

International VIEWPOINT

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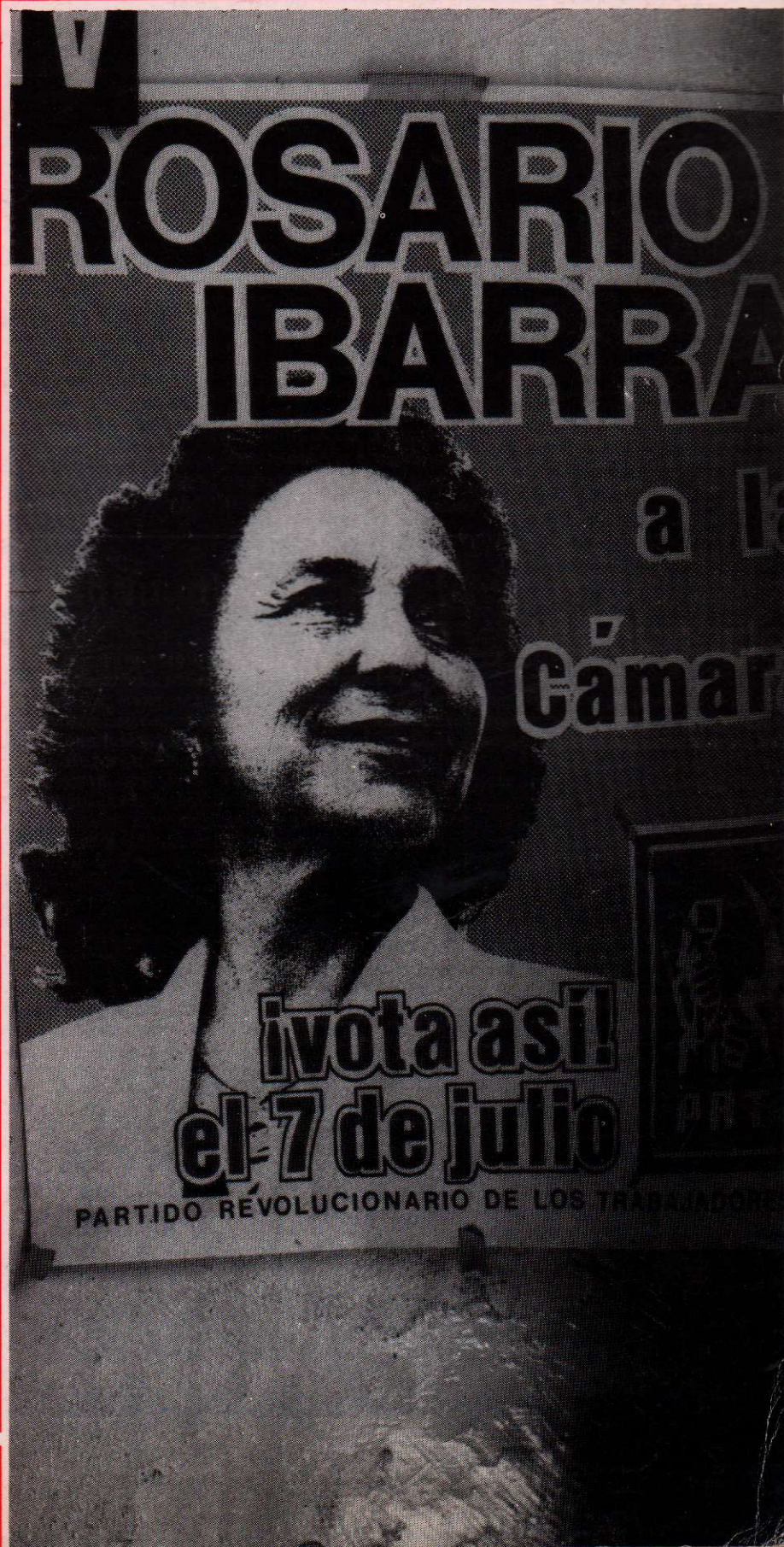
16 September 1985

**Socialist
campaigns from
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Women in Nairobi

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International Viewpoint

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The implications of French sanctions

SINCE JULY 21, 36 of South Africa's 300 districts have been under a state of emergency. The decree by the country's premier, Pieter Botha, affects the Black residential areas around Johannesburg in the province of Transvaal and around Port Elizabeth in the eastern Cape. In taking this step, the South African premier followed the direction indicated by his minister of police, General Johann Coetzee, who said that he was anxious to "quiet down the situation as soon as possible."* In fact, the two areas affected have experienced a chain of ghetto rebellions over the past eleven months, broken only by brief intervals of calm.

Under the state of emergency, the police can search, seize, and arrest without warrant. They can relocate people around at will. The rights of prisoners are further reduced, and the press is put under surveillance. (1) The state of emergency declaration gave the French government the occasion for instituting sanctions that it had previously refused to take. France is Pretoria's fifth most important trading partner, coming after West Germany, the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

NATHAN PALMER

The decision on sanctions by French premier Laurent Fabius has given a new impetus to debate over disinvestment in the countries most implicated in collaboration with apartheid, in particular in the United States, where the campaign for disinvestment and challenging of Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement" are on the rise. (2)

West Germany, Great Britain, and the United States have all declared opposition to a policy of sanctions. The fact is that they have more than a little at stake in South Africa.

Britain, the USA, West Germany, France, and Switzerland account for more than 90% of foreign investment in South Africa, that is, more than 15 billion dollars. Of the 1,068 transnational companies operating in South Africa, a third are based in the United Kingdom. One quarter are based in the United States, and another quarter in West Germany.

The links between London and Pretoria are long standing. Half of direct foreign investment is British. Direct and indirect British investments combined amount to 14 billion dollars, or 10% of total British in-

vestments abroad. (3)

The US accounts for the next biggest share of direct foreign investment, about 20% of the total. Between 1966 and 1982, US investments rose from 490 million dollars to 2.3 billion dollars. According to a US publication, American investment totals 13.78 billion dollars. (4)

West Germany accounts for 10% of foreign investment, or 1.4 billion dollars. The Federal Republic has a large surplus in its balance of trade with Pretoria, exporting 2.3 billion dollars worth of goods and importing only 676 million dollars worth from South Africa.

France is close behind West Germany in investment, having led the Federal Republic in this field up until 1983. In 1984, France imported 5.9 billion Francs worth of goods to South Africa and imported 4.3 billion francs worth.

Japan has a more even balance of trade, having exported 1.9 billion dollars worth of goods to South Africa and imported 1.3 billion dollars worth.

This touching family portrait would be incomplete without including the

decisive contribution of Western bank loans to maintaining and developing the apartheid system. The World Council of Churches released in April 1985 a report on such loans for the period from mid-1982 to the end of 1984. Some 98 new loans were granted by 202 banks of 18 different nationalities for a total of 4,244,100 billion dollars.

The loans went both to public and private enterprises in South Africa. The twenty biggest lenders were all European banks, with the bulk of the credits coming from the United Kingdom, Switzerland, West Germany, and France, in that order.

Thus, the French decision could have reverberations. But it is important to realize above all that it is not sufficient to talk about sanctions. The portent of the French decisions has to be assessed on the basis of their real effects. While on the diplomatic level, they represent a stiffening, it has to be recognized that they in no way threaten the economic relations between the two countries.

Suspending new investment does not put in question the French presence in the country nor the existing contracts, including the one under which Air Liquide is going to build the world's largest oxygen producing facility for Sasol. Thanks to Western involvement, Sasol has developed a chemical complex for the gasification of coal in order to meet the energy needs of a militarized economy.

Francois Mitterrand has already shown during his presidency that under his leadership France will continue to fulfill scrupulously the terms of commercial agreements signed under his predecessor.

UN votes for voluntary sanctions

Moreover, domestic political considerations entered into the position taken by France. It is no coincidence that the French premier talked about sanctions against Pretoria for the first time at a big human rights affair in Paris this past June in the presence of the Nobel-Prize-winning South African bishop Desmond Tutu. All of this goes to build up the image of the French Socialist Party as a champion of human rights.

* All quotations originally in English have been retranslated from French.

1. The 'Rand Daily Mail', the main opposition daily, had to shut down at the end of April. It has been replaced by a financial daily, 'Business Day'.

2. See 'International Viewpoint', July 15, 1985, "Rising struggle against apartheid spurs debates and maneuvers," by Peter Blumer.

3. 'Financial Mail', November 1984.

4. 'Christian Science Monitor,' July 5, 1985.

Nevertheless, one of the effects of the French sanctions has been to tip the balance a bit in favor of putting real pressure on Pretoria. Of course, any such pressures will never go beyond the limits of the common interests of the South African and European leaders in defending capitalism against the threat of a revolution in South Africa.

However, sanctions oblige the apartheid regime to try to justify its actions against the Black people of South Africa. The ongoing debate on sanctions in the Western countries is the result of the pressures brought to bear in these countries, but also of the growing concern in the main capitalist countries about the threat of explosions in a country that they regard as strategic.

Despite all these factors, both the United States and the United Kingdom still refused to vote for sanctions the last time the issue was debated in the United Nations. Given the Western pressures for change in the Republic of South Africa, whether in the form of sanctions or "constructive engagement," some response was expected from PW Botha's government in Pretoria. Speculation was rife, and some of the press that was well-disposed to South Africa even thought that they had grounds for predicting substantial reforms. That was a bad mis-estimation of the white ruling class and its internal differences.

Botha can afford to intimate that he wants to make reforms, but he has to take account of the regime's social base and cover himself against the rabble rousing of the extreme right, which is ready to raise a hue and cry over the slightest chink in apartheid.

Already on June 19 at the final session of parliament, PW Botha rejected any US interference in South African affairs. This speech came after the South African raid against the African National Congress (ANC) offices and leaders in Botswana. He even had the effrontery to say, "It is because we are succeeding at reform and because a stable South Africa is in sight that the forces hostile to such an evolution have determined to destroy the progress that has been made."

After the UN Security Council voted — with the UK and the US abstaining — for voluntary, non-obligatory, sanctions against Pretoria, Botha decided to take a sharper tone, defying this resolution: "I have ordered the South African authorities to establish rapidly the number of foreign workers in the country and where they are so that the government can consider measures for repatriating them."



Nelson Mandela (DR)

What Botha was threatening to do was to make hostages out of the 1.5 million workers who do not have South African citizenship. Among these, there are at least a million South African Blacks who have been dispossessed of their citizenship because they have been assigned to one of the four main so-called *independent* Bantustans (Transkei, Ciskei, Bophutatswana, and Venda).

In particular, the South African authorities' response to the demand for change is reflected by the continuation of police operations in the Black townships. On August 20 a house-to-house search was carried out in Soweto. Since the beginning of the rebellions a year ago, this was the first time that this township, the biggest in the country with around 2 million inhabitants, had been subjected to a police incursion of this sort.

A bit more than a year ago, the first rebellions were touched off by an increase in the rents of state-owned housing in the Black ghettos. These spontaneous explosions came into resonance with the massive boycott of classes by Black school students and with the continued advance of action by the independent unions. One of the high points of this convergence was the general strike in the province of Transvaal last November 5-6. (5)

One of the characteristics of the situation in the townships, therefore, is a combination of organized forms of actions, such as the boycott of white stores, and uncontrolled actions by crowds. The funerals of police victims have brought together community and trade-union organizations and a population simply fed up with apartheid. Collaborators with the regime, municipal councillors or Black police, have become the target of outbursts, and the violence against them reflects both the bruta-

lity of the system and the difficulty of finding a strategic way forward.

Following the news from South Africa from week to week, you get the impression of an unending tragic repetition of funerals of new victims of apartheid and of outbursts of anger by the Black masses who attack the auxiliaries of the apartheid system. This indicates one of the limits of these rebellions. They have remained confined to the Black areas and have been able to strike at only marginal targets, not at the heart of apartheid.

The recent events in Durban on August 7 and 8 also illustrate the limitations of the present upsurge. These rebellions turned against the Indian shopkeepers, who are numerous in this region. The apartheid divisions have given the community classified as "Asians" a relatively less unfavorable status both in the economic sphere and in the area of civil rights. For example, Indians are not obliged to carry passes.

Moreover, no conscious leadership exists capable of building unity of the Black masses, whether they be "Asiatics," "Coloureds," or "Africans," as has been done in the nonracial union movement. There is clear potential for such unity, since the "Indians" and "Coloureds" boycotted the constitutional reforms en masse, along with the Africans.

What is more, there are reports of attacks against political activists of Azapo, an organization coming out of the Black Consciousness current, and against union activists belonging to FOSATU — one of the two major nonracial federations, perpetrated by persons claiming to be representatives of the United Democratic Front (UDF).

The national leadership of the UDF has denied that these actions were carried out in its behalf. The Durban riots, in which thugs belonging to the tribal organization Inkatha played a clear role, suggest that divisions within the mass movement are being aggravated by provocations by the regime.

Inkatha is the organization led by Gatsha Buthelezi, chief of KwaZulu, which is the largest of the ten Bantustans created by South Africa as places to dump its Black citizens. But unlike the other Bantustan chiefs, Buthelezi has built up a profile as a moderate opponent of apartheid, rejecting the phoney independence offered by Pretoria to seek support in both South African and American business circles. He has just visited Israel in order to reinforce his international image.

Buthelezi's calculation is clear. He

5. "Rising struggle against apartheid," 'IV', July 15, 1985.

wants to get himself in position to offer an alternative to the ANC for the post-apartheid situation, as well as for the mass movement as a whole. When you remember that the Zulus represent 6 million people in South Africa, you can see what is at stake in the leadership of this community.

The Inkatha have patrolled the townships in Natal province armed with clubs and spears and did not hesitate to attack the funeral of Victoria Mxengue, the murdered lawyer of the UDF leaders.

The agitation in the townships seems as if it could go on indefinitely. Its impact is beginning to be felt even in foreign business circles, which are worried by the obstinacy of the racist regime.

The South African currency, the Rand, has depreciated sharply against the dollar. It is now being traded at 1 R for 45 US cents, after having been at parity with the dollar in previous years. South African stocks, especially gold-mine stocks, are dropping on the exchanges. If you remember that the economy had already been hit by the recession, you can imagine the sort of appeals for negotiation that are being directed at Botha.

Some elements are demanding that he make the necessary adjustments to deal in particular with the unrelenting determination of the independent union movement.

The strikes organized by the more militant sectors against layoffs, for higher wages, and for trade-union recognition have not stopped. The movement has been given momentum by important gains that have been won both in the private sector and from some state companies, such as Sasol.

At its special congress, which was attended by 12,000 activists and 450 delegates, the very dynamic miners union, the NUM, made three important decisions. First, it delivered an ultimatum to Botha that unless he lifted the state of emergency within 72 hours, "all White-owned businesses near the mining towns will be boycotted."

The second decision was to take a stand in principle for an immediate indeterminate general strike if the premier of the South African Republic carried out his threat to expel the "foreign workers."

The decision that made the biggest impact, however, was the one to call for a general strike in the mines starting August 25 to back up the demand for a 22% raise, when the Chamber of Mines has refused to go beyond 19%. The strike has now been postponed to September. But these three decisions taken together combine economic and political

demands on the government. It should be noted that the mining areas are not located in the regions under the state of emergency.

