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Aquino under the shadow of the gun

INTOXICATED by her electoral victories in February and May, President Cory Aquino overestimated her margin for maneuver. It took no more than three months for the crisis of the regime to become acute. At the end of August, there was a sudden acceleration in the pace of events.

For a period, a transport strike of exceptional scope paralyzed the capital and various cities. Then, on the night of August 27-28, a faction in the army unleashed a military coup. The rebel soldiers at last had to retreat to the northern part of the country, but did not lay down their arms. The civilian government claimed victory. But on September 9, it resigned, supposedly to give Aquino "a free hand" in her negotiations with the generals.

Our correspondent Paul Petitjean was in the Philippines at the time of the general strike and the military coup. The following report looks at these crucial weeks for the future of the country.

PAUL PETITJEAN

PUNCTUATED by explosions and bursts of machine-gun fire, the night of August 28 seemed very long. The putsch caught us by surprise. It was not preceded by the usual rumors in the press. Moreover, it quickly took on a much more serious look than the many successive coup attempts since July 1986.

Symbolically, the rebel soldiers attacked Malacañang, the presidential palace, wounding Corazon Aquino's son and killing three of her guard. Civilians were coldly shot down, probably to discourage any reaction from the people.

The mutineers took up strategic positions in Manila-Quezon City, the capital. They occupied Camp Aguinaldo, the headquarters of the General Staff; the Villamor airbase, which is close to the Manila civilian airport; and television stations. They were led by Colonel Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, known to be a tough customer.

Honasan was the "baron," that is, the top of his class of 1971 in the Filipino military academy. He has the reputation of being a military cowboy — doing parachute jumps with a cobra wrapped around his neck! And he is reputed to be just as deadly. A legend has already built up around this prominent leader of

the February 1986 military rebellion.

Anti-communism is what Honasan swears by. If the coup succeeds, the repression against the left will be immediate and brutal, in particular as the putschists have no popular support. Activists raise the spectre of Chile in 1973 or Indonesia in 1965.

If the coup succeeds... For hours the outcome remains uncertain. The whole morning goes by without military reinforcements coming to the aid of the government. After a brief speech during the night, President Aquino is silent. The TV transmits startling scenes.

Government counter-offensive finally begins

The soldiers protecting the Congress join the rebellion. A security officer, with the aid of clerks, tries to organize protection of the few legislators present. The speaker of the House of Representatives, Ramon Mitra, seems to pronounce a gloomy political testament. A member of parliament is clearly seen keeping his pistol handy.

The hours drag on. A period of vacillations sets in. The municipal police are at first assigned to retaking a TV



Rebel leader Gringo Honasan (DR)

station from heavily armed rebel soldiers. The cops retreat without a fight. By midday, finally the government counter-offensive begins to take form.

Aquino makes a particularly firm speech: "There will be no terms." There were to be no negotiations with "traitors." The Marines, an elite force, mount an assault on Camp Aguinaldo. Fighting seems to rage until nightfall. Two World War II-vintage propeller-driven planes fire rockets. The headquarters of the General Staff is on fire.

In a strange spectacle, helicopters circle a love-nest luxury hotel occupied by the rebels, the Camelot. It is built on the model of a medieval castle. Very modern machine-guns rake its towers and battlements.

This was by far the most serious putsch attempt since the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in February 1986. The provinces were moving. The rebels descended on the capital from the center of the island of Luzon, from Fort Magsaysay in the province of Nueva Ecija, where Gringo Honasan, implicated in previous coup attempts, had been sent to serve as the chief instructor of the Special Forces.

The mutineers took the Olivas camp in Pampanga province bordering Nueva Ecija, and the Legazpi airport in the southern part of Luzon island. They controlled the provinces of Quirino and Cagayan. For a time, they also controlled the island of Cebu, where the country's third largest city is located.

They seemed to be able to move freely through the northern part of the country. In Baguio, in particular, the cadets of the prestigious Philippines Military Academy openly expressed

their solidarity with the rebels. There was a persistent rumor that the bulk of the airforce was on the side of the mutineers.

"The putschists have numbers," a leader of the Bayan coalition of mass organizations told me.¹ "There are thousands of them. They also have quality — field officers who command the loyalty of their troops, the 'bright boys in the field.' They include many officers in the Police Constabulary, a military police force, long directed by the present chief of the General Staff, General Ramos. Above all, they have the sympathy of a very large number of junior officers, perhaps the majority."

The coup seemed to be on the verge of victory, at least militarily. There were dozens of deaths, mostly civilians, passersby who were shot down or caught in volleys of gunfire. The battles were waged with heavy weapons. A thousand rebel soldiers were arrested. But there was something of a false note in the military concert.

The majority of the mutineers were able to get out of the capital and regroup in the North. The rebel chiefs, including Gringo Honasan, got away by helicopter without too much difficulty, it seems. And there were very few deaths in the battle for Camp Aguinaldo.

The truth was not long in coming out. Even at the height of the governmental forces' counter-offensive, the Marines refused to shoot-to-kill. In its August 31 and September 1 issues, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* retraced the unfolding of the events as seen from Malacañang.

For a good part of the morning, in his headquarters at Camp Crame, General Ramos, chief of the General Staff, avoided responding to urgent telephone calls from the president. He still did not know what troops he could count on, and therefore had nothing to say to Corazon Aquino. At the beginning of the afternoon, fighting began.

The civilian government was incapable of restoring order without the support of a wing of the army. But even in these dramatic circumstances, the army was not ready to crush itself. In the uncertain hours of the morning of August 28, the generals bargained over the price for their support. Undoubtedly they set it quite high.

4 Today, the regime is navigating between two coups d'état, a brutal one

along the lines of Gringo Honasan, or a creeping, legal one by generals who present themselves as "constitutionalists," but are anxious to tighten their control over the civilian administration.

The Aquino regime is increasingly a hostage of its military officers. The president is trying to buy the army's loyalty by giving substantial pay increases. But the basic problem lies elsewhere. This has been noted by Senator Aquilino Pimenton, who more than once found himself in conflict with the army under Marcos:

"It is important that the country should not be misled and should understand that the threat to this state not only comes from the Armalite of Colonel Gregorio Honasan and his bunch, but that a more insidious enemy is the doctrine he stands for. That is, the



National Security Doctrine forged in Latin America, which advocates the absolute primacy of military considerations over politics."²

The rebellion was launched in the name of the most virulent anti-communism and defence of the country's territorial integrity, which the putschists claimed had been put into question by the negotiations over autonomy started by the regime with the Muslims and with Conrado Balweg, representing Northern tribals.³

The government was supposed to be guilty of softness in the counter-insurgency struggle. Nonetheless, Cory Aquino had declared "total war" on the guerrillas. With US advice and aid, she had given the generals new weapons, including combat helicopters and tanks, and greater financial means. If the military did not have more success-

es in their struggle against the New People's Army, that was the result above all of their own lack of energy.

The real issue lay elsewhere. It was institutional. In order to understand it, it is useful to go back to the elections of May 1987. Given the extent of the president's personal victory, a hasty reading of the results of the legislative elections could have led one to think that the regime had achieved a relative, if only temporary, stability. That, at least, was one of the elements of analysis that I myself suggested at the time.⁴

A cadre in the National Democratic Movement, a former political prisoner passing through Europe, warned me against that conclusion: "Aquino's electoral success was in fact too glaring. She did not need that. Too much is too much. There was fraud. But that is not the problem. Fraud is normal in the country's political life. Confronted with the Aquino landslide and the new rise of the big traditional families, the military felt cheated, cut out of the game. Instead of bolstering the government's authority over the army, these elections increased the cleavages, the resentments, antagonisms, suspicions. We have entered into a period of coups d'état."

I must admit that I remained somewhat sceptical about this. But the subsequent course of events rapidly proved this analysis correct. The May 1987 legislative elections had exposed a major institutional problem that could have been discerned when the constitution was adopted last February.⁵ The military vote went against it, while the civilian population ratified it

1. Bayan — Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, New Patriotic Alliance.

2. *The Manila Times*, September 2, 1987.

3. A priest, Conrado Balweg joined the NPA in the mountains of northern Luzon, an area inhabited by tribes with their own culture. He broke with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in 1986 over the question of regional autonomy and national strategy. He is negotiating with the government, and his forces have shrunk considerably. He has moved progressively closer to the military, especially since a bloody ambush was laid against him by the NPA. This did not prevent the rebel officers today from denouncing the autonomy agreements negotiated with him, notably, by Butz Aquino, the president's brother in law.

4. See "Aquino scores another personal triumph," in *IV* 123, June 29, 1987.

5. See "A temporary and fragile success for Cory," in *IV* 114, February 23, 1987. This article gave a more correct perspective than the one on the legislative election.

spectacularly.

With the prolonged imposition of martial law under Marcos, the army had come to the center of the power structure and penetrated into the islands' economy. This was the first time such a thing had happened in the Philippines, which in that respect, as well as in a lot of others, has had a very different history from most of its neighboring countries such as Indonesia and Thailand.

In the wake of the anti-dictatorial uprising of February 1986, Aquino re-established a bourgeois democratic system marked by elitism and patronage. Even by bourgeois standards, the new regime was only semi-democratic, since the army continued to wield considerable weight in it. But, as in the situation that prevailed before martial law, the electoral games assured the pre-eminence in political life of the clans, the big provincial families, parties and personalities.

Behind the constitutional facade

On the other hand, conditions were now different from those existing before martial law, in that the mass movement was broader and precisely because the army was now in politics. Behind the constitutional façade, the balance of the 1950s and 1960s could not be re-established.

Electoral jousts again became the main mechanism for selecting the personnel of political leadership, the acceptable channel for political struggle within the social elite. This system has implications that are not at all congenial to the military.

The electoral mechanisms installed have been thought up by, and for, the ruling class. But, despite the regime's anti-communist declarations and the civil war it is waging against the guerrillas, the people's movements cannot be excluded totally from the democratic game. It was not possible, for example, to refuse the Partido ng Bayan the right to run in the elections.⁶ The rules of an electoral system, even an "elitist" one, open a "democratic space" that can be occupied directly or indirectly by people's movements.

On this question, the virulently counter-revolutionary language of the rebel officers touched a nerve. A lot of people would like to close off this democratic space by suspending elections purely and simply: for example, by imposing a new reign of martial law.

However, the basic problem lays elsewhere. The electoral game and its concomitant, the ideology of a civilian regime, places the army outside the institutions of government. This is especially true in the Philippines, where

the various military factions have no political parties of their own to represent them.

In this area, the Aquino regime has been undermined by an open contradiction. The army has not been purged, and it remains at the center of political power. But it is excluded from such fundamental institutions of government as the House of Representatives and the Senate. It was precisely this contradiction that was glaringly highlighted by the excessive triumph of the presidential slates in the legislative elections.

The army reacted before the regime could go any further in building up the forms of constitutional rule, notably in the municipal elections scheduled for late this year or early 1988. In this sense, it is understandable why a number of generals looked favorably on the operation into which Honasan took their colonels. It was a good opportunity to remind the civilian regime forcefully of the fact that it remains under house-arrest.

Today the executive branch is continuing to pay the price for the policy that it adopted in mid-1986. Faced with attempted coups — which have sometimes had comic opera aspects, but which were always politically grave — faced with military sedition and the pressures of the extreme right, Aquino has refused to rely on mass mobilization and its accompaniment, social reform. She has kept on pursuing her unattainable heart's desire: loyal support from the Americans and a section of the army.

The May 1987 legislative elections did, of course, confirm that Corazon Aquino continued to enjoy great personal charisma among a population on the rebound from the dictatorial past. But with the regime's inability to carry out social reforms — and its nepotism — the wearing thin of the government's moral capital has been no less apparent.

Accusations of outrageous corruption have been directed against the immediate entourage of the president herself — her executive secretary, Joker Arroyo; her young brother, Jose "Peping" Cojuangco; and her uncle, Francisco Sumulong.

Far from being consolidated after the legislative elections, the government's control weakened over a series of regions. The power of the clans, of the big families, was asserted in the House of Representatives. The president's maneuvers on agrarian reform managed to dissatisfy everyone, or nearly everyone.

On the eve of the opening session of the new Congress, Aquino issued an incredible number of decrees, including the much awaited one on agrarian reform. Her objective was to be able to

say that she had kept her promise, and that Congress was responsible for the legislation becoming bogged down, as it could be predicted would happen. The decree in fact left the resolution of burning questions such as land prices, maximum holdings, scheduling of measures to the legislators.

The peasant organizations announced that they were especially dissatisfied with the content of the decree. But the big sugar planters on the island of Negros, nonetheless, came out in open political opposition to the very term "agrarian reform," and threatened to take up arms against the government if it persisted in including their plantations in this scheme.

Groups of "vigilantes," extreme-right armed organizations, have become more active on the island. One of them — the Negros Anti-Communism Crusade — has not hesitated to distribute a leaflet whose title needs no explanation, "Kill for democracy! Kill for peace! Kill all the communists!"

The leaflet went on to say: "All those who are not on our side, all those who are for land reform, those who were shouting human rights when they do not even denounce the human rights violations of the NPA, are communists. Our enemies are the subversive priests — headed by their leader, Monseigneur Antonio Fortich [the bishop of Bacolod] — the human rights lawyers, the *busabos* [rag-tag] farmers, the squatters who are always hungry like dogs and who are very dangerous, and the extortionists in the media like those in COBRA-ANS [a progressive organization of Negros journalists]."

Unionists harassed, arrested and tortured

Members of the sugar workers' union, the NFSW-FGT are being harassed, arrested, and sometimes tortured or shot down.⁷ [See the interview on page 7.]

It is in this context that the NPA has taken a series of spectacular initiatives on Negros. Repeatedly and in plain daylight it has occupied sugar mills and rural villages, sometimes throwing 200 fighters into a single operation. Despite months of growing militarization, the army has been unable to respond effectively. Thus, the government has had to send in reinforcements, including combat helicopters. But they had still not scored any notable success when the coup d'état broke out.

The regime's blindness to the erosion

6. Partido ng Bayan or PnB (People's Party). Launched in August 1986 by former political prisoners, the PnB is a radical activist legal party that is trying to introduce a popular and proletarian dimension into the electoral political struggle.

7. NFSW-FGT — National Federation of Sugar Workers-Food and General Trade.

of its authority was demonstrated in a particularly glaring way on August 15, when it suddenly announced an average 18 per cent increase in the price of gas and diesel fuel. In doing this, the government opened up an opportunity for a massive expression of popular discontent. It created the conditions for unity among the unions in a key sector of the economy in which it had been difficult to organize collective action, that is, among the drivers of the Jeepneys, the reconditioned jeeps that are the main means of public transport in the big cities of the Philippines.

Transport strike paralyzed Philippines

Even the TUCP itself, a union affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), that was recognized under the Marcos regime, found it necessary to join in the strike.⁸ Together with Bayan, the various mass movements of the popular left formed an ad-hoc coalition against oil price rises, COAPI.

There were two peaks in the transport strike, a week apart — the first and last days of action. A unifying momentum was obvious. The strike took on exceptional dimensions when all the unions were involved. The three days preceding the coup, August 25-27, represented a real turn in the political situation.

