

International VIEWPOINT

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**Youth fight back
in Greece
and Italy**

**Colombian army
on the rampage**

**«Normalized»
Czechoslovakia**



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Fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in conjunction with the French language *Inprecor*, which appears on alternate fortnights.

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İSÇİ MÜCADELESİ

THE FIRST issue of *Isci Mucadelesi (Workers Struggle)* appeared in November 1985. Produced by Turkish and Kurdish immigrant workers in the Fourth International, the journal will appear every two months.

It will be produced in Belgium and aims to reach the large number of Turkish and Kurdish immigrant workers in a whole series of countries of Western Europe. Since the September 1980 military coup the already large number of immigrants here for 'economic' reasons, has been swelled by the arrival of tens of thousands of political refugees. Sections of the Fourth International have often found themselves severely limited in reaching these workers by the lack of publications in Turkish. It is for this reason that *Isci Mucadelesi* was launched with the backing of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

We are calling on all sections and sympathisers to aid in the distribution of the journal.

All correspondence should be addressed to *Isci Mucadelesi*, 29 Rue Plantin, 1070 Bruxelles, Belgium. Subscriptions are 100 Belgian francs, 15 French francs, five Swiss francs for five issues. Any donations welcome.

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Bloody denouement

THROUGHOUT its history, the South Yemeni national liberation movement and subsequently the state it founded have been riven by violent factional conflicts. There are two obvious main reasons for this.

GERRY FOLEY

The first is that there has been a strong radical element feared both by the bourgeois nationalist leadership and the reactionary Arab regimes in the area, and they have brought every pressure to bear to push this radical element aside, including promoting rival factions and corrupting the more moderately inclined leaders.

The second is the vulnerability of this tiny desperately poor country of barely two million inhabitants to such pressures. It is bordered on one side by the right-wing regime in North Yemen, which presides over a much larger population (7 million) and on another by the thinly populated but enormously rich Saudi Arabia, closely allied to the US. Some 70% of the national income comes from the port of Aden, and it is obviously vulnerable to economic pressures from the Western countries, which account for most shipping. Another major source of income is remittances from South Yemenis working in Saudi Arabia.

Tribal traditions and great unevenness in the country also are a complicating factor.

Up until now, the more radical element has made advance after advance in the successive confrontations, in the conflict with the Egyptian backed FLOSY faction during the fight for independence, in the ouster of Qahtan ash-Shaabi from the presidency in June 1969, and in the ouster of Salem Robea Ali from the presidency in June 1978.

Qahtan had represented a Nasserite wing of the ruling National Liberation Movement (NLF). Robea Ali had been trying to move toward reconciliation with imperialism.

The fall of Robea Ali prompted the Arab League to impose a boycott on South Yemen, and aroused bitter comment by some representatives of the US government. In an article in the July 7, 1978, *Washington Post*, Congressman Paul Findley wrote, "An internal power struggle cut down the outstretched hand just as it was about to welcome a long-awaited US negotiating team to Aden."

In February 1979, there was a serious armed confrontation with North Yemen. Washington accused South Yemen of invading its much more populous neighbor and sent an aircraft carrier to the area.

In October 1979, South Yemen signed a twenty-year friendship treaty with the Soviet Union. It was also accorded observer status in the Soviet bloc economic coordinating organization, Comecon. The Soviet Union was granted the right to establish an important naval base.

The four leaders that the government of President Ali Nasser claims now to have executed were identified with the more radical aspects of the national liberation process in South Yemen.

The most important, Abdul Fatah Ismail from North Yemen, [now thought to be still alive] was a trade-union organizer, and the chief of the NLF struggle in the city of Aden during the war of independence. He was influential also on the theoretical level, where he distinguished himself by his attacks on Nasser's "Arab socialism." He denounced it for its denial of the role of class struggle and characterized it as a product of the petty bourgeoisie, along with a whole series of radical bourgeois nationalist regimes, including the Indonesian, the Syrian, the Algerian, and the Iraqi.

At the Fourth Congress of the NLF in early March 1968, he said, among other things:

"The compromising petty-bourgeois leadership in the epoch of imperialism is even more dangerous for the national popular democratic revolution than the explicit counter-revolutionary policies of the semi-feudal, semi-bourgeois alliance."

At the same time, he called for the smashing of state structures left over from colonialism and for building a militia of 100,000 to 150,000 people.

Abdul Fatah emerged as the leading figure after the 1978 events, but was pushed out in 1980.

Another of those reported executed was Ali Antar, leader of the guerrilla front in the Radfan mountains during

the war of independence. During the rise of the left after June 1969, he was minister of defense. In the December 11-14, 1972, issue of *Afrique Asie* he defined the role of the army as follows:

"It functions as a small corps of 'technicians,' whose role is to teach the population how to defend itself ... Within the army, all power is in the hands of political leaders who are obliged to carry out the decisions of our last congress."

The third of those reported executed, Ali Salem Al-Beedh, staged one of the major coups of the left in the period before the 1969 victory, firing 28 British military instructors in February 1968. He was a leader from the Hadramaut region, the stronghold of the left.

The fourth claimed dead by the regime was Ali Shai Hadi, chairman of the Yemeni Socialist Party.

It seems apparent that despite very extensive nationalizations and peasant mobilizations, the society had not been definitely transformed. The militia, which got Cuban training, is by all accounts substantially smaller than the army, which all reports agree was the essential base of the apparent victor in this confrontation, President Ali Nasser.

The Paris daily *Liberation's* correspondent Jose Garcon described the origin of the conflict as follows:

"Seeing the economic crisis as making it necessary to seek aid from the 'moderate' Arab countries and not just Moscow, the Yemenite president was to adopt a more 'flexible' policy toward the Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia (rapprochement with North Yemen, ending the long dispute with Oman, etc). This evolution was violently opposed by Ali Antar."

Obviously for such a small country, the material weight of the Soviet Union could be decisive. The reported dead leaders have been linked by the big press to Moscow. But they have taken positions to the left of the USSR in the past, if only because they had to fight for their lives against Nasserism, then backed by the Kremlin.

Against this background, it does not seem impossible that they would have needed a green light from Moscow to act. The Kremlin has, moreover, kept its alliance with Iraq despite the regime moving the right.

The bloody conflict that erupted on January 13 in fact raises many political and theoretical questions, not just about the evolution and parameters of Soviet policy, but about the revolutionary process and institutions in such countries, desperately poor radical ministates which are becoming a more common feature today. □

The struggle against the Finance Law

THE FOLLOWING article from the December 16 issue of *Bandiera Rossa*, the paper of the Italian section of the Fourth International, describes the political context of the battles around the Finance Law, the Craxi government's latest austerity legislation. Among other things, this law served as the focus for the massive student upsurge in recent months, which is recounted in the accompanying interview with Sergio Damia.

ELETTRA DEIANA

The vicissitudes of the Finance Law serve to highlight two major aspects of the Italian situation. On the one hand, there is the continuation of an acute, endemic crisis of the bourgeoisie's central instrument for governing — the five-party government. On the other, there is the political self-subordination of the major opposition force on the left, the Italian Communist Party (PCI).

The PCI continues to avoid exploiting the contradictions, losses of footing, and outright tumbles of this government so as to make its life impossible. In fact, it is doing everything possible to keep these slides from turning into a disastrous and irreversible fall.

If, despite all its internal problems, the Craxi government manages to survive the battle over the Finance Law, after the Achille Lauro episode, and succeeds in getting through a slightly revised but still essentially antilabor law, the responsibility for all this will fall above all on the PCI.

This party, in fact, is continuing simply to pretend to play an opposition role in parliament, confining itself to the presentation of amendments but *in full respect for the rules of the game*, without any serious attempt to obstruct or delay the work of the parliament. And, obviously, it has no intention of exploiting the positive thrusts, the will to fight that various sectors of society, including its own activist base, have demonstrated in recent weeks.

This combativity has been shown by the students above all but also by those who thanks also to the initiative of some PCI activists, gave life to an important and significant

demonstration in Rome against the finance law.

The internal rifts and contradictions in the majority have focused above all on Article 27 of the Finance Law, which establishes different categories for medical aid according to income. This is a central point in the five-party government's strategy for attacking and dismantling the welfare state.

Already in the first skirmishes, when the finance law was still in the formative stage, the problem of the income categories stirred up a hornets' nest in the various government parties, in particular in the Christian-populist sections of the Christian Democratic Party. The problem seemed to recede after the readjustment of the first version of the income categories. But on December 5, it reexploded in all its virulence, thanks to an operation by majority snipers. By staying away from the vote, they sabotaged the approval of Article 27 in the Senate.

This was clearly no accident, as the government's spokespersons have tried to get people to believe. To the contrary, it was an unmistakable confirmation of the discontent and conflicts within the government lineup. This is shown in particular by two facts. The defeat of Article 27 came shortly after a Communist Party amendment that called for striking this article was rejected by a tiny majority (119 against, 114 for, and five abstentions, which count as negative votes according to the Senate rules).

Thus, the majority senators knew very well that there was a risk of defeat. Among the abstentions there was a Christian Democratic figure as important as Donat Cattin. And

this is the second fact. In explaining his abstention, he recalled the criticisms that various CISL trade unionists made in previous months of the definition of the income categories.

Both in the international incident over the Achille Lauro, which resulted in the death and resurrection within a few days of the five-party government, and in the tempest over the Finance Law we have seen the underlying factors that are eating away at the foundations of the five-party government come to light.

In a few months, these factors have destroyed the momentum that the Craxi and De Mita government gained last spring from its double victory in the administrative elections and the referendum [on abolishing the sliding scale of wages].

In the first place, the special pre-occupations of each party to maintain a sphere of action and political role of its own have generated dissolving and centrifugal tendencies. In particular, the intrinsic competition between the Socialist Party (PSI) and the Christian Democrats has had such effects.

The party whose escutcheon bears the sign of the cross in fact has always looked, albeit with cunning and patience, toward the period "after the five-party government." It has been working incessantly to reestablish the Christian Democratic Party firmly in the center of the stage. And in this respect, Craxi is suffering from a sort of back-to-the-wall syndrome. In fact, he is perfectly aware that if the fish gets away this time, it is not very likely that his electoral fortunes in the future will give him another chance to play the balancing or Bonapartist role that he considers his great mission in life.

Bourgeoisie not satisfied

However, the majority also has another sort of problem. Directing the new and difficult phase of austerity that the bourgeoisie wants to impose on the workers and the popular masses requires, in fact, a determination, a tightness, a disregard for political risks that may not correspond to the electoral (or often clientelist) interests of some parts of the five-party coalition, in particular the Christian Democracy.

In his speech to a meeting of Confindustria [the employers association] held in late November in Turin, [FIAT boss] Agnelli drastically distanced himself from the Craxi government. He declared that it was necessary to carry out "a deepgoing restructuration of our entire system,

on the economic level, on the level of regulations, on the level of behaviour." It was necessary, he said to have "the courage to make unpopular choices." Industry was doing this, but the state and the government were not keeping pace.

Agnelli's speech was nothing less than a peremptory summons to the government to act in accordance with the expectations and desires of the bourgeoisie, that is, as an executive committee of the ruling class. There is no doubt that these desires are also those of the parties in the majority. But from word to deed the road is neither easy nor straight.

In a bourgeois democratic system such as ours, the government can only hold office with the consent of the electorate. And getting such consent costs something. The government's credit could wear out overnight, because of the discontent that the unpopular choices that the FIAT boss wants could arouse even among the most faithful electoral supporters of the ruling parties.

De Mita [the Christian Democratic leader] and his party are certainly aware of this, and it is no accident that they did not exploit the crisis touched off by the Achille Lauro affair to go for the premiership. In fact, their plans call for Craxi carrying as many of the difficult tasks as possible, such as launching this Finance Law. On the other hand, it is vital for Craxi to succeed in handling this crucial transition in Italian political life if he does not want to lose his credibility once and for all in the eyes of the bourgeoisie.

However, in these days it is not only the government that is showing clear signs of crisis. The whole political and institutional system reveals a state of deepgoing crisis and malaise, in which it has been for some time. The unprecedented confrontation between the president of the republic and the Supreme Council of the Judiciary in the Craxi-Intini-Tobagi case is only a symptom of this situation, although a particularly sensational one. (1)

The rules of the game have been broken, Eugenio Scalfari laments in *Repubblica* of Sunday, December 8. On the one hand, he sees, "excesses by the judiciary," "exhibitionist judges looking for cheap publicity," "megalomaniacs with a fascination for slapping handcuffs on people." On the other, he suspects grave interference by the political branch, illegitimate interference by the office of the president of the republic, which, according to the constitution is supposed precisely to safeguard the rules of the game.

Even in the pages of *l'Unita* you can find concern expressed about



Sit down protest in Rome (DR)

the "decline of the democratic system," about the "coming apart of the five-party coalition." But for the workers movement, for a left opposition worthy of the name, the task should certainly not be to lament the wearing out of the bourgeois system of rule, the "weaknesses" of the government.

This wearing out and these weaknesses should instead be used to make the struggle of the opposition more effective, to make the task of this government more difficult.

The potential for a fightback there

Despite the grave difficulties in which the workers movement finds itself today, after the defeats of last spring, there are energies and potential that can be tapped effectively for a deep-going struggle against the government and the Finance Law, which would give new thrust and perspectives to the workers who today, feeling the weight of defeats, lack confidence in their ability to stop the government's course of action.

The student movement is demonstrating a determination, the readiness to fight the Finance Law, that few would have suspected, and which the press is trying in vain to cover up. The 20 to 30 thousand women who mobilized in the PCI's campaigns in Rome, already numerous, would certainly be much more

so if there had been clear signals for a struggle, if there had been a clear determination to really defeat the government's maneuver.

The same thing goes for the sections of society in a weaker position that were also hit by the Finance Law, such as the old-age pensioners. The same thing goes even more strongly for the workers, who would certainly regain their confidence if there was movement in the situation, if there were a possibility for a real struggle against the government.

Despite the difficulties, despite the PCI's self-subordination in parliament and in the country, this remains an essential task in the coming weeks for those among the rank and file of the PCI, in the unions, among the youth and the women who are continuing to fight to defend the interests of the working people.

Positive results can be achieved today by mobilizing new energies against the Finance Law, by supporting in every way, in the unions and in the workplaces, the demands of the students, by calling in all the workplaces and union halls for a general strike against the Finance Law. This could force the PCI to pull its head out of the sand and make the government's contradictions unmanageable. □

1. The journalist Tobagi was assassinated by the Red Brigades. The assassins were captured and tried. However, Intini, the editor of the PSI paper 'Avanti' protested that the judges had given them too light sentences. He was supported by Craxi.

High-school student upsurge

IN OCTOBER AND November, Italy was swept by massive student demonstrations, primarily of high-school students. "Unprecedented in recent years and probably the most massive demonstrations in the country since the mid-1970s," was the assessment of *Bandiera Rossa*, the paper of the Italian section of the Fourth International.

The following interview on this upsurge was given to Gerry Foley in Basel in late November by Sergio Damia a leader of the Lega Comunista Rivoluzionaria (LCR, Revolutionary Communist League, Italian section of the Fourth International).

Question. Did the youth upsurge come as a surprise in Italy?

Answer. In recent years, all the media and experts and a lot of the left had been saying that this was a generation that did not want anything more to do with politics, that it was a right-wing generation. In the elections last year, many studies indicated that the youth vote was middle-of-the-road, or right wing. This generation of youth was described as one without ideals, a cynical generation.

We had a different assessment. We had an experience in work with young people in solidarity with El Salvador, in solidarity with Nicaragua, that gave us a basis for a different judgement, that is that sectors of youth were capable of ideals, above all, capable of ideals of solidarity with Nicaragua.

It was difficult, of course, to consolidate this potential among the youth. It should not be forgotten that this generation of youth has been marked by two big experiences. These were the mobilizations against the missiles, against the new arms race, which were massive, in particular among the students. But they tended to be politically rather vague. Then, there was the mobilization against the Mafia and the Comorra [a similar criminal association], which was rather massive, and above all involved large numbers of students.

