

International VIEWPOINT

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International VIEWPOINT

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After the coup

THE Algerian establishment has responded to the victory of the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in the first round of the legislative elections (see *IV* no. 220) by cancelling the second round and setting up a military government.

On the evening of January 22 the provisional leader of the FIS, Hashani, was arrested and it is possible that political parties will be banned.

While the spectre of a fundamentalist dictatorship has been banished for the time being, that of a military dictatorship is taking shape, and the democratic window opened after the mass revolts of December 1988 is being closed. There is talk of a state of emergency.*

CHAWKI SALHI — January 23, Algiers



AT A MOMENT when the regime seemed to be preparing to use legal means — with 341 appeals about electoral malpractices being filed — to combat the FIS' success and head off a fundamentalist tide in the second round, a coup put a violent end to the electoral process.

In fact the appeals would only have allowed 12 of the 188 seats the FIS gained on December 26, 1991 to be clawed back. The army could not accept cohabitation with a fundamentalist party that it had been instrumental in repressing only the previous June. Reprisals would have been inevitable.

Events succeeded one another apace: a petition from military officers, the deployment of troops, the resignation of President Chadli, the establishment of a State Council and then the suspension of the elections.

The coup was greeted by a widespread feeling of relief. The hysterical anxiety that had seized the modernist middle layers at the prospect of a fundamentalist government gave way to satisfaction, (although it would not be possible to talk of enthusiasm; the fact that this is an anti-democratic coup d'etat cannot be hidden).

Even among the FIS's popular electorate there was relief that there were no victims; civil war had been feared. In everyday conversations you could hear a sort of renunciation of democracy and popular sovereignty; there is great confusion and no clear outcome of the crisis. The most tense are the FIS' own militants while the youth have responded to this coup that has deprived the FIS of victory with a sort of dumb anger.

No reaction should be expected from the FIS which, in the confrontations of last June (see *IV* 212), took the measure of its powerlessness in the face of the army. The order of the day in the fundamentalist camp is: "be patient, fast, pray; this is not

yet the time".

The regime is on the offensive, hoping to push the FIS into making mistakes, and now arresting their chief for calling on soldiers to follow the path of God. It seems that the military are intending to maintain some semblance of democratic forms, but they must dismantle the FIS or at least cut it down to size. In passing they want to create a party of their own that can rival the FIS. Perhaps the former ruling party, the FLN, will be buried once the FIS has been contained.

But the new government, headed by historic FLN leader Boudiaf, who has been brought back from his exile in Morocco, will lack all credibility since the ballot box has already spoken in favour of the FIS.

It is clear that the regime has simply won itself a temporary respite and that social realities will soon make themselves felt again. The FIS, or rather fundamentalism, is the moral victor of the coup which has made it the legitimate representative of the people.

The FIS' leadership has been unable to stop the coup, but after a few months, when the regime's inability to deal with the country's economic problems becomes apparent, who else but the fundamentalists are in a position to step forward as the representative of the disinherited people? ★

*Chawki Salhi is a leader of the Algerian Socialist Workers Party (PST) which is in political sympathy with the Fourth International. The articles on "What is fundamentalism?" and "How to fight fundamentalism?" were originally written before the coup d'etat of January 11/12.

The following resolution was passed by the January 1992 meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International

LIFT THE BLOCKADE ON THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ!

FOR the last eighteen months the Iraqi people have been subject to a suffocating economic blockade, which, combined with the tragic consequences of the imperialist aggression during the winter of 1990-91, has created a food and health disaster, leading to many deaths, mainly of children and old people.

The Iraqi people cannot be held responsible for the actions of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. Imperialism is forcing the Iraqi people to pay this high price on the pretext that it wants to punish their oppressive government. This shows that the so-called humanitarian aims of its aggression against Iraq hid, in reality, a will to dominate the state of Iraq, in the context of hegemony over the oil-producing regions of the Middle East.

Kuwait has been given back to an Emirate which is more reactionary than ever. Iraq's military power is completely destroyed. The state of the devastated economy has been called "apocalyptic" by the United Nations' own mission of enquiry. However, under cover of the UN Security Council, imperialism continues to try to force that country to pay reparations to its richer neighbours.

This blockade is infamous. We must demand its immediate and unconditional lifting, as well as respect for the right to self-determination for the Arab and Kurdish peoples. ★

What is fundamentalism...

ARISING first amongst the petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals of lower class origin and small traders, with the support of the traditionalist sectors of the middle bourgeoisie, fundamentalism has become a mass phenomenon.

It has become a refuge for the marginalized and disinherited masses of the cities, who, in the absence of a mass workers' party, believe that they have found a party willing to wage a radical fight on social issues and against an oppressive regime.

CHAWKI SALHI

THE banal idea that the fundamentalists are rooted in Islam is contradicted by the history of the FIS which has seen it first gain the youth politically before winning them over to religious practices. When people attribute an Islamic essence to Algerian society, they do not explain why it took until the 1980s for this essence to manifest itself on the political level.

Fundamentalism is the party of despair, drawing its strength from the apparent failure of rational solutions to the prob-

lems of humanity and the absence of any other source of hope.

Is fundamentalism fascism? Insofar as the latter term refers to something violent and repressive, then yes. But the problem is more complex if the Marxist analysis of fascism as a regime of last resort for a hard pressed capitalist ruling class is applied.

Yes, fundamentalism can introduce the qualitative change in the relation of class forces which has eluded the Algerian regime since the 1970s. It can violently reduce the average wage, abolish social benefits, close and sell off public enterprises and change the rhythms of work — all basic con-

ditions for Algeria to be integrated into the world market.

Yes, fundamentalism is accepted with a sinking feeling by a bourgeoisie which hesitates between the coup d'état and cohabitation. However, imperialism has not yet made up its mind whether to allow a regime that threatens regional stability to be crushed by the weight of the foreign debt, or to collaborate with a regime of mass terror that can rapidly carry out the International Monetary Fund's adjustment plans.

Like fascism, fundamentalism appeals to nationalism. But in the latter case it is the nationalism of a dominated and oppressed nation that finds itself too close to the European Community to develop freely. The latter will not intervene because of massacres or prohibitions; it will be the threat of the collapse of vassal regimes that will concern it.

Yes, fundamentalism intends to suppress socialist parties, as Sahnoui stated at Setif last May. Yes, it is hostile to trade unionism, since its own union, the SIT, promotes collaboration and rejects the opposition between bosses and workers. However it has not developed alongside the workers' movement, but rather in its absence as a sort of monstrous substitute. It has not forged its militia in the struggle against social protests and its night of the long knives (the elimination of fascists opposed to the rich) will be more complicated.

It is of course a mass petty bourgeois movement and draws its support from the growing mass of the declassé and rejected in a capitalist society in crisis.

Islam is not the religion of an old order confronting a democratic revolution; on the contrary it is a substitute for a national identity in the face of a colonialist and imperialist West. It is the very rise of the FIS that allows us to begin to raise the issue of the separation of religion and politics.

Fundamentalism is not fascism, even if they have certain features in common. To confuse the terms would lead to emptying the concept of fascism of all content. ★

...And how can it be fought?

THE campaign by the National Committee for the Salvation of Algeria, which mobilized the democrats against democracy, has legitimized the FIS in the eyes of its electorate. The only means to resist the establishment of a fundamentalist dictatorship is a mass mobilization for the defence of cultural and democratic gains.

CHAWKI SALHI

THE traditional recipe of revolutionaries for fighting the danger of a fascist or fundamentalist dictatorship is the workers' united front. However, in our situation this has no practical meaning. There is no mass Communist or Socialist party while trade unionism is yet to free itself from the hold of the bourgeoisie, even if one cannot say that the various leaderships of the UGTA union have always been merely adjuncts

of the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN).

Despite this absence, it remains true that the road chosen by the democrats, that is, compromise with the very regime responsible for the failure, can only swell the ranks of the fundamentalists in the long run. To defeat the fundamentalists it is necessary to win the youth of

the popular neighbourhoods away from them, while at the same time continuing the fight against liberalism and resisting the plans of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The enterprises must once again become the centre of the struggle of the oppressed; while the revolt of the marginalized neighbourhood youth will remain the strike force of that struggle, it cannot provide political leadership to the popular masses.

We are not indifferent to the prospect of the arrival in power of the FIS which would suppress our liberties. Before the recent charm offensive, we heard several times from the mouths of FIS leaders that our party would be prohibited, and even our right to live challenged. Indeed, any dissimulation of this danger in the eyes of the masses would be unpardonable.

However, to go from that to supporting the regime responsible for our despair is to abandon the people to the FIS, since the liberal economic policy will lead to ever increasing misery and thus to the growth of the fundamentalists.

The compromises between the union leaderships and the government will cost us dear, giving legitimacy to the fundamentalist trade union, the SIT. The time has come to construct a pole of reference for the trade unions as the nucleus of the union leadership needed. The idea of a militant union forum, floated in 1989 but never carried through, is the only one that would allow us to avoid the fate of setting up a tiny pseudo-union.

In time, the working class will mobilize. We have to ensure the emergence of an alternative built in struggle that can seize hegemony from the fundamentalists. ★

Increasing repression

THE Tunisian regime is facing a major economic and social crisis, to which it is responding with repression. *IV* has received this report from Rym Ben Amor, a militant of the Organization of Revolutionary Communists (OCR — Tunisian section of the Fourth International).

RYM BEN AMOR



Free Tunisian Marxists!

ON January 4, 1992, following the distribution of a leaflet from the Revolutionary Communist Organization denouncing economic austerity and the repression against the fundamentalists, 23 left wing activists were arrested in the town of Tazerouline. All were released with the exception of two members of the OCR. Three other members of this group were arrested later and tortured.

On January 15, five OCR militants (Fathi Salawi, 27 years old, a worker; Saber Saadi, 18 years old, a high school student; Mohamed Kamel Charni, 25 years old, unemployed; Imed Zoghfi, 20 years old, a student; and Habib Souili, 24 years old, a student) came before the prosecutor general who prolonged the period of their detention. They are charged with belonging to an illegal organization, distributing leaflets without authorization and threatening public security. Four other OCR members are currently being sought.

The latest news is that their trial is now set for February 6 and applications for bail have been rejected.

To protest against these arrests, write to the Minister of the Interior, Avenue Habib Bourguiba, Tunis, or send a fax to the Tunisian League of Human Rights at 216 1 79 54 66. ★

geois opposition and keep the support of the moderate opposition.

Since 1989, the police state regime has got even worse; the few democratic gains obtained after November 7, 1987³ have completely disappeared. There is no freedom of expression, and no opposition publication now appears in Tunisia. They have all been suppressed by the censorship and economic pressures. The government does not tolerate any criticism from the weak democratic opposition. ★

1. See *IV* no. 200, February 18, 1991.

2. See *IV* no. 208, June 10, 1991.

3. The date of the overthrow of Habib Bourguiba by Ben Ali, currently president of the republic.

4. Some arrests had already taken place in October 1991. See *IV* no. 216, November 11, 1991 and 218, December 9, 1991.

mentalist Ennahda movement, including 12,000 interrogations of all those linked, however loosely, with the movement. Many were subsequently imprisoned. The fundamentalist networks have been completely dismantled. In order to justify this repression the regime spread invented stories in the media about supposed coups and insurrections planned by Ennahda.²

The pretext of fundamentalism

The regime has also tried to contain the other mass movements in the name of the struggle against fundamentalism. The weak democratic opposition parties, including the Movement of Democratic Socialists (MDS) and the Progressive Socialist Assembly (RSP) — have rallied round the regime to form an anti-fundamentalist front. They have subsequently demanded their reward since, for the moment, they are not even represented in parliament — however, even these crumbs have not been granted them and the regime continues its manipulations.

Ennahda was hard hit by the repression, with all its cadres in prison or hiding. The fundamentalists are thus taking no more public initiatives or political activity. But this does not mean that they are finished. In several cities movements of support for the victims of repression exist; martyrs are being made. Each time that the fundamentalists have been subject to repression (notably in 1981 and 1987), their audience has subsequently grown. In the medium term they will once again reappear on the political scene, above all after the events in Algeria, which have a big impact in Tunisia.

Furthermore, after the announcement of the results of the first round of the legislative elections in Algeria, the regime felt obliged to announce reforms of the Tunisian electoral code to calm the bour-

THE government of Ben Ali is applying the IMF-inspired structural adjustment programme in a drastic fashion. This means a liberalization of the economy (65% of foreign trade has been privatized), price rises, of 100% in four years, privatizations involving 5,000 sackings in the past two years, and a change to the Labour Code allowing more "flexibility".

The state has abandoned certain social commitments assumed after independence. A law for the privatization of half of the country's hospitals was passed in July 1991; furthermore, the government has announced that social security cover of hospital fees will fall from 100% to 80%. Since a week in hospital costs 800 dinars, people will have to pay 100 dinars — the minimum monthly wage. This law will be introduced in a gradual manner to avoid reactions. But public hospital services have already considerably deteriorated owing to the cuts in the health budget.

The state is also encouraging the creation of private primary schools and colleges. Parliament has refused to adopt a law allowing private universities, but these already exist in practice.

Unemployment has reached 500,000 and impoverishment is widespread. Now, at the end of December 1991, the prime minister has announced that the adjustment programme had until now only been half applied but that now it will be applied fully.

Despite such measures the growth rate for 1991, forecast at 6%, was in fact only 2%.

Support for Iraq during the Gulf war was high here.¹ But after the imperialist victory the regime, which had taken up a demagogic stance during the war — with a show of support for domestic public opinion and obedience to all the UN decisions — had gained a measure of credibility when mobilizations receded. The regime took advantage of this to attack the funda-

New government, new struggles

JANUARY 1, 1992, marked the second anniversary of the introduction of a pro-capitalist reform programme in Poland, drawn up by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Known in Poland as the "Balcerowicz Plan" after the Finance Minister of the time, it has focussed on slashing workers' living standards and liquidating public sector industry in an attempt to pave the way for privatization and the imposition of the rule of private capital.

JAN SYLWESTROWICZ*

THE results of two years of IMF austerity policies have been disastrous. Average incomes are some 40% lower than two years ago. Industrial production has fallen by almost half. Savage cuts have been made in the social services: around 2,000 nursery schools and day care centres have been closed, school hours have been reduced, class sizes have risen by 50-100%, huge price increases have been introduced for medicines and fees imposed for basic health care services, while thousands of essential capital construction and modernization projects have been abandoned.

The number of jobless had reached 2,156,000 by the end of December — 11.5% — with one quarter of that number not entitled to benefit and factories announcing another 263,000 redundancies in the coming weeks. Official forecasts speak of 3-4 million unemployed by the end of 1992: this would give Poland the highest unemployment rate in Europe.

Elite steps up attacks

In fact, everything indicates that Poland's ruling elite intends to step up its attack on living standards in 1992. Faced with a huge fiscal deficit, a deepening recession and the total fiasco of plans to attract Western capital, government economic policy for the coming year boils down to mass factory closures, further social spending cuts and a virtual wage freeze in the public sector (still employing well over 80% of the urban labour force).

Proclaimed as the most advanced and ambitious project of "market restructuring" in Eastern Europe, the Polish programme of capitalist reform has proved a complete disaster.

It is in this context that the beginning of January saw the beginning of a mass fightback by Polish workers, directed

the IMF.

The first signs of a new radicalization in the Polish workers' movement were already apparent in mid-December when a new rightwing coalition government was finally formed after almost two months of infighting amongst the 26 parties elected to parliament in the elections of October 27, 1991 (characterized by an abstention rate of almost 60%).

The new government of Jan Olszewski, supported by the right and the extreme right, was sworn in at a time when militant struggles were beginning in many parts of Poland. In Lodz, Poland's second city and the centre of the textile industry, factory occupations were under way in two major plants. The aviation industry was also the scene of protests, with an occupation of the huge WSK Mielec helicopter factory. More limited protest actions were being undertaken by shipyard workers, teachers and car workers.

Government hopes for "grace period"

The new Olszewski government, declaring that it intended to "amend" the economic policies of the last two years, believed it would be granted the same "grace period" as the two post-Solidarnosc governments that preceded it.

