

International VIEWPOINT

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The Israeli Soldier Antiwar Movement

Solidarnosc
today

Debate with
German Greens

The new
situation
in Chile



International Viewpoint

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Israeli antiwar soldiers sum up the movement's progress

One year after launching the war against Lebanon, the Zionist regime remains heavily involved in the country.

But the Begin government has not yet achieved any of its main war aims. It has not smashed the Palestine Liberation Organization. It has not built a stable right-wing buffer state in Lebanon. It has not been able to deliver a crushing blow to Syria. And, most importantly of all, it has not reconsolidated Zionist national unity among the Israeli Jewish population.

The war of attrition with Syria in the Bekaa valley has already cost more Israeli casualties than the siege of Beirut. According to the most recent polls, 50 percent of the Israeli population favors a unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon.

The Lebanon conflict thus remains the most political of all the Zionist wars and is tending to become more and more so. The outcome depends decisively on the ability of the Palestinian movement to keep up pressure on the Zionist state and on the ability of the anti-Zionist forces within Israel to win decisive sections of the Jewish population to an alternative to "fortress Zion."

The resolution of the present conflict in the PLO will certainly affect the ability of the movement to maintain pressure on Israel. But it will take some time for the facts to become clear. In the meantime, in this issue, we look at the other side of the equation, the growth of the anti-war movement in the Israeli army.

At a press conference to mark the anniversary of the invasion of Lebanon by the Israeli army, the reserve soldiers movement against the Lebanon war, "Yesh Gvul" ("There Is a Border" and also "There Is a Limit"), announced that it had just gotten the two-thousandth signature on its petition demanding that the ministry of defense not send any of the signers to Lebanon.

Among the numerous officers who signed the petition, many of whom were high ranking, were the former general secretary of the Labor Party and a judge of the Jerusalem district court, both of them lieutenant colonels.

At the same time, hundreds of soldiers were signing another petition rejecting the campaign medals due them for participation in the Lebanon war. TV, radio, and all the daily papers devoted a large part of their reviews of the results of the first year of war in Lebanon to the soldier movement against the war.

It is not an exaggeration to talk about a reservist soldiers movement against the war. (1) Given the central role of the army in the Jewish state, *International Viewpoint* was interested not just in the soldiers movement itself but in its place in a perspective of struggle against Zionism.

So, our correspondent met three anti-Zionist activists in the "Yesh Gvul" movement. Meir, an engineering worker, is a member of the Political Bureau of the Revolutionary Communist League, the Fourth Internationalist organization in Israel. He is a corporal in the quartermaster corps.

Yigal, a former member of a kibbutz, is a building worker and a sergeant in an

armored unit.

The third person interviewed, A., is public worker and a reserve lieutenant.

The last two joined the Revolutionary Communist League during the Lebanon war, partially as a result of their work in Yesh Gvul.

"When the war started," Yigal recounted, "and we were mobilized, there was an unprecedented disarray in the battalion. Most of us didn't want this war, but people didn't know what to do, whether to go or refuse to go. The idea of refusing to go was not altogether new.

"In recent years there has been talk on several occasions about soldiers refusing to do their reserve duty in the occupied territories. I was demoted myself for conducting a refusal action two years ago in the occupied territories.

"The problem with refusing to serve was not so much the threat of actions or lack of firmness in rejecting this war. The hardest thing is to stay behind when your friends are going into the slaughterhouse.

"For us, things were easier. We were told that we were going to the Golan Heights to hold the defense lines and not to Lebanon. Immediately afterward, we found ourselves facing two Syrian units on the eastern front!"

Yigal, who is 31 years old, went through the October 1973 war in an elite unit that suffered numerous casualties. He himself was wounded. At that time, he had no objections to having to fight.

"Like everybody, I thought that the Arabs wanted to drive us into the sea and that I was fighting for my life. Today, along with thousands of people, I have come to see that this myth of being the

victims of unjustified aggression is what glues the Israeli army together.

"There isn't any need for disciplinary battalions to force family men to fight. There is a self-imposed discipline based on strong personal motivation and loyalty to comrades that has been forged over the years under the pressure of national consensus."

As reactionary and colonialist as it is, the Israeli army is nonetheless a people's army. Its backbone are the reserve units, which are made up of citizens in arms between the ages of 35 and 60, including the officers.

Meir said: "When for ten or twenty years you spend a month or two every year with the same people, a solidarity develops that you don't find very often even in a shop or a factory. That's the strength of Zionism but it's also its weakness.

"So long as the soldiers are convinced that there's no choice, and that sooner or later there will be peace, this kind of army is effective.

"As soon as doubts arise, or it seems that war is not inevitable, or that it's Israel that's doing everything it can to knock away the hand offered by the Arabs, this sort of motivation boomerangs. Why should you risk your life when there's another option?"

During the Lebanon war, a number of factors came together to upset the image that Israeli soldiers had of the Palestinian militia and expose the big lies of the Zionist authorities and their systematic propaganda to dehumanize the enemy ("two-footed animals," "cockroaches"). There was the fact that in the year preceding the invasion the PLO scrupulously kept the ceasefire. There were the many statements by PLO leaders favoring a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the war itself, the heroism of the Palestinian fighters was often striking. And the treatment of Israeli prisoners of war was more than humane.

As a credibility gap opened up between the bases of the Israeli soldiers' motivation and the real objectives of the war, the government had no choice but to escalate its lies.

Yigal said: "One of the things that most scandalized us was to hear the radio say in the second week of the war that Israel had accepted a ceasefire with the Syrians, but that they attacked us anyway.

"At that very moment, when the front was entirely quiet, we got the order to 'step up the pressure on the line.' It was disinformation of this sort, which seemed to be a new thing to most Israelis — although it was not — that led to the formation of the short-lived 'Soldiers Against Silence.'

"The aim of this group was to demand clarification about a series of initiatives that had resulted in numerous losses and had extended the war far beyond the

1. Reservists from the bulk of the Israeli army in periods of mobilization. — IV.

forty kilometre area that Begin said was the limit of the 'Peace in Galilee' operation."

A. said: "The big difference between Yesh Gvul and the Soldiers Against Silence was that we in Yesh Gvul offered a practical answer to tens of thousands of soldiers who felt deceived.

"Peace Now, from which Soldiers Against Silence came, only raised questions. We said, 'There is a limit, *yesh gvul*, that we will not pass.' Today there are more than two thousand people who have declared their refusal to go to Lebanon, and the list is getting longer every day. But the Soldiers Against Silence disappeared a long time ago."

There is a limit. But what limit? Why Lebanon more than the occupied territories, why this war more than the 1967 war? "It's true that there's fundamentally no difference," A. said. For him, the Lebanon war was such a revelation that it brought him from moderate Zionist positions to Yesh Gvul, and from Yesh Gvul to an anti-Zionist position, and then to the Revolutionary Communist League.

"But," A. continued, "I only understand that now. When the Lebanon war broke out, how many were there like Meir who refused to go right off the bat? Even the Yesh Gvul petition, which was formulated in a very moderate way — 'We ask not to be sent to Lebanon' — got started only after several weeks.

"It was the unfolding of the war, the massacres, the lies, that confirmed in practice for everyone that this was a dirty war and that broke the national consensus.

"Once this first break was made, the way was opened up for a more general confrontation with the myths of Zionism. How did we get there? Was it because the same arguments were used in the previous wars? Weren't they also the result of Israeli aggression? Today the whole thing is collapsing. Now a lot of people in the soldiers movement are refusing to do their tours of duty in the occupied territories as well.

Meir was the first soldier to refuse to go to Lebanon. He did so on June 7. "Disobedience is not a principle in itself; it's a tactical decision," Meir said. "We made that decision in the Revolutionary Communist League on June 6, 1982, on the basis of a concrete assessment and the certainty that the war would rapidly become unpopular, and that so our action and our appeal would be understood and even be followed.

"At the beginning we were isolated. In the first days everything seemed to be 'going smoothly' for Sharon and company. There seemed to be an atmosphere of national unity. Friends who a few weeks later joined in setting up Yesh Gvul tried to persuade us not to take an initiative that looked likely to isolate us and make our comrades who had been called up easy targets for repression."

After refusing to cross the border, Meir was sent to a rear base in Israel itself. There his conviction that his organ-

ization had made the correct choice was reinforced. "The reaction of the soldiers on the base where I was stationed was still better than I expected. In the quartermaster corps there are not a lot of would-be heroes. It's rather the opposite. There is an overwhelming majority of oriental Jews, people from poor neighborhoods or immigrant towns, young workers, or lumpen. Most of them didn't see why they should risk their lives in Lebanon. Moreover, they had respect for somebody who was ready to take risks and confront the authorities for a principle."

Yigal said: "In a unit like mine, it's different. The ideology is a lot stronger. But if you proved in the past that you weren't a gold brick, that you lived up to your responsibilities, then they could understand and respect your choice."

A. just got out of prison where he was held 21 days for refusing to join his unit in Lebanon: "Along with me were 18 reserve soldiers and officers who were sentenced for refusing to go to Lebanon. Not only was there an excellent atmosphere and constant political discussion among us, but we were the center of attention for the other prisoners, with whom we had long political conversations. Generally, the soldiers understood us and often respected our choice.

"A young guy called up from a small immigrant town told me: 'I don't agree with you. I support Begin. I hate the Peace Now people. I respect you on the other hand because you at least put your money where your mouth is, and you don't just make speeches but take risks. That's what counts.'"

"It should be said that the risks were not very great, the penalties were relatively light. I know some soliders have considered refusing to go to Lebanon, figuring that a stay of twenty to thirty days in military prison was less serious than running the risk of getting killed in an ambush."

This last point was confirmed by a top officer in a radio interview, and it is undoubtedly the reason behind a change in policy by the military authorities.

At the beginning, the policy was to cover up the cases of refusal to go to Lebanon. Then, after the impact of the Yesh Gvul petition, the line was to impose punishments but nothing going beyond the usual limits of military discipline. Today, the general staff has decided to send soliders back to Lebanon after they have served a term in prison for refusing to go there, and to give them another sentence if they refuse again, and keep it up. Things are going badly for the Israeli army if it finds itself forced to reinforce its repressive arsenal to impress on soldiers that they have to go to Lebanon.

The impact of the soliders movement goes far beyond the left. It exceeds even the periphery of the currents united in the Committee Against the War in Lebanon.

Yigal pointed out: "It is paradoxical, but the people who have refused to go to Lebanon and have joined Yesh Gvul are

often more 'right wing' than those in the Committee Against the War in Lebanon. This is the only organization where you find typical supporters of Peace Now, even some ex-supporters of Likud [Begin's party] and radicals, communists, and anti-Zionists. The reason for this is that it is in the army, as a soldier, that you are obliged to confront political reality most directly.

"To a certain extent, the army lowers the barriers. That gives what you think more weight, more legitimacy, even if your views are very radical, than it would have in civilian life. This explains another paradox. It is those with the least political background, the 'new comers' who are the most radical. And it is often the activists of the left and far-left organizations in Yesh Gvul who are obliged to hold back initiatives that would cut the movement off from tens of thousands of people who in one way or another support our fight."

Meir added: "That shows how it is important for left activists not to try to avoid military service, even though it isn't very pleasant serving in an apparatus for repressing the Palestinians. In this sense, as I said before, disobedience is not a line in itself. If we chose this course for the present war, it doesn't flow from some 'special horror' of this war, as some have said, or because it is less legitimate than the others. For us as anti-Zionists, this war is no more criminal than the one in 1967 or in 1948.

"The reason is that, in the present context, we estimated, and this proved to be quite correct, that a refusal to go to Lebanon would not cut us off from the broad anti-war sentiment, even in our army units, but to the contrary it would be a concrete way of expressing our total opposition to this criminal adventure.

"It doesn't follow from this by any means that we will follow this tactic of refusing to serve as the crisis of Zionism deepens. Quite the contrary. The crisis of Zionism is, and will be, more and more of a military one. That is, it will take the form of armed confrontations, of wars, occupation. And the army, that is, the bulk of the male population, will be in the center of it. The duty of peace activists then will be to be with their companions in their units to help them find an alternative to the suicidal policy of Zionism.

"What the Lebanon war showed, more than anything else, was that the anti-Zionist activists were right to put their bets on the possibility of breaking the national consensus and of detaching a major section of Jewish workers from Zionism. This is no longer a theory today but more and more of a concrete reality, as is shown by the thousands of soliders who have broken from the actual line of action of the leaders of the Zionist state. This is going to make it possible for us and for all those who long ago decided to make a common cause with 'the enemy' to find the strength to continue to wear the despised uniform of the Zionist army. ■

The new stage in Chile: Interview with a Chilean revolutionist

Despite the semifailure of the general strike called in Chile on June 23, it seems clear that a new period has opened in the country that will be very important for the Latin American and world workers movement.

It is necessary, therefore, to look more at the political life of the Chilean left and workers movement, in particular in connection with such big events as the mid-June National Day of Action and the attempted general strike.

Shortly after the calling off of the general strike, Jean-Pierre Beauvais, a journalist of *Rouge*, the paper of the French section of the Fourth International, was able to interview a Chilean revolutionary leader. Beauvais's introduction follows, able to interview a Chilean revolutionary leader. Beauvais' introduction follows and then the text of the interview, which has been somewhat abridged.

* * *

The general strike call issued by the Workers National Command (CNT) and the truckers union was not generally followed. On June 26, three days after launching the action, the initiating organizations "suspended" it. They explained that they took this decision because they wanted to make a positive response to the Catholic church's appeal for "dialogue." The Chilean conference of bishops had called on the government and the opposition not to "let yourselves be caught up in a spiral of violence."

Since the full facts are not yet known outside Chile, it would be speculative to try to draw a balance sheet of an action that some Chilean opposition leaders have not hesitated to call a "defeat."

Will the upsurge of mass mobilizations of the workers and the poor that has developed in recent months be halted? The extent of the economic, social, and political crisis and the isolation of the dictatorship indicate that it will be difficult for the regime to accomplish that.

Will the process of recomposition that has been going on in the Chilean workers movement and the opposition be affected by this setback, and if so, how? The first indication of the answer to this question will become clear in the coming tests of the struggle, some of which have already been scheduled for the next few weeks.

In any case, it seems likely that the authority and influence of the Christian Democratic union leaders who, after playing a key role in launching the action, demonstrated their desire for "dialogue" with the dictatorship will be seriously challenged.

On the general situation in Chile and the analysis of the recent developments, we interviewed a representative of the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left), the best known of the Chilean far-left organizations.

Since the start of the 1970, under the Allende government, as well as throughout the dark years under the Pinochet tyranny, despite a somewhat uneven course of political development, the MIR has remained the main component of the Chilean revolutionary left. In the working-class and popular mobilizations that went beyond the reformist framework of Allende's Unidad Popular, as well as in the resistance to the dictatorship, the militants of the MIR have continued to play a leading role.

In publishing this interview, we are obviously not endorsing all the positions the MIR hold. This is an act of solidarity. It is also a reflection of a reality. No Chilean revolutionary activist working to achieve the clarification and recomposition that are so necessary when the "Pinochet era" is coming to an end can fail to consider the positions of the MIR.

Jean-Pierre BEAUVAIS

Question. How do you analyze the crisis of the Pinochet dictatorship?

Answer. Beginning in 1978-79, the Chilean masses began to emerge from the retreat that followed the coup d'etat and defeat of 1973. Gradually the conditions developed that made it possible to organize the people's forces socially and politically.

This is also the period when the dictatorship took a series of initiatives, in particular at the constitutional level, designed to give legitimacy to its rule. It considered a complete restructuring of political and social life and the institution, beginning in 1989, of a sort of "controlled democracy."

The prebiscite held in 1980 was part of this perspective. And, at first glance, it seemed to reflect a certain stabilization of the regime on the basis of a favorable relationship of forces. That is, at first glance it did, because at about the same time the reorganization that was underway in the people's movement was reflected by a very important strike — the strike of the Panal workers, which they maintained for two months. This was an exemplary strike in its combativity, its methods of organizing and fighting, and above all in the fact that it got solidarity from the workers and people's organizations nationwide.

Q. Then the economic crisis started.

A. This contradictory process was

thrown for a loop in 1981 and especially 1982 by an economic crisis that was more rapid and extensive than anything ever seen before in Chile.

At the start, a lot of major financial groups went bankrupt because, big as they were, they were not solid enough to hold up in the situation created by the world economic crisis. They were hard hit in particular by the falling prices for raw materials, including copper, which is the country's major export.

The deepening and widening of this crisis over 1982 was reflected in a 14 percent drop in industrial production, a 28.3 percent decline in the building industry, and a 14 percent decline in trading.

Officially 21.9 percent of the working age population was unemployed. In fact, if you add those who the regime calls "beneficiaries of the minimum employment program," that is, people who do tasks such as sweeping the streets in order to collect a little dole money, the figure is 30 percent.

In 1982, according to the official figures, the average buying power of wage workers dropped by 15 percent, and 810 enterprises had to close their doors.

Practically all sectors of the economy are overburdened by massive indebtedness, and the country's entire financial system is virtually bankrupt. Per capita, Chile has the world's greatest foreign debt. There is no way it can pay the interest owed to the big American banks, unless they are prepared to grant new loans!

There's no need to go on. This hopeless crisis reveals the total failure of the monetarist model imposed by the dictatorship and the imperialists.