Q. How did the recent mobilizations start?

A. It started last year, although the problem went back even further. Art School No. 2 in Milan, which has around 1,500 students, no longer had a building. It was shuffled around

from one set of dilapidated quarters to another, and divided up. The new building that was found was declared uninhabitable by the fire department. So, the authorities in Milan decided to assign the student body to afternoon sessions in two other schools.

So, the art-school students formed a committee to agitate for a new building. It then managed to organize the high schools in which the art-school students were quartered into a broader committee representing all three schools. To get the support of the general population, a demonstration was organized, and then another one. These demonstrations led to the formation of a still broader committee representing all the high-school students in Milan.

At the end of October, a very large demonstration, very large for Milan, was organized. It involved practically all the high-school students. It is hard to say exactly how many there were, but it must have been 15 to 20 thousand. It was a vast crowd of youngsters of 14 and 15 years of age, full of enthusiasm. The objective of the demonstration was at least symbolically to occupy a building.

Q. What political forces were involved?

A. Our comrades were, of course. There were also a series of comrades who look to us but are not organized by us. There was the Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana (FGCI—Federation of Young Communists of Italy, the CP youth organization) and Democrazia Proletaria (DP), but the latter was very weak. In general, all the political forces were weak in this movement.

In the movement, the idea was very widespread that there was a danger of being exploited politically and that that had to be avoided. This notion was pushed by the political organizations themselves in fact—that is, the FGCI and DP used it against each other.

Then, at the Milan demonstration, where the objective, as I said, was to occupy a building, DP had its defense squad block the street to keep the demonstration from getting to the building in question. There had been an agreement with the prefect that the building would not be occupied. So, even an organization such as the DP can play a moderating role. And this put them in a poor position in the movement.

The initiative in Milan had a considerable impact nationally. It was relayed through the channels of the FGCI. Moreover, it got a lot of coverage in the press. The youth attracted a lot of attention.

The idea was put forward for a national day of action. In the framework of this, all the individual schools raised their demands—lack of chairs, lack of classrooms, run-down buildings, lack of teachers—all the deficiencies that are the result of the austerity policy.

So, there were demonstrations in a great many cities on November 9. In some cases, the demonstrations included almost all the high-school students. They were very broad. It was a very powerful mobilization, especially in the central and southern regions, where there was the memory of the demonstrations against the Mafia and the Comorra.

Q. Who organized these demonstrations?

A. It was essentially collectives in the schools, which were organized around "white books," that is, books of complaints about conditions in the school. Then, there were city coordinating groups set up by political forces, usually in response to an appeal from the school groups. They took the initiative in organizing city-wide demonstrations.

The FGCI proposed a national demonstration on November 16. In fact, it blew hot and cold about this, sometimes pushing it, dropping it, picking it up again. But once the idea was launched it took on a momentum of its own, and there was no stopping it.

All the left forces were agreed that the deficiencies in the schools were the result of austerity. And they proposed as the slogan for the demonstrations in Rome and other cities "For overcoming the deficiencies in the schools, against the Finance Law." These demonstrations were not expli-

citly against the government, but the logic was antigovernment.

Q. Was there any doubt about the demonstrations being against the government?

A. All the press and the mass media tended to take the line that this was a generation that only wanted to improve its conditions for studying. They interpreted the mobilization as apolitical. In reality it was not like that. This is a generation that does first of all want to improve its conditions for studying, because it also wants better working conditions later on.

In particular, since opposition to the Finance Law was the central demand, these young people are rather clear about the logic of the thing. This was apparent both in the multicity demonstration of November 9 and in the national demonstration in Rome on November 16.

In both cases, a delegation of young people was received by the minister. On both occasions, the minister, Falcucci, kept them three hours trying to explain to them the whys and wherefores of the problem and all that the ministry was doing.

Both times, these kids came out of their three-hour meeting with the minister and told the TV reporters that the meeting had produced nothing concrete, that it was all talk, and that they didn't believe any of the things they were told, that these were promises that had been made several times.

So, the demonstration of November 16 was extremely important. It was presented as apolitical, above parties. But in reality it was not so. It was just that there was a fear among the high-school students that their action might be politically exploited.

Q. Were there any actual right-wing or conservative forces involved in the mobilizations?

A. No, and that is an outstanding feature. In past years, in the north of Italy in particular, the right-wing Catholic current, sort of Catholic fundamentalists, had become very strong. There were big rallies, one of tens of thousands of people in Rimini. This current, *Comunione e Liberazione*, won school elections. But in these demonstrations it was



'I kissed a minor'. A youth protest on the age of consent (DR)

simply absent; it played no role. It could not support demands that had an antigovernment dynamic.

Q. That presumably is because it is under the control of the Christian Democrats.

A. Yes, it is in the orbit of the Christian Democrats; it is the most ideological component of the Christian Democratic movement. It was an instrument for regaining influence among the youth by ideological means. But in these demonstrations, it was completely pushed aside. It did not participate even formally. It had nothing to propose.

The fascists might have played a role. They have had a certain revival in the high schools, in the general context of a rehabilitation of the fascists that the Craxi government is carrying out for the sake of gaining votes, including votes in parliament. The fascists could play a role in raising demands, radical demands. But they were excluded from the demonstrations. While trying to stay out of party politics, the organizers also said "no fascists." That was even though the fascists claim to be more against the government than anybody else.

Q. And also against parties.

A. It's true that these youngsters are suspicious and cautious about parties. It's hard to say how things will develop in the future. There is a proposal for a march on Rome from Palermo and Milan. It was originally conceived as a march for jobs, a march for jobs by the students who have waged the struggle for better schools.

Q. What is the position of the big political forces?

A. What the government is saying is that these are good kids, they want to study, and when they are forty, their children will have better conditions for studying. That is essentially what it is saying.

As for the left, although the CP has an interest in having a mobilisation against the finance law, it will not take any initiative. Its position is that it is for amendments to the law that will make small changes, remove the more scandalous aspects. For example, proportionately, the increase in university fees is enormous.

The young people are already saying that such improvements are not enough. The whole logic of the finance law is bad. But the CP is playing this card of amendments. On the other hand, we think that concrete actions of a limited scope and character should be supported, because if there are even some small local successes that will help give the movement momentum. We say that the move-

ment is not going to end here. It is not something accidental. The government cannot come up with credible answers. It cannot solve any of the problems raised by the youth. At the same time, it cannot carry out any operations that can definitively demoralize the movement. There will be ups and downs. But this experience that the young people have accumulated will remain.

There is another point that it is important to keep in mind. Both the FGCI and the DP have played a braking role in this movement. The FGCI cannot go beyond the CP's policy of trying to amend the Finance Law. The DP is very weak and doesn't know what to do.

The unions did aid the demonstrations. The young people went to the union movement to ask for help, to get trains, to get help in organizing the demonstrations. The unions gave it. Although the young people had collected money, they could not have organized a demonstration of a hundred thousand people in Rome without the help of the unions. To get fifty trains, a ferry, eighty sleeping cars, they needed the sort of organization that the unions have. So, the unions supported the demonstration in Rome, but they tried to limit the demands.

In this context, a polarization developed immediately as the youth ran up against these braking attempts. The case of the Milan demonstration that I mentioned before is symptomatic. Twenty thousand people started off to occupy a palace. And they were stopped not by the police but by the DP. The police might have tried to stop it. We cannot exclude that. But it would have been better if it had not been the DP defense squad.

This sort of thing even prompts outcries that these forces are acting like spies for the police. In Milan, they informed the prefect of the coordinating committee's intentions. So, there is a feeling in the movement of a need for more radicalism. The problem is that the people who offer that mainly are the Autonomi.

Thus, the Autonomi have gotten a second wind. This has put us in a difficult position. Because we have supported the appeals for more radical action, against the braking role of the FGCI and the DP, and found ourselves on the side of the Autonomi. But the Autonomi supported radical proposals in the spirit of dividing the movement, of violent confrontation, of breaking the dynamic of mass action.

Q. How strong are the Autonomi in the movement?

A. Their main forces are among the university students. But the rise of the high-school protests gave a new impetus to the university student movement, in particular since the university students have been hard bit by higher fees. Among the university students in Rome and some other cities, the Autonomi have some strength. Sometimes they are the only organized force, in Rome in particular.

Moreover, the Autonomi do not try to present themselves as a party, but as a radical section of the movement. So, the suspicion of parties offered them an opportunity. In fact, they were the only ones in the November 16 demonstration that had a presence for all practical purposes as a party. They had a strong contingent of university students, and even of high-school students, although the latter was marginal. They were the only ones present as a political force.

Q. What was the age of the participants in the movement?

A. Fourteen to sixteen. The great majority were that age. There were university students involved, as I said, but they were a minority. Nonetheless, the year 1968 was a reference point. That is shown by the slogan that was invented by the youth in Milan, I think, "Sessantotto non è stato male, ottantasei sarà eccezionale!" ("1968 wasn't bad; 1986

Students protest in Milan (DR)



will be extraordinary!")

That was a very nice slogan and it was taken up by a large number of the young people.

For these youth, 1968 is a historical reference point, despite the fact that the mass media tried to give the worst possible image of 1968, and the worst of all were the high-school teachers who appeared on TV and started by saying, "I, too, was out in 1968, but I have no confidence in these kids, there's nothing that can be done."

But in the minds of these young people there is the idea that something exceptional happened in 1968 and so they set their sights by it, even while maintaining their own individuality. That is, they say they are doing something else, something better.

The media claim that these demonstrations have nothing to do with 1968, because the upsurge twenty years ago was ideological or ideologized, not based on material demands. That is not true, because 1968 started out from material demands, and became ideologized later. Of course, it was combined with other factors, Vietnam among other things, and in Italy with a radicalization of the workers movement. It was a different phenomenon. But it was not different in inception.

What is different is that in 1968 — above all, because the movement then was a university student movement — there was a whole network of cadres shaped by previous political experiences in the FGCI, a broad network. That does not exist now. That is the real difference.

The number of left cadres among the high-school youth is very small. We are small. The DP is hardly better off. The FGCI has more of a national structure, but is very weak.

Q. Has the movement created permanent organizations in the schools?

A. Student councils have been formed. They're something like the French Prud'hommes [that is, grievance and welfare bodies] for high-school students. Moreover, there has been a whole change in the climate. The right had been on the advance, as I said. But in the elections that have been held since the movement there has been a complete turnaround. There has been a big increase in the vote for left slates, especially independent slates in the individual schools.

Q. What impact has the movement had on the political climate in the country more generally?

A. It came in the context of a total paralysis of the workers movement owing to the fact that both the

CP has conciliatory positions toward the government and the DP has been rather confused. Moreover, the trade-union platform, the proposals of the unions, are almost unbelievably conservative.

These youth demonstrations restored a bit of confidence in the working people, although we cannot say that they played the role of detonator. But we have put in leaflets that they should play that role, and our comrades have been working to try to get the movement to adopt a conscious orientation of that sort. There are youth who have appealed for help from the unions, etc. who are working for this.

In any case, the strikes that the unions called on an incredibly conservative program were successful in the last analysis because the workers perceived them as strikes against the finance law. That was because the day before the youth demonstrated against the Finance Law. This gave the strikes the thrust of opposition to the Finance Law, which was by no means the intention either of the CP or the unions.

Q. How strong is the structure of the FGCI. Are its full-timers actually young?

A. They generally are rather young, except on the national level. At its last congress, however, the FGCI decided to divide into four separate organizations, that is, a league of high-school students, a leader of university students, a young women's organization, etc. That gave the FGCI a certain advantage in this movement, since it had a separate high-school organization. But nonetheless, it played a very small role.

Q. Was there any difference in demands on the role of the young men and women in this movement?

A. No, except that you could say that the young women were in the vanguard. They were represented out of proportion to their numbers in all the leading bodies. One reason for this is that Art-School No. 2 in Milan where the movement started has a predominantly female student body. And the leaders are women, some of them very capable. So, among the public spokespersons of the movement, women tended to predominate.

Q. Were there regional differences?

A. The movement started in the North, but the response was still more massive in the South, perhaps because of the memory of the demonstrations against the Mafia and the Camorra, and perhaps also because the conditions in the schools in the South are much worse. □

New youth and student radicalisation

The case of the polytechnic occupation

THE UPSURGE of protests against the Papandreou government's draconian austerity measures was one of the most dramatic developments in Europe toward the end of 1985. It was described in an interview with a Greek Fourth Internationalist leader in the last issue of IV.

The following two articles from the December issue of *Ergatike Pale*, the paper of the Greek section of the Fourth International, give more facts about the student and youth mobilizations that took place alongside the massive workers actions.

It is interesting to note that many of the same features and problems were present as in the Italian high-school student mobilizations that took place about the same time.

The tradition of the 1973 Polytechnic uprising is extremely important, not just for the student youth but more generally because it was the only uprising against the junta, and so in a sense is seen as having saved the honor of the Greek people.

On Sunday, November 17, a march was planned at the Polytechnic. This year it came in a period of sharp confrontation between the government and the workers. Tempers were very high, and the political climate was heavily charged.

The PASOK government's severe economic austerity measures were still very recent, and the struggles of the workers were at their peak. Among other things, no more than three days had gone by since the giant national strike mobilization of November 14.

The two CPs (1) had made a considerable effort to put a damper on feelings of hostility to the government in the commemoration of the Polytechnic uprising. The crowning touch was their student trade-union groups voting for a common resolution with the PASOK trade-union fraction in the university, which avoided saying anything about the economic measures.

Nonetheless, it was clear that the Polytechnic march was going to have the character of opposition to the government's economic policy.

The government responded to the resistance of the working people by resorting both to ideological repression (lies, intimidating statements, demagoguery) and physical repression (sending the MAT [militarized police] into the offices of the CP-Interior union fraction, etc.)

The government's decision to respond forcibly to any resistance became clear also during the Polytechnic march, with the appearance of many platoons of the MAT, who followed the march in what can most mildly be described as a provocative way.

The march was almost entirely peaceful, except for the breaking of some windows in the Hilton hotel by anarchist groups. However, this seems not to have satisfied the police and the MAT, who did not want to confine themselves to intimidating people by their presence.

Thus, provocations began in Exarcheion Square, and when the anarchists in the square responded by throwing Molotov cocktails, one of the MAT "lost his head" and murdered a 15-year-old youth, striking him from behind.

The murder had the result of dramatizing a series of events that unfolded at a real cinematographic pace. They have to be looked at carefully in order to draw the necessary conclusions. In this article, however, we will only describe the facts.

On the same evening, a group of anarchists occupied the Chemistry Faculty to press the immediate demand for the punishment of the murderer. On the morning of Monday, November 18, special units of police,

having gotten permission from the Committee on University Inviolability, in which there was a representative of the PASK [Panellenia Syndikalistike Parataxis — Pan-Hellenic Union Fraction, the PASOK student-union fraction], one TH Tsamourkelis (!), invaded the Chemistry Faculty. Using tear gas and trampling under foot the fundamental concept of university inviolability, they arrested 18 anarchists.

As soon as the murder of the 15-year-old youth became known, the government tried to appear "tender hearted." In the person of its chief, Alexander Papandreou, it started shedding crocodile tears and promising that the killer would be punished.

Parallel to this, the MAT and the MEA [Monades Ethnikes Asphaleias — National Security Units, a special police force similar to the MAT] flooded the center of Athens, continuing in a provocative way the orgy of terror that they had unleashed the previous evening.

All the parties without exception condemned the murder, but none of them seemed inclined to make a concrete response. Only the far left responded immediately with a march on Monday afternoon. The anarchists participated in the march, and during it often broke off and trashed or set fire to shops. They came under attack from the MAT, which was waiting impatiently for an order to attack.