In particular, it laid great stress on its policy of "de-Communization" hoping to capitalize on the anti-Stalinist sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the Polish working class that had allowed the previous two "Solidarnosc" governments to push through viciously anti-worker policies by masquerading as the conquerors of Stalinism.

The new government made a series of miscalculations. Firstly, it believed that it could still legitimize itself by reference to the Solidarnosc mass movement and opposition to "Communism".

In fact, Polish workers are increasingly hostile to the elites which have taken power under the banner of Solidarnosc and the bureaucratic apparatus of the Solidarnosc trade union itself¹, whose official policy over the last two years has been one of "maintaining a protective umbrella" around the "Solidarnosc" governments to allow them to implement market reforms.

As regards the policy of "de-Communization" this now holds little water — it was the main plank in Lech Walesa's presidential campaign over a year ago, yet nothing has actually been done to break the power of the ex-Stalinist apparatus in the army, police and civil service, and still less to challenge the new economic power of the former Stalinist economic apparatus, today by far the most influential group of private capital in Poland, and a major bulwark of capitalist restoration.

The new government's second mistake was to commit itself immediately to continuing the most unpopular economic measures planned by its predecessor, in the name of "deepening" the market reforms — this represented a gross miscalculation of the popular mood and dispelled illusions that the new government's "amendments" to economic policy would reverse the trend in plummeting living standards.

Enormous price rises declared

Specifically, the government declared an enormous rise in electricity, gas and heating prices, to take effect from January 1, 1992. The effect of this price rise will be to increase the price of most consumer goods and foodstuffs by 25-40%.

Finally, the new Olszewski government chose first to ignore the most important single struggle which erupted at the close of 1991, the hunger strike at Poland's biggest industrial plant, the Nowa Huta steelworks (see accompanying article) and then, as support for the steelworkers mounted throughout Poland, to surrender frantically to their demands in an effort to appease public opinion.

In reality, the government's backtracking on the issue of the Nowa Huta steelworks was recognized as an indication that mass action could win, that the time for determined workers protests had returned, that the tide of the last two years could, after all, be reversed.

The Nowa Huta steelworkers, fighting to prevent planned mass redundancies, achieved their victory on January 6, after a 15-day hunger strike, supported by classic strikes in the steelworks itself and solidarity strikes in other plants. In the final days of the hunger strike, it had become the major domestic news item in the Polish media — and the effects of the workers'

* Jan Sylwestrowicz is a member of the Revolutionary Left Current (NTS) and an editor of the Warsaw-based Trotskyist paper *Dalej!* ("Onwards!").

victory were immediate.

Two days later, on January 8, the Solidarnosc trade union commission for the textile industry met in Lodz, attended by delegates from 46 textile plants throughout Poland.

The situation of the Polish textile industry is dramatic — in Lodz, the biggest textile centre in Poland, over 90% of plants are already technically bankrupt. Unemployment in the city is soaring, and in the first week of January Lodz saw the first spontaneous mass protest march of the unemployed.

Following the example of Nowa Huta, the Solidarnosc textile commission supported the decision of local textile workers to declare a hunger strike, demanding government intervention to guarantee wage payouts in insolvent factories and check unemployment. In the next few days, the Lodz hunger strikers were joined by textile workers from several other towns.

The example of the Nowa Huta strikers and the popular outrage at the energy price rises triggered individual strikes and factory occupations at many plants in the following days. For the first time, this also included factories owned by domestic or foreign private capital.

Workforce takes owner hostage

In one privately owned clothing plant in Lower Silesia, the female workforce not only occupied the factory, but also took the owner hostage — he had to be freed 36 hours later by local Solidarnosc bureaucrats.

Meanwhile, the government decision to raise energy prices was also condemned by the leaderships of all the Polish trade union federations. Aside from the economic hardship caused by the price increases, the new government, in its arrogance, had also broken the law — Polish law still declares that all price rises of this kind must first be subject to a process of consultation with the trade unions, a point which the government had blithely ignored.

Under pressure from the spontaneous wave of strikes, the leaderships of both Solidarnosc and the OPZZ unions called for protest action. Coordinated action was begun:

- The first major protest took place in Gdansk, where the regional section of Solidarnosc organized a one-hour stoppage on January 8;

- Beginning on January 9, teachers held a series of one-day strikes in various regions of Poland;

- On January 13, a national one-day strike was organized by Solidarnosc, which was supported at factory level by the other unions.

The strike was a huge success in many plants, the one-hour stoppage actually lasted the whole day, demonstrations were

held and many local demands were added to the general demand for the rescinding of the energy price increase. It is estimated that 90% of Polish industrial enterprises took part — for example, only four of the 84 coal mines did not stop work:

- On January 15, an additional one-day strike was held in all Polish aviation factories;

- On January 16, a national day of action called by both the OPZZ and Solidarnosc-80 federations resulted in strikes, demonstrations (20,000 at a Solidarnosc-80 demonstration in the port city of Szczecin) and protest marches in most Polish cities — in some, this strike was also supported by local organizations of Solidarnosc.

At the time of writing, the result of the protest against the energy price increases is not known. The Solidarnosc trade union has threatened a national general strike if the price increases are not revoked, while also suggesting that negotiations with the government could perhaps yield a compromise solution.

Local strikes are continuing and multiplying. Nevertheless, the Polish trade union movement as a whole remains divided and incapable of coordinating systematic protest action.

With very few exceptions there has been no attempt to generalize the lessons of the last few weeks and organize inter-union structures committed to fighting for a general rejection of the government's restorationist policies.

Need to protect the state sector

This is despite the fact that workers in more and more factories are raising more general demands that could serve to unify and give direction to the movement — in this respect, a particularly notable feature of the new workers' movement has been the frequent emphasis on the need to protect the state sector of industry against attempts to kill it off by discriminatory taxation and pressure to sell off assets at rock-bottom prices to any buyer that can be found.

While the bureaucratic leaderships of the union federations attempt to concentrate attention on the "illegality" of the most recent price rises, a general theme running through workers' demonstrations has become opposition to the government programme of privatization, seen as a policy that serves only to enrich the combined elites of the old Stalinist bosses and their post-Solidarnosc successors, while leading to a dismantling of large sectors of Polish industry and mass unemployment. So far, however, these sentiments have yet to find the political and organizational expression required.

Nonetheless, the organizational weakness of the new workers' movement, reflecting the overall political disorienta-

tion that has resulted from the last two years of "Solidarnosc" governments, is one that may rapidly be overcome as mass struggles develop against the concrete effects of the government's restorationist policies.

Moreover, the possibility of victories being won that would aid the rise of a newly conscious workers' movement is strengthened by the growing division and disarray of Poland's ruling elites.

The government, visibly stunned by the scope of workers' protests over the last two weeks, has only been capable of declaring that the strikes are "pointless" and warning that, if they continue, it will be forced to resign.

President Lech Walesa, who has declared several times over the last months that, if mass workers' protests were to break out, he would "take his place" at the head of them, now seems completely at a loss.

Walesa senses new radicalization

Walesa was in fact the first of Poland's leaders to sense the beginnings of the new radicalization, at the end of November. His response then was to propose a series of constitutional amendments which would greatly increase the powers of the presidential palace (allowing him, for example, to appoint the prime minister and cabinet) and permit the government to rule by decree.

These amendments are still being discussed by a special parliamentary commission. Since then, Walesa has come into sharp personal conflict with the key partners of the new government coalition over the respective powers of the president and the government, and has been hinting that he may be forced to launch a new political formation (up until now, he has tried to manoeuvre between the existing parties and is not himself directly connected to any). Meanwhile, opinion polls show that if the 1990 presidential elections were to be rerun today, Walesa could expect only 20% of the vote.

An even more interesting result was that of a poll organized even before the one-day protests held by Solidarnosc and the other unions. Given a choice of various measures that could be taken "if things do not improve over the coming period", almost 30% of respondents selected "organizing a general strike." ★

1. There are currently three main union federations in Poland: Solidarnosc, which claims a membership of 2,500,000; the OPZZ (the official union movement set up under martial law, still controlled by its original Stalinist leadership), which claims a membership of 4,500,000; and Solidarnosc-80, a radical split-off from Solidarnosc ("80" is a reference to the old Solidarnosc union established after the August 1980 strikes) which claims a membership of 250,000, and is the only one of the three that claims to be still growing. All of these figures are most probably substantially inflated. By comparison Solidarnosc had over 10 million members in 1980-81.

Steelworkers score victory

AN important role in triggering January's wave of protest action in Poland was played by an exemplary struggle at the Nowa Huta steelworks in Cracow. Although the number of workers at Nowa Huta has declined by several thousand over the last few years, it still remains Poland's single largest industrial plant, with a workforce of 26,000.

However, government plans to streamline the Polish steel industry, with the abandonment of pig iron production at Nowa Huta, would mean the loss of 6-10,000 jobs almost immediately, and of around 15,000 when the restructuring process is completed.

JAN SYLWESTROWICZ

PROTESTS began at the steelworks in early November, organized by the local branch of the Solidarnosc-80 trade union.

On December 7, two of the plant's largest shops struck for three days, the strike finally being sabotaged by activists from the "official" Solidarnosc union, whose leader at the plant, M. Gil, is also a parliamentary deputy and one of Lech Walesa's closest associates. Nevertheless, stoppages of one to two hours duration continued throughout December.

On December 23, faced with the point-blank refusal of management and government to discuss changes in their plans for the steelworks, the leaders of the strike committee decided to launch a hunger strike to last throughout the Christmas period and beyond — until the threat of mass redundancies was lifted.

No official reaction to hunger strike

Initially, the hunger strike provoked no official reaction, although workers' support gathered quickly. Inside the steelworks itself, a "rolling" system of work stoppages accompanied the hunger strike, with at least one or two shops refusing to work on each shift.

Solidarity strikes were held by several other plants in Cracow. Moreover, the steelworkers' determination was apparent, and as hunger strikers were hospitalized, other workers left the shop floor to take their place.

By the beginning of January, messages of support were coming in to the strike committee from various parts of Poland, and union activists from other plants were

visiting the Nowa Huta steelworks to fast themselves for two to three days to demonstrate their sympathy. By January 4, a number of mines and steelworks in Upper Silesia had threatened to stop work or hold hunger strikes of their own if the Nowa Huta workers' demands were not met.

At this point, the government finally took fright, and Prime Minister Jan Olszewski met the national leader of Solidarnosc-80, Marian Jurezyk, on January 6, acceding to the strikers' main demands and guaranteeing that pig iron production at Nowa Huta would continue, while the government would provide official guarantees for credits to purchase new process plant for the steelworks.

A victory of tremendous significance

The workers' victory at Nowa Huta is of tremendous significance. It represents the first time the government has given in to workers' demands in over two years of market reforms.

It also represents the first victorious struggle against mass redundancies, which is of particular importance in Poland today. Small wonder, then, that the strike has had such a broad effect on workers' combativity throughout Poland.

One reason for the strike's success lay in its democratic organization cutting across union lines, with strike committees being elected in shops by all the workers employed regardless of union affiliation. Thus members of "official" Solidarnosc and the OPZZ took part in the stoppages and also in the hunger strike itself, although the strike was denounced by the

bureaucracies of both unions (among other things, Solidarnosc officials branded the strikers as "revolutionaries", "anarcho-syndicalists" and so on).

The strike was also denounced by the local Catholic hierarchy in Cracow, with priests refusing the invitation of Catholic participants in the hunger strike to visit them over Christmas.

In the context of the tasks today confronting the Polish trade union movement, which faces major difficulties in recapturing the militancy and mass democracy which characterized Solidarnosc at the time of the Polish revolution of 1980-81, the Nowa Huta struggle offers many lessons.

It is symbolic in this respect that the chairman of the hunger strikers, Andrzej Szewczuwaniec, also led the strike at Nowa Huta in May 1988, which was the first of the wave of strikes that finally forced the Stalinist government to organize the Round Table and re-legalize Solidarnosc (Szewczuwaniec is also Cracow correspondent of the Polish Trotskyist paper *Dalej!*).

Thus, those who led the struggle for the recognition of Solidarnosc at factory level are now, after two years of brutal austerity implemented by "Solidarnosc" governments, taking action against the old leaders that betrayed them.

Workers draw lessons of strike

The steelworkers themselves are drawing the lessons of the strike. The strike committee has been kept in place to monitor the fulfillment of government promises and organize further action if necessary.

The strike bulletin is also being continued, and the January 16 day of action held by Solidarnosc-80 saw a march of 2,000 steelworkers from the plant gates into the centre of the city. Delegations from the Nowa Huta strikers have also been touring other plants in Poland to explain the course of their struggle and discuss the next steps to be taken by Polish trade unionists.

In an interview for *Dalej!*, the spokesman for the Nowa Huta strikers, Marek Kucia, assessed the strike thus: "The fact that we resorted to such a dramatic form of protest should be seen in a more general context — our struggle was part of the general struggle to force the government to abandon its anti-worker policies. We won and this is a sign that Polish workers are now overcoming the apathy of the past two years."

Another hunger striker, steelworker Krzysztof Jez, echoed a feeling which is being expressed more and more often throughout Poland: "The fact is, nothing has changed. The Round Table talks were a sell-out. The same people are still running the country, with the same policies in their own private interests; they've just

A hot winter in Hungary?

THE last quarter of 1991 has seen an enormous build up of tension within the social and political life of Hungary. Last summer many people talked about a coming "hot autumn", but in fact not much happened in terms of class conflicts. Now it seems as if the autumn had been a period of preparation, for the government, the opposition and for labour as well.

LASZLO ANDOR

THE previous attempts by the ruling coalition to concentrate increased power in their hands led to protests by the liberal intelligentsia in the form of a Democratic Charter, which summarized how the government was threatening basic civil rights.

The Charter did not have much impact until Prime Minister József Antall sacked the president of the National Bank of Hungary, György Surányi. The reason was, as the Prime Minister explained on TV, that Surányi had signed the Charter, and no government could allow a high official to sign an opposition document. The new head of the central bank was Péter Akos Bod, the former Minister for Trade and Industry and a loyal aide of Antall, who had participated in the formulation of the economic policy of the ruling Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) since 1985.

A wonderful advertisement

The prime minister's step proved to be a wonderful advertisement for the Charter. A few weeks later it had been signed by over 4,000 people and a mass meeting had been organized in the overcrowded lobby of the Budapest council offices.

But Surányi is not the only person to be sacked recently. Two deputy state secretaries from the foreign ministry, who had held office before the coming of the present government, were replaced, leading to the resignation of the foreign minister, another professional diplomat, Ferenc Somogyi.

However the mainstream of the ruling coalition have not had their fill of retaliation against those who were Communists, or who had served under the "ancien regime". Amidst the collapse of the East European economy under IMF control and the prioritization of privatization, they are wholly unable to provide better living standards. They thus need to hold up the severed heads of those alleged to be responsible for the suffering — the

Communists or "those who obstruct the systemic change."

The retaliation which is being prepared can be completely legal. The parliament has already passed an act which suspends the time lapse for those guilty of major crimes (participation in mass murder, treason or violence leading to death) committed between 1945 and 1989. The promoters of the act want to put on trial some former soldiers of the AVH (the Hungarian equivalent of the KGB that existed between 1948 and 1956) and some old politicians like 83-year old György Marosán, who was a trade unionist and social democrat before 1948, played a significant role in the unification of the two workers' parties, and spent six years in the prisons of Hungary's Stalinist leader Rákosi before becoming a vice-leader of Kádár's new party and retiring in 1962.

János Dénes, an independent MP and formerly an MDF and workers council activist, announced that he wanted to see Marosán hanged as soon as possible. The chairman had to point out that the death penalty has been abolished in Hungary. The same MP has also announced that he will put forward a bill in January to declare the MSZMP (one of the successors of the Communist Party, not represented in parliament) illegal and nationalize all its property. This time the chairman had to warn him that since the MSZMP operates according to the constitution it cannot be banned.