Under the pressure of the mobilizations and on the eve of the general strike of August 28, Corazon Aquino suddenly announced over TV a 50 per cent reduction in the price rise for petroleum products. To accomplish this, she dipped into tax receipts rather than touch the profits of the multinationals concerned. She seemed convinced that in this way she would cut the ground out from under the feet of the unions and the militant left.

However, on the following day, the transport strike was almost total. Calling for prices to return to previous levels, it paralyzed the capital and five other regions. Any increase in the price of gas and diesel fuel has immediate and dramatic inflationary consequences for a population suffering from acute impoverishment.

Despite the intervention of the army (which stationed soldiers in the buses and attacked the strike pickets) and the mobilization of city garbage trucks, hardly any jeepneys were to be seen moving in the capital. The activists themselves were surprised: "In all our history, there has never been such a widespread transport strike, at least never since martial law."

It was a sharp slap in the face for the president, who had staked her personal authority on the affair. The government

began by denying the evidence, telling astonished journalists that the strike was a failure. On the same day, the military repression was stepped up. The army killed two strikers at Cavite, south of Manila. The day after, the police rounded up activists of the May 1 Movement (KMU, the radical union confederation), which this time was continuing the strike alone.⁹

More than 150 people were arrested, including Medardo Roda, 53 years old and chair of Piston, a jeepney drivers' union affiliated to the KMU.¹⁰ A warrant was issued for the arrest of Crispin Beltran, the chair of the KMU.

Joker Arroyo, a former human rights lawyer and executive secretary to Aquino, did not hesitate to justify these arrests by imputing bad faith to the union organizers. He called them leaders "who have no sincere desire to really solve the problem and only want to create anarchy." (*The Manila Chronicle*, August 28, 1987.) It was no longer necessary to charge people for actions, it was enough to attribute nefarious intentions to them!

Even before the success of the August 26 day of action, a KMU leader explained to me what the government's "mistake" on the question of petroleum products prices — prompted by pressure from the IMF and pressure on foreign debt interest payments — had meant for the independent, militant wing of the union movement:

"Over the year and a half that has just gone by, the KMU has continued to gain strength, but relatively and slowly. And I think that it can be seen that we found ourselves pushed to the sidelines in many respects. It was very difficult for us to regain the initiative on a large scale. On the question of the price of petroleum products, on the other hand, we can be the dynamic wing of a broad trade-union and popular united front. Our demand for purely and simply rescinding the price rise has in fact been understood and supported by the population."

The Honasan putsch obviously braked the economic struggle that was underway on the question of prices. Everyone's attention was shifted to the

political situation. The general tendency at present is toward a tightening grip of the army on civilian administration, toward stepped-up recession and militarization of the country.

A year and a half after the start of the process, the prospects for establishing a bourgeois democratic system in the Philippines look more dubious than ever.

The army is not willing to go back to its barracks. As at the time of the previous coup attempts, today it is forcing the regime to accept a new de facto compromise with the rebel officers, despite the fact that Corazon Aquino had sworn publicly not to do this anymore.

Tendency toward fragmentation of regime

However, now the tendency is also toward a fragmentation of the regime. Conflicting orientations and interests are dividing the ranks of the military as well as of the politicians. The Americans obviously have eggs in all the Philippine baskets — the General Staff, the government and business circles. They know that in the present situation such divisions are particularly dangerous. The insurgents are profiting from this situation to press their advantage. But even under this threat it is not certain that substantial ground will be found for an accord among the various interest groups, including between the military clans and between the generals and the colonels.

The military will agree to denounce the dominance of the politicians and to present the army as the guarantor of the higher interests of the nation. The language adopted by the rebel officers made no bones about this. They said that the regime "indulges too much in politics." But they did not stop there. In televised interviews, the representatives of the movement, which came out

8. TUCP — Trade Union Congress of the Philippines.

9. KMU — Kilusang Mayo Uno, May 1 Movement.

10. Piston — Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsiper at Operators Nationwide, United Association of the Drivers and Owners Nationwide.



of the Movement to Reform the Armed Forces (RAM), scathingly criticized the General Staff and their superiors.¹¹

The dynamic wing of the late August putsch was made up of colonels and lieutenants: "The stars fall, the sun rises," was one of their slogans. Stars are the insignia of generals; sun rays are the insignia of colonels. General Ramos, the chief of the General Staff, was the direct target of this slogan. But it is likely that all, or nearly all, the generals felt that it was aimed at them.

In reaction to the civilian regime and its corruption, an extreme-right anti-politician current is taking form in the Philippine army, which is very different in its history and its ambitions from the traditional generals. It is fighting for a cause and thereby winning the sympathy of broad sections of

young officers.

It differs from "military reformist" currents in other times and places. It has no popular base, no overall program and no revolutionary aspirations. It is using anti-communism as its glue and laying out a typical semi-fascist ideology.

By conviction, as well as necessity (its lack of a social base), if this current managed to take power militarily it could plunge the country into an immense wave of repression. It is a new factor in the political equation in the Philippines. Above all it represents a new danger for the people's movement. ☆

11. The military movement that had prepared a coup against Marcos in 1985. In February 1986, it rose up along with the minister of defence, Juan Ponce Enrile.

"We need real land reform"

IN THE crisis-ridden "sugar kingdom" of the island of Negros, Frank Slegers met Serge Cherniguin, the general secretary of the sugar-workers' union, NFSW-FGT.

WHAT SORT of land reform is needed?

Agrarian reform is an urgent necessary. For 400 years, beginning under Spanish domination, the peasants have been demanding land. Some 200,000 planters on Negros, 9% of the population, own 52% of the land.

The whole of the Philippines needs a real general agrarian reform with financial, educational and other forms of aid from the government. If there has to be payment to get the land, the poor peasants cannot put up the money. The government will have to do it. And such payment should be equitable, selective and in installments. Illegitimately acquired big landholdings should simply be confiscated.

■ Do you support Governor Lacson's proposal?

Lacson, the governor of Western Negros, has proposed a plan providing for 60% of the sugar-cane plantations to remain in the hands of the big land-

owners and for 40% to be distributed and used for crops other than cane.

With the crisis in the sugar industry, 85% of the planters are already virtually bankrupt. Lacson's scheme comes from the planters themselves. We regard it as a feudal solution for a feudal problem. Nonetheless, we support this plan, because hunger is so acute that the problem of food for sugar workers takes priority over everything. At the same time, we are fighting for a real agrarian reform.

■ On the haciendas that I have visited, the whole hacienda would have to be divided up into parcels in order to give all the sugar workers adequate plots. Will the planters accept that?

We know that the big planters are aiming to fight reform. How do the workers regard the land? For them, it is the source of food. For the planters, it is the source of wealth, prestige and political power. We do not expect much from President Aquino. Aquino's reform scheme has been progressively watered-down and deprived of substance. Our only consolation in the present situation is that our organization has survived.

If the government manages to carry out the reform, and that would be a golden opportunity for them, so much the better. But if Aquino yields to the pressure of the big landowners who make up her entourage (isn't she also one of them?), the peasants themselves will force a redistribution of the land.

■ Have there been real advances for your organization?

Certainly. Our union has greatly increased its credibility among the sugar workers. For the time being we have no problems about the number of our members. The problem is rather finding enough cadres. And there is also

the repression. Anyone who calls for justice and peace is accused of being a communist, and a lot of our cadres have been murdered outright. We have a lot of widows and orphans in our movement. Despite that, none of our leaders has yet given up, and that is a great encouragement.

The planters have formed their own rival unions. These unions accuse us of stealing their members, but their ranks are coming over to us spontaneously. And we are scoring certain successes.

Many workers have been murdered for cultivating strips of land on the fringes of the plantations, alongside the sugar cane. No landowner will give up the smallest piece of land without being forced to. But now, thanks to the strength of our union, we have managed to force many planters to concede plots of land to the workers.

Our union's strength can also be measured by the threats directed at us. We get bomb threats. Our leaders cannot go out alone at night. Our building here is spied on day and night.

■ How severe has the repression become now?

Only yesterday, one of our members died. The military caught him, tortured him, cut open his stomach and broke his legs. Under Marcos, only the southern part of Negros was militarized. Today, under Aquino, the entire island is. And every time army control is established in the Philippines, the military run amok against the civilian population.

Yesterday, in the northern part of the island, there was a New People's Army (NPA) ambush. The army sent helicopters and three fighter planes. The result? They were not able to catch a single NPA guerrilla. But it's civilians who pay the cost of the war.

Last week, at a demonstration organized by the Christian base communities in Bacolod, the capital of Western Negros, the army planes buzzed the march to intimidate people. They even arrest 13- and 14-year-old children, who are later used as servants in the barracks. When the sugar workers organize in cooperatives on the plantations in order to cultivate certain parcels, the soldiers call that communism. The army also intervenes in union affairs.

For example, in Carlotta, they removed the chair of the union and appointed another. They tell the workers to get out of our union. Alongside the army, there are also "vigilantes," veritable death squads that the planters use against our workers, and they are more numerous everywhere. Aquino's hesitations over the agrarian reform are giving the army the opportunity to act as it pleases. You might think that Aquino herself has lost her grip on the occupation army. ☆

"The only alternative to mass action is abject surrender"

AT THE end of August, members of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) voted 3-1 in a national ballot for industrial action against British Coal's proposal to implement a new Code of Discipline.

A national overtime ban is starting on September 21, and miners in Yorkshire have already begun to take action.

THERESA YORK

EARLIER this year, on July 17, over 30,000 members of the NUM in Yorkshire and Kent went on strike against the vicious Code of Discipline imposed by British Coal (the state-owned mining industry, formerly NCB).

A few days earlier six miners at Frickley in South Yorkshire were suspended under the new Code. Immediately, all 900 Frickley miners walked out, demanding their reinstatement. Pickets were sent out to other mines and, by the third day of the strike, all 15,000 South Yorkshire miners had joined the fight.

On July 21, after a series of Yorkshire Area NUM meetings, the Frickley miners were persuaded to lift their pickets and return to work, pending the result of a national ballot. The Frickley miners argued that the union should act immediately, and that the national ballot was not calling for all-out strike action.

The decision to hold a national ballot on the question of the Code of Discipline was taken at the NUM's annual conference in July. President Arthur Scargill had called on miners who were

"fed up with harassment and intimidation at local and area level" to "not only support this resolution [for a ballot], but translate it into positive action throughout the coalfield."

The Code of Discipline is designed to let management ride roughshod over the workforce, to undermine the NUM and to pick off union militants. It is specifically designed to curb militancy under threat of dismissal. Under the Code any mineworker, including local union officers, can be dismissed for taking industrial action.

Strikes in 110 mines in the last year

The reactions of the media to the strikes against the Code were shock and surprise. Before the NUM conference, ruling class pundits had been gloating over what they thought was a union that had been smashed by the defeat of the year-long strike against pit closures in 1984-85.

But this view of the NUM and its national leadership is not shared by the management of British Coal and the Thatcher government.

In May this year, British Coal boss Sir Robert Haslam complained that miners went on strike thirty times more often than the average British worker.

In 1986-87, 28 per cent of all strikes in Britain were in the mining industry. Strikes had taken place at 110 out of the 125 mines. Two-thirds of these stoppages took place in the Yorkshire coalfield in the north of England — the largest area employing one-third of Britain's miners. It is this level of militancy that measures such as the Code of Discipline are designed to beat.

Opening the NUM conference, Scargill did not shrink from the difficulties facing the union following the re-election of the Conservatives for a third term in government.¹ Since the end of the 1984-85 strike, 70,000 jobs had been lost, 42 mines closed and a further 19 merged.

Despite this Scargill stated: "Our union continues the long struggle for victimized miners, against pit closures, job losses, and for decent wages and conditions. We continue because there is no other choice. The only alternative to mass class action is abject surrender, and that is no choice at all."

Scargill put the attacks facing miners in a historical context, explaining that British Coal management, and successive Labour and Tory governments, were following a "secret strategy document" drafted in 1974 by director Wilfred Miron. It contained four central elements:

- A production-based "bonus incen-

tive scheme" negotiated at individual unit level, designed to destroy unity and create splits between areas, further weakening national collective bargaining.

- Huge capital investment in "sunrise technology", to maximize available machine-time, increase reliability by "system monitoring" maximize output and control of product quality. New technology, coupled to a unit-by-unit viability study, would determine where to invest and where to cut back.

The Tory government's insistence in pursuing its nuclear power programme would also be a governing factor. The concentration of capital into the "central coalfields" of Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire is an additional incentive for privatization.

- A break from national collective bargaining around issues of wages and working conditions.

This began with the incentive bonus scheme in 1977, whereby miners' wages are determined by the amount of coal produced. Bonuses now account for between 18 and 25 per cent of miners' pay, a higher proportion than for any other major group of workers.

- Destruction of the 5-day week agreement, to be replaced with flexible working, requiring miners to work 6/7 days per week, 9 hours per day, leading where possible to 24-hour 7-day continuous mining.

Fight against six-day working

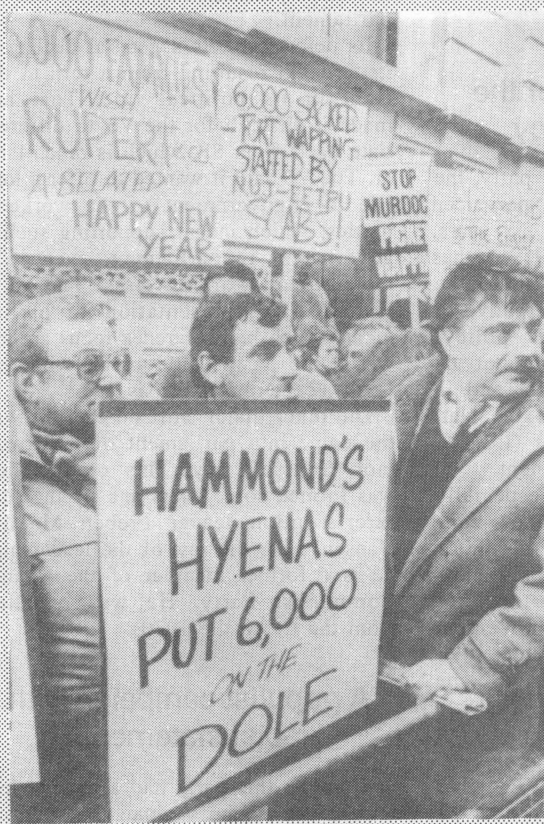
The introduction of bonus schemes was one of the factors that gave rise to a company union, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) based in Nottinghamshire, during the miners' strike two years ago. Scargill reported that the UDM had slumped to below 20,000 members, and that the NUM had recovered support, and now organized 25 per cent of Notts miners.

In the weeks running up the union's conference, British Coal tried to open up further splits. It announced that a £90 million new investment at Margam colliery in South Wales, first proposed in 1974, would only go ahead on condition that the NUM abandon the five-day working agreement won in 1947. Backed by the Thatcher government, British Coal claimed that Margam would not make sufficient profit unless new machinery was worked six days a week, in nine-hour shifts around the clock.