Q. What have been the effects of this inside the regime?

A. Once this situation developed, the conflicts among the various sections of the bourgeoisie sharpened, and their alliance around the government started to break down. Who was going to pay the cost of the crisis? What means should be used to assure the survival of bourgeois rule in this situation? Somewhat schematically, we can say that it was around these two essential questions that the differences among different sections of the bourgeoisie have appeared.

Roughly three groups have emerged. One favors maintaining the monetarist approach and carrying it further. Another is for increased state intervention in economic life but combined with setting up a corporatist-type political-social organization. A third grouping is favorable to a relative political liberalization, that is, it looks to a consensus of bourgeois currents, including the Christian Democrats, as the only way of assuring that "social control" will be maintained. On the economic level, this political liberalization would go hand in hand with a certain amount of protectionism.

Q. And what have the effects of the economic crisis been for the workers

movement, for the poor masses?

A. The other big result of the crisis is the fact that the mobilization of the masses for their concrete demands has assumed new dimensions. Our leadership inside the country has made an analysis of the development of all sorts of struggles for immediate demands, both legal and illegal. In 1981, there were 172 such struggles in total. In 1982, there were 672.

This figures reflect an extension of people's mobilizations to most social categories throughout the country. Of course, such mobilizations are strongest in the main industrial centers — Santiago, Valparaiso, Concepcion — and in the mining centers. Another point, to clarify the full extent of this development. The number of struggles for immediate demands in 1982 that I gave was by itself more than the total of all such struggles waged between 1974 and 1981.

This economic crisis, the contradictions in the ruling bloc, and the government's growing difficulty in preventing or controlling mass mobilizations, taken together, indicate the scope of the dictatorship's crisis.

Q. Did the mass mobilizations continue to grow after the end of 1982?

A. Yes. In fact, they took on a new scope after August 19, 1982. It was on that day that we had our first mass street demonstrations [since 1973]. Since then the mobilizations grew month by month to culminate in the big demonstrations of May 11 and June 14. It became evident that the people's movement was becoming a fundamental factor, an obstacle to the regime's attempts to find a solution to the crisis.

Q. Nonetheless, the general strike last week was a semifailure.

A. To understand what happened, obviously you have to take into account first the stepped-up repression, censorship, and so forth. But you also have to take into account the present situation in the trade-union movement.

In our view, the revival of the workers movement since 1978-79 has been marked by two parallel and interacting tendencies.

On the one hand, you have the reorganization of the trade-union leaderships from the top. This reflects the comeback of traditional Chilean trade-unionism, the trade-union-movement that historically organized the working class. This movement today is divided up into several sectors.

The CNS (Coordinadora Nacional Sindical, National Trade-Union Coordinating Committee) includes essentially Christian Democrats, as well as Communist and Socialist trade-unionists). The UDT (Union Democratica de los Trabajadores, Democratic Union of Workers) includes Christian Democrats influenced by the U.S. trade-union organizations (the AFL-CIO). The CTC (Sindicato de los Trabajadores del Cobre, Copper Workers Union) has a Christian Democratic leadership,

even though this includes some unionists linked to the left.

I should also mention the ANEF (Public Workers Association) and the CEPCH (Confederation of White-Collar Workers in the Private Sector). Both define themselves as "moderate."

At the leadership level, this brand of trade-unionism has inherited the faults of the old Chilean trade-union movement — bureaucratization, the lack of effective links with the base units, and deliberately maintained divisions that foster immobilism.

On the other hand, there is a growth of a rank-and-file trade-union movement in the workplaces, which is often coordinated at the local level through clandestine structures. This rank-and-file trade-union movement has a democratic life and real participation by the workers in making decisions. It is the expression of a new trade-union activism that is vigorous, militant, and jealous of its independence from the bosses and the bourgeoisie.

This rank-and-file trade-union movement has shown its capacity to organize struggles and conduct actions that go as far as factory occupations and mean confrontations with the dictatorship. In this movement, even though it includes the most diverse political tendencies, there is a prevailing spirit of unity and a general understanding of the need for overall solidarity.

Over these past months, this rank-and-file trade-union movement has played a leading role in the mobilizations, but at the same time the traditional leaderships have not been replaced.

Q. And these are the leaderships that took the initiative of launching the general strike...

A. In the beginning, the strike call reflected a demand from the ranks. A few weeks ago, for example, the delegates present at the CTC congress demanded a national strike for democracy, that is, a political confrontation with the dictatorship.

With the mobilization gathering steam, the leaders, essentially those linked to the Christian Democracy, decided to go along. They did so out of necessity, in order to control the movement, channel it, and gain political advantage out of it. Hence the contradictions that were clear in the streets themselves between the slogans of the rank-and-file structures ("Democracy Now!") and those of the leadership calling for "liberalization."

Q. You were talking about the union leaders linked to the Christian Democratic Party, who played the most prominent role. But about those linked to the Communist Party and the Socialist Party?

A. They have not been inactive, and their role cannot be underestimated. But they are targets of repression and in most cases do not have clandestine leadership structures. They have been tied down by repression much more than the Christian Democrats, some of whom have been interviewed by the press and been able to

speak out even when they were imprisoned.

What's more, the CP and SP unionists are paying the price for their old orientation, which amounted to abdicating their role to the Christian Democrats. Arguing that they had to shield themselves from repression, they often helped Christian Democrats into the leading posts. And the Christian Democrats knew how to take advantage of this.

Q. What was the MIR's position toward the tests of these past weeks?

A. For a year, the MIR's line has been to build at the rank-and-file level for a workers and people's general strike that would be led by the left forces and which would be able to draw in other sections of society that are suffering from the crisis — a general strike to overthrow the dictatorship.

In our opinion, last week the necessary conditions for such a general strike had not yet been assembled. The leadership of the movement, in particular, for the reasons I have noted, was still largely in the hands of the Christian Democrats, some of whom were notoriously linked to imperialism.

More than ever, as the crisis of the dictatorship accelerates, political clarity is essential. The bourgeois opposition, of which the major component is the Christian Democratic Party, is trying to put itself forward today as a credible alternative. But its plan calls for subordinating the interests of the masses to compromises with imperialism, to the monopolies, and to the armed forces. It offers Chilean society no guarantee for a better future.

What can assure the overthrow of the dictatorship and the establishment of full democracy for the masses?

Who will guarantee that the repressive apparatus of the DINA-CNI will be abolished and that the murders and torturers will be tried and punished?

Who will guarantee that the cases of the "missing persons" will be cleared up?

Who will guarantee that the armed forces and the police will be democratized and that the people's militias needed to protect the rights of citizens against the threat of another coup d'etat will be set up?

Who will guarantee that the courts will be reorganized and that those judges who have been accomplices of the tyranny will be ousted?

Finally, who is going to guarantee the expropriation of the trusts that are responsible for the poverty, hunger, and for the pillage of our resources?

This is why we are fighting to make sure that the popular resistance — which we are striving to build — to make sure that the left as a whole, that all consistent democrats reject any social pact. No class collaborationism. No subordination of the people's interest and the interests of the nation. This is the prerequisite for establishing the democratic, popular, revolutionary alternative that we are fighting for. Last week's events confirm that this is both possible and necessary. ■

Christian Democrats fail to restabilize bourgeois government in Italy

In a statement issued shortly after the results of the Italian general elections were announced the Secretariat of the Lega Comunista Rivoluzionaria, Italian section of the Fourth International, made the following major points.

1. The plan by the Christian Democrats to restabilize bourgeois rule and achieve a moderate shift to the right has failed. The setback of the Christian Democrats and the fragmentation of the bourgeois vote means that the bourgeoisie is further than ever from building an effective political instrument to rule the country in a period of economic crisis.

2. The growth of the vote for the neofascist Movimento Sociale Italiano reflects the fact that the economic crisis, the scandals, and the continued governmental instability are fueling authoritarian tendencies in some moderate sectors.

3. The increase in the vote of the Republican Party, the most consistent advocate of antilabor austerity policies, shows that sections of the business class are dissatisfied with the indecisive line of the Christian Democrats as they see it.

4. The left vote in general held up very well, indicating the continuing combativity of the working class and disappointing the Christian Democrats' hopes for a wearing down of the working-class vote. On the other hand, the complicity of the Communist Party leadership in the policy of austerity, its failure to offer a clear alternative to the bourgeois policy, meant that the CP and therefore the left in general, since the CP is the biggest party, failed overall to take advantage of the revolt against the Christian Democrats.

5. The good showing made by the far-left coalition of the Lega Comunista Rivoluzionaria and Democrazia Proletaria in a number of areas showed the correctness of putting forward a united far-left slate and that a significant section of working class activists are ready to listen to a consistent class-struggle alternative.

6. The conditions are improved for putting forward the alternative of a government of the workers parties and a working-class solution to the crisis. The radicalization of bourgeois party supporters to the right, in particular the vote for the MSI, shows, moreover, that it is more and more urgent to put forward a working-class alternative in a credible way.

7. New efforts are needed now to achieve a united front of the working class parties against the austerity policies, which will certainly be stepped up. In particular, it is necessary to press the Communist Party to unite with other working-class forces against austerity rather than to continue to try to accommodate the increasingly discredited Christian Democracy.

We could not get the text of the Italian LCR's statement before press time. So we publish below a review of the results from the July 1 issue of the French LCR paper *Rouge* written after consultation with the Italian comrades. It has been slightly shortened.

Christian PICQUET

There were no winners, but there was one big loser. How can the results of the Italian general elections be summed up? The June 26-27 vote substantially changed the electoral map of the country but produced no decisive shift affecting the makeup of the government.

Referring to this paradox, the headline of *Corriere della Sera*, the country's most serious bourgeois daily, ran the headline on June 28: "The Most Surprising Election in the History of the Country."

The Christian Democrats, who have been the pillar of bourgeois rule for forty years, were the losers. They suffered the biggest defeat in their history, losing 37 seats in parliament and seeing their percentage of the vote drop by 5.4 percentage points. Getting a total of 32.9 percent, they barely held their position as the country's largest party.

The "White Whale," as the Christian Democracy has been called, foundered even in its safest waters. It lost 18 percentage points in Soria in Latium and 11 points in Milan, for example.

Overall, the Christian Democrat defeat

did not benefit the left parties, which were incapable of offering a left alternative. Despite a slight erosion, the Communist Party maintained its position, with 29.9 percent of the votes. It got very good scores in the big working-class centers in the north and south, and gained ground in some big cities such as Rome, Turin, or Naples.

Thus, the CP gained from its tactic of using "radical" language to capture the votes of the more militant workers. *L'Unita*, the party daily, expressed satisfaction with the results.

The gains made by the Italian Socialist Party, however, were very much less than it hoped for. It gained 1.6 percentage points, which increased its percentage to 11.4 percent. This represented an implicit disapproval of the Socialist Party's support for the reactionary policy of the previous governments, and Bettino Craxi's offer of a "three year pact" with the Christian Democrats.

The vote lost by the Christian Democrats went essentially to the right, to the small "secular" parties less implicated in the regime of "malgoverno" (i.e., misrule). The Republican Party of former premier Giovanni Spadolini, for example, gained

two points. The next biggest gainers were the neofascists of the Movimento Sociale Italiano, which gained a half million votes over their 1979 score.

Following June 27, nothing has been decided in Italy. The political crisis that has been endemic in recent years is going to deepen. The failure of the Christian Democrats has not been accompanied by the emergence of an alternative solution. And the bourgeoisie is by no means inclined to respond positively to the proposal Berlinguer made shortly after the results were announced for a "broad majority" government excluding the Christian Democrats.

In these conditions, the formation of a cabinet similar to the preceding ones is inevitable. But the wheeling and dealing to put together a government is going to be more bruising. As one northern Italian industrialist put it: "the only power the parties have today is the right of veto over each other's proposals."

In fact, only one thing is certain: The new coalition will have very great difficulties in coming up with a coherent program. This is true on the governmental level, where the ruling class has been trying for a long time to build stable structures. This is true on the economic level, where the crisis has generated a 16.4 percent inflation rate and a snowballing of business failures.

Whatever governmental combination is put together, it will have neither the credibility nor the parliamentary base to impose the measures the bourgeoisie is demanding on the working people.

These elections have produced nothing for the workers. They will have to rely on their own strength to win satisfaction of their most urgent demands and to block the attempts of the bourgeoisie to liquidate the main social gains they have made in the last ten years.

The call for this was put forward during the campaign by the far-left slates supported by Democrazia Proletaria and our comrades of the LCR. While the international press has reported only the national average of these slates (1.5 percent), they got very significant results in several working-class cities. For example, they got 3.3 percent in Naples, 8 percent in Termini Imerese (where a very well-known trade-unionist at FIAT ran), 4 percent in one Naples district, and nearly 3 percent in Campobasso in Sicily.

Seven representatives of these far-left slates will sit in the next Chamber of Deputies. The alliance between the DP and the LCR reflects an agreement on the need to wage a united struggle against austerity.

In the area of mass struggle, where the weakening of the Christian Democrats offer improved prospects. For example, the evening that the results were announced a demonstration of three thousand persons marched on the Christian Democrat headquarters in Milan shouted: "The Christian Democracy is Going to Fall."

The mass movement in Poland today

The misfortune of Father Virgilio Levi came at just the right time to illustrate the contradictions of the pope's triumphal tour of Poland.

Levi was fired from his job as editor of the Vatican organ after writing an editorial that commended Lech Walesa for sacrificing himself on the altar of social peace in Poland.

The commendation was evidently at least premature, and disastrously inopportune for the pope.

The masses who came out to hail the pope were clearly not looking for mediation with the regime but for a chance to express their hatred of the dictatorship and their support for Solidarnosc. A slogan that characterized the mass rallies was "Come out, they're not beating up people today!"

The Catholic church has, moreover, not won its prestige in Poland by its success in mediating with the regime, although that is its underlying strategy.

The mass support for the church reflects the fact that it is seen as the only institution in a totalitarian system that defends human values, that stands for decency and dignity, for national honor. It also reflects the fact that many members of the Polish clergy have taken chances to defend people against totalitarian repression.

That is not true of the Catholic clergy everywhere in Eastern Europe. And where they have not stood up against the regime in defense of human and national rights, the church does not have the same prestige.

The dilemma the church faces in Poland in particular is that it needs the support of the people, since its traditional aristocratic and bourgeois base has been destroyed. But at the same time, it does not want to risk identifying itself completely with the struggle of the masses, and it has no interest in seeing them win — far from it.

The dilemma of the Marxist political tendencies in Poland that consciously seek to complete the socialist revolution and establish democratic control of the working people over all areas of society is that up till now the only organization able to survive under Stalinist repression has been the church.

That is both because the bureaucracy cannot stamp it out and, to a certain extent, because the Stalinist regime finds it useful to let the church function as a safety valve for mass discontent.

As long as the mass struggle does not pose the question directly of reorganizing society, the differences in program between the church and fighters for workers democracy remain unclarified.

On the other hand, every time the church has tried to pull back the mass movement against the bureaucratic dictatorship, as in the case of the primate's appeal for an end to the August 1980 strikes before the workers won, this has created havoc not only among the believers but also among the clergy.

That sort of experience undoubtedly prompted the pope to move quickly when the unfortunate Father Levi gave the game away.

It was clearly hypocritical for the pope to speak as an advocate of trade-union rights in Poland, whereas he notably failed to do that in Central America, where trade-unionists are systematically murdered, often in the most atrocious ways. This hypocrisy reflects two realities, however: first, the power of the movement in Poland; second, the interests of the Catholic church as an international institution. Internationally, the church still has a reactionary social base and has to continue to prove its value as a conservative force.

In a short-term way, the support of the masses for the pope and the church in Poland undoubtedly strengthens the Vatican's hand to play its conservative role elsewhere. But it is caught in powerful contradictions, as the case of Father Levi illustrates.

The following article gives an indication of the sort of mass movement the Vatican has to try to maneuver with.

Mary BLOTNIKY

Although people no longer talk 'politics' in the street or the bus, it is not the same once you are within the four walls of an apartment. What strikes you first is the complete rejection, indeed the hatred, for the ruling team. 'If I had a sub-machine gun I would put them all up against the wall and shoot them. And afterwards I would go to bed with a completely easy conscience, with no remorse at all'. That was blurted out by a forty year old engineer, a member of the Polish Communist Party (PUMP) for twenty years, who has little connection with Solidarnosc.

In the courtyard children about 10 years old were squabbling. They had a particularly rich vocabulary of insults. However, after a time they found themselves running out of epithets. It was then that one shot at the other, 'You, you *general!*' The supreme insult.

Many more examples could be given. The unanimous rejection of the generals and entourage round Jaruzelski is as great now as the credibility they had within broad sections of the population two years ago, before the coup. This massive rejection shows itself every time the dictatorship comes into too sharp a conflict with the feelings of the masses.

This, for example, was the case after the death of Przemyski, a high school stu-

dent battered to death after an identity check. His burial on May 19 gave rise to the biggest demonstration in Warsaw since December 13, 1981. At Powazki cemetery there were tens of thousands of people on that day, dignified and determined. But, over and above this human outpouring and what was more striking, was the attitude of those who did not go, either because they could not, or they dared not. 'There were a lot of us there', they said with pride when talking about the burial at Przemyski, that evening and the following days. They all identified with the demonstrators.

However, the unanimous rejection of the order imposed by Jaruzelski masks a tremendous diversity of opinions and levels of organisation. This diversity can be seen travelling through the different regions of Poland. There are those, like Lower Silesia, the regions of Lublin and Cracow, and Bielsko, just to take the best known examples, where clandestine Solidarnosc today organises 30 to 45 per cent of the members it had before the coup. Here the clandestine trade-union commissions (TKZ) exist in all the big enterprises.