Shock TV debate

Another shock was provided by a televised debate between the leaders of the parliamentary fractions of the two main parties, Imre Kónya of the MDF and Iván Pétö of the opposition SZDSZ (Free Democrats). Kónya argued that Communists had to be dealt with as fascists, and massive retaliation must go on, because this was required by the nation. As evidence he showed how he could whip up the blood lust of the audience, mainly

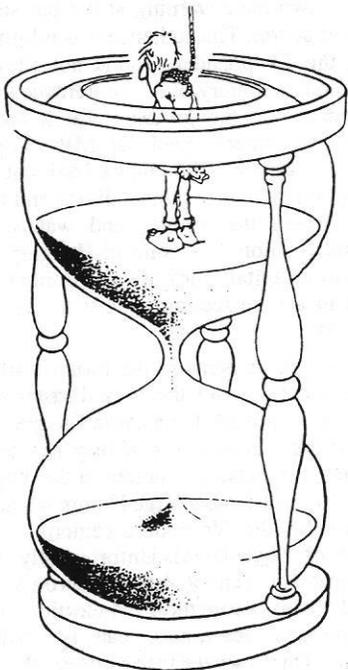
MESSAGES of support and donations to the steelworkers' strike fund, and messages from labour movement organizations demanding the reinstatement of Marek Kucia should be sent to: NSZZ Solidarnosc-80, Budynek "S" pokoj 110, Huta im. T. Sendzimira, Nowa Huta, Cracow, Poland.

taken over property rights. And instead of the CRZZ [the official Stalinist trade union federation prior to 1980] we now have Solidarnosc."

As regards what will have to be done to reverse the trend of the last two years, Ryszard Majdzinski, regional chairman of Solidarnosc-80 in Cracow, says: "we need to go back to the beginning and organize from the bottom up. Workers need to start organizing themselves again, throughout the country, to defend their own interests."

One demand of the Nowa Huta strikers remains unsatisfied, however. Contrary to earlier assurances, the plant management have refused to reinstate the hunger strikers' spokesperson, Marek Kucia, who was forced out of the steelworks in September 1991. Kucia, who has been politically active since the end of the 1970s, when he was involved in the democratic opposition to Stalinism before the emergence of Solidarnosc, has been told he will not be reinstated due to his union activity.

His department in the plant is therefore threatening another strike. It is hardly surprising that the steelworkers have maintained their strike committee and are preparing for new struggles. ★





invited by the 12th district MDF organization, a government stronghold in Budapest. This "Kónya Horror Show" was broadcast twice, just to make sure.

Iván Pétó has recently resigned from the leadership of the fraction, because the November congress of the SZDSZ elected Péter Tölgyessy as party president. Tölgyessy is a representative of the right wing elected by those who were not satisfied with the social-liberal behaviour of the party's founders such as Pétó or former president János Kis. Tölgyessy wants the party to be more patriotic and have better relations with the Church, meaning that under his leadership the SZDSZ will try to gain popularity not by being different from but by being similar to the MDF.

Competition on the right

This leadership change is probably the beginning of a new competition for the position of the most right-wing party between the MDF and the SZDSZ. In 1990 the SZDSZ came across as the most anti-Communist and thus came close to beating the MDF. Now the latter has much stronger positions which means that the decline of the SZDSZ will continue. Their shift to the right meanwhile will lead the Socialists (former CP) to abandon their expectations of making an alliance with the Liberals.

In December, the MDF also held their congress and elected Defence Minister Lajos Für to be the party no. 2 under Antall. Für belongs to the centre of the party and his promotion may represent an attempt by the moderate groups in the party to counter-balance the far right offensive of Kónya. It is also possible that the promotion of the defence minister is a response to the war taking place in neighbouring Yugoslavia.

In the parliamentary debate on the bud-

get for 1992, Finance Minister Mihály Kup promised a significant decrease in inflation and an end to the decline in production and real wages. Heads of the National Bank forecast single digit inflation for 1993 which could result in the national currency, the forint, becoming fully convertible.

It was indeed high time to promise something. The year that has just ended brought destruction reminiscent of war time to the people of Hungary. GDP declined by 5 to 6%, with a drop of more than 10% in industrial production — a rerun of 1990. Inflation rose to nearly 40% after reaching 29-30% the previous year. The really dramatic change, however, was in unemployment, which had reached 400,000 at the end of 1991, a fourfold increase on the previous year, an increase from 2 to 8% of the workforce. There are, as always, regional differences: The north eastern region is suffering unemployment twice as high as the national average.

The sharp decline in real wages has meant the collapse of purchasing power and a crisis of the domestic market. Retail trade fell by 20% in real terms. Despite significant price cuts at the end of the year, many shops suffer from lack of buyers, especially because people on low incomes do their shopping in the black and gray markets of the underpasses and outskirts.

But the other side of the coin are government attempts to promote the enrichment of their potential or actual voting base. Privatization has been exposed to tremendous criticism, but it is still taking place faster here than anywhere else in the region — let alone in comparison to the "case by case" privatization seen in Britain in the 1980s. Compensation payments for nationalized property will begin soon. Some 335,000 people have submitted claims to the Compensation Office, which has to process these demands. The 1992 budget has promised 1.6 billion forints for the operation of this office, while only 1.2 billion are earmarked for employment policies.

As a response to government policy, the major trade union federations announced a two-hour warning strike for December 17. On the one hand this was a reaction to increasing pressure from the rank-and-file on the union leaders. On the other it was an answer to the government, which has refused to take collective bargaining forums seriously.

Unions regain self-confidence

The strike is also an expression of the regained self-confidence of the major unions after the attack represented by the anti-union laws passed in July. The 1.2 million member MSZOSZ held its congress in November, and re-elected Sándor Nagy leader with 99% of the vote. Nagy

has been under attack by the government and the liberal media because he was a leader of the Communist youth in the 1970s, but this election has greatly increased his authority. Steelworkers, transport workers and miners, all MSZOSZ affiliated unions, represented the hard core of the December strike.

According to the first balance sheet of the strike, some 200-250,000 workers took part in the strike proper, and approximately 250-300,000 took part in rallies at the same time. Retired workers organized their own meetings to express their solidarity, and on trams and buses in the cities one could read that public transport workers agreed with the demands of the strikers and supported the MSZOSZ. After the strike Sándor Nagy announced that if the government did not change its attitude, MSZOSZ would call for a one or two day national strike at the beginning of 1992.

Militancy of teachers

The teachers' union is undoubtedly one of the most militant. Last autumn they organized a conference of 22 indebted countries against the World Bank's education programmes. This institution had made proposals for education cuts and some privatization of the school system to the Hungarian government. As the Minister of Education acknowledged at the conference, the three main pieces of advice were: 1. To abolish state subsidies to nursery schools; 2. to abolish afternoon schooling and; 3. to cut the number of teachers. The circulation of the material produced for the conference has helped many people to understand whose government this is.

At the Left Alternative's third trade union forum several workers expressed their view that what was needed was not just a two-hour warning strike but some harder action. The audience was informed that the TV president would not allow a one hour summary of the conference to be broadcast on the grounds that it had a political content. Socialist MPs Magda Kovács and Pál Filló emphasized that the government was playing a divide and rule game with the unions, and wanted to create a union free zone in Hungary for Western capital. They are also doing their best to arouse feeling against the unemployed.

Some participants in the forum warned that fascism is not the only disaster that can be expected from Antall's government; there is also war, if they decide to seize the opportune moment in the Yugoslav crisis (there is a large Hungarian population in the Vojvodina region in the north of Yugoslavia). Unfortunately, the government cannot be overthrown by legal means before the 1994 elections, but its political legitimacy can be undermined. This is what has to be done. ★

The loneliness of the long-distance runner

ARE WE approaching the zero option? Are war communism or a subsistence economy short-term inevitabilities in Cuba? And if so how did this situation come about? The Fourth Congress of the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) gave no answer to this question.

Fidel Castro, however, gave his answer in passing: "We enter a very hard and difficult battle in a situation into which we have been thrown — for it is, after all, not we who have put ourselves in this situation; we are in no way guilty of everything which has happened — this excellent "joke" that has been played on us by our friends of the socialist camp, which can no longer even be called a socialist camp, but a collapsed socialist camp.

"In fact, I no longer like to speak of collapse, for it seems to me that for something to collapse it has to have previously been solid... rather than collapse I prefer to speak of softening... But I would add that this softening is transient: the innocents have been badly beaten and it is necessary to begin again."¹

JANETTE HABEL

THE ambiguity of the metaphor is revealing: what kind of softening is being talked about? The explanation is rather brief. In reality, Castro is paying today for his blindness towards the former self-styled socialist camp.

Certainly Cuba is not responsible for what has happened in Eastern Europe and there was not — and is not — any autonomous road for a small dependent Third World country whose development has been stunted and deformed over several decades and three quarters of whose economy is dependent on the sale of sugar.

Serious analysis of tensions needed

But a serious analysis of the political and social tensions of the countries of Eastern Europe would have allowed a grasp of the risks involved in relying on the unshakable stability of economic exchanges with the "socialist camp" or on its political fidelity.

Such an assessment could have led to production and trade diversification, even if only for certain imported food products, with the aim of reducing dependence, even in a limited fashion. Because they were not undertaken sooner, these measures are being applied today under catastrophic conditions.

It is not a question of dreaming up miraculous solutions *a posteriori*. Cuba

served as a sugar reserve for the whole of Comecon — all the more so because the cost of production of beet sugar is higher than that of cane sugar — and benefited in return from substantial quantities of oil supplied at an advantageous price.

The dramatic consequences of the halt in Soviet oil deliveries in December 1991² and the uncertainties about 1992, in spite of the agreement announced with the Russian federation, are the proof of it.

Greater self-sufficiency possible

But the extension of the areas devoted to cane cultivation could have been limited to some degree to allow a diversified agricultural production assuring a greater self-sufficiency in food³; the priority given today to food production goes exactly in this direction, but, as Aurelio Alonso, deputy director of the Centre of American Studies⁴ in Cuba, stresses, it should have been implemented sooner to reduce the dependence on imported products. The more lucid Cubans ask why it was necessary to wait 32 years to do what is being done today, in the midst of crisis.

Neither Fidel Castro nor the Fourth Congress have given any reply to this question: to know when and why the "innocents" of October 1917 have collapsed, a balance sheet of Stalinism would have to be drawn.

The CCP congress adopted six resolutions and elected a profoundly changed leadership. Of the six resolutions, three concern the party itself, dealing with the statutes, the programme and the exceptional powers accorded to the central committee.

The three others deal with economic orientation, the functioning of the Organs of Popular Power (OPP) and foreign policy.

The congress ratified the existence of the single party, henceforth defined as the "party of the Cuban nation, Martiist [from the name of José Martí, poet and hero of Cuban independence], Marxist and Leninist."

To overcome the contradiction between the two concepts — the party of the entire nation can only with difficulty be reconciled with the single party — two changes have been made to the former statutes: one concerns the henceforth accepted adhesion of religious believers, the other, more significant, changes the old monolithic conception and affirms the necessity of reconciling "conscious discipline with the broadest internal democracy" through "respecting the plurality of internal points of view" and accepting that minority opinions can be maintained and defended.

This relaxing of the rules was not however accompanied by rights of organization for minorities.

Concessions to believers made

The only concession to organized pluralism concerns religious believers of all confessions in the name of "the project of national unity of the revolution".

The non-institutional character of the *santería*, the Afro-Cuban religious practices, cannot provoke conflicts: it is different with the Catholic church whose long discredited hierarchy has made a turn and enjoys a certain autonomy thanks to its international links with the Vatican. But the number of Catholics remains less than the followers of *santería*.

The discussion of the statutes allowed some sensitive themes to be touched on: the "exemplary character" of the party members and the policy of cadres.

The "exemplary" nature of the party members was a recurrent theme in the discussions: It is obvious that privileges — even minimal ones — are strongly resented by the people given the difficulty of the current situation.

Many speakers insisted on the fact that the leading role accorded to the party was not compatible with personal emoluments;

1. Fidel Castro, speech on November 17, 1991, *Granma Internacional* November 24, 1991. See also IV 205 and 214.

2. See article by Janette Habel in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 1991.

3. See Denise Douzant-Rosenfeld, *Problèmes d'Amérique latine*, second quarter 1991, La Documentation française.

4. See Aurelio Alonso, *ALAI*, September 1991.



the sons of some leaders were criticized in this respect. Cadre policy, meanwhile, is the source of numerous tensions: inexplicable changes, arbitrary promotions and sudden dismissals are part of the bureaucratic methods inherent in a single monolithic party which is beginning, for the first time, to be timidly criticized in the light of the events in Eastern Europe.

In the same way, the necessary separation between the state and administrative organisms, on the one hand, and the political and mass organizations, on the other, is beginning to be applied.

Implicit and timid discussion

In an implicit and very timid fashion, the discussion has started on the balance sheet of the functioning of the CCP since its first congress in 1975.

The drafting of the statutes, which should be worked out by the new central committee within a year, will allow an evaluation of the depth of the challenges to the dysfunctions "copied" from the USSR.

The most aware cadres in the leadership are well aware of the need for more radical change, but they come up against the political and social interests of powerful sectors of the apparatus: taking account of the gravity of the situation of the country, it is illusory to think that big reforms will take place in the short term. It is because of this that the congress has mandated the central committee to decide what changes to implement later.

The most spectacular measure concerns the full powers accorded to the leadership, sanctioned by a specific resolution which

gives "exceptional powers to the central committee so that it can in certain cases adopt the necessary political and economic decisions in relation to the situations which may confront the country, and in other cases promote legislation and state initiatives so as to attain the supreme objective of saving the country, the revolution and socialism."

This resolution is immediately applicable and changes the competence of the national conference of the CCP, an authority which can be convoked between two congresses "to deal with important

affairs of Party policy".

Indeed, henceforth, this conference "will have the power to make changes in the composition of the central committee, incorporating new members onto this body as well as freeing others according to necessity. The number of participants, the manner of their election, the rules of preparation and of the holding of the national conference will be established by the central committee."⁵

These arrangements are all the more significant if one takes into account the fact that over 50% of the leadership of the party was renewed during the congress. It is difficult to evaluate exactly the real significance of this inasmuch as the debates and internal divergences in the leadership are kept strictly secret.

One thing is certain: given the gravity of the crisis the country is going through, the central committee has full powers: if its use of them is not satisfactory — and who can decide that if not Fidel Castro himself — its composition can if necessary be changed without the holding of a congress.

The changes introduced on the organizational plane contrast with the poverty of the resolution on programme presented by Roberto Robaina (secretary of the Young Communists and a new member of the Political Bureau).

Since the central committee has been mandated to draw up the future programme, the text approved by the congress has only limited interest.

It renders the text adopted in 1986, during the third congress, absolutely obsolete "because so far as the concrete conditions of the transition to socialism in Cuba are

concerned, [that] programme does not correspond to the concepts developed in the context of the process of rectification of errors and negative tendencies starting from April 19, 1986."

The is a somewhat surprising remark inasmuch as the announcement of the process of rectification had been made — in typical Castroite manner — outside of the congress to be ratified during the second session of the third congress.

Among the baroque criticisms made of the former programme, the most significant concern "the strategic danger to the revolution that would be represented by... the conception and the application of certain economic mechanisms... of a technocratic character which rendered purely formal the political work and action of the revolutionary vanguard"⁶. In other words, the role of the party was minimized.

The resolution reiterates its condemnation of the system of economic leadership followed since 1976, because "it appealed in an excessive manner to personal incomes and money"; however these "capitalist mechanisms" condemned by Castro are being reintroduced today in the context of the new economic policy.

But the rectification process is given credit for "the break with the mediocre practices of bureaucratic planning, the waste of resources, the gigantism of projects, the waste, the importer mentality" and the former system of economic leadership is blamed for "the delay in the construction of housing and of crèches, the underestimation of voluntary labour" which would be typical of a technocratic conception.

A veritable pot-pourri

All these ambiguities make the resolution a veritable pot-pourri of contradictory and short-term recipes. One of the issues at stake in the debates on economic orientation is the repartition of prerogatives between the party and the managers (the "technocrats") who demand less interference from the apparatus and the first secretary and more powers.

Defeated at the third congress, the partisans of reform now see their abilities recognized thanks to the adoption of the new economic orientation.

It is true that, as an ultimate precaution, the four last lines of the resolution on programme recall the will of the people "to be implacable with those who capitulate and those who betray, to annihilate the pretensions of the enemy to reestablish capitalism in Cuba".