The occupation of the Polytechnic

In the meantime, the slogan for an occupation of the Polytechnic was launched, and was finally followed. Along with the anarchists, quite a few far-left organizations took part. Other far-left organizations, however, disagreed with the action and left after the march. They included the OKDE [Organosi Kommounistike Diethnistike tes Elladas — International Communist Organization, the Greek section of the Fourth International], the OSE [Organosi Socialistike Espanastasi — Socialist Revolution Organization, sympathizers of the British state capitalist group, the SWP], and the KKE (ML)

1. The Communist Party split during the period of the dictatorship of the colonels. One section, which had the majority within the underground organization at the time, became known as the CP-Interior. The other section, with a majority in exile leadership and supported by Moscow, became known as the CP-Exterior. After the fall of the junta, the CP-Exterior far outdistanced its Eurocommunist rival, the CP-Interior, but the "Interior" retains a certain tradition in the student movement. In particular, it took a more sympathetic attitude to the Polytechnic uprising in November 1973 than the "Exterior." — IV.

[Communist Party of Greece, Marxist Leninist].

The principal demands of the occupation were for punishment of the killer, dissolution of the MAT and the MEA, and the disarming of the police. Sometimes also slogans were raised against the PASOK government and its antilabor measures.

In the courtyard of the Polytechnic on Monday evening, at least 5,000 people gathered, expressing their opposition to the terror that had been unleashed by the MAT and the MEA and had culminated in the murder of the youth.

In the meantime, the EFEE [Eniaia Phoitike Enosis tes Ellados — United Student Union of Greece] decided to hold a march of witness for Tuesday afternoon. The motion was passed with the votes of the PSK, the DA [the CP-Interior fraction], and the Regroupments [multi-tendency far-left groupings in the student union].

At about the same time, the ministers of internal affairs and civil order, Koutsogiorgas and Tsouras, resigned to show their "sensitivity," but of course their resignations were not accepted.

Throughout the night of Monday and also in the early hours of Tuesday, clashes occurred around the Polytechnic. The fighting was either between the occupiers and various fascist-like elements (the rightist party ENEK and its student organization, the ENEP) or "outraged citizens," the majority of whom were members of the PASOK, who had come to help the MAT impose order on the occupiers, or between the occupiers and the MAT, which attacked with tear gas, asphyxiating gas, and water cannon.

On Tuesday morning, there were about a thousand people left in the Polytechnic, who were looking for a way to end the occupation.

At midday on Tuesday, the EFEE announced its decision to call off its march, explaining that "we cannot defend it." Thus, in essence the parties of the traditional left had responded to the murder by doing nothing but send people home.

The march, however, was maintained by the parties and organizations of the far left. At the same time, the Regas Feraios [the youth organization of the CP-Interior] held its own separate march condemning the EFEE's decision to call off the mobilization.

During the march, the occupiers left the Polytechnic, and the far-leftists joined the demonstration, while the anarchists dissolved. Despite the provocations of the MAT, which kept stopping the march and then retreating, there were no incidents.

In the coming months, an enduring

mark of the Polytechnic occupation will be the damage caused both by the anarchists and by the fascist groups that attacked the occupiers under the protection of the MAT.

The murdering policeman was let go scot-free, thus demonstrating the government's "sensitivity" and "good will." At the same time, six of the anarchists arrested in the Chemistry Faculty were jailed, facing grave charges. Along with this, the CP-Exterior launched a crude campaign of provocation, which in essence

accomplished nothing but gave the PASOK a basis for exploiting the events for its own profit.

Another point should be noted about these events. It is that the spontaneous reaction to the murder and repression took on significant scope, not only in Athens but also in other cities, such as Salonika and Erakleion. This is a fact of special importance in that it shows that a radicalization of some sections of the youth is combining with the great economic crisis. □

The echo in Salonika

THE MURDER of a 15-year-old boy by the PASOK's MAT on the day when the working people and the youth honor the dead of the November uprising did not provoke any reaction from any of the big organizations in Salonika, except from the Regas Feraios [CP-Interior youth].

It seemed that the portrayal of Athens as in the grip of anarchy suited everyone from the DAP [the youth organization of the right-wing big bourgeois party, New Democracy] to the PSK [the PASOK student organization], which exploited it for a provocative campaign. This hysteria about "anarchy" blotted out the murderous frenzy of the police.

Under the influence of this picture of anarchy, the PhEAPTh [The Salonika branch of the student union affiliated to the GSEE, the national trade-union confederation] did not issue any communique, not even about the violation of university inviolability.

The only reaction and mobilization came from the extraparliamentary left and the anarchists. The day after the murder, a march was held in the streets of the city to denounce the state terror and the violation of university inviolability. The march had two main contingents, one of anarchists and one of the far left (with about 400 people). The Democratic Union of the Law School also participated.

The two contingents divided when the anarchists threw Molotov cocktails at the offices of the EPEN [the far-rightist student organization] and then started breaking store windows. Symptomatically, the MAT did not

show its face during the march in the city, but late in the evening (after the events in Athens), they started to come out.

On Friday, November 21, a new march against state terrorism was organized to demand the release of those arrested. It brought out between 500 and 700 people. The lack of a mass turn out was owing to the change in the climate after the episodes in Athens. The groups participating were the Left Student Regroupments [Aristeres Syspeiroseis Phoiteton], the KKE ML, the OKDE [Greek section of the Fourth International] and groups of anarchists.

Salonika's distance from the center of the events and the small forces that mobilized prevented a sharp clash on the far left between supporters of "forceful" actions and those who insist on an overall anticapitalist policy, who think that forceful actions should be carried out by mass mobilizations and not by "grouplets" of the far left and who believe that in a period such as the one we are passing through forceful actions by small groups lead only to isolation.

The quick ebb of the events in Athens (precisely because of their isolated character) prevented a sharper clash. But it did not prevent a ridiculous row in the middle of the road over whether the far-left contingent should march behind the anarchists or not.

We do not think that the anarchist's sectarian blind alley, with its glorification of small groups and their historic rights, constitutes political action. Moreover, it is politically dangerous for those forces that want to be seen as a credible alternative by the working people and the youth. □

Bloody 'counterinsurgency' operation

MANUEL GUILLERMO BARRANTES is a Colombian journalist based in the city of Cali. He presented a report to the Foro Nacional por el Derecho a la Vida (National Forum for the Right to Life), which was held on the campus of the University of Bogota December 6-8. The purpose of this assembly was to expose the crimes and outrages that the Armed Forces and the parliamentary groups have unleashed recently in Colombia. (1) Barrantes' document describes the assault of the Colombian army on a poor neighborhood, Siloe, in Cali.

The Foro por el Derecho a la Vida was attended by some 1,300 delegates from trade-union, people's and human-rights organizations in 17 departments of the country. One of its organizations recently travelled to Europe to present the conclusions and recommendations of the Foro to international organizations that defend human rights, such as Amnesty International. The following is our slightly shortened translation of the document.

Companeros,

Some of us have come here to tell you what is happening in the Valle del Cauca, what is happening in the mountains, cities, towns, and neighborhoods.

We have come to tell you that in those rich lands of sugar, coffee, and soya beans, in a green land as sweet as sugar syrup, a people is under the shadow of death, prey to hunger and violence. But it is still unbowed, facing bullets, bombing, torture, and the enemies of peace who today are defending the tyrants, the assailants of the workers, the students, the priests, the journalists, the trade-unionists, the white-collar workers, the poets and the poor farmers, who want to obliterate their dreams of freedom.

We have come to tell you that the Valle and its Cauca river are running red with the blood of those who have been taken from their fields, factories, newspaper offices, high schools, universities, or their homes. This year that is about to end has seen two thousand people killed. More than 800 unidentified bodies have been found, and hundreds of people have disappeared.

The jails are full of political prisoners, and hundreds of wounded people are being held in hospitals without medical attention.

Hired killers have murdered many people for blood money. People are being shot down under the eyes of their families, neighbors, and friends. A human "cleanup" program is underway, in response to the demands of an unholy alliance of special-interest groups, politicians, and the Church hierarchy.

A phrase is being echoed all around the city, "a Clean Christmas for Cali," a slogan that came from someone who was probably sipping a whisky and eating lobsters purchased from the sweat of the oppressed people in Aguablanca on Siloe, who can afford only sugar water and hard bread.

For this "cleanup" in the Valle, there are groups that specialize in massacres — the Comandos Verdes [Green Commandos], the Justiciero Implacable, Kankil, the Bandera Negra [Black Flag], Majib, and other groups that we do not know about.

These are paramilitary groups led by specialists trained in Chile or the US who get promotions and medals with the blood of their subordinates and the defenseless people. And they appear on the front pages of the papers or in set-up interviews on the radio and TV. Their crimes are covered up and the press praises them in its editorials, which talk about peace, while their workers suffer need and poverty, as is the case in the dailies

El Pueblo and Occidente.

Today, the Valle is fighting for the right to life against an extermination ordered by a decrepit and demented ruling class that is trying to survive at the expense of many lives.

Two priests were murdered. The first was the curate Irne Garcia, the second, Father Guillard. They were killed because they were friends of the people. In an investigation of a terrorist act by paramilitary groups, leaders of M-19, among others Antonio Navarro Wolf, and trade-unionists and councillors on both sides were also shot.

In another terrorist attack two boys were killed, and more than forty persons were wounded when a grenade exploded in a rally. Thirty-five homosexuals have been killed this year by a group called MAJIB (Muerte a Maricas y Jibaros — Death to Queens and Butches).

More than 800 presumed antisocial elements have been found dead in remote places, bound and gagged and whipped, and with the names of Kankil, Bandera Negra, and the Vengador Justiciero carved on their bodies.

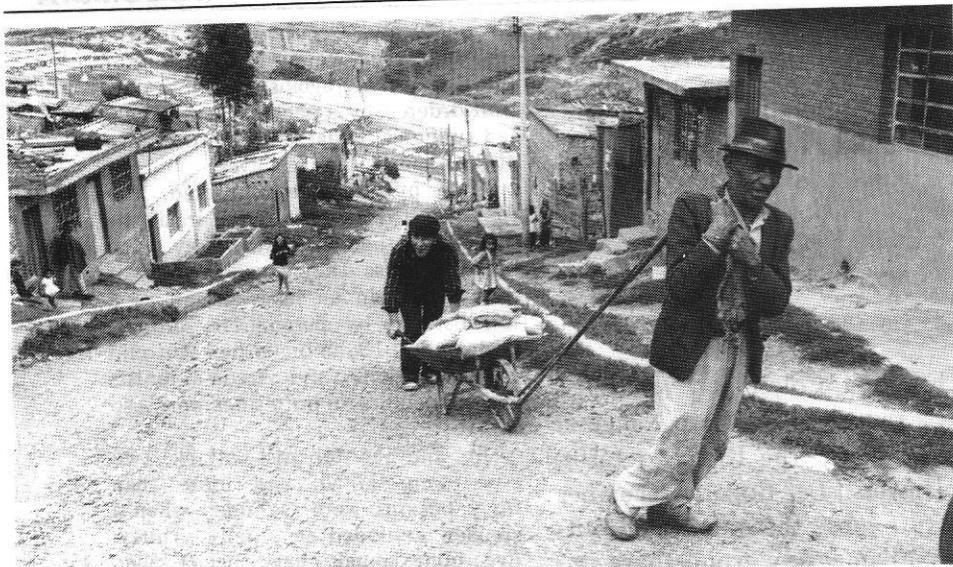
Students, workers, and trade-union leaders, as well as people's fighters, have been shot and had weapons put in their hands to give the idea that they were killed in clashes. In the case of many "missing persons," their relatives testify that several men came in campers and took their victims from their homes telling them that nothing would happen to them. Today, their whereabouts is unknown.

One night in the Sucre neighborhood, which is known as a red-light district of Cali, eight persons were slaughtered in a house, because it was said to be a den of thieves and homosexuals. For this, they used tear gas and finished off the victims with bullets.

Night of terror

In the same night of terror, three youths were executed in the Eduardo Santos neighborhood, when they were talking about football. It was later learned that the criminals had got the wrong people. The murderers were recognised as policemen. An accusation has been lodged with the state prosecutor's office.

1. *The massacre of the guerrillas who occupied the Palace of Justice in Bogota and the judges and other civilians in the building by the Colombian Armed Forces on November 6 opened the way for a broader rightist terror, some of the episodes of which are described in this document. See the article "The reasons for the bloodbath," by Rodrigo O' Farrell in 'International Viewpoint', No 88, December 9, 1985.*



A suburb of Bogotá (DR)

In the early morning hours, in two luxurious cars, idle rich boys took pot shots at people, shooting for example a woman collecting paper.

The political prisoners had to resort to violent protest to get several jailed ex-policemen accused of belonging to the Comandos Verdes taken from their cell block. They waited three months to talk to the prison warden, who always said that he did not have the time. Finally, they were forced to hold a rally to get these people out of the block assigned to the political prisoners.

On the following day, they met with the national director of prisons, who heard their request. After the latter returned to Bogotá, the warden in reprisal banned them from the workshops, the only place they had to work, after everything else had been taken away from them — sports, the right to teach, and medical care.

We should point out the attack on a political prisoner when he was talking with the representative of the state prosecutor. It happened the day of the rally. A furious guard beat him with a stick that had a point at the end, which wounded the prisoner.

There is a case for Ripley in the police. Because of vendettas among them, there was a clash that left 15 policemen dead, and there have been repeated battles.

In the industrial city of Yumbo, various trade-unionists and popular fighters have been murdered. Simulating an assault on the city, the police killed three youths in a soda fountain. A few months ago, three men were incinerated in a camper in the locality of Vijes; and in main streets in broad daylight in buses, homes, and stores, men, women, elderly people, and children have been mowed down with bullets.

This is what is happening in the Valle del Cauca. Everything is being

thoroughly investigated. There is no point in making more complaints to the regional prosecutor's office, which will go no further. Everything is recorded in the newspapers. The facts are published, but we will never know how many cases there are. They do, however.

We have left the case of Siloe aside until now because it is a very special one, and because we offer here eyewitness accounts of what happened in this area in recent days.

Planned massacre

With its 20 thousand inhabitants, Siloe has lived a marginal existence for forty years, abandoned by all the oligarchical governments, who show an interest only when they come to hustle votes.

Siloe rises up in the hills that overlook the town, as a witness to the struggle of a people uniting with their brothers and sisters living lower down, in Aguablanca. Of course, for the oligarchs, Siloe is known affectionately as the "shame of Cali," because it is supposed to be the refuge heap for the dregs, the bastards, the thieves, and the guerrillas.

Siloe has always been a blacksheep. How much the enemies wanted to raze this town in order to be able to build their chalets, and they are already doing so. Around the now famous Estrella they are putting up pretentious buildings, and they will not delay in building skyscrapers that can cover up "Cali's black spot." But this year Siloe has written its history in blood. From the moment that the peace encampments went up, which were the start of a new culture, its inhabitants were harassed by the public forces, and since then attacks have become a daily occurrence.

Initially, they were small skirmishes, but they intensified with the National Strike on June 20. The day that a noisy army operation killed Ivan Marino Ospina was marked by a government attack on the inhabitants that resulted in eight deaths, most of them among the civilian population.

Later, on October 2, the army entered the zone, and, finding no guerrillas, opened fire on a boy muleteer, later planting on him a gun bigger than he was. This is attested to by pictures that have created a stir nationally and internationally.

To settle scores, paramilitary elements threw a fragmentation grenade into a local assembly on the night of October 7. A child of four and a teenager lost their lives, and more than thirty people were wounded. We will make a complaint later about the attitude of the Cali Red Cross toward this incident.

Later other incidents occurred, such as a surprise attack by the army that left three boys wounded and resulted in the death of a deranged person, who shouted that he was a "subversive."

Later in another operation, a rifle bullet fired by a soldier passed through a humble dwelling, wounding three little girls, aged two, three, and four, who were under a bed, where they were hiding out of fear.

It is not true that an attack on a riot-police patrol that occurred on November 27 provoked an operation such as the one that started on Friday night.

In solidarity with the victims of the tragedy in Armero, the commanding general of M-19, Alvaro Fayad, ordered the militias of this movement to cease hostilities in the urban sector.

The Third Brigade was well aware of this. What is clear is that for more than two months, it was known that the military were going to occupy the locality some time or other, and the troops had started to be mobilized a month before throughout the sector.

The military occupation was not delayed any longer. Whenever the special interest groups speak, the army does not think twice, and that week it did it.