The NUM has sought to keep a margin for maneuver in its confrontation with the Chamber of Mines. It knows the harm that a major defeat could do it now, when over the past five years it has been one of the fastest growing of the independent unions. The advance of the NUM is in fact illustrative of the rise of the independent unions. The funeral of a leader of the FOSATU, Andries Raditsela, who died just after his release from police custody, was the occasion for an imposing demonstration.

In the demonstrations accompanying the funerals of victims of the repression, you often see union banners and T-shirts alongside those of the political and community organizations. This has more than a symbolic value. It reflects the deep roots that the union movement has put down patiently rebuilding the links and structures that were destroyed by the overt repression in the 1960s.

The growth of the unions explains the thinking going on throughout the movement about building a working-class leadership and about the experience of the working class in other countries.

Such thinking is all the more important now that the independent unions are involved in preparing to set up a broad united confederation of unions, which may be launched at the end of this year.

The search for a strategic orientation, for a leadership for the struggle, and for a policy of alliances are problems that arise in any situation in which the class contradictions sharpen. South Africa is no exception to this rule, despite the special difficulties posed by the national question.

The Black working class and its organizations have the potential for more than worrying the regime. The Black workers of South Africa alone, because of the place they hold in the society, can organize the struggle to overthrow apartheid completely, going all the way to its capitalist roots. This is understood both by sections of the white bourgeoisie and church circles.

This understanding explains the pushing to the forefront of figures such as the Nobel Prize-winning Anglican bishop Desmond Tutu or the Reverend Allan Boesak, president of the World Council of Reformed Churches. The Western powers are making them their special interlocutors because they are the only personalities who appear to be opposed to collaboration with the apartheid system and at

POSITIONS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

A limited number of copies of *International Viewpoint* No 25, March 7, 1983, containing the positions of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on the struggle in South Africa, are still available.

the same time are fierce opponents of Marxist ideas and have a mass audience.

The leading role played by the churches, allied with the Chartist current (6) in the framework of the United Democratic Front shows that they have understood that a race is now underway for influence over the Black masses and that it is not a good idea to linger at the starting gate.

Other Western sectors are pressing for realism, going so far as to demand the release of Nelson Mandela, the ANC leader jailed for life in 1963. That indicates how convinced they are that negotiations with the ANC are inevitable sooner or later. Even the government of Margaret Thatcher has come out for his immediate release. Mandela himself has rejected any negotiations with the regime until it clearly drops its commitment to apartheid.

It has to be noted that the South African Communist Party is beginning to try to make a reappearance, as attested by the presence of a CP banner at the Cradock funeral on July 20.

The ANC has built up its influence in the townships and at its second conference since it was banned in 1960 (held over the late spring and early summer this year) it decided to step up its struggle, including hitting civilian targets. Umkhonto we Sizwe (the Spear of the Nation), the military wing of the ANC, has carried out actions that have increased its prestige but for the moment have not demonstrated its usefulness in the townships against the forces of the regime.

Today the entire world knows that even if it is not on the brink of revolution, South Africa is going through a critical time in which the stakes will increase as the test of strength intensifies. The political and organizational gains made now will weigh heavily in the balance for the movement of the South African Black masses.

6. The current that identifies with the Freedom Charter adopted in 1955 on the initiative of the ANC.

Stepped-up campaign against apartheid

AS THE STRUGGLE against apartheid and racist repression in South Africa intensifies, solidarity activity in different countries around the world is being stepped up.

Sections of the Fourth International in all the major developed countries are currently preparing their activity for the autumn.

GERRY FOLEY

The Militant, the newspaper that reflects the views of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), a group in solidarity with the Fourth International, published a special issue on the anti-apartheid struggle at the end of August. It reported: "Actions across country demand: 'Free South Africa.'"

The most important action was the August 12 demonstration of thousands of people in Washington, DC, to protest the imposition of the State of Emergency. The organizations represented by banners including "churches, religious-oriented groups, Central American solidarity organizations, and several trade unions ... the American Federation of Government Employees, the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees, United Food and Commercial Workers, Service Employees International Union, International Association of Machinists and International Union of Electronic Workers."

The California National Organization for Women (NOW) conference held August 16-18 approved a resolution condemning apartheid and calling for support for the protest actions planned against it.

The youth group affiliated with the SWP, the Young Socialist Alliance, decided on August 16 to give top priority to building the national day of protest against apartheid planned for October 11. To this end, the YSA National Committee voted to give full support to the tours of South African and Nicaraguan students by student organizations committed to solidarity with the Black people of South Africa.

In its August issue, *Socialist Action*, a Fourth Internationalist paper published in San Francisco, pointed to the importance of the example of the mass struggle in South Africa for the US labor movement:

"The revolutionary proletarian methods of the struggle mounted by the South African masses differ profoundly from the 'unfair lists' published by US unions. Such boycotts and strikes — carried out

without organized, prepared, mass participation of the union ranks — remain ineffective."

Socialist Action also called for "making every effort toward organizing large protest actions this fall."

The paper of the German section of the Fourth International, *Was Tun*, published a special on South Africa in its August 15 issue. As an example of the sort of solidarity needed, it pointed to a resolution by 23 shop stewards and Factory Council members at the Daimler-Benz auto factory in Mannheim.

The resolution called for the following actions:

1. "Making contacts directly and quickly with South African brother

and sister trade-unionists working at the East London [South Africa] factory [of Daimler-Benz] in order to enable us to react immediately to firings and jailings."

2. "To inform ourselves thoroughly about the oppression of Blacks but also about Daimler-Benz's activities in South Africa."

3. To call on workers representatives in the Supervision Council [*Aufsichtsrat*, a comanagement body] to demand an investment boycott."

4. To better inform the workforce through an assembly of the shop stewards, an exhibition in the local union offices, and perhaps a South Africa week in the plant.

5. To organize "regular trips by workers from Mannheim to South Africa and to invite colleagues from East London to Mannheim." Representatives of the East London plant are to be invited to an assembly in the Mannheim plant.

Klassenstrijd, the paper of the Dutch section of the Fourth International, called for a boycott of South Africa on the front page of its August 21 issue and in the editorial, which said:

"We cannot predict how the bitter and bloody confrontation between the apartheid regime and

Free Nelson Mandela!

Nowadays repression in South Africa is becoming less and less selective and all sections of the opposition to apartheid are constantly threatened with arrest, death and kidnappings. But the regime still considers that its primary target has to be those currents who are tied in one way or another to the ANC. This explains why the UDF, which is partially under the influence of the ANC along with that of the churches, is facing the most violent attacks today. The Reverend Allan Boesak, president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and a founding member of the UDF, was arrested on August 27 when he was supposed to lead the demonstration for the freeing of Nelson Mandela the following day. Father Boesak was detained under the internal security laws, which allow the authorities to hold suspects indefinitely without preferring any charges.

But other organisations have also been hit by the repression. This was the case for example in the Chemical Workers Industrial Union where Andries Raditsela died in May this year following brutal treatment by local police during detention. No one is safe at the moment. ANC members and sympathisers are most often held under the pretext of the anti-communism laws. Assumed or proven membership of this organisation places the person concerned under threat of immediate death. A significant number have already died in detention. But recently commando squads, similar to those used by repressive regimes in Latin America and often composed of Blacks, have grown up, using such methods as kidnappings and assassinations. This avoids any formal need to arrest people and keep them in detention. With this system also, it will now be possible to hit out at all those who threaten the regime including moderate members of the UDF, trade unionists and members of the Black consciousness movement, whom it would be difficult to accuse of membership of the ANC.

The campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela obviously goes beyond the simple issue of democratic rights. For some, the issue of his release is a good propaganda exercise for the need to establish talks between the government and the Black movement. For the ANC it is good propaganda for their organisation. Abroad it is often used in a sectarian way, especially by the communist parties, in order to limit solidarity to the ANC alone.

Whatever the case, however, the liberation of this long-time leader of the ANC would be seen, not as simply a result of international pressure from social democracy and certain liberal sections of society but as a victory for the mass movement.

FREE NELSON MANDELA!

the Black masses will unfold. A lot will depend on the activities of the antiapartheid movements in the imperialist countries. The focus should be above all on a boycott of the apartheid regime and on giving the maximum support to all currents in the Black resistance. Our trade-unionists must build strong ties with the independent Black unions and extend support to their actions."

This issue highlighted a pamphlet on South Africa published by one of the main Dutch labor confederations, the FNV. It also carried a major article on the activities of Dutch corporations in South Africa, in particular Shell.

In its editorial, the August 22 issue of *Klassekampen*, the paper of the Danish section of the Fourth International, concentrated on exposing the collaboration of the rightist Schlueter government in Denmark with apartheid:

"The South African regime's repression and barbarism are so open today that the Danish government has to do something. Ministers and bourgeois politicians talk a tough line against the South African racists, they have even shut down our general consulate. Their line sounds tough, but it is really soft.

"This is the same Danish government that has opposed reducing coal imports from South Africa, has done nothing to stop AP Moeller from transporting oil to South Africa, which could even fail to vote for its own proposal for a halt to investment in South Africa because an extragovernmental majority stiffened it with amendments, which as late as the last parliamentary debate on South Africa clearly supported the Reagan administration's South Africa policy, and which has opposed the proposal to increase aid to the victims of apartheid."

In its August 22 issue, *Internation-alen*, the paper of the Socialist Party/Swedish section of the Fourth International, stressed a petition of a group of engineering workers that is to be presented to the upcoming congress of their union:

"In Sweden all important organizations are against apartheid or claim to be. But the Swedish engineering union in fact accommodates the South African regime by opposing practical economic measures. On September 12, for example, it opposed the proposal to put teeth in the so-called South African Law for stopping new investment in that country.

"So, when a group of metalworkers took the initiative a few weeks ago to launch a petition for a total boycott of the racists, it came just in time." ■

State terrorists at work

THE PUBLICATION of the Tricot Report on the involvement of the French secret services in the sinking of the Greenpeace flagship "Rainbow Warrior" in a New Zealand harbor has proved counter-productive for President Francois Mitterand.

RODRIGO O' FARRELL

Under fire from his country's press, which was beginning to say openly that French espionage agents were responsible for the attack on the environmentalist vessel, in which a crew member was killed, the Social Democratic Party president named a personality in the bourgeois opposition, an old Gaullist, to carry out an investigation. The objective was obviously to stop speculation that the administration itself gave the green light for this terrorist operation.

However, the conclusions that Bernard Tricot drew from his supposed investigation far from calmed the waters. Instead, they reinforced the conviction among observers that the top echelons of the government must have been involved in this ruthless attack on the environmentalist activists.

In his 25-page report, Tricot not only exonerated the top levels of the government and the officials in charge of the foreign security department (DGSE) but also the DGSE operatives who were caught at the scene of the crime by the New Zealand police.

To the astonishment of many people Tricot gave a clean bill of health to those arrested in Auckland after the attack, Commander Alain Mafar, alias Alain Turenge, and Captain Dominique Prieur, alias Sophie, who masqueraded as his wife.

Tricot also claimed that the three French noncoms who operated on the yacht *Ouvea* also had to be considered innocent "in the present stage of the investigation." The explanation for the undercover presence of this military personnel in New Zealand, according to the veteran Gaullist white-washer, was that the DGSE had ordered all of them to spy on Greenpeace, to

"infiltrate its organization," and to "consider" means for disrupting its attempts to protest against a French nuclear test on Mururoa atoll.

Days before the report was released, the "Piscine" ("Swimming Pool"), as the general headquarters of the DGSE is called in Paris, leaked to a journalist working for the state radio the same version, that those arrested in New Zealand were officers in the French land army assigned to collecting information on Greenpeace and nothing more.

Just looking?

This story was confirmed by Bernard Tricot, who disclosed that Admiral Pierre Lacoste, chief of the DGSE, had given such orders. They supposedly did not call for any violent action against the peace activists.

"Heading off" Greenpeace's protest actions was the key word in official circles, Tricot discovered in reading an internal memorandum of the Ministry of Defense.

According to Admiral Henri Fages, commander of the French nuclear testing zone in the Pacific and the author of the memorandum in question, "heading off" did not mean sinking the *Rainbow Warrior* or anything like that. And Tricot accepted the statements of the officers involved as the revealed truth.

Consistent with this approach, Tricot was extremely careful to avoid even giving any names. About the crew of the yacht *Ouvea*, he said only that they had been in a port in the far north of New Zealand after June 22, that they had left the country hastily after the sinking of the

Rainbow Warrior and that, since their movements for several days were unknown, they could have been the perpetrators of the attack, there being "not inconsiderable reasons to suspect this."

Tricot's report went no further than simply reproducing the statements of the chiefs of the espionage services, who are precisely those most to be suspected of implication in the affair. However, the modesty of his contribution to clearing up the facts of the case did not keep Tricot from throwing out a hypothesis about who could have put the explosives in the hull of the Rainbow Warrior.

This terrorist act, the Gaullist politician proffered, could have been carried out by "isolated individuals motivated by political passions," or by "other secret services" that might have had an interest in "harming the Greenpeace movement, which is not only a problem for France, and might have wanted to harm both Greenpeace and France by throwing the blame for this action on us."

Isolated individuals? This theory did not cut much ice with those following the case, in view of the complexity of the operation aimed at Greenpeace. People have not forgotten, first of all, that the agent Mafart and Captain Prieur had genuine Swiss passports in which the pictures had been changed, a method typical of professional espionage commandos involved in high-risk operations.

Moreover, this criminal operation was an extremely expensive one (the cost was about 100,000 francs, or about 12,000 US dollars, according to Tricot's conservative estimates, 3 million francs according to others). This indicates that powerful interests were involved.

Moreover, it has been established that in May 1984, Christine Cabon (alias Frederique Bonlieu), a lieutenant in the DGSE, infiltrated Greenpeace in order to "open up the road" for her colleagues in the DGSE in New Zealand. She disappeared from the scene as soon as the press got on the trail on July 27.

To top it off, the crew of the yacht *Ouvea* — Roland Verge (alias Raymond Velche) and his cohorts Andries and Bartelo (alias Eric Audrence and Jean-Michel Berthelo) belonged to the DGSE and were trained as frogmen by the French secret services, like Mafart, and as parachutists and sabotage experts, in the case of the latter two.

Tricot's incredible hypothesis about the role of these people in the port of Auckland was sharply rejected by Alain Madelin, a Giscardian [liberal Gaullist] deputy, who said that the Tricot report "takes the French for

idiots," because "it tries to tell us that they used an underwater demolitions expert to take pictures."

Why did an agency like the DGSE, which has a long history of bloody scandals behind it, send its goons just to maintain a peaceful "surveillance" of Greenpeace's preparations in the Pacific? The history of the "Swimming Pool" is full of sinister episodes.

This agency is believed to have organized mercenary commandos in Chad and to have worked with the reactionary guerrillas in Angola. Under the Gaullist regime, this service was implicated in the assassination of North African independence fighters, in the kidnapping of Mehdi Ben Barka, and in Operation Barracuda to overthrow Bokassa, as well as the setting up of a puppet regime in Gabon and in the coup d'etat in the Camores, among other things.

It's all in the family

In other words, the DGSE is the terrorist arm of French imperialism. Why should Greenpeace not be one of its targets, if, as the Tricot report admits, this organization had become an obsession for the French army because of its denunciations of its nuclear tests? Tricot confirms that through Admiral Lacoste, the minister of defense, Charles Hernu, ordered the DGSE to build up a "file" on Greenpeace.