On the economic plane the definitions adopted by the congress are clearer: the new economic policy, imposed by international circumstances and by the resulting internal disruption, breaks implicitly with the premisses of the rectification process adopted by the preceding congress.

The development of mixed enterprises, the acceptance of privatization of artisanal

activities with the notable exception of the free peasant markets, the appeal to foreign capital for the relaunching of production in factories paralyzed by lack of raw materials or fuel and the commercialization agreements are to gradually fill the immense vacuum left by the collapse of exchanges with Comecon, reorientate foreign trade and reorganize a country confronted with a dilemma analogous to that of the 1960s: how to reconvert an economy suddenly deprived of energy sources.

This question is not only economic but social and political. Supposing that the new economic policy has a certain success, in other words supposing that Latin American (whose status is privileged) or European capital really develop; this could only increase social differentiations and inequalities: already, the development of tourism has revived foreign currency trafficking and the black market.

As Aurelio Alonso puts it: "There is not just a black market in currency in Cuba, but a trade fed by everything which is lacking, in particular the rationed products... Most of the imported products which circulate are not bought in foreign currency but resold in Cuban pesos after having been bought in a diplomatic or tourist shop. The trade in foreign currency is inserted in this informal market which is very much more significant".⁷

How is such a situation, which generates significant social tensions, going to be understood by a people used to a very egalitarian tradition? How are the inevitable antagonisms going to be resolved?

The question of the functioning and above all the powers of the OPP, their articulation with the CCP and the independence of the mass organizations were at the centre of the debates at the congress, but nothing essential has changed.

Election of deputies

The decisions taken concerning the forms of election of deputies to the Popular National Assembly should in principle be concretized in the course of 1992: they imply constitutional changes which are to be decided by the national assembly.

But this latter, which met in December 1991, has still adopted nothing: the difficulties are indeed considerable. Pluralist electoral forms, in the framework of the OPP and resting on the support of the masses, could have been introduced in better conditions and were not. Now the Castroite leadership is obliged, in the worst conditions, to introduce reforms whose parliamentary logic could, in the absence of a real popular power, be the means for imperialism to tighten the "democratic noose" in the Nicaraguan manner.

Certainly, the direct election of deputies to the National Assembly envisaged for the end of 1992 will take place within the framework of the single party: but what will be the attitude of the government

towards certain dissident candidates that it is — perhaps — ready to tolerate locally but certainly not nationally?

Such is the fundamental demand of Washington, the Latin American bourgeoisies and Madrid whose plans for Cuba coincide⁸ and who wish to use the current crisis to impose the end of Castroism and the revolution.

Already the dissident organizations, which everybody agrees have as yet no social base, are intensifying their activities thanks to increased aid supplied by the United States. The launching of armed provocations by the emigré sectors is no longer ruled out, for economic blockade and provocations are complementary tools. Already, the Cuban leadership has responded by repression, condemning the leader of a group of dissidents to two years in prison for distributing leaflets and clandestine organization.

While it is understandable that isolated and menaced Cuba, which is virtually at war, should organize its own defence, this cannot justify repression for crimes of opinion. The revolution is being attacked from outside, but it could also die of bureaucratic asphyxiation from inside.

It is necessary "to be reassembled as a single family, following a single line, a single flag, a clear road for all" said Fidel Castro on November 26, 1991, but the cohesion and unity of the country henceforth needs something other than voluntarism or attempts to debureaucratize the bureaucracy of which the rectification process was the most recent manifestation.

The defence of the revolution supposes that the people have the ability to debate and to settle such important questions as the peasant markets, the shortage of labour in agriculture, the nature of information and of press organs, the designation of candidates to posts of responsibility, the functioning of the OPP, the forms of election to the national assembly, and so on.

An old Cuban sociologist has said: "It appears to me obvious that we have become experts on socialism. We have experienced 30 years of Cuban socialism and we know what works and what does not, and thus we all have important opinions to express. With this crisis, there exists a great controversy inside the revolution, because the immense majority of the people support the revolution and the



socialist choice, but starting from there all must be healthily debated".⁹ The rectification process is dead under the weight of its contradictions and the effects of the crisis. As an attempt at anti-bureaucratic struggle launched from above, it was a prisoner of its ambiguities.

Cultural symbolism

Perhaps it is on the cultural plane that the symbolism has been most clear. Daniel Diaz Torres, CCP member, is the author of the film "Alice in the village of wonders", which, in his words, "is born from the process of rectification, made in the revolution, for the revolution and with the revolution" and which denounces the misdeeds of the bureaucracy and double standards¹⁰. Rarely has a work unleashed so much violent polemic, provoking an open crisis inside the Institute of Cinema and the party which is only beginning to be resolved, proof that, as Diaz Torres says, "the questions posed by the rectification process have not been resolved"¹¹

And if they stay unresolved, the "innocents" will finally collapse. ★

5. *Este es el congreso mas democratico*, p. 13. Editora Politica, Havana, 1991.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

7. Aurelio Alonso, op. cit.

8. Sergio Berrocal, *AFP*, Madrid, November 27, 1991.

9. *Envio*, December 1991, Managua.

10. See *L'Humanité*, December 27, 1991. After four days, the showing of the film was stopped.

11. *Ibid.*

How reformers won Teamster election

IN A YEAR that saw the replacement of union heads in four major rail unions and the strengthening of opposition groups in some industrial unions including auto, plus the upset victory of a new leadership in the West Coast longshore union, the announcement of the election of Ron Carey to the presidency of the 1.6 million-member International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) on December 19, 1991 marked a sea change in US unionism.

Phil Kwik, who covers the Teamsters for the Detroit-based monthly *Labor Notes*, reports.

PHIL KWIK

THE stunning sweep by reformers in the first ever one-member, one-vote election in the Teamsters union happened because the rank-and-file were angry about the direction of their union.

"The members understood how corruption — even if it isn't taking place in their backyard — can have an effect on everyone in the union", said Bill Urman of Minneapolis, a newly elected International vice-president.

"They want honest people running this union, and all the things that go with that: better representation, more responsiveness and contracts that aren't sell-outs," he said.

The rank-and-file were tired of their loss of strength at the workplace and bargaining table. As Margaret Farrell, a Northwest flight attendant from Detroit, put it: "The rank-and-file have been taking a beating for a long time. Finally, we just said 'Enough'".

Much of the credit for the Ron Carey reform slate victory goes to Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the 16-year old, rank-and-file reform caucus within the union. Though Carey is not a member, he was endorsed two years ago by TDU, and it provided the organization and activists which were the backbone of the campaign. Many of Carey's slate members belong to TDU.

The Carey slate won 48% of the vote and all the 16 seats contested. Overall, 424,000 Teamsters voted — 28% of the union.

The slate headed by R.V. Durham and supported by a majority of the union's old executive board received 33%. Two Durham candidates for vice-president from Canada were elected at the union's June convention when they ran unopposed.

A third slate, headed by Walter Shea and supported by a minority of incum-

bents, got 18% and won one seat on the board.

Each of the 1.5 million Teamster members were eligible to vote for president, secretary treasurer, five at-large vice presidents, and vice presidents in their area conferences. There were three vice presidents elected in the Eastern and Central Conferences, and two in the Southern and Western Conferences.

Organized crime

The reformers won in every region except Canada. They did their best in the South and West — winning over 53% in both Conferences — where TDU has strong local chapters. In the East, though Carey lost the locals with closest ties to organized crime, reformers won the Conference by winning throughout New England, and in big locals in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. The race in the Central Conference was closer, but even here, Carey took 48%.

"The members were pissed off with everyone in the leadership of the union", said Mike Ruscigno, recording secretary of Local 138 in New York. "When their local officials told them to vote for Durham or Shea, they said 'yeah, stick it'. They certainly weren't going to listen to them." Carey won Local 138 by a 10-1 margin.

The only defeat for the reformers was in the Canadian Conference, where Durham beat Carey 2-1. This loss reflected the reformers' relative lack of organization there. However, Carey won in British Columbia, the home base of Diana Kilmury of the Carey slate and Edward Lawson of the Durham slate.

The composition of the new Teamster executive board is qualitatively different from any other leading body in the US labor movement. Carey's slate contained

no International officers and only half of the members were local officials. The rest were working Teamsters. Two have been without jobs since the summer. One was fired for union activity, the other was laid off when the trucking company he worked for closed.

The Carey slate includes the first woman and Latino to sit on the Teamsters' executive board — Kilmury and John Riojas — and one African American, Leroy Ellis.

Activists were especially pleased by the election of Kilmury, a feminist, long-time union reformer and co-chair of TDU. During the election, Carey supporters hit hard at the absence of women on Durham's slate and at Durham's suggestion that none of the 400,000 women Teamsters were qualified for national office.

"This has always been a male-dominated union," said Farrell. "Now we have people on the executive board who will pay attention to working women's issues."

Pat McIntosh, a University of Chicago clerical worker, agreed. "This union will now raise issues that affect working women — childcare, pay equity, health insurance — and it will address the concerns of those low paid \$6 an hour Teamsters who are primarily women."

The Teamsters union was once known for its militancy. Over the last 30 years, however, it has been better known for its corruption. Recent Teamster leaders conspired to blackmail employers, bribe politicians and sell out and beat up workers. They created an "election" process that allowed them or their hand-picked successors to lead the union time after time. While the living and working conditions of the workers declined dramatically, the leaders paid themselves two or three salaries, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

Jailed leaders

Four of the last five Teamster presidents have been jailed; the fifth died before he could be.

How then were rank-and-file Teamsters able to regain control over the union in a race where they were outspent 2-1, and where the incumbents had access to locals? The key elements in their victory were:

- Years of organizing by Teamsters for a Democratic Union. During this time, TDU developed an impressive group of leaders in locals across the country. Some won local office, some became discouraged and dropped out. But many more were recruited. All across the union, there were hundreds of seasoned activists — ready to take advantage of the big break when it came.

- Ron Carey and his slate. Carey had a sterling record of fighting for his membership in Local 804. Carey never hid his disgust with the top Teamster leadership. He

and his running mates campaigned tirelessly, often until midnight, and then again in the early morning at the next stop.

● An incumbent leadership that could not remember — if it ever knew — how to take its message to the membership. Because many local officials relied on intimidation in the past, they couldn't campaign when their jobs depended on it. "Durham's people didn't know how to campaign, because they never had to," said McIntosh. "They told the members 'vote' but never had a strategy to turn out the vote."

● Government intervention. In 1989, the US government ordered the Teamsters to hold a one-member, one-vote election for top officers in order to settle a lawsuit filed by the government to clean out organized crime in the union. This remedy was supported by the TDU.

Though many activists in the US labor movement opposed the government's intervention in the union, the reformers needed it to win at this time. Without the federal surveillance, there would not even have been an election in 1991, let alone a fair one.

It is impossible to say how the process of reform in the Teamsters would have been played out if one of these four elements had been missing.

The new administration's supporters say it will need to move quickly to show that the union has a different kind of leadership. Urman suggest, for instance, that the *International Teamster* magazine "talk about workers for a change."

On December 12, Carey said he would cut the president's salary by \$75,000 and end the practice of paying executive board members multiple salaries for holding more than one union office.

But more than symbolism is needed. Carey ran on bread and butter issues, as well as union democracy, saying that a clean union is an effective one. The most difficult problems in the union's future are the same as in the past: those created by the employers. The new leaders will have to rebuild the union's strength at the workplace.

One way to do this, according to reformers, is to move resources away from things like officers' salaries and toward organizing. "We need to set up a massive organizing drive across the country," said Local 138's Ruscigno, "where we put unemployed Teamsters into unorganized shops and have them organize from the inside. Then if they get fired, the Joe behind them says 'you can't fire him for that', and we'll start a movement."

Carey will also have to strengthen the union's bargaining. Before the election, employers worried that they'd face pressure from the ranks for better contracts.

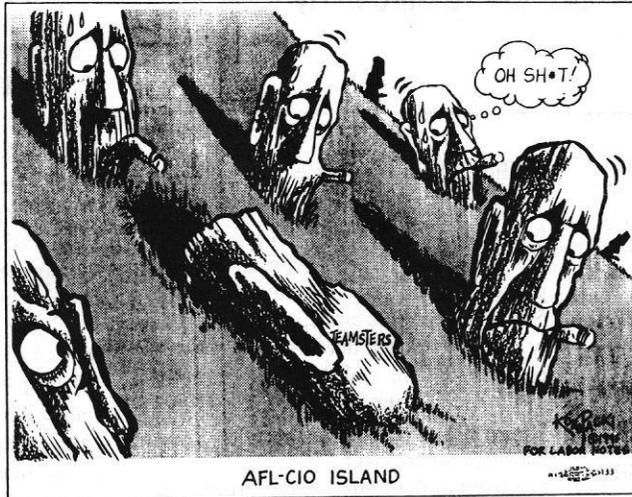
The *Wall Street Journal* reported, "Trucking companies and others among the Teamsters 45,000 employers will probably find it more difficult to count on union leaders... to sign cozy or at least modest contract agreements the Teamster members will have to accept."

The new administration's first task will be to negotiate the contract for carhaulers — those who transport cars from factories to dealers — which expired last May 31. Carhaulers have been working under their old contract.

Old-guard remain

Reformers will also have to finish the job of cleaning up the union. They've elected the top officials and have demonstrated their support among the members, but a vast middle layer of multiple-salaried, old-guard officials remain in control of much of the union apparatus.

Carey has said that he's willing to work with anyone who wants to rebuild the union. But it's not clear whether these officials will be willing or able to adapt to a different way of doing union business. One Teamster activist predicted that a "civil war" would break out between the administration and activists on one side and the old-guard, mid-level officials on the other.



On the other hand, says Pat Reardon, a freight driver from Kalamazoo, Michigan, "There are a lot of good people in the Teamsters — even some establishment people — who are caught in a bad position." Some will welcome changes.

Reformers know that consolidating their strength will require taking over more locals. The local-by-local vote tallies from the International election will tell reformers which locals are most receptive to change in elections next fall.

And activists will have to reach new areas and involve more than the 28% who voted, if their plan to turn around the union has any chance of succeeding. "We need to get the members concerned and involved in this union," said McIntosh.

"We need to show them that this is a union worth belonging to, because Carey can't do it alone."

Though the turnout was low, some say that, considering that this is the first time an election has ever happened in the union, the numbers aren't surprising. "Don't forget that hundreds of thousands of Teamsters made a decision about who would lead the union," Urman said. "That's better than in the past, when these decisions were made behind closed doors by a handful of men."

Teamsters reformers are beginning to think about how their union can become an aggressive and progressive voice in the house of labor.

One way is for the new leadership to break with past practice in the area of electoral politics. For most of the past 35 years, Teamsters' presidential endorsements and campaign contributions have been more like those of a corporate political action committee than a labor union's. Conservative Republicans got the nod, no matter how bad their labor record was. Carey has pledged to change this self-defeating strategy.

Beyond elections, says Urman, "We need to take positions on issues that go beyond the Teamsters and into the broader labor movement." These issues include national health care and unemployment.

If the Teamsters are successful in doing this, adds Reardon, "We could be one hell of a force in the labor movement."

The other big question is what the Teamsters election will mean for others fighting for change in their unions.

Those in the labor bureaucracy hope it won't mean much. Within hours of Carey's victory, former United Auto Workers Federation President Douglas Fraser denied that the Teamster example bore any relevance to other unions. The Teamsters union, Fraser claimed, is a special case.

However, Teamster activists disagree — they know their victory will have an impact on rank-and-file activists fighting to revive the labor movement. Says J.C. Thomas, a freight driver from Memphis: "People will see that we did it. They'll see how we did it. People will start feeling like they belong to a union movement again."

In other unions, different conditions will suggest different strategies for overthrowing the entrenched old guard leadership, but the key element will be organizing at the grassroots to build a reform caucus and a battle-tested leadership. That's the one factor that rank-and-file activists have control over.