Leaders of South Wales NUM, supported by Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock, argued that if six-day working

1. See "After eight years of the 'Thatcher revolution'", *IV* 121, June 1, 1987; and "Tory 'landslide' with only 42 per cent of the vote", *IV* 124, July 13, 1987.

TUC waves the white flag



BRINGING together representatives of over 9 million workers, this year's 119th Trades Union Congress in September managed to produce only "a typical piece of the TUC fudge", as Arthur Scargill described it. A series of crucial resolutions proposed to congress on questions of union organization, growing non-unionism, strike-free/single-union deals and related questions were all shunted off to be looked at by a Special TUC Review Body, which will report back next year.

Only a small minority of delegations challenged this procedural move, according to Scargill "the most dangerous precedent in the history of the TUC". In the name of "avoiding divisions and preserving unity", the right wing and centre leaders gave a green light to unions like the EETPU (electricians) to continue their strike-busting, pro-management role. The EETPU played a major role in the defeat of the printworkers' year-long strike at Wapping earlier this year.

In the face of continuing Tory government attacks on the unions, there are two clear approaches: fightback or surrender. This year's TUC firmly set itself on the latter path. Behind the glossy brochures and promotional videos lurked the real intent of the so-called "unity preservers", as exemplified by AEU (engineers) president Bill Jordan. He explained that the TUC would not support militant action, and that the union champions of confrontation had had their day: "They have lost — and we have lost members as a result". (*Financial Times*, September 7, 1987.)

As the Tories prepare a new batch of trade-union legislation to further weaken union organization, employment protection and legal rights, the majority of the TUC has chosen to roll over and play dead. "Nice doggie!" Thatcher will be saying, as she claps her hands with glee. ★

was the price to be paid for the 600 jobs on offer, it should be accepted.

Scargill has consistently defended the union's policy of fighting for a shorter working week. As he said at the conference, "To suggest that projects like Margam are being designed to create additional jobs is a lie." It was clear that British Coal planned to introduce flexible six-day working wherever possible. This would mean "at least 31 pits will be closed and 40,000 jobs destroyed."

Delegates at the July conference voted 49-22 in support of a resolution to reject "the six-day working week, or any lengthening of the working shift, and to hold an individual ballot vote [of the whole membership] on this issue, recommending support for this resolution."

Alternative strategy on new technology

Leaders of the company union, the UDM, rushed to accept six-day working. But their enthusiasm is not shared by the ranks. Secretary of the Notts NUM, Henry Richardson, reported that this had resulted in 300 UDM members re-joining the NUM in the space of two weeks.

The NUM conference debated and

passed resolutions for "an alternative strategy" to British Coal on new technology, and "to wage an intensive campaign...around the theme of increased basic wages, shorter working hours and intensified safety legislation". Since the year-long strike, miners have had wage settlements imposed without negotiation. A resolution against mine closures was adopted that called for the leadership "to re-kind the pre-strike campaign against closures nationally, to be followed at an opportune time by a ballot vote of the members as to a form of industrial action".

An emergency motion was adopted unanimously, instructing the executive to call a ballot or ballots for one-day strikes for the reinstatement of the 356 miners still victimized, out of over 1,000 sacked, after the 1984-85 strike.

International links were also strengthened. The previous NUM conference in 1986 welcomed James Motlatsi and Cyril Ramaphosa, president and general secretary of the South African NUM. Since then, the NUM has distributed a booklet, *Miners united against apartheid*, to every union member, as well as posters and regular features in the union's press promoting the struggle against apartheid. Recently, it has also organized joint actions with the Anti-Apartheid Movement for sanctions

against South African coal.

The NUM conference unanimously adopted a resolution supporting solidarity with "the continuing struggle of the people of Nicaragua to maintain the development of social and economic progress within the country, free from the economic and military interference of the United States."

"Regenerate the spirit of the historic miners' strike"

In 1986, the NUM became the first trade union in recent years to support the demand for British imperialism to withdraw from its colony in the north of Ireland. The Annual Report noted that the union had been represented at the annual conference of the Labour Committee on Ireland, and that it would be participating in a conference this autumn against employment discrimination faced by Catholics in the north.

Summarizing the sentiments of the conference, Scargill said: "This union must regenerate the spirit built up in the historic miners' strike. In association with the magnificent women's support groups and others, the NUM must begin a massive public campaign and fightback in the coalfields to stop any further butchery of our industry and our communities." ☆

Surprise setback for austerity government

THE PERPETUAL smile on the face of Danish Premier Poul Schlüter stiffened, and the Copenhagen stock exchange experienced a moment of panic when the results of the September 8 legislative elections were known. The reason was not because of a victory for the workers' parties, but because the stability of the four-party bourgeois coalition was threatened.

SØREN JOHANSEN

AN EASY victory had been expected by the outgoing government after a short election campaign lasting three weeks. The workers' parties were not prepared, and they had no governmental alternative to offer. Nonetheless, the government coalition — the Conservative Party, the Left (Venstre, the liberal party), the Christian People's Party, and the Democratic Center Party — lost seven seats, and the bourgeois parties as a whole lost three.

The new parliamentary instability comes from the fact that the government will now have to seek the support of six bourgeois parties in order to get a majority in the 175-seat parliament. However, it is difficult to get the Progress Party and the Radical Left (Radikale Venstre) under the same roof. The Radical Left is a bourgeois center party, largely supported by the educated petty-bourgeoisie.

Over the last four years, the Schlüter government has depended on the support of the Radical Left, which remained outside the cabinet. Its vote went up from 10 to 11 seats in this election. The extreme-right populist Progress Party increased its seats from six to nine.

This result reflects the weakness of the Danish workers' movement which

after five years of austerity policy is still unable to defeat Schlüter. The unemployed and weaker sections of the working population have been hit hard by this policy.

Another setback for the social democracy

By far the largest workers' party, the social democracy, has just experienced its third electoral setback in six years. From 38% of the vote in 1959, it has dropped to 28%. The leadership of the party has offered no real alternative to the government's bourgeois policy. For last five years they have not attempted to use their strength, and in particular their leadership of the National Confederation of Labor (LO), to mobilize against the government.

They could have done, especially since the unions negotiated new contracts every two years. In the spring of 1985, the social situation could have led to a general strike overthrowing the government. But the movement was blocked by the LO leadership.

This year, union leaders have come to rapid agreements with the bosses in order to prevent the development of a similar situation.

Once again, the Socialist People's Party (SF) increased its vote. With 27 seats, its electoral support now amounts to half that of the social democracy. SF can be characterized as a left reformist party. It comes from a split in the Communist Party in 1985, but it no longer has any links with Stalinism.

The growing support for SF cannot be explained by its activity among workers or in the social movements. In fact, as a party it has a very limited capacity for mobilizing. But many workers and intellectuals see it as a force for real change. Moreover, unlike the social democracy, it has not been marked by decades of integration into the capitalist state.

"For a workers' majority in parliament"

For many workers, the central theme of the elections was "Down with Schlüter, for a workers' majority in parliament." Many of them saw the Socialist People's Party as the only force that could pull the social democracy to the left, away from its policy of deals with the bourgeois parties. Their hopes will not be realized.

On the left, two major shifts occurred. The Left Socialists (VS) suffered a very serious setback, losing half of their votes and falling below the threshold for representation in parliament. Since its formation in 1969, coming

from a split in the Socialist People's Party, this organization of the 1968 generation was considered to represent the extra-parliamentary movements in parliament.¹

Its defeat reflects a general decline in its strength resulting from a turn to the right in its political line. That has made it difficult for the VS to differentiate itself from SF, which is much larger. The VS said it wanted to offer a long life to a government of the workers' parties, which meant supporting such a government in parliament, even if it attacked the working class. The VS's loss of its representation in parliament, which had offered a focus around which the party could unite, will certainly accelerate its crisis.

The other major shift on the left was the entry into parliament of the Common Course Party. This organization was formed some years ago by the seafarer's union leader Preben Moeller Hansen. Like the rest of the leadership, he is a former member of the Danish Communist Party. He was expelled from the CP in the 1970s.

A populist campaign with racist statements

Although this party had a general left appearance in the campaign, it refused to be linked in any way to the left or socialism. It conducted an extremely populist campaign, denouncing the "parliamentary circus," and so on. Many observers noted similarities between it and the extreme-right populist Progress Party, including even racist statements.

The Communist Party got 5,000 votes, representing about 1%. It is a turning point for this party, which has been losing votes at every election since 1969.

The Socialist Workers Party (SAP), Danish section of the Fourth International, also participated in the election. It got 2,000 votes, a few hundred less than in the previous elections. A central point in the SAP's campaign was defence of political refugees and immigrants, along with the fight against the austerity policy and the need for anti-capitalist solutions to the crisis.

The SAP is now going to hold a special congress to discuss its campaign and decide whether it will start to collect the 25,000 signatures necessary to run in the next elections. The organization will also discuss the possibility for collaboration among the left parties and the possibilities of running a common left slate, an idea that is under discussion in the left as a whole. ☆

1. See "Left socialists at a crossroads" by Tom Gustafson, *IV* 109, November 24, 1987.

Socialist Party strengthens support in trade unions

LONG FROZEN in the grip of an almost totalitarian social democracy, in recent years the Swedish labor movement has been shaken by important challenges from revolutionaries. More than a year and a half ago, however, the revival of militancy in the unions was slowed down by shock at the unsolved murder of Premier Olof Palme. In a way this event marked a watershed in the political history of Sweden, which had seemed more civilized in comparison with most other capitalist countries. In an interview with Gerry Foley in July, Göte Kilden, a leader of the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International, described its evolution since Palme's murder.

HOW MUCH does the shock at Palme's murder still affect the union movement?

We used to say that workers in Sweden were hit by the ricochet of the bullet that killed Olaf Palme. The employers, the social-democratic government and the union bureaucracies together exploited the situation, exploited the shock and mourning among workers. Before the murder, there was a reactivation of some social movements, and especially in the case of oppositional currents inside the unions. The momentum was broken.

The period since has also been marked by several filthy scandals, which is something that Swedes are not used to. The most important one is connected with Palme's murder. That has to do with the way the police chief of Stockholm handled the investigation. He did all his sniffing around the Kurds and other refugees in Sweden. He said that one of their parties, the PKK, was probably responsible. But after a year he had to resign. The police were able to find no evidence whatsoever that the PKK or any other Kurdish organization or individual was responsible.

In the meantime, they had neglected all the other trails, in particular those that pointed to involvement by elements in the the Stockholm police themselves, such as right-wing groups inside the police force, connections with the World Anti-Communist League

and other right-wing forces.

During the same period, the peace movement in Sweden uncovered big illegal arms deals by the Bofors firm with various countries. Moreover, in connection with this, one public arms inspector was killed by a train in the underground. Maybe it was murder, maybe it was suicide. He had information.

The next scandal came in connection with a big arms deal with India. Local officials were bribed. This has become a big problem for Rajiv Gandhi. Some of his close associates are alleged to have accepted payoffs.¹

Our ombudsman for justice had to resign because of misuse of money, junkets, private luxury dinners and so on. We have seen all these things — the murder of Palme and the scandals — strengthen the feeling among the masses of disgust and distrust with politics and with politicians, but also with big employers.

We have also seen some defeats for the workers in this period beginning in February, one year after the murder. They came in areas that do not have a large population but are important for their industry — the steel-producing areas, the mining areas. There have been defeats. In these places, there is a big problem with unemployment.

On the other hand, the situation has been quite different in the big cities, like Stockholm and Göteborg, where there is less unemployment. In a place

like Göteborg today the employers are desperate to find more labor because of expansion. So we have had an increase in union membership, both in the private sector and especially in the public sector.

■ What sort of fightback has there been?

The first wave of protest came in the public sector, because the government and the bosses tried to use the situation to create a split between workers in the private sector and the public sector. The first pretext they came up with was to say that workers in the private sector should get more pay because they had less job security. Of course, this big campaign was related to the question of taxes and re-privatization.

The nurses reacted in a good way. They carried out a long fight for their wages, but also in defence of their value as a workforce. The question of women's oppression was involved also. They compared what they did with traditionally male jobs.

However, even if we have had an increase in membership of unions, this whole period was marked by a decline in activity by workers. Although members of the unions are not at all content, they do not engage in activity because they are dissatisfied with their leaderships, and they see no real alternatives to them.

In the political field, there has been an expression of this attitude in the opinion polls. The percentage for the Green party for example has mushroomed from 2% in 1985 to as high as 10% in the polls today. In the unions this search for an alternative was expressed in a more modest way in elections where we ran candidates — party members or SP members together with independent forces close to our union positions.

■ What has this meant for your work in the unions?

This year, there were big possibilities for winning support, although we still have the problem of drawing people into activity. People are prepared to vote for a new leadership, but still not prepared to take militant actions. For us at Volvo, this has meant breakthroughs in two places.

We have had a long tradition in leading the union at the Volvo truck plant in Göteborg. In the auto plant, the union opposition built up a tradition of involvement in daily struggles over ten years, but it had never been able to win a majority in any one of its local union bodies. But now party members and independent workers close to our union positions have won an election victory

1. On the Bofors scandal in India, see "Rajiv's fading star", *IV* 121, June 1, 1987.

for the first time and taken the majority leadership of the daytime assembly line at the auto assembly plant.

This is a unit with 1,500 workers. It is a very modern unit, known as the heart of the assembly plant. In the shift line (there is the daytime line and the shift line) there is a stalemate now. We still do not have a majority, but even so comrades close to our positions have a big influence in the leadership. At the same time, we have held our bastion in the truck plant, where we now get around 65% of the vote, holding all the posts in the union leadership, and nearly all the shop stewards.

Breaking through in another Volvo plant was important for us. In the early and mid-1970s we had a broader network of workers at the Göteborg plant. Then, we were weakened, and there was a tendency to become isolated in the truck plant. The victory in the auto plant gives us possibilities for broadening our network once again, and maybe for picking up enough forces to challenge the central union leadership of 14,000 metalworkers in Göteborg.

Also in Umeå, in the far north, two comrades were elected to the union leadership for the first time in a plant of 700-800 workers. In all these elections, the social democrats ran candidates against us.

The same possibilities were reflected in several other workplaces. For the first time, we ran candidates at Atlas Copco, a metal plant in the Stockholm area. In those units where we had comrades, we got a majority. But overall we got only about 35%. Still, as a first effort, it showed an encouraging potential.

In other unions, such as among hospital workers in Göteborg, comrades were elected to the leadership of a union organization of several thousand workers. Comrades were elected to bodies in the Saab-Scania plant in Göteborg. In Stockholm, where we have had a long experience of working together with other oppositional forces in the local transport union — a big organization with various sections — we are reaching equality with our opponents.

We have been a minority that had important positions, but now we are winning a bigger and bigger base. And this has been important for taking more general initiatives.

This year especially, comrades in that union have been able to carry out some anti-racist activities, to support anti-racist organizations. The skinheads and fascists have been carrying out racist provocations in the underground, and they have been confronted by the anti-racists. So, it was important that the union was able to come out in support of the anti-racist groups.