As in the case of the kidnapping and murder of Ben Barka, which Bernard Tricot was assigned to clear up (strangely enough, the names of those responsible for that crime did not come to light either), the Greenpeace affair remains far from settled.

It is obvious that from the moment he was named to head this investigation by the Socialist Party-controlled executive branch, Tricot's objective was to absolve the French state of blame. But the clean bill of health that the report gives was so incredible that it immediately generated a boomerang effect.

The text of the report, despite the author's intentions, gives a clear impression that the higher interests of the French ruling class — the development of the country's nuclear power — are deeply involved in this sinister episode.

This suspicion is confirmed by the complicit attitude the opposition leaders have taken toward the scandal. While they are certainly not unaware of how useful this issue could be in the legislative elections that are coming up in March 1986, the opposition leaders have preferred to accept the conclusions of the

Tricot report and the word of the premier, Laurent Fabius, who admitted only that there had been grave lapses in the supervision of the espionage services.

Fabius has announced that the investigation of the incident will continue and that he has asked Charles Hernu to establish whether reform of the secret services is necessary. But giving this task to the minister of defense is the same course that led to the gaps in the Tricot report.

This does not mean that the truth will never come out. Both the New Zealand government and Greenpeace rejected the Tricot report. The New Zealand authorities say that they have sent Paris evidence proving the link between the French secret services (the "Turenges" and the crew of the *Ouvea*) and the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior involving the death of the Portuguese reporter Fernando Pereira.

Greenpeace, convinced of the French government's responsibility for the attack, has announced that it will form a team of American lawyers to present a case against Paris before the International court at the Hague, as well as before the European Court of Human Rights.

The pacifist and environmentalist group will also continue its protests against nuclear testing, for which it has sent its ship Greenpeace and some sailboats to the atoll where a new French atomic test is to be held.

The French president arrogantly announced that his armed forces would open fire on the antinuclear fleet if it crossed the line drawn by the French navy. But this did not scare off the Greenpeace activists. "They will have to board us," one of the group's representatives said, pointing out that they would watch the nuclear test in international waters. Another blow at Greenpeace would further undermine the French authorities' sagging international respectability.

The fact is that Greenpeace is a legal organization in France and in the other countries where it has offices. The sinking of one of its ships and the murder of a crew member in a scenario filled with French secret agents raises a lot of doubts about the claimed dedication of the Mitterrand government to civil rights.

Moreover, the sort of undercover operations seen in this affair can be expected to cause frictions with the countries whose laws are seen to be flouted. This will further complicate the French government's difficulties in trying to establish a nuclear testing zone in the Pacific that threatens the peoples of this region. ■

The myth of press freedom exposed

THE BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) — a pillar of the British and international establishment — has been shaken from top to bottom by two major controversies. It has suffered an unprecedented one-day strike by its journalistic staff, and a dramatic weakening of its international prestige as an independent institution. This has created a stormy debate about the whole future of broadcasting in Britain. *The author of the following article is a worker for the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.*

DAVY JONES

It all began when a journalist on the *Sunday Times* (a newspaper which has been progressively taken over by hard-line Thatcherites in the last five years) asked Margaret Thatcher a hypothetical question about her attitude to any TV interview with a leading IRA member. Her 'utter condemnation' was blazed across the front page on July 28, together with the news that the BBC was to show a documentary featuring Martin McGuinness, an elected Sinn Fein member of the Northern Ireland Assembly, together with an extreme Loyalist, Gregory Campbell. The press hounds rushed to the Home Secretary, Leon Brittan: what was he going to do about it, as the prime minister had clearly expressed her view. Within hours Leon Brittan wrote to the BBC Board of Governors appealing to them not to screen the programme. On July 30 the Governors met and decided to withdraw the film. The *Sunday Times* had got what it wanted.

But nobody bargained for the response that the ban brought. BBC journalists are not exactly the most radical bunch of trade unionists, but they were outraged that their Board of Governors could give in so easily to pressure from the government. In a whirlwind of activity over the following days, first the BBC journalists, then other news journalists in TV and radio all round the country, and finally other BBC staff, all voted overwhelmingly to support a one day strike on August 7. The television and radio were full of the debate, newspapers saturated with articles, and a mighty range of public opinion, including the Labour and Liberal

Parties, weighed in to complain of government censorship.

The strike itself received huge support from BBC staff and journalists. It was extraordinary to see TV news-readers and personalities on the picket line carrying placards, and stopping lorry drivers at the entrance to the BBC. Every radio and television station in the country was without news bulletins. Even the BBC world service went on strike for the day for the first time in its history. Overseas listeners to the BBC World Service were treated to eerie Soviet-style music broadcasts instead. Overseas camera crews and journalists rushed to Britain to cover the BBC strike. It made the lead story in many countries across the world. The impossible had happened — the BBC was on strike, led by the journalists.

Ironically the programme at the centre of the controversy — 'At the Edge of the Union' — was nothing particularly unusual. It included simple interviews with McGuinness and Campbell on their political and personal beliefs, and showed them to be politicians of conviction yet ordinary human beings. McGuinness himself has frequently appeared on Ulster TV as a local elected politician to comment on local political and community affairs. Other, more controversial, programmes have appeared on Ireland in recent years without attracting such direct and public Government intervention to stop them. It is clear that the Government hoped to use this example as a way of tightening up on the already restrictive guidelines which exist on broadcast coverage of Irish affairs, as a way of furthering their war against Sinn

Fein's growing popularity in the North of Ireland.

The British media's treatment of the 'Irish problem' first succumbed to censorship in 1971 after the introduction of internment. Reports of the torture and atrocities committed at that time by the British Army led to politicians calling for 'patriotic censorship'. Lord Hill, the chairperson of the BBC Governors, said: 'The BBC and its staff abhor the terrorism of the IRA and report their campaign with revulsion ... As between the British Army and the gunmen, the BBC is not and cannot be impartial.' The prized 'balance' of the BBC on current affairs programmes was officially out of the window. New ground rules were introduced for journalists covering Ireland — the so-called 'reference upwards' system, whereby any programmes on Ireland had to be approved at the highest level. (1)

As a result, a whole string of programmes, fifty in all, have been banned by the broadcasting authorities since 1971. These include documentaries, plays, even a video by the Police rock group! Not surprisingly a planned programme on media coverage of Ireland was itself banned. Since 1979 there have been no TV interviews with members of the IRA at all despite their obvious and growing public support among sections of the community in Ireland. Any nationalist politicians who are interviewed also have to be 'balanced' either by hostile questioning or by another interview with an alternative point of view. Needless to say Government spokespersons or traditional figures of the establishment do not require such 'balance'.

But that is the 'British' way of censoring — not direct intervention so much as subtle behind the scenes manoeuvring. It was this 'normal' method of establishment censorship and self-censorship that Leon Brittan and the Tory Government had broken from by their unsubtle intervention. As former Labour Home Secretary Merlyn Rees, who himself suppressed many an Irish programme, put it at the height of the controversy: 'Why Leon Brittan had to publicly write to the BBC Governors to get the film banned I'll never know, why didn't he just pick up the phone and do it as many others had done before him.' But that is not the way the Thatcher Government works. It not only wants to get its way, it also wants to do it publicly and to humiliate its opponents in the process. It is a Government committed to

1. For a detailed study of the British media and Ireland see 'Ireland: the Propaganda War' by Liz Curtis, Pluto Press, London 1984.

breaking the mould of the post-war British consensus.

It was therefore no surprise when the calm after the censorship storm was immediately broken again by media revelations about vetting of senior BBC staff by the Government's security services, MI5. To add insult to injury the vetting was carried out by staff in a room in the BBC's own headquarters led by an MI5 Brigadier! Again broadcasters and journalistic staff were in uproar over the news. National Union of Journalists (NUJ) members at the largest BBC building voted to demand an end to all vetting, and the threat of another round of industrial action by journalists still hangs over the BBC.

There is no doubt that the BBC's image at home and abroad has been badly tarnished. Held up as the model for broadcasting integrity all round the world, the BBC has been shown to be as craven in its capitulation to simple government pressure as the media in many other countries. Held up as the epitome of fair play and unbiased reporting at home, it has been revealed to be a timid lap dog of the government of the day.

In recent years the media have played a major role in supporting the Tory government in times of acute crisis. During the Falklands/Malvinas war there was a sustained campaign by the right-wing press to stop any media airing of views hostile to the Government's war. The more unpleasant tabloid papers excelled themselves in revolting war hysteria and racism, including the infamous *Sun* daily newspaper headline 'Gotcha' (got you!) when the General Belgrano was sunk with the loss of hundreds of Argentinian lives. The manipulation of the media during the crisis was very explicit and Orwellian, including a Government spokesperson giving tight-lipped press conferences each day to feed the media highly selective 'information'.

During the historic miners' strike of 1984-85 the role of the media itself became an issue in the dispute. Right wing newspapers like the *Daily Express* and the *Sun* found their printworkers refusing to print the paper unless the miners were given a right to reply to outrageous attacks on the union or wholly inaccurate articles. This came to a head when the *Daily Express* ran a spoof front page entitled 'The truth that Scargill dare not tell' purporting to be a 'confession' by Scargill that he had lied to his members about the real reasons for the strike. One week later the *Sun* tried to run a front page headline 'Mine Fuhrer' with a picture of Scargill allegedly giving a Nazi salute. It was stopped by

printworkers. During the strike the miners and their supporters secured more than a dozen rights of reply to media bias in the local and national press, and the demand for legislation for a right of reply, as already exists in some European countries, has been growing.

The result of these media performances in times of crisis is a growing public disenchantment with the media. For a long time public opinion polls have shown general scepticism about the reliability of the press to produce fair and unbiased reporting. But a recent BBC Research Department Survey showed similar scepticism for the first time about TV news and current affairs. An amazing 46 per cent of those questioned said they believed TV news and current affairs were sometimes deliberately misleading, against only 38 per cent who felt they were generally honest!

The state of the media in Britain has seriously deteriorated under Thatcher. Not only has there been increasing pressure on the BBC to censor its own material, but a newly-announced Government inquiry — the Peacock inquiry — has been set up to look into the future of public sector broadcasting. There are fears of the break up of the BBC and its hiving off into the private sector where the multinational media corporations of Rupert Murdoch and others could take their pickings. Media trade unionists fear widespread job losses as a result and a drastic decline in broadcasting standards. The press too has become increasingly monopolised under Thatcher. Three men, via their multinationals, now own 75 per cent of all daily papers sold in Britain, and 83 per cent of all Sunday newspapers — that is Robert Maxwell, Rupert Murdoch and Lord Matthews. And the spectrum of political opinion represented editorially in the British daily papers is narrower than virtually any other country in Europe, with just one paper — the *Daily Mirror* — supporting Labour,

and then only the extreme right wing of the Labour Party.

Within the labour movement the demand is growing for a break up of the media monopolies, for the establishment of a labour movement daily or Sunday paper, and for an end to Government interference in the BBC. There is increasing support for democratising the Governing structures of the BBC. The Governors are currently appointed by the Government of the day and consist of Lords, Ladies, and ex-Oxbridge students from the Establishment. The Thatcher Government has used the opportunity to stack the Governors full of their tame poodles.

With the defeat of the miners' strike, the journalists' action at the BBC was a ray of hope for the future, especially after the appalling role that some of their members played during the miners' strike itself. As in so many other fields the Government's brazen and ruthless attempts to jerk the whole political and institutional spectrum to the Right may yet lead to a raising of consciousness amongst at least a minority of the labour movement about the need for alternative radical solutions. The media plays an increasing important role in the plans of Governments in the 1980s. It could be that the Thatcher Government badly miscalculated over how blatantly it could manipulate the media in Britain. Since the BBC controversies all opinion polls have shown the Tories trailing badly in second or third place behind Labour and the Alliance. Meanwhile organisations like the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom have been showing the banned BBC film to large audiences around the country. Censorship is not a popular political platform to stand on and the Tories are well and truly identified with it. ■

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom can be contacted at 9, Poland Street London W1V 3DG. Tel: (01) 437 2795.



'And to ensure a balanced and impartial discussion of the latest government measures I have with me a government spokesman and a wild-eyed Trot from the lunatic fringe'

Crisis continues to deepen

THE CRISIS threatening the Philippine regime is slowly deepening. Despite the belated accord with the IMF and the drop in the inflation rate from 50% in 1984 to perhaps less than 20% in 1985, the country's economy remains stuck in recession. Falling industrial and agricultural exports have a considerable social impact.

The workers movement, whose backbone is the Kilusang Mayo Uno [May 1 Movement] has to wage its struggle in very difficult conditions. Over the first quarter of the current year, 130 strikes were officially reported. Workers involved in struggles are still being killed by the repressive forces.

The crisis in agriculture is having disastrous effects. With the prices of fertilizers, pesticides, and the other essentials for "green revolution" agriculture reaching absolutely prohibitive levels, the peasants are falling back on the traditional crops and methods. This is notable in particular on the southern island of Mindanao.

While the internal market is contracting, the reorganization of the declining sugar industry threatens to leave hundreds of thousands of agricultural workers jobless in a country where the unemployment rate is already 20% of the economically active population, and where more than 50% are underemployed.

The guerrilla forces led politically by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP) are growing steadily in such different regions as Mindanao in the south, Negros — the sugar kingdom, in the center and Bicol, in the northern island of Luzon.

On the political level, despite the pressures brought to bear on it, the Marcos regime continues to show an incapacity for reform. Accused of complicity in the case of the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino in August 1983, General Fabian Ver will probably return to his post as chief of the General Staff after a token trial. Washington reportedly wanted him replaced permanently by Lieutenant General Fidel Ramos, who has been serving as temporary chief of the General Staff.

President Marcos has, moreover, just tightened his control of Comelec, the commission in charge of supervising the elections. Under these conditions, the parliamentary opposition has remained essentially impotent.

It is probably significant that a "reform" movement has declared itself for the first time in the armed forces (AFP). The origins of this "Reform the AFP Movement" (also known as the "We Belong Movement") supposedly go back four years. Since the end of 1984, it seems to have really gotten some wind in its sails, involving perhaps 1,500 officers, many of them lieutenants and lieutenant colonels, out of the 13,000 officers in the armed forces.

These officers seem to be no more than luke warm about General Fidel Ramos (who is greatly esteemed by the Americans for his professionalism but is still a cousin of Marcos). At the same time, they are very worried about the rise of a coterie of officers close to the president and his wife, Imelda, such as the Philippine army commander Major General Josephus Ramas.

The international implications of this great crisis of the regime are magnified by the fact that the Philippine islands occupy a vital strategic position. On the island of Luzon, the US has two immense military complexes around the Subic Bay and Clark bases.

Clark airbase, the headquarters of the US Thirteenth Air Force, is the most important in Southeast Asia. It can accommodate every sort of plane, including B-52 bombers and C-135 air tankers. The Sub Bay naval base can meet two thirds of the needs of maintaining the US Seventh Fleet, which includes ninety ships, 550 planes, and 70,000 men. It is the largest base of its type outside the US. The American military establishment in the Philippines (which extends throughout the archipelago) offers a communications center of the first importance, along with very extensive observations facilities.