As Thomas put it, "We can't discuss this win without discussing the foundation that has been built by TDU. They had the money, but we had the people." ★

Groundswell of support for creation of Labor Party

THE United States is practically the only advanced industrialized capitalist country that does not have a mass labor or left wing political party based on the trade union movement. This has had deleterious effects on the capacity of workers and oppressed nationalities in the US to defend themselves and to elaborate an alternative course for US society. It has meant that the potential political energies of US labor have been either unrealized or channelled into one of the two bourgeois parties — the Democratic and Republican parties, with the former successfully posing as the party of workers and Blacks since the 1930s.

While left-wing militants have long argued for a labor party, and some trade union bureaucrats have even threatened to launch one when the government and Democratic party have seemed to them particularly unresponsive to labor's interests, no significant progress in this direction has ever been made. Today however, important forces in the trade union, women's and African-American movements appear prepared to break with the parties of the bosses and form a third party.

KEITH MANN

THESE developments take place in a context of increasing social polarization in the United States. Throughout the 1980s the amount of wealth controlled by the richest layers of US society dramatically increased. Today, 36% of the country's wealth is owned and controlled by 1% of the population, while over 23 million Americans — nearly ten percent of the population — rely on food stamps to survive. Unemployment is rapidly increasing, especially in some of the industrial sectors where the organized labor movement has been the strongest and where the greatest gains have historically been registered, such as the auto industry where General Motors has recently announced that 74,000 workers will be laid off.

These social polarizations have not been reflected in a corresponding political polarization. The general rightward movement of the Republican Party has been matched by a rightward drift by the Democratic Party. The failure of the Democratic Party to even talk about the mild program of social protection they had advocated in the past has meant that the growing social contradictions of US society have not found an echo in mass

public political discourse.

This is the context in which the National Organization for Women (NOW), the largest women's rights group in the United States with over 500,000 members and chapters in all fifty states, has been debating the question of independent political action and a third party for the last two years. During the last year NOW has conducted public hearings where over 500 people, mostly militants in the feminist, environmental, civil rights, and antiwar movements debated the perspective of a third party. Their findings were striking; an overwhelming majority were in favor of building a new party.

A committee called the "Commission for Responsive Democracy" formally recommended by a vote of 26-4 the formation of a new party. This proposal will be discussed and voted on at NOW's national conference in June 1992. The NOW Young Feminist Conference, which was held in February 1991, also recommended that "NOW join forces with other interested groups to initiate a call for a new party."

NOW leaders and activists seem less than clear about what type of party this

would be, and what type of program it would be based on, and there is heavy concentration on the electoral aspects of independent political activity. Nevertheless, they are clearly animated by a disillusionment with the Democratic Party as a vehicle for defending women's rights at a time when abortion rights are seriously challenged.

They also realize that women's rights are tied to Black, labor and environmental issues. It must also be remembered that whatever illusions NOW has had in defending women's rights through parliamentary institutions, this organization has mobilized enormous street demonstrations of up to 600,000 people.

The second significant development in the direction of independent working class political action is the formation of an organization called Labor Party Advocates (LPA) by Tony Mazzocchi, a longtime leader of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union. Mazzocchi launched LPA after becoming disgusted with the failure of the Democratic Party to oppose the anti-union offensive of American capital throughout the 1980s. He has also been encouraged by the results of polls he conducted amongst working people concerning the idea of a labor party.

Strong dissatisfaction with Democratic Party

These polls indicated that there was both strong dissatisfaction with the Democratic Party and interest in a labor party. For example, less than half of the workers questioned saw the Democratic Party as representing the interests of working people (only 4% saw the Republicans as their party), while 52.8% supported the idea of a labor party.

The LPA does not consider itself a Labor Party but rather a vehicle for educating and agitating workers on the need to politically break with the Democrats and Republicans and eventually create a Labor Party. It hopes to recruit 100,000 trade unionists, following which a founding convention will be held.

Although the type of party Mazzocchi has in mind is patterned after West European reformist parties, it is, nevertheless, conceivable that if this initiative gathers momentum, far more radical dynamics could develop which would go far beyond the mild Social Democratic vote gathering party that Mazzocchi envisions. In any event, LPA represents the first attempt since the immediate post-world war period by a section of the labor movement (apart from small groups of radicals) to actually fight for a Labor Party.

The third and least well known of cur-

rent developments in favor of independent political action for US workers and the oppressed is the presidential campaign of veteran African-American activist Ron Daniels. Daniels explains that his campaign is intended to be "part of the process of organizing and institutionalizing an independent and progressive third force or new political party to... advance the struggle for a new society." More specifically, Daniels hopes to contribute to the building of a political force that will represent African-Americans and all workers. He and his collaborators are preparing a program that calls for full employment and a national health service. He has also expressed support for the LPA and NOW initiatives.

The question of independent working class political action is a crucial one for African Americans. Since the 1930s African-Americans have been among the most loyal constituents of the Democratic Party though they have benefited least from Democratic Party presidencies and congressional majorities.

Gains of civil rights movement

The gains in affirmative action that the civil rights movement registered in the 1960s and 1970s are today under attack. Due to the racist nature of US society and the concentration of African Americans in the dying manufacturing sector of US industry, the African American working class has borne the brunt of the current economic crisis.

Like the LPA and NOW initiatives Daniels has an inconsistent conception of what actually constitutes independent political action. Like Mazzocchi and many of the NOW activists involved in their respective campaigns, Daniels' past is in the shadow of the Democratic Party (he is a former executive director of the Rainbow coalition — an organization that largely functioned as an organizing committee for Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign).

Nevertheless, like the other two initiatives, the discussion that will certainly accompany the Daniels campaign can go a long way towards popularizing the idea of independent Black and working class political action, especially within the African-American community. Likewise, it could, in spite of the fact that it has been until now a far more modest effort than the LPA or NOW initiatives, erode the influence of the petty-bourgeois pro-Democratic forces that have long been hegemonic amongst African Americans.

Each of these developments in the direction of independent working class political action in the post-cold war United States are significant. The coming

The growing isolation of Hassan II

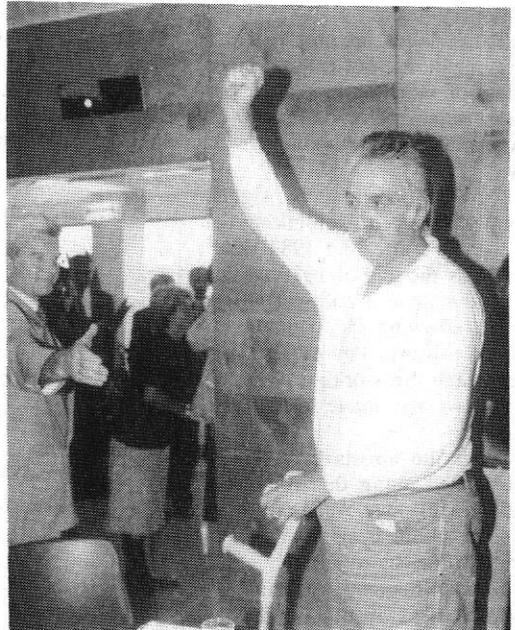
Interview with Abraham Serfaty

ABRAHAM SERFATY, one of the the longest serving political prisoners in the world, was freed from Kenitra prison in Morocco in September 1991 and expelled to France. Today 65 years old, he was arrested 17 years previously, in 1974, for his role in founding and leading the Marxist-Leninist organization Ila Al-Aman ("Forward"), which originated among far left students.

Serfaty, who along with many other prisoners of Morocco's royal dictator Hassan II, received our publications in jail, agreed to grant IV a long interview dealing with the main themes of his thinking during his years of incarceration. By mutual agreement we preferred to wait until the shock of his new found liberty had worn off before conducting the interview.

The interview takes place in many dimensions, corresponding to Serfaty's multifaceted outlook as a revolutionary leader: the Moroccan, the North African (Arabo-Berber), the Arab, the Arab anti-Zionist Jew and the internationalist.

We publish overleaf the first part of this interview, dealing with Morocco; a second part dealing with other themes will appear in our next issue. The interview was conducted by Salah Jaber in December 1991.



Abraham Serfaty on his arrival in France after his release in September 1991

period will see each one of them encounter the pressures that have traditionally mitigated against the formation of a labor party in the US. This raises a number of questions. Will the inevitable pressure to defeat the Republican presidential candidate by supporting an eventual Democratic Party candidate be too much to resist?

What effect will the current absence of

sharp working class upsurges have on the political coloration of such a party if it is actually formed? And finally will a dynamic develop that could push such a party in a revolutionary direction, or will the situation evolve in such a manner that the reformist illusions already present in the NOW, LPA and Daniels initiatives prevail? ★

SINCE your release in September 1991, you have several times used the term "end of reign" to describe the situation in Morocco. Why do you feel able to pass such a judgement on a regime which, seen from the outside, seems very secure?

This appreciation is based first of all on the fact, that, over the past three or four years, there has been a coming together of the struggle of democratic forces from the legal opposition and that of the revolutionary forces.

These latter are not really structured organizations, but rather fringes or currents of more or less legal parties. The most organized revolutionary group is Ila Al-Aman, which functions in clandestinity.

Our influence grew significantly owing to a rethinking that took place after the 1984 riots¹; towards the end of 1979 we had already made a political adjustment allowing us to direct our work towards the popular districts and the working class, but even so we made many mistakes.

After the arrests in 1985, we continued along this road, and, above all, we thought more deeply about basic problems of the Moroccan revolution which had been neglected as much by ourselves as by other forces — in particular the Berber question. These ideas have gained ground in certain quarters, such as the *qa'idine* students², but also in the popular neighbourhoods, especially Casablanca. At the same time they have helped in drawing together the radical forces within the legal organizations.

There is, of course, also an autonomous radicalization which is not due to the work of our organization, but comes from the pressure of the popular masses and working class, and which expresses itself in the renewed dynamism of the Democratic Confederation of Labour (CDT).³ This organization has increased its weight both as a union organization and within the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP).⁴ The result has been a tendency towards radicalization for the whole of the USFP and its dependent organizations, such as its youth organization, the *Shabiya Itihadiya* ("unionist youth").

This global radicalization is certainly linked to objective conditions: the middle classes are no longer benefiting from the relatively important material advantages they enjoyed in the 1970s. Furthermore, the chauvinist mobilization around the Saharan question has lost its force, even if it continues to be pushed forward

by the parties. More and more it is the problems of democracy and human rights, and more fundamentally of the political transformation of the country, which are uppermost in people's minds, both in the popular and the middle classes.

The coming together around these issues of the legal and democratic forces and the revolutionary groups, as well as the radicalization of the former (and particularly the CDT) explains the continuous rise in struggles in the past three or four years, increasingly raising the issues of democracy and human rights. This is clear from the legal parties' attitude to the constitution: in a few months they have gone from demanding constitutional amendments to, since November 19, 1991, calling for a new constitution,



which is obviously incompatible with Hassan II's regime.

■ **The main new feature of the recent situation is thus the change in the attitude of the middle classes on the question of democracy. Is this why you have talked of the "end of reign"?**

Yes. Certainly, this is a complex phenomenon and one not limited to the middle classes. The demand for liberty runs deep. At the same time the old sectarianisms are being overcome, both by the legal democratic forces and the more radical, even revolutionary forces. For example, Ila Al-Amam previously rejected these legal forces, while they considered us as extremists, and traitors to the cause of the "Moroccanness" of the Sahara.

Now, in practice, the question of the Sahara has been relegated to the second level and is no longer a divisive issue.

On the other hand the coming together is in opposition to the king — which is why we have set the concrete objective of overthrowing Hassan II rather than that of abolishing the monarchy. Among the people, there can be no doubt that there is a rejection not only of Hassan but of the monarchy — this is especially evident in the towns.

On the other hand, the middle classes do not yet reject the monarchy; they are still in the grip of the old ideologies of the Moroccan national movement, dominated by the bourgeoisie for the past 60 years. They are perhaps worried about being outflanked and their concern for stability prevents them from challenging the monarchy as an institution.

This coming together against the king is also due to something that took shape during the 1980s, and particularly after 1984: Hassan II's regime, while it continues to defend the interests of the dominant classes, is relatively isolated even within those classes, having formed what we have called the "makhzen mafia", rooted in the old "feudal" power structures.⁵ This system basically rests on the heads of the police forces, and, more marginally, on certain generals — it would be untrue to say that the army as a body is really a part of this power system. What we have is a police state, under the aegis of Hassan II which robs the economy while repressing the people.

Such a system leads to contradictions even within the ruling classes and, even more, between the middle classes and the system. This means that Hassan II's regime is increasingly isolated and is becoming the direct or indirect target of the struggles, expressed in particular by the demand for a constitutional change. This is why

Morocco is today ripe for the overthrow of Hassan II, and an at least partial dislocation of his mafia.

Our organization began to understand this during the autumn of 1990 and more precisely with the demonstrations of Jan-

1. In January 1984, riots broke out in several Moroccan cities, particularly in the north of the country, in reaction to price rises. Hassan II accused "Khomeinists" and Ila Al-Amam of having fomented the disturbances. A wave of arrests followed.

2. The *qa'idiyine* ("rank-and-file") students: a radical left student current close to Ila Al-Amam.

3. The CDT is the union confederation close to the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP — see note 4). Founded in 1978, it is the second largest, after the UMT (see note 6).

4. The USFP was legally (re)founded in 1975. It came out of the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP), a left split off from the Istiqlal party in 1959 (see note 7) led by Mehdi Ben Barka.

5. The *makhzen* signifies the domain and the royal treasury, exacting a tribute from the population.

uary and February against the Gulf War where the convergence of forces and the isolation of Hassan II among the people were very clear.

■ You have spoken about the political nature of the dominant popular sentiment in Morocco today, but what are the underlying socio-economic factors?

These developments have, of course, an economic basis. Since the end of the 1970s, the relative advantages given to the middle classes have vanished. During the 1980s the regime's economic weakening became more intense, tied on the one hand to the war in the Sahara and on the other to the world crisis, and the increasingly harsh demands of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in favour of unrestrained economic liberalism.

This has led to a deterioration in the conditions both of the working classes and middle classes and has contributed to the regime's isolation. The relations of dependence, particularly with respect to Europe, with the rapid development of subcontracting in textiles and leatherworking in the 1970s and 80s, facilitated the racketeering. Moroccan entrepreneurs are less real capitalists than prison guards of cheap and super-exploited labour. These operations are quite illegal, breaking labour legislation and have thus needed police protection. In return the police have wanted a cut in the proceeds. At the same time, entrepreneurs who want to carry out industrial or commercial projects according to the law have met more and more difficulties.

The racket has been growing; since the 1984 insurrections the Interior Ministry's police grip on the life of the country has spread in all fields, including information and culture and the economic system. This has infuriated not only the middle classes but a section of the ruling classes. The "Makhzen mafia" has even annoyed some foreign interests, which find it more and more difficult to operate normally in Morocco.

■ The trade union movement and workers' movement in general have played a central role in the last big mass movements, notably at the end of 1990 and the start of 1991. However this has not translated itself at the political level, where demands remain limited to what is acceptable to the middle classes — and in particular to the USFP which can be considered a party representative of this social milieu.

In fact, the working class does not yet



have the political structure that would enable it to express itself in an independent fashion at this level. A big revolutionary political party of the working class does not yet exist, although this is the aspiration of many militants — and not only in our organization — who wish to participate in the construction of such a party.

This is the case with some radical currents, such as that which has split off from the USFP. This current was for a long time known as the "Administrative Commission" before recently forming the Democratic Party of the Socialist Vanguard (PAGSD).

In the union movement, one can see, above all in the CDT, a certain awareness developing among the leaders of the specific problems of the working class. This is reminiscent of what Nicos Poulantzas called "the pertinent effect of the working class on its political leaders" on the radical wing of the USFP, crystallized in the CDT. It should be remembered that the Moroccan working class has shown elements of class consciousness for a long time.

It was very highly unionized in the 1940s, under the aegis of French or Spanish militants, who, whatever their mistakes, wanted to develop class consciousness and a tradition of independent class struggle action in the unions. This marked the Moroccan Labour Union (UMT)⁶ for a long time after independence and explains its anarcho-syndicalist tendencies, which were exploited by its bureaucracy both to draw it out of the grip of the political parties and to maintain their own grip on the rank-and-file.