■ What are the perspectives for the next round of bargaining?

We think that now there will be new negotiations at the end of the year and the beginning of 1988. Already the government has taken a very aggressive stance. It is saying 3% and nothing more for the public sector, and if they want more, there has to be rationalization and a trimming down of the workforce. They can take their choice. But no more than 3%.

On the other hand, in the metal industry and in the private sector, we think the workers are in a mood for revenge. There has been a dramatic redistribution of wealth in Sweden during the years of two bourgeois coalition governments and the five years of the new social-democratic government. This has been the biggest redistribution of value since the general strike of 1909, which started things going in the workers' favor.

Now there has been a turnaround. Export companies are swimming in money and profits made in this last period. This government started its term with a 15% currency devaluation.

■ How much has the standard of living of workers declined?

It amounts to something like 10% of real wages. The standard of living was at its peak in the middle of the 1970s. For Volvo workers, it was 1976. Since then we have lost the equivalent of a month's wages. In the last two or three years we haven't lost much. But we didn't take back anything either. Now, for some time, we have been at the peak of a boom, and the workers want to regain some of what they lost in the late 1970s.

The crucial problem is leadership. All the indications are that when people do something, wherever a group of work-



Internationalen, weekly journal of the Socialistiska Partien (Socialist Party), Swedish section of the Fourth International

ers gives leadership or puts forward a proposal for action, it will be supported. The problem is the weakness of the union opposition nationally.

■ Does that mean that what is decisive about Göteborg is not Göteborg but you?

The subjective factor for the moment is very important. But the objective situation is also that in Göteborg you find concentrated huge forces of labor, a lot of metalworkers; it is a proletarian town, the leading working-class town in Sweden. There are traditions, and there are other left forces at work that have traditions.

■ What are the other left forces?

The official Communist Party, the VPK, is a weak influence in the unions today. I think we can say that our union influence is stronger than that of the VPK. I'm sure that they have more members altogether. But they do not act as socialists or communists in their

unions.

■ What about the Moscow loyalists, the Workers Communist Party, the AKP? It was supposed to have taken a lot of the old working class base of the CP.

Yes, but it is withering away. It exists. They are able to produce a daily paper, I think with big subsidies from the East European countries. Their biggest base today may be among immigrant workers, people who were Communist Party members in their countries of origin, from places such as Chile, Greece, Finland and so on. Exile organizations.

■ What about the Maoist groups that were very large in the 1970s?

The biggest group were the "popular front" Maoists, the KFml. There were the leading organizers of the very strong Vietnam movement. Today, it is a tiny group calling itself the Solidarity Party. It has two main objectives. One is to support the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan. That has to do with its background. They concentrate on fighting "Soviet imperialism." They have no difficulties in giving total and uncritical support to the Mujahadeen forces, to Islamic fundamentalism and so forth.

Their second objective is to support workers' mobilization for democratic demands and also for defending the standard of living. On that level, we can collaborate with them. In general, this is a demoralized group looking for a future.

The "third period," or ultra-left Stalinist Maoist group, the KFmlr, is different. They still have a real stronghold in Göteborg, though it is weakening. Moreover, they are getting more and more pro-Soviet. In this situation, they even tend to criticize Gorbachev for being too democratic. They cling to the Stalinism of the past. They can only have a very modest influence on politics, because they deliberately remain outside union activities. They refuse to run in elections.

■ Where do they recruit, in the factories or among the unemployed?

I would say that if they recruit today it is among public workers and intellectuals.

■ It seems strange that a Stalinist cult like that would be attractive to intellectuals.

They were well organized. They had a lot of actors. They produce in some aspects a very good paper. In other regards, it is political pornography. They had a tradition in Göteborg with former Communist Party members.

■ There was a right-wing aspect, wasn't there? They had this campaign

that all prospective immigrants from Africa should be tested for AIDS.

Yes, they have very reactionary positions concerning homosexuals and the AIDS question. They make a point of denouncing "petty-bourgeois homosexuals" in their paper.

■ Is the Solidarity Party a factor in the union movement at all?

No. They have some activities. And usually we can agree with them around proposals to fight for union democracy, which they have always seen as very important.

We act politically — not only carrying out a political fight concerning wages, unemployment, racism, international solidarity and so on, but we also openly act as members of the Socialist Party, in most cases well-known members of the Socialist Party. They don't. They prefer to be politically anonymous.

■ Can you recruit people directly to the party in the factories?

Yes. We have had some recruitment. But last year, membership stagnated. We recruited some, some left. That is because it is difficult to organize youth. You can get support, but for the moment, they tend not to become members of left organizations. They tend instead to support Greenpeace or other such activities.

■ What about the circulation of your press in the factories? For example, would it be read by a much wider circle than your membership?

Oh yes. But it has had its ups and downs. In some periods, we are very active. In other periods, we are not that active with the press. The big difference is that today our weekly has a content, a line that is possible for politically interested workers to follow.

At the VPK convention some months ago, we got a very nice complement. The main reporter about their press was a worker from Dalarna, and represents a left current in the party. He said: "I am not ashamed to say to you that my co-workers and radical left social-democratic people in the steel plants in Dalarna read *Internationalen*, not our weekly.

"I also prefer it, because it gives more leadership, more information, more discussion about problems concerning workers than our weekly. Our weekly is more a journalists' project, but not a political project for strengthening our union work."

But I think much more can be done. We have problems with a slowing down of our activity, which also affects the distribution of the press. That comes both from the aging of our cadres and our difficulties in recruiting a younger people. We have some young people around us in the truck plant, in the union. But we have had difficulty in educating them and convincing them to become party members.

The leading cadres of our party are becoming more occupied with their families. So, they don't have the same energy when it comes to selling the press and so on. That is a problem as a whole for our party.

We need more young people who can spend a greater amount of time on activities like that. In the first years of our work in the Volvo plants, we spent more or less all night on union work, producing leaflets. And now, many of us are middle-aged with families and we cannot keep up that pace. We have a more solid base. We have more solid work that's much more related to concerns of workers, but the old energy is lacking.

We need more rebellion, so to speak, more youth coming in. ☆

Notebooks for Study and Research REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY TODAY

IN THIS new NSR 4, Daniel Bensaid reviews some of the fundamental positions of socialist politics: the role of the state, the evolution of proletarian class consciousness, the notion of revolutionary crisis and dual power. He attempts to demonstrate their relevance to current debates on left governments, the welfare state, self-management and democracy, and in the light of experiences in the 1960s and 1970s in Southern Europe and Latin America. Also included are extracts from articles by Ernest Mandel and Nikos Poulantzas.

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AFTER THE signing of the peace accord in Guatemala, do you think that there are real prospects for peace in Central America?

Nicaragua is a country with a great interest in achieving peace, both for principled reasons and because of immediate needs. We want peace for reasons of principle because the revolution was made to win lasting peace. We are champions of peace out of necessity. We cannot continue to live with a situation of endless war.

In reality, war means a lack of oxygen for us. While it is true that the moral and political reserves of a people involved in a revolution are inexhaustible, the fact is that a certain anxiety has arisen among the people over the question of peace.

The people have not yet become tired. Even when its dynamism seems exhausted, a people engaged in a revolution finds new sources of energy. I think that I represent the feeling of the Nicaraguan people when I say that they are in favor of peace, inasmuch as over these last years they have sacrificed a lot of their blood in the struggle. Nicaragua's biggest and the most torrential river is neither the Rio Coco nor the Rio Matagalpa but the river of our blood.

■ In June, President Daniel Ortega said that he would not negotiate questions of domestic policy outside the country. Isn't that what he has just done in Guatemala?

This accord does not concern domestic policy. It describes our point of view on democracy, and this point does not pose any problems for us, because it says, "The government's pledge to give impetus to an authentic democratic, pluralist, and participationist process, which involves advancing social justice and respect for human rights, national sovereignty, the territorial integrity of states and the right of all nations to determine their economic, political and social blueprints freely and without foreign interference of any kind." (Esquipulas Accord, No. 3.)

We have nothing to add to this document. It is easier for us to sign this document with Guatemala than with any other government in Central America. So, Daniel Ortega was not in contradiction with what he said in June.

■ Despite the peace accords, it is likely that the United States will not withdraw their support from the contras. And so, it seems difficult to foresee a cease-fire. What is Nicaragua going to do then?

I think indeed that the United States in practice holds a veto over the Guatemala accords. Reagan's intent is to continue his aggression against our coun-

try and to block the peace process in Central America. However, there are a series of important factors that make it difficult for him to carry out his plans. The United States had decided to intervene directly in Nicaragua. But there was the Irangate scandal, the shooting down of Hassenfuss's airplane and other elements that prevented such an intervention.

In the same way, I think that a series of factors are going to emerge that will force the government of the United States to accept the reality of the Guatemala accords. The American government's wish is to liquidate the Nicaraguan revolutionary process. But it has not succeeded in doing this. The fact that this intention has been implicit shows the extent of the difficulties that it faces in trying to prevent the implementation of the Guatemala peace accords.

Moreover, if Reagan intervened with his own peace plan a few days before the meeting of the five Central American presidents, that shows that he was in a difficult situation that forced him to give ground to a certain extent. Even though the way the plan is formulated is unacceptable to us, we would be prepared to open a discussion on it. In fact, this plan reflects a certain flexibility on Reagan's part. What is more, one might suppose that Reagan will encounter certain difficulties in retreating from it.

■ Do you think that this peace accord is a victory for Nicaragua?

I think that it is a victory for all the Central American countries and most especially for ours, which is undoubtedly the one with the greatest interest at stake in these accords. It is not surprising that we have already started to implement it. We take account of the fact that we face a real danger of an invasion by the United States.

The signing of this peace accord puts difficulties in the way of Reagan getting congressional approval for new subsidies to the contras. Rejecting new subsidies to the contras would be the best contribution American members of Congress could make to the implementation of the Guatemala peace accords. In this way also, they would open up an honorable way out for the Reagan administration. Moreover, the very fact that the United States agreed to accept dialogue, even if the starting points were unacceptable to us, represents a step forward.

After long internal discussions, the Sandinista leadership decided to open a dialogue on the basis of the American proposition, knowing full well that the United States would defend a position completely contrary to our interests.

It has to be understood that in any negotiation, the parties involved begin

Interview with



“We must mean coexistence national and the are not ne

AFTER THE signing of the Cer Esquipulas (see article on page 14), Toussaint interviewed Tomas Borge is a member of the national National Liberation Front (FSLN) the Revolution, and the leader of

by taking the most intransigent positions. Should we think for example that the United States is going to say to us: "Gentlemen, we recognize your existence. We are going to stop our aid to the contras. We agree to say that you are a legitimate government. We support the autonomy plan for the Atlantic coast. We think that you are respecting human rights." Obviously, that would not be negotiating; it is a total utopia.

Tomas Borge



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(18), our correspondent Eric
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he FSLN.**

Regardless of negotiations, the Reagan administration's point of view will always be in conflict with ours. Nonetheless, we must find a means for coexistence. We take the interests of the United States into consideration, even if they see them in a way that is quite out of line with reality.

They are afraid that Soviet bases will be established in Nicaragua. All right, that is a concrete point on which we can come to an agreement. We can of-

fer a pledge about that. However, they feel perfectly free to set up American bases everywhere it suits them and to station troops everywhere in the world. But it is totally intolerable to them that other countries station troops abroad.

Well, we are realists. We recognize that American imperialism exists, and we consider that we could reach an agreement that would put an end to some of the United States' worries.

What is not negotiable are our national sovereignty and the existence of revolution. But it is precisely these things that are being challenged by the United States. Now, they are terribly worried because the Persian Gulf has been partially mined. But they themselves mined the port of Corinto, that is, "right under our nose"! That is the way they are! That is how unjustly they treat the rest of the world, and not just the poor countries.

■ What is the situation of the contras?

To gauge the strength of an army, you have to look at its morale in combat and not only just its armaments. For example, shortly before the triumph of the revolution, the forces and equipment of Somoza's National Guard were intact. But a series of politico-military factors led to its defeat. On this level, the morale of our armed forces is excellent, and the same cannot be said for the contras.

The contras adopted a strategic perspective of inflicting a military defeat on the armed forces of the revolution and of taking power. They have given up this objective and adopted another — to create ideal conditions for American military intervention.

Before adopting this new strategic objective, they tried to take a stretch of Nicaraguan territory in order to set up a government, they tried unsuccessfully to occupy a city, to stabilize a contra zone in order to establish a strategic bastion. They did not achieve these objectives, evidently, since their zone of influence is in the north near Honduras. That is the real theater of the war, regardless of the fact that they have been able to penetrate as far as they have into the interior of the country.

It has been very important to us to understand the enemy's strategy in order to establish our own priorities. Since the contras did not manage to stabilize large compact military units, since they did not manage to get enough military personnel to form such big units and since we had more fire-power, they decided to disperse their forces. This was a temporary, tactical decision and not a strategic one.

I think that to a certain extent they succeeded in carrying off this tactical

dispersal of their forces. That has led concretely to an increasing number of small armed actions in the recent period. Small armed actions reflect strategic weakness. So far this strategic weakness has not been definitive, and our immediate response has been to transform their tactical dispersal into a strategic dispersal. This means keeping from exercising centralized control over their dispersed forces.

Through our military offensive and new tactical deployments of our army, our intelligence and other forces of the Ministry of the Interior, we have succeeded in inflicting impressive human losses on the contras. For every one of our people who falls, three to four contras are made harmless. Our capacity for replacing our forces is much greater than that of the contras. Over the past two years, their military forces have decreased by more or less 50 per cent.

Nonetheless, it has to be said that they have achieved a certain capacity for renewing their forces. That is, they have recruited. They recruit essentially backward peasants, either through shanghaiing people or through standard propaganda and relying on large financial resources.

However, if you remember that before their last offensive, they had a large part of their forces trained in Honduras and in the United States (training that included preparation for anti-aircraft warfare with very sophisticated weapons, such as "red eyes," and for using considerable communications equipment and decoding devices to intercept our army's messages), you can understand that the major losses we inflicted on them have had a particular effect on these militarily best prepared troops. Naturally, the new forces that they have incorporated, which are made up to a greater extent of children of 12 and 13 years of age and women, are militarily much less effective.

So, their best trained forces have considerably shrunk. This reflects a very great decline which will be aggravated by the signing of the Guatemala peace plan. Their weakening is also reflected in the extent to which members of their forces have expressed their satisfaction at the peace plan and their wish to go home.

We, for our part, have demonstrated our seriousness in welcoming men and women who break from the contras. We welcome them in a humanitarian way, and we offer them jobs or other means of reintegrating themselves in to social and civilian life.

■ Do you think that the right opposition could win elections?

There is always that possibility, and the constitution provides for respecting an election victory by forces other than the Sandinista front. But I think

that it is hard to imagine the Nicaraguan people turning their backs on history. Such a thing has never happened. To encourage everyone to be more realistic, I would say that it is virtually impossible that the people would decide to return to the road of the past. But, if that were to happen, we would have to yield power, and I would stop believing in humanity.

