

International VIEWPOINT

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INSIDE:

GULF WAR

UN report: Iraq faces epidemic and famine

And

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LATIN AMERICA

The best laid plans of George Bush

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Interviews with Lula, leader of Brazil's Workers' Party and Peruvian senator, Hugo Blanco

EASTERN EUROPE

The restoration tragedy: end of act 1

Also:

- * India
- * Tunisia * France
- * Belgium
- * European Unions

Contents:

INDIA 3

THE killing of Rajiv Gandhi reveals the growing void at the centre of Indian politics — *M. Navid*

TUNISIA 4

BOURGEOIS nationalist regime, supported by the "legal" opposition, launches onslaught on alleged fundamentalist plot — *Ali*

PERU 6

SENATOR Hugo Blanco explains the background to the cholera epidemic and the state of the Peruvian left

BRAZIL 8

LEADER of Workers Party, Lula, gives his views on the international situation and need to strengthen the party's organization as it approaches its

first national congress — *Teoria e Debate*

LATIN AMERICA 11

G. BUSTER surveys the progress of Washington's attempts to reorganize the continent under its hegemony; The US, short of cash, is not having a smooth run with its plans.

EASTERN EUROPE 15

HENRI WILNO summarizes the various schemes for restoring capitalism in Eastern Europe, and defends the need for an alternative based on efficiency and solidarity

FRANCE 19

A PROJECT for fusing two French unions on an ultra-moderate platform is meeting stiff resistance among rank-and-file activists. *Pierre Remé* looks forward to a different and broader unity, based on active defence of workers' interests

EUROPE 22

WORRIED about their diminishing influence in the corridors of power in the "new Europe", top union bureaucrats meet in Luxemburg — *Joaquin Nieto*

BELGIUM 23

THE European capital is shaken by a revolt of disadvantaged youth, often of immigrant background reports *Vincent Scheltiens*

Around the World 24

- Mali ● Palestine
- Algeria ● Sri Lanka

GULF WAR 26

UNITED NATIONS report documents the tragic consequences of the "surgical war" against Iraq
And CAMPAIGN is launched to defend US soldiers who opposed the war against Iraq — *Jeff Mackler*

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Assassination highlights leadership crisis

THE assassination of the leader of India's Congress Party, Rajiv Gandhi, at an election rally in the state of Tamil Nadu, has focussed world attention on the country's deepening political and economic crisis. I asked Indian Marxist political analyst M. Navid for his view on the immediate and longer term implications of the killing.

INDIA's crisis is chronic. On the one hand there is constant political instability, on the other there is a political system which remains unshaken in its fundamentals. Thus, we will not see in the near future either the break-up of the Indian state nor the end of bourgeois democracy there. On the other hand, the instability will get worse.

Rajiv's death highlights the acute crisis of leadership of the Congress party — the party that led India to independence, the party of Nehru and Indira Gandhi. The party has no national leader to replace Rajiv, or even with equal standing to that of other party leaders such as the present prime minister Chandrasekhar or Janata Dal's V. P. Singh. The invitation to Rajiv Gandhi's widow Sonia to lead the party is both a sign of Congress' crisis of leadership and an attempt to capitalize on the sympathy vote, which was used in his day by Rajiv Gandhi after the assassination of his mother.

At the same time over the past two years there have been signs of a centrist regroupment involving the Congress and other parties, such as the Janata Dal, which have their origins in dissident factions of Congress. This process will be made easier by the death of Rajiv Gandhi.

However, even if such a re-alignment is carried through, the country's instability will continue to get worse, fuelled by a number of elements:

- The economic crisis. This is more than merely a conjunctural crisis; it is a crisis of the economic model, pursued since the 1950s, of attempting to build up an independent Indian economic structure through nurturing Indian industry and systematic protectionism. A big budget deficit has led to massive borrowing from imperialist banks and agencies, and

thus a huge foreign debt and balance of payments deficit.

According to the *Financial Times* (Thursday May 23, 1991): "India, a country desperately concerned to limit interference by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, seems now to be at their mercy."

- The rise of intermediate castes, with interests at odds with those of the central government.

- The increasing communalist tensions and particularly the rise of Hindu fundamentalism.

Indeed, just before the assassination, the Hindu fundamentalist BJP party looked set to make big gains in the elections, notably through winning the majority of the seats in the Indian capital, Delhi.