There are others, like the mining region in Upper Silesia, where the workers resistance to the coup was stronger, where repression was heavier, and the police are thickest on the ground. In this region, none of the activists I met would hazard a guess at the numbers organised in the clandestine union. In many factories and mines there are no TKZs, or they exist as a mere skeleton in others.

But there are also big differences within the same regions, between the major concentrations of workers, which were and are the strongholds of Solidarnosc, and the small workplaces and offices where, in the smaller places with very few exceptions, there is only a tiny percentage of activists compared with the number of Solidarnosc members before the coup.

SOLIDARITY WITH A SMALL 'S'

A worker from a factory with more than 10,000 employees explained how Solidarnosc organises today. 'In our place more than 70 per cent of those who were card-carrying members before December 13, and that was 90 per cent of the workforce, are still paying their union dues. They do this more or less openly, even with a hint of defiance to the sneaks who are in every workshop, on every line. These dues are to pay for the factory press, which is distributed free in the work-shops. They are also for the official funds that Solidarnosc was entrusted with running as the legal union organisation, plus others made necessary by the new situation — the mutual aid funds, the birth and death allowances, the funds for those who have lost all or part of their wages because of repression.

'Of course, not all those who pay dues can take part in all our activities. The



Underground Solidarnosc spreads its roots (DR)

conditions of the repression itself force a selection of cadres. But we know, and this has already been proved in practice, that if we are arrested others will take our place, and the trade union's activities will not be affected. And what is even more important, and what allows us to keep going, despite all the strain of a 'double life', is to know that if we are arrested our families will receive aid and support, that our comrades will do the impossible to keep us from being isolated.'

This aspect of Solidarnosc's activity is all the more important when you realise that the period of legal investigation can go on for three months, during which time the accused can meet neither family nor even a lawyer.

This solidarity goes well beyond the organisational limits of Solidarnosc. A worker from a small enterprise told me proudly that he had collected 15,000 zlotys (more than the present average monthly wage) for a sacked worker in two days among 'colleagues and neighbours'. Another person who arrived in an apartment building where the police had just arrested several of her friends, told how a stranger stopped her pressing the lift button for the floor she wanted, saying, 'You don't live here; there are police on that floor, come to my place. We've been friends for a long time, haven't we ...'. That way another arrest was prevented.

Thus, 'solidarity with a little "s"', as it is called in Poland, is becoming part and parcel of daily life. This is very important for all those who, without organisational links to the regional co-ordinating bodies of Solidarnosc, without support in the workplaces, and sometimes working in great isolation, resist, produce often ephemeral bulletins, and are striving to rebuild Solidarnosc where repression has hit hardest. That is, in areas with a low concentration of workers, in regions where, from the beginning, arrests disorganised the union structures and where it is now difficult to rebuild the links

which have been broken for a long time.

This is also important for those thousands of young people that the Polish revolution had not been able to organise in a sustained way before December 13, 1981, and were only thrown into the struggle as a result of the crackdown by Jaruzelski. School students and young students often act without organisational links with Solidarnosc, though they identify completely with the struggle in the factories. It is these young people who form the base of hundreds of groups, independent of the trade union, formed around numerous bulletins.

These are the ones who 'decorate' the streets with graffiti that is cleaned off in the early hours of each morning by special teams of militia. And these are the ones who still pay a heavy tribute to the repression, partly because of their lack of experience, but also because of the disorganised and activist character of their initiatives. It is from this milieu that most of the 'ephemerals' come from, the bulletins that can be counted in hundreds if not thousands, and which disappear after one or two issues.

AND SOLIDARITY WITH A BIG 'S'

And what about Solidarity with a big 'S'? What is the situation of the union Solidarnosc today? Again the situation is quite diverse. But there is a general tendency — a regional reorganisation around the co-ordinating structures of the TKZ. These are more and more often taking over from the former regional leaderships organised around one or more of the well known leaders, who escaped the round up of December 13, 1981, and went underground.

What is still more interesting is that this reorganisation is not a result of repression removing the clandestine activists, but of a conscious choice; based on a more realistic appreciation of the rhythm of activity and future events.

'A year ago', one union leader told me,

'we all thought that the state of war would be a passing phenomenon. Not because we really believed the slogan raised by the youth 'The winter is yours, the spring will be ours', but either we underestimated our adversary's strength, or we overestimated our own forces, or we had a naive belief that a compromise could be reached with the regime.

'We looked to the future with serenity, thinking that a space for democracy, although very limited, was opening up before us. The official dissolution of Solidarnosc, the fact that none of the mass actions aimed at forcing the regime to negotiate succeeded, made us realise that we had to envisage more long-term activity.

'The failure of the call for a general strike last November made us understand how far we had to go in our own organisation before we could say "We are ready for a general strike". And thus there is the tendency you see in my region, but which I think is more general. It is a concentration on reinforcing the organisational structures, an attempt to develop the inter-enterprise co-ordination, and establish regional leaderships on this more solid foundation, not on the basis of ideas but on material strength — the organisation of tens of thousands of workers.'

When I asked him what was new in this, and whether the workplace bodies had stopped functioning he replied, 'The months of common activity before December 13, the daily difficulties and conflicts, were an excellent test. The people got to know each other in the workplaces, they could assess each other. Today, in my place for example, I know almost everybody. I know who's who, what I can say to one, what I can ask another.

'I think this is the main difference. And it's not a transitory difference, compared to the situation before August 1980. The state of war managed to destroy our structures, but on this basis they can be immediately rebuilt. The difference is in the fact that after the coup our activity was centred on help for the interned and imprisoned, on the distributing of information, activity oriented towards repeating what I would today call symbolic actions, because they do not get anywhere.

'This period gave us the opportunity to consolidate the union where there was the objective base for solidarity — above all in the big factories. Elsewhere we were hit hard. You must have noticed that now we no longer live waiting for the 13th of the next month. We have given much greater importance to what is the function of a trade union — not just the general strike but also, and above all, the defence of each worker as an individual.

'Although we often can't stop a sacking or other harassment, like changing a worker from one post to a worse paid one, we can on the other hand give the victim sufficient aid that such measures lose their dissuasive effect. And that's a victory, not necessarily obtained through

struggle, but struggle is only one of the forms of workers solidarity, not the only one.'

While it is true that it is more difficult today to talk about long-term perspectives with Solidarnosc activists, this is not necessarily a sign of political regression. It is often the sign of increased maturity, increased understanding of the present relationship of forces.

One woman militant explained it thus, 'Previously, a lot of people were for a general strike in the short term. But this perspective had very little to do with their day-to-day activity. They waited for the general strike as one waits for the Messiah.'

'Today a lot of people will tell you that they are against this perspective, because they have realised that it is not easy to organise, and that there won't be a victorious general strike without organisation and detailed preparation. And often they don't know how to set about it.'

'This could be interpreted as a regression, but I think that would be mistaken. The people have realised the strength and the determination of the adversary. Among some this could bring about a fall back on organisational work, but this is not negative. This means strengthening of all structures, which were too weak when we wanted to go towards a general strike. On the other hand, others are engaging in deeper strategic reflection, starting from reality as it is, not what they would have liked it to be.'

The most marked feature of this turn is undoubtedly the development of co-ordination. Instead of the previously very tenuous links between the regional leaderships of Solidarnosc and the workplace unions — links that, with the notable exception of Lower Silesia, amounted essentially to networks for distributing the underground press — there are now more solid organisational links. In one region the TKZ have built a co-ordinating committee involving 170 enterprises. The delegates meet regularly to discuss the main political and organisational questions. This sort of 'workers parliament' elected an executive that replaced the former leadership set up after December 13, 1981.

This sort of organisation has made it possible, for example, in collaboration with other regions and with peasant organisations, to organise summer holidays for ten thousand families. This is a practical response to one aspect of the bureaucracy's blackmail, 'Put up with things, or there won't be room for you in the factory summer holiday centres'. At the present prices, individual summer holidays are beyond the reach of the workers. And the region in question is far from being the only one where such activities are being organised.

Another new element, the strategic scope of which could turn out to be decisive, is the reconstitution of the Network (*siec* in Polish) linking the big enterprises. 'The starting point', explained one of those who is involved in this

task, 'is the same as that which existed when the MKO (Inter-Regional Commission for the Defence of Solidarnosc) was set up. (1) That is, that it was necessary to have an instrument for co-ordinating union activity based on the strongholds of Solidarnosc, the big factories. Such a structure could effectively help the TKK (Provisional Co-ordinating Committee) and facilitate an exchange of experiences, which the TKK had not been able to do satisfactorily.'

'In addition, only this sort of body could effectively lead a general strike, even though today this perspective does not seem to be uppermost in people's minds. But, and this is the big difference with the MKO, it is a co-ordination of the TKZ in the big enterprises, and not of individuals.' This Network is beginning to take its first steps. A statement announcing its first meeting has been published.

The same militant explained to me that, 'We wanted to avoid all bluff or self-proclamation. For the moment the Network is just starting. We still have not been able to include all the enterprises which were part of the Network before December 13. But it is clear that there won't be a continuation of some of the manipulatory aspects of the previous *siec*. We want a co-ordinating body, not a tendency, a faction, or the base for some sort of 'Polish Party of Labour! [This idea had been developed before the coup by the then co-ordinator, Milewski, an intellectual from Gdansk.] And, contrary to the MKO, we don't want to create a parallel leadership to the TKK. We think that the unity of the movement is the precondition for its functioning.'

The appearance of the Network and its future development will probably be an important element in the reorganisation of clandestine Solidarnosc that has been taking place over the last few months. Because while the step forward is immense — everybody says so — as far as the organisation of the union at the regional level goes, the national co-ordination and even the liaison between regions, is still only just beginning.

The leader of a region which presently has about 50,000 dues-paying members went so far as to tell me it was easier to meet a Western journalist than to find the TKK. It is true that in his region the press published elsewhere is almost unknown, and that the new leadership — elected after several other leaders were arrested — has no contact with the TKK and only learns the content of its resolutions through the Western radio. This shows how necessary the national co-ordination is.

SOLIDARNOSC IS STILL ALIVE

What can we say about the situation after these various meetings, which undoubtedly do not give a complete picture?

The first factor, and undoubtedly the most important, is that Solidarnosc exists and has a mass organisation even if — and it would be surprising if it were other-

wise — it is no longer a trade union organising ten million members. On the other hand, most West European unions, despite their legal existence, are far from having as many activists as this organisation, which has been buried so many times by the Western press.

This second factor is that clandestine Solidarnosc today is far from reaching the whole of the working class either through its press or its organisation. The only result of this can be a differentiation in level of consciousness, the appearance of signs of weariness, indeed despair among some workers. Trade-union involvement is not an easy thing today. Big risks are involved. The possibilities of success in mass struggle are slight, because the bureaucracy rarely concedes on even minimal demands.

There is also exhaustion. One union leader who has already been in prison said to me, 'You know, sometimes I find it difficult to insist if one of our comrades refuses such or such a task, because we are all in a state of extreme nervous exhaustion. We have to continuously act as if we are leading normal lives, while feeling ourselves unceasingly watched. Undoubtedly it is easier psychologically to function with false papers, even if the risk of being caught is no less. But it is very hard when no one, neither work-mates nor family, must know what you are doing, and what gives a meaning to your life. But if you relax for a moment, you are caught soon afterwards.'

When I asked one of the people I spoke to what he thought of the situation and possible perspectives, he replied, 'You know we have taken a terrible blow. Solidarnosc has undoubtedly been partly destroyed. But the union is reforming in the big factories and reviving in a number of ways. Elsewhere — even if this could appear small, and at this level without future — solidarity links exist, as well as different initiatives around bulletins, or aid for the victims of repression. And, even today, if the regime committed a provocation — what is decisive is not whether the regime thinks it is making a provocation, but the people take it for that — and a few big enterprises in various regions went on strike, we could very quickly see a general strike. We were a hairsbreadth from that last October when the Gdansk shipyard went on strike to protest against the dissolution of Solidarnosc by parliament. Then, only the intervention of the TKK prevented a generalisation of the movement. But I also think that today, in the present state of our organisation, a general strike would have small chance of success.'

'On the contrary, it is very likely that we would not recover from another failure. So, what we have to do now is to work patiently to strengthen our organisation, and prepare the ground — particularly within the repressive forces — so that a general strike could have a good chance of success.'

1. On this subject see *International Viewpoint* No 17, November 15, 1982.

Bolivian miners take over nationalized mines, forge links with peasants

On August 31, 1982, the thirtieth anniversary of the nationalization of the Bolivian mines in 1952, the new government in Bolivia presented its proposal for co-management of the nationalized concerns. Since then, two opposing positions have developed on this question.

One position is held by the Democratic People's Union (UDP) government. The UDP is a class-collaborationist coalition, including the Bolivian Communist Party, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), and the Revolutionary National Movement-Left (MNR-I).

The government's position calls simply for involving representatives of the workers in the administration of the nationalized concerns and in particular of the mines. It is in the worst tradition of reformist co-management.

In opposition to the government's proposal, the miners union (FSTMB) and the Bolivian Labor Confederation (COB) call for a workers majority on the co-management boards, which would give the workers' leaders the predominant voice in the administration of the public enterprises.

The confrontation between these two positions came to a head for the first time in April in a turbulent social climate marked by numerous working-class and popular demonstrations against the government's economic measures.

In fact, in mid-March, the UDP government adopted a series of decrees that constituted the "second phase" of its economic program. (1) These included, for example, a 46 percent increase in the minimum monthly wage and increases in the prices of certain necessities.

The Bolivian Confederation of Employers (CEPB) expressed its satisfaction with these decisions. But the COB rejected them. Its traditional leader, Juan Lechin, went so far as to say over the radio that "Hernan Siles Suazo [the incumbent president of the republic] is more right wing than Victor Paz Estenssoro." (2)

Indeed, the proposed wage increases were not sufficient to halt the decline in the standard of living of the Bolivian people,

Victor MURILLO

On April 3, 1983, the technicians and administrative employees in COMIBOL (who are a privileged layer from the standpoint of wages) went on strike in a dispute concerning social services.

In fact, this action was designed to block the discussions initiated by the FSTMB in all the nationalized mines on miners' co-management. In most cases, the great majority of the miners were declaring their support for a workers majority on the co-management boards.

Instigated by the government and the right, the technicians and white-collar workers went on strike in an attempt to cut short the rise in the militancy of the miners.

The miners know perfectly well that COMIBOL lost money in 1982 (more than 110 million pesos, or about 535 million dollars at the January 1983 rate). That is why they are demanding the power themselves to supervise the enterprise,

which is the country's major foreign currency earner and employs about 26,000 workers.

It should be pointed out that the Soviet technicians working at the La Palca factory, a high-technology tin-refining plant, also went on strike. This amounted to open collusion with the government against the workers, and demonstrated that the Soviet technicians oppose the miners' demand for a workers majority in co-management.

WORKERS TAKE OVER THE MINES

In this situation, the San Jose miners in Oruro immediately took over the technical and administrative tasks in the mine right from the start of the boycott action by the technicians and administrative personnel.

On April 12, the workers at La Palca took a historic decision. They started up the furnaces again, resumed production, and managed to operate the plant's soph-

isticated equipment.

Without the help of technicians, either Soviet or Bolivian, they got the best performance yet out of the furnaces. So despite all sorts of threats and pressures, La Palca was running at full capacity.

The FSTMB then demanded that the authorities in the nationalized mining sector "declare the abandoned jobs vacant." Since the union got no satisfactory response from COMIBOL, it declared on April 18:

since from November 1982 to March 1983, the cost of living rose by about 300 percent.

At the end of March, therefore, there was a wave of mobilizations. In particular, the health workers went out on a nationwide strike demanding higher wages. Bank workers struck demanding the resignation of the management, after it refused to accept the unions' wage demands.

High school students mobilized demanding lower charges for transportation and school supplies. In the course of their demonstrations, clashes occurred with the police.

On March 14, Juan Lechin said that the economic "correctives" proposed by the government "went against the people's interests" and that "the UDP is taking the side of private enterprise."

While this was going on, the proposal for a workers majority on the co-management boards worked out by the FSTMB leadership was being discussed by the miners. Finally, confronted with the strike of technicians and administrative employers in the nationalized mines, which began April 3, the miners decided to act themselves to apply their own concept of a workers majority in co-management.

On April 19, after a series of local initiatives, the FSTMB, headed up by Juan Lechin, took over total control of the nationalized mines, pushing to the sidelines the Minister of the Mines and the general manager of the Bolivian Mining Corporation (COMIBOL), both of whom are members of the Bolivian Communist Party. The miners union immediately appointed an administrative council made up of trade-union leaders, including members of the Socialist Party-No. 1 (PS-UNO, a group that has become a broad rallying ground for opposition to the UDP from the left) and even of the Bolivian CP, which is divided on this question.

The following article from the May 23 issue of *Bandera Socialista*, the weekly paper of the Revolutionary Workers Party (Mexican section of the Fourth International), describes the miners mobilization.

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1. See "The Bolivian Cauldron" by S. Romande in *International Viewpoint*, No 22, January 24, 1983; and "The 'Social Truce' Ends in Bolivia," in *IV* No 26, March 21, 1983.

