonstrations winning the tacit approval of the crowd for their anti-Gypsy slogans, and with attacks on Gypsies in the countryside. By hinting that 100,000 Slovak Romanies will flood

into the Czech Republic, the Czech right is winning popular support for a full separation of Czech and Slovak citizenships and the introduction of a physical, guarded border.

Since most of the 300,000 Czech Romanies are registered as Slovak nationals, new general legislation to deny Slovaks work permits in the Czech Lands are, in fact, measures for the deportation of a national minority, the break-up of families and an invitation to open racism.

Petitions are already circulating in industrial centres like Most for the internment of Romanies in special camps, or their confinement to specific suburbs. There is talk about reintroducing old Austrian legislation confining minor criminals to their home district for a period of time, of "on-the-spot" punishments, of compulsory public labour for minor criminals and so on.

Parliament is not likely to deal with these problems. Most deputies did not even react when Farmers Party leader Frantisek Kondelik threatened a journalist with a knife in late November, when he and a group of drunken MPs were observed chanting *Sieg Heil!* in the Czech parliament members' bar.

Murder attempt

The latest political outrage here was the attempt to murder Czech Communist leader Jiri Svoboda on December 5. The unknown knife wielder was undoubtedly encouraged by the press campaign against Svoboda. *Cesky Dennik*, the paper closest to Czech premier Klaus, even exploited the fact that Svoboda has one leg shorter than the other.

Only one journalist, Jiri Hanak, of *Lidove Noviny*, protested against such personal attacks.

According to the pro-government weekly, *Respekt*, "no one else had the courage to risk the bucket of dirt that goes along with any such activity nowadays. And this new fear of conflict with the new "guardians of order is more dangerous for the right here than all the speeches of [left-wing leaders] Ivan Svitak and Milos Zeman together". ★

Population of Czech Republic

Czechs	9,500,000
(including Moravians Silesians)	1,500,000 45,000
Romanies	300,000
Slovaks	100,000
Poles	40,000
Immigrants	60,000
TOTAL	10,000,000

AROUND THE WORLD



Anti-racist/ anti-fascist news

SWEDEN

AN attempt by Swedish fascists to celebrate the anniversary of the death of King Charles XII on November 30, 1992, in Stockholm and Lund was met with counter-demonstrations by anti-fascists. Some 3,000 anti-racists blocked the way to the 200 Nazis in Lund.

However in Stockholm, the counter-demonstration was banned as the mass media and the big political parties whipped up a campaign accusing anti-racists of provoking violence. Nevertheless, 2,000 succeeded in holding an anti-fascist rally. A time bomb was found in Kings' Garden where the rally took place.

The bookshop of the Socialist Party (SP — Swedish section of the Fourth International) was the object of an organized fascist attack; an appeal for funds has been launched. — **Dick Forslund** ★

SPANISH STATE

FOLLOWING the racist murders of Hassan Al-Yahahaki, a Moroccan, and Lucrezia Perez from the Dominican Republic, protests took place throughout Spain. In the capital Madrid, 3,000 people demonstrated in the neighbourhood where the murder took place while on November 21 some 15,000 marched through the city.

The following day a demonstration of 5,000 protested against the new anti-foreigner law, while in Barcelona, on November 29, some 60,000 took to the streets. — **Pagina Abierta** ★

GERMANY

GERMANY is witnessing continuing racist and neo-Nazi violence and massive anti-racist and anti-fascist protests — including a "human chain" by formed 300,000 people in the Bavarian capital of Munich on December 7, 1992.

However, at the same time as expressing its displeasure over the racist outrages, the German government is pressing ahead with its campaign to res-

strict the right to asylum currently enshrined in the German constitution.

On December 6 a "compromise" agreement between the government and the opposition Social Democratic Party on the issue was announced. This tightens up the definition of who is entitled to refugee status. For example, refugees from civil wars will be entitled to only a limited stay in Germany and will not be considered for refugee status thereafter, while Poland, the Czech Lands and Slovakia are defined as "safe" countries from which refugees cannot be accepted and to which refugees can be returned if they passed through them before arriving in Germany.

It will be made easier to summarily throw asylum seekers out of Germany, if their claim is judged invalid. The 400,000 "old cases" of asylum applications will be treated under the new law.

Amnesty International has stated that, whatever Social Democrat leaders may claim, the amendment dismantles the constitutional right to asylum. A representative of the UN High Commission for Refugees has also expressed "scepticism" over the agreements.

While the SPD leadership has not yet formally accepted the agreement there seems no doubt that it will do so. Given the present instability in Europe these new measures will mean mass expulsions and a witch-hunt against immigrants, creating an even more fertile atmosphere in which the fascist groups can flourish.

International protests are urgently necessary. — **Manuel Kellner** ★



Students strike back

ON Tuesday, November 24, exactly one year after "Black Sunday" — the date of the far-right Vlaams Blok's electoral breakthrough — high school and university students of the two biggest cities in Flanders, Antwerp and Ghent, went on strike and massively flooded into the streets. This was an unexpected success: 10,000-strong demonstrations in both cities.

This is a big step forward for the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggle. The youth have met the Vlaams Blok threat head-on — the same Vlaams Blok which claims to have the support of a majority of youth. They have shown that the relationship of forces can be changed through mass mobilizations.

International Viewpoint spoke with Nadine Peeters, a 21-year old university student in Antwerp and spokesperson for the organizing committee AJOKAR (Anti-racist Committee of Antwerp Youth). She is also a national leader of the Jeune Garde Socialiste, Belgian youth section of the Fourth International.

HOW do you explain this enormous success? Everything happened very quickly. The Vlaams Blok had been preparing a victory celebration

11

for quite a long time, to commemorate the first anniversary of its electoral breakthrough. One year ago, electorally it became the biggest party in Antwerp. Its victory celebrations were seen as a real provocation, especially considering that they were to take place in the Antwerp neighbourhood of Borgerhout, where many North African immigrants live.

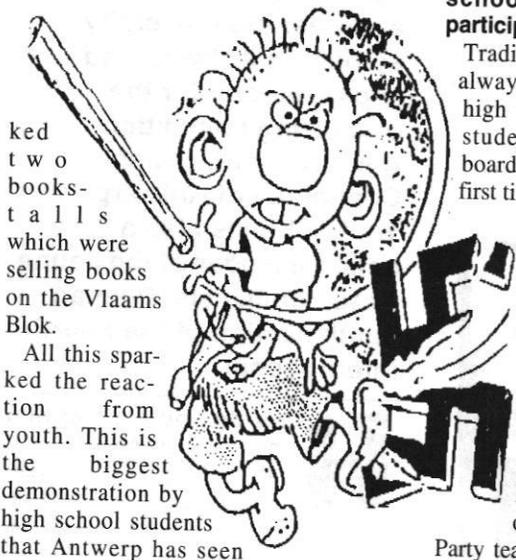
The united movement that was created after November 24, 1991, to react to racism and the social crisis decided to organize a demonstration and a party. The Charta '91 citizens' movement, the Anti-fascist Front, the "Hand in Hand" coalition of unions and new social movements and its youth group "Color Team", and the anti-racist neighbourhood committee of Borgerhout united under the name "A totally different Antwerp".

We decided to call a strike and street demonstrations in the morning with high school and university students, following the example of Ghent where these types of activities were already being prepared.

The success is due to the fact that a majority of youth are ready to mobilize against racism and the far-right. We had already seen that the day after last year's elections, when students in Louvain and Ghent immediately descended into the streets.

■ **So, there was a willingness to struggle. All that was needed was a good initiative?**

Yes, that's right. And ours was perfectly timed — coming as it did in the wake of the neo-Nazi attacks in Germany and Spain. And in Antwerp, a member of the Young Socialists was nearly killed by a gang of fascists while putting up posters for the unitary meeting. He was only saved thanks to emergency surgery. A few weeks before, the fascists had attac-



ked two bookstalls which were selling books on the Vlaams Blok.

All this sparked the reaction from youth. This is the biggest demonstration by high school students that Antwerp has seen

Raining on the Vlaams Blok's parade

ON November 24 anti-racists and anti-fascists took over centre stage in the streets, in the media and in political life — and not the Vlaams Blok (VB), in spite of its promise to celebrate the first anniversary of its spectacular electoral breakthrough.

The stakes were high, and there was a real test of strength, even though this took place without direct confrontations (aside from the partial destruction of one of the fascists' offices and the overnight occupation of the VB's meeting room).

Initiated during the November 9 demonstrations — called by the European Network Against Racism and for Equality — people were surprised by the size, combativeness and diversity of the response.

First, there were the high school strikes and demonstrations in Antwerp and Ghent. Indeed, the ensemble of anti-racists and anti-fascists of Antwerp made themselves heard through the youth.

That same evening, there was a torchlit demonstration that brought together 3,000 people thanks to a broad unity around the Anti-fascist Front, followed by a meeting and party where Gilles Perrault brought greetings from French anti-fascists.

At the same time, 2,000 people celebrated the success of another undertaking: the one-year long collection of 500,000 signatures on a petition demanding the right to vote for immigrants.

On Sunday, November 22, in an auditorium filled with more than 1,000 concerned citizens, the dozen government ministers, the secretary of state and the leaders of political parties got an ear full.

Invited by Charta '91, the movement of concerned citizens born out of the anti-racist demonstrations, they had to reply to one question: "Given that the victory of the Vlaams Blok is due first and foremost to the social crisis, what changes have you made in your policies to resolve this crisis since the November 24, 1991 elections?"

If the Vlaams Blok has not yet gone down in the polls, at least the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement is continuing the upswing which started with the 150,000-strong demonstration of March 23, 1992. This is the meaning of the activities planned for the International Day Against Racism next March and the mass demonstration planned for the city of Ghent in May 1993. — François Vercammen ★

since 1973 against Vanden Boeynants, the minister who wanted to suspend postponements of military service.

■ **In Belgium, there are several school boards. Did they all participate?**

Traditionally, the state schools were always most heavily involved in the high school activities. But this time, students from the private Catholic boards massively participated for the first time. There were rows and rows of young women in blue uniforms singing anti-racist songs and shouting their rejection of the Vlaams Blok.