In the mines and big factories in Casablanca, the workers have a tradition of

raising class demands, and this has had an influence on some political formations. This is particularly clear in the interrelation of the current workers' pressure and the CDT, and through the latter, on the radical wing of the USFP. This is sharply at odds with the old guard, whose petty bourgeois reformist ideology is marked by opportunism and by a bourgeois democratic project which has even led it to attempt to conciliate Hassan II.

Even if the USFP and the Istiqlal party⁷ have recently proclaimed the need for a constitutional change, going beyond a mere amendment, it is not clear that this turn is expressed in the outlook of the leaders; indeed one can expect the contrary: Some of them will surely seek a compromise with the King.

But the powerful mass pressure and its expression by the CDT, and the discontent of the middle classes, tend in the direction of real democracy, which is incompatible with Hassan II. The working class, which has made a conscious choice to today limit itself to the democratic field, also has the possibility of going over to a revolutionary struggle in a later phase.

The first phase, which is now underway, must allow us to concentrate our forces to beat Hassan II, even in the framework of the monarchy, to dislocate to some extent the *Makhzen* Mafia, and win democratic gains. The possibility of going over to a higher state rests on the class consciousness of the Moroccan working class, which is relatively high by Third World standards. Serious rank-and-file work by revolutionaries, in close connection with CDT militants who are not at present revolutionaries and even with certain UMT militants, can allow progress along this revolutionary road.

■ Morocco is a country of explosive contradictions, in particular with respect to the urban poor as has been seen in recent years. Does not an awareness of this constitute a strong restraining force on the middle class reformists?

There is, certainly, a contradiction here. Is this an obstacle in the immediate term? I don't think so. At the moment all forces can come together around the objective of the fall of Hassan II. In the popular mind, Hassan II is the enemy of the people — this was very clearly expressed in the

6. The UMT is the country's biggest union confederation. The Istiqlal and the Communist Party work inside it.

7. The Istiqlal ("Independence") party, founded by Alal Al-Fassi in 1944, is the party of the liberal national bourgeoisie.

1984 demonstrations for example.

In a big city with a social history like Casablanca's, there is in fact an objective link up in struggles between the proletarian nuclei of the big factories, and what I call the "proletarian masses" of the popular neighbourhoods. Both live in the same neighbourhoods. Political work and organizational effort need to be deployed there, at a higher level than is currently the case.

Going beyond these present objectives to more revolutionary and more radical objectives is closely linked to the development of this link up. This is why we insist, both for immediate and strategic reasons, on the self-organization of the masses in the popular neighbourhoods and the factories, where the workers should organize themselves in rank-and-file committees that can outflank the bureaucratic apparatuses in certain unions and dynamize them. This is what happened with the students in the movement for rank-and-file organization of the *qa'idiyine*. In this way the link up between the proletarian masses and the nuclei can take shape, but on one condition: it is necessary that the revolutionary alternative be made clear.

From this point of view, it is well known that in the Arab countries these semi-proletarian masses are the privileged field of activity for the fundamentalist movements. This is because the revolutionary forces have not been able to present a coherent perspective, remaining restricted, particularly in the case of the Arab Communist parties, to a traditional "economist" approach. I believe that, on the contrary, we in Ila Al-Amam have been able to formulate an overall revolutionary perspective integrating the aspirations of these masses. Our militants and sympathizers in the popular neighbourhoods closely combine the objectives of the democratic struggle for immediate demands with the strategic demands of a revolutionary platform.

■ Thus, according to you, the main reason why the fundamentalist movement is relatively weak in Morocco compared to other countries in the region, despite the extent of the social and economic crisis, is the role played by the Moroccan revolutionary movement.

This is, in any case, true for the cities like Casablanca. I am not of course, saying that the fundamentalist movement does not exist, but it does not have the strength that it has in other big cities in the Arab world. This is doubtless less true in the other cities in Morocco where the proletarian movement is less significant than in Casablanca or the main mining regions. Things are much less clear in the mainly petty bourgeois towns where the fundamentalist movement is stronger. But since Casablanca is the main stronghold of the Moroccan revolution, this is a

major obstacle to the fundamentalist movement.

Another important factor blocking the path of the fundamentalist movement is that presented by the problem of the identity of the marginalized regions, in the form of the Berber question, the questions of the Rif, of the Souss and others, with the new emphasis given to the Berber and regional identities. In the north, for example, the main site of the 1984 insurrections, one meets, both in the Arab (Ghala) and Berber speaking regions (Riaffa), very significant problems of regional specificity. These regions, along with the Souss, are the main centres of emigration.

We are the only people with a clear platform on these questions in the framework of a revolutionary alternative. This allows us to respond rapidly and oppose a coherent and tangible alternative to the mythical alternative of fundamentalism. This is one of the reasons for our influence among the students of a university such as Fez, who come from these regions. And it should not be forgotten that the Berber question concerns 60% of the area of our country, while in Algeria it is only 15 to 20%.

We are only at the start of this activity; it was only in the last decade that we integrated the Berber problem into our thinking. Our clear positions on this question are three or four years old, but they are rapidly gaining a hearing.

Potentially, it is quite possible to combat fundamentalism, on the condition that the link up is made between the proletarian pole in Casablanca and the peripheral regions. Even the predominantly petty bourgeois towns, where fundamentalism finds more fertile terrain, could go beyond their present limits in the context of a global revolutionary movement. This has been clearly seen, for example, in Marrakesh, a city linked to the surrounding Berber areas, during the big demonstrations of January 1984.

The classic reformist democratic forces have a strong grip on the middle classes and the convergence of these forces with our own activity creates a big movement in the direction of democracy which shows the masses that a certain number of conquests are possible without falling under the fundamentalist spell, and it may be this that explains the fact that fundamentalism has not gained as much here as elsewhere.

■ Can the question of regional identity neutralize the traditional role of the peasantry as the base of the monarchy, or even create antagonism between this peasantry and the regime? Are there other factors working in this direction?

We ourselves for a long time made no progress on the peasant question — we had an "economistic" approach in the 1970s, centred exclusively on the con-

centrations of agricultural workers in the irrigated regions where the big properties are found. A more precise analysis in the 1980s showed first of all that the ruling classes are determined at all costs to avoid the formation of a permanent agricultural proletariat, even if this means losses in terms of productivity — in this they show a very lucid class consciousness.

The peasant problem, in the regions traditionally dominated for centuries by the *makhzen*, are very complex and one cannot talk of struggles taking place in these regions. Currently, the movements involve the cities and — more or less spontaneously since the January 1984 insurrections — the peripheral regions, particularly the north. The dynamic is towards spreading struggles, but the process is only at the beginning.

I have noticed that in Europe, in regions where there is much immigration from the north of Morocco, such as Belgium and Holland, there is a very marked development of awareness: the problems of the Rif arouse great interest. In the course of the meetings I have done there, the rare fundamentalist militants I have encountered had simply nothing to say about these questions.

However, I don't want to belittle the difficulties. A significant proportion of the rural areas remain in the grip of the monarchy's systems of domination, of the "Moroccan *fellah*, defender of the throne", through the intermediary of notables, above all in the rural regions of the centre.

There is thus much work to do, but I think that insofar as a revolutionary movement can be developed starting from the proletarian centres such as Casablanca and the peripheral regions, an overall dynamic can be created.

■ You have mentioned how the fact that the Sahara is now of secondary importance has created space for certain forms of struggle against the regime to develop. This has its obverse: until recently the Saharan war has primarily worked in favour of the regime and the hopes of revolutionaries that it might be the catalyst for a radicalization against the monarchy have not been realized.

It is undeniable that the war in the Sahara has given Hassan II 15 years grace, from 1974 to 1989. The dominant tendency in the past four years has been for this problem to be overshadowed by concrete struggles by the people and the democratic and progressive forces, but the problem has not for all that been solved.

At present the decisive question for the regime is the referendum on the Sahara — the government is stepping up its efforts to sabotage this referendum and it is clear that some opposition leaders are supporting it in this. The Sahara war con-

tinues to act as an obstacle to popular mobilizations and their radicalization.

I also wonder how far a certain reserve recently seen regarding the coming together of the opposition abroad is related to this. Very recently, a conference took place in the south of Holland — near to Maastricht — of much of the Moroccan opposition. However there were certain regrettable absences. Some failed to come owing to previous frictions between groups, but I also wonder if some absences, notably from France, were due to the referendum.

■ The fact that the regime has been able to use the Saharan question for 15 years suggests that for the Moroccan masses the question of Morocco's historic claim to that territory remains live. Should this not make us stop and think?

Is it simply chauvinism and ideological mystification which makes people see the problem in this way or are there more substantial factors at work, among them aspects of the behaviour of Polisario [the Saharan liberation organization] or its links with the Algerian regime?

Two levels of this problem need to be distinguished. Of course, there is the dominant presentation of Moroccan history, made up of the glory of empires, which has been absorbed by the Moroccan people. The map published in 1956 at the time of independence by the founder of the Istiqlal, Alal Al-Fassi, showed Morocco extending as far south as Senegal. This map was put up by all the shopkeepers in the towns. At the same time, the Green March organized by Hassan II in 1975⁸ was also a march towards a new Eldorado for the Moroccan masses who believed that the region's phosphate and other riches would solve all our internal problems.

By the end of the 1970s disenchantment had set in over the economic prospects. Despite the hopes, in fact things had got worse. From the start of the 1980s — and this is one of the underlying reasons for the popular explosions of 1981 and 1984 — the question of the Sahara no longer played its old restraining role, even if many retained their former positions on the legitimacy of the demands of the Polisario Front.

On the other hand, in the middle classes the question of the Sahara has remained a stumbling block for ideological reasons connected to the entire history of the Moroccan national movement under the grip of the bourgeoisie since 1930, and

this goes together with the dominant version of Moroccan history based on the *Makhzen* ideology in fashion from Idriss I to Hassan II. The Moroccan national movement, and specifically, the Istiqlal party, have breathed new life into the myth of a unifying monarchy, which does not in fact exist in the deep traditions of the Moroccan people.

Today, feelings in popular circles are more confused. People have had enough of this



war which is costing too much, even in terms of lives in some peasant regions of the country. During the 1980, examples of war weariness and a certain admiration for Polisario, which dared to confront Hassan II, could be seen. The big demonstration in Marrakesh in January 1984 obviously raised basic demands, but the leaflets put out for it also saluted Polisario's struggle, without this hindering the mobilization.

On the other hand, in the Berber regions, where the consciousness of a specific identity is sharper and where the *makhzen* myth of a linear history of the country is rejected, there is a certain fellow feeling with the Saharan struggle because it challenges this myth. This is evident in the Rif and among immigrants from that region in Holland or Belgium.

Our ideas, which are at odds with the dominant ideology have been able to have such an influence on the *qa'idiyne*

students not only because we have been in radical opposition to the regime but also because we have been very firm on the Saharan question and on the right to self-determination for the Saharan people.

There has been some sympathy for Polisario's struggle against the Moroccan regime, but also the idea that it calls into question the legitimacy of the monarchy.

The idea of the "Morocanness of the Sahara" is much more rooted in the middle classes than in the popular masses. But it is questioned in the Berber speaking or marginalized regions or by militants who reject the monarchy, even if they do not make the causal link between this institution and the Saharan question.

Fears over the Algerian role have dominated and continue to dominate in parts of the Moroccan movement — and it is clear that questions need to be asked about this. For Ila Al-Amam, support for the right to self-determination for the Saharan people was above all a question of principle, without illusions about the Algerian regime — I don't mean to say that it should be put in the same bag as that in Morocco, but we were aware of its limitations.

We give full support to the struggle of the Polisario Front out of principle, but that does not mean that we consider it to be the vanguard of the revolutionary movement in the Arab west (Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauretania) as I myself wrote in 1972. Things are clearer now. The fact is that the Polisario Front is the crystallization of the struggle of the Saharan people, in the same way as the PLO is for

the Palestinians. As a consequence, we support it, and I personally support the struggle for the right to self-determination wholly and without reserve.

In my opinion, the perspectives for a positive development for the whole of the region do not rest only in what is positive in the struggle for the liberation of the Saharan people and of the Polisario Front, but also in the possibility of seeing Morocco advance down the road of democracy and of a radical revolution, thus becoming capable of giving political aid to the positive forces of the Saharan people and Polisario in overcoming the negative risks. ★

8. The Green March was a huge march organized in 1975 by the regime from the south of Morocco to the former Spanish Sahara (Western Sahara) to mark the taking of control of this territory after the announcement by the colonial power of its withdrawal.

National independence versus the state

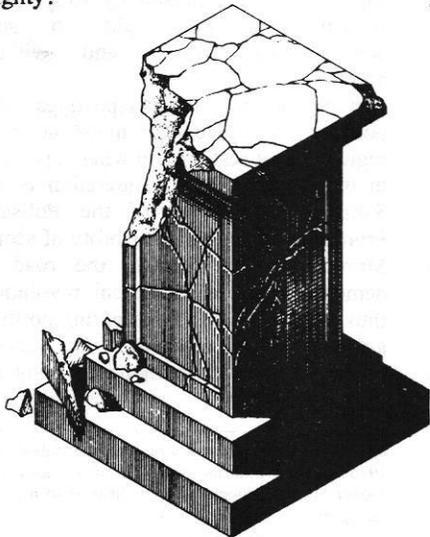
HOW can the struggle for the independence of Euskadi [the "Basque country"] be integrated into a political conception and a strategy against the state? The following article by a Basque revolutionary socialist militant considers the relation between the search for authentic national independence and the struggle for a self-managing society.

JOSE IRIARTE "BIKILA"*

TWO positions, both of them one-sided, exist on the question of independence.

The first, upheld by some sectors of the left and by bourgeois nationalists as well as by some sectors of the right in the stateless nations, takes a point of view that could be defined as evolutionist/economist.

The basis of this conception is the idea that the internationalization of the economy and its European expression mean that national independence for the stateless nations is an obsolete or inappropriate choice. Why have an independent state, at a time when the existing states are in the process of losing their sovereignty?



However, the attempt to politically structure Europe is being made not in the pursuit of an internationalist ideal but by actually existing states which are trying to create a union in their image and in the interests of the most powerful. The Europe they are trying to build is by no means destatized, but is rather a macro or super state (taking the form of a federation or confederation of states) founded on the more or less reconverted old apparatuses of the bourgeois national states, which bequeath to it in a scaled down manner all their failings: apparatuses of coercion, bureaucracy, separation between the citizens and the apparatus, social stratification, racism, discrimination, and so on.

The second, more traditional, position concerning independence is that prevalent among the majority of the nationalist left.

Removal of internal frontiers in Europe

From this point of view, the right to a separate nation state is completely justified. Faced with those who put the accent on a future without internal state frontiers in Europe (and who do not acknowledge that the national state will only disappear if there is a macro-state to replace it) the demand for an independent national state separate from the Spanish state or France has its own logic of radical negation and rupture.

The problem with this demand is that it seems simply to put a plus where there is a minus and vice versa within the framework of the same model, concentrating on the national struggle rather than on the elaboration of an alternative future to that of the current states (with their dual class and national nature) and to the capitalist super-states, to external frontiers closed to all "undesirables" and tightly controlled internal spaces.

An alternative point of view would search for new premisses, while preserving what is correct in the old positions. It should not only take into account the inter-

national tendencies and the progressive interdependence of the national economies, but also, at the same time, the necessities of the struggle against the actually existing national states. It should amount to a transcendence of these two positions, rather than their simple negation.

The Spanish state (and the French state) is a very complex sum of coercive apparatuses and of consensus (social and national), which exists to perpetuate the interests of the dominant classes which support it. No strategy of national and social liberation can avoid this reality. The Basque and Catalan bourgeois nationalists, who in no way challenge the system, and who do not wish to destabilize it, try to squeeze some crumbs out of the Spanish state, to become a power alongside it, and hope to win, at the same time, a place in the European Community, whether in terms of direct representation (regional chambers and organs, zones of economic investment adapted to their possibilities) or indirectly through the Spanish state.

However, the historic identification "independence = separate national state" is not self-evident, either in its internal or its external aspects.

Independence and anti-imperialism

Independence is the absence of external domination. It presupposes the disappearance of the imperialist international order, in the cultural, political or economic domains. The independent national state can guarantee independence in part, but any radical and global conception of independence must be associated with a vision of a largely, or even completely, destatized international society (of nations — these will not disappear).