The inhabitants of Siloe, the shanty town Tres de Mayo, San Francisco, and El Cortijo say that the army began the cleanup operation on the night of October 10 and that a lot of strange looking characters in civilian clothes were seen (from the B-2 and F-2 secret services. Eight days before a cultural affair had been held that was massively attended, and clothing was being collected for Armero. A first shipment had been

sent off, and a second one was being prepared.) The sleeping people of Siloe were awakened by a veritable hurricane. Nobody knew what was happening when they heard the first shots and the shouts of people who were trying to get out of their houses, while others were taking refuge under the beds.

The first assault on the civilian population came at 3:00 am and the second at 5:00 am. The doors of the houses were kicked open, and the maddened soldiers fired at everything that moved. Shouts and cries of "don't kill me" were heard all around. The children cried while their parents, not knowing what to do, put them under the beds. The guns were pointed even there, and they forced out the terrified children, as if the attack were against them.

At 8:00 am Saturday morning, the streets were full of the dead and wounded. Two elderly people were the first victims, a man and a woman. House by house, the soldiers searched for guerrillas, making the most cowardly raids anyone can remember.

The fragile cardboard dwellings of the Tres de Mayo shantytown and the houses of the people in the Esterilla neighborhood of Siloe were gone through with picks in search of arms and the inhabitants were rounded up. They pulled up the floors looking for tunnels. Even the children's toys were smashed up in the uncontrollable fury of the soldiers carrying out the action.

Curiously, the radio stations that have made a commotion over such cases were silent this time. In a meeting with the directors days before in the Third Brigade headquarters, the commanders asked them to put a damper on the news.

However, anxiety and terror increased as the hours went by. The rattling of machine guns and the roar of grenades was stronger after midday. The electricity and water had been inexplicably cut off.

In this demented operation, the victims were women, children, and elderly people. All you have to do is look at the list of casualties.

There were eighty hours of blood, with horrendous scenes, which I will try to relate briefly.

A young man who worked as a guard in a security company had been operated on a few days before and was recovering at his home. When the army arrived, the man came out leaning on a walking stick to see what was happening. The soldiers saw him, seized him, and asked for his papers. The young man was an army reservist. That was his crime. After beating him up under the eyes of his mother and his small children, they took him a block away and shot him.

A mother was preparing breakfast when a soldier shot her in the back through the window. The bullet struck her in the back of the neck. Two elderly and handicapped men were killed because a neighbor said they had helped the guerrillas; he "fingered them" as is commonly said.

This practice of shooting people on the spot was begun in previous incursions. The objective, as Colonel de La Cruz of the General Staff of the Third Brigade says, was "to give a lesson to those people who want to help the bandits."

The people carried the wounded on planks, carts, on their backs to the hospitals, where soldiers had been stationed to capture any wounded guerrillas that turned up.

Why did the people take the wounded down, then? When I described what happened the night that a grenade was thrown into a town meeting, killing two children and wounding more than 35 people, I said that I would take up the Red Cross later.

So, what happened then happened again. The Red Cross did not come, not because the rescue workers refused to but because, unlike anywhere else in the world, the Red Cross here is under the authority of the Ministry of Defense, and it is the military that decide when to send the rescue workers in.

No help for the wounded

Colombia has not signed a treaty on the question, although the statutes of the Red Cross say "in peace or war." I want to denounce the Red Cross publicly and its office bosses, oligarchs who disguise their wives as nurses. But I also want to denounce the hospitals for their cruel treatment of the wounded. It was nurses and medical assistants placed there by the Third Brigade that looked after the wounded.

On the day of the explosion, several members of this committee appealed to the Red Cross to go to take care of the wounded, most of whom were children. The answer from a starchy type was: "Get an order from General Gomez Barros and we'll see."

But the assault on the people of Siloe did not stop there. On Sunday night there were more shootings, as the army looked for more collaborators of the guerrillas, and all the young people in the area were detained.

Two women were hooded by the army so that they would not be recognized by the local people, and they were saying "this one, yes; this one, no."

Those they said were guerrillas or collaborators with the guerrillas were lined up and later taken to a school, near the tanks. A woman who went to look for her daughter managed to see the bodies of ten young girls, completely nude and with their breasts cut off.

A local person heard a noncommissioned officer tell his men to do what they liked with the "female bandits."

Torture exists in Colombia. It has been denounced by the International Red Cross. But what happened that night and was told by the people in this troubled area went beyond all previous limits.

Many complaints have been made about the crimes committed by the soldiers, who stole the local people's belongings. We have all seen them talk about this on the TV. As a journalist, I was in the area and can testify to the destruction of homes.

Television sets were wrecked in the search for arms. Cardboard dwellings were torn apart. Dogs, cats, and parrots in cages were shot by way of target practice. Children's piggy banks were broken and their pennies taken.

All of this is confirmed by pictures that appeared in a paper in Cali. Women were mistreated abominably. In the University Hospital, there is an 75-year-old man who was stomped because he was accused of collaborating with the guerrillas.

Besides the bloody events in Siloe, we want to tell you that in the Aguablanca area there have been isolated incidents that have already resulted in a large number of deaths. Military and police operations in the Petecuy, Marroquin, and Comuneros neighborhoods, and another ten besides, were so extensive that they claimed the lives of about a hundred victims, mostly young workers and students. But the worst thing is that there are signs that a crueller operation than the one that occurred in Siloe is in the offing, and this is terrifying the population.

Today, we appeal to you to use every means to assure respect for the lives of the detainees, who are already more than two hundred. We ask that the life of the fighter Lucio Cifuentes, who was arrested last Thursday in Siloe, be respected. We ask that the safety of the lives of the seventy political prisoners that were taken from Villahermosa to other jails in reprisal for the demands they raised, be assured.

We ask that the lives of the lawyers who are defending the political prisoners be respected.

We ask for respect for the lives of three detainees taken from the Buen Pastor prison and whose whereabouts are unknown. □

Alliance for socialism - Tony Benn speaks

THE FOLLOWING is the text of a speech by Tony Benn, Labour Party Member of Parliament (MP) and leader of the left-wing, delivered to a meeting of socialists in London on November 16-17. The weekend meeting, entitled 'Alliance for Socialism' was organised by *Socialist Action*, a revolutionary socialist newspaper inside the Labour Party.

The speech is taken from the November 22, 1985 issue of *Socialist Action*. All footnotes and bracketed additions are by *International Viewpoint*.

I would like to congratulate *Socialist Action* on organising this conference. There has been a wide range of contributions. I think everybody here appreciates how serious the situation is for the people of this country.

There is an attack on living standards, on the unions, on women, on the Irish, on the Black community, on democracy, on civil liberties — and a technique of division is being practised which is to some extent effective. The apparatus of the state is being used quite ruthlessly and of course the media are being used on a daily basis in order to maintain that division.

I agree with what has been said, that Britain is the last colony left in the British empire, and that all the techniques of repression that were tried elsewhere are now being used against our own people. Anyone who saw that recent TV programme, *Brass Tacks*, about the police will know that the colonial policing methods have been applied here.

At the same time we have a large American army here. We are really subject to American foreign policy and defence control. We are also, in terms of our domestic legislation, integrated with the Treaty of Rome. And the bankers have an enormous power over our economy.

It is against that background that we have to look and see what happened within the Labour Party. And I want to turn to that first.

We have had a very big change in the Labour Party over the last 15 years, beginning when Heath was elected, much of it triggered off by the earlier experience of office under the first Wilson government [elected in 1964]. That was when the radicali-

sation began. What I think people began to realise — and Diane Abbott touched on it when she talked about power rather than office (1) — was that successive Labour governments, became the intensive care units for capitalism.

When capitalism got in a real mess and the people who ran it could no longer control it, they invited a Labour government to take over which used its capacity to win the loyalty of the working class to make the sacrifices to put the system right. The government then lost us the election and handed the system back, fully recovered, to the people who ran it in the first place. That intensive care unit role for Labour governments is an absolute distortion of the original function of the Labour Party.

Thus we had the 1970-74 radicalisation, a further Labour government, and another defeat in 1979, and the campaign (which was absolutely correct) to try to deal with that problem by making the parliamentary party accountable to the Labour conference. Looking back, I think that campaign needs to be restarted, for it was certainly effective. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) left and that was an indication of the real position: they had tried to run the party from the top, failed and defected.

But, of course, in the period after 1981 there was a major swing to the right organised by some political and trade union leaders; the Labour front bench supported the Falklands [Malvinas] war, which absolutely undermined Labour's peace policy: we had the witch-hunting beginning; and we had the election

defeat in 1983. From 1983 there has been a major swing to the right in the central organs of the Labour Party — though not at rank and file level.

The Labour [Party] conference and the labour movement are now seen in my opinion, as the first stage of the rocket that fires the front bench into office. As at Cape Canaveral, the labour movement provides the initial lift and then falls harmlessly into the Caribbean while the parliamentary capsule goes where it wants.

Since 1983, we have seen the downgrading of the national executive, the downgrading of the role of conference, and a downgrading of the role of policy itself. The NEC has decided that we'll have no Labour programme 1986 which is what we should have. There has also been an upgrading of the role of the shadow cabinet now funded by the government through state aid, an upgrading of the role of the PLP [Parliamentary Labour Party], and the appearance — which began when the radicalisation started — of the Trade Unions for a Labour Victory, made up of general secretaries who drip feed the national executive with money if they agree with what the NEC [National Executive Committee of the Labour Party] wants to do.

Moreover the role of the electorate has been shrunk, and is only perceived to exist now in the statistics produced by the public opinion pollsters. The electorate as such, with all its many problems and needs, disappears in weighted, balanced samples which are then studied like the omens in an ancient tribal ritual. This polling has played a part in the new strategy: distancing us from the struggle — of the miners, of Liverpool, of Bernie Grant (2), and so on — the repudiation of the left, and of course the renewed witch-hunting which goes very widely indeed.

My fear about that — quite apart from thinking it's not the right way forward — is that every time you read about another repudiation, you find that the party itself is apparently confirming the analysis of Thatcher and Owen [leader of the SDP]: namely that Labour is full of nutters and loonie lefts and dangerous people. And now everything is beginning to

1. Diane Abbott, a leader of the fight for Black sections inside the Labour Party, also spoke at the weekend event. She has recently been selected as parliamentary candidate for Hackney North, London and is likely to become the first Black woman MP in Britain.

2. The reference to Liverpool is to the stand taken by Liverpool councillors against government attempts to restrict local financing. Bernie Grant is the Labour leader of Haringey council. He is well-known for his support for Black sections in the Party and his stand taken against police brutality during last year's riots in Tottenham, London. Tottenham falls within the borough of Haringey.

rotate around what is thought of as a loyalty test to the leaders. Much of the realignment which is supposed to be going on is apparently designed to realign us around personalities rather than around policies.

The latest charge made against anybody who asks for anything is that of 'impossibilism'. I don't know whether 'impossibilism' began with Leon Trotsky or not. But I suppose by that test the eight-hour day was an impossibilist demand, and that the Chartists and the suffragettes made impossibilist demands, and the Tolpuddle martyrs made an impossibilist demand (3).

If anyone demands more than is currently on offer from the top it means you are charged with impossibilism, and hence trying to lose the election.

The effect of all this is deliberately to lower expectations, and that is what the Mitterrand example is about. 'Don't think we'll do what he did. He came unstuck, so we won't even try it!' Full employment is therefore no longer on the agenda ...

All this is moving us in the direction of a hung parliament. And Neville Hough in Ireland last week said 'Labour might have to depend on Shirley Williams [SDP leader] to topple Thatcher'. That was the clearest statement from the chairman of the Labour Party as to where all this could lead us.

I remember 1959, when Macmillan won his great election, and said socialism was no longer needed because we were so prosperous. There was a film called *I'm all right Jack*. Peter Sellers was in it, they made fun of trade unionists. It was all old hat, you didn't need it. Gaitskell [former leader of the Labour Party] then tried to change Clause IV [of the Labour Party constitution], an early attempt to realign us to meet the demands of a prosperous welfare capitalism.

Now we're being realigned to fit in to a new right-wing consensus. Mrs Thatcher, in an interview in the *Financial Times* the other day said in effect, one of the reasons she was staying on was because she didn't want to leave until the Labour Party had come to terms with the fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of the rich that she was carrying through.

One of the effects of all this on the left is that there has been a crisis of perspectives, by which I mean that there is not a shared analysis of the left at the moment of what is going on. The Euro-communists are in conflict with the *Morning Star* (4), even with *Socialist Action* there is some disagreement about the meaning of permanent revolution, and in the



Tony Benn, MP. (DR)

WRP [the Workers Revolutionary Party] there are some arguments about what should happen. Some left trade union general secretaries are in conflict with other right wing unions of which Roy Lynk (5) is now the leader. The broad left within the unions are not always united themselves.

The psychological effect of this is to create fear, to create division within our society, and to create suspicion. When you are in difficulties it's very easy to look over your shoulder and say a Black has taken your job, or whatever is the National Front line — because a certain sense of hopelessness has been created.

Here I will say something I hope won't give offence. When Thatcher says 'there is no alternative', and it becomes the chorus of the media, we on the left must not respond by saying there will be 'permanent betrayals.' Reflect for a moment on that. If the left says we're always going to be betrayed, and Mrs Thatcher says there are no alternatives — we would be saying the same thing. That is a very dangerous line for us to take.

As far as the general public are concerned, the people we try to represent, the effect of all that I've described is to make the political process increasingly remote from their experience. I don't believe that all these little meetings, as when the 'cuddly left' was recently born, has any resonance with the public at all. If you're unemployed, if you haven't got a decent home, if your mother's waiting for a hip operation, if your dad can't live on the pension, if you're worried about nuclear weapons, and you hear there's another dinner at St Ermines where certain people are going to gather together to realign it's just as irrelevant as it could possibly be. It's irrelevant to people's needs.

All that people are being offered now is anti-Thatcherism in many varieties, but no real alternative to the policy that's been carried through.

We've got to face the fact that a hung parliament is a possibility and a non-socialist majority in the next parliament is a near certainty. And we've got to look a bit ahead too.

We may get a defeat of the present prime minister. She may be removed before the election because the Tories are not very loyal to their leaders when they fail. I don't rule out the possibility that if support for the Tories continues to decline the Earl of Stockton [former Tory prime minister, Harold Macmillan] will find himself sitting next to the Countess of Finchley [Thatcher's constituency] and they can sort it out in a private word because the Tories will get rid of them. But the day she goes, and particularly if the Tory Party is defeated, despite everything I've said there will be a big surge of expectations. People will say 'this is the end of the crisis'. They'll have been told it's all about Thatcherism, and when Thatcher goes they'll believe that it is the end.

And that presents a danger for us as a socialist movement. For if, following the rising expectation, there was a terrible disenchantment, it could be followed by a swing to the right and socialism would go down in the subsequent debacle. Our job is to see that doesn't happen.

Now may I say something about certain cul-de-sacs which the left must avoid — the false trails. First of all the temptation to respond personally to attacks on the left that are made personally. I don't believe that has a resonance with the public. I don't think it's the right way forward. Secondly, I don't think that the right way forward is to try and personalise the argument by a challenge to the leadership — because to be quite candid, I think that if that happens, the desire to defeat Thatcher would be so great that the left's strength would not in any way be reflected in the outcome of such a challenge.

I don't believe that the answer

3. The Chartists were a broad-based movement of the mid-nineteenth century campaigning for a Charter of democratic demands including the right to vote. The Tolpuddle Martyrs were a group of six trade unionists from Tolpuddle, Dorsetshire who were deported in the 1880s for setting up a trade union.

4. The *Morning Star* is now the paper of the hardline Stalinist wing of what was the Communist Party of Great Britain. The party split when the *Morning Star* editorial staff were expelled. Those supporting a more Euro-communist line have since established a new newspaper, *7 Days*.

5. Roy Lynk is a leader of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM), the scab union which was established as a split-off from the TUC-affiliated National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) following the strike. Recently, the right-wing-led Electricians Union caused considerable controversy by holding discussions with the UDM. See *IV* No 86, November 11, 1985.

lies in sectarianism, if by that is meant the idea that somehow you can go on dividing and subdividing till you're only with people with whom you wholly agree. I don't believe that splitting the party is right. There are people who say, in effect, that there is no hope. That's absolutely wrong. Those in the past who have left, like the ILP [Independent Labour Party] have withered on the bough.