They may do less well now, given the sympathy vote for Congress and the fact that the killing of its leader has given weight to Congress' main election plank; in favour of stability.

This appeal to the voters has come against a background of unprecedented election violence, especially in the north of the country, where most of the country's Muslims live and where the aggres-

sive policies of the BJP have inflamed the situation.

However, the rise of Hindu fundamentalism will not be definitively reversed. The BJP, a petty bourgeois party, puts itself forward as the party of law-and-order, criticizing central government for its lack of vigour in crushing separatism and its attachment to secularism. The BJP's economic programme is clearly in favour of liberalization, and thus to an extent in line with the "spirit of the times" on the world scale.

It is thus not comparable to, for example, the Khomeinite fundamentalism in Iran, with its strong poor against rich rhetoric. If it turns out that Tamil or Punjabi separatists were responsible for Rajiv's death, then the BJP's law-and-order stance will gain added weight.

The major left wing parties in India are the two Communist parties; the CPI(M), which controls the state government in West Bengal, and the CPI, which runs Kerala state in the south.

Both of these parties have thus far bucked the international trend set off by the crisis of the bureaucratic regimes in Eastern Europe and are maintaining their ground and even picking up new support.

They are, of course, firmly in the secularist camp, and their fortunes are closely bound up with the struggle over the secular nature of the Indian state currently underway. ★

International demonstration and carnival against the Third World debt

DID you know that:

- ✳ Between 1983 and 1990 developing debtor countries paid the North US\$325 billion more than they received.
- ✳ Deaths of children are on the increase. It is now estimated that 500,000 children die each year in Africa and Latin America as a result of the debt.
- ✳ Third World governments, under instructions from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, are imposing harsh austerity programmes that penalize the poorest peoples — cutting back or even wiping out food subsidies, health and education services.
- ✳ The Gulf war proved that debts can be cancelled. Egypt's military debt was wiped out — an instant reward for supporting US war aims.

On July 15-17, 1991, leaders of the world's seven richest nations will meet in London. With help from their friends in the IMF and the World Bank they will decide what's best for the Third World.

On Saturday July 13 an international demonstration and carnival to demand the unconditional cancellation of the debt will be held in London, supported by Labour MPs and many charitable, human rights and political organizations, as well as by anti-debt campaigns in other countries. On July 15-16, 1991, an alternative economic summit will be held.

For further information on these events, contact:

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23 Beveden St., London, N1 6BH
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Regime launches anti-fundamentalist offensive

THE TUNISIAN regime appears to have decided to deal a finishing blow to the fundamentalist movement *Nahda* (Renaissance)¹.

A press campaign is in full flow denouncing the violent crimes committed or about to be committed by the fundamentalists, sweeping arrests are being made (around 2,000 prisoners are spoken of), particularly in the faculties and the university campuses where the B.O.P. (Brigades of Public Order) and the "anti-gang brigades" round up students en bloc, beat them up and then select some of them for further attention. The streets of the capital are tightly controlled, bulky bags are systematically searched to see if they contain molotov cocktails, and the UGTE, the fundamentalist student union, has been banned.

ALI

THE democratic and reformist opposition, like the UGTT (the General Union of Tunisian Workers — the main trade union confederation), has once again demonstrated its allegiance to [President Zine El Abidine] Ben Ali, denouncing in chorus the "fundamentalist plot" to destabilize the country, before timidly demanding a little more liberty. Moadia, president of the principal bourgeois opposition party, the MDS, has been designated by Ben Ali as head of a committee comprising all the parties, a sort of committee of national unity to protect the university.

What remains of *Nahda*, after the split led by its former second in command, Abdelfatah Mourou, has accepted the logic of the confrontation and is trying to escalate the tension with methods (violent attacks, bombings) which contribute to its isolation inside a population which is passively and nervously witnessing a struggle in which none of the belligerents is telling the truth.

In fact the current anti-fundamentalist crusade is only the culmination of a long series of increasingly tough confrontations between the regime and the fundamentalists since the legislative elections of April 1989. The fundamentalists then obtained nearly 30% of the votes and appeared as the main party of opposition, whereas the democrats saw themselves

marginalized. The Destour [the ruling political party] used this bipolarization to present themselves as the protectors of the "state of laws" and of "civil society" against the fundamentalist Satan, but they remained nonetheless very worried, faced with the rapid and apparently irresistible growth of the fundamentalist current.