The state is by its essence a factor of distortion, of permanent struggle. From this point of view, the federation of national republics, the confederation or association between independent entities, faces another dilemma: that of liberating itself from the weight of the characteristic features of the state (army, bureaucracy, and so on), to emancipate the nation and the society from the weight of a historic contingency born from capitalism and the world market.

It is the same in the internal sphere. The nation is a historic result produced through long evolution or through tumultuous regroupments which have succeeded in forming a collectivity. In this process, political, economic and cultural factors intervene in each nation with their own weight and autonomy. This is what has happened in Euskadi. The role of the state in this process has been essential in

* José Iriarte "Bikila" is a leader of the newly formed Basque revolutionary organization EMK-LKI. This article, which has been cut for space reasons, first appeared in the Basque magazine *Hika*.

Senegalese revolutionaries form new organization

THE founding congress of the And Jeff/African Party for Socialism and Democracy (AJ/PADS) took place last December 14-15. Two thousand people, 1,100 of them delegates, participated in the congress.

The founding of this organization is quite significant because it defines itself as socialist and anti-imperialist. It enjoys the support of several thousand members and sympathizers. It is clear that it will enjoy significant influence among students and the independent trade union movement. The new organization hopes to contribute to the emergence of a new revolutionary Pan-Africanism.

The AJ/PADS is the product of a fusion of several far-left organizations and, because of the exemplary manner in which the fusion was carried out, it can hope to draw even more forces together.

This is quite significant in Africa where no organization of this type has ever before existed.

CLAUDE GABRIEL

the formation of a national model, in the identification with the nation-state, generally not very democratic and not very homogenizing.

This has led to many problems: Few national states are formed by a single national component, many are multinational and, in applying the national model (nation-state) all factors of difference are erased. The very definition of the territory to be demarcated by the state frontier has created many problems.

We have seen examples of this in the ex-Soviet Union and we see them in Yugoslavia. We have this problem in Euskadi, with a working class of diverse national origin, and territories which are not at all clearly demarcated and still less won over to a democratic Basque national project that can integrate them.

This is the situation in Navarre, where different (Basque and Spanish) identities are today superimposed on each other and where the point of convergence is precisely the Navarre identity. Without the consent of those who feel this Navarre identity, any voluntary adhesion of Navarre to the Basque nation is unthinkable, unless imposed by state force.

A nation based on voluntary adhesion

A delimitation of the nation on the basis of voluntary adhesion, very much more flexible in terms of territorial conception and based on consent in the administrative domain, would avoid many problems, some of artificial origin, and some due to the difficulty of separating drastically that which is not very clear, either in reality or in the consciousness of the inhabitants. It is not by chance that the conflicts become destructive and violent, leading to chauvinism and xenophobia, exactly in those areas where this delimitation is neither clear nor conclusive.

It is necessary to understand that a good part of the population has diverse national origins and that, to win it to a Basque national project, it will be important to recognize and respect the cultural rights stemming from that origin.

This destatization of the nation also involves a self-managing economic project, the free association of the producers and of units of production, an articulation between the social plan and those sectors where the market is judged necessary. And naturally, such a project is also required in the political and administrative domain, where the weight of the state, of the apparatus (police, army, bureaucracy) is a permanent source of oppression and hierarchy.

The path of self-managed independence rejecting both the existing order and the statist and European capitalist road is on the order of the day: it could help us to go beyond the limits of strictly national independence. ★

THE new party is the result of three years of debates between four organizations. The largest of these was the And Jeff/ Revolutionary Movement for National Democracy (AJ), an organization of Maoist origin which was built in conditions of clandestinity during the 1970's, particularly through cultural activities in the poor neighborhoods. AJ has progressively developed beyond its original positions. It approached the fusion process with the attitude that many questions had to be dispassionately re-discussed.

The three other organizations that participated in the founding of the PADS are the Union for Popular Democracy (UDP), the Socialist Workers Organization (OST), and the Suxxuba Circles. The UDP was the product of a split in the AJ and was therefore also of Maoist origins. The OST was a revolutionary Marxist organization and part of the Fourth International.¹ The Suxxuba Circles came out of a split from the Lambertist current.

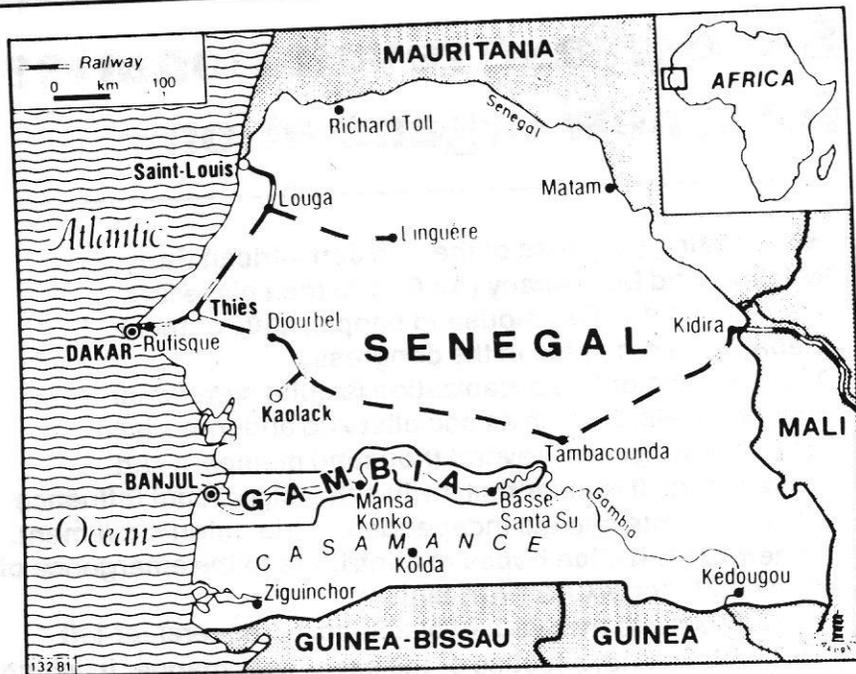
During the last three years these organizations found themselves converging politically through common work in community campaigns, in the union movement, in university struggles, in the positions they took against the Gulf war, and against the repressive policies of the government in the southern part of the country, the Casamance.

The proof that this fusion was an authentic one lies in the fact that the lead-

erships worked for months debating the program, the tasks, and the organizational principles of the future organization. This does not of course mean that the founding congress was able to clarify all programmatic and political questions. The idea of socialism has been so muddled in the African continent that the PADS needs time to develop a coherent alternative to the current crisis in Black Africa. This continent has never lacked either "Socialists" or "Marxists" to manage its neocolonial states! The system of nationalizations has been so widespread because the speculators who shared power needed to tap a certain sum of money from the collective purse to further develop their private wealth. In other words, it is necessary that a genuine anti-imperialist project clarify the question of social property, identify the social aspects of democracy, and finally offer a vision of another society.

A true break with the current system of dependence involves clarity on the nature of the existing states and the role of various social classes and layers in future struggles. This is without doubt the key challenge for the PADS and much will be revealed in the coming months. Many

1. Following a decision of the conference, the members of the ex-OST will remain individual members of the Fourth International, and those elected to bodies of the International will continue as such. The PADS and the Fourth International will establish relations of political solidarity.



questions have been left open. There was at the congress a clear trend towards "refounding" a political project. As elsewhere, the pressure of world events has nourished a discussion which starts from a radical critique of capitalism, shorn of the dead weight of Stalinism and the various reformist and nationalist illusions that it engendered.

Apart from these analytical questions the new party will be confronted with the problem of organizing the hundreds of people who will be attracted to it hoping to find something different from what the traditionally corrupt clientelist parties have offered.

A party built at the base

The stakes are enormous because the political project outlined at the December congress can only be realized with a party built at the base, capable of carrying out militant political initiatives in the neighborhoods, regions and villages. Thousands of men and women in this country are waiting to be heard and are ready to act on the condition that there is an organization that will allow them to participate in discussions that will help them understand the world. In this sense the founding congress was an enthusiastic and moving gathering because the participants had the impression that they were charting new territory in their country.

The other challenge will be on the electoral plane. The pressure of the national and international relationships of forces can derail the best of initial intentions. A small organization has less of a risk of falling prey to electoralism than a party already able to modify the political situation in a country. Electoral strategies are therefore a new problem for Senegalese militants. They will have to grapple with the task of combining electoral cam-

paigns with long term revolutionary projects, as well as dealing with the relationship between state institutions and the patient accumulation of militants for the formation of a powerful revolutionary movement.

The PADS must not remain alone and isolated. Its first activities underline the urgent need for solidarity. Such is the case in its first campaign against corruption, in which it has targeted the "fat debtors", that is, the men and women in power who have taken out huge loans without paying them back. This is an excellent example of making the connections between social mobilizations and the demand for social control over foreign aid on the one hand, and the international campaign for the cancellation of the debt on the other. While imperialism loudly clamors for democracy in Africa it remains silent on the secret bank accounts of African dictators and all the corrupt politicians whose booty inevitably winds up in Western banks. This is their contribution to democracy!

Solidarity is also needed since a motion was passed at the PADS congress demanding that French troops leave Senegalese territory and that no other foreign troops be stationed in the country. This would be a good project for the French anti-militarist movement.

But the greatest gain made at this congress was without doubt the role envisioned for women. The battle was joined to make the PADS the first mass party in Black Africa where feminism is part of the consciousness and practice of the party. The motion passed by the congress on this theme ended thus: "If productive labor is the necessary condition [for emancipation] it is not by itself sufficient because economic autonomy does not immediately and irredeemably eliminate ideology and incapacity, dependence and

submission... This is why the essential pedagogical principle of this alternative is [for women] to rely on their own forces beginning with self-organization, self-development and self-defense. These are the mechanisms which will restore and reinforce the confidence of women in themselves, make them capable of occupying the important place that they will assume in the fight for an independent, democratic and prosperous Senegal where men and women will freely develop without any discrimination whatsoever."

It is hoped that women in the PADS will continue this fight in their own party and that the party as a whole will lead this struggle throughout Senegalese society. This would be a considerable gain for a movement that wants to change society, and will win it the support of the women of the country. There will not be true democracy in Africa as long as women are excluded from the current debates on constitutional reform. What could be more hypocritical than these national conferences that are taking place throughout Africa where there is much talk about the people, development and democracy, but where women are practically excluded?

Women of neighbourhoods and villages

If the PADS fully meets this challenge it will gain for itself the considerable social force of the women of the neighborhoods and villages. The first stage in this process was that of electing leadership bodies. Eleven women were elected to the forty-five member Executive Secretariat (the equivalent of a Central Committee).

The PADS conference also provided the opportunity to bring together for the first time a number of independent and oppositional African organizations in order to discuss the renewal of Pan-Africanism. This was only a beginning as several invited organizations could not come. The next stage of these discussions will therefore be important.

Two options remain open along these lines: that of a broad coming together in which heterogeneity would become a paralyzing factor, or that of an anti-imperialist African left capable of taking several initial initiatives and debating strategic problems. The debate around the renewal of Pan-Africanism has only just begun. Hopefully, the continuity with the past, particularly the rich but contradictory experiences of the 1950's and 1960's, will not be broken. But these must be enriched by new generations brought up under new social conditions. Pan-Africanism can take either the form of a "regional" super-nationalism, a simple formal revolt against dependence and alienation, or of a revolutionary Pan-Africanism that would be the African link in a new internationalism capable of contributing to the renewal of a universal socialist project. ★

AROUND
THE
WORLD

AFRICA

Pan-African Forum meets

ON December 15, 1991, in Dakar, Senegal, during the founding congress of the African Party for Democracy and Socialism (see article on opposite page), an exploratory meeting of African political organizations was held to consider the possibilities for the rebirth of a militant, independent and anti-imperialist Pan-Africanism.

The number of countries represented and the political diversity of the participants meant that the Dakar forum was no more than a first modest step in this direction. But the impetus is now there. Subsequent meetings will show whether the movement can broaden itself. We publish below the final declaration of this meeting.

THE continent is in a critical situation. Despite its enormous wealth, Africa carries a derisory weight in the affairs of the world.

On the political, as well as on the economic and commercial levels, Africa is subject to the whims of foreign powers and multinationals. Its economy is ruined, weighed down by payment of the heavy foreign debt burden contracted in the name of the African peoples, but which has only served to enrich the bourgeoisies and the ruling dictatorships.

These foreign powers and multinationals imposed dictatorial regimes on the African countries at the time of independence and are now trying to hi-jack the developing democratic movement. Africa must remind the entire world that it owes its current bankruptcy primarily to capitalism (the market). Africa's failure is the failure of the political-bureaucratic bourgeoisies supported by the West which have pillaged the continent and transferred colossal fortunes to Swiss and other Western banks.

The winds of change which are blowing across the continent could be without effect if new bureaucratic regimes succeed the parasitic bourgeoisies which have, until now, presided over the destiny of Africa; and if the questions of

internal co-existence are not properly resolved.

No African country can by itself resolve the enormous problems confronting it.

That means that it is necessary to develop Pan-Africanist ideas and make them a material reality for the de-Balkanization of the continent which is, today, a central dimension of our struggle. It is necessary, in order to do this, to build new institutions controlled by men and women who are honest, competent and accountable to their people.

It also requires socio-economic choices defined in relation to the needs of the peoples and the possibilities of our countries and not in relation of those of foreign powers.

The African forces of progress should attach as much importance to the problems of internal integration of the states as to regional or continental integration.

Only then will it be possible to go beyond the logic of the frontiers inherited from colonization and replace it with the logic of peoples and grass roots communities, which could promote an African unity which is neither bureaucratic nor authoritarian, an African unity freely consented to by the peoples, which alone is capable of promoting the new behaviour and the comprehensive changes that the state of our continent and of the world demands from us.

The Pan-African Forum of progressive parties, mass democratic organizations and associations which met in Dakar on December 15, 1991, constitutes a first step in this new direction.

Consequently, the Forum decides:

- 1) To establish a Technical Secretariat charged with maintaining the links between the participating organizations;
- 2) To make contact with political parties, associations, mass democratic organizations and personalities who share the Pan-African ideal.

Signatories to the declaration included: the Gambian Anti-Apartheid Movement; the Uganda National Liberation Front (Anti-Dictatorship); Consciousness for a Democratic Alternative (Burkina Faso); Party for the Liberation of Labour (PLT-Niger); Nigerian Party for Democracy and Socialism; the Regroupment of the People of Guinea; the Ivorian Popular Front; The Ivorian Workers Party; the Union of Social Democrats (Ivory Coast); the Cameroon Popular Front; The Front of Resistance for Unity, Independence and Democracy in Mauritania; the Alliance for Democracy and Progress (ADP-Benin); And Jéf/ African Party for Democracy and Socialism (Senegal); Movement for Socialism and Unity (Senegal).

The Pan-African Forum can be contacted through PADS, Gibraltar 1, Numéro 168, Dakar, Senegal. ★

ANTILLES

Obituary — Vincent Placolý

VINCENT Placolý, well known West Indian poet and militant of the Fourth International, died at the beginning of January after a long illness.

Vincent was a founder and leader of the Groupe Révolution Socialiste (GRS), the organization of supporters of the Fourth International in Martinique and Guadeloupe. He was 45 years old.

Born in Martinique, Vincent was politically and culturally active since his schooldays. While still a student, he was involved in the launching of the anti-colonialist political and cultural magazine *Pigments* in 1963.

Later, in Paris, Vincent was a student activist and became involved with dissident members of the Union of Young Communists (the student organization of the French Communist Party). Returning to Martinique, he was instrumental in the foundation of the GRS in the early 1970s. Now enjoying literary acclaim, he remained at the forefront of the activities of the GRS and was a candidate at the 1978 legislative elections. On January 10, more than 2,000 people accompanied Vincent's funeral procession, representing political parties, associations and institutions as well as ordinary people. Prominent French West Indian writers (including Edouard Glissant and Aimé Césaire) were also present.

On January 13, the GRS organized a final evening of tribute to their comrade at which numerous poets, musicians and artists participated.