■ **Did the anti-racist groups support your action?**

We received strong support. From our first meeting, representatives of the Anti-fascist Front and Hand in Hand came out to help us. The Socialist Party teachers union and Public Service

Employees Union-Teachers (CGSP) of Antwerp immediately helped us with the passage of a motion of solidarity and a memo to the schools requesting that students leaving school to participate in the action not be punished.

■ **What were the demands put forward in your platform?**

It was a simple and completely correct platform: for tolerance and democracy (put forward by Hand in Hand), for equal rights, against racism and fascism, against the Vlaams Blok, and in order that we never forget November 24, 1991.

We distributed 20,000 leaflets in about 40 schools. We explained that we wanted to strike because, like immigrants, high school students do not have the right to vote, and therefore striking was the only way to make themselves heard.

■ **On the fringes of the demonstration, a minority of youths smashed up the far-right's well-known meeting place. Shop**

windows and cars were also smashed. The press has spoken of violent youths, singling out immigrant youth in particular.

True enough, there was some smashing up. The committee says this is regrettable, but it is necessary to keep everything in proportion. The important thing is that there was a spirited and combative demonstration of 10,000 youths against racism and fascism.

Moreover, the youths — and not only immigrant youth — that participated in the smash-up have to endure daily provocations from the far-right in the neighbourhoods of Antwerp. These are youths who have been hit by the crisis and see no way out. For them, and rightfully so, politicians are cheats without answers.

The quality of education has been sacrificed in the interests of austerity. There are no jobs, aside from insecure and low-paid work. Indeed, what we are seeing is the well-known boomerang effect; there is nothing fundamentally different between Los Angeles' southeast side and the French *banlieues*. The explosive situation is entirely the work of the authorities.

■ **The Socialist Party mayor of Antwerp has said that the organizers will have to pay for all the damage. What do you plan on doing?**

We refuse to pay, period. We organized a youth demonstration against the rise of racism and fascism in a city where the political leaders have failed to fulfill the social needs of the majority of the population. They have laid the groundwork for the far-right. We do not accept any of this.

It is necessary to organize broad solidarity right away. Three well-known figures in Antwerp, including a Green Party deputy of Moroccan origin, have already launched a campaign of solidarity against payment for the damages.

We have to specifically address ourselves to working people. In a context of budget cuts, on both the local and national levels, the charges levelled against the youths might be used as a pretext to make a union response that much more difficult.

■ **What are your plans after this recent success?**

On November 24 we decided to announce that our committee, AJOKAR, would continue. We have called for the formation of AJOKAR committees in every school. We want to mobilize on a unitary basis for anti-racist activities on a national and pan-European level. ★

Crisis in Philippine Communist Party

FOR many years, the National Democratic Front (NDF) has been the main militant force on the Filipino left. Inspired by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), it has also been the left's most coherent component and the only one to carry on a struggle on all fronts. Today it is undergoing a major crisis.

The internal political debate is sharp. Fundamental issues are at stake, involving questions of overall orientation, the way in which the CPP functions and its unity, and this party's place in the country's popular movements.

In the last issue of *IV* we published the report prepared by Walden Bello on the basis of his survey of CPP and NDF cadres. Here we look at the reasons behind the outbreak of an open crisis.

PAUL PETITJEAN — December 2, 1992

THE crisis gripping the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is serious. Various cadres estimate that the party has lost about 40% of its organized forces in recent years. In an internal document approved by the CPP central committee, Armando Liwanag states that the movement is "confronted with an unprecedented loss of mass base" and that "the very life of the party" is "now threatened".¹ The national democratic movement is currently said to be numerically weaker than in 1985 on the eve of the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship.

During 1992, internal political differences gave rise to open crisis. For a long time, differences of analysis and orientation between central committee members and between regional or sectoral leaderships, have been apparent. But they were contained. The balance was upset after Liwanag and the executive committee decided on a "rectification movement" which excluded compromise. But this attempted crack down met with resistance. This is a fight over legitimacy rather than a simple confrontation between a majority leadership and opposition.

There is nothing surprising about this crisis. Over the past decade the CPP has faced radical changes both on a national level — with the fall of Marcos — and international level, the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The large number of the milieus and regions in which it has intervened have provided it with a rich but diverse experience. The CPP has to change and changes of this order are never easy. The difficulties are all the greater for an organization formed in 1968 on the basis of cultural revolution-style Maoism, which has

waged a prolonged armed struggle, has suffered severe repression and most of whose cadres are underground, despite the parallel development of significant mass work.

Can a party like this evolve and adapt? The answer is thus far ambivalent. For years the central leaders have put off essential debates at the risk of losing its vital forces. In 1991, at last, it seemed as if the conditions for a reassessment were coming together. Unfortunately, once again, the discussion has been stifled.² This is a sad waste. The CPP had the internal resources to undertake a collective rethinking of how to bring itself up to date theoretically and politically. Instead, the executive committee and some of the leading cadres, taking advantage of a tradition of bureaucratic centralist functioning, have been able to choke off this process until the outbreak of the current crisis.

1990-91 saw a stream of encouraging signs of political maturity. In 1990, strategic rethinking was made possible by the abandonment of the notion of the "strategic counter-offensive".³ The National Democratic Front, founded in 1973, finally

1. Armando Liwanag: "Reaffirm Our Basic Principles and Rectify Errors", *Kasarinlan*, vol. 8, no. 1, third quarter 1992. Unless otherwise stated, references to Liwanag refer to this document. The editors of *Kasarinlan* note that Armando Liwanag "is widely believed to be the pseudonym of José Maria Sison, founder and first chairman of the CPP".

2. The CPP's history is punctuated by basic debates and political "openings" (for example, in 1980-82 and 1986-87) followed by ideological and political crackdowns. After the fall of the dictatorship in 1986, these debates have spread beyond the leading circles, to involve a growing number of militants.

3. According to some of those Walden Bello spoke to — see *IV* 240.



held its first national congress which adopted a programme and more formal organizational rules that could have allowed it to develop its own personality independent of the CPP.⁴ A new balance sheet was drawn of the paranoid purges in Mindanao in 1985-86 and in South Tagalog in 1988. The leadership subsequently admitted that this was an indefensible disaster.⁵

In 1991, the editors of *Ang Bayan*, the organ of the central committee, opened a more or less public discussion on a wide range of national and international problems.⁶ In the course of that year, the *Ang Bayan* editorial board was disavowed by the central leadership, which nonetheless undertook to continue the discussion in a more internal journal, *Rebolusyon*.

Highly polemical tone

However, the latter, which is produced in the Netherlands, has never published anything other than the theses of the executive committee and Armando Liwanag, which often adopt a highly polemical tone.⁷

This is the context in which at the end of 1991, Armando Liwanag put out the two documents that were to precipitate the crisis: the already mentioned "Let us Reaffirm Basic Principles", which draws a historical balance sheet of CPP policy and "Against Modern Revisionism" which draws the lessons of the crisis of the Soviet bloc.⁸

The nature of these texts explains the level of protest they aroused within the CPP. Highly polemical, they take up all the points in the debate, but with the aim of putting the seal of authority on their closure.

They deal with strategy (reaffirming the line of encircling the cities from the countryside); theory (according to which the Philippines is still a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country); history (Stalin being presented as the great successor of Lenin); tactics (condemning the election boycotts of 1978 and 1986); democratic centralism (especially denouncing "ultra-democratism"); politico-organizational line (affirming the authority of the CPP executive committee over the leadership of the NDF) and programme (rejecting the theses on the

socialist transition recently adopted by the NDF).

In the course of the text, severe criticism is leveled at cadres and leading bodies, including the central leadership in 1978 after the arrest of José Maria Sison, the NDF's negotiators in 1986-87, the general command of the National People's Army in the 1980s, national commissions, regional leaderships such as that in Manila-Rizal and, especially in Mindanao.

"Deviations" are denounced: proponents of urban insurrection, of the premature formation of big military units, of "Gorbachevism", of petty bourgeois liberalism and of bureaucratism. A vast "rectification movement" is announced as well as sanctions against and the expulsion of "incorrigible" elements. All this before any formal debate had been organized on these questions.

From this moment on, two parallel movements were at work in the CPP. On the one hand the leadership's rectification movement and, on the other hand, a movement of "resistance" supported in particular by the leaderships in Mindanao, in the Visayas (a group of islands in the centre of the archipelago) and Manila-Rizal, the capital region.

In March 1992, the executive committee, a very narrow body, adopted Liwanag's document reaffirming the "basic principles" with a few small changes. The Political Bureau seems to have then demanded a central committee plenum to discuss the situation. In mid-1992, a CC took place, but many of its members were absent — the meeting may have been inquorate.

The rectification movement was launched and every militant was called on to examine their conscience to find out if they had been guilty of "insurrectionism". In October 1992, the first expulsion was pronounced against an NDF cadre, Lucas, known for the original strategic ideas he had put forward in the CPP.⁹

However, a growing number of militants have countered the rectification campaign with a demand for a collective discussion. In December 1991, Tales Duhaylungsod reviewed the course of the discussion. He drew a basic lesson from the "crisis of socialism": "socialism cannot succeed without integrating democracy into the

core of its theory and practice".

Underlining the complexity of the questions facing the revolutionary movement, he stated that the democratic "risk" of organizing the holding of a party congress had to be taken.¹⁰ At the start of 1992, many (probably the majority) of the members of the party's West European network took up this proposal. Also, a text by Ka (meaning comrade) Barry called for "resistance" to the "authoritarian tendencies" in the party, in particular rejecting Liwanag's amalgam of different positions, such as those of the Manila-Rizal and Mindanao leaderships and his explanation of the paranoid anti-infiltration campaign of 1985-86.¹¹

Call for party unity

Meanwhile, cadres in Mindanao sent a letter to the central committee declaring that they were "deeply disturbed" by the judgements and conclusions contained in Liwanag's document. They consider the way in which the later summarily condemns individuals without reference to the "party's weaknesses" as incorrect. They call for the unity of the party against the purge which they see as the aim of "rectification". In a series of other documents, one of these cadres refutes at the

4. The NDF comprises a dozen underground organizations, including Christians for National Liberation and various mass fronts. However the CPP is the only political party to be a member.