■ The right opposition says that in order to apply the peace accord it is necessary to lift the state of emergency, and to permit the reopening of *La Prensa* and *Radio Catolica*.¹ What do you think about that?

I am reading the accord signed in Guatemala, and it says exactly the opposite. This accord implies that the state of emergency will be lifted when the war ends. When somebody is pointing a pistol at us, it would be crazy to put down the one that we are holding. I think that negotiation could lead to suspending the state of emergency. For our part, we will move ahead very quickly in implementing the peace plan. We are setting up the National Reconciliation Commission.

However, until we reach an overall and simultaneous accord in Central America, nothing requires us to suspend the state of emergency. Before such an accord, we can decide to suspend the state of emergency only if we think that the conditions have been assembled for this. The state of emergency is not an end in itself. It is a temporary measure designed to meet the needs of a war situation.

Now, in the present conditions, we cannot lay down our military or our political weapons or the legal weapons authorized by the constitution. But we would be ready to stop shooting if there were no longer any enemies that we had to shoot at. And likewise we would be ready to stop using the state of emergency, the legal means provided

by the constitution, if that were no longer necessary. If we were not ready to do that, we would fall into an illegal and dictatorial state of affairs.

■ The representative of the Social Christian Party (PSC) says that you have 10,000 political prisoners in your jails. How much truth is there in that?

There are 8,800 prisoners in total, the majority of whom are thieves, rapists, drug-peddlers and cattle-rustlers. The majority, therefore, are common-law prisoners. In addition, there is a large group of former Somozista National Guards who have been imprisoned since the revolution. In all, 2,400 counter-revolutionaries are prisoners.

I am going to tell you an anecdote. When I went to Germany, an individual named Geisler questioned me, saying that there were Social Christian prisoners in Nicaragua. I checked by telephone, and I was told that there were, if I remember right, four or five Social Christian prisoners. But they were not jailed because of their political affiliation. One had committed a robbery, another a rape, and so on.

Following Mr. Geisler's reasoning, you could say that there are 8,800 Catholics in jail in Nicaragua. You could also say that a majority of the prisoners are Sandinistas. But nearly 5,000 "Sandinista" prisoners are not in jail because they are Sandinistas but for other reasons.

What is more, I can tell you that a majority of the prisoners in Region VI (the northern part of the country, Jinotega, Matagalpa) are members of the armed forces or of the forces of the Ministry of the Interior who have committed abuses against the population, and have violated the law for one reason or another. They are also Sandinistas. Is anyone concerned about their fate?

■ Where are you with the autonomy plan for the Atlantic Coast?

The adoption of autonomy for the Atlantic Coast is entering its final phase. At the end of August or the beginning of September, autonomy projects will be submitted to the National Assembly. How long will this discussion go on? That depends on the National Assembly, but normally there should not be any major obstacle to adopting the plan because it has an important feature — it is an expression of the will of the majority of the inhabitants of the Atlantic Coast. This bill is the most democratic of all laws that I know of in history. It has been discussed and approved word by word, paragraph by paragraph, article by article by the people of the Atlantic Coast.

I might say that I would have preferred another sort of formulation in

certain parts of the document, but since it is the result of collective discussion among the people of the Atlantic Coast, it would be an insult to them to oppose this law.

The application of the law is not going to be very easy, because it is complex and represents a qualitative step. Every qualitative step involves difficulties. The autonomy scheme is the result of the restoration of peace to the Atlantic Coast and the correction of errors that we committed.

This is a model law, an example to those facing similar problems throughout the Americas. It will be an encouragement to all the native peoples of the hemisphere, including those in the United States and Canada. It will be a cause for rejoicing for the Indians of the Americas and an object of great satisfaction for the inhabitants of the Atlantic Coast.

■ Since 1979, a revolutionary regime has existed in Nicaragua in which political pluralism and real trade-unionism has survived. What balance sheet do you draw from this situation?

Pluralism and the mixed economy in Nicaragua are the natural results of our revolutionary process. This is not a trick or a tactic for gaining time. The problem is not whether this is positive or negative. It is a fact that cannot be gone around. It has not been easy to establish political pluralism, because in order to maintain this pluralism and mixed economy, the state has had to make major concessions to the employers.

We have encountered difficulties because the political factor took precedence over economics. That is, the class interests of those sectors excluded from political power (those who retain political options without holding political power) have created blockages in production and in the economy in general. In other words, ideally, if we could separate the political aspect from the economic one and solve the problems in each of these areas separately, things would be much easier. The problem is that politics and economics are tightly intertwined.

The fundamental aspect has been politics. More than an instrument of producers, the [employers' organization] COSEP is a sort of political party. Moreover, concretely, it is part of the Acasa coordinating body, which is a political instrument opposed to the revolution. It is clear that the room for political pluralism will increase to the extent that the provisions of the Guatemala peace accord are applied, because it has to be said that the state of emer-

1. Radio Catolica, the archiepiscopal station, was banned on January 2, 1986; and *La Prensa* was suspended indefinitely the day after the US Congress voted \$100 million in aid to the contras on June 27, 1986.





agency has restricted the activities of the opposition parties to a certain extent.

■ **In this stage of the Sandinista revolution, what is the role of the Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS)?**

The mass organizations have developed considerably since the revolution. Before the victory, they were underground, while now they are part of the revolutionary power.

The CDS are a special form of representing the inhabitants of a neighborhood. They have been going through a process of finding ways to act and function. In the last analysis, the CDS can be the road to follow to consolidate mass participation in the revolutionary power. Now, the CDS are no longer essentially devoted to revolutionary vigilance, in any case not in the form that was practiced a few years ago.

The CDS are the trustees and interpreters of the demands of the people in the neighborhood. Thus, these people have a channel for advancing their immediate demands — demands that are not outside the political context. Within the CDS, elections are genuinely democratic; they take place by means of secret ballots. I have witnessed a series of elections in various parts of the country. The CDS do not necessarily elect those who are recommended by the Sandinista Front, even though the majority in the CDS agree with the positions of the FSLN and recognize it as the revolutionary vanguard.

■ **What remedies are there to bureaucracy, taking account of the fact that at the moment the main danger comes from imperialist aggression?**

I would like to know what chemical formula is effective in fighting bureaucracy. But I think that they will find a

cure for AIDS first. I think that we really have to find mechanisms for fighting bureaucracy. But often this is very difficult because the forms that bureaucracy takes are so incredible that I am not surprised at the capacity it shows for survival.

I said to a friend a little while ago in a discussion on human rights and bureaucracy: "If people commit the folly of launching a nuclear world war, humanity will disappear from the surface of the earth, but the bureaucratic cockroaches will survive."

That is a way of describing the difficulty of dealing with bureaucracy. Nonetheless, you have to deal with it, and I think that the main means for fighting it is for the leaders, the revolutionists, to maintain a direct contact with reality. And you cannot get to know the reality in an office except through direct contact on the ground with the masses, the working people, the people in the neighborhoods and so forth.

To make myself understood, I am going to give you an example. A document arrives in an office describing the problems in a factory where the workers are complaining about noise. Reading this paper is no substitute to visiting the factory. I went, and I realized that the problem was not that there was a lot of noise, but that the noise was intolerable, and that unless technical means were found to remedy this the workers were going to go deaf.

If the functionaries or minister responsible for this factory did not confront the facts, the problem would not be solved. Reports never describe the facts exactly. They give you only a distorted view.

Today, imperialism and bureaucracy are our main enemies, and it is harder to fight bureaucracy than it is to fight imperialism. ☆

The Central America peace accord

THE HISTORY and context of the Central American peace accord, signed August 8 in Guatemala, are described in the following article from *Panorama*, a quarterly magazine published in Mexico City, which specializes in the affairs of the Central American and Caribbean region.

ROBERTO BARDINI

ON NOVEMBER 7, peace could be established in Central America if the weapons of dialogue get the upper hand over the dialogue of weapons. That is the day when the "Procedure for establishing a firm and durable peace" approved by the five Central American presidents at their second meeting in Esquipulas in Guatemala on August 7-8 is supposed to go into effect.

This accord — signed by Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala — provides that within 90 days a process of cease-fire, amnesty, suspension of foreign military aid and internal democratization is to take place within the region.

An international commission including representatives of the Contadora Group (Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations is to monitor compliance with the plan and its follow up.

Thus, the four years of diplomatic efforts by the Contadora Group seem to have borne fruit. This negotiating body was formed on the island of Panama on January 1983, and during its 56

months of existence it has given impetus to 30 meetings of Central American foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers. In September 1985, it presented a "Treaty of Peace and Collaboration" for the region. Of the 100 points it contained, 97 were approved.

The three points left open dealt with the most controversial questions — arms reduction and inspection, the mechanisms for surveillance and following up on military maneuvers and political security.

During this time, the United States, the most notable absentee from the negotiating table and the main actor in the conflict, exercised an influence from a distance through El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica. In June 1985, the Contadora Group's diplomatic talks seemed to have reached an impasse. And in January 1987, the social-democratic president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, proposed an alternative peace project, known as the "Arias Plan."

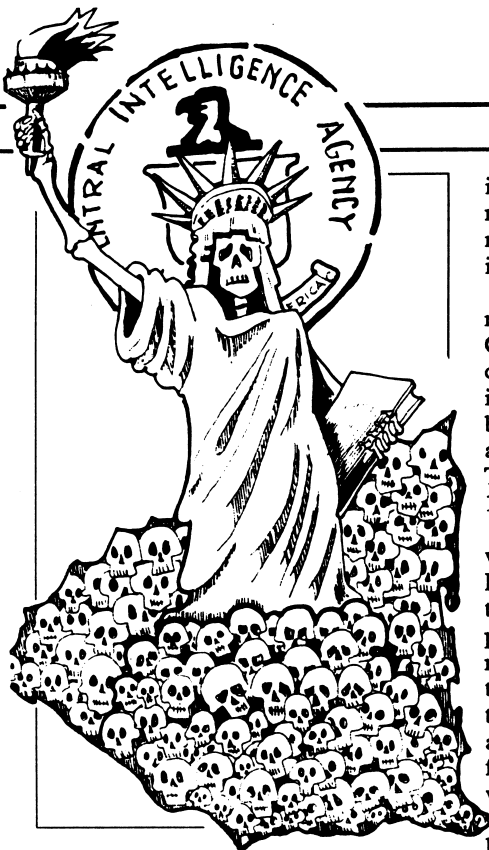
However, this latest proposal did not succeed. Initially, it provided for a summit meeting in Central America for June 25-26. But on the request of the Christian-democratic president of El Salvador, Jose Napoleon Duarte, this meeting was suspended.

On this question, Salvador Samoya, a representative of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) of El Salvador, told *Panorama*: "At the start, the Arias Plan was aimed against Nicaragua. It tried to open up a political space within the country for the contras at a time when the White House was going through the the arms sales to Iran scandal. But subsequently the game turned around, and the result was a symmetry that was not to the taste of the United States."

Contradictions of US policy in Central America

Samoya continued: "What they wanted for Nicaragua — legalization of the contras within the country — they did not want for El Salvador with the FMLN-FDR. What they demanded from the Sandinista government — new elections — they did not want for the regime of Napoleon Duarte. And what they also wanted for Nicaragua, a cease-fire, did not suit them in El Salvador."

The symmetry between the contras and the FMLN obviously got in the way of Washington's plans. On July 19, on the occasion of the eighth anniversary of the Sandinista revolution, President Daniel Ortega said: "The government of the United States has rejected Arias' proposal, which no one could call leftist. That gives you an idea of Reagan's obsession — he does not want to move out of the White House



and leave a free Nicaragua behind him."

But if the Arias Plan did not suit Washington, the accord signed at Esquipulas II is still less likely to. On August 16, Frank Carlucci, White House security advisor, announced that regardless of the Guatemala accords, the United States would continue its aid and support for the contras until they can "exchange their guns for ballots." The American government, Carlucci said, "has the goal of achieving the establishment of a genuine democracy in Nicaragua."

Two days later, the US ambassadors accredited to the five Central American countries concerned issued a communiqué expressing "the deep concern of the United States regarding the Guatemala accord." [Quotes re-translated from Spanish.] Before it could be applied, the US diplomats specified, Nicaragua would have to stop getting military aid from Cuba and the Soviet Union, put a stop to its "programs of subversion" in the region and set up a plan for "genuine and full democratization." In short, it was the same old line.

On August 19, a *New York Times* editorial indicated that "the new peace initiative in Central America obliges the Sandinista leaders and President Reagan to choose between the perspective of more fighting and the risks of peace: Mr. Reagan has every practical reason to choose the diplomatic road to peace." The paper even considered that the Guatemala accord could be "the last chance."

All the governments concerned with the conflict in Central America saw it that way. On August 20, the five ministers of foreign affairs held a two-day meeting after signing a seven-point accord that is to be the framework for

implementing the initial stages of the regional peace treaty signed in Guatemala. The next meeting was to be held in Nicaragua on September 20.

On August 21, 13 Latin American ministers of foreign affairs (five from Central America, four from the Contadora Group and four from the Supporting Group) met in Caracas to draw up blueprints for monitoring the accords and inspecting compliance with them. These ministers had not met since June 1986.

But once again, diplomatic advances were obstructed by a new initiative by President Ronald Reagan, who, with the agreement of the Democratic Party, put forward a series of "non-negotiable" points, which were outside the Esquipulas II accords and amounted to preconditions for applying these agreements, which were to go into force on November 7. These points were the following:

- Any cease-fire in the region has to be acceptable to the contras, and "humanitarian aid" to the anti-Sandinistas will continue during the negotiations.

"Soviet and Cuban presence"

- The "Soviet and Cuban presence" in Nicaragua will be considered as a "direct threat" to the national security of the United States.

- Democracy in Nicaragua is also linked to the security of the United States. Before 1990, there must be an electoral commission not controlled by the Sandinistas.

- The United States will gradually suspend "humanitarian aid" to the contras as they are integrated into Nicaraguan society.

- Any suspension of US military maneuvers in Central America has to be understood as "demonstration of good faith" to aid the process of negotiation.

As the White House sees it, any negotiations are the result of its own pressures. Sol Linowitz, former United States representative to the OAS, expressed clearly his view of the Latin American attitude toward Washington's policy. "There is a lot of scepticism about our intentions," he was to say. In fact, the history of Washington's interventions and its diplomatic prevarications speaks volumes, and these habits have not changed.

Some small comments are still more illustrative. In April 1985, when the US representative presented a "peace" plan for Nicaragua, the Nicaraguan minister of foreign affairs, Miguel d'Escoto was to say 24 hours later: "President Reagan has simply said, 'Either they die, or I'll kill them.'" ☆

Major advance for peasant organization

IN THE CONTEXT of a sharpening crisis in the country, with severe repression on the one hand and a wave of nationalizations on the other, Peru's largest peasant organization held its Seventh Congress in Lima August 21-25. The Confederación Campesina del Peru (CPP) was founded 40 years ago. The main decisions are noted in excerpts in the following article.