2. Victor Paz Estenssoro, the historical leader of the Revolutionary National Movement (MNR), originally a bourgeois populist formation, was president from 1952 to 1964, when he was ousted by a military coup. Subsequently, the old MNR broke up into opposing faction-parties. In 1971, Estenssoro's MNR-H (Historico) backed the coup d'etat of General Hugo Banzer, who is today the head of the National Democratic Alliance (ADN).

"In militant solidarity with the miner comrades in every district, who have kept the mines and treatment plants running despite all the problems and thereby have shown a high level of responsibility to the nation and the society, we have decided to assume supervision over COMIBOL.

"Likewise, we are setting a 24-hour deadline, beginning today at 5:00 p.m. for the resolution of this conflict. We are taking this action to put an end once and for all to the disastrous course followed by people who have been making more and more antilabor and antinational maneuvers."

WORKERS MANAGEMENT AND WORKERS GOVERNMENT

A bit further on, this statement specified: "In taking this initiative to safeguard an industry that brings in foreign currency, which provides jobs, and which is part of the patrimony of the nation, the FSTMB will respond immediately to the demand from the ranks...to form an Administrative Council that will take charge of the nationalized mines in conformity with our plan for workers-majority co-management. This plan points up the close relationship between such measures and a preponderant role for workers in the decision-making centers of political power."

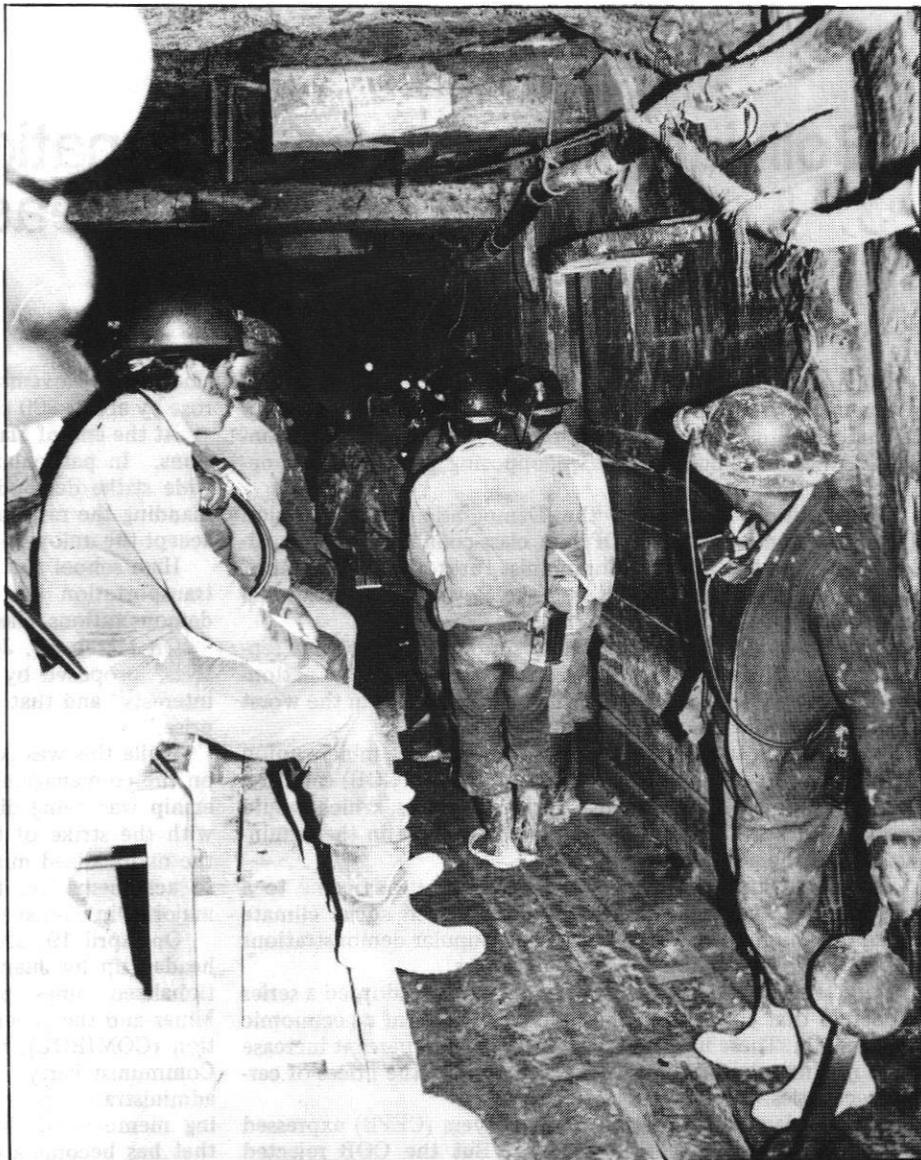
On Tuesday, April 19, at 5:00 p.m. when COMIBOL was occupied, Juan Lechin said the following about the attitude taken by the technicians and administrative personnel: "When the mines were nationalized in 1952, COMIBOL produced 27 million tons of tin with only 135 technicians. Now it is producing less with a far greater number of technicians."

In answer to a question from journalists about what sort of supervision over the mines the FSTMB had assumed, Juan Lechin said: "Yes, this is self-management."

When COMIBOL was occupied, the leaders of the truck drivers, oil workers, and other categories of workers declared that the "only solution for the state companies" was to put them all under workers control. The inhabitants of the El Alto shantytown blocked traffic to protest against an increase in bus fares, and so the whole city of La Paz was virtually paralyzed.

A tense social climate developed, which was aggravated by statements from businessmen expressing their unhappiness about the occupation of COMIBOL. On the other hand, miners in all the country's mines sent messages of support to the FSTMB in the COMIBOL offices.

On April 20, the first day of workers administration, a round table sponsored by the United Nations on international cooperation with Bolivia opened in La Paz. Representatives of forty countries and 27 international organizations were in attendance. Only a few streets away from the occupied COMIBOL offices, they discussed means of getting Bolivia out of the terrible crisis it is in. But they



Bolivian miners underground (DR)

could not come up with the slightest agreement.

Quite nearby, the workers meeting in the COMIBOL offices were discussing how to solve the crisis of the country's biggest enterprise in accordance with the interests of the working class. This is an enterprise, moreover, that can take charge of finding and exploiting mineral deposits, selling and exporting mineral products, importing machines, tools, and consumer goods to meet the needs of the mining centers.

MINERS ASSEMBLY CAPTURES THE CENTER OF THE POLITICAL STAGE

The same day, the minister of planning and coordination, Arturo Nunez del Prado, announced at the round table on international cooperation: "Neither the government nor the people want a socialist society, but only a nationally independent society with a mixed economy."

The bourgeois press very reluctantly accorded the occupation of COMIBOL a greater importance than the UN-sponsored round table. At the mining company offices, there was quite a different tempo of journalistic activity than at the Nation-

al Bank, where the round table was going on.

Two days after the COMIBOL occupation, the bosses, military, and government ministers got together to declare the workers Administrative Council illegal. On April 22, President Hernan Siles Suazo addressed a message to the entire country in which he called the miners leaders "anarcho-syndicalist." Their action, he said, had been an adventure in which they manipulated the workers.

Calling it an "irritating violation of the constitution," Siles Suazo declared the occupation of COMIBOL illegal and assured the population that he had the necessary authority to deal with the workers, who, he said, "by their inopportune initiatives could throw the country into anarchy and bring about the downfall of the country and the collapse of democracy."

In the same message, the UDP president said that he would not accept workers-majority co-management, that there would be no workers control in the private enterprises, and that the economy would remain mixed.

Under the pressure of the workers action, the president spoke clearly for the

first time to the workers who brought him to power, the workers to whom he had promised co-management and workers control.

By publicly coming to the defense of the bourgeoisie, declaring the miners outlaws and calling them anarcho-syndicalists in cahoots with the far right, Siles Suazo revealed his true class nature. He also forgot that it was the workers, particularly the miners, who by shedding their blood and waging a general strike brought down the dictatorship of General Garcia Meza.

The Bolivian Communist Party, which is part of the government coalition, is implicated in Siles Suazo's course. If it were genuinely representing the workers' interests in the UDP government, it would have broken immediately with the regime on this occasion. To the contrary, it went along with President Siles Suazo's attacks on the workers and adopted an ambiguous attitude toward the issues.

In reality, the Communist Party's attitude is clear. It is following the logic of reformism. Only this could enable it to remain part of a government that declares publicly to the international community that it does not want socialism but only a nationally independent society based on a mixed economy, and at the same time holds up this bourgeois democratic government to workers as a socialist one.

WORKERS AND PEASANTS UNITY

On Friday, April 22, the peasants fighting for their most pressing demands, set up road blockades, paralyzing La Paz, Oruro, and Potosi. No one could enter these cities. The people who were caught on the road formed an ongoing picket in front of the government offices in La Paz until the conflict was resolved.

The mine technicians and administrative personnel also marched through the streets of La Paz demanding that the government act against the FSTMB and the workers administration of COMIBOL.

The peasants, for their part, let it be known that they were not demonstrating only for their own demands but were also expressing their solidarity with the occupation of COMIBOL, with self-management in the state enterprises and workers control in the private ones.

Thus, the two most important sectors of Bolivian society, the miners and the peasants, concluded a de facto alliance that raised the perspective of a workers and peasants government as the only alternative to the capitalist crisis.

In the papers, big headlines played up the fact that in reality there was another government confronting Hernan Siles Suazo and his vice president, Jaime Paz Zamora — a government represented by Juan Lechin and Genaro Flores, the main peasant leader.

On Monday, April 25, a special national assembly of the trade unions in the state mines opened in La Paz, following the call of the FSTMB. Support was total for the COMIBOL action, and the de-

cision to fight on until workers-majority co-management was won in the state mines was reaffirmed.

A nine-point platform was then adopted (see box) expressing the determination of the workers. It ended with the following statement: "The National Assembly of Miners...proclaims a state of emergency in the nationalized mines."

DECISIVE STEPS BY MINERS ASSEMBLY

The miners general assembly continued on April 26. The session that day was devoted to an examination of President Siles Suazo's message denouncing the occupation of COMIBOL. In a 17-point document, the FSTMB refuted Siles Suazo's assertions one by one. The entire Bolivian people could follow over the radio the miners assembly discussions exposing the UDP president.

In his speech to the people, Hernan Siles Suazo had claimed in fact that he could not be against the FSTMB, because he was one of the founders of the union.

In their assembly, the miners proved that the president played no role in the founding of the FSTMB nor did he ever play any role in the people's struggle when the chips were down, and what is more, he was going against the FSTMB now by rejecting workers-majority co-management.

The FSTMB's document answering the president ended with the demand for

"the institution of workers-majority co-management as quickly as possible for the good and peace of the country. This is the way to attack immorality, to beat back the rush for government jobs, to honor those who have fallen in the social struggles, this is the way to say 'enough!' 'enough!'"

In the closing session of the miners assembly, which had already declared its support for the struggle of the United Confederation of Working Farmers of Bolivia (CSUTCB), Genaro Flores appeared in the hall. He received an enthusiastic welcome from the miner delegates.

In the name of the Bolivian peasants, he expressed his support for the occupation of COMIBOL and came out for workers' majority co-management and an alliance between the workers and peasants. He said that the future of the country depended on unity between the miners and the poor peasants. He explained that he was against destroying the coca trees, and that it had been discovered how to use coca leaves for medicine and food.

SEND THE FBI BACK TO THE US

Juan Lechin answered that Flores could count on the support of the miners, from whom American imperialism want to take the only thing that made it possible for them to resist hunger and bear the superexploitation in the mines [that is, the coca leaf].

RESOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL MINERS ASSEMBLY

The National Assembly of Miners:

1) Declares, on the basis of the positive results reported by the mines and the FSTMB, that an experiment in workers administration of COMIBOL has begun in Bolivia and that this is the result of the revolutionary consciousness of the Bolivian miners.

2) Unanimously and firmly expresses its approval of the unions in the mines that have formed production and administration councils, through which, in the framework of workers-majority co-management, the workers have taken charge of the main source of national wealth.

3) Unanimously and firmly expresses its approval of the FSTMB executive committee's work to form and organize the administrative council at COMIBOL.

4) Calls on the production and administration councils in the mines to persevere in their work so as to assure that the process of production is improved and expanded in conjunction with technical and administrative reorganization of COMIBOL, and so as to assure the establishment of a production plan that will lay the basis for a real policy for the mining industry.

5) Calls on the Executive Committee of the FSTMB, which has the unanimous support of all the miners in the country, to take the necessary steps to consolidate the advance toward workers-majority co-management of COMIBOL.

6) Decides not to give up the occupation and supervision of the mines and to the contrary to reinforce the organization of production and administration councils as the precondition for workers-majority co-management.

7) Declares that the struggle for workers-majority co-management of COMIBOL is inseparable from the struggle for national liberation, which, through the defence and consolidation of the democratic process, will lead to the achievement of the working class' strategic objectives.

8) In view of the COMIBOL's technical and administrative deficiencies, the National Assembly of Miners demands that urgent attention be given to defining the relationship between COMIBOL and ENAF (the national petroleum-refining company) in accordance with the interests of the nationalized trust.

9) Declares a state of emergency in the nationalized mines. ■

The above points were unanimously approved by the National Assembly of Miners.

(From *Combate*, organ of the POR-Combate, May 1-15, 1983.)

Cocaine control is so important to the US, Juan Lechin added, that it sends FBI agents here, who are in fact mercenaries and instigators of coups d'etat. These agents should be made to work in their own country and not Bolivia, they should demonstrate their proficiency there in policing the cocaine trade.

As the miners assembly was ending, the CSUTCB won a complete victory, forcing the government to issue decrees granting them the following gains:

- Participation by the peasant union organizations in planning the Ministry of Agriculture's development projects.

- Formation of an executive committee to administer the emergency agriculture plan, in which the peasant leaders would take part along with the government authorities.

- Authorization for the National Investment Institute to finance a study of organizing the cocaine industry for legal purposes.

- Extension of the general labor law to seasonal workers in the cotton and sugar-cane industries.

- Authorization for organizing transport cooperatives for livestock raisers.

- Turning over uncultivated lands reverted to the state to peasant communities whose livelihood is threatened.

The peasants know that it was by mobilizing and paralyzing the western part of the country that they won this victory. They also know that their miner brothers also contributed to this success, and they are not going to let themselves be cheated of their victory.

MAY DAY — THE CLASS CONFRONTATION SHARPENS

May Day came at a time when the morale of working people throughout the country was at a high point, following the concessions that the government had been forced to make. The state mines were controlled by workers councils, the peasants were making steps forward in organizing and doing this in unity with the miners. The government was in a weak position and was involved in forming a new cabinet. It was looking for a solution to refurbish its fading credibility in the eyes of the masses.

May Day highlighted the break between the workers and the UDP government and saw the military whet their bayonets. In his Labor Day speech to the country, President Siles Suazo said: "Unless co-management is on a parity basis, the Bolivian state will be weakened."

For its part, the COB called on the workers of the country to demonstrate in support of workers-majority co-management in the nationalized mines, workers control in the private sector, and participation by the COB in deciding the policy of currency exchange rates.

Other slogans were also put forward. They included rejection of the demands

SUPPORT COMBATE

Combate, the organ of the Revolutionary Workers Party (Partido Obrero Revolucionario — POR, Bolivian section of the Fourth International) regularly reports the work of the POR-Combate and working-class struggles in the country.

For example, the latest issues that have reached Paris, Nos. 117 and 118, April 1-15 and May 1-15, focus on the fight for workers-majority co-management in the state enterprises.

The themes taken up by *Combate* are the central ones in the Bolivian workers mobilizations. Issue No. 117 for example has an article describing the debate going on in the miners movement on workers-majority co-management. The following issue, May 1-15, gives the position of the POR-Combate on the FSTMB's action

of the International Monetary Fund, suspension of payments on the foreign debt until the country was able to meet its obligations, solidarity with Nicaragua and the Salvadoran people, punishment of those who perpetrated crimes under the military dictatorships and all those who violated human rights, implementation of the agrarian program presented by the CSUTCB.

The vice president, Jaime Paz Zamora, marched with the cortege of the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), his party. As for the president, he did not even venture out on his balcony to view the parade.

THE MASS RADICALIZATION WORRIES THE REACTIONARIES

The commander in chief of the armed forces, General Alfredo Villaroel, and the chief of the general staff, General Luis Anez, said in Cochabamba that the armed forces were getting more and more worried about the occupation of COMIBOL. It was rumored that Rico Toro, a military gorilla in exile in Argentina is already preparing a coup for June. What is certain is that the break developing between the workers and the government is posing the question of who governs in the country, in the mines, and in the countryside. If the military had an alternative plan, they would not have hesitated to attempt a coup d'etat before now. This situation cannot go on forever. (3)

This is a process in which, despite their victories, the workers and peasants are not yet masters of the country, even though they hold the main state enterprise in their hands. The government remains in the hands of reformists and bourgeois democrats. There is not yet a revolutionary situation, since dual power does not yet exist. However, the situation could evolve in this direction if the workers and peasants forces take a clearer attitude toward the government. This would involve consolidating workers-majority administration in COMIBOL and

taking control of COMIBOL, and it publishes a long document from the miners union responding to the president's attacks on their struggle. Each of these issues also, of course, take up international questions, in particular the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of Central America.