5. Hundreds of innocent people were executed in these purges. However, a first balance-sheet from the leadership concluded that the campaign of purges had been a "great victory" despite some regrettable excesses. See *Ang Bayan*: "Revolution in Mindanao: Recovery and Advance", June 1988.

6. See *Ang Bayan*, May-June 1991, and Paul Petitjean: "New debates on Philippine left", IV no. 211, July 22, 1991.

7. See IV 236, October 12, 1992.

8. Armando Liwanag, "Stand for Socialism against Modern Revisionism", *Rebolusyon*, no. 2, series 1992, April-June. Signed as president of the CC of the CPP.

9. Lucas has protested vehemently against his summary expulsion in a letter of October 8, 1992. He claims that he has been punished for "confronting the party leadership on fundamental questions long unresolved". Accused of direct responsibility for the first phase of the "anti-infiltration campaign" on Mindanao in 1985, he remarks that he himself has, since 1989, "accepted his share of the responsibility" and stated his readiness to "face an investigation/disciplinary process" before an impartial body. But, he adds, a "Stalinist purge" in 1992 cannot repair the damage done by the paranoid hysteria of 1985-86.

10. Tales Duhaylungsod, "An Open Letter to Comrades. Reform the Party! Save the Revolution", December 1991.

11. Ka Barry: "Resist Authoritarian Tendencies Within the Party! Let a Thousand Schools of Thought Contend!", *Kasarinlan*, op cit. Liwanag claims that the anti-infiltration campaign was the result of "impatience" related to a line for a "rapid insurrectional victory".

Ka Barry insists that this does not explain the disaster, and points out that South Tagalog, a region which supported the line of prolonged revolutionary war, was one of the centres of the "anti-infiltration" hysteria.

length the contempt which Armando Liwanag shows for the whole political experience on Mindanao, in particular defending the *welgang bayan*, or people's strikes.¹²

In recent months, a large number of other texts have been circulating from the Visayas, Manila-Rizal, and various committees and individuals. This is an unprecedented development in the CPP's history, which has seen little in the way of written discussion, and confirms the strength of the feeling that a debate is needed. A significant number of central committee members are, furthermore, demanding that a new plenum be called, judging that the previous one was too narrow to be legitimate.

In these conditions, the rectification movement appears to be bogged down and the authority of the leaders who started it is being challenged.

Is the CPP capable of incorporating a pluralist experience, organizing fundamental discussions and giving its members the right to determine the party's orientation, or will it condemn itself to intellectually sterile monolithism? This is one of the main issues in the present discussion. Joel Rocamora remarked in this respect, at a conference in Amsterdam, that the CPP's development is fed from several sources, reflecting the variety of regional experiences and a diverse reflections on national and international political developments.

But these sources have always been gathered in by the great "theoretical dam" inherited from the 1960s which let pass only one current of thought. Today, the dam is giving way under the pressure of events. Long-standing debates are reaching their culmination. This is the time, according to Rocamora, for the party to

allow the expression of several currents of thought.¹³

The CPP, like any other revolutionary organization, is confronted with highly complicated strategic and programmatic problems to which no one can pretend to have all the answers. It is perfectly natural that divergences appear. However, Armando Liwanag and the executive committee, do not allow any validity to different analyses, to a confrontation between lines or a discussion of fundamentals. This is one of the most striking aspects of their documents. Keeping the worst aspects of the Maoist tradition, all political debate is assimilated to ideological class struggle. The core of the central leadership upholds, of course, the "proletarian" outlook and the oppositions defend petty bourgeois or even quasi-imperialist views. There is thus no space for a wide-ranging debate among revolutionaries.

Self-criticism totally absent

As a corollary, the dimension of self-criticism is totally absent. Liwanag correctly denounced the paranoid purges in Mindanao and South Tagalog. But, in relation to the general functioning of the party, he remains silent over what allowed such a disaster to take place. Safeguards have always existed in the CPP, which has not seen the political assassinations of "dissident" cadres which have wreaked such havoc in other movements.

But it is clear today that the rules adopted in the first years of the struggle were not enough. It was only in 1988-90 that more precise directives were issued, in particular forbidding torture in any circumstances. Torture played an important role in the mad dynamic of the anti-infiltrator purges. It had previously been tolerated "under exceptional circumstances" in at least some regions, including Central Luzon, for "interrogations for tactical ends" of agents of the military.

Liwanag's verdict on Stalin, furthermore, undermines the credibility of his denunciations of human rights' violations inside the revolutionary movement. Like Mao Zedong, he recognizes that "grave excesses" were committed in the Soviet Union in 1936-37 and that a bureaucracy developed there in the following decades.

But in essence he

defends the Stalinist system, claiming that it was Brezhnev who introduced a "perverse" interpretation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He has even imposed this position on the National Democratic Front which has published big extracts of his "Against Modern Revisionism" with a photo of Stalin accompanying that of Lenin in the official organ of its international bureau.¹⁴

The CPP has not held a congress since its foundation 23 years ago. The explanation is not technical. The very real difficulties presented by clandestinity could have been overcome and, even if this were impossible, there could have still been wide-ranging political debates. The party's central leadership has not considered this question very important and the same is true of Armando Liwanag in his document of December 1991.

Liwanag recognizes the fact that to go 23 years without a congress is "extraordinary". But he sees this as a secondary problem. He goes so far as to suggest that the absence of a congress has, despite appearances, been a good thing (using the term a "blessing in disguise"). For, if such a congress had been held in the 1980s his line might have been outvoted. A revealing line of argument!

Nonetheless, the CPP's constitution stipulates the requirement for the holding of regular congresses and the election of leading bodies. The leadership has thus violated the organization rules. This is not a formal problem. A congress, on the condition that it is democratically prepared, is the only possible occasion for the members to determine the direction of their own organization and the composition of its leading bodies. Accompanied by free debate, complete information for the militants and discipline in action, a congress is the keystone of democratic centralism.

Free debate not a "luxury"

Free debate is not some "luxury" nor a petty bourgeois sign of "ultra-democratism" (or even a concession to the "bourgeois pluralism" so roundly denounced by the executive committee). It is a vital need. It is also a test: how can revolutionaries convince people that they are a democratic force in society if they stifle democracy in their own ranks? ★



12. Concerned comrades in Mindanao: "Letter of Concern"; (Unsigned): "Additional clarifications of the Mindanao experience".

13. Joel Rocamora, Forum "Southern Comfort", *X minus Y*, November 18, 1992, Amsterdam. See also his interview "The Philippines, East Europe, Socialism and Democracy", *IV* 186, June 4, 1990. Currently living in the Philippines, Rocamora has editorial responsibilities in *Debate* and *Conjunctures*.

14. Liwanag's analysis and Stalin's picture were published in *Liberation International*, volume 4, no. 3 and 4, May-August 1992.

Workers resist draconian reforms

AFTER years of comparative social peace, there has been a dramatic explosion of class struggle in Australia. Hundreds of thousands of workers have been propelled into struggle against a package of reforms that threaten to roll back rights and conditions to the standards of the early nineteenth century

JOHN TULLY — December 7, 1992

UP to one million workers struck in the state of Victoria on November 10, and around 200,000 thronged the streets of Melbourne in what was probably the biggest demonstration in Australian history. Tens of thousands of others also demonstrated in provincial towns and there have been large demonstrations in other states.

The upsurge follows the introduction of a package of draconian anti-union laws and austerity measures introduced by the incoming Liberal (that is, conservative) state government in Victoria. The government has effectively abolished the right to strike, outlawed various forms of trade union solidarity action; provided for the criminalization of strikers and the sequestration of union assets; and moved to abolish the existing industrial award system.

Workers will be forced to negotiate individual contracts with their employers. The government has also raised charges for essential services, imposed a "pre-tax" of \$100 on ratepayers and slashed spending on education, health and welfare. Tens of thousands of public sector workers face the sack.

Pomp and ceremony

These "reforms" have been accompanied by pay increases for parliamentarians and a return to the expensive formal pomp and ceremony of the past. Small wonder that, only a matter of weeks after the elections, the new government is detested by a growing proportion of the population.

Neither has the upsurge against the government waned since the mammoth demonstration of November 10. On November 23, for example, over 10,000 education workers from Melbourne's Western Suburbs demonstrated outside the Education Ministry, despite threats of a lock out and organized scabbing.

Public transport, the metals and engineering industry, the building trades, the docks, aviation and hospitals have been hit

by rolling strikes. On December 10, electricity and public transport workers will effectively shut down industry for 24 hours.

The electricity workers, significantly, are covered by a federal award and are thus legally beyond the state government's reach. The workers, however, are taking action both out of solidarity with workers on state awards and in protest against the threat by the federal Liberal opposition to introduce practically identical legislation if it is returned to office in next year's general elections.

The massive fightback must have come as a shock to the state government and federal opposition. Victoria's premier Jeff Kennett is on record as saying that he believed Australian workers would meekly accept their fate.

He was extrapolating from the New Zealand experience where similar, if less draconian, legislation was introduced by the National Party government with minimal opposition.

Kennett, however, has shown no sign of backing down. He insistently stresses his so-called mandate, but, while it is true he did win a landslide against Labor in October, even clear sighted conservatives dismiss his claim. In fact he refused to divulge most of his industrial policy before the election and claimed that working people would be no worse off than under Labor.

Kennett probably hopes that the storm will abate, leaving him free to pick off the small groups of workers who disobey his laws. Many workers, however, have pledged to fight on to victory, and it is probable that many thousands would go to prison rather than pay fines. Even the right-

wing leaders of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) appear aware that to give in would mean a return to the days of the Masters and Servants Act of the early nineteenth century.