HUGO BLANCO

SOME IMPORTANT aspects of this congress should be noted. The CCP, which is the largest farmers' organization, was not afraid of offering full representation to the ranks of the other peasant confederations. It also offered places in the Junta Directiva [Executive Council] to those delegates of the Confederación General de Campesinos del Peru who were willing to accept them. This was done to promote unification of the peasantry into a single confederation.

People were present from all 24 departments [administrative divisions] of the country. The travel expenses of who attended were paid in most cases by their own peasant bases. This marked a step toward overcoming the paternalism that has existed until now, with some centers of support for the peasants being asked to pay the travel expenses.

Another notable aspect was the presence of representatives of the jungle Indian communities, to which little attention had been paid before now. They now have a secretariat in the National Executive Committee of the CCP.

Although the CCP is not officially recognized by the government, the deputy ministers of agriculture and fisheries attended the congress. They were greeted with shouts of "Enough promises, we want solutions!" and "Free the political prisoners!" On the premises where the congress was held, there was an office of the Banco Agrario (the state agricultural bank) to offer advice.

Delegations were present from Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador and Brazil, as well as a representative of the Chinese embassy.

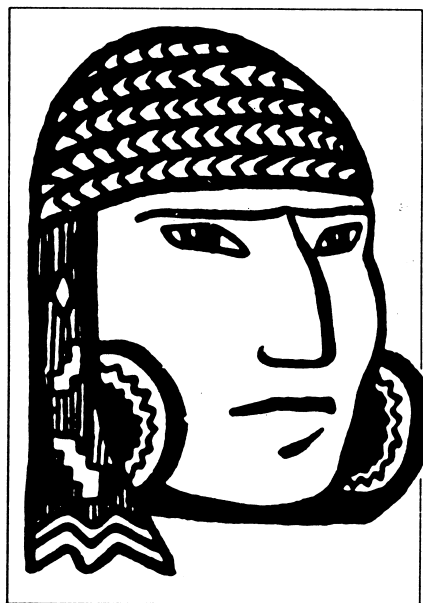
Although there was a sharp political debate between the majority, represent-

ed by the Partido Unificado Mariateguista (PUM), and the minorities represented by Patria Roja and a militarist current, the PUM had the maturity to present a slate for the National Executive Committee that included all the political currents. For this reason, the overwhelming majority of the delegates voted for the election to be based on slates, and no one wanted to put up an alternative slate.

There were two changes in the structure of the CCP. The first that the intermediate body between the congress and the National Executive Committee no longer has to be elected by assemblies of the local federations. Instead 80 permanent members are to be named who will hold their positions until the next congress. These members will be elected by departments in proportion to the size of the organization in each. They will be included in the working committees formed around each of the secretariats. In this way, a broad leadership body will be formed for the CCP, which is an urgent need for a confederation of more than two million members.

The second change was the appointment of four regional secretaries for the north, center, south and east (the jungle area). This represents an attempt to decentralize the organization, with the objective of promoting strong regional organizations and a later development of Regional Leadership Councils.

A notable feature of the congress was the presence of many folk music groups. They performed in the opening session of the congress and in various breaks in the sessions, including on the final night, when the session lasted until 8.00am. ☆



DOCUMENT

For land and power

UNDER THE SLOGAN "For the land and power, we will win!" the Seventh Congress of the CPP adopted a statement that included many radical points. The following are excerpts:

□ **For a new national agrarian policy for feeding the people:**

The agricultural policy followed by the Ministry of Agriculture has been to subordinate the agrarian economy to the interests of the agri-business monopolies and to impose new landlords on the country-wide. Aid programs based on political control have been used to manipulate, divide and repress the organized peasant movement.

The Peruvian peasantry demands the resignation of the minister of agriculture because he represents a neo-landlord bourgeois policy and conciliation with the agri-business monopolies linked to imperialism.

The Seventh National Congress of the CCP calls for a new agricultural policy including the following points:

● For a national policy of feeding the people, with fair prices for the producers. Participation of genuine peasants' organizations in setting prices

● For direct participation by the peasants' organizations in the mechanisms for trading in the principal farming and ranching products and for

centralizing trading in these products.

- The state commercial banks must devote the bulk of their financing and placements to agriculture, giving preference to food production, medium-sized farms and the agri-industrial projects of agricultural producers.

- The Banco Agrario del Peru (BAP) must devote 100 per cent of its placements to small farmers and peasant cooperatives.

- For a genuine democratization of credit, with interest-free credit being extended to all the peasant communities and peasant producers, with the opening of BAP offices in the country's agricultural provinces. Business credit for peasant organizations that decide to sell their products directly.

- Nationalization of the multinational Nestle company and its handing over to the workers and milk producers in the Cajamarca valley.

- Extension of the nationalization and democratization of the agri-industries of milling, oil-bearing products, dairy products, brewing, and of the cotton and wool industry, and trading in these products.

□ We reaffirm our determination to fight for the land and for strengthening the peasant communities:

- Continue the land occupations as a means of just and democratic struggle in the countryside. Organization of the peasantry to develop a national campaign for this.

- The handing over of new lands for cultivation to the peasant and native communities and to landless laborers.

- Delivery of titles for communal lands, developing peasant communal agriculture by establishing communal enterprises.

- Support for the working partners in the agricultural cooperatives on the coast that keep the cooperatives intact.

□ For peace with social justice, amnesty for political prisoners now!

In view of the failure of the counter-insurgency strategy applied by the military and the APRA government, in view of the stepped-up violence, militarization and the "dirty war," the activity of paramilitary gangs and the division of the peasant patrols by the formation of "civic patrols" under the control of the police, the governors and the APRA party, in view of the fact that hundreds of people, mainly peasants, are being held as political prisoners, we agree on the need for:

- National mobilization of the peasants and the popular masses against the repression and militarization, against all abuses of authority by the APRA government. Organization of provincial and departmental civic and political strikes, as occurred in Cusco and Quillamba.

- For the withdrawal of the armed forces and police from the emergency zones; for the establishment of civilian regional governments that will pursue a policy of peace with social justice.

- Organization of mass self-defence and peasant patrols and development of urban patrols.

- Defence of human rights and elimination of torture, kidnappings, "disappearances," massacres and illegal executions. Immediate release of our political prisoners and social fighters and an end to the trials against them.

- We reject violence against the peasantry and its natural organizations exercised by any group or organization, and such violence is all the more to be condemned when it takes terrorist forms.

□ For the defence of the peasant and native communities:

Our peasant communities must be able to develop their original higher civilization, their qualities as creative peoples. The native communities in the Amazonian jungle and the fringes of the jungle must be given back the vast lands that have been stolen from them.

Historically the enemies of the communities, including the Peruvian state, have tried to defeat us, divide us, and disperse us. They have sought to legitimize the denial of our Andean culture and the native culture of the people of the Amazonian jungle. We have never been regarded as participants in changes in, and transformation of, Peruvian agriculture and society.

The attempts of the APRA government to divide us and manipulate our demands have failed. President Alan García's offers and the agreements we made for our communities have remained unfulfilled promises. Therefore, we agree to call for:

- Repeal of the anti-community laws.

- Direct participation in the discussion on drafting the regulations of the Law on Peasant Communities, for which we must draft our own alternative.

- For land, development and regional governments with the participation of the peasant and native communities.

- Rejection of the native communities bill drafted by the APRA government without our participation.

- To demand justice for all the native communities that have been fighting to defend their territories and natural resources.

□ In view of the national crisis, it is necessary to fight for people's power and a democratic people's national government.

The gravity of the national crisis requires developing a national people's

alternative distinct from that proposed by the reactionary right, which is the enemy of the people and the Peruvian nation. It is necessary to defeat the APRA government's conciliation with Peruvian and imperialist monopolies. It is necessary to defeat the growing militarization of the country.

We have been fighting nationally to forge our revolutionary unity and build a National People's Assembly that, together with the left organizations, can become an alternative government and power that can defeat the people's enemies.

Such an alternative can only be built by mobilizing the people. Therefore, we call for a national farmers' and people's strike on the road to forging the National People's Assemblies.

We agree to support the fight for autonomous democratic and decentralized regional governments.

International solidarity with our sister people of Nicaragua and the revolutionary democratic government of Nicaragua.

Solidarity with our sister peoples in struggle in Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador and Palestine. ☆



Hugo Blanco

Red hopes and election blues

A SNAP election called by Prime Minister Bob Hawke on June 11 resulted in his Australian Labor Party (ALP) being re-elected for a third term. Nationally, there was a 1% swing against the ALP, but in spite of this they increased their seats from 82 to 86. The conservative parties fared badly, mainly due to the disunity of the opposition, with both the Liberal and National parties losing two seats each, to take 43 and 19 seats respectively.

The ALP, in government since 1983, has presided over a fall in real living standards, consistently high levels of unemployment and an accelerating economic crisis.

The following article explains the reasons for the ALP's victory, and the problems confronting the Australian left. It is republished from the August issue of *F.I. News*, produced by supporters of the Fourth International in Solidarity.

THE LEFT has some bitter pills to swallow after last month's federal election. The disarray of the left during the federal election mirrored the confusion and in-

eptitude of the far-right that assured Labor's victory in marginal seats. The difference is that the right set the agenda on the main policy issues, while the left found itself on the defensive throughout.

Worse, no sector of the left shows any sign of having learnt anything from the dismal experience. Each organization solemnly declared that the results confirmed its analysis of the situation, and then it was business as usual. But behind the bravado is the sad reality that the main left organizations have no coherent strategy to take on Labor and its austerity policies; that their main concern is organizational survival.

This sectarian approach to the crisis of the left is nothing new. Each time there has been a "fightback event" in the past four years, the result has been a skirmish to control yet another "national organization". Activists were repeatedly urged to prepare for campaigns that never happened because they did not fit in the game plan of the parties. Such jousting by the main party elites has created virtually nothing by way of a real fightback, but has greatly increased burn-out and bitterness.

In areas such as environment and Black struggles, activists have put up spirited campaigns against Labor with little visible help from socialist organizations. Instead, the left exhorts these activists to join them, join the new party or join the ALP, depending on the particular poison they're peddling.

The problem is not that activists in these areas refuse to join a political party, but that the political parties have nothing to offer these activists, a fact strikingly confirmed through the federal election campaign. For those with eyes to see, the main facts are clear enough.

Massive electoral swings against Labor

The ALP suffered massive electoral swings against it in working class areas. The worst swings were in New South Wales (NSW), where safe Labor seats saw an average swing of 4.36%. (Unless otherwise stated, figures are two-party preferred, based on 80% of the vote counted.) This average itself covers up the magnitude of the disenchantment and desertion — 10% in Sydney, 7% in Prospect, 6% in Fowler, 7% in Kingsford Smith and 6.5% in Blandland.

Despite this massive erosion of electoral base, Labor picked up seats. Why? The ALP right-wing machine would have us believe that its "targeted, professional" campaign was designed to achieve this result. The

facts say otherwise.

- The erosion of the ALP's base vote took the pundits and the Labor machine by complete surprise.

- The environment vote, created by the mass movement, handed Labor 1% to 2% in key Queensland and Tasmanian seats.

Revolt of the "New Right"

- The New Right revolt, allegedly based on a coalition of small businessmen and farmers, failed to materialize.¹ While the national swing against the ALP in metropolitan seats was 1.65%, the non-metropolitan swing was a mere 0.72%. In fact, the main electoral impact of the New Right was positive for Labor, with the aborted Joh for Canberra push costing the conservatives a further 1% to 2% in Queensland.²

- Labor's own marginal seats held up due to the divisions and incompetence of the conservative parties, which delivered a vote for stability from the least politicized, middle layer urban voters. The crisis in the bosses' parties reflected long-standing political divisions among fractions of the bourgeoisie. [Liberal Party leader] John Howard is the product of a crisis of leadership in the ruling class, not its cause.

The votes against Labor in working class electorates ended up going 50-50 to the Democrats and the Liberal Party. The news here is all bad for the left — the right-wing policies of the Hawke government have resulted in a measurable decline of class consciousness among blue-collar workers.

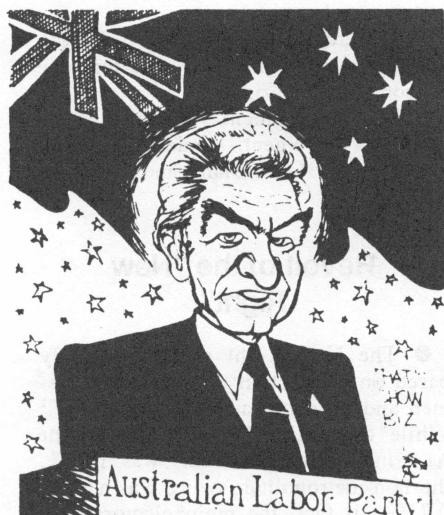
In general, protest candidates did poorly, both in comparison with the 1984 election and, particularly, when measured against the rhetorical predictions of the main left parties over the past 18 months.

Within this framework of weakness, the electoral strength of alternative candidates was directly proportional to their standing vis-a-vis actual campaigns.

Bill Hartley's Industrial Labor Party did very poorly in Victoria. The former Queensland senator George Georges benefited from his opposition to the introduction of a national identity card, but his vote failed to meet expectations because of the lack of a strong campaign on the issue. The highly visible election stunts by the NSW Green candidate Ian Cohen produced fewer votes

1. The New Right is a business and industrial grouping, in the Liberal Party whose aim is to push it further to the right.

2. State Premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen is the leader of the Queensland National Party. His bid to challenge National Party leader Ian Sinclair wrecked the 40-year-old Liberal/National coalition.



than the Nuclear Disarmament Party's association with the anti-nuclear movement, which no doubt assisted Western Australia Senator Jo Vallentine as well.³

The relationship between campaign strength and electoral result is particularly telling for socialists, who almost uniformly did far worse than expected. Hartley's Senate and House teams, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the Victoria seat of Gellibrand, the Socialist Party (handicapped by its lack of registration as a party for the Senate) in Grayndler and the Senate, and the CPA-SPA joint exercise in South Australia all polled dismally.⁴ If 2% of the vote is regarded as the minimum threshold for a meaningful result, then candidates associated with socialist politics did not make a dent.

Behind this depressing result is the fact that the central issue of austerity was never once effectively challenged by the trade-union movement in the run-up to or during the campaign. It is this lack of challenge that has bred disillusion and hostility to left politics in the working class.

Appeals to "run quiet" for fear of hurting Labor's re-election prospects are cold comfort for those whose standard of living is being slashed.

The authority of Hawke and Federal Treasurer Paul Keating's "solutions" to the economic crisis is based on the stranglehold of the labour bureaucracy, led by ACTU president Simon Crean and secretary Bill Kelty, on the trade unions. A political alternative to Labor cannot be built until this stranglehold is weakened by sustained industrial action against pro-capitalist policies. Such action will both draw from and fuel social protest in all areas.

Such a fightback cannot be conjured out of nothing, but the situation is far from hopeless. The working class has not suffered a decisive defeat, although it has lost some battles. The capacity and willingness to struggle is still very

much in evidence. The bourgeoisie has not resolved its own crisis of leadership, meaning first and foremost that it is not united on the necessity of a frontal assault on the labour movement. Internationally, imperialism is lurching from crisis to crisis — the Gulf, the farm crisis, the debt question, inter-imperialist competition, the Contra-Iran scandal — as the international economy sinks into depression.