We have got to accept that the Labour Party is the vehicle by which we're going to make change. If you look at the decisions taken at the 1985 Labour Party conference you will find they are very good indeed: for example, breaking off relations with South Africa, ending nuclear power, supporting the miners, supporting the local councillors, supporting women's rights and gay rights too. The Labour conference at [the town of] Bournemouth, if you forget the media hype for a moment, was an excellent indication of the strength of socialism within the party.

There is one point I want to touch on, because it often features on the left, and that is the role of parliament. I think there is some genuine confusion about this. The argument about extra-parliamentary versus parliamentary, put in its crude and simplest form, is really a false argument.

If you doubt what I say, look at the Tory Party who have never believed that their strength lay in parliament. Their strength lies outside parliament, but they need people inside parliament to control the statute book, to enrich the people outside parliament who pay for their election campaign. That view of parliament, as the control of the statute book being part of the process of transformation, seems to me to be unanswerable. We too need the statute book to control the state, to prevent it from enslaving us, to deal with certain economic questions, to liberate or to enfranchise working people (I've never liked the phrase 'empower the working class', I've always thought they had power but didn't use it), but we would have to enfranchise the working people and that is what the statute book is about.

I also think there's some confusion in arguments about reform versus revolution. My complaint is not that we've had reform rather than revolution, but that we haven't had reform. All the periods of Labour governments have manipulated the system, sometimes to our advantage as in 1945 but we have never changed the power structure. And it's that failure to make the major reforms open to us to make that has led us into some of the difficulties that we're in.

The charge is often made that we want to lose. It is a wholly fraudulent argument. I've never met anybody who actually believes that if, by our conscious decision, Thatcher could be given another term in some way that would strengthen the left. It would not. We have therefore to try to build up from the bottom.

Can I turn now to the role of new social forces, which is the jargon for what we're discussing today? There is the argument, associated with Professor Hobsbawm, of a declining working class. I think there are a number of points to be said about that analysis. First of all the working class is always changing its composition and always has. Secondly, when Britain had a working class of a classic character, we never had socialism. So the theory that you could look back on a golden age when you could have got socialism because the working class was big enough to give it is not true. We've never had that.

It also seems to me a very strange — and this is why the miners' strike was so unpopular with the Euro-communists — that such an argument was launched at the beginning of the greatest working class struggle in the history of Britain, the miners' strike. That was not supposed to be able ever to happen again. And if it happened it was supposed to be seen as irrelevant.

Actually, the miners' strike mobilised the very alliance that we're talking about at this conference today. The political consciousness, the central role of women in the strike as an independent reinforcing element, the link with the Black community, with the Irish struggles, and so on, came out of it.

Also, as I'm sure must be becoming apparent, the militancy of the so-called white collar workers is rising. Look at the teachers, look at the nurses, look at the GCHQ (6) people. If anyone who thinks that because you've moved to a certain level that somehow excludes you from any form of militancy they are wholly misunderstanding the nature of the struggle.

But how should we approach these new social forces? I find that I agree very strongly with Diane Abbott who talks about people who anguish about women and about the Black communities. What is now being attempted in the Labour Party is an electoral incorporation or manipulation of the new social forces: the idea that if you say the right thing somehow you solve the problem.

This theory argues that you can incorporate women, incorporate Blacks, incorporate the peace movement, incorporate the green move-

ment into your party without actually changing the party itself. That is absolutely false and destined to failure.

If people say we want Black sections or women's rights to be recognised then class comes out of a dusty cupboard and is used to reject the demand of the Blacks on the grounds 'it's not about colour it's about class'. So then you look at Labour's economic policy document, where you'd think that class would be in capital letters — and it's disappeared in favour of consensus. Class is used to shut off the new social forces and then is forgotten if you are going to discuss what transformation would be about.

'We've got to recreate the Socialist tradition'

I'm absolutely certain that the only way we're going to link up with those new social forces, somehow or another, is by the refounding of the labour movement — in such a way as to open it to the new social forces which must be properly statistically and politically able to make their demands within the framework of a party now dominated by white middle class males.

There is one important initiative here we should support. The Labour women's committee have now decided to have shadow elections for the national executive. They're going to have elections for all women to take part in, culminating in the women's conference. Of course it is not in the constitution, but they will produce an elected slate, which I hope the whole labour movement takes up and then elects them all onto the national executive.

We've got to open up new affiliations and we've got to recreate the socialist tradition within the labour movement. That is what I think our task is about.

When you look at that and ask how do you actually do it, the answer is that we must root it in an experience. You can't approach people with a textbook and say 'on page 88 this was said in 1883'. That would be bibliolatry, where people used to stick a pin in the Bible to read their fortune.

You can't approach socialism in that way. It's got to be rooted in people's experience, it's got to be about whose side you're on, whether it's miners or Liverpool or the people

6. GCHQ is the government communications headquarters in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. In January, 1984, the government banned trade-union membership there, provoking widespread protest in the trade-union movement.

in Tottenham. Any other basis is going to fail. It's got to build solidarity, it's got to develop internationalism.

My approach to internationalism is very, very simple. They've got the same problems in South Africa that we've got here. We were a developing country till a couple of hundred years ago. After all, the collective memory of what it was like in feudal England hasn't changed. England is still a feudal country — you just need to see the opening of parliament on television to realise that. There was the chief on her stool: there were the wise men of the tribe with long hair (they call them judges); there were the witch-doctors robed as bishops; and there were the lords dressed in animal skins, ermine, indicating their ownership of land. It's a *shared* analysis with the Third World that is going to make internationalism real.

We have got to campaign for basic demands and build our broad alliance on the demand for jobs, the demand for homes, the demand for schools, the demand for health care, the demand for dignity when you're old, for equality and an end to discrimination, and the demand for peace. We have got to approach socialism through all forms of experience of exploitation.

Believe it or not we had some document at the Labour National Executive's home policy committee last Monday saying that we were going to have a policy for those who were not employed, like women at home, as if those who work to raise a family were somehow non-employed people. The experience of exploitation may well come just because you are a woman or Black or gay.

Unless we open ourselves to those experiences in the way that trade union affiliation opens up the party to working experience in factories and pits, we're not going to develop good policies. We must look again at the concept of the manifesto. For many years I spent my time trying to get the manifesto under the control of the national executive, though when I look at the executive now I wonder if it was worthwhile.

We cannot have a manifesto composed of promises made to the public by politicians. The manifesto has got to be redefined as meaning those demands we make here and now. We make them when Labour's there, we make them if Owen's there. A manifesto of demands is quite different from a manifesto of promises.

I mention this only briefly, but in Chesterfield [Benn's constituency town] we're trying to do just that. There, arising out of the by-election and the miners' strike, our member-

ship has gone up from 300 to 1500. We got a 12 per cent increase in the Labour vote at the county council elections. We've got a community defence campaign. We've got an international committee set up now. (I don't know if other constituencies have done it.) That international committee is also going to work with Anti Apartheid, with the Black groups in the area. It's going to be an international committee that is a centre of internationalism built into the structure of the party. We've got workplace branches. We need plans prepared for the future: new local government legislation, and aims and objectives which we're discussing at our conference in about four weeks' time.

'We don't need permission to take action'

The policies we're demanding in our manifesto must be for full employment. I know the *Million Jobs A Year* pamphlet which the Campaign group endorsed is not perfect, but actually at the root of most of the questions of Black people and women is mass unemployment. Unless we can tackle that problem, and do it seriously, you're not going to be able to do more than a cosmetic job.

The manifesto, in my opinion, must include the withdrawal from Ireland. All this latest media hype about Fitzgerald and Mrs Thatcher is not going to work. The manifesto must include a policy of non-alignment in British foreign policy: to take us out of NATO, because NATO's nature is being seen more clearly. It must include common ownership of the banks, of land and of major companies. But not a common ownership which ends up with a MacGregor or a Robens [present and former chairs of the National Coal Board] in charge, but one which allows people who make the wealth to make the decisions that influence the companies and enterprises in which they work.

If you look back over the history of the nineteenth century and our whole history, you will find that it is the democratic challenge they fear most. They can live with socialist rhetoric, just as they can live with the Archbishop of Canterbury on Easter Sunday talking about the brotherhood of man — so long as nothing happens till next Easter Sunday.

But what is really threatening to the establishment is to demand accountability: accountability of the unions to their members, of local government to their own community, of industry to those who work in it, accountability in foreign and defence policy and party democracy put

back on the agenda. I agree with the right of recall and I've got a very radical suggestion: that we should have a socialist on every shortlist [for parliamentary candidates]. We have got to prepare it all now.

Can I just say in conclusion. It is a very hard time in a way, but it is also a time for action and for hope. I find that reading labour history is really encouraging because almost everything that's happening has happened many, many times before.

When I saw the police in Chesterfield I remembered that the government sent the Dublin Fusiliers during the miners' strike of 1983, and again in 1910. In the 1820s I remember they were hanging Luddites all over the place, literally hanging them. They had barracks built after the French revolution, which frightened the British establishment quite as much as the Russian revolution.

It's all happened before. The difference between then and now is that when those people worked for a different society they didn't know it was possible. We know they were able to make gains. In that sense we're doing it again, and this time we intend to do it properly.

The system is in crisis and neither Thatcher, nor Macmillan, nor Heath, nor Pym [Tory leader of the so-called 'wets' faction], nor Steel [leader of the Liberal Party], have any real answers. What gives me the feeling of confidence now — because I do have it very strongly — is that more and more people are learning what it's all really about. Political consciousness is rather a fancy phrase but that's what's happening.

I even met lawyers in Chesterfield on Friday who came to complain about what's happening to them under the new Crown Prosecution Service, that solicitors were not being treated properly. The nurses came two days earlier talking about what was happening to them. Capitalism is attacking the professions as well as the manual working class. A lot of people are learning.

And we have surely learned something else from the last year. We don't need permission before we take action. The Greenham Common women didn't need permission, Arthur Scargill didn't need permission. If he had written to Len Murray, [leader of the trade union confederation, the TUC], he would still be waiting for a letter on House of Lords note-paper telling him to go ahead.

The capacity to take action is vested in us. When you look at it that way, there are grounds for hope and confidence: so long as we're clear that we either do it ourselves or it won't be done at all. □

Normalization revisited

FOR THE SAKE of comparison with the situation in Poland, the following article and interview on the state of affairs in Czechoslovakia have a particular interest. They trace the failure of the leadership of the mass movement for democratization to organize a determined struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy. They are from the October 28, 1985, issue of *Profil*, a broad circulation Austrian magazine. The interview that follows was also done by Hermann Dworczak.

HERMANN DWORCZAK

Two border crossings, two scenes of "normalized" Czechoslovakia. Ceske Velenice, the train from Vienna to Prague has just passed the iron curtain. An elderly man speaks to me in German: "A lot of people on your side don't appreciate freedom," he says in a chatty tone.

Although he has been retired for a long time, in the last two years, including cost-of-living increases, he has not gotten more than 900 crowns (officially, the average income in Czechoslovakia is around 2,900 crowns). So, despite his advanced age, he is obliged to supplement his income by working as a homemaker.

Another scene, Bratislava. At the Petrzalka border crossing, alongside the customs building there is a kennel. Going through passport control, you are confronted with the barking of savage dogs.

In the Prague Spring, Czechoslovakia set about ridding itself of the Stalinist straitjacket, and took the first steps toward "socialism with a human face." In 1985 in Petrzalka it's the snouts of animals that confront you.

Leaving the railway station in Prague, I thought at first that I had come to Linz [an Austrian city]. The bad air almost took my breath away. From Hradschin, I saw the massive dome of smog that presses down on the city. Because of the sulphurous yellow cloud, the Zizkov, the national memorial for the Hussite leader Jan Zizka, was visible only vaguely.

Defense of the environment gets short shrift in Czechoslovakia. A report entitled *Analysis of the Environmental Situation in Czechoslovakia* which was sponsored by the government is still being kept under wraps.

Supporters of the civil rights movement, however, got hold of a copy and got it published — in the West. On the appropriations for defense of the environment, it says:

"In the USSR, spending on environmental defense as a whole amounts to 2.7% of the national income, in Sweden it is 0.8%, in the USA it is 1.5%, in the Federal Republic of Germany it is 2% of the GNP. Even these spending totals are not strictly comparable from a methodological standpoint, it is clearly food for thought that in the sixth five-year plan (1976 - 1980) such spending in Czechoslovakia will amount to only 0.3% of the applied national income and 0.85% of total investment."

The Czechoslovak-Hungarian version of Hainburg (1) is called Babickovo-Nagymaros. For the joint power plant that is planned to be built there, the Austrian building firm, Baufirma Universale, has just gotten a 400 million schilling contract [twenty Austrian schillings equal approximately one US dollar].

A publication issued by Hungarian environmentalists in mid-September, with an introduction by Charter 77, warns of negative effects of the power plant on the drinking water supply in Czechoslovakia.

The environmental gray veil matches the cultural scene. In 1963, at the legendary conference on Kafka in Liblice, which is supposed to mark the beginning of the development that led to the Prague Spring, Ernst Fischer demanded an "extended visa" for the writer, who had been banned in the East up until that time.

Frantisek Kautman, who was a participant in the Liblice conference, was

asked about the attitude to Franz Kafka in Czechoslovakia today. "In 1983 and 1984, a few selected readings were published and a collection of stories in a small edition. There is no study of him. Actually, Kafka is living in exile again."

A salesperson in a bookshop where in 1967 I bought the book containing the materials from the Liblice conference confirmed that. "You will find nothing of Kafka here. He is taboo here."

In a submission of Charter 77 to the Budapest Forum of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was signed by the Nobel prize winner Jaroslav Seifert, among others, the following was said about the cultural situation:

"After 1968, a long period began in Czechoslovakia of destruction of all the major values of a sovereign national culture, in many respects reminiscent of the 1950s and in many respects even worse."

A young film maker talked about the "sterility of official cultural activity. Only on the fringes do you see occasional sparks." For example, the *Concreto Grosso* by the pantomimist Boris Rybner is treated as an allegory.

After 8:00 pm, most of the streets in Prague are empty of passers-by. On the Karlsbruecke alone a crowd of young people ebbs and flows and music is played. "Only here because there are foreigners around do you have any chance of not being moved on right away by the police," one of them said.

River of forgetfulness

The taverns, on the other hand, are chock full, and beer flows in rivers. On the situation of youth in North Bohemia, the writer Jan Pelc has said: "There are no open spaces where people can meet. Everywhere you run up against the regime and its long arm. So, people go to the only place still open to them, the tavern."

Along with sousing, a weekend in a countryhouse is one of the most common means of escape from an oppressive reality. A quarter of the 450,000 Prague households have such a second dwelling, and seek by this means to get away a bit from the Kremlin big brother and his local viceroys.

The press resembles a morgue. Even the party boss, Gustav Husak, finds it too boring. He is quoted as saying: "Everything is in good order

1. A nuclear power plant against which there have been big mobilizations in Austria.



in the papers; it's just that they are often unreadable."

Western TV is generally "in." In Plzn, police built a common antenna in order to get better reception from the West German transmitters. On weekends in Bratislava, you can see lines in front of the newspaper kiosks. There is a real scramble for the Austrian Communist Party paper *Volksstimme*, because it has a supplement that gives the TV listings.

After the setbacks of 1981 and 1982, the present economic situation in Czechoslovakia is rated as "relatively favorable" (c.f. *Die Sueddeutsche Zeitung*). Cited on the positive side are a sharp increase in agricultural production, a positive trade balance since 1980, and a small debt to the West.

Czechoslovakia's debts to the West are estimated at around 2 billion dollars, as against a total indebtedness of the Warsaw Pact countries that stands at 75 billion dollars.