New radicalization

Many of the strikers and demonstrators have never been engaged in industrial action before. Kennett appears to have achieved a new radicalization of layers of working people. Two events illustrate this: the angry reception given to Labor MPs who appeared at rallies, and the resounding applause given to militant union leader Bill Deller, who declared that if the government did not back down, it had to be brought down.

Another spin off of Kennett's attacks is that the seemingly impossible may have been achieved in the federal political sphere. Until Kennett's rampage, the federal Labor government was trailing the Liberals in opinion polls, and Paul Keating was rated the most unpopular Prime Minister in Australian history. The situation appears to have been reversed and some jittery Liberals are calling for the brakes to be applied.★

Leftwing MP sacked by High Court

IN WHAT may prove to be an unfortunate move for the ruling class, Australia's High Court has upheld an appeal against the election of popular leftwing independent Phil Cleary. Cleary was elected earlier this year in the federal seat of Coburg in Melbourne, following the resignation from parliament of former Labor Prime minister Bob Hawke. His election indicated that where the voters perceived a viable alternative, they would turn against both Labor and Liberal.

The High Court upheld an appeal from a disgruntled rightwing independent who managed to get only around 300 votes out of a total of around 50,000.

Cleary was dismissed because the court agreed that at the time of his nomination for election, he had "occupied a position of profit under the Crown". This is doubly absurd, as Cleary was, in fact, a high school teacher on extended unpaid leave, at a time when thousands of teachers are being made redundant.

Cleary is almost certain to be re-elected if a fresh by-election is called, and the result will be seen as a judgement on the policies of the Kennett state government, the federal government and the federal opposition with its so-called "Fightback policy". ★

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THE Ukrainian referendum on December 1, 1991, in which 90% voted "yes" to independence, was an important watershed in

A year of independence

Eastern and Central Europe, as a new state of more than 50 million people emerged almost overnight. This also sounded the death knell of the Soviet Union which was liquidated within a month of the birth of the Ukrainian state.

POUL FUNDER LARSEN — December 7, 1992

FOLLOWING the failed putsch of August 1991, the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet declared the republic's independence, a decision later confirmed by the December referendum. However, a mere five months earlier, in March 1991, 70% of Ukrainian voters had endorsed the concept of a "renewed Soviet Union" in the all-Union referendum staged by Gorbachev. Further adding to the uncertainty about Ukraine's new role as an independent state was the fact that even if a president was elected — with top former bureaucrat Leonid Kravchuk winning a resounding victory, no new elections were called for the Supreme Soviet (elected back in March 1990).

Ukraine was one of the three founders of the (at first exclusively Slavic) Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) set up in December 1991 and subsequently enlarged. But throughout this first, turbulent year of the CIS' existen-

ce, Ukraine has remained one of its most reluctant members. It has only signed a minority of the agreements made in the CIS framework — for example, only five out of the 15 agreements carried at the CIS summit this October. It has also recently refused to sign the Charter which outlines the Commonwealth's field of action.

Parts of the Ukrainian opposition have been highly critical of the CIS, pointing to the dangers of Russian domination of its institutions. Indeed, relations between Ukraine and Russia have been fraught with a series of tensions over security and territorial issues since the break up of the USSR.¹

The protracted dispute over the division of the Black Sea fleet was temporarily settled by an agreement between Yeltsin and Kravchuk instituting a joint commando, which is to function for the next three years. But this decision was

strongly criticized by Ukrainian nationalist forces who saw it as a concession to Great Russian domination.

Likewise the issue of control over the strategic nuclear forces based in Ukraine and their eventual removal, remains unresolved. The West is exerting strong pressure on Ukraine to hand these forces over to Russia, while the Kravchuk leadership seems to be inclined to use them as a bargaining chip in negotiations over economic aid.

One of the potentially explosive differences between Russia and Ukraine concerns the future of Crimea, which is also the base of the Black Sea fleet. This peninsula belonged to Russia until 1954 when it was given to the Ukraine by Khrushchev. Two thirds of its current inhabitants are Russians. After the Russian-Ukrainian summit at Dagomys in June this year injected a temporary measure of stability into relations between the two states, and as Russian demands for the secession of Crimea subsided, the issue receded into the background.

Protests by Crimean Tatars

But the basic problems are still unresolved. This was graphically illustrated in early October when an uprising took place among the Crimean Tatars protesting the attitude of the local authorities to Tatar settlements.² Kravchuk, in unison with the leadership of the Russian dominated Crimean Supreme Soviet, branded the protests "extremist", apparently to uphold this fragile alliance and keep the situation in the Crimea "governable". The risk that the legitimate national interests of the Crimean Tatars in this connection will be subordinated to other political interests is considerable.

In the economic sphere, the Kravchuk team has stopped short of implementing "shock therapy" on the lines employed by Gaidar in Russia. The approach to privatization has been more cautious and ambiguous, insofar as the workers and management retain a measure of control, while the initial onslaught on social gains was not as aggressive as in Russia. However, the freeing of all food prices by July and runaway inflation has caused a sharp drop in living standards and there is no sign that this decline is stopping.

When Kravchuk's new prime minister, Leonid Kuchma, addressed the Ukrai-

The bureaucracy in session

THIS month's Russian Congress of People's Deputies saw sharp disputes between Russia's President Boris Yeltsin and the Congress majority over how best to defend the interests of the country's ruling elites.

Yeltsin emphasizes the need for a severe economic rationalization programme which can win Western aid. To gain support for this break with the past he attempts to appeal to popular anti-bureaucratic sentiment. The Congress majority, defending a range of special interests, calls for support for existing industry and a more vigorous campaign to uphold Russia's domination over the former Soviet space. They are less concerned about Western public opinion.

After a series of defeats in Congress votes, Yeltsin threatened his opponents with a referendum to decide whether the government or the Congress should rule.

Despite the "democratic" arguments employed by both Yeltsin and his critics, their real social base is narrow and their methods necessarily authoritarian. The Congress itself is a remnant of the Gorbachev era packed full of apparatchiks.

Mass democratic movements capable of sustained anti-bureaucratic action have yet to emerge in the republics of the former Soviet Union; if one is to be formed it will have to appeal to the material interests of the great majority of the population. In these pages we focus on some as yet weak, but historically highly significant attempts, to develop a genuine anti-bureaucratic perspective. — **Colin Meade** ★

1. For an account of Russian relations with the CIS "near abroad" see "More Equal than the Others", in IV 237.

2. Hundreds of thousands of Crimean Tatars were deported by Stalin to Central Asia and Kazakhstan in 1944 as a "collective punishment" for their alleged collaboration with the Nazi occupation forces.

nian Supreme Soviet in November, he painted a picture of an economy that was in the process of rapid disintegration: "Within the first nine months of this year, the GNP of Ukraine has dropped by 18%, national income by 11.5%, the volume of industrial production by 19.7% and the output of consumer goods by 12%. Particularly disturbing is the reduction in the price of food: the production of meat has dropped by 24%, cheese production by 31% and of milk by 28%... The living standards of the people are declining disastrously. In the first half of this year, wholesale prices rose 15.6 times in Belarus, 14.6 times in Russia but 22.3 times in Ukraine."³

Ukraine is in an extremely exposed position as trade relations with its partners in the former Soviet Union gradually shift to a hard currency basis, because it has to import much of its raw materials for its industry from abroad, and especially from Russia.

Strained economic relations with Russia

Economic relations between Russia and Ukraine have also been strained. While Russia, at least for a time, zealously obeyed the orders of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) about strict monetary control, Ukraine retained a looser credit policy. This was met with a series of counter-measures from Russia, including suspending all credits to Ukrainian enterprises in September.

In the end this was a major factor in Ukraine's decision to leave the rouble zone. Earlier this year, Ukraine had introduced the karbovanets coupons as a parallel currency to the rouble and on November 12 it became the sole legal tender. The Ukrainian karbovanets, however, has the dubious privilege of being even more "wooden" than the Russian rouble. The rouble is exchanging at about 450 to the dollar while the karbovanets trails behind at 650 to the dollar.

The karbovanets is only meant to be an intermediary step on the way to a full-fledged Ukrainian currency, the hryvna, but because of the generalized financial chaos, the introduction of the hryvna has been postponed several times.

The West and its institutions have adopted a wait-and-see attitude to the Ukrainian economic reforms. Most have refused to commit themselves, and the IMF has several times complained about the "hesitant" and "contradictory" nature of the reform. This recently prompted Kravchuk to warn that Ukraine may not ratify the START Treaty on strategic nuclear arms if no Western economic

and military aid is forthcoming.⁴

Meanwhile, on the domestic scene, the stakes seem to have been raised with the instalment in mid-October of the new premier Leonid Kuchma. A former director of the huge Yuzhmash arms manufacturer, Kuchma has been dubbed the "Ukrainian Volsky" (after the leader of Russia's industrial party and key opponent of radical free marketeer Gaidar). Kuchma is demanding wide-ranging powers to carry through a drastic economic programme.

Izvestiya described the decision of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet to grant these powers under the headline "The Ukrainian government receives economic powers to introduce dictatorship over the economy". The government will be authorized to decide on "the legal regulation of property relations, business affairs, social and cultural development, customs and excise, scientific and technological policies, the financial system, taxation and state policy on wages and prices".

The request for these powers was justified by Kuchma in the following manner: "we have to understand that people have been driven to a point where slogans about privatization, social demagoguery and political speculations could spark a spontaneous mass uprising."⁵ But he did not present the Supreme Soviet with any concrete measures and by all accounts the medicine on offer will be a mixture of free market mechanisms (included stepped-up privatization) and some support for state industry.

The granting of wide-ranging authority to Kuchma — to begin with until May 1993 — is yet another sign of the slide towards increasingly authoritarian solutions; a tendency prevailing not only in Ukraine but in many of the post-Soviet states.

Criticism of the patriarch

President Kravchuk, who picked Kuchma, is himself a bonapartist figure "hovering above" the different parties; though even this "father of the country" is coming in for increasing criticism as conditions deteriorate.