To harness the possibilities, the left must break out of the political blind alley, roll up its sleeves and start campaigning with a coherent strategy of united front work. We do not pretend to have a rounded analysis of the strategic dilemmas and their solutions, but many of the problems that need to be addressed are obvious enough:

The International Socialists, which is recruiting rapidly among youth, has a completely abstentionist position on actual campaigns.

CP has ambiguous position on austerity

The largest left group, the Communist Party, has a profoundly ambiguous position on the key class question — austerity.

The dominant faction in its leadership has a reformist strategy of wanting to manage the crisis of capitalism, which is why it was a co-architect and key enforcer of the ALP-Australian Council of Trade Unions accord. Its industrial cadre and supporters are firmly wedded to nationalist industry plans as trade-offs for wages and conditions.

The new party project, in which the CPA, the SWP and others are investing most of their political energy and capital, continues to place leadership-to-leadership bargaining ahead of a united front response to the crisis. There is, of course, nothing wrong with trying to construct a larger more inclusive socialist party in Australia; however, if the organization that emerges is less radical, less politically coherent and less organized it will create more problems than it solves.

The new party project is premised on an incorrect analysis of the ALP, refusing to recognize Labor's working-class base in the trade-union movement. To aim to construct an alternative to Labor, without a strategy of intervention in the labour movement, is to reduce the problem of labourism to one of illusions and betrayals.

Such an analysis has nothing in common with Marxism, but relies on impressionistic media pap about Bob Hawke's big business mates. Labor retains the allegiance of the majority of the working class, despite ALP governments, because as a party it is based on the trade unions.

Certainly the nature of the Labor Party has changed over the past decade, but so has the labour movement. For better or worse, the craft union structure has been undergoing a revolution in recent years that is likely to be consummated by huge institutional changes in the near future. The changes in the ALP both reflect and reinforce (while it is in government) the changing nature of the trade unions.

In the last election, voting Labor rather than Liberal, National or Democrat was an elementary act of class consciousness for the majority of workers that may be a long way from socialism, but it is nonetheless qualitatively different to the vote by an American worker for the Democratic Party.

The profound dangers of misunderstanding the nature of the ALP were clearly illustrated by the SWP's endorsement of the Democrats ahead of Labor in the election. As the SWP said, such endorsement makes sense if it is assumed that both Labor and the Democrats are "liberal capitalist" parties, and that electoral assessments should be based on a "lesser evil" approach.

The Democrats have always been profoundly hostile to trade unions and working-class interests. Their track record on issues such as removal of sections 45D and E of the Trade Practices Act and welfare crackdowns clearly shows they are not a "left alternative" to Labor, but a left, or wet, alternative to the Liberals. Like the Liberal wets themselves, this does not exclude the Democrats being more "left wing" on some issues than Labor. But that is hardly the point.

Rebuilding the left is more urgent than ever

Finally, the far left, including Solidarity, is tiny, isolated, and unable to exert a significant influence on many of the central questions of the day, particularly in the trade-union movement.

Revolutionaries in Australia have not made up the ground lost by the degeneration of the SWP, which resulted in its leaving the Fourth International in 1985.⁵ An active and interventionist far left would be both a sign of health and an essential component of the workers' movement. Given the likely gravity of the looming international economic crisis, the process of rebuilding is more urgent than ever, whatever its organizational form. ☆

3. On the formation of the NDP, see IV 67, January 14, 1985.

4. CPA-SPA: two groupings resulting from a split in the Communist Party, the former is Maoist and the latter pro-Moscow.

5. See "In defence of the Fourth International — against the split of the Australian Socialist Workers Party" by Ernest Mandel, published in IV Special Supplement to issue 93, February 14, 1986.

Democratic self-rule for the people of Hong Kong

IN 1984, the governments of China and Britain signed an agreement to restore Chinese sovereignty to the British colony of Hong Kong on July 1, 1997. From that date, Hong Kong is to become a Special Administrative Region of China, with a large degree of internal autonomy.

The following is the text of a joint statement on the Hong Kong government's Green Paper "The 1987 review of developments in representative government" published by *October Review* and the Revolutionary Marxist League, from the May/June 1987 issue of *October Review*.

1 WE BELIEVE that in ending the colonial rule and returning to China, the Hong Kong masses must promptly build a political system whose power is delegated by the entire population to decide and manage autonomously local affairs of Hong Kong. Only in this way can the democratic self-rule of the Hong Kong people be realized. Such a democratic political system should be the common goal of struggle of the majority of the Hong Kong masses.

2 THE SO-CALLED "development of representative government" and the orientation of the "review" launched by the Hong Kong government will not lead to the democratic self-rule of the Hong Kong people.

In the 1987 Green Paper, though over 30 options concerning the development of the political system are proposed, they are mostly related to how the seats of the advisory bodies (the Legislative Council and the District Boards) are to be produced, and how their role and relationships are to be regulated. Crucial questions such as the source of power of the colonial government, the power of the Governor, and the relationship between the Executive Council and Legislative Council (Legco), are all put in the forbidden zone. These show that the so-called "representative government" continues to be an advisory body devoid of power. In fact, the Daya Bay Nuclear Plant project [being built by the Chinese in the face of massive local opposition] and other incidents prove that such a

consultative structure carrying certain electoral features is totally incapable of changing the dictatorial and repressive essence of the colonial rule.

3 WHEN THE Hong Kong government proposed the "representative government" in 1984, it defined a grand goal of developing "a system of government the authority for which is firmly rooted in Hong Kong". However, it is generally known that firstly, the "root" seen by the British is not the general Hong Kong masses but social forces of the upper strata closely related to it in interests; and secondly, the British will bring about the transfer of power progressively under its control. By the development of the "representative government", the British aim at:

- Alleviating the confrontation between the colonial authority and the awakening masses, so that British capital and the major financial groups can obtain the optimum political and economic interests before sovereignty over Hong Kong is returned to China.

- Progressively transferring power to its agents so that after Britain withdraws from Hong Kong, it can still safeguard its interests by various channels and influence the future development of Hong Kong.

Hence, the "representative government" to be built and developed by the British in Hong Kong has a colonial flavour and it safeguards the class with established interests. Concrete examples are that the present Green Paper consistently stresses that the colonial

"constitutional arrangements" are to be maintained, the source of power is not at all challenged, the official and appointed members of the Legco are deliberately preserved, and "indirect election" and "election by functional constituencies" are fostered.

4 HONG KONG is a component of China, and China has gained its independent and autonomous international status after a prolonged and arduous anti-imperialist struggle by the Chinese people. The Chinese people (in particular the Hong Kong people) should not let the British breed a pro-British regime through the "representative government". The most effective way to resist the British deployment is to fully expose its intentions, and propose a goal of struggle that is totally different from the British "representative government", that is, to fight for a political system whereby the people are sovereign and to realize the democratic self-rule of the Hong Kong people. We consider it the obligation of the Chinese government to assist the Hong Kong people in arriving at this goal.

5 UNFORTUNATELY, the existing Chinese government is trying all it can to obstruct the effort of the Hong Kong people in fighting for a democratic political system. This helps the Hong Kong people to come to realize the essence of the Chinese government's policy towards Hong Kong. Now it is obvious that:

- The Chinese government (from its responsible officials, organs and mouthpieces to even the leadership of the so-called "leftist" trade unions) hurriedly stresses that the development of the political system in Hong Kong should "converge" with the Basic Law [a future mini-constitution]. Instead of having the Basic Law drawn up by respecting the wish of the Hong Kong people, it requires that they submit to the will of the Chinese authorities.

- Through their mouthpieces, pro-China personages explain that the capitalist system is not only to be maintained in prolonged and general terms, but the "status quo" is to be maintained in its immediate and concrete form. This includes:

- a) economically, investors will be given all conveniences and safeguards, whereas the livelihood of the labouring masses is totally ignored;

- b) politically, the development of the political system will be subordinated to the colonial "constitutional arrangements". This means the so-called observation of the stipulation of the Sino-British Agreement, whereby before 1997 the British "constitutional

arrangements" with the Governor holding full power will remain in force and no major change will be conducted on the present ruling structure. After 1997, China's sovereignty over Hong Kong will resume in the form of bureaucratic domination, and the democratic rights of the Hong Kong people will be taken away.

Following this logic, some people even consider that "direct election" of the Legco before 1997 will breach the constitution and thus will violate the Sino-British Agreement. They also stress that "the politics of political parties" should be prevented, and direct election will ensue in the "politics of political parties".

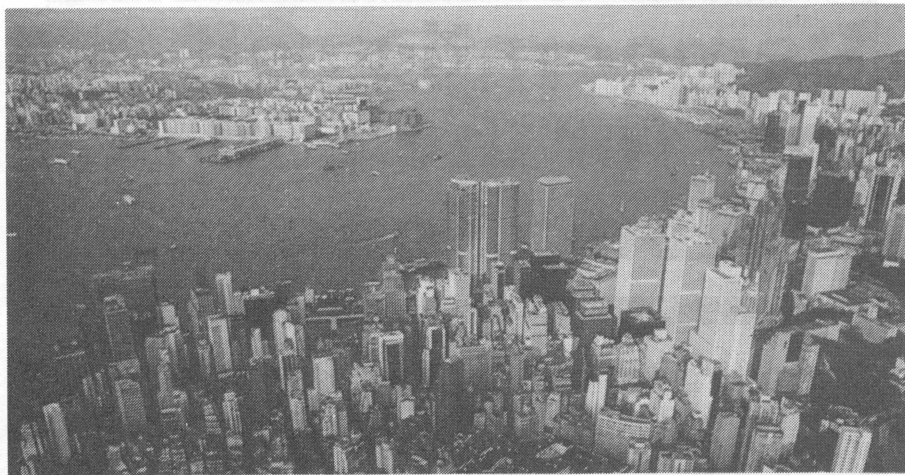
● The recent adoption by the Political System Group of the Basic Law Drafting Committee on the relationship and role of the legislative body and the executive body are in fact a reproduction of the existing political system.

6 IT CAN thus be seen that in the eyes of the Chinese authorities, their followers and their advisors, only two factors decide the future of Hong Kong and the development of the political system. The first is the Chinese government's direct intervention and final decision over Hong Kong, and the second is the interests of the big capitalists (naturally including capitalists willing to cooperate with the Chinese authorities) that in the present or the future control Hong Kong's economic veins through investments. As for the general masses, they should submit to and not confront the interests of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) bureaucrats and the capitalists.

Now, the Chinese authorities and the Hong Kong government both stress that the development of Hong Kong's political system must correspond with the related stipulations of the Sino-British Agreement. In fact, the Agreement stipulates that Hong Kong will be ruled by the British until 1997, which indicates that the Chinese government recognizes, in a disguised form, that Hong Kong will remain a British colony before 1997, and that this state of affairs corresponds to the interests of the Chinese government.

Thus, the followers of the Chinese authorities not only oppose the Hong Kong people's demand to the British to return power to the people, but also stubbornly insist that the British should maintain the colonial constitution, and they go so far as to consider that a consultative system will also violate the Sino-British Agreement. (From this can also be deduced that the Hong Kong people should not agree to the Sino-British Agreement without criticism.)

The Chinese authorities are most wor-



ried that although the "representative government" is a consultative system of fake democracy, it carries the form of the election of certain seats, hence it may stimulate among the masses greater aspirations for democracy, and the masses may gather greater momentum to the point of going beyond the deployments of the British.

In particular, when there is the opportunity of direct election of a central body, the masses may mobilize to further fight for a democratic future that corresponds with the political and economic interests of the masses. If a mass democratic movement emerges in Hong Kong, the arrangement of the Chinese authorities — the rule of Hong Kong by Beijing officials in conjunction with the big capitalists — will be disrupted. On the other hand, this will be an important stimulation to the movement for democracy launched by the masses in mainland China. The Chinese authorities do not want this.

7 A GENERAL review of the recent actions of the British and Chinese authorities shows that there exist contradictions but also common interests between them. Their contradiction is that each wants the political system in Hong Kong to develop according to its needs. However, they must also avoid any rupture, and must find a solution through secret diplomatic channels.

The British grasp this crucial relationship, and exploit the ruling power in their hands as bargaining counters to seek greater interests from the Chinese authorities. Their common interests lie in diligently safeguarding and strengthening the interests of the privileged who control Hong Kong economically. They both consider that the function of the political system is to promote, according to the constitution, a close integration between the government and those in economic rule. They both consider the masses as the ruled rather than the central force comprising society or the master to exer-

cise sovereignty of the country.

Therefore, before the Chinese authorities intend to generally and directly dominate Hong Kong, the contradictions between them have much room for compromise. On the question of containing the Hong Kong people's demand for democracy, they take the same path and sound the same tune.

8 WE APPEAL to the Hong Kong people to note that: the colonialists always view Hong Kong as a place where they seize huge profits to take away; those with more assets view Hong Kong less as their home; the British and Chinese authorities demand that the Hong Kong people submit to the interests of the investors and continue to practise a policy encroaching on the people's livelihood and suppressing democracy. Under such circumstances, only the lower and middle strata, in particular the working class, are the forces that genuinely push Hong Kong forward and lead Hong Kong to a democratic integration with the motherland.

Any policy that encroaches on the people's livelihood will eventually disrupt Hong Kong's economic prosperity and social stability. Thus, the Hong Kong people must now rise up to fight for democracy, based on the grassroot masses as the central force. They must express the demand for the democratic self-rule of the Hong Kong people when it concerns the review of the political system or the drafting of the Basic Law, and at the same time integrate the demand for democracy with a whole series of demands for improving the people's livelihood. Otherwise, the grassroot masses cannot be mobilized to build a mass democratic movement.

In summary, it is urgent that the masses be generally mobilized to rise and fight for democracy. If the opportunity is lost, the people will continue to suffer from dictatorial rule and exploitation of big capitalists, and the future government of Hong Kong will be an extension of the CCP's bur-

peaucratic rule.

9 AT PRESENT, a wave is rising in Hong Kong demanding directly elected seats in the Legco in 1988. This is stubbornly opposed by the Chinese authorities and their followers. We believe that from the angle of breaking the monopoly of power of the rulers and fighting for the right of the people's representatives to speak in a central consultative body, the fight for directly elected seats in the Legco has its positive meaning. Under the present conditions, where the people's political rights are deprived and the rulers suppress all democratic demands, the struggle insisting on direct election of the Legco in 1988 can objectively break the suppression of the rulers and promote the development of the democratic movement. Thus, we support the struggle for direct election of the Legco in 1988.

We further point out that direct election of Legco seats cannot provide an overall way out for the fight for democratic self-rule.

If the constraints of the British constitution are not broken, even if all Legco seats are directly elected, the Legco will remain a colonial representative body without real power. In practical terms, an elected consultative body can by no means take power from the British, break the control of Hong Kong by the Chinese authorities, and autonomously decide Hong Kong's system and policies according to the will of the Hong Kong people. The effect of a fight only for partial seats of the Legco to be directly elected is even more limited. Thus, the fight for direct election of the Legco can only be viewed as a tactic in promoting the realization of the democratic self-rule of the Hong Kong people. The tactic must be linked to the goal of building a political system with the people being sovereign. The tactic must not replace the goal.