The irresistible fall of Mikhail Gorbachev

GORBACHEV's failure is in line with that of Tito, Khrushchev, Mao or Dubcek. The Soviet bureaucracy is too vast, its social networks too strong, the web of inertia, routine, obstruction and sabotage on which it rests too dense for it to be decisively weakened by actions from above. Its removal demands the initiative and action of tens of millions of workers, that is, a real popular revolution from below, an anti-bureaucratic political revolution. Gorbachev was incapable of unleashing such a revolution — nor did he wish to. His aim was to preserve the system while profoundly reforming it.

Gorbachev's course towards a radical reform of the system was not, in the first place, the result of any ideological choice. It was the outcome of unavoidable objective conditions, of the ever deepening crisis of the system in which the USSR was mired since the end of the 1970s;

The main signs of this crisis were:

- The continuous fall in growth rates, which remained lower than those of the USA for more than a decade;

- The impossibility in these conditions of maintaining at one and the same time the drive for the modernization of the economy, the arms race with imperialism, a constant, if modest rise in the living standards of the masses and the maintenance and expansion of the privileges of the bureaucracy. At least two if not three of these objectives had to be abandoned.

- The failure, predicted by Trotsky in the 1920s, of the conversion of extensive into intensive industrialization. This conversion demanded giving priority to problems of quality rather than quantity, exact calculation of costs, transparency of economic mechanisms and the growing sovereignty of the consumers. All of which are incompatible with bureaucratic dictatorship;

- The beginning of a pronounced social regression, expressed particularly by the existence of 60 million poor and the marked deterioration of the health system (including for several years an absolute fall in life expectancy);

- The loss of any political legitimacy by the regime, with the appearance of broad sectors of opposition (experts, writers, young people, the oppressed nationalities, and workers acting to some extent independently);

- A very deep ideological and moral crisis that the bureaucracy could no longer control.

Gorbachev's defeat is above all the

THE attempt at reforming the bureaucratic Soviet regime undertaken by Mikhail Gorbachev was doomed to failure. This confirms the impossibility of an attempt at self-reform by the bureaucracy.

ERNEST MANDEL

defeat of economic *perestroika*. Badly conceived from the beginning, changing direction several times, combining increasingly contradictory objectives, *perestroika* ended up dismantling the old command economy without replacing it with anything coherent.

From stagnation to economic decline

After several somersaults, economic decline followed stagnation from 1990 onwards. Galloping inflation contributed to precipitating the decline. The links between enterprises began to unravel. Consumer goods disappeared from the official distribution circuits, being gradually monopolized by various mafias and the free market, where they were sold at exorbitant prices.

The essential minimum income in Moscow at the start of 1991 was 200 roubles a month per person, which was still covered by the minimum wage. In October 1991 the essential minimum income had risen to 521 roubles according to calculations by the unions. Some 90% of Muscovites got less than this sum. Since then the situation has got still worse. And now we have the massive price rises of January 2, 1992. Given this progressive deterioration of the living conditions of broad masses, Gorbachev completely lost his popular base.

The fundamental driving force behind Gorbachev's foreign policy was to stop the arms race at all costs and obtain technological and financial aid from imperialism to save the sinking ship. This led to counter-revolutionary regional accords at the expense of the Central American and Cuban revolutions, and the liberation struggles in South Africa and the Arab world. In this, Gorbachev was doing nothing more than continuing the long history of betrayals of the international revolution by Stalin, his successors and

their acolytes: the betrayal of the Spanish, Yugoslav and Greek revolutions, the betrayal of the opportunities for revolutionary breakthroughs in France and Italy in 1944-48 and 1968-9, and the betrayals of the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cuban (in the first phase) and Portuguese revolutions.

However, if it was illusory to expect Gorbachev to succeed, it would also be an error to close one's eyes to the profound and positive changes that took place in the USSR under Gorbachev.

These changes are essentially summed up by *glasnost*, or, if you prefer, the substantial extension of democratic liberties in practise enjoyed by the Soviet masses.

These liberties are of course limited, partial and not constitutionally guaranteed and have been combined with authoritarian features that were accentuated in the last period of Gorbachev's reign. But these democratic liberties were real enough. Many parties, political associations, social groupings, and independent workers' organizations arose. A press entirely outside the control of the party's censorship appeared. Public demonstrations, often of great size, took place. There were an increasing number of strikes. Elections offering the voters a choice of candidates with genuinely different political orientations were organized.

To deny that this was a colossal change for the masses compared to the Stalinist and post-Stalinist regimes, and to describe the Gorbachev regime as "totalitarian", amounts to prettifying the Stalinist dictatorship.

Under Stalin there were millions of political prisoners. Under Gorbachev there were less than in the USA, Britain, the Spanish State or Israel. Under Stalin all strikes were bloodily suppressed. Under Gorbachev no strike was bloodily suppressed.

Such a mistaken vision of the political reality in the USSR is the result of an ultra-leftist conception of variants of political regimes. In this conception only one distinction exists: the power of the Soviets and the fascist — or fascist-inclined — bourgeois dictatorship. All intermediary forms disappear from view.

The August 1991 putschists wanted to severely limit or even suppress the democratic liberties that existed in reality. They intended to suppress the right to strike and independent workers organizations. This is why the putsch had to be opposed by all means available. And this is why the failure of the putsch should be hailed.

This means that the working masses of the ex-USSR must now undertake a struggle on two fronts: for the defence, exten-

sion and consolidation of democratic liberties on the one hand, and on the other against privatization. To abandon one of these two central struggles would be to sacrifice the fundamental interests of the working class.

There is no chance of the development and victory of the political revolution in the ex-USSR without the working class regaining its capacity for mass independent political class organization. This objective, in turn, can only be realized by a long period of apprenticeship, of the development of struggles and the emergence of a new vanguard. Without democratic liberties in reality, this process will be much longer, more difficult and would have fewer chances of reaching a successful conclusion. And without such a political revolution, the restoration of capitalism is inevitable in the long term.

Gorbachev was not overthrown by a mass mobilization. Nor was he overthrown by an offensive by imperialism or domestic bourgeois forces. He has been overthrown by a wing of the bureaucracy led by Boris Yeltsin.

Yeltsin: a man of the apparatus

Yeltsin, just as much, if not more than Gorbachev, represents a faction in the top levels of the nomenklatura. Yeltsin, by his whole past and education, is a man of the apparatus. His gifts as a populist demagogue do not permit the modification of this judgement. If there is something that distinguishes Yeltsin from Gorbachev it is that he is less inclined to evasion, more authoritarian and thus more dangerous for the masses.

People will say that, unlike Gorbachev, who continued in some vague fashion to call himself a socialist, Yeltsin has come out openly for the restoration of capitalism. This is true. But professions of faith are not enough for us to form an assessment of politicians. We have to look at what happens in practice and what social

interests they serve.

From this point of view, Yeltsin and his allies in the liquidation of the USSR in favour of the "Commonwealth of Sovereign States" represent a faction of the nomenklatura distinct from the bourgeois forces properly so-called (essentially the "lumpen-millionaires", the new bourgeoisie), although they can overlap at the margins.

The most typical cases are those of the presidents of the Ukraine and Kazakhstan who, together with Yeltsin, have "betrayed Gorbachev" (in the latter's own phrase) to liquidate the USSR.

Both were leaders of the Stalinist apparatus in these two republics at the beginning of the Gorbachev era. Both continue to rely on the local, hardly changed, KGB. At the start both played a waiting game, or even supported the putsch. They have both used the legitimate revolt of the masses of their region against national oppression to convert themselves into "nationalist leaders".

Their cynicism is manifested by the their readiness to associate, at least for the time being, with Yeltsin and his acolytes, who are authentic Great Russian chauvinists.

What we are seeing in the ex-USSR is a triangular struggle between; factions at the top of the nomenklatura; directly restorationist, that is bourgeois in the social sense of the term forces; and the labouring masses. These three forces are distinct, acting in society according to their own distinct interests.

New putsches are possible. Yeltsin may well rapidly lose popularity, given the anti-worker and anti-popular policies he is pursuing. Behind him can be seen the sinister figure of Vladimir Shirinovskiy, the Soviet Le Pen, who looks for inspiration at one and the same time to Stalin, the Tsar and Pinochet; he has the support of a wing of the army and is furiously Great Russian, xenophobic, anti-semitic and racist. His popularity should not be underestimated.

We do not today face either a revolutionary or a pre-revolutionary situation in the ex-USSR. Without doubt, the working class is infinitely stronger than its adversaries, far stronger than in 1917 or 1927. At the same time Stalinism is, as we have always predicted, in the process of collapsing. But for it to be overthrown by a political revolution, the working class must act as an independent political force, which is not the case today.

Due to the enormous discredit thrown on the very ideas of communism, socialism or Marxism by the Stalinist dictatorship, the void created by the profound ideological/moral crisis of Soviet society is not about to be filled by the working class. This is active, but only for short-term immediate ends and in a fragmented and discontinuous way. The right wing has the political initiative.

The broken thread of history

Contrary to our legitimate hopes up until 1980-81 (the first rise of Solidarnosc), the thread that leads from the revolt in the Vorkuta labour camp and the East German uprising of 1953 through the Hungarian revolution of 1956 to the "Prague Spring" and the first steps of Polish Solidarnosc has been broken. It will take time to restore it.

Does this mean that a lasting restoration of the power of the nomenklatura or a real restoration of capitalism are the most likely outcomes? Not at all. They are just as unlikely as a rapid move to political revolution.

Certainly, the Yeltsin government has taken some initial steps towards capitalist restoration. But there is a huge distance between the beginning and the end of such a process.

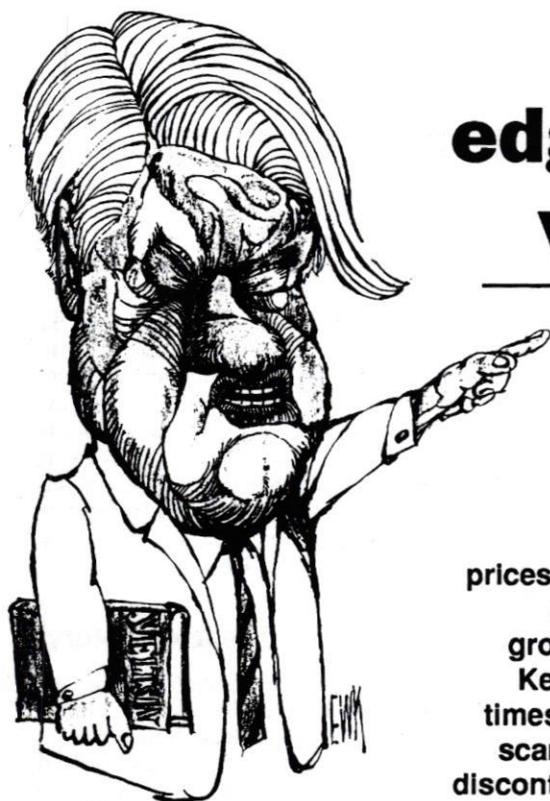
For a real restoration of capitalism, an extension of the commodity economy — which remains today less developed in the ex-USSR than in the time of the New Economic Policy of the 1920s — is not enough. The big means of production and exchange must also become commodities. This requires at least \$1,000bn, a sum which is not available in present conditions, either in the West or the ex-USSR itself.

It is also necessary for labour power to be subjected to the laws of the "labour market". This implies 30 to 40 million unemployed and a drop in living standards of the order of 30 to 50%; this will meet with fierce resistance.

The most probable eventuality is a long period of decomposition and chaos. Our modest but real hope must be that in this period the Soviet working class will be able gradually to reconquer its class independence. The main task of the small and fragmented socialist forces is to link up with the workers and aid them to overcome the obstacles to that end. ★



"How I love this country; its people have such a sense of humour!" — cartoon by Vladimir Jiranek from the Czech daily, *Lidové noviny*.



On the edge of the volcano?

THREE weeks have passed since the main republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States (SNG — the successor to the USSR) liberalized prices. Turmoil in the economy and in social relations is growing almost by the day. Key products (now several times more expensive) are as scarce as before the reform; discontent among the people is growing and has in some regions begun taking on organized forms while the liberal reformers in power seem increasingly divided about how to go forward.

POUL FUNDER LARSEN

RUSSIAN leader Boris Yeltsin had a taste of popular anger when, during his "American style" campaign tour to explain the necessity of market reforms, he visited a supermarket in the city of Engels on the Volga.

The daily *Izvestiya* (January 9) reported: "The customers kept him for more than an hour. On the counters were sausages at 191 roubles a kilo, marmalade at 92 roubles, sour cream at 78 roubles, and the shop tried to sell butter at 270 roubles a kilo... Who fixes such perfidious prices? 'Nobody should dictate the prices, neither the producers and enterprises, nor the traders — only supply and demand' said Yeltsin, who was himself quite shocked."

It can hardly be the level of prices that shocked Yeltsin, since the president and his team have been well aware of the consequences of freeing prices in an economy totally dominated by bureaucratic monopolies; however, the reaction of the customers may have given him a chilly presentiment of the troubles ahead. Indeed, some republican and regional authorities have already back-tracked on parts of the steepest price rises.

A recent opinion poll showed that confidence in the success of the economic

policies of the Yeltsin government dropped from 53% on January 2 to 42% on January 16. However, a majority of the people still maintains a wait-and-see position hoping that Yeltsin's promises will come true, so that in "half a year the first improvements will occur."

This gives the "democrats" a little room for manoeuvre, but the contradictions within the Yeltsin camp are multiplying with both vice-president Rutskoy and chair of the Russian parliament Khasbulatov openly criticizing the record of the government and (more or less explicitly), Yeltsin.

Recently Yeltsin also had to recognize a major setback for his efforts to centralize powers and create a strong repressive force. The attempt to set up a Russian "Ministry of Security and the Interior" (MBVD) was halted by a decision from the newly formed Constitutional Court of Russia, ruling this an unconstitutional measure.

The idea had been to merge the structures of the KGB and the Ministry of the Interior (MVD) into one extraordinarily powerful body. This aroused strong reactions from many sides (including some of the "democrats") evoking fears of a new structure akin to Stalin's NKVD, which had also united all repressive forces in

one ministry.

However, Yeltsin could be in desperate need of effective means of repression if the despair and spontaneous protests spread and turn into organized action.

There have been several outbursts of protest and riots — with a particularly violent clash occurring in the capital of Uzbekistan Tashkent, where police attacked students protesting against the effects of the price rises on their meagre grants. Some local strikes have been reported — for example, in the capital of Kazakhstan, Alma Ata — but the most important developments so far have been in some of the mining regions.

"Pre-strike readiness"

In the Western Siberian Kusbass the miners are in "pre-strike readiness" as the contradictions between the government and the strong workers movement in the Kusbass sharpen. Yeltsin can still count on a certain "state of grace" in Kusbass, but this may soon come to an end as railway workers, teachers, health workers and even policemen are announcing strike action.

The situation in the Donbass region of Ukraine and southern Russia is even more tense; the general social crisis of the mining regions is taking its toll and the breakdown of economic links between regions and republics accelerates this process. Some miners in the Donbass have already stopped working: "Life in the Donbass has become 8-15 times more expensive. Not only parts of the production, but whole enterprises and combines [of enterprises] have stopped. Thus on January 13, all mines in the Dzherzhinskugol combine (*obedinieniya*), where 20,000 miners are employed, had to stop the production of coked fuel, because of lack of wood for shoring up the galleries." (*Izvestiya*, January 16).

Meanwhile in the Karaganda field of northern Kazakhstan by early January the miners went on strike over the issue of wages and the sharing of incomes from coal production. According to *Pravda* (January 15), ten mines were on strike, and the strikes were continuing despite the intervention of president Nazarbayev and his prime minister.

In a telephone interview with *IV* on January 21, the Moscow leftwing activist Vadim Damier summed up the situation as seen from Moscow:

"The mass of people are still rather passive, though certainly angry. So far in Moscow, the neo-Stalinists have been in the forefront of organized protests, while the 'official' trade unions have generally not taken major initiatives. The Russian 'official' trade unions (FNPR) are torn between a certain political loyalty to the Yeltsinites and the growing pressure from below. The left wing, for its part, has organized some demonstrations, but so far without a mass response." ★