The opposition forces, however, are heterogeneous and divided. The Rukh movement, which started out in 1989 as a broad national-democratic front, has undergone a *de facto* split. One faction, primarily based in Kiev and led by, among others Ivan Drach, has joined hands with the Kravchuk wing of the old ruling nomenklatura, while another faction, featuring Vyacheslav Chornovil and more traditionally nationalist elements from western Ukraine, maintain a rather more independent position.

Meanwhile a coalition of supporters of liberal economic reform came together in June to form the New Ukraine political movement. Its head is Volodymyr Lanovy, a former minister of the economy, who is proposing a reform course similar to Gaidar's.

The Ukrainian Communist Party was dissolved in August 1991 by its former ideology secretary, Kravchuk himself. There are today several organizations that claim to be the successors of this party: the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the Ukrainian Communist Party are small Stalinist groups, while the Union of Communists is somewhat broader, but still situating itself within the bureaucratic tradition of the former ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

By far the most important party with its origins in the Ukrainian CP is the Ukrainian Socialist Party (USP). It may have some 30,000 members, but most of its leaders are former middle ranking party apparatchiks. The party is quite heterogeneous and draws eclectically on different traditions within social democracy, "Soviet communism" and Western Marxism.

In some of the big cities, such as Kiev, Kharkov and Odessa, there are groups of anarchists and left socialists, which are numerically much weaker than the ex-Communists. In general, however, these groups have experienced declining membership and influence since their prime in the perestroika period.

Revival of workers movement

But at present, the workers' movement is the player with the biggest potential to alter the political situation in a progressive direction and thereby open up new possibilities for the left. The Ukrainian workers' movement has recently been showing new signs of life: in early September the Association of Free Trade Unions organized a strike of transport workers, with some miners joining in; and in mid-November miners in the Donetsk region struck for 24 hours against a law on the settling of labour disputes — struggle supported by other groups of workers.

Even if these signs of increasing resistance among the population are modest, the Kravchuk-Kuchma faction, dressed up in the new clothes of nationalism, could soon face growing opposition from a people tired of misery and empty promises. ★

3. *Izvestiya*, November 19, 1992.

4. *Reuters*, November 16, 1992.

5. *Izvestiya*, *Ibid*.

National rebirth and economic reform

SERGEI KLIMOVSKY is a "veteran" of the Ukrainian left: he was a founder of the Socialist Workers Party of Left Forces and edited the short-lived journal *Revolutsia*, which attempted to create a common framework for the revolutionary left wing. In the interview published below he gives his appreciation of the main developments in Ukrainian politics after the demise of the Soviet Union. The interview was conducted in Kiev by Poul Funder Larsen.

WHAT is the main thrust of the economic reform carried out by Kravchuk and his government? Does it envisage the same kind of IMF-style monetary policies as the one introduced by Yeltsin in Russia?

In my opinion there is no major difference as regards the substance of the reforms in Russia and Ukraine. Kravchuk, however, does not proceed as quickly as Yeltsin and he is apparently meeting less resistance on the side of the opposition. One cannot say that the course of Kravchuk is aimed simply at the restoration of capitalism; it is rather an attempt at maintaining the old totalitarian structures under new conditions and keeping control over the key sectors of the economy, while granting some freedom to private entrepreneurs.

So far, privatization has been going very slowly, though it is underway. But the prob-

blem is that there is no "national" Ukrainian capital which can take part in large-scale privatization of state enterprises even if they are sold off cheap. Kravchuk — like the leaders of most other republics — is hoping for massive investments from the West, but preferably in the form of credits for the state than for specific enterprises.

By all accounts, however, these hopes are not justified. There are obviously some enterprises that may be sold to foreign capital, but this will be the exception either out of dire economic necessity or because of shady deals between the top layers of the bureaucracy and Western investors.

As in Poland, efforts are made to show that the state enterprises cannot compete with the private ones, and thereby discredit the very notion of state ownership. But the problems for the state enterprises are to a large extent a result of the break down of economic ties among the republics after the disintegration of the Soviet Union — meaning for Ukraine that it has lost its former markets, particularly in Russia.

It is clear that the perspective of an integration of Ukraine into the capitalist world market presupposes a structural change of the Ukrainian economy that would reduce it to a secondary position. Many enterprises will either have to close or adapt to the role of appendages of Western companies.

■ How is the national question as posed in Ukraine linked to the issue of the economic reform?

In a sense, the market reforms of Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Kravchuk have been carried under the banner of a return to the order that existed before October 1917 — with a glance at contemporary experiences in the West. There is in the Russian reforms a certain connection back to the "Westernizers" of the last century who wanted to draw on the experience of Western capitalism.

In Ukraine and the other non-Russian republics the ideological basis for the implementation of the reforms is found in nationalism and the idea of national rebir-

th. The old party- and state-bureaucracy has with few exceptions embraced these ideas, and Kravchuk is the political expression of this layer. The elite formerly basing its rule on "communist" ideas is now using Ukrainian history in a revised and partly falsified way to preserve its position under the new conditions.

Rukh, which initially played the role of a democratic movement supporting the gradual reorganization of the Soviet Union, has for now lost its position as a major player in Ukrainian politics, though it is still one of the biggest formations in Ukraine.

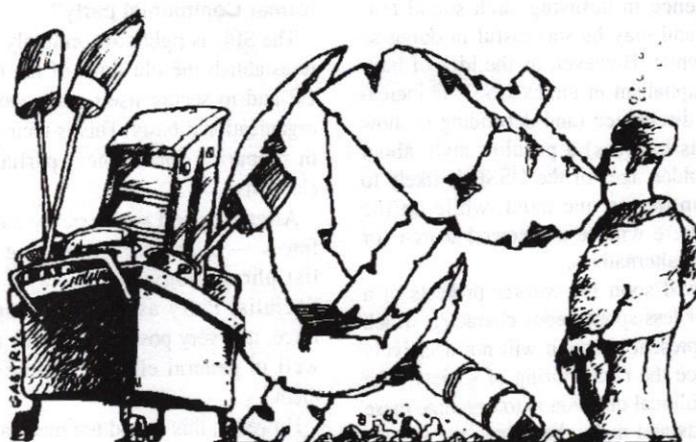
In a way, Rukh has followed the trajectory of the Polish Solidarnosc. Originally, there were two main wings of Rukh — one nationalist and one democratic. Presently the nationalist wing has taken the lead, propagating a more orthodox version of Ukrainian nationalism than did the democrats.

After the August 1991 coup, a paradoxical situation arose in Ukraine, because there was no genuine opposition left. Rukh, which until then had acted as a special form of parliamentary opposition realigned itself with Kravchuk. Indeed, Kravchuk turned Rukh into a kind of presidential party.

■ What does the weakness of the popular movements mean for the possibility of building a socialist alternative independent of the old apparatus and the various ex-Communist groups who are presently the main "leftwing" formations?

In the ex-Soviet Union and most parts of Eastern Europe we will see protracted stagnation, where rapid upheavals are unlikely. Instead there will be long-drawn out struggles both among former republics and inside the republics between different political tendencies representing the bureaucracy and the emergent bourgeoisie.

The economic deterioration will inevitably bring about the conditions for social explosions, but the state apparatus has



experience in defusing such social tensions, and may be successful in doing so for a while. However, as the idea of building capitalism in the ex-USSR is increasingly discredited (and depending on how fast this happens) a peculiar myth about the "golden age" of the USSR is likely to develop on the one hand, while on the other there will be a renewed search for leftwing alternatives.

We will soon see worker protests of a more or less spontaneous character, which in the present situation will not decisively influence the restructuring of society. The main political question is to organize these outbursts and make the people the subject of political change. This presupposes a political organization of a new type which can unite these forces and realize their potential.

■ Is there any possibility of collaboration between the small revolutionary leftwing groups and parts of the Socialist Party of Ukraine, which is the main successor to the

former Communist party?

The SPU is right now primarily trying to re-establish the old links of the outlawed CP and to secure itself an economic and organizational basis. This is their first step in preparing for the next parliamentary elections.

After a period with openly nationalist forces — or at least forces using nationalist phraseology — in power, and the Socialist Party as the main opposition force, it is very possible that they could do well in general elections and even win them.¹

However, this would not mean a qualitative change in the situation. Rather, it would mean an abandonment of perhaps the most extreme expressions of nationalist ideology and a continuation of the current Kravchuk reforms with a bit more of a "human face". ★

1. This interview was conducted before the recent victory of the ex-CP in Lithuania headed by Brazauskas — a development with many affinities to the scenario described by Klimovsky

The impasse of the Ukrainian left

THE following article by the Ukrainian historian and leftwing activist Sergei Klimovsky was originally published in IV's Russian-language sister publication *Inter-Vzglyad*, no. 3/1992. It offers a participants account of events in the Ukrainian left in the period 1989-91. It has been slightly abridged for space reasons.

DOCUMENT

FOR the time being, the leftwing in Ukraine is experiencing a period of decline, suffering from the absence of real organizational forms.

In the years 1989-91 different leftwing groups in Ukraine, identifying themselves as Anarcho-Syndicalists, Anarcho-Communists or Left Socialists, attempted to establish mutual contacts and founded regional associations such as the Confederation of Ukrainian Anarchists or the Socialist Workers Party of Left Forces.

But today the activities of these regional political associations have in practice ceased.

Among the reasons for this state of affairs one can cite the following:

- The lack of a theoretical understanding on the left of the developing social processes and its own place in this;

- The absence of a real social base for the leftwing organizations — a phenomenon which is also true for other political organizations — meaning that they never won any significant backing. Even the largest of the leftwing organizations, the Confederation of Ukrainian Anarchists, counted no more than about 200 relatively active members in its prime;

- the absence of well-defined organizational forms of a new type — even though there was a search for this — as the principles of traditional party building were being rejected;

- The general decline in political activity and the peculiar disappointment of the people with politics in the autumn of 1991;

- The relatively peripheral position of Kiev, Kharkov, Zaporozhe and other Ukrainian centres compared to Moscow and Leningrad — and consequently the absence of common, all-Union links among the leftwing groups. these are fundamental causes for the relative weakness of the leftwing, which meant that it did not become a

genuine political force.