The Philippines are one of the pivots of US imperialism's military deployment around the world. It faces Vietnam. It serves as backup for the bases in Japan. It is a key link in the chain of US forces in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, and a coordinating center for the operations zone covered by the Seventh Fleet — from the West Coast of the US to the eastern coast of Africa.

This military network means that the US is directly involved in the archipelago. The dangers of direct US intervention against the Philippine people's movement are, thus, very real, very immediate.

The activists of the anti-intervention movement, the antimissile movement, and the international peace movement have to make an effort now to forestall such an intervention and to demand dismantling of these bases, which are capable of accommodating and directing nuclear forces (including Polaris submarine missiles).

We interviewed Roland Simbulan, who represented the Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition (NFPC) at the European Nuclear Disarmament campaign conference held in July in the Netherlands. The author of a book on the US bases, a professor at the University of the Philippines, and a trade-union activist, he explains in the following interview what is at stake militarily and strategically in the archipelago, and the struggle that is being waged in the country against the putting into operation of a particularly dangerous nuclear power plant.

This power plant, built by Westinghouse, has a reactor of the Harrisburg type (notorious after the Three Mile Island accident). It is located in an active earthquake zone. Still worse, it is at the foot of a dormant volcano — Mount Natib — and not far from others, one of which has been active recently. According to the International Atomic Energy Authority, "the eruption of Mt. Natib is a credible event."

The population of the region, Morong, on the peninsula of Bataan, near the free-trade zone of Nariveles and facing Manila, were alarmed. They staged a general strike June 18-20, which paralyzed the region.

Question. What groups are involved in the NFPC?

Answer. I represent the teachers' sector. I am with the Alliance of Concerned Teachers — ACT-Phil. There are also representatives from other sectors, such as labor, through the KMU (Kilusang Mayo Uno — May 1 Movement); students, through the League of Filipino Students, as well as church groups, peasant organizations, and territorial coalitions such as Bataan Anti-Nuclear Alliance. There are also youth organizations and the women's group GABRIELA, as well as the Concerned Women of the Philippines. Today, 83 organizations are represented. When the NFPC was founded in 1980, there were forty.

Q. How did you come to be involved in the NFPC?

A. We have a union of teachers at the University of the Philippines. It is called the United Teachers and Employees of the UP. Actually, it's an alliance of faculty organizations. The acronym is UNITE UP. I am the secretary of that. It functions more or less as a union, although as public employees we are technically not allowed to belong to unions. Our alliance is affiliated to ACT Phil., a national organization of teachers. Since we are in ACT Phil., we are involved in the teachers movement and other multisectoral efforts in which the ACT Phil is involved. That is how I came to be involved in the NFPC, through the ACT Phil.

Q. How did you come to participate in the END conference?

A. The peace movements, especially the Pax Christi, the IKV — Interchurch Council, the main Dutch peace coordination — and Novib, who were active participants in the END convention, invited me, as well as other Third World representatives, to discuss "North-South" issues. This is the first time our coalition has had dealings with the European peace groups.

We have had close ties with the US peace groups, especially with the Nuclear Freeze movement, and also with the Japanese, Pacific Islands, Australian, and New Zealand peace movements.

Q. What do you think the convention accomplished?

A. Well, no concrete actions were planned. But I think that it is significant that they introduced Third World issues. It showed that the organizers of the European movements are open to linking up with the Third World movements concerned with similar issues. I think that is a turning

point for the European peace movement. We feel that ultimately the success of the struggles here in Europe, as well as in other Western capitalist countries, depends a lot on their linking up with Third World struggles. To a large extent, the victories in the Third World, especially in the fight for independence and self-determination will determine the success or failure of the struggles in the advanced capitalist countries.

Q. So far the main Third World issues introduced in the peace movement have to do with Central America and South Africa. These are, of course, very important. But given what is happening in the Philippines, it seems that should also be injected. From what you know, is the Filipino question becoming an issue within the US peace movement?

A. Since the US is the power directly involved in the Philippines, the peace groups there are putting this question high on their agenda. This was pointed out by a speaker from the US on the second day of the convention, for example.

Q. What does this US involvement in the Philippines amount to?

A. The US maintains five major bases in the Philippines: Clark Air Base, Subic Naval Base, the Wallace Air Station, the San Miguel Communications Center, and Camp John Hay. In addition, they have more than twenty identified minor facilities scattered all over the country. I say "identified," because there are other unidentified ones in strategic places.

The US maintains no less than 15,000 combat troops, mostly Marines, Air Force, and Navy troops permanently in the Philippines. These are US combat troops in uniform. In addition, there are around 3,000 so-called civilian employees, who are in fact with the CIA or the National Security Agency. Organizationally, they are part of the US Defense Department. On top of this, there are always another 5,000 US navy servicemen in the country at any one time, because their ships, which are part of the US Seventh Fleet, dock at the Subic base. It provides some 70 percent of the entire supply and repair requirements of the US Seventh Fleet east of Hawaii.

After the US debacle in Vietnam, the Philippine bases took on a greatly increased importance. Washington now considers them as its frontline facing the Soviet bloc. We also have some of the most important C31 facilities in the US system. This stands for Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence facilities.

This involves us in the US nuclear war strategy. You do not have to

have nuclear weapons on your soil to be a target in a nuclear war, because the US C31 facilities are part of the American nuclear infrastructure. These facilities will pinpoint any US strikes on the Soviet Union. So, if you were the Soviet Union, they would be one of the first things you would hit.

Q. So, what are you doing to get rid of these bases and other facilities?

A. We think that the campaign against the bases is part of the broader struggle against US domination. We do not separate these two aspects, because we feel that the bases will never be dismantled until there are substantial structural changes in Philippine society. But the campaign against the bases has to be a specific one. So, we have to provide technical information. It is not enough just to attack the infringement of national sovereignty. As we inform, we mobilize people.

Some people start their involvement by working on this issue. But unlike the Western movements, that are mainly single-issue coalitions, we have to link up this issue with other aspects of American economic, political, and cultural domination. Most of our affiliates, for instance have comprehensive programs, political and economic programs. They look at the base question as one aspect to campaign on at specific times. I say specific times, because we have just waged what we called a "Welgang Bayan," or people's general strike, in Bataan province, where a nuclear power plant is supposed to start operations next February. Originally, it was supposed to start operations in 1982, but so far we have managed to delay it with massive campaigns and mobilizations.



Ferdinand Marcos

Our coalition decided to wage a people's strike to dramatize the people's protest. So, on June 18-20, no less than 45,000 people participated in the action, totally paralyzing the province.

Most of those who participated were workers. Out of twenty large factories in the Bataan Export Processing Zone (this is a concentration of foreign factories), only three continued to operate, and three-fourths of the workers participated. Also many communities, organized by the Bataan Anti-Nuclear Alliance, which is affiliated to us, mobilized. Out of 12 towns in the province, eight were completely paralyzed. Then

were human barricades, most of the businesses were closed. For three whole days, the people stayed on the barricades, despite hard rain. There were some tense moments.

Q. Are new forces still coming into the movement?

A. One big recent development is the politicization of the union of the workers on the bases. This is the federation of civilian employees in the US facilities in the Philippines. In the past, these workers have been an obstacle to any antibase movement because the base authorities have paid them relatively well. That doesn't mean that they got a fair wage, but their pay was higher than the average in our country. So, in the past they acted like a company union.

However, recently, they have become very militant. This is one of the biggest unions in the country, moreover. There are now 25,000 Filipino full-time civilian employees working on the US bases. This makes the bases the second biggest single employer in the country, after the Philippine government. Most of these workers belong to the union.

Another important issue is our exposure recently of the use of these facilities to intervene in internal developments in the country. What I am talking about specifically is the deployment of two units of Special Operations Forces.

I exposed these deployments in a speech on June 12 to the Rotary Club of Angeles City. The day after, it got into the papers, and the day after that the US embassy issued a statement confirming the presence of these units but denying that they were being used for the purposes I mentioned.

I identified the First Operations Squadron, deployed at Clark, and the Naval Special Warfare Group, based at Subic. I was able to get hold of the US military construction plans that had to be approved by Congress, and I found out that while in the past the Special Operations Forces troops there were sent there merely for R and R or in transit, they have now deployed two units there permanently.

Last May 31, the Paris-based Gamma TV did an interview with Marcos, in which the latter said that if things got out of hand in the Philippines, he would invite American combat troops. Top officials have begun insinuating that another superpower is helping the NPA guerrillas. These are danger signs.

Q. What is your assessment of the present stage of the Filipino people's struggle?

A. It has now become more nationwide. Before, the problem they had was expanding. Now it is more consolidating. The conflict is reaching a critical stage, because the capability of the people's movement is coming more and more to match that of the other side. In such a situation, many things could happen, and one of them is US military intervention.

The revisions in our base agreement with the US in 1979 give them the right to operate outside the bases in order to maintain the security of their facilities. Moreover, the 1947 Mutual Defense Agreement allows the US to intervene if there is an external threat or aggression.

Q. To what extent have you been able to unite the opposition on this issue?

A. Well, the traditional leaders of the opposition are what you might call the disenfranchised section of the Philippine oligarchy. That is, when martial law was declared in 1972, Marcos assumed a monopoly of power. This group is purely anti-Marcos, and very pro-US. These people, like Laurel and Kalaw would maintain the present setup, including the American military, economic, and political domination. They are trying to court US support. They don't want to talk about the bases or about the IMF.

What the US wants is to reconcile the disenfranchised oligarchy and Marcos in order to meet more effectively the challenge of the popular opposition. Even after the Aquino assassination, American policy has two sides. It supports Marcos while promising the oligarchs concessions, pressuring Marcos to give some concessions so that there will be one solid Philippine oligarchy like before martial law.

Q. We are seeing a tendency in Europe now for Social Democrats and the unions linked to them to look to Social Democratic forces in the Philippines, although the Social Democrats in the Philippines, with their links to the church, look more like Christian Democrats. What is their role?

A. Their viewpoint is manifested in some political organizations like the PDP-Laban. I don't know how much strength they have. Their potential base is the Roman Catholic church. But many elements of the church are more identified with the grassroots opposition than with the Social Democrats. In fact, Defense Minister Enrile once said that no less than twenty Roman Catholic priests and nuns have joined the guerrillas.

As for the US bases, the PDP-Laban

is against dismantling military bases and against stopping the storage and deployment of nuclear weapons.

I don't think the Social Democrats have much influence today. They are part of the opposition, however, in the sense that they participate in some organizations.

The Philippine people's movement encourages initiatives from various sectors. It is not really homogeneous in as much as there are so many sectors, classes, etc. in Philippine society. It is only natural that certain sectors or interests manifest their own feelings through their independent organizations. We encourage these initiatives, including by businesspeople. But while we encourage this, we think it is important that people organize not just for the sake of organizing their own organization but to be part of the larger struggle of all Philippine society. They may have their own links in Europe. That is not something to be discouraged.

However, it should also be understood that the organizations of what we call the "basic masses," the peasants and workers organizations should have the upper hand. That is a problem in alliance work. Sometimes the traditional politicians demand equal say with representatives of large labor organizations. The people will not allow that. Organizations of peasants and workers are not fighting for these people to be placed in office — they are fighting so that the needs and aspirations of the majority of Filipinos will be put first.

For example, certain business people wanted Jaime Ongpin — president of one of the country's largest mining concerns — to occupy an important position in the broader front. The labor unions, especially the KMU, refused. Ongpin didn't even want to recognize the KMU-affiliated union in his company. It had to strike to get recognition. In any coalition, it is natural to have struggles. They are manifestations of different interests.

Even in our coalition we have representatives of various groups. The Board of Director's emeritus is former senator Tanada, the chair of the board is Bishop Nepomuceno.

If people are really sincere, you can thrash out differences. There is nothing that cannot be settled. I think that in the Philippines, we have been very successful in coalition work. We have been able to attract the Church's progressive elements into the broader front. Some people say the Church cannot work with Marxist groups. But we have seen this happen in the Philippines.



Political prisoner speaks out

ON MAY 5 this year Saturnino, 'Satur' Ocampo, escaped from a Philippine gaol after ten years as a political prisoner. An ex-student leader and then journalist, Satur began his struggle after the declaration of martial law in 1972. Arrested in January 1975, and accused of subversive activity, he was imprisoned and tortured for several months on end. He was considered to be an important leader of the underground Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP). As a political detainee Satur continued his struggle by leading the movement of political prisoners and working for the release of his comrades.

We publish below an interview conducted by Deb Snookal when Satur was still in prison.

Question. What has been the impact of the August 1983 assassination of Benigno Aquino? Has the movement against Marcos become stronger in the last year?

Answer. Definitely yes. This is particularly true of the open, legal democratic movement, although there has also been an intensification of the armed struggle in the countryside.

Before the assassination of Aquino, the street demonstrations were essentially made up of workers, students, and the more radical side of the opposition to Marcos. But in the wake of the Aquino assassination the so-called legal forces, including the representatives of business, more church people, and more of the dutiful, conservative elements of society, saw the truth — that if a man of Aquino's stature could be done away with in the way he was killed, then it could happen to anybody.

So it was something like a catalyst. The people sought some catharsis for their hatred, for their pent-up anger against the regime. This became worse as the economic crisis worsened, with the flight of some capital and nervousness in the business community. Then there was also the repatriation of foreign exchange by people who had been investing here or who had been keeping their money in banks here.

Q. The Aquino assassination, of course, has only been one more incident in which the Marcos government has been implicated. There

are so many cases of murders, disappearances, and so on. What did Aquino mean to the Filipino people?

A. At first when Aquino was killed, some people thought that he was just one of the victims of the military depredations. But in the course of the popular response of the people, of the protest and anger against the regime, Aquino's murder became an outstanding example that the regime or those responsible for these killings and "salvagings" [summary executions] would not respect even those in the elite of Filipino society.

Q. What would be your balance sheet of the May parliamentary elections? It has been suggested that Marcos used the elections to present a facade of democracy to improve his international image. (See IV No 59).

A. Even before the assassination, the regime was already in need of a political exercise that would improve its image internationally. The election of the regular parliament was one way Marcos tried to prove that there is a workable democracy in this country. Because of the demands of the opposition and of the people who are protesting the undemocratic way the government has been running affairs, Marcos was pressured into granting some electoral reforms.

With the aid of the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), the businessmen, and the Bishops' Conference, they were able to get some improvement in the rules by

which the elections were conducted.

The militant monitoring by NAMFREL of the elections provided some credibility to the results of the elections, particularly in metropolitan Manila, where the KBL [New Society Movement] of Marcos was trounced.

Q. What was the significance of the boycott campaign?

A. The boycott campaign was the manifestation of the people, the broader opposition to Marcos, which did not consider the parliamentary elections as essentially responding to the need for change.

But as it turned out, the boycott movement had very little time. And while it was able to generate a lot of support, it was not able to counteract the great enthusiasm of the people to go to the polls and repudiate the Marcos government through the ballot.

This indicated that a lot of Filipinos still believe the electoral process may be a way out of this undemocratic government. But Marcos intransigently holds on to Amendment Six, which authorizes him to make decrees and override parliamentary decisions, including on questions of budget allocations. So it's becoming very apparent that the Batasan [parliament] voting might have been a useless exercise from the point of view of effectively eroding or doing away with the dictatorial authority of Marcos.