However, given the economic crisis afflicting Bolivia, it is difficult to assemble the resources necessary to keep a workers press coming out regularly. So, we are appealing to all those who want to help assure the regular publication of the revolutionary Marxist press in Bolivia to send financial contributions to *International Viewpoint*, 2 rue Richard-Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, France. Checks should be made out to Daniel Bensaid, with "for *Combate*" written on the back.

establishing the independence of the workers and peasants from the ruling classes. This independence could be embodied in the COB and the formation of a broad united front of the workers organizations, parties, and people's councils. This front should also show an openness to discontented middle layers that are incapable of playing a leading role in this process.

The Revolutionary Workers Party-Combate (POR-Combate), Bolivian section of the Fourth International, is striving to direct the sentiment for unity toward the formation of a united front. It is pursuing this objective by encouraging the organization of people's councils in the neighborhoods, mining centers, and peasant communities, and by encouraging these councils to group around the COB. An important aspect is preparing for self-defense in every union, neighborhood, and community in order to prevent yet another massacre. There must not be another slaughter of miners and peasants, and this can only be prevented if the workers defend their gains with their own militias.

At this crucial moment in the struggle of the Bolivian working class, the international solidarity of workers throughout the world is vital. ■

3. The right is reacting more and more sharply to the mass mobilization. Some sections of it are focusing on the demand for the ouster of the Communist ministers from the UDP government. Others, such as the former dictator Hugo Banzer's ADN and Paz Estenssoro's MNR-H go further. They call for a struggle to wipe out "anarchy" and "halt the advance of Communism in Bolivia." Following in their wake, two former military officers recently expelled from the armed forces, ex-colonels Norberto Salomon Soria and Javier Alcoreza, respectively the former chief of fighter aircraft and former minister of finance, put a document in the papers under the slogan: "Against Communist Dictatorship, Elections in 1983." In this document they say clearly: "Only one solution is left for our armed forces — to demand that the government of the country be put in the hands of the Supreme Court so that it can...call general elections for July of this year." (from the Mexico city daily, *Uno mas Uno*, of April 4, 1983.)

The reasons for the set back to the Bombay textile workers strike

On January 18, 1982 over 250,000 textile workers in Bombay went on strike. Their demands included wage increases, paid holidays, permanent status for some 100,000 substitute workers, and recognition of their union, the Maharashtra Girni Kamgar Union.

The number of workers involved and their growing self-organisation and politicisation, and the broad solidarity among other workers and peasants made this one of the most important strikes in the history of the international and Indian workers movement. (see *International Viewpoint* Nos 18 and 21, 29 November 1982 and January 10, 1983.)

Now, after 18 months, over half the workers originally involved have gone back to work, and although over 100,000 workers are still continuing the struggle it is clear that there has been a serious setback. The following article from *Proletarian Politics*, journal of the Communist League, Indian section of the Fourth International, assesses the reasons for this. It has been abridged by IV.

Amar JESANI

The textile strike was an expression of workers anger and determination. But for it to have succeeded would have required elements that were lacking in the leadership.

Let us look at some of these points:

— The textile strike was a product of self-activity and self-organisation of the workers. But this alone does not ensure success. A politically conscious leadership is necessary.

— If there is no clear political strategy from the leadership, or this is confined within the accepted norms of trade unionism, victory is extremely difficult, or will only be achieved at tremendous human and material cost.

— This strategy must include a clear perspective for developing a strong solidarity movement. This means aggressive attempts must be made among wide sections of the working masses of India to make known the workers struggle, the need for solidarity and to build support. This must be done aggressively because the reformists, whether Stalinists, centrists or so-called socialists, will always try to insulate their own base from workers in struggle. Thus, for the real success of a strike of these proportions a strategy of extending the strike into other sections of the working class is a must.

— Over the last ten years we have seen this type of self-activity and self-organisation several times. But this has to be extended, and consolidated. Otherwise it takes a rapid downward turn resulting in the defeat of the struggle.

The far left, who constitute the smallest political force in Bombay, tried to intervene in the strike with a political perspective. But the united body, the Kamgar Ekta Sangharsh Samiti (KESS) failed to make any impact and by the end of February it was clear that only the

Communist League and the Sharmak Mukti Dal were prepared to make a full commitment to the textile workers strike.

Thus, despite the heroism of the textile workers, and the way forward they showed to the entire working class through their self-organisation in the mill and area committees, these gains could not be consolidated and extended.

THE ROLE OF DATTA SAMANT AND THE TRADITIONAL UNION LEADERSHIPS

Datta Samant came to the fore as the leader of this strike because of his known militant approach to leading strikes. However, neither he nor the leadership of the traditional left-controlled unions could offer any perspective for the strike beyond defending their own trade union base. Samant's role as a strike breaker in the October 1982 transport workers strike openly divided the trade-union leadership. The long term detrimental effects of this were not apparent in the euphoria of the successful solidarity strike call and the demonstrations around the arrests in October 1982. But it became clear to those actively building solidarity that the textile workers were becoming isolated and that the leadership were aiding this process.

At this point, taking advantage of their isolation, the bourgeoisie went on the offensive. Samant was not willing to continuously mobilise the workers on the streets to paralyse the government, and the other union leaderships were eager to crush Samant, who is a threat to them, and betray the strike. The success of their tactics was apparent when the December 13, 1982, strike call flopped miserably.

From this point the downward trend of the strike was apparent. The only way

forward was to stop applying a brake to the workers militancy, and to form a broad left unity in solidarity with the strike. The KESS tried to form such a front in January 1983, but the meeting called for this purpose was sabotaged by the Lal Nishan Party, and the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India-Marxist.

A historic opportunity to develop a broad working-class united front, on the basis of the self-activity and self-organisation of the textile workers was squandered. The political implications of the strike were ignored. This proved that attempts to lead an openly political strike with traditional trade-union means cannot succeed.

SETBACK FOR THE TEXTILE WORKERS

There has been a big setback. More than 50 per cent of the workers have gone back to work, and most of the mills are operating. Those that are not are prevented by the financial difficulties of the owners, not by the lack of workers. Many of those not back at work are prevented by the mill owners refusal to take them back because they are known activists, or because there is no longer work as the mill owners have in effect carried through their planned rationalisations, which were part of the cause of the strike.

Samant and the Lal Nishan Party are not ready to accept this reality. We believe that the struggle should be continued. But it is adventurist to talk of a massive offensive when the workers have just suffered a setback. Now the task is to defend existing positions, plan a process of reorganisation, to work to increase mobilisation in the rank-and-file, etc. This should be done at the same time as encouraging discussion on the strategy of the strike. The leadership must be open to criticism and encourage free debate.

The other way of 'continuing the struggle' would be to gradually abandon the workers without formally withdrawing the strike call. This would be done by continuous public rhetoric and channelling the workers attention to electoral contests without any efforts to evaluate or revive the struggle.

We give critical support to the Lal Nishan candidate against the Maharashtra chief minister in the Sangli bye election. In so far as this electoral contest focuses attention on the textile strike and helps mobilise the masses it will be positive.

But there are some pitfalls, and this may be a sign of a different orientation by the leadership. Since October 1982 the strike leadership has systematically refrained from talking militant actions, street demonstrations, pickets, etc. Samant has said repeatedly that he does not want the strike to become a 'law and order' issue. In this situation diverting the workers to elections rather than the concrete task of salvaging their basic interests will be fatal. ■

The trajectory of the Greens

Although the Christian Democrats won a big victory in the March 6 elections to the West German federal parliament, along with this for the first time since 1953 a party to the left of the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens, cleared the 5 percent barrier for representation. This is one of the clearest indications of the contradictory stage of West German politics today.

Garnering more than two million votes, the Greens were the only force on the left that made any real gains in the elections.

In West Germany, the Greens dominate political debate on the left more than in any other country in Western Europe. These debates are, moreover, beginning to reach deeply into the SPD itself.

The following article explains the position of the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten (GIM), German section of the Fourth International, on the Greens and their role in the March 6 elections, as well as in the process of building a left alternative to the Social Democrats in general.

Peter BARTELHEIMER

The development of the Green Party has a close relationship to the deep-seated political and economic stability enjoyed by West German capitalism up to the end of the 1980s, the stability that the Social Democrats vaunt in their propaganda about the "German model."

The effects of the 1974-75 world capitalist recession on the West German economy were in fact quite limited. Moreover, working-class mobilizations against rising unemployment and the first measures of bourgeois austerity policy were blocked for many years because a Social Democratic Party linked to the trade-union bureaucracy was involved in running the government.

As a result, mass action developed in most cases not in the form of mass workers mobilizations but of mobilizations by the new social movements against nuclear
Greens in Hesse (DR)

power and later, at the start of the 1980s, against stepped up militarization.

The participants in these mobilizations, who were mostly young people, did not see the workers organizations, the Social Democratic Party and the unions, as potential allies of their rebellion. To the contrary, in their eyes, these organizations were on the enemy's side, and an integral part of the crooked political game of the capitalist system.

A large section of these young people, therefore, moved away from the Social Democratic Party in the form in which they saw it, as the dominant party in the Social Democratic-Liberal (SPD-FDP) coalition government. This rejection was not on a class-struggle basis but grounded rather in radical opposition to both the "civilian" and military uses of nuclear technology, and to the destruction of the

environment.

The big Maoist organizations that dominated the socialist left since the heyday of the student movement collapsed. For many of the activists coming from this political background, the ecology movement was not simply a starting point for building a left alternative to the Social Democratic Party but also represented the end of their hopes for a radicalization of the workers.

Green and alternative slates began appearing in 1978 and started electing representatives to state parliaments and city councils. Paradoxically, right from the beginning, these formations shared one of the deepest convictions of the Social Democracy — the belief that capitalism would continue to be able to overcome its economic contradictions and succeed in a lasting way in coopting the working class.

In their quest for an alternative society, these currents repeated the old errors of the student movement. They drew an "x" over the workers movement and in particular ruled out the unions as means of overthrowing the existing order. They made the "new movements," the question of the survival of humanity faced with the threat of nuclear war and ecological disasters, the rallying points for opposition to capitalist society.

If, despite this, the Green Party from the start has been something more than just an environmentalist group, it is primarily thanks to the active participation of a section of the socialist left in this project. Such forces joined the Greens because they saw this movement as the only way to gain a mass base.

The electoral successes of the Greens, which have gained them a foothold in five state parliaments (Hamburg, Bremen, West Berlin, Hesse, and Baden-Wurtemberg) and in the national parliament, would have been inconceivable without the mass actions of the peace movement, the movement against nuclear power, and the movement against the destruction of the environment. This is why the claim by the Greens that they are the cutting edge of all these movements is putting the cart before the horse.

The Greens are a melting pot of the most diverse political tendencies. The gamut goes from people holding reformist environmentalist conceptions that remain in the framework of capitalism to advocates of socialist and Marxist positions. Somewhere in between are people spinning theories about the possibility of a revolutionary transformation of society based on ecology.

Regional groups, such as those in Hamburg and Berlin, which are organized respectively around the Green Alternative Slate and the West Berlin Alternative Slate, assert a certain programmatic and organizational autonomy with respect to the national Green Party. In part, they owe their existence to the initiative of a wing of the old Maoist left and are strongly marked by anticapitalist conceptions.

While in the elections, the Greens got thousands of votes from activists in the



social movements, they nonetheless do not represent an organizational force capable of building mass actions.

The Greens were absent both from the big trade-union demonstrations against austerity in the fall of 1982 and from the anti-NATO mobilizations. In fact, underneath the cover of demagoguery about grassroots democracy, a small minority of the membership long ago formed a crystallized apparatus. They are the ones who discuss and make decisions. The various programmatic options are not openly put before or discussed by the body of the membership.

Ernst Hoplitschek, cofounder of the Alternative Slate in West Berlin, has given a description of the internal life in this organization. In the delegate councils of the Alternative Slate, seventy to eighty members wield the cudgels of "ideological battles," while no more than thirty "alternative" politicians make the decisions in "the name" of the 2,600 members.

In Hesse, where the Greens owe their electoral success last fall to the hard-fought mass struggle against the building of a west runway at the Frankfurt airport, about eighty members and participants decided on the election program and slate of candidates for 2,500 members.

This group refused to allow in Alexander Schubart, a former Social Democrat and the main spokesperson of the fight against the expansion of the Frankfurt airport. Schubart is a firm socialist and had come out against a purely "Green" slate and for a broader electoral alliance.

In the fall of 1982, under the pressure of the new world recession, the tripling of the number of unemployed, and the tightening of austerity measures, the Green Party went through heated debates in the months preceding the election campaign over its economic program.

A first meeting of the National Assembly of Delegates, held after the breakup of the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition government on November 13-14 in Hagen, was marked by the public presentation of a provocative theory that Rudolf Bahro developed. He maintained that a radical environmentalist policy should be put forward to take advantage of the opportunity represented by the rise of the number of unemployed to 5 million. The movement should demand that public means should be allotted to "get rid of alienated industrial labor" and to build "a new functioning of daily life independent of the world market."

The economic program that was finally adopted at a meeting of the National Assembly of Delegates in Sindelfingen, near Stuttgart, on January 15-16 was deeply marked by the conceptions of the socialist forces active in the Greens. But it represented the sort of compromise that is typical of this chameleon-like and divided organization.

On the one hand, the program is based on a critique of the law of profit, capitalist competition, and the existing relations of production, which are analyzed as the

source of social alienation and the exploitation of human beings and of nature.

On the other hand, the "conceptions of a new economic order based on preservation of the environment and on democracy" are formulated in a deliberately vague way ("diverting big industry from the world market" to "production close to the consumers in the local and regional economic spheres," a "financial system based on human solidarity," and building cooperatives made up of small self-managed production units).

The purpose of such fuzzy formulations is to maintain the illusion that there is a third way between capitalism and the traditional socialist conceptions.

The program calls for "socialization of the land, of the environment, of the means of production, and of the banks in new forms." It rejects "the traditional forms of nationalization." Thus the Greens have so far refused to support the demand of steelworkers for nationalization of their industry.

The long-term goal of "a complete structural change of the social system in accordance with environmentalist and social principles" is counterposed to a series of immediate demands that are achievable in the framework of capitalism. Bourgeois austerity policy and cutbacks of social gains are decisively rejected.

However, the call for self-management to replace "the present bureaucratization of the social-welfare state" strikes up a tune dangerously reminiscent of the Christian Democrats' demagogic campaign for a break with the idea of the "providential state."

After a heated debate, the Greens finally came out for the immediate enactment of the 35-hour week without any cut in pay for the lower and middle categories as a means of creating new jobs. And if this measure were not enough to provide jobs for all, the Greens favor an additional cut in the workweek.

On the other hand, the Greens are considering part-time work and job sharing as a means of responding to the wishes of some who want to work less intensively than the weekly average. They note that wage earners and unions maintain a large potential for influencing economic relations because of the numbers they represent and their direct hold on the means of production. Therefore, they say that active work in the unions is necessary. But trade-union and factory struggles are seen only as a subsidiary means of achieving the party's program.

The recent change of government in Bonn, following the breakup of the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition and the March 6 elections, marks the end of West German's exceptional situation as an island of stability in the midst of the capitalist economic social crisis.

The new situation is very rapidly going to reveal the Green Party's weaknesses. This will lead in the relatively near future to a crisis of perspectives and very sharp internal debate. It will no longer be possible to defuse political and ideological differences by getting good results at the

polls. Unemployment, austerity budgets, and trade-union fightback have become the central themes in domestic politics.

The Greens can no longer afford to ignore the working class and unions as the decisive factors for social change. Already, even among those who identify with the Greens, the disarray and panic caused by the victory of the right and by the attacks of the government and the bosses have considerably cooled the enthusiasm aroused by the entry of the Greens into the federal parliament.

The orientation followed so far by the Greens, who, with their 5 percent of the vote, present themselves as the only real opposition to the establishment bloc of Social Democrats and capitalist parties no longer has any credibility in a situation where the workers are again placing their hopes in a Social Democratic Party out of power.

Any policy today that is not designed to achieve unity in action with the Social Democratic Party against the rightist coalition will inevitably lead its proponents to the sidelines of social struggles.

The sectarian refusal of the Greens to work together with the left socialist forces and their repeated claim to be the only legitimate representative of the new social movements come more and more in contradiction with the disappointing role they have played on many occasions in the organizing and conducting of mass actions.

The ranks' lack of control over the parliamentary fraction and the scant possibilities for systematic political discussion can quickly lead to a crisis if the Greens' vote falls in the upcoming state elections or even if they fail to clear the 5 percent barrier.

Before the March 6 elections to the federal parliament, the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten (GIM, German section of the Fourth International) called for a broad electoral alliance between the Greens and the forces of the socialist left, as well as other organizations.

The Greens rejected such a move. They have not given a clear answer to the question whether they would vote for the Social Democrat candidate for chancellor, Hans Vogel, if he had the possibility of winning a majority in parliament. They have failed to understand the need for common action with other forces of the socialist left to support the workers' demands. Rather, the Greens have regarded the Social Democratic Party as their main competitor for votes.

For these reasons, the GIM, which campaigned for a new left majority and for a Social Democratic Party government, called for voting for the Social Democrats alone and not for the Social Democrats and the Greens.

The central objective of the GIM's policy remains joint mobilizations by the Greens, the unions, Social Democrats, and the left socialist forces against the course of the rightist coalition. In this framework, it will be necessary to call on the parliamentary fractions of the Greens

and the Social Democrats to support mass actions by means of common initiatives in parliament. They should, for example, introduce a bill providing for the enactment of the 35-hour week.