In 1968, the Kremlin ended the attempt to bring together socialism and democracy in a brutal way. In the wake of this, the bureaucracy moved with a similar brutality to re-consolidate its threatened positions. A half million party members were purged. A couple of hundred thousand people lost their previous professional status.

Corruption is in full swing in getting housing, hospital care, or the many "approval stamps" for a trip abroad.

The reaction of the population? Apathy, inner emigration, and Svejksism (2). On the "Lennon Wall" in a part of Prague, it says in a resigned way, "Vy mate Lenina — nechte nam Lennona" ("You have Lenin, leave us Lennon").

A former journalist, now a porter in a hotel said, "Among fellow workers people talk quite openly about the machinations of the rulers. Of course, everyone is in the party and they all give their lip service on May 1. But no one believes in the swindle at the top."

Anyone who engages in any oppositional activity is watched, harassed, or locked up. "Bugs" in the homes of Charter 77 signers are the rule. When a former spokesperson of the Charter, Petruska Sustrova moved, the new tenants found a listening device "made in England" when they were renovating. They gave it to Sustrova as a souvenir. It was not long before the police came and demanded that she return their "tool."

In September, the Catholic priest Vaclav Maly was interrogated by the state security service and dragged off into a wood. Lenka Mareckova, a 22-year-old clerk, following the personal intervention of the minister of justice, was tried twice; and for her poem "Death of a Dictator" (Leonid Brezhnev) she got several months in prison.

Despite the repression, the regime has not managed to silence the opposition. The Charter is going into the ninth year of its existence. In its ranks are supporters of various philosophical and political currents. Ladislav Hejdanek pins his hopes primarily on the positive effects on some reform course in Moscow on the situation in Czechoslovakia. (c.f., the accompanying interview.) The revolutionary Marxist Petr Uhl, on the other hand,

looks to "the fall of the bureaucracy" as a result of mass resistance.

"The central thing is the struggle here and the international synchronization of the independent movements in Eastern Europe. That is creating the preconditions for an explosive situation."

On the upswing is a Catholic movement critical of the regime. After the great festival in honor of St. Methodius in Velehrad in July, a good 30,000 pilgrims flooded into the west Slovak religious site of Sastin, most of them young people. The most popular chant was "We want the Pope."

The regime holds the power, but no place in the affections of the people. An economic reform is overdue. But there is no threat of an economic collapse as in Poland at the end of the 1960s. There is an opposition, but it is far from endangering the bureaucracy. Great hopes continue to be expressed in very subdued ways. Another slogan on the Lennon Wall was "Dreams are our only freedom." □

2. The principal character of the novel 'The Good Soldier Svejk' by the Czech novelist Hasko. It describes an attitude of de facto passive noncooperation by Czechs to the Austro-Hungarian rulers based on avoiding confrontation by pretending to be a well-intentioned fool.

Interview with Ladislav Hejdanek, former spokesperson of Charter 77

Question. The economic situation in Czechoslovakia does not seem to be so bad.

Answer. It seems so on the surface. The economists, however, say that the reality is far worse. A lot of data are just dreamed up. Even the government has no clear view of the whole thing. Seven different kinds of crowns [the national currency] are used as a means of accounting, which makes the situation totally unintelligible.

Q. Politically, it's the ice age.

A. After the big shock of 1968, there is a general lack of perspectives. Most people concentrate on purely personal questions. In this situation, the Charter has begun to show that it is possible to express a protest.

In comparison to the Polish Solidarnosc, our activity may seem rather "dry." But given the fact that there is no strong pressure from below, it

borders on a miracle that there is still any activity at all.

Q. Is there only latent discontent?

A. In certain situations, criticism comes into the open. This happens above all when a lot of people come together, as in a train or bus. Then remarks are made whose meaning is quite clear.

Q. There is the classic Svejk, Brecht's Svejk in the Second World War. How does today's Svejk operate?

A. For example, the measures dictated from above are so undermined, that after two or three weeks, it seems as if the orders had never been given. In a factory a hundred people regularly come late, but some fellow workers punch in for them. The management finds out about it, and sets up a special check at the workplace door. For maybe two weeks, the slackness is over. Sudden-

ly, somewhere else in the factory "difficulties" turn up. The checkers are ordered there, and the old cycle starts again.

Q. The Charter has just published a document on the cultural situation in Czechoslovakia.

A. Without exaggeration, the cultural situation is a catastrophe. Even in the natural sciences, we are years behind. In the humanities and social sciences, things are particularly bad. Almost all the work in these areas is in the hands of opportunists who do not even believe in what they churn out. Unless there are changes soon, it will be difficult, even in two generations, to clear away the damage.

Q. The Charter has also spoken out on questions of environmental defense.

A. Not directly. We help those who are interested in ecological questions. The same goes for the peace movement. Anyone who takes a critical stand on environmental questions can be treated here simply as a psychiatric case. The authorities look into their personal situations, make trouble for them at their jobs — in a word, they try to break them.

Q. What are the reasons for the growing Catholic resistance?

A. In order to be brief, I will just talk about Bohemia. After the First World War, more than a few Catholics turned against the republic and consequently even flirted with Hitler's Munich treaty.

After the Second World War, incredible pressure was put on the Catholics. They got the worst treatment of any group. The events in Poland gave them self-confidence. The state's organization for priests, *Pacem in Terris*, is taken seriously by no one. It exists only on paper.

Q. Is the term "underground Church" appropriate?

A. I think that this term is not appropriate. The Church is unregulated and unregulatable. But it has no programmatic perspectives. Today it is concerned mainly by survival. In the future, something bigger could come out of that.

Q. Is the regime firmly in the saddle?

A. There can be no question of that. Without the support of the Soviet authorities, it wouldn't last more than a few weeks. The situation in our country is as artificial as it could be anywhere. The rulers can't accept any public opinion. They have censored even Gorbachov's attacks on corruption. A reform line in the Kremlin could become a danger to

the regime here. Our hope is that it will be sunk by an imitation of such a reform course.

Q. How long can the present freezing of social contradictions last?

A. That is above all an economic question, that is, how long the population can be corrupted by an artificial

maintenance of the living standard. No one knows the extent of our debts in the East, and it cannot be foreseen how long the Kremlin will be prepared to bear the burden of the satellite countries. Without external changes, say, reforms in the Soviet Union, the present situation could last another ten or fifteen years. □

New Canadian organisation founded

BARRY WEISLEDER

A NEW national organization to unite revolutionary socialists in English Canada was formed at a convention held in Toronto, November 22-24, 1985.

The Alliance for Socialist Action [ASA] is the result of the fusion of four socialist groups: the Socialist Workers Collective (Toronto), the Socialist Action Collective (Winnipeg), the Socialist and Feminist Action Collective (Edmonton), and the Socialist Action Collective (Vancouver).

The new organisation is comprised of activists from the feminist, gay liberation and international solidarity movements; of active trade unionists, students and left-wing members of the New Democratic Party (the mass labour party in English Canada).

ASA members are already playing a leading role in the abortion rights and anti-intervention movements in several cities.

But without an activist organization based on a genuinely revolutionary programme, the ASA representatives stressed, socialists remain "chained to the treadmill of reformism", with no real prospect for building a movement for fundamental change.

In three days of deliberations, which capped a six month oral and written pre-convention discussion period, the gathering of the rank and file sponsoring groups adopted a Statement of Principles, Basis of Unity, Political Resolution, Norms and Organization document, Tasks and Perspectives, and a Constitution.

The convention instructed its elected National Committee to edit and publish all of these documents early in 1986. The NC, which is composed equally of women and men from across the country, is the leadership body that will meet at regular intervals between conventions of the ASA.

Socialists can, on occasion, provide exemplary leadership to mass struggles even in periods of general working class retreat, and in this way attempt

to bring a positive influence to bear on the traditional organizations of our class.

Herein lies some of the motivation behind the ASA convention decision to help spread and coordinate across the country the work of two key social movement campaigns: the campaign for women's reproductive rights and to defend the Morgentaler abortion clinic; and the campaign against United States' intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.

The ASA will also launch a modest publication to serve as a vehicle for its socialist analysis and views as well as to provide vital information on struggles and campaigns in the interest of the working people. The newsprint bi-monthly will be called *Socialist Challenge — for Socialist and Feminist Action*, with its first issue scheduled to appear before March 8, International Women's Day.

Although the ASA exists only in English Canada, it aspires to be a part of the process of building a Pan-Canadian revolutionary workers' party. The next step along the long road towards that goal is to unite revolutionary socialists today living in Quebec and English Canada.

For that reason a central priority of the ASA is fusion with the Quebec Trotskyist organization *Gauche Socialiste*. The leadership of the GS has expressed agreement with this objective and will propose to the February convention of that organization that a membership-wide discussion be opened up on the question of building a Pan-Canadian organization.

The ASA is committed to the construction of the Fourth International, now active in over 45 countries fighting to establish a revolutionary Marxist alternative to Stalinism, social democracy and petty bourgeois nationalism. Although links with the FI had previously been made, the ASA convention voted to apply for formal sympathizing organization status for the ASA within the International — a status the *Gauche Socialiste* was given one year ago. □

Towards unity of revolutionary Marxists

FOR MORE THAN a year, the International Marxist Group (IMG), German section of the Fourth International, and the Communist Party of Germany (Marxist-Leninist) (KPD-ML) have been negotiating a fusion into a single revolutionary socialist organization. In early November, a special congress of the KPD came out for unification by the end of 1986. A delegate conference of the IMG held in early December also voted by a large majority for unification.

The following report on the special congress of the KPD explains this rapprochement, which at first glance hardly seems possible, between a section of the Fourth International and an organization that up until recently had presented itself as a "sister party" of the Albanian Party of Labor. The KPD has broken from the dogmas of the so-called Marxist-Leninist movement and is seeking a new programmatic basis for "the unity of socialist activists, both male and female."

PETER BARTELHEIMER

When *Roten Morgen* ("Red Dawn"), the paper of the KPD appeared without the martial line up of "classic profiles" (Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin), this represented more than a simple face lifting. The old KPD-ML, familiar to a generation of activists in West Germany and West Berlin for its claim to total representativeness as "the party of the working class," which came out of Chinese and later Albanian style Marxism-Leninism, drew an "x" through this history at a special congress November 1-3 in Dortmund.

This congress rejected the party's 1977 program and replaced it with a draft program and statutes that are the result of two years of self-critical discussion. At the same time, the delegates decided to continue the negotiations with the IMG so as to achieve the unification of both groups in a common socialist organization within a year.

A part of the organization did not accept this break with the previous conceptions. Shortly before the Dortmund congress, about 150 "Marxist Leninists" turned their backs on the party, after making a resounding declaration characterizing the present KPD Central Committee as "Trotskyite" and "Titoist" and unhesitatingly "expelling" it.

Under the slogan "Forward in the spirit of Ernst Aust," the recently deceased founder of the party, they are sticking to an ideology to which the delegates at Dortmund do not want to return, even if the new

program and the new conceptions are by no means clear and remain open to dispute in some respects.

With its democratic and fraternal debates, the special congress tested the capacity of the KPD to find the road to political reality in a different way than the other organizations of the Marxist-Leninist movement that are today dissolved — that is, without giving up socialist organizing work.

The recognition of socialist democracy involved in the draft program was not challenged by the 100 accredited delegates, who represented 500 members. The "dictatorship of the proletariat," which the draft program uses in the same meaning as "workers power," is seen today by most members as more realized in besieged Nicaragua than in Albania, whose leadership up until now called the KPD a "sister party."

Today the KPD regards as "inalienable" such fundamental rights as freedom of the press and opinion, freedom of religion, a plurality of political parties, trade union freedom, the right to strike, and freedom to assemble and to demonstrate. These rights are to enable the working class to "fight for its interests and demands without any state bans or limitations — and, if need be, against a workers state."

Under the influence of the Polish workers movement, the draft program explicitly mentions, and this is no small thing, "the principle of self-management and self-government." In

many spheres of society, the political power of the working class in practise makes superfluous the centralization of decisions and the state authorities.

For the KPD today, economic planning means, besides the expression of the democratic will about "the underlying values of the plan, for example, the effects on the environment," recallable and accountable plant managers, the right of control and veto for the personnel on all questions, and the elimination of the capitalist organization of working time. In such a workers state, communists cannot arrogate to themselves "any special power."

Only one party body, the Blumenthal Cell, tried to maintain as much as possible of the old ideology in the draft program, that is, to repeat a profession of faith about the leading role of the party and against fundamental rights. It was not represented in the congress, and its contributions had no chance of getting support.

The new democratic consciousness was expressed in the statutes. As symbolic as the removal of the "classic heads" was the elimination of the post of chairman. The lifting of the ban on factions that was included in the old statutes has a more decisive practical significance.

What is more, "the formation of different currents and positions in the party" is now regarded as "a normal part of democracy within the party and of the necessary confrontation of views." "The composition of the party bodies should, insofar as possible reflect the diversity of currents."

The difficult questions

According to the majority resolutions, moreover, such currents have "the right to continue to represent their opinions and to develop political work in accordance with them, so long as this does not contradict the general political orientation of the party and put in danger its capacity for action."

The Central Committee will be reelected at a regular congress in February. In the discussion of the statutes, the new CC is to take account of the criticism that it has not kept the membership well enough informed of the negotiations with the IMG up until now.

In the new draft program, the dogmatic characterization of the SPD as "social fascist" was cautiously left in cold storage. But the document notes that "the ouster of the Schmidt government, which had been conduct-

ing a Social Democratic policy, was undertaken directly by the monopolies and the employers' organizations."

Likewise, the draft program says, the result was a "government of political reaction," which is "ready and determined to pursue the interests of capital in open confrontation with the unions and other social movements."

As for the "influence of Social Democracy," the draft program says that it amounted to "disarming" the unions through "social participation" [class collaboration]. Instead of simply reviling the SPD, the document stresses the need for a united front against the rightist coalition in Bonn, that is, against "the exercise of government power by the most reactionary forces, that trample malevolently on the working class and the unions."

Another "sacred cow," as one delegate put it, proved more difficult to slaughter. It was the characterization of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact as representing social imperialism. No other question aroused such an open dispute among the delegates.

Although the draft program did not use this expression and called for unilateral disarmament of the German Federal Republic and withdrawal from NATO, responsibility for the growing war danger and the stepped-up arms race were put indiscriminately on "the two aggressive military blocs, NATO and the Warsaw Pact."

Under the pressure of practical experience in the peace movement, many delegates were moved to attack this formula as a "pitiful vestige of the theory of the superpowers," which had led the party in the 1970s to a position of "defense of the fatherland," that is, "to bloc with our own bourgeoisie."

An amendment that portrayed NATO as the sole source of the threat of war "because of its actual economic, political and military forces," even if in the event of war the Soviet Union would not be "a just side," was rejected by 58 votes against and 37 for and eight abstentions.

At the same time, an overwhelming majority voted through a motion calling for reediting this part of the program "in the direction of making clear differences in the assessment of these two great powers." Twenty-five delegates also voted for other amendments that tended toward removing claims that capitalist exploitation and the profit economy exist in the countries of "actually existing socialism."

The delegates who found themselves taking this position did not want to go on "bashing the Russians anymore." They see good grounds

for moving toward the analysis of Ernest Mandel and the GIM that these countries are "bureaucratically degenerated workers states" in which "the means of production have been taken from the capitalists but the political power has been confiscated by a layer of bureaucrats."

The majority of the delegates, on the other hand, shared the view that the existence of capitalist relationships of production, even in special forms, has not been proved in these countries.

The chairperson of the party up until now, Horst-Dieter Koch, called the result of the votes "unusual for our party," and he ventured the prediction that it would "give vitality to the discussion."

Among the most significant political weaknesses in the document approved in Dortmund is the fact that neither the emergence of the Greens nor the interests that they advocate were debated. They are not mentioned in any way in the program. The theses approved on the nature and role of the KPD are laconic, to say the least.

To be sure, the just criticisms the Greens make of capitalism must "be taken account of in the formation of a revolutionary socialist party." But since they "remain in the framework of the fundamental contradictions of capitalist society and wage labor," the building of such a party must be undertaken mainly in the working class.