Of course, I grant that the Batasan can be a sounding board for the people's sentiments. But in terms of achieving significant changes in the government, there's very little chance through parliament.

Q. What do you see as the main program of reforms needed in the Philippines today?

A. What the 'parliament of the streets' has been calling for is the destruction of the dictatorship. But this is tied up completely with the economic strangulation of the Philip-

One month after the death of Aquino —



SWEDEN
pines by foreign interests.

The political and economic change must be achieved in tandem, although the key is the dismantling or removal of the Marcos dictatorship and its replacement with a government that would be representative of the various sectors of society. Some, like Jose Diokno and Lorenzo Tanada [opposition political figures], call this a coalition government. Basically I support this kind of transition government.

Q. How united are the anti-Marcos forces today?

A. Well, compared with the period before the assassination of Aquino they are more united. But there remain some cleavages within the ranks of the opposition, in particular arguments about how to achieve change, though I think this could be ironed out through earnest dialogue among all the opposition forces.

Q. What are the options for the US government in the Philippines?

A. From the statements of the US State Department and the US ambassador to the Philippines, they are still opting for a unification of what they call the "democratic opposition." When I talk about the democratic opposition, it is not the same terminology as the American embassy. They mean the traditional politicians. When we talk about the democratic opposition we mean the people's organizations.

In the case of the United States, they are trying to tie up all the traditional opposition groups and drive a wedge between the left and the traditional opposition. They know there is a basic influence of the left within the mass movement. Whether they will be able to build an opposition minus the left remains to be seen.

Q. How would you assess the support for the National Democratic Front (NDF) opposition bloc in which the New People's Army (NPA) — the people demonstrate (DR)



and the CPP participate?

A. The NDF is better known internationally than it is here. Here the people identify more with the New People's Army, which is a component of the NDF. As an idea, the NDF is very acceptable, even to some sections of the middle forces.

The government accepts that there has been an expansion in both the number of fighters and the strength of armaments of the NPA, although it tries to play this down by saying that the situation is not as serious as 1972, which is not accurate.

Q. What is the effect of the militarization of the countryside by the army, the hamletting of peasant communities, and so on?

A. There are extensive military abuses, particularly "salvaging," hamletting, torture, etc. These activities are helping to politicize the people, driving them against the Marcos government. The only alternative open to them is the NPA, because it is the one most responsive to their basic problems and grievances. However much the government tries to counter the NPA, they will never be successful in their "civic action" programs and counterinsurgency campaigns.

Q. The NPA is said to organize its own local government administration in some areas. Would you describe these as similar to the liberated zones in El Salvador?

A. As far as the level of armed struggle in the Philippines is concerned, there has not been any claim yet of liberated zones. But they are classified as guerrilla zones, that is, guerrilla bases that are relatively advanced. These bases, when consolidated, would get to the level of liberated zones.

But even in the guerrilla zones there is already the infrastructure of a government in the villages, the *Barangays* [village councils]. In some areas it is the government structure itself which is utilized; in others it is an alternative form.

As the area of the armed struggle by the NPA expands, the villages are consolidated into self-governing units with their own defense, health, education, and administration.

Q. Could you tell me something about your case?

A. In the "rebellion" case, it is my contention that I should not be accused because rebellion entails taking up arms against the government. The crime I am alleged to have committed was at a time when I was working as a journalist, that is in 1972. So I could not have been a participant

in the armed struggle.

Q. You have been charged with organizing the import of arms from a "foreign power," presumably the People's Republic of China, in this rebellion case.

A. In the case of "subversion" and "rebellion," they want to prove that I am a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines and by implication share responsibility for the arms smuggling.

I deny both accusations, and it is up to the military prosecution to prove that I am a member of the Central Committee and that I am responsible or partially responsible for the bringing in of arms.

Q. Is it true that Jose Maria Sison has not denied that he is the chairman of the CPP?

A. He has a statement which he signed in which he says he was chairman of the CPP. In my case I have refused to sign such a statement, knowing it would be used against me in the trials.

Q. When I spoke to the military's prosecuting lawyers, I asked them about the use of torture to exact confessions. They denied this, of course. Could you explain your own case?

A. The documentation of my torture has been submitted to Amnesty International and has also been well-publicized by the Task Force Detainees. In 1978 an investigation was ordered after my complaints of torture. But nothing happened because there were no witnesses to corroborate my contentions. But of course there are never witnesses to torture. It's all on their side.

Q. What have been your conditions during your eight and a half years' imprisonment?

A. For the first nine months after my arrest I was in solitary confinement. Then for five months in 1980 and 1981 I was put in solitary again because I was accused of leading a hunger strike of the detainees.

Q. Do you think the hunger strike tactic was effective?

A. Up to 1981 it was effective. The best hunger strike we had was in November-December 1980 when 133 of us went on strike. About 100 of these won their release.

But after that we haven't been able to win many concessions with hunger strikes. So last year we changed our tactics. Instead of the prisoners alone going on hunger strikes, the relatives and friends went on hunger strike outside. But even that did not move Marcos into releasing most of us. ■

Workers and youth protest in general election

THE FOLLOWING interview was given to Gerry Foley during the annual summer camp of the Socialist Party/Swedish section of the Fourth International by Haakon Blomqvist, the editor of the SP's paper, *Internationalen*; and Dick Forslund, an SP leader from the town of Nacka in the Stockholm suburbs. The camp was held in early July on a smaller lake just north of Vanern, the largest of the Swedish lakes. The attendance this year was the biggest in the history of the event, 150 adults and 65 children. This year most of the workshops and lectures were devoted to preparation for the SP's campaign for the general elections to be held on September 15.

Question. What sort of an election campaign do you intend to run this time?

Blomqvist. Well, from the beginning, from the time the Political Committee and the National Leadership first discussed it a year ago, we had the idea of running a broader campaign than just an SP one. The original idea was to get a united campaign that could include many Social Democratic workers who were disgusted with the present Social Democratic government of Olof Palme. He came in in the 1982 elections with the slogan of "freedom to move instead of more belt tightening." But since then things have continued to get steadily worse for ordinary people.

So, we started to get better and better contacts with both Social Democratic workers in opposition to the austerity policy and even some Communist Party workers as in Bolange.

Forslund. The Communist workers were disillusioned with their party, the VpK's [Venstrepartiet Kommunisterna — Left Party of Communists] cooperation with the Social Democratic government.

You know, the VpK members of parliament always end up accepting the Social Democrats' austerity measures, no matter how much they may object.

B. A political vacuum has been developing in Sweden because of this disillusionment with the bigger workers parties. We think that a lot of people who voted for the

Social Democrats or the VpK as a lesser evil may not vote this time. So, we thought that it was important to try to offer an alternative, not just run a routine propaganda campaign of our own. So, the National Leadership [National Committee] gave the Political Bureau a mandate to test the water for a united workers opposition campaign. We got only a lukewarm response. Critical Social Democratic workers would say, "Well, it's a good idea, but..."

F. But we only contacted people in five or six places, and only the top oppositionists, trade-union leaderships, for instance. We did not really go to the grassroots.

B. It's clear now that we were too timid in our testing. We should have pressed harder. But when we got this initial lukewarm response, we decided that we had to put up our own party slate. But we would still try to make it broader by inviting independent socialists and people from other parties to stand on our slates. A couple of weeks after that, the Socialist League, a small grouping affiliated to the Moreno current [which split from the Fourth International in 1979] and the youth organization "Benny," which it initiated but which has become a much broader thing, decided to participate in our Workers Protest campaign. After meetings with them, we decided to draw up a simplified platform for the coalition.

F. We simplified it to a short text explaining our viewpoint on the government and what the Social

Democrats had done in the government and that the workers need another voice besides those of the two bigger workers parties. And then we raised slogans on seven or eight issues.

B. This common platform does not prevent us as a party from talking about socialism, Nicaragua, Poland, and everything else we want to talk about. It was just a way of concentrating what we had said in the rather long program that we had drawn up initially. At the same time we went out to get independents to run on our ticket.

F. We had some rather important successes. In Keeping, an industrial town, we got five independents on our slate of ten.

B. But the results were very uneven. Many branches still approached the election in a routinist way. They never really understood the importance of trying to broaden the campaign.

F. We have not yet been able to get this idea across to the entire party. But we hope to make some progress in this camp.

Q. How many candidates are you running?

B. We have about 250 candidates.

Q. Is this election just for parliament?

F. No, it is for three different levels of government, municipal, regional, and national.

Q. How many candidates are you running for parliament?

B. About two hundred. There are a total of three hundred seats in the parliament. Moreover, in Sweden the slates are generally made as big as possible for demonstration effect. For example, the Social Democrats run more candidates than there are places to be filled.

F. Swedish voters also look at the professions of the candidates, which are listed on the slate. This is an important factor.

B. It is also very important to have local candidates in small towns. In such places, it is a bit of an event when a local person is on a national slate, even if everyone knows that there is no chance that the slate will be elected. On our slate, there are about 15 independents, about twenty Young Socialists [from the youth organization in solidarity with the SP], about 15 from "Benny," and five or six from the Socialist League. The "Benny" is a large organization in Stockholm.

F. "Benny" also plays an important role in Vaexsjoe, a town of about 40,000 people in southern Sweden. This town has a special importance

because when a Nazi group tried to hold a rally there a few months ago, more than 3,000 of the local people chased them into the toilets of the railway station. That means that nearly 10% of the population was out chasing the Nazis.

B. And we had no branch there. "Benny" has a local there and the Socialist League has an organization that functions. So, all the names on the Workers and Youth Protest Campaign slate in Vaexsjoe are Socialist League or "Benny" members.

F. Nonetheless, the name of our party is at the top of the slate. There are also two Latin-American immigrant organizations in the area that are supporting the campaign.

B. Of course, the forces behind the campaign are tiny. The only real organization, and that's small enough, is the SP. But the important thing is that the campaign nonetheless has a broader profile. This is something new in Sweden. It's a very nonsectarian way of gathering the forces that are against austerity, for youth, women, immigrants and for solidarity with Nicaragua and Poland. Moreover, this combination of Central America and Poland is a very important thing for the Swedish left.

F. It's the dividing line between us and the other currents on the left.

B. There are a lot of elements in the VpK or the orthodox Stalinist party [the AKP, Workers Communist Party] who are against the austerity policy and the bureaucracy in the unions. But for the Social Democratic workers who are breaking from their traditional allegiance today, who don't feel comfortable anymore in the Social Democratic Party, these

"Communist" currents are no alternative, even if they have positions on austerity, etc. that these workers agree with. Because these people look at Poland, Latvia, and other Baltic countries.

Q. Is this a factor because you have a lot of refugees from the Baltic countries in Sweden?

B. Yes. That's important. But the largest number of refugees are from Poland.

Q. What sort of response did you get from the other far left organizations, the AKP for instance?

B. The AKP has its own campaign. Besides, they have been on a rampage against Trotskyism, running long articles denouncing the Trotskyist menace. In Goteborg, they expelled their whole active membership for collaborating with us on the October 4 demonstration against the right.

F. In the last parliamentary elections, they got about 6,000 votes, and we got about 4,000. In some communities in the north of Sweden they have strong traditional support.

B. They have a backbone of older workers in their party. When you talk to AKPers, you can be impressed that they have been in the struggle for so long. But then you feel very sad, because you realize that these people are finished.

Q. That they are fossils?

B. Yes. I think that we will outdistance the AKP this time.

Q. What about the VpK?

B. They are growing today, in electoral support, not in activity or

Demonstrating for workers rights (DR)

membership. The polls show a slight upturn for the Social Democrats and a sharper one for the VpK. That's not surprising. They are extremely close to the Social Democrats now, I have never heard them sound so Social Democratic in my lifetime.

Q. That is, they look like Social Democrats but a bit to the left?

B. Yes.

F. The way it works is this: The Social Democrats make austerity proposals. The VpK says, "No, no, we can't have this." But the Social Democrats keep pressing, and then the VpK says that it has no choice but to go along.

B. One Social Democrat leader even said publicly that they always propose measures harsher than they intend to implement, so that they can make some compromises with the VpK and make it appear that the VpK got something. So, the VpK has gained electoral influence, and that must convince the leadership that they are on the right track. But on the ground, they are going to hell.

In Sweden, there is a feeling spreading among Social Democratic unionists and workers, and even among Communist Party unionists and workers, that there are no longer any workers parties.

F. On my job, they say that to me. They don't support us. Maybe only a few of them will vote for us on the quiet. But they say, "It's perfectly understandable that you are trying to run a ticket to the left of the VpK and the Social Democrats. It doesn't make any difference for us whether a Social Democratic government or a bourgeois government is in power."

If you look at the Social Democratic Party slates, you see "social worker," "professor," and all sorts of top academic titles, or just party full-timers. Then, maybe on the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth place, you may see "metalworker." They have to keep some sort of front, after all.

B. It's a strange situation in Sweden now. The Social Democrats have been very inactive. Their electoral workers seem not to have dared to go out. It's a very bad state of affairs when a Social Democratic government gets in and says that Sweden is on the right track again, and then a year later everything starts getting worse for ordinary people. And all the official propaganda is that everything is getting better. It's a 1984 situation. It creates an atmosphere where the Social Democratic election workers are afraid to go out. But at the same time the polls are getting better for the Social Democrats. And the VpK are in about the same state as the



Social Democrats.

F. They are very inactive.

B. The VpK youth has between 15,000 and 20,000 members on paper. But in Stockholm, when the local branch tried to assemble their members, they could get only four together. They have collapsed.

But we are also having some strange problems. The activity of our membership is down sharply. But our paper has the highest circulation it has ever had. This summer camp is the biggest we have ever had.

F. There are many new people here.

B. But there is a problem of flagging activity.

Q. Like people taking a vacation?

B. Perhaps, but not just in the summer, it has been going on since April.

F. People are feeling the pressure of austerity. Even our members tend to seek private solutions, retire into the family, spend more time with the children, let the bad weather pass over.

B. The problems of the society affect us, too. For example, one of our main leaders is not here this week. He had to work extra in the harbor so that his family could make ends meet.

F. Part of the problem is slowness in rooting ourselves in the unions. We have, maybe, 40 or 50 percent of our membership in unions that belong to the National Labor Organization (LO). Those members are active in everything. But the members who are isolated in places where only a few people work, who often have higher education, they feel a right wing wind blowing. But in the industrial workplaces, the wind is blowing in the other direction.

Q. It's not a life cycle thing is it, that is, that your membership is getting older, more have children, and so on?

B. That's part of it.

F. Yes. I regret now very much that we didn't start the youth organization in 1975. We did not realize that our membership was getting older.

B. Another problem is that women are being pushed back in the party, as a result of these social pressures. There are fewer and fewer women in leading positions. On the other hand, 90 percent of our new recruits and sympathizers are women.

Q. So, why are you suddenly getting so popular among women?

B. It's the course of the radicalization in Swedish society today. Women are becoming more and more critical. They are often alone,

with one or more children. They often work six hours a day, with lower pay. So, the austerity policy hits them much harder than men. You can see the effect when you are selling papers. When you're ringing on doorbells. Women are generally more interested in what we have to say.