10 WE BELIEVE that the practice of the democratic self-rule of the Hong Kong people means that the entire Hong Kong population exercises a high degree of self-rule, that is, exercises the power of drawing up the constitution and legislation, and the power of rule.

Only by holding the power of drawing up the constitution can Hong Kong's social, economic and political system be decided according to the will of the majority of the Hong Kong people, and can the legislation and rule correspond to the interests of the Hong Kong masses.

To genuinely exercise the above powers, a Hong Kong General Assembly,

generally elected and holding plenary powers, must be produced to hold the above powers. Otherwise, the Hong Kong people will be treated only as a target of consultation by the British and Chinese authorities.

We reiterate that the orientation of the democratic movement is to fight for the convention of a generally elected, full-powered Hong Kong General Assembly. When the Assembly is convened it will mean the end of colonial rule, and democratic self-rule of the Hong Kong people will be realized. This organ with plenary powers in Hong Kong will, according to the social condition at the time of convention and the interests and will of the people, draft, discuss and adopt the Basic Law, and define Hong Kong's social, economic and political system and policies. The Basic Law will be sent to the National People's Congress for the record.

The Chinese authorities diligently monopolized the decision over the Basic Law, and in an undemocratic way appointed a Drafting Committee whose Political System Group adopted a clause on the relationship and role of the executive body and the legislative body which is a reproduction of the existing political system. This shows that the Chinese authorities stay on the opposite side of the Hong Kong people's fight for democracy. Therefore, we call on all citizens of Hong Kong to unite and build a mass democratic movement whose axis is the struggle for the convention of a Hong Kong General Assembly. The movement's central tasks at present are:

- to widely disseminate the idea of "power to the people", of the orientation of struggle being the realization of the democratic self-rule of the Hong Kong people, and to wage a tit-for-tat struggle with the fake democracy of the British and the anti-democratic intentions of the CCP;

- to demand that the Chinese authorities concretize their promise for Hong Kong to enjoy a high degree of autonomy by having the Basic Law drafted and adopted by the Hong Kong General Assembly;

- to support the struggle of the grassroot masses to defend their rights, and point to the alternative of fighting for democracy and defending the people's livelihood;

- to support all actions against dictatorship and for democracy, and direct all partial struggles to the road of the democratic movement fight for the convention of a General Assembly.

11 WHEN negotiations between China and Britain on the future of Hong Kong took place, quite a number of political groups ap-

peared in Hong Kong. They are in fact the embryo of political parties. They have expressed ideas on the Hong Kong government's policies and on questions related to Hong Kong's present and future development (including the question of the political system). On the other hand, representatives of the bourgeoisie are also forming their political groupings. This shows that embryonic political party activities have been going on.

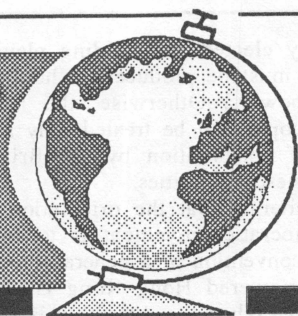
The Hong Kong government rejects the legalization of political parties, and the bourgeoisie and the Chinese authorities (with their followers) voice strong opposition to "political party politics", because they want to monopolize power and deprive the people of their political rights. Therefore, the fight for the legalization of political parties is the fight for the freedom of activity of political parties and for breaking the repression of the rulers.

Most importantly, historical experience shows that for any social class or stratum, only through political parties representing their interests can they express their needs unequivocally and fully, and gather their strength effectively to realize their aims.

In terms of the fight for democratic self-rule, the Hong Kong people urgently need the legalization of political parties so that the present and future political groups can show their political program to the people in the capacity of political parties, and the people can, by this, examine if the parties do insist on the fight for democracy, and if their proposals correspond to the interests of the grassroot masses. In this process, the people can select militants that truly represent the people.

12 THE democratic movement in Hong Kong is an important component of the struggle of the Chinese people for democracy. The democratic movements in Hong Kong and in China mutually depend on and promote each other. Since the 1976 Tian An Men Square event, the CCP crisis of rule has been worsening.¹ With the incessant struggle of the vanguards of the democratic movement and the awakening of the general masses in the mainland, a bright perspective for development has opened up for China's democratization. At the same time as the democratic movement of Hong Kong ends colonial rule, it will begin to integrate with the people of China, and together they will fight for a democratic future for the whole of China. ☆

1. The Tian An Men square riot took place on April 5, 1976. Over 100,000 workers and students spontaneously mobilized against the regime. On the struggle for democracy in China, see articles in *IV* 113, February 9, 1987.

AROUND
THE
WORLD

PORTUGAL

Elections challenge the left

FOR THE first time since the fall of the Salazar dictatorship in April 1974, a rightist party gained an absolute majority of the vote in the July 19 elections. The Social Democratic Party (PSD) headed by the premier, Cavaco Silva, got 50.5%. This result represented a major upheaval in Portuguese politics.

The PSD was able to form a minority government after the 1985 elections owing to a drop in support for the Socialist Party to 20%, which had previously oscillated between 30% and 35%. The bulk of the lost votes went to the party of President Eanes, an officer in the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), who commanded the operations against the military opposition to the Socialist Party government on November 25, 1975.

In the recent elections, the vote for Eanes' party, the PRD, dropped to 5%. The Socialist Party vote rose only slightly from 20% to 22%. But at the same time the Communist Party vote, which had long remained rather stable, dropped from 15% to 12%. The vote for the far left was approximately 2.5%, representing a slight decrease compared with the 1985 election.

Carvaco's PSD was helped in particular by two factors. The first was Portuguese membership in the EEC. This had an important psychological and ideological impact in a country where 10% of the Portuguese-born population has emigrated to EEC countries. Moreover, as the poorest member of the EEC, Portugal benefits proportionally more from community subsidies. Secondly, the fall in oil prices had a beneficial effect on the Portuguese economy.

In the same period, there was a decline in the activity of the working class. The number of strike days

dropped. And the main union confederation, the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers (CGTP), influenced by the Communist Party, showed less fighting capacity. The government's margin for maneuver was increased by the total lack of unity in action of the reformist left parties. The SP put forward a "governmental alternative" that excluded an alliance with the Communist Party. The CP, for its part, tried to decrease the weight of the SP by bringing the PRD into all anti-Cavaco negotiations.

The campaign of the Socialist Workers Party (PSR), the Portuguese section of the Fourth International, made an impact out of all proportion to the size of the organization. In the first place, electoral laws in Portugal offer equal TV and radio time to the parties. Also, since electoral politics are new to the country, they are not so frozen and the public is not so passive as in countries where bourgeois democracy has been long established.

The PSR had used its 1985 campaign to establish relations with other political activists anxious to overcome the narrow self-affirmation and pure propaganda campaigns of the other parties. United slates were also a means of expression of concrete forms of resis-

tance to the restoration of capitalist "normality" in the country.

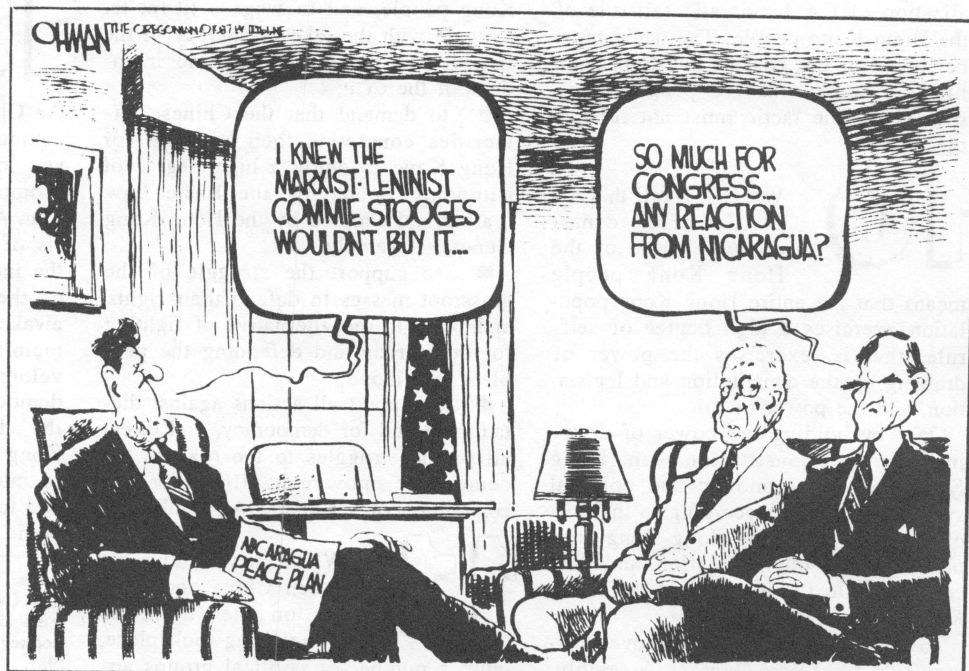
In 1987, this work led to the participation of a significant number of former leaders of revolutionary organizations on the PSR's slates, especially from the Maoist current that has dominated in the Portuguese far left. Along with activists from various political backgrounds, the PSR slates included trade-unionists holding responsible positions in the CGTP, journalists, activists in the solidarity movement, and even some well-known intellectuals, such as the writer Eduarda Dioniso and the film-maker Jorge Silva Melo.

The participation in the campaign of some of the best known actors in the country, as well as the support of major writers, reinforced the image of an open, radical, militant revolutionary opposition. In the first week of the campaign, TV audience studies gave the PSR an absolute preference of 4%, exceeded only by the SP and the PSD, and equal to that of the Communist Party.

The PSR's first TV broadcast was given over to testimony by Natercia Campos, who was imprisoned for nearly two years in relation to the trial against Otelo de Carvalho and released before that trial was finished. She was a PSR candidate, and used the campaign to expose Portugal's judicial system.

The PSR ran a bigger campaign on the ground than ever before, with innumerable rallies in factories and in the major cities. For example, PSR candidates occupied installations of the US embassy in Lisbon in solidarity with Nicaragua. The protest was also to denounce the embassy's activities, which was one of the themes of the campaign.

With the help of journalists, the PSR



IN THE USSR, it is a time of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness). You are not supposed to be afraid of the truth any more. That's official. The authorities themselves are putting up posters everywhere saying "You must not be afraid."

The press has become very interesting. Writers, film-makers and historians are having a field day. This summer, researchers in various fields who had been repudiated as "bourgeois" by Stalin were rehabilitated.

In this atmosphere, it is the most natural thing in the world that among intellectuals (and not only among them) a real determination is emerging to get back in touch with real history — the opposite of the official *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*.

An article in the September 10 issue of the Paris daily *Libération* announced that rehabilitation of Trotsky was a sure thing. The fact is that such things are still far from certainties. This was not a factual report but an interpretation of rumors, such as the one that Trotsky's grandson had been invited to Moscow (which he denied). But this impression developed against a real background of rapid changes in the cultural and political climate in the USSR.

A credibility test for glasnost

We do not of course expect any rehabilitation of Trotsky's ideas. But his re-appearance in the real history of the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s is inevitable. First of all, *glasnost* would not have much credibility if people speaking in its name continued to make historical assertions as dubious as claiming $2+2=5$.

What is more, encouraged by the official line, the truth is continuing to be brought out by layers that will remain "Gorbachevite" if Gorbachev moves forward. In other words, layers that he no longer has the political means to repress.

But if the truth has to be accepted, the men in the Kremlin want it to serve a useful purpose. An immediate effect of a rehabilitation of Trotsky, Bukharin and the entire Bolshevik old guard would be a terrible blow to the oldest and most conservative wing of the bureaucracy, the one most reluctant to accept the present changes.

There are many signs of increasing tensions with those who have based their job security and prospects on lies. At least there was order in the past, they say, while *glasnost* is leading to anarchy. The police no longer

Trotsky rehabilitated?

IS GORBACHEV preparing to rehabilitate Trotsky? Recently there has been speculation about this in the Western press, especially in France. Catherine Verla commented on it in the September 28 issue of *Rouge*, the paper of the French section of the Fourth International.

know what they are supposed to do. Cops who beat up some hippies found themselves denounced by the new Social Initiative Clubs, which carried out their own inquiry and reported the results to the press. The overzealous cops now face a court case. Suddenly, no one wanted to clobber the Tatars this summer when they held a sit-in for 25 hours in Red Square.

Following the line of Ligachev, the regime's number two, complaints are increasing that criticism should not be carried too far. *Pravda* articles have stressed that not everything that happened under Stalin should be rejected. The debate is focusing more and more on the interpretation of the 1930s, the sudden halt of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and also the purge trials.

Some are trying to find a justification in the past for Stalinism, while others are trying to find one for their more radical critique, which is necessary for reforms.

The working class for the moment is in the wings. But it is there, and it is a powerful onlooker. Its scepticism about the reforms could turn tomorrow against Gorbachev. Cultural liberalization is not the essential thing for winning the workers. But they are not unaffected, especially by the invitations to "feel masters in their own sphere." Every day, features in the

press, letters from readers, the regular TV programs on the *perestroika* report obstacles to change, reticence on the part of the workers, a daily life that is not changing much, and sometimes even changing for the worse.

Changes in agriculture and the services are most likely to improve daily life. But they are slow because they are running up against the passivity, the past and the weight of the bureaucracy. Appeals for initiative run up against fears that the pendulum can swing back. The end of the NEP, and the trials of the 1930s, still cast a shadow.

In this context, a rehabilitation, not of Bukharin alone and still less of the ideas of Trotsky, but in a more diluted way of a certain "historical legacy" of the 1920s has its advantages for the rulers. Using this to praise Lenin and his flexibility would enable Gorbachev to justify his pragmatism. At the same time, it would undermine the historical legitimacy of its immediate opponents.

Millions persecuted as "Trotskyists"

For that purpose, it is necessary to to accentuate the criticism of Stalinism but without going to the point of accepting a plurality of political organizations. It is necessary to bring Stalin's opponents and victims out of non-history, to allow them to exist again, but not too vividly. They have to be kept in the past to be used selectively to justify the present.

Trotsky's ideas on "building socialism in one country" are not, in the short term, too worrying for the Kremlin, which will continue to try to represent them as leftist. It would not be very new either to select from his writings passages that make him look like an iron-fisted bogeyman.

Much more troublesome, to be sure, are Trotsky's analyses of the bureaucracy, of Stalin and of the revolution betrayed. They are little known by the new generations, and not too dangerous as long as criticism of bureaucracy remains controlled from above.

But millions of non-Trotskyists were persecuted for "Trotskyism" in the 1930s. One of the ideological foundations of the Stalinist state was the struggle against Trotskyism. Children of that generation do not know what Trotskyism is. They want to know.

Can they be kept much longer from finding out? Gorbachev, the sorcerer's apprentice, may not have any choice in the matter. ☆