At the same time, however, revolutionary socialists will have to debate with the socialist forces in the Greens to convince them that it is possible and necessary today to build a socialist alternative among

the workers.

Socialists such as Thomas Ebermann, who are working in the Greens but not fighting openly for a revolutionary socialist program, are not playing the sort of role they could when, for the first time in many years, socialist objectives and anti-capitalist demands are being broadly discussed in the Social Democratic Party and the unions. ■

Revolutionary trade-unionist debates Greens leader



Steelworkers demonstration (DR)

Following the West German national parliamentary elections on March 6, the Swiss section of the Fourth International organized two public forums on the political situation in West Germany, along with another major left group, the POCH (Progressive Organizations of Switzerland).

Below are major excerpts from the contributions of two participants in the forum held on March 16 in Zurich.

Thomas Ebermann is a member of the Hamburg Green Alternative Slate and a member of the Hesse state parliament.

Jakob Moneta, is a former editor in chief of the magazine of the union IG Metall. He is presently a collaborator of the revolutionary socialist journal *Was Tun*, which reflects the points of view of the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten (GIM), West German section of the Fourth International.

Thomas Ebermann: The only bright spot in the results of the March 6 elections is our entry into the federal parliament. As happy as we are to have made it, we have to take note of the fact that in West Germany, there is a Christian Democratic state on all levels.

We have a Supreme Court dominated by the Christian Democrats, a national employment agency dominated by the Christian Democrats, a Christian Democratic president, a Christian Democratic majority in the federal parliament, a Christian Democratic majority in the Council of the States, and a large Christian Democratic majority in the local governments and parliaments, as well as

the municipalities, and now finally a Christian Democratic-dominated federal government.

The slogan "foreigners out!" which up until now had gotten little response, is becoming the expression of a social reality. The deployment of US intermediate missiles, an essential element in the whole strategy of NATO, is being pushed through by growing state repression.

Socially disadvantaged women can no longer pay the cost of abortions. Unemployment and cutbacks in social welfare are increasing, and there will be an economic policy of the sort that will bring back bad memories of other times

in German history.

All this is the product of thirteen years of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) working in government. The line it followed was summed up by Willy Brandt (who served as chancellor from 1969 to 1974) in the following way: "If you want to milk a cow" — the animal in this case representing the capitalist system — "you cannot kill it."

The conclusion a lot of workers drew from this slogan on March 6 was the following: "If that's the way it is, if the workers have to subordinate themselves to the interests of capital, then let's vote for the party that the capitalists really have confidence in." And that party is the Christian Democrats.

The most disappointing aspect of the election results is how many workers voted for the Christian Democrats.

Last year marked a "first" in the history of West Germany. In the Saar state, the workforce in one concern collectively and apparently voluntarily gave back part of their wages to the boss in an attempt to keep their jobs secure. And this is despite the fact that job security had been guaranteed by the contract.

Such an action is both a boost to, and a result of, an ideology that claims that labor and capital are "social partners." This ideology, which the Social Democrats helped to develop, is gaining ground....

The West German elections were dominated by the question of economic policy. Probably a majority agreed that the Social Democrats were best qualified to deal with questions such as the missiles, education, and maintenance of democratic rights. But the majority did not have confidence in their ability to solve the economic crisis. That's why the Christian Democrats' demagogic slogan "Vote for an Upturn" (meaning a conscious acceptance of the capitalist law of profit) found such fertile ground.

What is more, it is important to grasp the fact — which is often not seen abroad — that the Social Democrats did not want to win these elections. They were ready, for reasons of realpolitik to take a defeat in order to be in a better position to break up the Greens and Alternative Slates.

So we can see that the decisive battles to come between the Social Democrats and the Greens-Alternative Slates will be fought over questions of economic and social policy, although that does not mean that the Greens can neglect environmental needs or the demands for a policy of peace.

The historic task of the Social Democrats, as defined by the financial circles, is to play the role of opposition in order to choke off the new forces that are appearing and whose activity is challenging the structural foundations of the system in West Germany.

Three years ago, anybody could easily distinguish the Social Democrats from the Greens-Alternative Slates. There was no way we could be mixed up with the Soc-

ial Democrats....But it has now become more difficult to tell the Social Democrats from the Greens, precisely because of the opposition role the Social Democrats have been assigned by capital....

In order to maintain its antagonistic attitude to the Greens, the Social Democracy has developed a new argument:

"Their goals and their ideals are no doubt wonderful. But they understand none of the complexities of political economy. They don't realize shortage of means and financing that afflicts the state budget. And so we cannot go along with them and put into practice the ideals we hold in common." That is the substance of it.

This argument was expressed most completely in an interview given by a left Social Democratic Party Hamburg city councillor. He said: "Under the pressure of the election results in Hamburg [in the June 1982 elections the Greens-Alternative Slate got 7.7% of the vote], the Social Democratic Party has to return to the road of a socialist policy." And then he added: "Of course, I mean within the limits of our present financial means."

Thus he seems to be saying socialism is very expensive, and one might almost conclude that it is only possible when capitalism is flourishing and not in a period of crisis....

The task of the Greens, therefore, is to conduct a debate to clarify the issues for the people. If the functioning of the society is not determined by the law of profit but by overall social production, then defense of the environment becomes cheap.

And for the sake of the environment as well, it is important to try to put an end to the capitalist functioning of society....In Hamburg, for example, there is a full-fledged crisis in the shipbuilding industry. But what is new here is that the shipbuilding workers — a minority in the workers movement, are not demanding "more subsidies" or "support for the shipbuilding industry." They have established a list of alternative products that they could produce.

So, their demands go further than simply the "right to a job." That demand as such says nothing about the quality or the use of the product, or working conditions or social needs.

These workers have had to take on all the established political parties, including, notably the Social Democrats. The latter have expressed their admiration for the workers spirit of initiative and creativity. But they come back: "All we have to do is prove that a market exists for these products and that their sale would be profitable. After that, producing them might be considered."

Even in this area, where the state could be the buyer and could set very strict rules for the protection of the environment — even within the framework of the present system and without the break with the relationships of production that we seek — even here, every possibility for environmental investments for

the future, for socially useful investments, is rejected.

Today, the Social Democrats have discovered the 35-hour week. The only problem is that they think it should be instituted at no cost to anyone. So, they say: "The 35-hour week must not lead to any increase in the wage bill or in state expenditures." This amounts purely and simply to saying that the 35-hour week has to be financed by lowering wages....

What I say here should not be misinterpreted. I am not at all saying that the Greens are a new Dr. Keynes, a miracle-working Keynes with an environmentalist tonic, who is going to make unemployment vanish by means of a complicated system of environmental investments, or cure capitalism of its cyclical crises. We can't do that.

We can show that there are measures that can be taken, and there is a policy for redistributing taxes that will make it possible to moderate the unemployment rates. But at the same time, we want to pose the issue of socializing the means of production, the goal laid out in our program, by raising questions about the usefulness of products, about social needs, and concern for the environment.

This is what is historically new about our current. It is from this standpoint that the Greens can help to expose a certain ossification in the traditional workers movement and its organizations. I say "they can" because the ideas I have put forward here today are very much the subject of debate and controversy among the Greens.

Everything I have said — and I come out of a communist tradition and I decided consciously as a Marxist to devote my energies to the Greens — can be put forward among the Greens and can win a majority. Of course, you can find politicians among the Greens who think that they can advance their orientation within the framework of the present society and its relationships of production. You can also find minorities among the Greens, like Rudolf Bahro, who advocate a return to subsistence production and think that no means of production should ever go beyond the stage of craft work. This is wrong.

The Greens pose the problem of how to orient the development of the productive forces, and on this point also they are much more advanced than the Social Democratic Party's Bad Godesberg Program (adopted in 1959). This program not only waves away the problem of property relations but it also looks at the development of the productive forces and economic growth in a wholly uncritical way.

The Greens, therefore, make a two-sided criticism of the Social Democracy. Jakob Moneta thinks that the best tactic is to call for a vote for the Social Democracy and not for the Greens. I think that this tactic is completely inadequate. What I have tried to do is explain to you that a new political force has appeared in West Germany. This force still has many failings. But it is the most

hopeful thing in this sinister Christian Democratic state.

Jakob Moneta. I glad that at the end of his talk, Thomas picked up the thread of the debate by mentioning that I called for a vote for the Social Democrats. But he neglected to explain why millions of people vote for them.

I agree completely with the critique Thomas made of the Social Democrats. I have agreed with these points since I joined the youth of the Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei (1) in 1931 instead of the Social Democrats. But this is not the problem.

The real question is the following: What concrete policy could have prevented what happened in the recent elections? Even if a grouping to the left of the Social Democrats managed to get into the federal parliament on March 6 — which is grounds for rejoicing, especially since the grouping in question bases itself on the mass movement — the victory of the right on the parliamentary level has meant a major setback for the left and for the workers movement. This is where the problem arises....

It makes me think a bit of the Weimar Republic period (1919-1933) and especially of the German Communist Party, which congratulated itself for gaining a million votes in elections when the Nazis gained 3 million. I can't sing any hozannas over such victories.

If we look at the problem of getting the masses to break from the Social Democracy to move toward socialist policies rather than vote for the Christian Democrats, we should be very clear about the character of this crisis and what is at the root of the right turn that has taken place not just in West Germany but also in the recent municipal elections in France.

To show the nature of this crisis a few figures are sufficient. In 1970-71, there were 10 million unemployed in all the developed countries. In February this year, there were three and a half times that number, that is 35 million.

In West Germany, the number of unemployed has multiplied by ten times since 1970-71, going from 250,000 to 2.5 million, and it shouldn't be left out that there are 700,000 workers on part time. Whereas in the other capitalist countries it took 13 years for the number of unemployed to multiply by three, in West Germany this happened in three years.

This deepening of the crisis made the issues of unemployment and the jobs crisis the central question in the elections, contrary to the expectations of the Greens and others. I have to say that this question did not get the place it deserved in the Greens election campaign — at least not in the official propaganda.

1. Socialist Workers Party, a group founded in 1931 that brought together several currents in the left wing of the Social Democratic Party. It failed, as a whole, to go beyond centrism, however. — IV.



'Education not Bombs' (DR)

Thomas Ebermann put forward his own positions, with which I fully agree.

Was there really no possibility of a government to the left of the Christian Democrats and the Liberals (FDP), the possibility Willy Brandt talked about after the Hesse state elections in September 1982?

In August 1982, the polls gave only 30% to the celebrated Helmut Schmidt, who passes for an expert in world economics and never stops talking about the "German model." Then the break came between Schmidt and the Liberals. He showed them the door, and hope sprang up among millions of workers and trade-union activists, who had always said:

"Why do you keep telling us that you have to carry out this rotten policy — social cutbacks and all the rest — because you have the Liberals (FDP) in the government. Why don't you get out of this government?"

And the traditional answer was: "O.K., but we have to accept the lesser evil, otherwise the Christian Democrats will run the country."

Then Schmidt made an aboutface and aroused so much hope that the situation was turned around, to such an extent, that in the Hesse elections, the Social Democrats, who were at the end of their rope, ended up winning. This was a total surprise. None of the pollsters predicted it. (2)

In the same period, at the end of 1982, we saw mass demonstrations organ-

ized by the unions that drew 600,000 people. It's amusing, moreover, to think that these demonstrations were decided on when the Social Democrats were still in the government to show that the unions could no longer defend the policy of the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition.

However, the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition government had fallen in the meantime, and these demonstrations were ultimately directed against the Kohl-Genscher (Christian Democrat-Liberal) government, against the government of the bosses.

And the outcome was that the Social Democrats, who were given no hope of winning the elections to the municipal parliament in Hamburg on December 19, 1982, came out with an absolute majority (51%), and didn't even need the support of the Green-Alternative Slate. From this, a certain number of conclusions can be drawn.

First of all, it is clear today where the force is that will make it possible to get rid of a rightist government. To accomplish this we need an alliance going outside parliament and uniting the mass movements, the trade-union movement as well as the peace movement and the women's movement....

Why should we aim to reach the working class and win it to our objectives? That's easy to explain. I am a cofounder of the Club for Action in Defense of Life. This group has worked inside the trade-

union movement for a different energy policy and a total stop to nuclear power. We have had some successes. Some unions have come over to our positions.

In Bonn, I spoke in the name of the club to a rally of 150,000 people who came to demonstrate against nuclear power. At that time, I was also, as editor in chief of the IG Metall journal, in charge of the strike papers.

On a daily basis, I followed five major strikes in Bremen and in Baden-Wurtemberg. I could see the difference there is between demonstrations in which thousands of people mobilize and then go their separate ways and a strike that managed practically to paralyze the country and capitalism. I could see that in order to achieve victory it was necessary to win these masses of working people. This is where the difference is with the great majority of Greens, who do not understand this.

I am coming to the question of the electoral tactic. I am going to explain briefly my position. If we want to convince the workers, the trade-union officers, the factory delegates who today still have confidence in the Social Demo-

2. In the Hesse state elections on September 16, 1982, the Christian Democrats failed to get the absolute majority the polls predicted. The Liberals failed to clear the 5% barrier for representation in parliament. The Social Democrats' vote dropped by only 1.8%, while the polls had predicted a drop of more than 10%. The Greens got their highest score, with 8% of the vote.

crats, we have to let them go through the concrete experience of having a Social Democratic government.

As long as the Liberals were in the government, there was an easy explanation for such people. Everything was the fault of the Liberals, who were a bourgeois party with which it was "necessary to make compromises."

That's why, as a trade-unionist, I supported the call for voting for the Social Democrats, along with some other people, including Green candidates, one of whom, Jurgen Reents, was elected to the federal parliament. In conjunction with this appeal, we pushed the following ideas: If the Social Democrats were in a position to form the next government, we demanded first that they not make any alliances with any bourgeois party and that they give no support to a bourgeois minority government.

Secondly, we demanded that they accept the support of the Greens, which would mean that the Social Democratic candidate for chancellor, Hans Vogel, agreeing to be elected with the votes of the Green members of parliament against the rightist candidate.

On this question, once again there were two positions among the Greens. Some said: "We are only going to vote for Vogel if he is ready to do something to meet our conditions." Others, and I agree with them, thought that this line led to perpetuating the illusion that the Social Democrats really could respond to such demands. There is one condition right off the bat that the Social Democrats are never going to meet — the demand to get out of NATO.

Instead, what I think is important is to mobilize people who identify with the Social Democratic Party. That is what we did with the electoral appeal I spoke of, in which we said that a new Social Democratic government should be against the deployment of the NATO nuclear missiles in West Germany, it should vote in a law enacting the 35-hour week, it should come out for women's rights, and for the socialization of certain state-financed tasks. That is what we demanded as trade unionists.

We know that a Social Democratic government cannot meet these demands and will not meet them. But we also know that the workers electing a Social Democratic government would expect it to meet them. We know that we are not going to convince Vogel or Dohnanyi (the mayor of Hamburg). What is important in our view is that the workers come on their own to see who is for them and who is against them. This is the only chance to break them away from the Social Democrats.

A still more important point is to form links now with those forces that are ready to strike or to come into the streets to demonstrate. There is the example of steel, where it has reached the point that tens of thousands of workers have come onto the streets and the factory delegates in the Hoesch trust have demanded nationalization of the company. (3)



The Hoesch trust workers, moreover, were not left on their own. Delegates in other factories have demanded not only nationalization but nationalization with a guarantee of maintaining jobs.

If you start from the principle, as some Greens do, that self-management can be set up immediately in the factories, then you have to ask yourself a question: What would self-management mean in the steel industry, when the whole industry is in the throes of a crisis? Such a project would be condemned to failure. Moreover, if you say at the same time, as the Greens do in their program, that it is essential to decentralize the concerns, then the problem becomes insoluble.

Thomas says that he is for socializing the means of production if this is on the basis of an alternative economic model. My question is what this alternative society should be. If this question is not settled from the start, then the bosses' logic will continue to prevail. In fact, this involves the question of transitional demands. If the working class takes up demands such as the one for nationalization of the steel industry for example, then its struggles and mobilizations will come objectively into conflict with the logic of capital and the capitalists....

[After the change in government in Bonn in the fall of 1982, a discussion took place in the left regarding a broad alliance of the Greens, the Alternative Slates, and other socialist groups. The GIM came out for such an alliance, as well as the Democratic Socialists (4), a grouping around former left figures in the Social Democratic Party. Thomas Ebermann was asked about this proposal. He replied as follows:]

Thoms Ebermann. I can't see, after all that Jakob Moneta has just said, how another sort of policy of alliances by the Greens, with, say, the Democratic Socialists, would make it unnecessary for him to call for a vote for the Social Democrats.

Now, the Greens are being criticized from two different standpoints. On the one hand, we made an error by not calling for a vote for the Social Democrats. On the other, we rejected an alliance, for example, with the Democratic Socialists.

Balancing off these two arguments, I come to the following conclusion: If

the GIM, perhaps along with the Democratic Socialists, had been a moving force in an electoral alliance with the Greens, then calling for a vote for the Social Democrats would have been wrong. The right thing would have been to support this electoral alliance.

Since the electoral alliance was put together without the Democratic Socialists and without the GIM, we get a very deep analysis of why, in the light of the relationship of forces among the classes and the general level of consciousness of the class, it was necessary this time to call for a vote for the Social Democrats.

This is a contradiction that shows that among you also there are narrow group interests that influence your decisions.... If I may also refer to the Marxist classics, in this case to Lenin, I would call this a "tail-endist policy."