Q. What about the role of youth in this campaign?

F. Well, we changed the name of the campaign from the original Workers Protest Campaign to a Workers and Youth Protest Campaign. In Stockholm, the first nine candidates on the slate for parliament are Young Socialists; They are educating the older members of the party on the youth question. One of the main issues is the new laws for getting youth into work, in a very artificial way, at low wages.

B. The "Youth Units."

F. There is one law for youths 16-17 years of age and another for youths 18-19 years of age.

B. They have just taken all the young people off the unemployment rolls. They have put them into Youth Units and taken away all their social benefits. What happens is that when they cut back social services, for example, they lay off the hospital workers and replace them with Youth Units, who get half the wages.

The most important demand for the youth protest campaign is the right to real jobs. The other demands are that young people should have places of their own to live and a right to happiness.

Q. What is the "Benny" organization, exactly?

B. It's a new phenomenon. It's not really a political youth organization in the traditional sense.

F. They have just two or three demands, money in the pocket, happiness, etc. They have gathered a lot of rebellious youth around them, youngsters of 14, 15, 16 years. In fact, these young people are very dubious about running in elections. Anyway, they can't vote. The minimum voting age is 18. They are anarchistic minded. The socialists inside seem to have pressed them to support our campaign.

We may see some problems later in the campaign. Because the media will not present the ticket as a coalition but as a socialist one. And "Benny" has not taken a position for socialism.

B. They say, "We're neither left nor right, we're just 'Benny.'" This imaginary character, "Benny," is the symbol of the group, sort of a mascot, a strange-looking figure with big teeth. He is drawn on walls all

over Stockholm with captions saying, "Benny wants a job," "Benny wants an apartment," "Benny wants happiness."

F. "Benny thinks," "Benny can manage," "Benny knows."

B. They have big banners in demonstrations with just this strange figure with big teeth, looking silly. And they say, "Benny," nothing more. They have aroused a lot of comment in the media.

F. I read a long article about them in a financial paper. They had some professor at Upsala explain the symbolism of "Benny."

B. They have about 150 people in Stockholm, but it is very loose. They don't have meetings. They just have parties.

F. They have about ten people in Nacka and I got them together for their first meeting to interview them for our mass paper.

Q. What mass paper?

F. We are publishing a special campaign paper in editions of a quarter of a million copies nationally. It's not the paper of the SP but of the coalition. It's mainly made up of interviews with the different candidates on our slates and different members of the four component organizations. We assume about 90 percent of the costs, but we give the other organizations equal space.

The interviews take up different aspects of the platform. The main article in the latest issue describes the flow of money from the poor to the banks, to the industrialists, and to the finance capitalists. There are two articles on the back, one is on Central America and one is on Poland. The latter is mainly an attack on the way the bourgeoisie exploits this question.

The different organizations in the coalition will also distribute their own materials. For example, a number of SP branches have made their own mass papers.

Q. How much of a role do internationalist issues play in the campaign?

F. The Polish issue is less active now, because the situation in Poland has not changed for the last two years. There is a more active interest in Nicaragua. That is a well established issue now in Swedish politics. For example, in my city, the municipal government has twinned with a little town outside Leon called Santa Rosa. This has given the Nicaragua solidarity committee in Nacka the occasion to invite representatives of Santa Rosa to speak. There is a collection going on now to gather 30,000 crowns for a school. Many radicals go to Nicaragua to work.

We also have a member of the Nacka branch of the SP in Nicaragua working in public health. She will return for three weeks in August and we will organize meetings for her to speak on Nicaragua in the framework of the campaign.

Q. What role does the immigrant issue play?

F. We have put immigrants in high positions on our slates. They are allowed to vote in municipal and regional elections but not for parliament. So, we demand that they also have the right to vote for the national government. Moreover, the flow of refugees from third world dictatorships has increased and that is becoming a big issue in Sweden. For the first time, small racist and Nazi sects are trying to start agitation against immigrants. The border police are getting very racist and try to turn refugees back whenever they can. This sort of thing is in the newspapers every day now.

We had a case in a town near Nacka where there was a Chilean refugee family that had been waiting for three years for permission to stay, and it was finally denied. The pupils at the school where this family's nine-year-old girl was enrolled demonstrated and petitioned the government. The local nursery school petitioned the government. Unfortunately, the Social Democrats and the VpK did not do anything, although they had the majority in the town.

Another case is Sodertaelje, an industrial town just south of Stockholm. There is a big Assyrian community there, about 4,000 out of 100,000 inhabitants. They all live in one area. The authorities are trying to keep them from living together. So, we are campaigning for their right to live where they want.

Socialist Party election poster (DR)



The example of a Fourth Internationalist unionist at Volvo Goteborg

THE FOLLOWING interview was given to Gerry Foley in Milan in March by Gote Kilden, the leader of the Socialistiska Parti/Swedish section of the Fourth International organization at the Volvo motor vehicle complex in Goteborg, following new successes by the SP-IV in union elections.

Question. With the right on the offensive and the left generally in decline, how do you explain the fact that the SP-backed slates continue to make progress in the elections?

Answer. The trade-union opposition in Goteborg has been active for ten years now. In the beginning, it included different political forces, such as the Communist Party, our party, and other left-wing groups. In recent years, all the other organized political forces have gone away. They have dissolved or become diluted owing to the changes in political and trade-union life in Sweden.

You could also say that we as well have been hit by crisis in some respects. Some of the cadres in the opposition and some SP members have also become demoralized, although not to the extent that they have lost interest in union politics or left our party. But after spending many years at physically hard jobs and still being young enough to change, many of them have gone on to skilled jobs, such as electricians. But that has meant that we have lost some capable cadres among assembly-line workers.

Moreover, the right has been having a field day, as in many other countries. And now with a Social Democratic government pushing down wages, instituting an austerity program, there has been further demoralization among many left Social Democratic sympathizers and for the first time we can see some very young workers, representing 10 to 20% in general elections, turning to the right. Some young workers even wear right-wing party badges. This does not happen, on the other hand, in the Volvo truck factory, where we are very strong. The relationship of forces there is such that it is impossible to

act as a rightist.

Our position is that there has been no real change among workers in general, although there has been a certain shift among younger workers to the right. We talk rather about a political vacuum. That is, you have workers turning their backs on politics in general, all parties. Of course, this means problems for us. But we have stood up against the right. One important example of what can be achieved in this respect happened after the right held a demonstration of tens of thousands of people in Goteborg. Formally, it was against a proposal by the Social Democratic government to set up funds through which the workers could "buy out" the capitalists, the so-called Wage Earners Funds. But in reality it was to attack wages, the public sector, social security, and to press for greater differentiation within the working class. The right wants big differences between skilled and unskilled workers, like in the US. In Sweden, there is still very little difference.

The Social Democratic Party and the big unions refused to reply to this offensive. But we took an initiative and got support from dozens of local unions, most of them small but including some large ones. We managed at first to organize a demonstration of 2,000 people. Second, we produced a good paper and managed to circulate 100,000 copies. We held a lot of neighborhood meetings, going around working-class areas. The big press was obliged to send reporters to our news conferences.

We have taken many initiatives like that, such as our work in support of the British miners. We have taken representatives of the FMLN of El Salvador to our union meetings.

We have also been aggressive in skirmishes around local contracts and our working conditions. So that's the background to the recent elections.

In the truck factory, we already had a majority, but not an absolute one. I have been the chairman there for some years. This year, after a furious campaign by the Social Democratic Party, in which the state apparatus threw itself behind them to a large extent, in which they had dozens of full timers, expensive leaflets, four-color materials, and all that, our candidates got an average vote of around 67%.

What we did not expect was that this time also we made a breakthrough in the auto plant. On the day shift, where the union has a thousand members, our comrades got 55% of the vote. They only ran three candidates but all of them got 55%. This is an extremely important indication, given the situation I talked about before. It shows that a political vacuum can be transformed into support and confidence for a new leadership. It showed that in response to the government's austerity policies, a lot of former Social Democratic voters are ready to look for a different sort of leadership.

We say that the right wing only exists because of the betrayal of the union leaderships. It is they who open the door for the rightist forces. The union leaderships are saying that the public sector has to be cut back. The rightists say, OK but it should be cut back more. Social Democratic politicians and union leaders don't stand up for a socialist program. The same goes for the CP, which has a marginal role in Sweden.

The CP gets about 5% of the vote in the elections. But in the union field it no longer has any base in the industrial unions, although it still has a certain base in the public sector. They have no position other than negotiating in parliament and keeping the peace. So, they told their activists to avoid competing with Social Democrats for union positions because that was not good for their relationship with the Social Democratic Party in parliament. The Social Democrats more or less told them that if they gave them trouble in the unions, then they would not accept them as allies in parliament.

But the workers are looking for an alternative. There is another important example. At an important steel plant, Domenarbetet-Bolonge, where they produce special steel, and at Uranium Aluminium, we took the leadership of the union some weeks after there had been a scandal. The bureaucrats came in and offered a compromise, but the

workers did not buy it and threw the whole leadership out.

This is another example of the fact that the rightward trend is not something inevitable. If you have enough forces, if you have a correct line on trade-union unity, you can even put forward the elements of a socialist program, not just on trade-union issues but on governmental questions, on austerity. In our union election campaigns, we openly attacked the government's policy, calling it antiunion and against the interests of the workers, and so on.

Q. How well have you done in recruiting to the party in the plants?

A. We have recruited in the past years a substantial part of our fraction, what we call our "Union Club," from the plants. But because of the situation I described, with many leaving to take skilled jobs, our membership has remained about the same for the last two years. But we hope that we can broaden our contacts during the party campaign for the September 15 parliamentary elections.

When we began our union work, we were rather young, many of us. Our periphery were very inexperienced in union matters. Today, it's different. In our new union leadership, we have many workers around us who are thirty or forty or fifty years old, and they follow our party in a very close way. I think that in the coming year we can recruit a lot of them. It takes time. These people have no political background, and they have families and so on. So, it takes some years for them to acquire a political education. But already today, they are close to our politics.

Q. How much of a factor in your success in the union elections is the close identification between the government and the union bureaucracy? Are you seen as the force that is not controlled by the government?

A. I think that in these elections the close relationship of the bureaucrats to the government favored us. They came against us with anti-Communist slander, a red-baiting campaign, calling us terrorists. But this has not worked, because we have been working in the union for many years. People know us as serious socialists, union people. They don't accept such slanders any more.

Q. What sort of a role does the Workers Communist Party (AKP), the orthodox Stalinist splitoff from the CP play? It claims to represent a workers alternative to the "petty bourgeois" politics of the regular CP (the VpK, Left Party of Communists)?

A. It's a minor party, but it has some forces. The group here originally

joined in our initiative against the right that I mentioned before. But their party leadership ordered them to withdraw, saying that Trotskyists were in the leadership. They refused, replying that whatever else these people may be they are good unionists and this initiative is a good one, even if we don't agree with them about the Soviet Union. The upshot was that they were expelled, 35 of them were expelled, including half the leadership and many of its most active members. They are not Trotskyists, but they are very open to discussion and to common activities.

Q. Does the AKP have a very different line in the unions from the VpK?

A. Yes. In the split, they kept some of the most experienced unionists. They were not necessarily more Stalinist than those who went to the Eurocommunist VpK, but they had the feeling that in the party nobody cared anymore about workers. They had no alternative but to be more radical than the VpK. Otherwise, they would have no reason for existence. But they also tend to be very weak with respect to the Social Democracy when it comes to national questions. On the other hand, the people who were expelled not only collaborated with us but also criticized their party leadership for having a weak line toward the Social Democrats.

Q. What sort of national impact did your gains in the Volvo elections have?

A. The Social Democrats' big paper, *Arbetet* ("Labor") devoted a whole editorial to it. The whole thing was an attack on me as a "splitter" of the workers movement. Their only argument was that we took an initiative against the rightist forces without the Social Democratic Party supporting it.

Q. But you did try to get the Social Democrats to support it?

A. Of course, and many did, many individuals, even some of their representatives in the city government came up to us and embraced us, saying that this initiative was the best one in ten years. So, we didn't have a sectarian line. But the Social Democrats refused to participate, because if they mobilize people to respond to the rightist attacks, tomorrow the same people are going to ask questions about the government's policy. So, the Social Democrats are paralyzed in the face of the right. We hope that we can begin to get across the idea of an alternative on a broader scale in our campaign for the parliamentary elections. ■

Not only in Volvo

STOCKHOLM — In recent years, we have seen it again and again. The Social Democratic bureaucracy has been tightening its grip over the union movement by combining the organizations into larger and larger units and narrowing the maneuvering room for broad opposition currents in the union elections. As this process has progressed, the left has found it more and more difficult to make any impact on the top level of the union movement.

This has led many people in the Swedish union movement and the mass media to regularly announce the death of the left opposition to the policies of the Social Democratic leadership. Of course, they say, there are a few plants that are the "exceptions that prove the rule." The fact is that they have completely missed what has been happening at the grassroots level in many other places.

KJELL PETTERSSON

In a series of workplaces throughout Sweden, the left is stronger today in fact than it has been in a long time. That was pointed up by a number of union elections in the spring and early summer.

Those who are fighting for a militant and democratic trade-union movement remain a distinct minority. But both in industry and in the social service sector — for example, transit and the hospitals — left opposition currents have made notable advances. These can be explained by three factors:

— There is a growing gap between what the top union leaderships in the National Labor Organization [Landsorganisation — LO] say and what a lot of working people feel should be done. Unemployment, open and still more so concealed, remains high. The government is keeping an "anti-inflation ceiling" on wages. Another issue is the shutting down of the Uddevalla shipyards, the most modern in the country, with 2,000 workers. So, discontent is growing, and the confidence gap is widening for the Social Democratic government. At the time, opponents of the austerity policy are getting a greater hearing for their ideas in the unions.

— In a period of economic crisis, it is particularly important that the workers have organizations that can defend their interests. More and more of them see the unions as organizations run from the top in which the ordinary members

have less and less say. This feeling is increasing possibilities for advancing democratic demands — a right to a voice in negotiations and in contracts and the same living standards for those who are supposed to represent the workers as for ordinary workers.

— If there are union activists who year after year have fought consistently for their workmates in local contract struggles, against plant closures, and for greater union democracy, then the way can open up for an alternative. This is just what happened in the spring.

Despite the fact that this is an election year and the Social Democrats are doing everything possible to assure tranquility in the workplaces, supporters of radical union policies are more and more coming to the fore.

In the local contract negotiations at the Saab-Scania auto factory in Goteborg, the factory union club members demanded five crowns (about US 75 cents) more an hour. The fact that the club leadership backed up this demand can be seen as a result of the work of the union opposition. This year, it put up two radical candidates for the club leadership. Both were elected with clear margins. The opposition now holds three of the six places in the leadership.

At the end of 1984, it was discovered that the treasurer of the factory club at the Graenges Metall aluminium factory in Sundsvall had

embezzled about 140,000 crowns. The consequence of this was that the entire club leadership was forced out.

An interim leadership was put in until the elections that were scheduled for February. For the first time in Graenges' history, the election was conducted in the plant itself. Over half the workers took part in the elections, while in the past only about a third had done so. Six of the seven places in the club leadership went to candidates who had participated in the work of the union opposition.

In the Stockholm municipal workers union, which includes the mass-transportation workers in the Greater Stockholm area, elections were held in a series of sections [districts] in the spring.