One has to add two more factors, which were not specific to the Ukrainian situation. Firstly, the fact that the CPSU, in spite of its inclination towards social reformism. was laying claim to a "socialist orientation", which forced all leftwing groups to constantly dissociate themselves from it, or, as the anarchists did, to stand up for openly communist positions — leading to unavoidable contradictions and the loss of an independent profile and perspective.

Secondly, in comparison with the preceding period, the restructuring of post-Stalinist society was carried out not under the banner of a return to the original, pure Marxism and a correct understanding of Lenin — as was the case in the 1985-86 period — but under the slogan of restoring the order of the pre-October revolution period in harmony with nationalism in the republics.

In general, the attempts by different small, independent groups to return to "classical Marxism" were soon exhausted, and they had either to give up or to fuse organizationally with groups inside the CPSU, pursuing the same ends or with other leftwing or social democratic forces.

Inside the CPSU the return to classic Marxism took two forms. One was the so-called Bolshevik Platform, which drew the conclusion that it was necessary to return to the early 1950s. These "defenders of socialism" were oriented not towards the future but towards the past — as were the liberal democrats wanting a return to pre-October times — and therefore reactionary.

Another attempt to return to classical Marxism, and partially to renew it, was undertaken by the Marxist Platform left by Buzgalin and Kolganov. However, its activities did not lead to the formation of a conceptually independent leftwing organization.

When the CPSU was liquidated, the Marxist Platform ceased to exist as an organized whole, and the diversity of conceptual orientations within the Platform was decisive in its dissolution. But whereas in Russia the modernist wing merged with the Socialist Party of Kagarlitsky — in the Party of Labour — no such wing existed in Ukraine, and here the Marxist Platform was integrated into the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU), which stands on social reformist positions close to those of the former CPSU.¹

In summing up the results of the years 1989-91 one has to note two peculiarities characteristic of the leftwing in this period. Firstly, in spite of some attempts to build links to the workers movement, which all leftwing currents traditionally understood as their social base, and to organize some

1. In a later article IV will take a look at the situation of the Russian left today.

kind of common action, the leftwing and the workers' movement existed separately and on the whole did not interact.

Secondly, under conditions when both the official and the emerging democratic press were in reality launching a massive campaign to discredit leftwing ideas, it was, not surprisingly, youth who constituted the backbone of the leftwing groups and organizations, whereas the right, centrist or even neo-Stalinist organizations were led by people who were usually over 40.

However, one should not evaluate the virtual discontinuation of the activities of leftwing organizations in Ukraine as the disappearance of the leftwing as such. On the contrary, if anything, the 1989-90 period could be seen as a period of growth in breadth, when small, but rather active groups were springing up in all the major cities, putting considerable effort into proclaiming their existence up to the point of establishing international links.

From breadth to depth

But from the autumn of 1991 the situation started to change. For the movement, a period of reduction of external activities began — links between the groups in different cities were getting weaker and they were concentrating more on their own problems, often searching for theoretical clarification. This period could conditionally be seen as time of growth in depth, although only time can confirm or disprove this hypothesis.

In analyzing the current state of the left in Ukraine, one can then single out the following tendencies, which will undoubtedly determine its future development:

First and foremost it is a break with the dogmatic interpretation of classic leftwing theories and an attempt to work out an independent methodology for understanding the processes in society. In many ways the Ukrainian leftists are searching for theoretical clarification that runs parallel to that of the "new left" in the West, although it does not so much touch on general philosophical questions, but is oriented towards the socio-historical concrete.

At the same time, there is a search for new, non-traditional forms of leftwing organization — different principles for building and functioning — and the emergence of a different form of psychological interaction inside the organization itself.

It is not impossible that these general developments could lead to the appearance within the next two to three years of a broad leftwing, in new organizational forms, if favourable objective conditions and a consistent evolution of the current tendencies on the left prevail. ★

Russian socialists hold congress

RUSSIA's "new left" political formation, the Party of Labour, held its founding congress in Moscow on October 9 and 10.

The party was established in the form of an organizing committee at the end of August last year. With the adoption of a constitution and other founding documents, it can now apply for official registration, in order to run election candidates in its own name.

RENFREY CLARK

EVEN by the standards of Russian politics, with its swarm of small groupings, the Party of Labour is not a large organization. At the height of the congress the hall contained about seventy people, and the party's total membership is probably no more than 400. However, the party occupies a strategically important political space and is almost unique in having a leadership with a real grasp of international political and economic thought.

In a Programmatic Declaration adopted at the congress, party members stressed their opposition to the government's neo-liberal "reforms," which include the privatization of state assets throughout most of the economy. Instead, the declaration called for a large state sector to be retained and modernized to serve as the "locomotive" required to haul the Russian economy out of depression.

This is a position which the Party of Labour shares with large sections of the main anti-Yeltsin bloc in Russian politics — the so-called "right-left opposition," based on an alliance of Russian nationalists with old-style Stalinists. However, the new party in fact has little in common with these forces.

As a central element in its plans to rebuild the shattered Russian economy, the Party of Labour urges the development of organs of workers' self-management. These concepts are quite incompatible with the "command-administer" system to which the neo-Communist parties want to return.

Also, the Party of Labour — unlike the great majority of Russian political groups — refuses to make cheap gains by adapting to Russian nationalism. One of the main challenges before the congress was to choose formulations

which would make this position clear, while stressing the need for workers of different nationalities to develop their economic and political collaboration. After lengthy discussion, a section of the party constituting endorsing the concept of a "new federalism" was adopted, with the proviso that debate on the issue would continue.

The Party of Labour thus rejects both the "barracks socialism" of the past and the capitalism of the neo-liberal future, while condemning the nationalist thugery that has been an ugly feature of Russian states for hundreds of years. These general positions are shared by scores of millions of Russians, so there can be no doubt that the territory which has opened up for the "civilized left" is exceptionally fertile.

Traumas of Russian history

However, the traumas of Russian history have left this political space thinly populated. Throughout most of the period since independent organizing became possible in the late 1980s, the democratic left has been represented by small and isolated political groups; by cells of worker militants within the heavily bureaucratized trade unions; by a largely stillborn movement of labour collectives; and by the still small environmental and women's movements.

If the democratic left is to become the massive force it ought logically to be, these groups need to develop the habit of collaboration. A key task which the Party of Labour has set itself is to provide a framework within which the political groups, at least, can combine their efforts. The list of currents which have joined the Party of Labour process is

already considerable, and reflects the talent of party leaders for intelligent compromise.

The new organization contains veterans of the Socialist Party, formed in 1990 by left-wing opponents of Communist Party rule, and of an anarcho-syndicalist current with roots in the student movement. Also present are people who worked within the Communist Party to recruit activists to the struggle for democratic socialism and workers' control. There is also a socialist-populist element, made up of people who look to the traditions of the Social Revolutionaries of the first decades of the century. Finally, there are individuals whose positions could be described as left social democratic.

Combining people from these backgrounds into an effective campaigning unit will not be easy. However, the diverse origins of party members have meant that debates within the Party of Labour have been exceptionally rich. Party of Labour members tend to be much more familiar with the thinking of the international non-Stalinist left than Russian leftists whose main experience has been within the Communist Party, and they also have a far keener grasp than most Russian liberals of the realities of Western capitalism. As a result, the Party of Labour is well placed to join in the debates of educated Russians as these layers lose faith in the neo-liberal utopia.

However, the party does not want to remain a discussion group for the intelligentsia. As speakers at the congress stressed, the party seeks to act as a bridge between progressive movements and political action. Much of the work of party activists consists of building contacts with the environmental, women's, and above all, labour movements, and of trying to defend the interests of these movements in the political sphere.

Forging contacts

While useful contacts have been forged, the party's influence in broader progressive circles has so far been slight; Russian activist groups which have arisen outside established structures are almost always suspicious of political parties. Consequently, the Party of Labour has developed a strategy of building itself as a "party-movement." For a long time, leaders expect, the party's progress will be reflected not so much in increased membership, as in the spread of collaborative relations with numerous movements and organizations.

Speakers at the congress were nevertheless able to report progress in win-

ning members in a number of provincial industrial centres where the party did not have an implantation in the past. In all, delegates were present from eight cities.

If the congress could not be described as a great triumph, party economic strategist Andrei Kolganov observed, mem-

bers had nevertheless gained a sense that despite their differences they could work together.

"There won't be rapid successes, and there are many years of struggle ahead," Kolganov concluded. "But we're not going to wait with our arms folded." ★

Programme of the Party of Labour

WE publish below the programmatic resolution adopted by the founding congress of the Party of Labour, held in Moscow October 12, 1992.

DOCUMENT

OUR country is now passing through one of the most dramatic periods of its history. In the course of the events of August 21, 1991, the people demonstrated their unwillingness to live in the old ways and their readiness to defend democratically elected organs of power. Nevertheless, the collapse of the old system of totalitarian rule has not led to the expected triumph of democracy. The people struggled against the old regime, rose up in demonstrations and built barricades, but they were not permitted to enjoy the fruits of their victory.

Despite the differences between them, the forces which came to power in Russia and in the other parts of the former Soviet Union are united in arguing that the crisis can only be overcome through the broadest possible privatization and through attracting massive quantities of foreign investment.

These new ruling forces defend the rights of the entrepreneurs and of the new property owners, who in most cases have emerged from among the old nomenklatura. The bureaucratic oligarchy is being allowed to secure its privileges in a new form, to legalize them, and to redistribute power and property among the various groups within the ruling elite. The property of all the people, which never belonged to the people in more than name, is now being directly appropriated by the same circles which bear prime responsibility for the crisis in our society.

In their haste to build the shining capitalist future as quickly as possible, the ruling circles reject everything even

vaguely connected with socialism. This includes even such elementary social guarantees as the right to work, along with free education and health care. Social tensions are exacerbated by the threat of widespread bankruptcies and mass unemployment, by galloping inflation, by the collapse of living standards, and by the quashing of the first signs of workplace democracy that were permitted under earlier legislation.