In order to lay out a socialist or progressive environmentalist policy, you can't just base yourself on the consciousness of the workers. You also have to apply the criterion of whether a group is ready to break with the bourgeois state and with the parties linked to it by bourgeois ideology.

Jakob Moneta. If an electoral alliance had been formed, that would not have meant that we would have joined the Green Party. It would have meant that we would have proposed a program on a whole series of points that would have gotten our common agreement.... It is correct to say that if a program containing the seven or eight points that we have put forward as essential had been drawn up, then it would have been necessary to line up together behind it and call for the whole left to come out in support of it....

That did not happen, and so we just had to make a decision. Should we call for a vote for an organization with totally fluid positions, when there was no way of telling what would jell tomorrow out of the churning of its various currents. Or should we go to the workers and say to them, it's not wrong to vote for the Social Democrats today. You think they will nationalize the factories. We don't. But if you think that, put them in power, and go through the experience yourselves. Those were the two possible options, and we made a choice. ■

3. See "The Impact of the World Economic Crisis on West German Unions" by Peter Bartelheimer in *International Viewpoint*, No 31, May 30, 1983.

4. In March 1982, there was a public discussion on forming a new party to the left of the Social Democrats at a conference attended by 1,200, including representatives of the GIM. The Democratic Socialists were formed on the initiative of figures expelled from the Social Democratic Party such as Manfred Coppik, who was expelled from the SPD parliamentary fraction for opposing Chancellor Schmidt's nuclear policy. This formation drew in a current that broke with the SPD leadership to the left in recent years, a small current of union activists, and a section of the environmentalist current conscious of the limitations of the Greens' policy. On the Democratic Socialists and the position of West German Fourth Internationalists to this development, see "Toward a New Socialist Party in West Germany?" in *International Viewpoint*, No 4, April 12, 1982.



Volvo workers going to demand wage rise (DR)

Ten years of building class-struggle unionism in Sweden's biggest plant

For more than ten years, Scandinavia's biggest plant, a concentration of 12 to 13 thousand workers, has been the scene of an intense struggle between the Social Democratic union leadership and a trade-union opposition in which revolutionary socialists play a leading role.

The fight is over working conditions and the workers standard of living. It has inevitably raised the question of leadership of the trade-union organization — the Volvo local of the Metallindustriarbetarfoerbund (Engineering Workers Union).

Volvo/Gothenburg is not only the biggest plant in Scandinavia. It is also the most influential. And since Volvo carries a lot of weight in the Swedish economy, it tends to set the pace in the trade-union movement.

For more than a decade, the Social Democratic party organization at Volvo has done what it could to strike back and isolate the union opposition and the political forces that underpin it.

But the opposition has held on firmly. And in this year's elections for section and local leadership, it made some new advances.

These gains were also made in a new political situation in Swedish society. After the September 1982 elections, a Social Democratic government is at the helm. The Social Democrats dominate both government — including a lot of municipalities — and trade-union life from top to bottom. They hold overwhelming majorities in most of the union locals.

The gains of the trade-union opposition at Volvo in Gothenburg reflect the fact that the Social Democratic unionists are having a harder and harder time defending the severe austerity measures that the Palme government began to introduce following last year's election. (1)

An *International Viewpoint* correspondent, Tom Gustafsson, interviewed Goete Kilden, a leader of the union opposition, chairman of the section committee at the Volvo truck factory, and a leading member of the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International.

Question. How would you describe the position of the Union Opposition at Volvo today, after ten years of consistent work?

Answer. It is hard to express the influence of the Union Opposition in terms of percentages. The vote it gets differs from question to question, and depending on the general political situation.

But let's start with the results of the most recent elections.

In the election for the union-local leadership, the opposition ran one candidate, myself. The result was relatively

good. I got 35% of the vote. The vote we got differed from shop to shop. In all, there were ballot boxes in 23 shops. We got the majority in two, including the truck factory, where I work.

I ran as a candidate for the Union Opposition. But the Social Democrats in the engineering union have rigged the rules in such a way that I was obliged formally to stand under a party label, as a candidate for the Socialist Party.

The Social Democrats got about 65% of the votes. About 45% of the work-force voted. You have to keep in mind

that nearly everyone at Volvo is in the union.

Before the union-local elections, at the beginning of the year, there were shop leadership elections. I was elected chairman of the largest section of the truck assembly workers with 70% of the vote.

In this shop, the opposition got a majority of the section leadership, with an average vote of 60%. We also made a breakthrough in the elections for another shop leadership.

Up until then, the only leadership posts we held were in the truck assembly section. But this time the opposition managed to win two places in another shop leadership. In both other shops where we ran straight opposition candidates, we got about 35% of the vote.

But there are a number of representatives in other section leaderships that sympathize strongly with us. They may hesitate to take part in all our activities or to run under the label "Union Opposition." But they can back up the opposition in various skirmishes that occur in the plant and in battles in the union.

Q. What's the situation like at the other levels in the union?

A. If we take Volvo/Gothenburg as a whole, there are 600 elected union representatives. The number supporting the opposition has varied over the recent years. But we have steadily made inroads into the union apparatus. Today there may be 75 or even a 100 shop stewards who are ready to support the opposition in an active way. They were elected because of their close relations with workers on the shop floor and use their posts as levers to advance union organization.

If you add to this the backing we have gotten in connection with conflicts with the management and on democratic questions in the union as a whole, we can estimate that we have a much broader base of support.

On the other hand, there are a series of problems in the way the union functions that obstruct our work. One example is that the national union has abolished our membership meeting and replaced it with a delegated one. These delegates are bureaucratically chosen, partly appointed. So, in the delegate meetings, we have only about 10% on our side. In the membership meetings we often got majorities on various questions.

And as I said, party labels are imposed on candidates running in union elections.

Q. What sort of impact has the union work at Volvo had outside the plant?

A. The long years of work and the results it has achieved has made the Union Opposition at Volvo a factor in political life, something that people are aware of here in the Gothenburg district but also on the national level.

Gothenburg is probably Sweden's most important industrial city. Volvo is

1. See "The 'Welfare State' Fades in Sweden" by Tom Gustafsson in *International Viewpoint*, No 29, May 2, 1983.

here, along with the port, shipyards, and various other industries. Everyone active in the unions or interested in the life of the unions knows about the opposition.

Over the last year, above all in connection with the most recent union elections, there has been a great deal of material about the opposition in the papers and on the local radio. So, a lot of people have had to take a position on what we are doing.

The opposition is inevitably a subject of discussion in union training sessions and conferences. Where there are representatives of the opposition, people seek us out and discuss with us. A lot of people are curious, interested by the attention our union work has gotten.

Q. How have the conditions for your work changed in the past year?

A. The opposition made a certain comeback this year in the elections by comparison with the previous period.

When the bourgeois coalition was in power, especially toward the end of its time in office, it was more and more aggressively antilabor. But with the Social Democrats in opposition, the Social Democratic leadership in the union had a lot of maneuvering room. The Union Opposition was pushed back to a certain extent.

The abolition of membership meetings also hurt us. It seriously reduced democracy in the union and put another obstacle in the way of the membership having any say in the union. For the Union Opposition, this meant that we no longer had the kind of forum we had before where we could meet as representatives from various shops, work out statements, prepare contributions, and in general prepare proposals for orienting the union's work in a natural way.

The character of the opposition has also changed as a result of the decline of various political organizations that had been active in its work. Maoist and centrist groups coming out of the radicalization of the 1960s and 1970s just simply threw in the towel. Foerbundet Kommunist dissolved outright, nationally. And the formerly very powerful Maoist Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti wasted away to a mere shadow of its former self. For some years now, it has had no real influence in our union.

So, we made something of a comeback in the recent elections. This reflected the beginning of a new situation, which has a lot to do with the installation of the new Social Democratic government.

This shift reflected the first protests, the first distrust, about the Social Democratic government's policy. The Social Democratic Party has in fact introduced abruptly a series of measures aimed against the working people — devaluation of the Swedish crown by 16%, increases in indirect taxes, and an informal incomes policy through which the Social Democrats got the unions to make record-low wage demands in the latest contract negotiations.

Q. In this situation, what were the main trade-union and political questions in the union elections this year?

A. After 1976, which was the last "fat year" as regards the Swedish workers' living standard, the years of declining wages set in, and the thin years have been getting thinner under the Social Democratic government. Since 1976, the living standard of the average Volvo worker has dropped by about 12%.

At the same time, the Volvo concern has been making advances on a number of fronts — in its sales of both automobiles and trucks, of marine motors, airplane motors, and busses. In the context of the general crisis in the automotive industry, Volvo has won new markets and raked in unequalled profits.

In the union local elections, we could point out that the estimated profits for this year — about 4 billion crowns — represent 70,000 crowns for every Volvo employee in the country.

The union's national wage demand — and that was generally accepted as the standard — added up to between two and four thousand crowns.

The union-local elections led to an argument, a confrontation, between two lines for the local negotiations, which were to begin in March or April. We demanded that the local should go after a local wage increment of three crowns per hour. We can say that we got good results from this campaign. The union local leadership was forced to get involved in a real discussion about the workers' standard of living and finally for the sake of sheer self-preservation was obliged to raise its demands.

Of course, we also fought hard on other fronts, raising an issue that has become sort of the theme song of the opposition — democracy. We demanded regular reports on the state of contract negotiations, the right to vote on the contract before it is signed (which is not the case today), and membership meetings instead of delegated ones, and so forth.

We also attacked examples of the way the leadership misused its mandate, such as the case of junkets to Portugal for members of the union local leadership, which the company paid for. This amounted to union officials taking money "under the table" from the bosses.

In the elections to the section leadership, a series of specific questions came up, such as reorganization of production and how workers transferred to other shops were treated by union representatives.

Q. A lot of the leaders of the Union Opposition have political connections, often to the Socialist Party. How did that affect the union-local election campaign, and what is the relationship between the trade-union questions and the broader political ones?

A. The very fact that I ran both as a spokesman for the Union Opposition and a member of the Socialist Party meant that I had to take up a whole body of related questions in interviews with the

newspapers and radio reporters.

It is well known that the Socialist Party actively supports the Union Opposition and that a number of the leaders are members of the party. But it is also well known that the Opposition is a broad current. It is open to everyone who is ready to work around the immediate class questions and to transform the union into a democratic and fighting organization — socialists, workers who have voted for the Social Democrats but are critical of them, and independents.

The biggest newspaper in the area, the *Goeteborgs-Post*, which is read by most Volvo workers, ran a nearly full-page interview with me and a leading Social Democrat on the theme "Two Lines for Trade Unionists." It was possible and necessary, to give a broader background to the concrete issues and also to put forward broader solutions, such as nationalization of the banks, and socializing the big companies.

The Social Democratic campaign was rather defensive. They wanted to avoid any discussion of buying power and austerity, but they could not get away with that.

They concentrated on evocations of the Social Democratic party's long experience and its long history of statesmanship. And they did not fail, of course, to try to play the card of primitive anti-Communism, talking about how untrustworthy, etc. we and other small groups were.

Q. Can you describe in more detail the relationship between the Union Opposition and the Socialist Party's work at Volvo?

A. The Union Opposition has never been an organization. It has never had any statutes or any elected leadership, as would be standard operating procedure for political parties.

We have always talked about the Opposition as a *current*. Its activity has always depended largely on the trade-union responsibilities we have held. It has been through these positions that we have been able to take a number of practical initiatives and unite as many workers as possible on the shop floor around the most acute questions of the moment, regardless of party affiliations. It has been a rallying ground for those ready to act. That means, therefore, that its strength has ebbed and flowed.

At the same time, the Opposition's relationship to various political forces has shifted. I mentioned what happened to Foerbundet Kommunist and the SKP. The official Swedish Communist Party, the Vaensterpartiet Kommunisterna (Vpk) was originally involved in the opposition work. But it later fell away from it. Today, its very limited forces at Volvo and other workplaces in Gothenburg oppose the Opposition and are pursuing a policy of polite pressure on the Social Democratic union local leadership.

At the same time, the position of the Socialist Party has grown stronger in the local.



Goete Kilden (DR)

The fact that the Opposition's activity expands in certain periods and then may contract is understandable. Such a broad current obviously ebbs and flows depending on the general political conditions that affect it. Where there is an ebb, the political currents play a bigger direct role in maintaining the level of activity. And when there is a period of upturn, there is a broader basis.

We saw this in the most recent period. In the truck factory at Volvo, the upturn has led to the involvement of the older generation of workers, forty to fifty year olds, in the activity of the Opposition. This is an important development. The majority are politically unaffiliated, although most of them have voted for the Social Democrats in various elections.

The members and close sympathizers of the Socialist Party are organized in a separate trade-union club at Volvo as in a number of other workplaces in the country. This is the traditional form of party organization within the Swedish workers movement, there is nothing new or special about it.

You could say that the union club is our political fraction in the union and in the workplace. It coordinates and organizes the party's campaigns and trains the membership through meetings and discussion groups as well as running a number of social activities.

The last point should be stressed. Most of the members of the union club — and the same goes for the Union Opposition — have families. This is something we have to take account of when we plan our activity, when we determine its content, forms, and rhythm. This is important both for getting workers to join the union club and for holding them.

So, the union club also runs film showings and trips to the country. We have traditional family parties with dancing and international music groups, with food and political speeches. Every year we run a summer camp for families, with boating, canoeing, political discussions, and so forth. In a nutshell we weld politics to everyday life.

It was only when we managed to broaden our activity in this way and to make politics a natural and integral part of our coworkers' lives and work that we were first able to begin to recruit "ordinary Volvo workers." We have continued this work so successfully that today our union club at Volvo has about fifty members.

Q. What conclusions have you and the Socialist Party as a whole drawn from your work at Volvo and in other workplaces across the country in opposing a Social Democratic leadership that still has nearly total control of the union movement on the national scale?

A. The most important thing is that

we never flutter around like butterflies.

We have seen a lot of other groups and individuals "pass through" the factory. They come in from the outside, speak at meetings, make their proposals, sell their papers, pass out their leaflets, and then disappear, perhaps as fast as they appeared in the first place. They pop up like "jack-in-the-boxes." You can never gain any real confidence that way.

We have operated in a completely different way. The most important thing is that we are in Volvo to stay. We are there to earn our living, to get the best possible working conditions for ourselves and others, and to win the majority of the workers for a new trade-union orientation, for a socialist program, to build a new force in the Swedish workers movement. We can only do that by sustained activity over many, many years, rounded activity as individuals and as a group.

Even if there are concrete reasons why one or another individual has to leave or change jobs, that is never something we take for granted. Every such case weakens the work and can only be regarded as an unavoidable evil.

We strive to win confidence on all levels, on the basis of being good workmates, to get a hearing and gain understanding for our socialist ideas.

When we started our work at Volvo we often got involved in solidarity campaigns, for example in support of Vietnam. But we were not able to win the support or the interest we should have.

A lot of what we said did not get a proper hearing because the great majority of workers had a natural skepticism about a new party in the workplace. They did not know if they could really count on us, if we would stay there through thick and thin.

Today we can draw a balance sheet. First, we have accomplished our task, assumed our responsibility for our fellow workers and for the union (often in very "day-to-day" questions such as insurance, transfers, grievances, and so forth), so that we could make real progress.

Then we showed that we could deal with these questions, that we could deal with the problems facing us as shop stewards and members of the union leadership, that we could handle negotiations with the company, that we could gain something in the negotiations. We then also got more of a hearing for what we were saying in other areas. Then our fellow workers took more time to read what we were saying on broader political questions, to read our national newspaper and our factory sheet, to take part in our party meetings. It was not always that they agreed altogether but that at least they saw that what we were saying concerned them and their future.

Let's compare the effects of our international solidarity work today and five, six, or seven years ago. Take solidarity with El Salvador for example.

On our initiative, and without any big opposition from any quarter, the union local leadership invited Gabriel Lara, the

FDR/FMLN's representative in Sweden, to a delegate meeting. He was given a platform to appeal for solidarity with the struggle in El Salvador. He had an hour to speak. And then the meeting decided to conduct an extended collection through the Volvo plant and that all the money would be turned over to the FDR/FMLN.

This was not only important for the Volvo workers. It is important for solidarity in other workplaces. In other plants, people can point to the Volvo example. This initiative would not have had this effect if we had not gained real confidence, a well-established position in the workplace.

Over the last ten years, there has been a veritable barrage of leaflets and newspapers aimed at Volvo. In certain periods of intensive activity we have put out two factory sheets a week, as members of the Opposition and as party members. This has been very energetic activity. And it was very important to break the Social Democrat's monopoly on information.

In the section where I work, we can see that 90% of the workers read the leaflets we produce and which we distribute both inside and outside the factory. Even though people read what we print with varying degrees of attention and criticism, we can see that there is a completely different climate than when we started our work.

We are no longer seen as just individuals, responsible for the good we do or the mistakes we make. There is organized, collective work, and we have a presence in as many heavy production sections as possible.

Our trade-union opposition work has always had a conscious orientation of avoiding sectarianism. We have fought to defeat proposal after proposal, often coming from other political currents, that would have transformed the opposition into a kind of ersatz party, with its own discipline and its own newspaper for political debate and other purposes.

We have argued that the Opposition would lose its force if it operated like that. We have striven to maintain a broad, open current, that could draw in everyone ready to get involved in developing an active, fighting orientation for the union, in fighting the management and a capitulationist and class-collaborationist union leadership.