In sections No. 5 and 8, the union radicals have long had a majority in the leadership. In these elections, the radicals held their positions.

Most heartening were the gains made in Section No 6. Under the name "Trade-Union Renewal," a group of Stockholm transit workers ran on the following demands: "No cutbacks in transit, no cuts in real wages, and for building more membership participation through better dissemination of information and more democracy in the union."

"Trade-Union Renewal" ran candidates for the Section leadership, for the delegates to the municipal workers union leadership, and for the editorial board of the union newspaper, *Raka Spaaret* ["Straight Track"]. All but one were elected by a good majority.

For an independent union, a voice for the membership, and better information for the members — those were some of the demands raised by the "Trade-Union Alternative" in the elections in Section No 1, Branch [Avdelning] 34 of the municipal workers union in Uppsala.

The Socialist Party [Swedish section of the Fourth International] union club in the university hospital ran six candidates for the branch [avdelning] leadership. Two were elected as full members and two as alternates. One of the Trade-Union Alternative candidates was also elected as an alternative to the section leadership.

Moreover, for the first time individual socialists have been elected to factory and shop level positions in a number of workplaces, such as Saab-Scania in Soedertaelje, the SSAB steel plant in Borlaenge, Atlas Avosverken in Oerebro, which produces mining equipment, and Sweden Boots rubber factory in Helsingborg. And the list seems certain to grow. ■

The PRT in parliament

Interview with Sergio

Rodriguez

ON JULY 7, 1985, legislative elections were held in Mexico (see *International Viewpoint*, July 29, 1985). In those elections, the Mexican section of the Fourth International, the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT), made some important breakthroughs. Despite widespread electoral fraud by the government, the PRT obtained, officially, more than 300,000 votes (1.7% of the votes expressed), which entitled it to six representatives in parliament. Three years before in the presidential and legislative elections, the PRT had failed to reach the quorum of 1.5% and its success in these elections is testimony to the party's involvement in all the different struggles across the country. It also demonstrates the economic and political crisis inside the country, a crisis which is rapidly undermining its 'stability'.

Below, Sergio Rodriguez, a leading member of the PRT outlines the conduct of the election campaign in an interview given just after the elections and before the results were fully known.

Question. The ruling party — the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI — in power since 1929) presents itself as coming from the people, as the guardian of the spirit of the revolution but at the same time it implements severe austerity measures against the population. Despite this and the fact that it is well-known that the election results will be fiddled as they have been before, this party is still in power and has been for the last 56 years! They are now saying that they have received 70 per cent of the votes cast. These facts taken together are rather difficult to fathom.

Answer. The PRI did not get 70% of the votes. They might have picked up 55 to 56 per cent of votes cast but the turnout for the elections was only about 45%. This means, therefore that the PRI continues to hang on to power with the support of only one quarter of the electorate.

But that is not the main issue. I believe we are witnessing the most severe crisis ever undergone by the PRI and this is expressed in four ways.

Firstly, the PRI built itself a definite anti-imperialist image which, at the time, rested on its very real opposition to US interests.

The PRI were saying to the masses; 'If the US takes retaliatory measures against us we are counting on you to support us against "gringo imperialism".' But in the last few years the Mexican government, under the leadership of the PRI, has aligned itself more and more with the economic and international policies of US imperialism.

Also there is the issue of the relationship between the PRI and the Mexican bourgeoisie. In the framework of the 'Pri-ite' state machine and under its protection, the bourgeoisie has grown in strength and is more and more tied up with US capitalism, since the Mexican economy is very dependent on the USA. This bourgeoisie wants to see an even stronger alignment of the Mexican state with the USA. On the other hand it wants further rationalisation of Mexican capitalism. For example, it wants to put an end to some of the benefits that the peasants have received as a result of the Mexican revolution. Agrarian reform in Mexico has meant that the vast mass of the peasantry have access to the land. On these issues an important section of the Mexican bourgeoisie would prefer the Mexican government to switch its policies

and for this they are looking towards another bourgeois party, the Partido Accion Nacional (PAN).

Thirdly, there is the question of relations between the PRI and the trade union bureaucracy. The very powerful trade union movement in Mexico is dominated by a bureaucracy which is directly linked to the PRI. But this bureaucracy did not come to power simply by crushing the left in the union. It came to power because at one time economic conditions in Mexico allowed the Mexican government to make social and economic concessions to the workers. In exchange the trade union bureaucracy kept social peace and made propaganda for the PRI. Once the PRI began to adopt a policy of austerity, the trade union leadership had to take its distance in order to survive, although it only did so in a very half-hearted manner. Since then, the dissatisfaction of the workers with the trade union leadership has increased.

Finally, for several decades now the PRI has relied on the mobilisation of the masses to support it. This doesn't happen any more. Now you hear people everywhere — in the marketplaces and on buses — complaining about the government. A large section of the population still vote for the PRI, but it can no longer rely on popular mobilisation.

So there is a crisis of the system of rule of the PRI without any real left alternative to the crisis developing. Popular discontent is widespread but it is not as yet expressed in an organised way, except in certain sectors. This has been achieved, for example, with the independent peasant organisations in which the PRT plays an important role such as the Coordinacion Nacional Plan de Ayala (CNPA) which organises 500,000 peasants. (1) The problem is that within the industrial working class no such organised class struggle current exists. The bureaucracy still controls the trade union movement. So the proletariat is not yet in the leadership in the country, it has not yet proved itself to be the *caudillo* (commander) linking up with the peasantry to present a workers' alternative.

Q. Did you present parliamentary lists in every area of the country and how were they made up?

A. We presented lists in every area, yes. They were made up of 850 candidates for parliamentary representation. If you add our parti-

1. On April 10, 1985, the Coordinacion Nacional Plan de Ayala organised a 50,000-strong march of peasants to the capital. This was one of several regional demonstrations involving a total of one million people.

cipation in certain regional elections, the total number of candidates is 2,000.

One third of the candidates were under thirty years old. Our lists included the largest number of women. We had lots of working class candidates, trade union activists especially in electricity, rail, textiles, and in the finishing industries. But mostly we had mass leaders of the independent peasant organisations.

We took a great deal of care in drawing up the lists and as we had opened them up to mass organisations we were able to call electoral assemblies locally to finalise the lists. We also gave an important role to the mass organisation in the urban areas which is linked to our organisation, that is the Bloque Popular Revolucionario, which organises the fightback in the shantytowns and the popular quarters.

Q. You say that certain mass peasants' organisations participated in the PRT campaign. Yet wasn't the 1985 campaign more centralised under the party banner than was the case in 1982?

A. Yes, of course. In 1982, we were still a small party with very little electoral experience. We had a lot of nerve, but no real organisational roots. In 1982, we organised an electoral campaign around the presidential candidature of Rosario Ibarra, the main figure in the fight against the government for democratic rights. In 1985, Rosario was again a candidate in the legislative elections and she did a series of meetings in the campaign, but this time it was less centred on her candidature. At the start of the 1982 election campaign, we had members in 15 of the 32 states and we stood 171 candidates.

There is also a political difference between the 1982 and 1985 campaigns. In 1985, in the elections, we decided to conduct a campaign against all the policies of the government and of imperialism. We put forward a programme which was in tune with the preoccupations of the masses and which provoked a popular response because it corresponded to the level of consciousness of the masses. Also, this campaign was characterised by its firmer roots in the society and by its superior organisational capacity and more developed response from the membership.

Q. What were your main slogans?

A. We had two main slogans; 'Arriba los de abajo!' ('up with those who are down!') and 'Democracy, wages and land'.

Before we would have simply taken up the slogan for a 'workers and peasants government' but this was not the best way of expressing



'Down with those at the top' 'Up with those at the bottom' (DR)

what we want. The Mexican people are very critical of the government, they are against corruption, but they do not understand all the links between corruption on the part of the PRI and the exploitation in the capitalist system as a whole.

The PRI mounted its campaign around the theme of 56 years of stability and social peace. We said; 'fifty-six years of exploitation and corruption! Those who head the country should be brought down!' This slogan was very popular. For example in different regions of the country the peasants composed three songs around the theme of the campaign, 'Arriba los de abajo!' And these songs are becoming more and more popular.

But there were other slogans which have more of a relation with social and economic issues. We put forward the demand for the non-recognition of the foreign debt. This was a cross between the demand for a moratorium and the non-recognition of the debt. We explained that the foreign debt had already been paid by the profits made in Mexico by international capitalism and through flights of capital abroad. And we said: 'If someone

has to pay this it should be the bourgeoisie and the Mexican government who used and organised external borrowing and the flight of capital.' We also demanded: 'Who has been consulted about this debt? Who was consulted about renegotiating it? And if we repay it, what effects will this have on the standard of living of the masses?'

We also put forward anti-imperialist slogans like 'Defend the country against US imperialism'. But we understood that this defence could not be achieved through an alliance with the Mexican bourgeoisie or sections of it or even with the government. Because these people are in a position of total subordination to the interests of US imperialism, especially on the economic level. The struggle for the defence of the country means that the proletariat must act as the 'caudillo' and must place itself at the head of the oppressed and exploited in this country and must direct their fire against imperialism and its national allies, the government and the Mexican bourgeoisie.

We also put forward a whole series of demands around the issue of democracy. The first thing we said was that there is no such thing as democ-

racy in the abstract. The most important democratic right is the right to eat, to earn a decent living wage, the right to work and the right to adequate housing. Thus we posed the question of democracy in the context of class, in the context of the interests of the working class and the other oppressed classes, also giving a social character to democratic demands.

The PRT also, of course, posed the question of democracy in its strictly political context, from the point of view of democratic rights in general, democratic rights in the workplace, that is in the factories, in agricultural work as well as in the places where people live and in the popular quarters. It should not be obligatory to affiliate to the PRI and the whole system of social coercion instituted by the government should be abolished.

Q. An electoral campaign is not just a series of slogans, it is also a whole mobilisation of the forces inside and around the party?

A. We adopted a campaign strategy six months before the elections. This plan covered all the main issues: the content of the electoral programme, the make-up of the list, the rhythm of activity, etc. The fundamental question was how to involve the maximum number of people who were not yet in the party. In order to do this we set up women's committees or committees in the shantytowns with the job of supporting women or inhabitants of the shantytowns who were on our lists without necessarily being members of the party.

On the other hand, we tried to get the maximum number of contacts and sympathisers to agree to be our representatives at the polling booths and at the count. In Mexico City, we were represented by nearly 4,000 people in the polling stations! This is important because it is a way of getting contacts to identify with the party. It is a huge step forward when you realise the extent of the control that the PRI exercises over every aspect of life. It was also good for the party because it limited the possibility for fraud. Furthermore we managed to get the mass organisations, in particular amongst peasants, who supported us, to really put a lot into the election campaign.

The party put in a great deal of effort to achieve this. We sent full-timers out into certain areas to launch the campaign. New branches of the party were set up at that time. This was most notably the case in the north of the country where, in one area we recruited one hundred

new members, many of whom were peasants. In order to mobilise the party and its contacts and the people who we met in the course of the campaign, we had to break with a very current tradition on the left, which consists of saying that elections are merely an occasion for doing party propaganda and that the number of votes received is not really important. On the contrary, we had to stress that it was important to get votes and that this was evidence of the credibility that we might have at a given time.

But this was not the main objective, either. The main objective was that between now and the end of the year we should recruit several thousands of new members. Our main problem is the political education of this growing membership of the party. There are certain regions of the country, like Sonora and Puebla where whole village communities want to join the party or where there are people who already consider themselves members. This happens in the shantytowns as well. Up until now we have been telling them that there were certain conditions for becoming a member of the party and that there is a difference between being a sympathiser and being a member. We tell them that they are not members of the party. But we have to find a better solution to this problem. Anyway, our peasant fraction has fixed a target of recruiting 500 peasants to the party.

Q. Could you give us some idea of the size of the party, in statistical terms, and of the sort of things you achieved in the election campaign?

A. At the beginning of the election campaign we had 2,000 members and nearly 3,000 organised

Election poster with Emiliano Zapata (DR)



sympathisers. We have people in all the 32 states in Mexico. Of course there is an uneven development of the party. In certain states we are very strong, like in Sonora, Baja California, Morelos, Colima and Mexico City. In others, like Oaxaca or Quintana Roo, we are weak. As far as public meetings go we had more than 100,000 people participating. At our final rally for central Mexico on June 15, 1985, we counted 25,000 people in the Zocalo, the main square in Mexico City, of which about 1,500 came from the state of Puebla, a six or seven-hour bus journey away. At the final rally for the northern region, in the state of Chihuahua, there were 6,000 and at the one in Sonora there were 4,000. We also made a big effort with posterage. In Mexico City, for example, where we stood 40 candidates, we printed 3,000 copies of a personalised poster for each candidate, that is 120,000 altogether. We should also add all the general posters. That would be, altogether, for the town of Mexico City alone, 500,000 posters!

Q. What strikes you when you go round Mexico City is the huge number of wall murals that the party has done. That must have been a lot of work?

A. Yes. You must realise that only the PRT, the United Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM — the Mexican communist party) and the Mexican Workers Party (PMT — a radical nationalist party), put up their own mural slogans. All the other parties pay people to do this work. In Mexico City people talked about the 'war of the walls' because there was a permanent battle to get access to the walls and to protect the slogans you put there. It takes two or

three hours to put up a really big slogan.

Q. Did the PRT candidates suffer any attacks because of their participation in the election campaign?

A. Yes. A few days after the list of candidates became public, the repression started. Our candidate from the number one district of Mexico City is secretary of a section of the public employees' union. The national leadership demanded the resignation of the comrade. After a huge defence campaign, we managed to get it agreed that he could complete his term of office. Since then there have been more trade union elections in this particular sector and we have strengthened our position in the union leadership.

The most serious incident occurred the day before the vote when an independent candidate on the PRT list in Mexico City was assassinated by five or six 'unknown' assailants who attacked him in a popular quarter of the town. We are certain he was killed because he was a candidate. It is not unusual for activists in the town or in the countryside to be killed like that without anyone claiming responsibility.

Q. What was the attitude of the PRT with regard to the rest of the Mexican left?

A. The PRT proposed a common front for the elections to the rest of the left. This front would have included the PRT, the PSUM and the PMT and all the left which was not legalised. We believe that the realisation of such a united front could fundamentally change Mexican political life because it would put an end to the traditional reaction of an important section of workers who, in order to vote against the PRI, vote for the other large bourgeois party, the PAN.

But the two other parties of the left were not in agreement with our proposal. They preferred to go it alone in the elections. Despite this, the left got a lot of votes. For example in Mexico City, which has 18 million inhabitants, the PSUM, the PRT and the PMT together got almost 18% in some areas and 21% to 29% in others. In several areas of the town the PRT got 5.5% of the votes, the PMT 6.5% and the PSUM, 9%. On average the PRT got 3.5% of the votes in Mexico City, that is nearly 100,000 votes. The significance of this success, which occurred despite the divisions, has now been recognised by the three parties and the leading bodies of each have declared that if they get members elected to parliament they will form a joint parliamentary group. ■

Nairobi: Women debate their liberation

'WOMEN SHOULD not be discussing politics but only the issues specifically related to women!' This was the slogan of the US delegates and their allies in the run up to and during the third and final UN Decade for Women Conference and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Forum held in Nairobi, Kenya this summer. The theme of the Decade was 'Equality, Development and Peace' — but it was 'development issues' that the US was particularly enthusiastic to promote. While government representatives (women and men) met in the prestigious Kenyatta Conference Centre to reach agreement on the final decade document entitled 'Forward Looking Strategies', the alternative Forum at the Nairobi University was an enormous gathering of 14,000 women (and some men) from all over the world. The author of the following article was part of the delegation from the London-based SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign.