The destruction of the system of social guarantees is leading to a new growth of discontent and to a political instability that is pregnant with dictatorship. Civil rights are being restricted; elected organs of power are being disbanded; opposition publishing houses are being shut down, and the powers of representative bodies are being curtailed in favour of a concentration of authority in the executive branch.

Those who suffer as a result of these policies are not only the workers. They also include the independent entrepreneurs, who cannot compete freely with the monopolistic organizations of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, the new social layer which has emerged as a result of the privatization of state property, and which controls the structures of power. Instead of the ideologically neutral state which was promised, a new system of power has arisen.

It has replaced communist slogans with anti-communist ones, but it has preserved its bureaucratic basis. The promised triumph of law over arbitrary exercise of power has not occurred either. The country risks repeating the darkest pages of its history.

Unanimity of the victors

The unanimity of the victors is especially dangerous, since without opposition, without the representation of dissident views in the organs of power, democracy ceases to be democracy.

Decades of totalitarian rule by the Communist Party have discredited socialist values and the very concept of the libera-

tion of labour. But these values and ideas did not arise out of drawing-room discussions; they represent real necessities of the defense of workers' interests. The collapse of the Communist Party has finally made it possible to create a genuine democratic left movement that expresses these needs. This is why we now view it as essential to form a broad Party of Labour, a party-movement constructed on the basis of initiatives from below.

We reject the idea of a vanguard party. The Party of Labour must become a party of political support to the trade unions and the workers' movement. Without trying to bind the mass workers' organizations to its leading role, the party must help them to acquire their own voice in the organs of power, and to become the decisive force in our social development. Only a party of this type can meet the real needs of working people in our country and become an organic part of the international left movement.

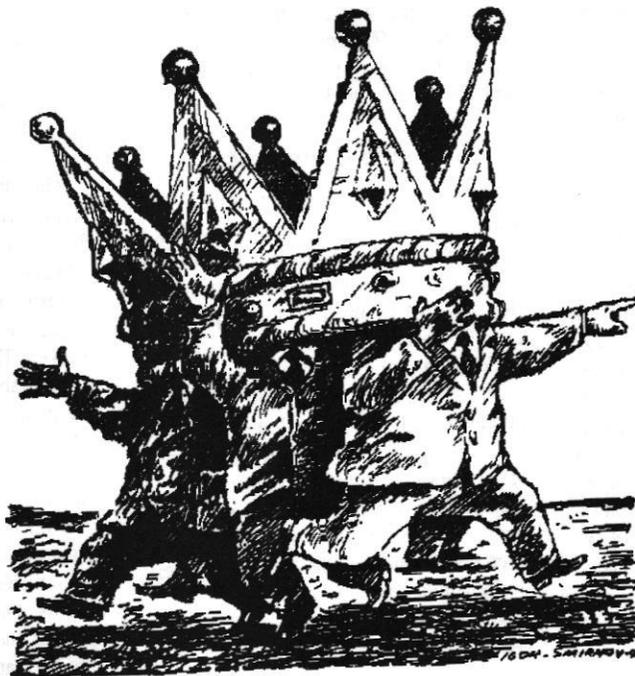
If the parties of today's ruling layers see their aim as defending the interests of the entrepreneurs, we declare our intention of defending the interests of hired workers above all.

Our society needs a party that campaigns:

- For the right of all workers to a job;
- For reform of the system of social guarantees;
- For economic democracy, for the participation of workers in making economic decisions that affect their material position and conditions of work;
- For the independence of the trade union movement; for the guaranteed right of trade unions to exist and operate freely in all enterprises no matter what the form of property; for the ratification by our country of the Convention of the International Labour Organization;
- For the development of collective and municipal forms of property; for the transformation of the state sector of our economy into a modern, efficient, decentralized social sector capable of leading our country out of economic crisis;
- For an end to the uncontrolled bureaucratic privatization of the former "property of all the people"; against the conversion of state monopolies into private ones;
- For the rights of consumers and of independent national entrepreneurs;
- For the democratic regulation of the economy as an indispensable condition for establishing civilized forms of the

market;

- For integration into the world economy on a basis that ensures the development of national production and exchange, instead of serving the interests of transnational corporations;
- For self-management and a strong representative power as counterweights to the centralization of executive authority;
- For honest government, guaranteed by a strict demarcation of state from commercial activity and by a clear division between the social and private sectors within the framework of the mixed economy;
- For genuine equality of women; for the effective right of women to participate



fully in the life of society, without being forced to renounce family responsibilities;

- For the rights of national, cultural, and religious minorities.

Impasses and Alternatives

The crisis which afflicts our country is not only the result of the collapse of the old system of rule. Our productive technology has become obsolete, as has the whole structure of our economy. Our country, which not long ago was among the world leaders, is increasingly being transformed into an outdated and dependent periphery of world capitalism.

Our economy must now be rescued from chaos. Normal economic ties must be re-established between the various regions and enterprises. The consumer market must be saturated with goods. The people must complete the work, left unfinished by the totalitarian regime, of creating the conditions for a modern industrial society, establishing an infrastructure,

creating modern means of communication, and so forth. At the same time, our society must begin the transition from the old basis of industrial production to new, post-industrial structures.

The experience of Eastern Europe and of our own country during the 1980s provides convincing proof not only of the bankruptcy of the old administrative methods of rule, but also of the futility of seeking "pure" market solutions and of mechanically combining elements of bureaucratic-administrative planning with the free market.

In Western countries, developed market forms took several centuries to evolve, and after this a whole arsenal of regulatory mechanisms arose in a natural historical fashion. A mechanical transferring of these methods onto our soil is impossible, since our problems are qualitatively different from those which the Western economies have traditionally confronted.

Under conditions of an extreme deficit of goods and services, and of economic disorganization, attempts to unleash elemental economic processes will only intensify the crisis.

The impossibility of free competition is bound up with a historically determined structure of production in which practically all branches are dominated by one or a handful of huge monopolistic enterprises. In principle, anti-monopoly legislation can yield nothing in such condi-

tions. In order to subject enterprises to genuine competition, a complex programme of economic restructuring must be implemented. This needs to include long-term investment programmes, involving the creation of new enterprises and the reorganization of existing ones. Imports must be controlled, and certain controls must also be exercised over exports. All this in turn is impossible without strong and effective planning of economic processes.

This planning must ensure that the basic needs of the population are supplied, while not limiting the initiative of enterprises and not undermining the stimuli for their development. During the period when the crisis is being overcome, these ends may be achieved by using directive methods to set the minimum basic levels of output, and by setting favorable tax levels for production over and above state orders. Simultaneously, heavy fines must be imposed in cases where enterprises which have failed to fulfill state orders

sell their produce through channels and at prices which are not foreseen in the state orders.

The development of a commodity market is an indispensable condition for the formation of an efficient economy. The official propaganda implicitly suggests that the market and private property are identical. We are convinced, however, that the universal introduction of private property can no more guarantee economic efficiency than total nationalization can guarantee social justice.

In a country where Western traditions are absent and where there is no such thing as a civilized modern bourgeoisie, whose formation in Europe and America required centuries, a spontaneously arising market can take on only the most primitive and barbaric forms.

Without the conscious transformation of the existing structure of the economy any large-scale privatization leads automatically to replacing state monopoly with private, with the additional problem that private monopolies are even more difficult to control.

The development of entrepreneurship "from below", the establishment of new firms, and the creation of new jobs and products must be encouraged in every way possible. Cooperatives and small private businesses must be given access to cheap credits, to premises, and to raw materials. The creation of private super-monopolies on the basis of the old centralized state property constitutes one of the most serious obstacles to achieving this.

Soviet property

The only force which can serve as a locomotive capable of dragging the country out of its crisis is a transformed and democratized social sector of the economy. The state enterprises which carry out economic tasks on various levels must be the property of the respective soviets. Democratic organs of power must be given control of their own investment funds, so that they can use these accumulated assets to create jobs, to modernize production and make it environmentally safe, and to retrain workers.

The representative organs of power cannot and should not be involved in direct economic management and must not be forced to rely on profits from economic activity. The only appropriate source of income for popular power bodies is officially imposed taxes. The tasks of the democratic soviets, in our opinion, must include defining the priorities of development and the basic directions in which the use of social funds should proceed.

We consider that the direct management of each enterprise

should be carried out both by its work collective, which should elect or hire the managers, and by the enterprise administration, which should be independent in its actions while remaining responsible to the soviet for the use of the social funds invested in the enterprise. The workers should also be guaranteed the opportunity to participate in controlling production.

The plurality of forms of property and administration within the social sector (including property ownership by work collectives) makes it possible to create a flexible decentralized economic mechanism that combines democracy in production with democracy in civil life. This will ensure that the rights of workers are respected and that social guarantees are provided "on the spot", without the cumbersome and inefficient centralized bureaucracy which has proven disastrous under both Communist and capitalist regimes.

Viable Democracy

We are firmly convinced that the soviets which now exist in our country, irrespective of who constitutes the majority in them, are incapable either of carrying out the tasks of economic development or even of ensuring that the normal process of decision-making goes ahead.

The collapse of the single monolithic bureaucratic pyramid has led to the rise of a multitude of local bureaucracies on all levels. These local bureaucracies are conducting a confused struggle among themselves for power and privilege, and over the division of the former "property of the whole people".

Despite the formal proclamation of democratic freedoms, of multi-party pluralism, freedom of the press, and so forth, the country lacks the elementary conditions for the formation and development of civil society. The social groups which have arisen

(with the exception of the bureaucracy) are still not fully conscious of their interests, and have not acquired the habits of self-organization. In essence, what is taking shape at the moment is not a democratic state but something closer to feudalism.

In such circumstances it is entirely natural that many "liberal" politicians both in the centre and in the various regions should try to put an end to the anarchy in the country by installing an authoritarian regime, overturning the few democratic freedoms we possess, dissolving the political parties and soviets, and setting in place a system of personal power.