A broader outlook

Some delegates were not satisfied with this. An amendment for revamping the program to pay more attention to the new technologies and the restructuration of industry got 32 votes.

The amendment was defeated, but in the discussion on the nature of the KPD the criticism flared up again that the document failed to give enough place to the "capacity of the proletariat to be the advocate of general social progress."

One delegate demanded that the questions that were leading "sections of the trade-union movement to lean to the Greens" should be answered "from the standpoint of the proletariat." She thought that in the material for the congress the "interests of the workers movement" were too narrowly conceived.

Another delegate said: "I support this resolution out of political realism, but who knows what importance the questions left hanging will have for the workers movement? This is only half a program."

The kernel of the theses adopted on the nature of the Party was the observation that it does not represent "a combination of all the more progressive forces in the workers movement but only a small part."

The KPD of course is strongly for "a conscious and politically organized effort to form a mass revolutionary party" and also criticizes the "fragmentation in different organizations as a harmful product of the sectarianism of the revolutionary left, including in our party." It aspires to the unification of the greatest possible number of forces that see the workers movement as the main instrument for social change and reject "actually existing socialism."

For the KPD, it is the question of "class collaboration or class struggle" that will be decisive in the coming years for the "formation of a socialist current" that will "include the left Social Democrats, the DKP, [the pro-Moscow CP], and the Green parties and support a revolutionary working-class policy."

For almost two years, the KPD has been discussing with other organizations in the Marxist-Leninist movement or coming from the anarchist tradition about "the unity of revolutionary socialist activists, male and female" within an informal coordinating arrangement.

It was only with the GIM's offer to conduct concrete negotiations with the aim of forming a united organization that the KPD was successful in practise "in breaking with our narrow conception of the party," H.D. Koch said in defence of a contribution supporting fusion with the GIM.

On this question, the contributions from the GIM delegation left no doubts. They took into consideration the difficulties still to be resolved, but also the determination to create a common organization.

Most of the qualms on the part of the delegates were aroused by the proposal to make a fundamental decision on integration into the Fourth International only two years after the fusion. Up until now, membership in the Fourth International has been excluded by the KPD.

In this period, the members of the Fourth International would have to have the possibility to organize to advocate the new organization joining the Fourth International. Despite everything, the congress adopted this with only one vote against and four abstentions.

The GIM and KPD leaderships must now together rework the draft program and statutes adopted in order to put them to the members of both organizations as a basis for the fusion, which is to be decided on in a year. □

The split of the Australian SWP from the Fourth International

THE UNITED Secretariat of the Fourth International meeting December 16-20 decided to publish the following declaration regarding the decision of the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party of Australia to disaffiliate from the Fourth International.

The National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party [SWP] in Australia has publicly announced its decision to disaffiliate its organisation from the Fourth International, part of a process of a progressive abandonment of central conceptions and perspectives of revolutionary Marxism. At the last World Congress of the Fourth International the positions of the SWP were rejected by overwhelming majorities.

The public explanations (1) that the SWP leadership have given for their organisational break with the Fourth International include:

— its claim that the Fourth International suffers from 'an over-estimation of the place... occupied by political revolution against the ruling castes in the bureaucratised workers states'; (2)

— their rejection of the theory and practice of permanent revolution and their assertion that the test of actual revolutions have repeatedly confirmed its incorrectness;

— that the Fourth International represents 'an obstacle to fully participating in the process of building new revolutionary parties and a new mass international revolutionary movement'; (3)

— a subordination of the aim of building a revolutionary international to the notion of 'international collaboration among revolutionaries'; (4)

1. According to the SWP leaders, the International has been unable to grasp the 'anti-imperialist axis' that, according to them, constitutes the unifying element of the world revolution.

This notion implies in fact that the main feature of the world revolution is the anti-imperialist struggles carried out in the dominated countries. The underlying idea is that the relationship of forces and, in the last analysis, the fate of the revolution on a world

scale, will be fundamentally decided in these liberation struggles and that the proletariat in the industrial countries will be just a back up.

As against this idea the last World Congress emphasised the linking together of the socialist dynamic of the revolution in the dominated countries, the socialist tasks of the proletariat in the imperialist countries, and the tasks of political revolution against the bureaucracy in the USSR, China and Eastern Europe.

2. In the framework of their new conception of the world revolution — whose axis can be reduced to the anti-imperialist struggles — the SWP leaders blot out the perspective of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution and the revolutionary significance of the struggles waged by the working class in the bureaucratised workers states. The SWP leadership explains that the anti-bureaucratic struggle should be subordinated to the 'anti-imperialist axis'.

The SWP leaders are replacing the revolutionary Marxist conception of the three sectors of world revolution by a 'campist' conception which expresses the fundamental antagonism existing on a world scale in terms of the opposition between states or blocs of states instead of in terms of social classes.

Carried through to its practical conclusion this would mean that, in the interest of the fight against imperialism, the struggle against the bureaucratic castes should be given up. But these bureaucratic castes represent a major obstacle to aiding the proletariat of the dominated countries to wage a consistent struggle against imperialism and for the workers of the industrialised countries to challenge the domination of capital.

3. This is why the struggle to overthrow the bureaucracy is an in-

tegral part of the world revolution. Concerned to avoid the so-called 'sectarianism' of the Fourth International, the SWP leadership is for its part on the way to fabricating a theory of 'non-sectarianism' whose logic is to blot out the struggles led by one-third of the world working class!

In fact, the present position of the SWP reflects a more general opportunist attitude towards the bureaucracy. This is concretised in apologetic analyses of the bureaucratised societies which the SWP leaders persist in calling 'socialist states'. For the SWP leaders 'there is no economic crisis in the USSR' (5) despite the evidence provided by the Kremlin leadership itself in its calls for reforms of the economic system. For SWP members who were delegates to the recent Moscow Youth Festival all critical judgement was suppressed and instead a rosy view was adopted which proclaimed that 'the opportunities to meet and discuss with others were only limited by the hours in the day... And it seemed that the whole of Moscow wanted to be part of it...' Not a critical word was reserved for their hosts, a bureaucratic apparatus which under Stalin claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of class-conscious workers and continues to suppress independent organisation and discussion today.

The SWP's adaption has gone so far as to fail to disassociate themselves from such Stalinist crimes as the execution of the Vietnamese Trotskyists in 1945, instead providing a justification for these actions claiming that 'the Trotskyists and their nationalist allies had made a major contribution to the near-destruction of the revolution in the South. Preventing further damage, if necessary by physical repression, was imperative.' (6)

4. But the evolution of the SWP has been expressed above all by its leadership's rejection of our conceptions of socialist democracy, reaffirmed and made more precise in a specific resolution at the last World Congress. These conceptions — directly linked to our strategic perspective of political revolution — are an essential element in the identity of our movement.

Our positions on socialist democracy are based on the experience of mass movements in the bureaucratised

1. 'The Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International' by Jim Percy and Doug Lorimer. Published by Pathfinder Press (Australia), September 1985.

2. *Ibid.* p18

3. *Ibid.* p54

4. *Ibid.* p55

5. David Holmes in 'Direct Action' July 31 1985.

6. 'The Vietnamese Revolution and its Leadership' by Alan Myers, 1985, p. 48.

workers states in which hundreds of thousands, indeed millions of workers from the East Berlin revolt in 1953 to the rise of the Polish revolution in 1980-1981 have put forward ideas, perspectives and demands that have enriched and confirmed an orientation developed since the emergence of the Left Opposition at the end of the 1920s. They forget that in the last analysis these movements confronted the bureaucratic regimes as such, going beyond a purely reformist perspective.

The logic of the SWP positions on the other hand comes down to now placing itself within such a perspective of reform. It is on this terrain in particular that the SWP is going in the direction of a break with revolutionary Marxism.

5. The revolution in the dominated countries is now presented by the SWP as a revolution by stages that implies a qualitative separation between the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution.

Such a concept cannot be based on the history of any victorious revolution, starting from the Nicaraguan, Cuban or Vietnamese revolutions. All these revolutions confirm the basic idea of permanent revolution — that the democratic and national tasks of the revolution cannot be resolved without the workers taking power. The Sandinista leaders have explained that they made tactical alliances with bourgeois forces, without giving up their own leadership of the revolution. Furthermore in Cuba, following the installation of the workers state, the growing over into the socialist phase took place at a relatively rapid rate. The Vietnamese Communist Party waged a heroic struggle for over thirty years which

resulted first in the formation of the North Vietnamese workers state and then its extension to the South after the 1975 victory. This is what we call the process of permanent revolution. Che Guevara was thinking in the same direction when he said that 'a socialist revolution or the caricature of the revolution' was the perspective in Latin America.

It is true that in a whole series of imperialist-dominated countries leaderships have been inspired by the schema of a revolution by stages and that they have banked on a strategic alliance with the bourgeoisie or important sectors of it. The practical consequences of such conceptions and orientations are tragically clear: the worker and peasant masses have suffered crushing, indeed historic, defeats. In the course of their polemic the SWP leaders pose the question of why the Vietnamese masses succeeded while the Indonesian masses were crushed. They correctly point to the differences between the strategies of the two Communist Parties as decisive. But they fail to stress that it was precisely because the VCP did not halt the struggle until the establishment of a workers state that US imperialism was struck its heaviest ever military and political blow and that it was because of the Indonesian CP's stagist view of the revolution that a million Indonesian workers went to their death.

The essential is, and remains, that the proletariat and its vanguard must from the outset seek to lead the revolutionary process, and that only the dictatorship of the proletariat can successfully accomplish the fulfilment of the democratic tasks.

6. The SWP leaders now claim that the majority of the International

has also gone towards an — albeit timid — revision of the theory of permanent revolution without, for all that, drawing the conclusion, as the SWP has done, that Trotsky's theory was in fact, leftist, sectarian and consequently wrong.

In fact the text adopted at the last World Congress concerning the debate on permanent revolution said in particular:

'The difference between Lenin and Trotsky before 1917 can be discussed as much as one wants. This is a historical and theoretical question about which many viewpoints have already been expressed inside the Fourth International. However, the thesis of the sixth point of the Left Opposition is a dividing line between revolutionaries and reformists in the colonial revolution. It is consistent from its first to its last word since there cannot be "a peaceful growing over" of the Stalinist-style democratic dictatorship (as a regime separate and distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat) into a socialist dictatorship; nor can the building of socialism be undertaken without a revolutionary conquest of power. On the other hand, there can and must be a growing over of the democratic and national tasks of the revolution into socialist tasks, *in the framework of a dictatorship of the proletariat.*

'On this essential point the Cuban, Vietnamese and Nicaraguan revolutions, and negatively the Indonesian disaster and the bourgeois normalisation currently underway in Iran, confirm the immediate relevance of the theses of the permanent revolution: "For countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially for the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution means that the genuine and complete solution of the democratic and national liberation tasks can only be *the dictatorship of the proletariat standing at the head of the oppressed nation, above all the peasant masses.*" The truth is that just as those who stop making revolutions halfway are digging their own grave, those who in the epoch of the putrefaction of imperialism stop the revolution at its bourgeois democratic "stage" are handing the revolution over to its gravediggers. And now the course of the Nicaraguan revolution since Somoza's overthrow is also verifying this law of the growing over of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution, a process which is necessary if the democratic conquests themselves are to be consolidated.' (7)

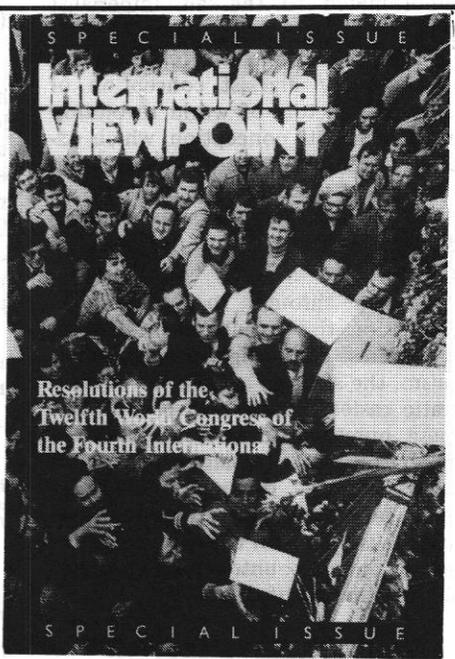
In reality, it was the SWP leaders who defended a sectarian and dogmatic

7. 'Resolutions of the Twelfth World Congress'. *International Viewpoint*. p. 33

Twelfth World Congress resolutions now available

This special issue of *International Viewpoint* contains the resolutions adopted by the Twelfth World Congress of the Fourth International in January/February 1985.

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conception of permanent revolution within the International for years. This position was neither in keeping with the positions of Trotsky, nor with those of the majority of the International. Thus, in the 1970s, the SWP for example attacked the Vietnamese leadership on the basis of an ultra-sectarian conception of the tactical and strategic questions that the Indochinese revolution was facing. For example, the diplomatic operation that the Vietnamese developed during the Paris Peace Accords in 1973 was considered as a capitulation of the Indochinese revolution. And even after the fall of Saigon they closed their eyes to the anti-capitalist dynamic of the revolution.

Today they are making the opposite mistake. And they want to make the balance sheet of their own previous positions the balance sheet of the whole International.

7. The SWP leadership throws overboard the main gains of revolutionary Marxism. The comrades claim that by doing this they will from now on be able to more easily establish relations with other movements and other revolutionary political currents outside the Fourth International. But the Fourth International has consistently fought to link up with new leaderships. It sought to do so with the leaderships which emerged in Yugoslavia, Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua not through merely explaining our support for the revolutions but through our active solidarity work. It is within that framework that we have both learnt from these revolutions and brought to bear a critical eye based on both the international and historical experiences of the workers movement.

8. In particular none of these leaderships has pursued the idea of a 'new international revolutionary movement'. The Cuban leadership, for example, does not advance this idea which is one of our differences with it. But the SWP leaders do not even offer the perspective of building an international today, instead denouncing it as a 'fetishisation of form'. They justify their position by saying 'the big parties do not have an international, they just have relations between parties.' (8) They assert 'the relations today between parties that stand at the head of state formations will not be the same as the relations between parties in the Third International'. They forget that the liquidation of the Third International flowed not from the founding of the Soviet workers state but from the Stalinist counter-revolution.

The lack of a mass revolutionary international remains the central weakness and is one of the agonising

THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION

& RESULTS AND PROSPECTS



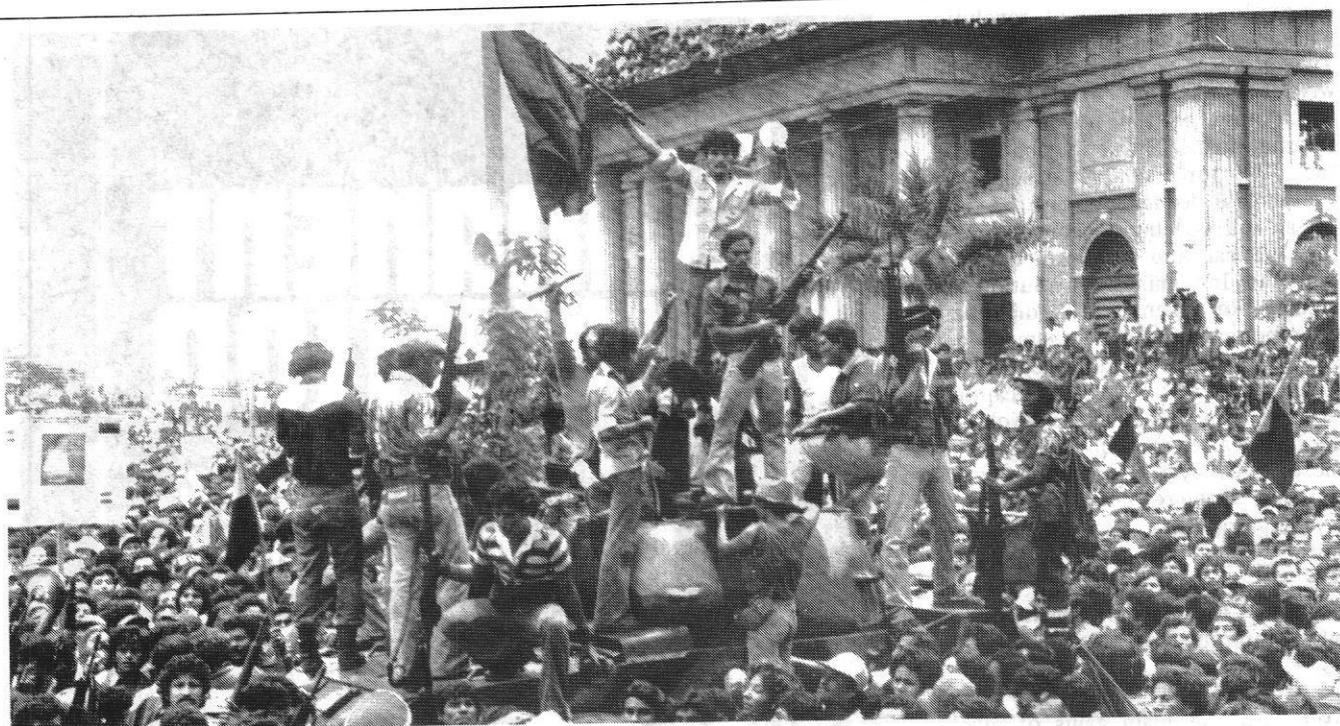
LEON TROTSKY

contradictions of the world workers movement. An international is necessary to defend consistently the interests of workers in the countries dominated by imperialism, in the industrialised capitalist countries, and in the bureaucratised workers states. The reality today, for example, is that the Cuban leaders support the struggles in Salvador and Guatemala, but in Poland or Czechoslovakia they line up with a bureaucracy that oppresses the workers. In the same way, movements like Solidarnosc fight against the bureaucracy but have illusions in the capitalist countries, and do not mobilise in solidarity with the peoples of Latin America.