Q. What have been the dividing lines between this line of developing opposition work and what the other political currents stand for?

A. We have always stressed the central role of trade-unions in Swedish politics, their central role in the Social Democracy's control of the Swedish workers movement.

Our first consideration has always been the crucial importance in the Swedish union movement of the elected officers closest to the ranks, such as shop stewards, safety officers, and education officers, and — where there is suffic-

ient support from below, positions in the leading bodies. Such positions are essential as underpinnings for our work as a means for organizing.

Let's compare this attitude with that of another political organization, the Kommunistiska Partiet, Marxist-Leninisterna (revolutionaererna). This is a unique organization in Western Europe. It has about a thousand members in the Gothenburg area. It has Maoist origins but today can be better characterized as a centrist organization.

The KPML(r) has always had a sectarian orientation in trade-union work. It refuses to take positions of responsibility, and follows a generally propagandist line.

Despite its original strength, which was based mainly in the broad Vietnam movement, and despite a conscious and consistent orientation of political work in industry, the KPML(r) has in general failed in its industrial work, been isolated. Today it has less influence than it had some years ago.

The Socialist Party's work has developed in the opposite way. Its predecessor organization started out from much more modest beginnings but we have taken better advantage of the opportunities.

The reason is not simply or even primarily that we have a transitional program, which they do not. The reason is that the KPML(r) turned its back on the union and important questions facing union members.

It is clear now that the KPML(r) is at a crossroads and is being forced to change its course. A whole section of it are even talking about that.

The struggle that the Union Opposition waged in the union election campaign this year over the three crowns increment has been continued. This has been a broad campaign, backed up by a petition signed by 3,500 people. For the first time, we got the support of the KPML(r). We hope that that fore-shadows a change of course on other questions as well. That would be quite important. The work of the Union Opposition has undoubtedly had an effect here.

Q. Volvo is a multinational company, which has an important part of its operations abroad. What has this meant for the work of the Union Opposition in solidarity with Volvo workers elsewhere?

A. We have regularly pushed solidarity questions, such as Vietnam and Salvador, but also questions directly related to Volvo's international operations.

We did this for example with a campaign to break the isolation of the union in Peru. We also gave impetus to a solidarity strike in support of Belgian Volvo workers. Of course, we have problems overcoming the obstacles to making direct contact with other groups of workers, who are often far away.

The actions we have carried out have been an encouragement to further activity along these lines. It is easy to see today what belonging to an international

organization such as the Fourth International can mean, especially if it succeeds in increasing its membership, its number of industrial workers, and its trade-union and political influence.

We have a broad basis here for taking part in, and backing up, such international initiatives as the campaign for a shorter workweek — 35-hour week with no pay cut (or a six-hour day, which is the way this demand has been popularized in Sweden). Our work in the Swedish automotive industry through the union oppositions and the party clubs at Volvo in various parts of the country and through our comrades at SAAB and at other automotive and airplane plants in Sweden can be used as a lever for reinforcing the international campaign on this question.

Q. Given the place that Volvo holds in Swedish industry and in the Swedish trade-union movement, trade-union and political work at Volvo/Gothenburg has broader implications. The issues that you raise and push, and the results you get, have a clear national dimension. How can the party's work at Volvo be used as a lever for building the party in general?

A. It's obvious that there is a direct connection between the Volvo work and the role that we can play with respect to issues at the municipal and even national level.

The work we are carrying on in Volvo has its natural extension in the campaigns the party is conducting in the Gothenburg region or nationally.

We, as well as our fellow workers, are being hard hit by cuts in real wages, social cutbacks, and unemployment. Questions such as child care, educational policy, the media, the environment, leisure-time possibilities all concern us.

For us, there are two things that knit together our activity as workers, rent-payers, and political activists. One is the unified and rounded programmatic answer we are fighting for in all areas of society. The other is our party's work as a representative of the interests of the working class in all those areas.

With our base at Volvo and in collaboration with activists in other places, we can confront the politicians in the city governments, the provincial governments, and the national government. With the base we have, we can demand that the Social Democratic Workers Party give an accounting for the election promises it made before the 1982 elections, and which it has done so little to keep.

We can demand that these election promises be fulfilled, and build broad united actions to force through measures that the Social Democrat leadership has reneged on. In this mass work, our party is winning a place. Through this work we can win the confidence that will make people more and more ready to listen to our overall political positions. Through it we will lay the foundations of a new socialist force in the Swedish workers movement.



AROUND THE WORLD



TOWARDS EARLY ELECTIONS IN MAURITIUS

Barely a year after the landslide victory of the electoral coalition between the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM) and the Mauritian Socialist Party (PSM) in June 1982, their electoral promises and, more importantly, the hopes of the popular masses, have been completely betrayed by the new government.

The disorientation of the toiling masses is that much greater because they expected a radical change in society, even a march towards socialism, as the leaders of the MMM had been promising them for years.

The first electoral advance by the MMM in 1976 demonstrated the rise in the class struggle in this small island in the Indian Ocean. The June 1982 electoral victory marked a new stage, with every single seat going to the MMM-PSM coalition. But there is a danger that the new period of class struggle opened by this overwhelming victory (the famous 'sixty to nil') will end in demobilisation and demoralisation, because of the attitude of the MMM and PSM leaders. Their policy has in the final analysis had only one common denominator — to waste the potential for struggle and combativity in order to impose policies that serve the interests of the bourgeoisie.

After governmental crisis after governmental crisis came the split between the MMM and PSM in March. Then parliament was dissolved a few weeks ago, and early elections called for the end of August.

The rejection by the mass of workers of the government's economic policy, which was based on the advice of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and carried out by Paul Berenger, then minister of finance, was the determining factor in the governmental crisis last March. This popular discontent was most notably demonstrated through the forming of a trade-union front against austerity, including the main federations in the country. The opposition activity of this front threatened to force a break in the traditional links between the MMM and the General Workers Federation.

Moreover, the radical activists of the MMM organised around the bulletin *Lalit Travayer* (Workers Struggle) and working within the National Front Against Unemployment (FNAS), an organisation which contributed greatly to

mobilising for the victory of the MMM (see *International Viewpoint* No 12, August 2, 1982) found a growing response to their campaign against austerity.

Thus the government faced a difficult situation for pushing through an austerity budget. Confronted, on the one hand, with the resistance of a section of the traditional bourgeoisie opposed to his policies of economic rationalisation, and, on the other, with the disapproval of the masses, Paul Berenger decided to take the initiative during the last governmental crisis. He resigned from the government, along with eleven other ministers, and broke up the MMM-PSM alliance.

Thus, in the space of a few months the political scene has changed profoundly. The MMM is once again in the opposition, while its former president, Anerood Jugnauth, has set up his own organisation, the Mauritian Socialist Movement (MSM) and formed a government with members of the PSM.

The most serious effect of these political manoeuvres is a certain drop in the level of class consciousness among the workers compared with the level at June 1982, and a revival of the poison of communalism bringing a resurgence of conflict between the various ethnic and religious communities.

It is in this context that parliament has just been dissolved, and new elections called for August. None of the formations coming out of the MMM-PSM government can claim with any justification to represent the interests of the workers.

Jugnauth's MSM has just made an electoral agreement with the Labour Party, which was swept from the political scene in June 1982.

On his side Berenger is leading a campaign for a rightwing technocratic managing of the economy, presenting petty bourgeois technocrats for the workers votes. Moreover, to demonstrate its reliability to the bourgeoisie and the imperialists, the MMM leadership recently expelled the most radical rank-and-file

activists — the FNAS members who distribute the bulletin *Lalit Travayer* within the MMM. They were even refused the right to have a general meeting to deal with this question.

From this point these comrades have turned towards building a real socialist workers organisation, as the masthead of their weekly journal, *Konba Travayer* (Workers Fight), states. Since May 1, the press run and sales of each issue have been in the thousands. These militants are mobilising against the holding of early elections, and for respect to the popular mandate given unequivocally by the workers in June 1982.

In *Konba Travayer* No 7, June 10, 1983, published before the dissolution of parliament was even announced, the militants of LT-FNAS defined their perspectives in this way:

1. Immediate mobilisation of the trade unions, workers, youth and all activists against the holding of early elections. Our '60 to 0' should not disappear to the benefit of the capitalists. In our mobilisation and struggle we need these '60 to 0' to strengthen the nationalisations, get the Industrial Relations Act and Public Order Act revoked, to ensure that Cargo Handling (the management structure for the nationalised port) is set up, and the workers demands are satisfied.

2. If, despite everything, we find ourselves faced with early elections, should not the militants of LT-FNAS, the trade unions, all the militant left in general, stand jointly on a single workers slate, based on an anti-austerity, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist programme?

3. We should strengthen the initiative that has already been taken to build a mass revolutionary organisation, as a third way, a way for the workers, who are faced with bankruptcy of the social-democratic alternative, to block the right.

On June 19 the militants of the *Lalit Travayer* tendency in the MMM announced the creation of the Militant Organisation of Workers (OMT), which already has several dozen members, and the transformation of their mass front, the FNAS, into the Fron nasyonal anti-soufrans (National Front Against Poverty), which appeals not only to the young unemployed but the whole of the working population. ■



DEMAND RELEASE OF ANTI-ZIONIST ISRAELI POLITICAL PRISONER

With the development of a more critical attitude toward Zionism among the Israeli Jewish population as a result of the Lebanon war, Uri Adiv's family has launched a campaign for his release.

Adiv was sentenced to 17 years in prison in 1972 for going to talk to the PLO. The charge against him was that he "damaged state security."

In an appeal from Tel Aviv June 4, Lea Lechem explained: "At the time [1972] the very idea of discussing with the PLO was almost inconceivable. In those days, Golda Meir was proclaiming 'There is no Palestinian people.' Intoxicated by the victories in the 1967 war and the economic prosperity that the new territorial gains made possible, every layer of Israeli society was gripped by chauvinism....

"In such an atmosphere, the initiative by Udi Adiv and a few dozen young Jews and Arabs provoked a real shock in Israeli society. An unprecedented witch hunt was launched against Udi and his comrades.

"The aim of the extremely severe sentence was clear — to frighten off any Jew who might have the idea of engaging in dialogue with the Palestinians."

Today, despite the different mood in the country, the Israeli security service are trying to veto any release of Adiv. Lea Lechem writes:

"The highest authorities (the office of the chief of state, the Ministry of Justice, the office of the chief of the bar) and even a number of well-known lawyers contacted have made it known clearly that the decision is in the hands of the security service.

"The security services in turn stress that Udi chose of his own free will to live among the Arab prisoners (the section where they are held in the Ramalah prison is notorious for the very difficult conditions that exist there) and that he was elected to the Political Prisoners Committee that is fighting in the prison for better conditions.

"They also note that Yasser Arafat mentioned Udi's name in his speech to the UN General Assembly in 1974 and that Palestinian commandos who have slipped into Israel have demanded his release....

"The truth is that the security services cannot forgive Udi Adiv for the fact that for ten years in prison, he has refused to bend and yield to the many pressures that he break his ties with the Palestinian prisoners and accept transfer to another wing of the prison. They have tried on many occasions to convince him, by various favors, special visits, the chance for a few days home leave, better conditions, even the promise of an early release. But Udi has refused all privileges that are not accorded to the Palestinian political prisoners. This is the real reason the security services oppose his release."

The campaign for Adiv's release has gotten broad support. Thousands of persons have written the president on Adiv's behalf. They included three judges of the Supreme Court that upheld his original sentence, judges Haim, Cohen and Etsioni, as well as the present presiding judge of the court, Kahane, who conducted the inquiry into the Sabra and Chatila massacres.

Among the other personalities supporting the campaign are Y. Ben Aharon, former president of the Histadrut labor confederation, Sem Tov, general secretary of the Mapam Party, and prominent writers such as Amos Oz and A.B. Yehoshua.

It seems clear that the Adiv appeal can be won and that this would have an important political effect in Israel. But Lea Lechem stressed, the broadest possible international support is essential.

Letters and telegrams calling for Uri Adiv's release should be sent to the President of Israel, Haim Herzog, Mishkan Nesiei Israel, Jerusalem. Copies should be sent to the Adiv family at Kibbutz Gan Shmuel, Israel. ■

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more apparent.

The big majority of Christians in my country are on the side of the revolution. The Pope's visit confirmed this — 700,000 people, that is, a third of the population of Nicaragua, welcomed him. And most of them were in favour of a coming together of the church and the revolution.

Q. There were claims that it was Sandinistas who organised disruptions during the Pope's speeches, and that they do not respect religious freedom.

A. No other government did as much to ensure that the largest possible number of people could see the Pope. The government gave over all its vehicles, and the necessary petrol, although we do not have too much. We, the Nicaraguan Christians, were waiting for the Pope to come out clearly for peace and in opposition to the invasion. This he neglected to do, and this disappointed and irritated people. The shouts such as 'Christianity and revolution were made for each other' were spontaneous.

Then the Pope added fuel to the fire by demanding silence in a dry and authoritarian manner. The Sandinista leaders showed a lot of self-restraint. In Nicaragua there is absolute freedom in matters of religion. There is not another country in Central America where priests can live and work with as much freedom as in ours.

Q. Can one be Marxist and Christian?

A. In Rome it is always said that it is absolutely impossible for a Marxist to be a Christian because, as a Marxist, one is necessarily an atheist. But I do not think it is the business of Rome to decide who is Marxist and who is not. Marxism and Christianity have a common objective. We, Christians, call for building the kingdom of God on earth. That is, a society without selfishness, where all the goods of the earth and the fruits of labour are shared fraternally. Authentic socialism, as Marx posed it, seems to us a lot nearer this aim than capitalism.

Q. So, you do not see a contradiction between Christianity and revolution?

A. No, because real Christianity wants a profound change in all human society. This means a revolution. Such a radical change is going on in Nicaragua. Our Christian duty is to participate in the revolutionary process, and to protect it against outside intervention.

Q. What are you expecting from us here?

A. Solidarity. We need financial aid for the schools, the health system, the tree-planting schemes. But, above all, we need political solidarity. This, for example, could take the form of a declaration by parliamentary representatives against Reagan's policy in Central America, as the West German deputies have just done, or mass demonstrations like today's. ■

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Nicaraguan minister, Ernesto Cardenal, speaks

Ernesto Cardenal, the Nicaraguan minister of culture, writer, priest and revolutionary took part in the big national demonstration against US intervention in Central America that drew more than 6,000 people to Bern in Switzerland on June 4.

Cardenal also took part in public meetings in Geneva, Bern and Zurich, each of which was attended by more than one thousand people. During this tour Ernesto Cardenal gave several press conferences, including an interview to the comrades of the Parti Socialiste Ouvrier, Swiss section of the Fourth International, for their newspaper, *La Breche*, which we publish below.

Question. What has been the impact of the counter-revolutionary Somocista invasion, supported and led by the United States, on the social climate in Nicaragua? Are the people afraid?

Answer. The invasion has reinforced the unity of the people, of the government and of the Sandinista National Liberation Front. The determination to defend the country and the revolution is growing.

In the north, the region which borders on Honduras, the invasion has naturally had a big impact on the daily life of the population. There one lives in permanent danger of getting killed. The Somocistas act only through ambushes, firing on everyone in range of their weapons, whether it's people in civilian vehicles or peasants at work.

Q. Is the whole population really behind the government?

A. The poor certainly, the rich probably not. We have introduced a free health system, which benefits the poor

and not the rich. They could always, before this, get treatment in Miami, in the US. Nor do the free schools benefit the rich; they had very good schools before. And also the redistribution of the land has been carried out only in favour of the poor.

Q. What are the effects of the war on the economic situation and the social gains of the revolution?

A. Because of this war we have had to devote a lot of money to military needs. But I should emphasise that our defence spending is a lot smaller than the media often claims. For example, we do not buy weapons. They are given to us, unconditionally of course. Nicaragua only has defensive weapons. Thus, we have only a weak and poor-quality airforce, but a very good system of anti-aircraft defence. We have a few bad tanks, but a very good anti-tank defence system.

Despite the war we are continuing with our literacy programme, and cultural development. Basic food stuffs have not

become more expensive. The health and education systems remain free.

Of course, we have had to stop certain projects. For example, we had a project to save a big lake in the middle of the country which was dying from pollution. Instead of being able to use the money necessary for an ecology policy and save our lake, Ronald Reagan has made us spend it to save the country and the revolution. But we have not given up this project.

Q. The most important product in Nicaragua is cotton. Are you trying to get away from this dependence on a single crop?

A. Yes, absolutely, for ecological and economic reasons. Because we depend heavily on cotton we are tossed on the world market like a boat on the waves of a storm. In addition, we have to import a lot of technical means for its cultivation, cultivation, which is beginning to become expensive.

To that is added another fact. Cotton plantations require huge areas of cleared land, cutting down all the trees. Then there is erosion, the earth is ravaged, the topsoil swept up and blown away by the wind. Therefore we are now working on a programme of tree planting.

Q. In Nicaragua there are obviously two churches. On one side five priests, as ministers, form part of the government. On the other side the archbishop of Managua, Obando y Bravo, is one of the most determined adversaries of the Sandinista revolution.

A. In Nicaragua there are not two churches. There is one church but it is divided. It is the divide between poor and rich, which has always existed, as St Paul's statements criticising the Corinthians demonstrate. During the revolution, when the poor rose up against the wealthy, this division thus simply became

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Nicaraguan May Day demonstration (DR)