These policies are presenting an acute threat to the future of our country and of its peoples. The suppression of initiative from below and the repression which would inevitably follow the installation of a group or individual dictatorship threaten to undermine the possibility of any renewal of society.

The alternative to "liberal" authoritarianism, which is thrusting us back toward barbarism under the cover of beautiful phrases about "the free market" and "the return to civilization," can only be the struggle for the democratic reform of power. This must include the creation of new, viable soviets and of a new democratic majority within them, the development of culture, and improving workers' qualifications and raising the quality of their labour.

Both in the state and in the productive sphere, only a functioning and not merely declarative democracy can solve our problems. Only the creation of new, viable organs and structures at all levels can aid the formation in our country of a system of power which is responsible before society and before the law. Without the effective, democratic reform of power at the local level there can be no resolution of the national question; Russia cannot be reconstructed, and there can be no reliable guarantees of independence for the peoples who are striving to create their own national states.

We are convinced that the only way such a power can be created in our country is through the rise of the labour movement, through the acquisition by the mass of working people of an understanding of their interests, and through struggles by workers to defend their rights.

Only the solidarity of working people can provide an alternative to divisions between nationalities. Only forces which are not tied to the interests of bureaucratic oligarchies, which are not participants in the quarrels between regions and republics, can alter the course of events. Such forces, in our view, must place at the center of their activity the interests and





A Russian privatization coupon

demands of the people, their welfare and dignity.

Our Values

To make human beings the masters of their fates, independent in the highest degree of external forces not under their control, whether these are the power of the state or the power of capital; to overcome the alienation of the worker from the means of production and of the citizen from the taking of social or governmental decisions; to transform a society of hired workers and state subjects into a society of citizens with equal rights, who freely choose their destinies — these are the traditional aims of the socialist movement to which we strive to remain loyal.

Freedom is impossible unless there is civic accountability and unless people have equal rights. Modern civilized society features a juridical equality, in formal terms the law is the same for everyone, and the government proclaims that citizens have equal political rights. But full equality of political rights is unattainable under an economic system which divides people into owners of property on the one hand, and on the other, hired workers who are forced to sell their labour power. The road to human freedom lies through overcoming economic and social alienation, and through the liberation of labour.

It is impossible to overcome alienation either in society where state-bureaucratic forms of property predominate, or in one where market relations provide the setting for rule by big capital. Modern Western capitalism has achieved a very advanced form of development, and has shown clearly what is and what is not possible on this basis.

But although capitalist society has brought about a very high level of prosperity in a few Western countries, it has proven incapable of fully solving the problems of poverty and alienation and has also given rise to new contradictions, the global environmental crisis and the division of the world into a dependent, ever more backward "periphery" and a highly

developed industrial "centre," whose prosperity is linked to an ever greater degree with maintaining the backwardness of the rest of the world. Thanks to the liberal reforms, Russia is more and more becoming a part of the dependent periphery. Along with the other republics of the former Soviet Union, our country is about to experience the injustice of this system in full measure.

The world is becoming more and more crowded; it is too small for us to allow these problems to remain unsolved. Humanity will move forward, and the current state of the world will not remain unchanged. Before us is the beginning of humanity's transition to a qualitatively new stage of its development; our country must take part in this transition together with all the other peoples, and not transform itself into a brake on history.

Socialism as we understand it is a society of economic democracy, a society which guarantees people and national groupings the maximum degree of freedom on the basis of equal rights. These include the right to take part on an equal basis in economic decision-making, and the right to participate equally in the administration of public property. This does not involve an attempt to make everyone identical, to force everyone into the same mold. On the contrary, socialism creates the possibility for everyone of showing their individual face, and of realizing their potential to the maximum degree.

Socialism for us is not some finished ideal, which must be realized once and for all, but a prolonged historical process involving the evolution of old social forms and the rise and development of new ones, based on the combining of economic and political democracy.

In different countries the socialist perspective may take on quite distinct forms, depending on the concrete economic, political, and cultural conditions and the general level of development. The highly developed countries of the West stand on the threshold of the post-industrial era and are trying to overcome the environmental crisis and to find worthwhile uses for their

huge technological potential.

It is clear that the socialist perspective in these countries will assume very different forms from those it will take on in Eastern Europe, beset by crises on all sides and trying at any price to overcome its growing technological lag behind the West, or in the countries of the Third World, which suffer both from the most barbaric forms of traditional capitalist exploitation and from bureaucratic totalitarian dictatorships.

We reject utopias, but hold strongly to the values and ideals which we have embraced. Attempts at realizing the consumer utopia of the "perfect society," based on equal distribution of goods, lead in practice to the complete opposite of what was originally promised. Instead of a society without shortages or problems, there emerges a system which exacerbates to an extreme degree all the problems which need to be overcome. The totalitarian utopia not only reproduces the worst features of early capitalism, the lack of rights for working people, the alienation of the individual, social inequality, but also undermines people's faith in the possibility of full liberation, and discredits the very idea of the new society. However, an unprincipled political approach oriented solely toward the needs of the present day would be just as devoid of prospects.

In the final instance the crisis of utopian consciousness gives rise to just such a political position, of defending the power of rulers who no longer believe in their own utopia, who laugh at their promises and who pride themselves on their cynicism. This political consciousness, which prevailed in our society until recent times, has nothing in common with genuine political realism. It, too, is based on illusions and can have results that are totally unexpected.

Against political cynicism

Political cynicism and the lack of principles are the reverse side of the totalitarian utopia and bear witness to its crisis. Such attitudes cannot form the basis for genuine renewal. This is why we reject cynicism: so that our society can reestablish its values. It is essential for our society to regain a belief in itself, for people to have the opportunity to rely on their own strengths, to maintain a genuine cultural succession that includes a continuity with the revolutionary traditions of the past. People must have the opportunity finally to reject the totalitarian utopia.

The essence of socialism lies in the movement of society toward more democratic forms of self-organization. This must be brought to fruition by society itself in the process of long and difficult labour. ★

IV goes monthly

THIS issue of *International Viewpoint* is the last before our winter break. It is also the last of the current fortnightly series. Your next issue will arrive at the start of February 1993 and will be the first of the new monthly series of *IV*.

THE EDITORS

AS we warned last July, despite the fact that sales and subscriptions have remained steady, rising costs and a mounting deficit are threatening the future of *International Viewpoint* and its sister publications.

Despite an encouraging response from our readers to our appeal for funds and a good take up of the three-month special offer, the deficit has continued to mount. In these circumstances it seemed wiser to act decisively to stem the losses and retreat to a more sustainable budget than to risk the need for even more drastic remedies in the future. Instead of a schedule of 22 numbers of a 28-page journal a year, we will be moving to a schedule of 11 numbers of a 36-page journal.

The validity of current subscriptions will be calculated on a basis of one new issue to one and a half old ones — thus effectively turning a one year subscription into a subscription valid for eighteen months.

Annual rates for new subscriptions will remain the same for the new series as for the old — obviously representing a cut in the number of pages received for each subscription. Cover prices will be raised.

Every cloud...

However, all is not doom and gloom. The announcement of our problems six months ago brought forth many expressions of dismay and offers of concrete help with production and distribution — proving that our readers find *IV* useful and sometimes even indispensable. This vote of confidence has given a big boost to morale here! We will be taking advantage of all the offers of concrete help.

Furthermore, fortnightly or monthly, the time had come for a new start for *International Viewpoint*. In recent years, the

international political map has been completely redrawn. Some old landmarks have been swept away altogether and others are tottering. The collapse of the Soviet bloc in late 1989 has been followed by (among other things) the Gulf War and the outbreak in the former Yugoslavia of the first full-scale war in Europe since 1945. And this is only the beginning.

The combination of the crisis of capitalism and the collapse of the dominant ideologies in the workers' movement leads to a situation where fundamental ideas need to be restated and applied to the new reality. *International Viewpoint* intends to strive to assume its responsibilities in this respect. It aims to assist in the birth of a new labour movement adequate to the demands of the new times.

...But fund drive continues

OUR favourite example of the kind of financial problem we face has been the rise in postal costs, which have risen by 150% in the past ten years while the price of *IV* has risen by 70%. Postal costs are a major item for a magazine mainly sold outside its country of production. About a third of each mailing, for example, goes to North America — a continent away!

Furthermore, there has been a long-term decline in the value of the American dollar and British pound — the currencies of English speaking countries where we sell — compared to the French franc — the currency of the country where we produce.

Thus our income from every issue of *IV* sold in Britain and North America has been squeezed. In effect, while it may not seem like this to our readers, we have been subsidizing ever more heavily to cover the unfavourable development of exchange rates.

These problems will not disappear when we go monthly; we are therefore continuing our appeal for funds to assure the long-term future of our press. ★

The new monthly formula will have a new look, with a new front cover and layout. It will include regular, well-prepared, dossiers on key problems of international politics and regions of the world. Cumulatively, we hope that these will become a source of reference for our readers.

We will have a documents' section providing information on key developments on the left and revolutionary movements. A number of other rubrics are under discussion that will make the magazine more useful and interesting.

Changes in editorial structure will ensure that *IV* provides sharper, thoroughly discussed views on the big questions our readers are asking.

We aim to produce a magazine written in a manner accessible to the widening circles of people who feel the urgent need for a new perspective solidly founded in a grasp of the fundamental forces at work beneath the mounting chaos, but who are not acquainted with, or impressed by, jargon and rhetoric.

Finally, we give our heartfelt thanks to all those who have sent in money, and offered help and encouragement. Going monthly is a step back, but with your help and support it will be a step back to a well-fortified position that will be a tower of strength in the tremendous turmoil that faces our world in the years to come. ★

INTERNATIONAL MARXIST REVIEW



THE WINTER 1992 issue of *International Marxist Review* focuses on combatting current attacks on Marxism:

- The pro-capitalist ideological offensive and its limits
- Can there be socialism in "complex societies"?
- Postmodernism, difference theory and feminism
- Crisis of French Marxism
- Legacy and prospects for the U.S. left
- Women, political parties and positive action: Fourth International World Congress resolution

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