It is absolutely necessary, and even vital for the future of the revolution and of socialism, to overcome these contradictions, to work for the unity of revolutionary forces in the three sectors of the world revolution and for the construction of a mass revolutionary international.

The Fourth International does not claim that it is this international. But it is an incontestable fact that it has carried out a fight for internationalism, theoretically and in practice, for fifty years, and that it is determined to continue this fight. The Fourth International is perfectly conscious of the limits of its organisational gains. However, it has been able to play an important role in campaigns and practical solidarity initiatives with revolutionary anti-imperialist struggles, including in the most difficult periods such as, for example, committing itself fully to solidarity with the Algerian revolution in the 1950s. In more recent times, it has mobilised in active solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution and the Polish revolution. It has built active organisations in some fifty countries, active in the class

8. 'The Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International' p. 21.



The triumphant arrival of the Sandinistas in Managua (DR)

struggle at every level, and often hard-hit by the repression of our enemies. These organisations are striving, in different situations and with different tactics, to build mass revolutionary parties. They are carrying out their tasks in the framework of an international organisation, which makes it more possible for them to resist any national or sectoral pressure.

9. This is the fight that the SWP is giving up today, without being able to give any realistic alternative, the "new world revolutionary movement" of which they talk not existing in reality. They can thus only put forward a practice consisting of episodic, diplomatic relations with different parties or national movements. This leads them, and will inevitably lead them, to adopt tail-endist attitudes towards other currents — opportunist, bureaucratic, including some of Stalinist formation — and they will in consequence be less and less able to resist national pressures. They have already moved in this direction.

For example in line with their tiny group of co-thinkers in the USA gathered around the North Star Network they have identified the Australian Labour Party as a party of the same basic type as the Democratic Party of the USA, justifying a simultaneously opportunist practice of supporting Democratic candidates electorally in the USA and an analysis of the Australian Labour Party which could lead to sectarian practice. Their regroupment discussions with the Stalinist Socialist Party of Australia have only hastened their abandonment of ideas of revolutionary Marxism as

has their uncritical attitude towards the HDP, the movement organised around the reactionary ideal of Croatian nationalism in the Yugoslav state.

10. The SWP was formed as an organisation linked to the Fourth International and has been the official section since 1972. It has recruited its members as an integral part of the Fourth International. Its disaffiliation is not just a break of organisational relations with other sections and with the leadership of the International. It indicates a qualitative change in the very nature of the SWP, which now becomes a largely national organisation, subject to all the traditionally heavy pressures on the Australian left without an institutionalised framework for collaboration with revolutionary Marxists who can learn from their experience while subjecting it to friendly and critical discussion. Already there are worrying signs of these pressures. To take such an important decision as disaffiliation from the Fourth International without placing the matter for open discussion before the entire membership is reminiscent of the commandist style of leadership associated with sects. The most elementary duty was to submit the question to a national conference after an exhaustive discussion among all the members. It preferred to present everybody with an accomplished fact.

11. The SWP leaders declare that they would like to maintain a 'collaboration in practice' with us on questions on which they think there is agreement (struggle for Kanak

independence, solidarity with Central America, etc.).

For years the International leadership and, at the last World Congress, the majority of the delegates, have polemicalised against the positions of the Australian SWP leadership and denounced their liquidationist dynamic. We have however striven to avoid this organisational rupture that the SWP leaders have now chosen:

a) because we did not want to resolve a problem that was eminently political in organisational terms;

b) because the SWP leadership seemed to have the intention of remaining within the statutory framework of the International;

c) because we did not want to exclude the possibility that following a long discussion and on the basis of future experiences the Australian comrades would correct their course.

We still hope that they will do so, but there is now obviously a new situation resulting from the SWP leaders' break with the International. Our relations with them are put on a totally different plane.

It is however in our tradition and practice to strive to bring into being the workers united front and to collaborate with other parties or currents identifying with the workers movement in struggles, mobilisations and campaigns. We have never discriminated against other currents on this terrain, and we will not do so now with relation to the Australian SWP.

But that will not prevent us from continuing our struggle to build a revolutionary Marxist party, section of the Fourth International in Australia. We call on Australian revolutionary Marxists to join us in this. □

AROUND THE WORLD



Europe

Political Bureaux meet

A MEETING of the Political Bureaux of the European sections of the Fourth International was held in November 1985 with delegations from the French, British, Portuguese, Spanish state, German, Belgian, Dutch, Luxembourg, Swedish, Austrian, Swiss and Italian sections. On the agenda was the analysis of the economic crisis; its social and political effects; and the consequences flowing from this for the construction of revolutionary organisations.

The first report, given by comrade Ernest Mandel, dealt with the breadth of the economic depression, its effects on the different branches of production, the employment situation in each sector and the different developments in manufacturing and the service industries as well as the development of workers living conditions.

Mandel also spelt out the impact of new technology on the main industrial concentrations and on the organisation of work; the effect of this on the level of trade-union organisation, and this in line with the capitalists' notion of the 'dual society'. He showed how capitalism used unemployment and the increase in precarious employment and part-time work (notably amongst women) to impose divisions among the working class and to provoke long-lasting demoralisation amongst sections of the youth.

The report finished on the responses of the working class, which, although different in different countries, had a certain defensive and fragmented character. In this context the process of recomposition of the workers movement will be a long one during which revolutionary organisations must prove themselves capable of presenting a programme of struggle against austerity, against the ideological counter-offensive and to counteract the neo-liberal offensive which accompanies the attacks of the bosses and the bourgeoisie. An overall social-ist propaganda must be developed.

This general introduction was complemented by two other, more specific, reports; one on the crisis in and the restructuring of the car industry and the responses in the trade union movement, by comrade JC Bernard; and the other on flexibility of employment, precarious employment, and the effects on negotiations and

collective agreements and what our orientation should be, which was given by comrade D. Raymond.

After these three reports and discussions, the second part of the meeting was given over to the problems of construction of revolutionary organisations. Reports were given by comrades from the Spanish state, France, Belgium, and Denmark.

There were also different commissions working on different topics. A women's commission was held twice to discuss the specific attacks which women are victims of and the problems posed by the development of part-time work and what responses to give. The commission also discussed the problem of women in the sections.

A 'youth' commission discussed the problems of the youth organisations and the preparation of the third International Youth Camp in summer 1986.

A commission on South Africa and the need for solidarity work was also held.

The discussion on all these themes should be continued in preparation for the 1986 meeting of the International Executive Committee [IEC] of the Fourth International. □

Poland

Borusewicz arrested

ON SATURDAY January 11, Polish radio and television announced the arrest of Bogdan Borusewicz, a member of the leadership of the underground Solidarnosc (TKK) in Gdansk.

Bogdan Borusewicz began to be politically active in March 1968 during the youth mobilisations. In 1976 he was one of the founders of the Committee for Workers Defence (KOR) and then he began to devote himself to the construction of an independent trade-union movement. In August 1980 he was a member of the central strike committee in Gdansk in which he played a leading role.

When Solidarnosc went underground in December 1981 he took a full part in its reconstruction. Within the TKK he tended to support the most radical positions. In particular he violently criticised the TKK for not having taken the leadership of the spontaneous strike which broke out in the naval shipyards in Gdansk in October 1982, which he believed could have been the start of a general strike. □

Cuba

Havana conference

THE SECOND conference of Intellectuals for the Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America was held in Havana from November 29 to December 3, 1985. More than 300 delegates participated. The opening speech was given by the Brazilian Catholic priest Betto, the author of the book *Fidel y la religion*, of which 45,000 copies were sold in Havana in three days.

Betto said that it was necessary to strengthen the alliance between Christians and Marxists, which he considers fundamental for the success of a social revolution in Latin America.

Subsequently, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the well-known Colombian writer, expressed his regret that discussions at previous conferences of the same nature had not had any practical implications. His view was that these meetings should have adopted "practical resolutions and assured a continuity of work."

For his part, the Cuban minister of culture, Armando Hart, stressed that the meeting in Havana pointed up the fact that the Cuban revolution was open to all revolutionary and progressive currents of thought as well as various artistic and scientific points of view.

The work of this conference was carried on in three commissions. The first discussed the theme "culture, democracy, sovereignty, and peace in our America," the second took up the problem of "science and art as factors of cultural development in Latin America and in the Caribbean," and the third was devoted to "the domination of information and its consequences for the sovereignty of our peoples."

The Cuban daily press published extensive accounts of the discussions that took place at the conference.

Luis Vitale, a Chilean historian and member of the Fourth International, proposed in the first commission that a history of the Latin American foreign debt be produced before July 26, 1986 (the anniversary of the attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953). At the same time, he drew up a detailed list of all those who should collaborate on such a project.

This proposal was adopted by a majority of the participants in the commission and unanimously during a plenary session of the conference. □

A new victory for the Belgrade Six

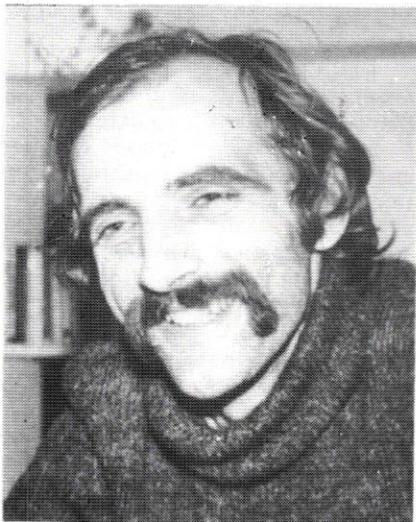
THE CRISIS OF the Yugoslav regime has been deepening rapidly since the death of Tito. One of the first major political battles within the apparatus came to focus on the case of the Belgrade Six, which *International Viewpoint* has followed in detail from the outset. The following article describes another victory against the advocates of repression in the regime and new perspectives for the struggle for civil and political rights in Yugoslavia.

On January 7, the Belgrade tribunal informed Vladimir Mijanovic and Gordon Jovanovic, two of the six defendants in the "Belgrade Trial," that all the charges against them had been dropped and that their case was definitively closed. This decision represents another victory for the campaign to win the release of the "Belgrade Six," which has been scoring points for a year now.

This case originated in August 1984 when Mijanovic and Jovanovic and their codefendants — Pavlo Imsirovic, Dragomir Olujic, Milan Nikolic, and Miodrag Milic — were charged with "forming a counter-revolutionary association" and "attempting to overthrow the social system," because they had organized "free universities." (1)

The trial of the Six, which began in November 1984, was preceded by a broad campaign of solidarity in Yugoslavia and internationally, in which in particular the Western left provided impetus.

The first success of this campaign was the release of the accused on Vladimir Mijanovic (DR)



bail. Nonetheless, they still faced the possibility of sentences of up to 15 years in prison. However, the pressure of public opinion did not cease building up on the harder nosed sections of the leadership of the Yugoslav party and state.

In January 1985, the charges against Imsirovic were dropped. At the same time, the trial against Mijanovic and Jovanovic was adjourned. As for the other three accused, they were found guilty of a lesser offense — "hostile propaganda." Following an appeal hearing, Olujic and two other defendants had their sentences reduced in August 1985. Moreover, the two latter got stays before they would have to start serving their sentences, three months in the case of Nikolic and an undetermined time for Milic. Moreover, Nikolic's stay, which ran out at the end of December 1985, has just been renewed for three months.

These concessions indicate how troublesome the Yugoslav authorities find this case. So, now precisely is the moment to step up the pressure in Yugoslavia and in other countries to get the charges against Milic and Nikolic dropped.

It is also important to call for the release of Vojislav Seselj, who is serving a two year sentence handed down in a parallel trial. (2)

Throughout the trial of the Belgrade Six, this whole practice of prosecuting people for their political activities has been put in question. This problem, of which the Belgrade trial has become a focus, is one of the issues in the battle between a liberal wing of the League of Yugoslav Communists (LYC) and the partisans of a more repressive line against currents of independent thought.

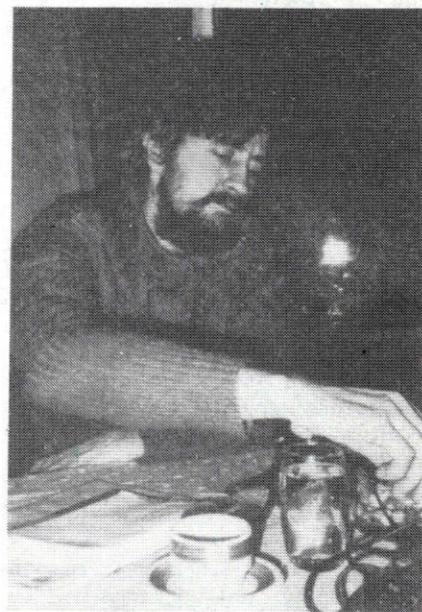
This debate is not limited, however, to the leading circles of the party and the state, but also involves

sections of the population in a way that is scarcely imaginable in most other East European countries.

Thousands of Yugoslav citizens have signed petitions against the Belgrade trial. And, for example, in Ljubljana, the capital of the Republic of Slovenia, young people can be seen walking in the streets wearing badges on which the number "133" is crossed out with a red line.

Article 133 of the Yugoslav constitution is one of those that opens the way for prosecuting citizens for crimes of opinion. The badges are part of a campaign against it. When he was interviewed by the *International Herald Tribune* on December 11, 1985, Miha Kovac, the editor in chief of the Slovene weekly youth magazine of the LYC, *Mladina*, was wearing one of these badges.

It is true that there is a more favorable climate in Slovenia for the public expression of political views. But the same ideas are being expressed more discreetly elsewhere.



Dragomir Olujic (DR)

The attitudes among the youth, linked to the remobilization of the Yugoslav working class (3) indicate that what happened with respect to the Belgrade trial is no accident, and the forces exist to fight the more bureaucratic tendencies in the Yugoslav party and state.

Messages of protest can be sent to the Yugoslav Presiding Committee, Bulevar Lenjina 2, Belgrade, Yugoslavia. □

1. See "Increased repression in Yugoslavia," in *International Viewpoint*, No. 56, July 2, 1984; and "What is at stake in the trial of the Belgrade Six," in *IV*, No. 60, October 1, 1984.

2. See "Regime facing problems" by Michele Lee in *IV*, No. 84, October 14, 1985.

3. See the article by Michele Lee cited previously.