ROS YOUNG

The participants in the Forum came from national liberation organisations such as SWAPO, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the African National Congress (ANC), the Front for the National and Socialist Liberation of the Kanaks (FLNKS), Eritrea and East Timor; from Black women's groups, refugee and migrant groups, indigenous peoples organisations, aid and development agencies, peace movements, lesbian groups and Christian organisations. This was a forum for meeting together, discussing, exchanging ideas, learning and making contacts for future work. It was not a formal conference and had no official relationship with the nearby UN meeting, nor any influence on the final documents that government delegates were laboriously plodding through. Nevertheless, the Forum was the most important of the two in that many of the women there were representing grass roots organisations and were the people who were fighting for their rights as women, as Black people, as the working class and oppressed. And by meeting people who were in struggle, you could really find out what was happening internationally.

Attempts had been made to avoid holding such a forum as the US feared (quite rightly as it turned out) that it could become a platform for

attacking US policies. Having failed to stop it going ahead, organisational sabotage became the order of the day to ensure that minimum numbers of women were able to find their way through the bureaucracy to register and raise funds to get to Kenya. The US had instructed the Kenyan government to use hotel space allocations to keep the number of potential troublemakers down and to exercise strict controls on entry visas. SWAPO delegates did have quite a bit of trouble getting into the country. Other women were stopped from leaving their own countries, such as Palestinian women from the Israeli occupied territories who were refused travel permits and are now under house arrest. Despite this, women mobilised to get to Kenya in the last few months, having heard that the US was trying to hijack the Forum. For example, SWAPO Women's Council in Angola urged their supporters to attend because the US was planning to send around 2,000 delegates and participants to stop important political issues such as the struggle for Namibian independence being discussed. At the opening ceremony, the organisers admitted that they were shocked at the response. Up to the official closing date for registration in April, only 2,000 women had officially registered! Other

organisational methods were employed to limit and isolate the debates on apartheid in Namibia and South Africa and Zionism in particular. Over 1,000 workshops took place and it would be interesting to know what priorities were in operation in the allocation of rooms and times — many important workshops were given tiny rooms ...

Without a doubt, the main focus of the Forum was whether you saw 'women's issues' as separate from the struggles against US and western imperialism, against apartheid and racism, against colonialism and neo-colonialism, that is 'politics'. Women from the Pacific talked about the years of nuclear war that have been inflicted on their people by western governments testing the latest bombs; the Kanak people are fighting for independence from French colonialism, the Aboriginal peoples of Australia and New Zealand for self-determination, basic human rights and for their land rights in the face of gross exploitation. Indigenous Indian women from Nicaragua spoke of their support and defence of the revolution but that due to their marginalisation in the revolution and the specific discrimination they face not being recognised sooner by the Sandinistas the US has been able to cynically recruit their people over to the side of the counter-revolutionary forces. The Guatemalan Junta, with technical aid and expertise from Israel, are practising wholesale genocide on the indigenous Indians (who are 80% of the population!) in an attempt to expropriate the land for use by the multinational companies.

Women face additional oppression throughout the 'Third World' in the attacks on their fundamental right to control their own bodies. Widespread drug experimentation, in particular contraceptive drugs, and mass forced sterilisations are taking place under the cover of medical research and population control.

The triumph of the Forum was that at last at an international women's meeting, the liberation movements, Black women, women from all over the Third World were in the majority and were the stronger. In many workshops women were told not to speak about politics, but they couldn't be silenced. One SWAPO woman reported that in a workshop on prisons they wouldn't let her talk about her experiences in South African prisons — the American women running the workshop wanted a discussion on social work within prisons, rather than confronting why prisons exist in the first place and who is being imprisoned — Black people, the working class, political prisoners.

As the Forum progressed, it was



Some of the delegates at the Nairobi Forum (DR)

around the question of Palestine that the most heated debates took place. To gain credibility, the Zionists (from Israel, the US and Europe) continually insisted that 'Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jews' and that any criticism of Israel (in relation to Palestine and Israel's counter-revolutionary activities internationally) was tantamount to anti-semitism. They enlisted Black women from the US to say that the oppression of Jews was the same as the oppression against Blacks, and while some of the 'left' Zionists did have dialogues with Palestinian women, others refused to acknowledge the existence of Palestinians. It was clear that the terms of the debate had not moved forward since the last Forum in 1975, but support for the Palestinians and Lebanese had increased since the 1982 Israeli invasion.

Heavy security presence

An important aspect of the Forum was the heavy presence of security forces. Armed uniformed police patrolled the campus and dormitories where Forum delegates were staying; outside every hotel and Forum venue security checks were made and police hung around outside many of the workshops. Plain clothes security police were always present inside the 'political' workshops looking very conspicuous in suits with small triangle badges attached. After women gave contributions in open debates in the Peace Tent for example, they would be pounced on and asked 'what's your name, that was an interesting speech, do you have it written down, and where are you from!' In the West Papuan workshop Indonesian security police got inside and photo-

graphed everyone. An Iranian male tried to physically attack an Iranian woman who was speaking out against Khomeini's regime ...

All of this gave sufficient cause for alarm and although it did not silence women about their own struggles, it made many very reluctant to speak out about what was happening in Kenya itself. Informed sources told us that students who were acting as officials in the Forum were told to sit in workshops, listen in to conversations, take notes and report back. There was a lot of Kenyan government interference in the Forum, from evicting participants from their hotels to make way for official UN delegates, to trying to close the Peace Tent down (as women were discussing armed struggle) and seizing all the films for the Filmforum, insisting that they had to pass through the censor and completely ruining the whole programme as a result. They also refused permission for a march from the Forum to the UN Conference, but then that is not surprising since demonstrations are banned in Kenya anyway.

The police and security presence did have an illuminating effect — it alerted many women to the fact that things were not quite as they seemed and that Kenya was not the 'democratic' country many had been told about. Word spread through the campus, albeit quietly, about what was going on outside the Forum. Prostitutes and the dispossessed poor had been bused out of Nairobi in a big clean up of the city before we arrived, to give a good impression of what US and western money could do for Africa. We were told, however, of the rural poverty and starvation; the conditions of workers in the multi-national companies and the squatters towns around Nairobi,

of Langata women's prison, said to be worse than any of them men's prisons; the forced sterilisations of women in the rural areas and the widespread use of depo-provera; the murders of prostitutes by US servicemen from the US naval base in Mombassa. The heavy political repression has led to vicious attacks on students at

the university in recent months (17 died and over one hundred injured as a result of police attacks in February). There is the continuing imprisonment of university students and the lecturer Maina wa Kinyatti and while the Forum was in progress, 12 of the detained 1982 Coup leaders were hanged in prison ...

The main lesson learnt in Nairobi is that our struggle for women's liberation cannot be separated nor seen in isolation from the class and race struggle.

A longer version of this article is also due for publication in the journal Race and Class. ■

Asian women speak

We reprint below the text of a speech to a workshop organised by the Asian Women's Research and Action Network (AWRAN).

VIBHUTI PATEL

The decade has witnessed increasing violation of democratic and human rights in Asia. While accepting that both men and women are victims of it, we would like to emphasise that women suffer even more.

Growing militarisation in the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia, jingoism in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have their own implications on the lives of women. Conditions for women political prisoners and under trial is shocking. Heinous tactics of rape and other perverted forms of sexual abuse and torture are used for humiliation and terrorisation of women in these countries. Nepalese women fighting against the monarch are brutally tortured and abused by the state. It is not an exaggeration to say that the states in Asian countries have institutionalised violence against women. Mass rape of women by military-men in the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia; police atrocities against women in India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan are glaring examples of this phenomenon ...

During the decade, because of pressure from women's groups in some of the Asian countries, liberal legislation on questions like equal pay for equal work were granted on paper but at the same time basic democratic and trade union rights for women workers were taken away as a result of establishment of free trade zones and an expanding informal sector. During the decade most of the trade union struggles have been defensive struggles — employers close down factories and treat women workers as easily replaceable commodities. Women workers are expected to suffer in silence inspite of getting precarious wages and deteriorating

physical and mental conditions due to occupational diseases and hazards.

The state has double standards as far as women's struggles are concerned. If the middle class women demand liberal legislation, preferential treatment, reserved quotas, the state, at least sometimes, obliges. But if the toiling women start organising themselves the state ruthlessly represses them. In Pakistan, when martial law was declared in 1977, Zia-ul-Haq took it upon himself to bring about the new Islamic Order and the women of Pakistan bore the brunt of the Islamisation policies regarding punishment to "adulterous women", rape victims etc...

All states in Asian countries grant personal laws based on religious codes and customary laws. The laws are not only discriminatory against women, but have a deep-rooted prejudice against women. None of them recognise women's individuality in its own right and they see women as dependent on fathers, husbands or sons. Because of personal laws, legal status of women in different religious groups is not the same. Women's groups in Korea, the Philippines, Ceylon, India have demanded abolition of personal laws and formulation of uniform civil code.

Asian women don't have landrights. Even land reforms have deposited landrights in the hands of men. As a result in many countries agrarian women's struggles demanding landrights have emerged.

The worsening economic crisis has given rise to religious fundamentalism and ethnic revivalism that has culminated in religious, caste and ethnic riots

in Asia and women are the worst victims of the same. They have not only resulted in merciless massacres and mass rape but general curbing of women's access to education, employment and movement. Orgies of violence against Tamil women in Sri Lanka, Dalit-Muslim-Sikh-tribal women in India and women of Pakistan bear witness to this process, insecurity of minorities communities make them even more conservative about women.

The decade has sensitised women's groups to the fight against some of the worst forms of violence against women. Issues like rape and wife-beating are taken up by the women's groups all over Asia. The Women's Forums' fight against lynching and other brutal punishment to women in Pakistan, Indian women's struggles against "bride-burning" are some of them. In India, the old practice of female infanticide is replaced by the modern technique of female foeticide — Amniocentesis. It has posed a threat to survival of women, as it is, women are a declining sex in India.

State sponsored population polices have snatched away the basic reproductive rights of Asian women who are used as guinea-pigs for contraceptive researches. The drugs that are banned in the imperialist countries are dumped in the Asian countries. The Malaysian state wants women to produce five children to meet the projected 70 million population in 115 years time so that a large labour force can be provided for a heavy industrialisation. The state in Singapore wants its educated women to breed more babies so that a superior race is generated. In South Asia, the rulers want women to produce not more than two children. Contraceptive measures like sterilisation and abortion are not seen as means for women to have greater control over their bodies, but rather for the reshaping of the demographic policy.

The only force that can counter attacks and violation of the democratic rights of Asian women is a grass-roots movement of women working hand in hand with other movements of the toiling masses, because it is the interplay of state interference, patriarchy and class that creates the present situation. ■

Second International Youth Camp meets

THE YOUTH organizations linked to the Fourth International held their second summer camp this year at the end of July. More than 800 people attended.

This was 200 more than last year and surpassed the expectations of the organisers. In fact, in the first days the cooks had a difficult time providing for so many people!

SERGE EMERY

The attendance this year was also younger. The average age of the participants was between twenty and twenty and a half, instead of twenty-one, as it was last year. So, the age of the youth organizations is going down, following the example of the Belgian delegation, which was the youngest, averaging 19 years.

The number of participants who belonged to adult organizations linked to the Fourth International amounted to just 36 percent. In other words, more than five hundred youth came from every corner of Europe and from further afield to learn about the Fourth International.

The Dutch delegation had by far the best proportion of women, who represented 56%. The percentage of the total attendance who were women was only 35%. So, recruitment of younger people does not necessarily mean recruiting more women. There is a lot of work yet to be done in this area.

There is more to organizing a youth camp than just getting people to come along. Above all, it is part and parcel of building the youth organizations, and spreading the idea of the need for revolution. Here too we are justified in claiming success. What other example is there of such a large gathering where young revolutionists could discuss and feel at home?

The enthusiasm of the participants at the end of the camp shows the way forward for building youth organizations. They must not be imitations of the adult ones but organizations that integrate the concerns of all young people in their day-to-day political life, from music to anti-racism, in order to fight for a new world. This second summer camp was a further step in

this direction.

This road does not mean a sectarian self-affirmation of the youth organizations linked to the Fourth International. An essential part is the determination to discuss together with all those who are fighting against imperialism and the bureaucracy. So, for example, about a dozen comrades

from the Lutte Ouvriere group were included in the French delegation.

Moreover, comrades who are active in the antiracist struggle in France in various associations, such as the FASTI [Federation d'Associations de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigres — Federation of Associations Supporting Immigrant Workers], took part in discussions on this subject.

We were also pleased to have a representative of Sinn Fein and of the FMLN-FDR, as well as a large delegation from the New Caledonian liberation organization, the FLNKS, who participated in the workshops and in the final rally.

The enthusiasm with which these representatives were welcomed showed that they can count on the young revolutionists of the Fourth International throughout the world to support their struggles.

In fact, the youth camp was a gathering of revolutionists from all over the world. It brought people from Mexico, the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, and all of Europe who wanted to get together to advance the revolution without any protocol, bureaucracy, or paternalism. That is exactly what young people are looking for today. ■

What we thought ...

The Irish delegation to the FI youth camp was comprised of three delegates from People's Democracy and one observer. There was also a comrade from Sinn Fein. We thought the camp was a success and very interesting and enjoyable. We attended many workshops on matters such as women's liberation, Iran, Lesbian and Gay liberation and so forth. We found these workshops to be very useful to us. However, the best discussion had was with Andre Calves, a partisan veteran from Brittany. This was very interesting because of the parallels between Nazi occupied France and British occupied Ireland. The Irish delegation also held a workshop of their own which explained the present situation in Ireland. We received a very positive response to this and look forward to next year, hoping for the social life to be every bit as good as this year!

Gerry Lynch (17 years old)

Two young miners from Penrhiwceiber lodge/branch of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in South Wales came as part of the British delegation to the camp and this was one comment ...

'I'm involved with Socialist Action at home and we have had discussions on various things there but its much more educational to actually meet people involved in the various struggles — more than you can ever read in any article. Lots of links can be made between our struggle and others — whether they're as advanced as that in Nicaragua or like the miners' strike. As a result of the youth camp we'll have the basis to operate the campaign for amnesty [for sacked and imprisoned miners] within the youth organisations.'

Nigel Bevan (19 years old)

The PRT, Mexican section of the Fourth International sent two delegates to the camp. In fact there were a further ten who wanted to come. I came both to represent Mexico and to give information on the struggles which exist there but also to get an idea about what Europe and life in Europe is like. I found that it was totally different to my country.

The camp seemed incredible to me as I had never been at such an event and I thoroughly enjoyed it. The organisation was very good as was the food! I was delighted to see the enthusiasm of the European youth especially for the struggles of the peoples of Central America. We should all say with one voice; — 'Todos somos jovenes revolucionarios' — 'We are all revolutionary youth'.

Maria Hernandez