The concessions to "Islamism" and "Arabism" made by Ben Ali immediately after his coup d'état [in 1987, when he overthrew former dictator Habib Bourguiba], with the aim of cutting the ground from under the feet of the fundamentalists, appeared completely ineffective. The municipal elections scheduled for June 1990 accentuated these fears, which transformed themselves into a veritable panic after the electoral triumph of the Algerian fundamentalists. The regime found itself then faced with two alternatives. It could legalize *Nahda* and allow its fate to be democratically settled at the municipal elections; a difficult choice to make, for it would mean allowing all the opposition, of whatever tendency, to win numerous municipal councils to the detriment of the Destourian bureaucracy. Or it could organize tightly controlled elections aimed at preserving the monopoly of the regime, with all that would imply for restrictions of liberty and repression, in particular of the fundamentalists.

The regime chose the second road, and

May Day

AS USUAL, the leadership of the UGTT (General Union of Tunisian Workers) did its best to avoid May Day becoming the occasion for the workers to mobilize and express their demands.

And this all the more in a year when, under the pretext of national solidarity in the face of the imperialist aggression against Iraq and its repercussions in Tunisia, the executive bureau of the trade union federation had blocked every struggle and accepted without complaint the new austerity measures and, in particular, the obligatory imposition on the workers of five days extra work to compensate for the economic damage suffered by Tunisia due to the Gulf war.

The traditional meeting at the UGTT centre was, therefore, carefully organized to prevent any disorder, with entry by invitation only. Despite these precautions, workers came in considerable numbers whilst left trades unionists overcame the stewards, or rather the bureaucratic militia, to gain entry to the hall. The speech of Ismail Sahbani, the general secretary of the UGTT, was continuously interrupted by the slogans of the left trades unionists, taken up by a large number of the workers present:

"No militia against the workers, the trade unions for the struggle!"

"Sahbani bluffer, traitor to the workers!"

"The five days will not get through, the struggle continues!"

"No to decisions from the top, the rank and file is everything!"

In the face of this affront, the bureaucratic leaders reacted quickly and gave the green light to the arrest by the police of 11 union activists as they left the meeting, most of them from the "Fighting trade union left" current in which Tunisian supporters of the Fourth International are involved, as well as some Maoist militants. They were freed after six days. Moreover, the executive bureau immediately set up a commission of enquiry and drew up a list of trades unionists suspended from their union responsibilities, a totally unconstitutional procedure. Finally, the EB drew back, and it has now dropped any disciplinary measures. ★

the confrontation began. The fundamentalists were repressed, and reacted with a more and more radical discourse, demonstrations and so on.

The result for the regime was contradictory; it kept control of the municipalities but it set everybody against it. Not just the fundamentalists but all the opposition, including its most moderate wing, boycotted the elections (apart from a pro-Albanian group); the masses had lost any illusions and could not be bothered to go to the polling station to vote.

Regime loses international credibility

The regime became increasingly discredited abroad; in France it was questioned whether Ben Ali was capable of leading the post-Bourguibist transition,

whilst in the USA more and more interest was being shown in Ghannouchi (the principal leader of *Nahda*, who chose to go into exile two years ago).

Following the municipal elections, that is on the eve of the outbreak of the Gulf crisis, the regime sought to escape from its impasse, making some advances to the democratic opposition which left open the possibility of a future government of national unity. But it made no immediate substantial concessions and the opposition, sensing the regime to be weakened, refused to commit itself on the basis of mere promises. It was then that Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and imperialism deployed its military contingents in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia.

Fearing the loss of all credibility with the masses, Ben Ali condemned the foreign military presence in the Gulf and

called for an "Arab solution", whilst denouncing the invasion and annexation and rigorously applying the embargo. This position, hard to imagine in the time of Bourguiba, gave him a certain credit in the eyes of the masses. A climate of national unity developed. The democratic opposition was hardly less virulent in its denunciations of the United States, fearing being irrevocably marginalized, and threw itself into the arms of the general-president.

But, more significantly, the Gulf war provoked a grave crisis inside the fundamentalist movement. Whereas Ghannouchi made incendiary pro-Iraqi declarations, the rest of the leadership

1. On May 22, after this article was written, the Tunisian government announced that it had foiled a coup plot organized by *Nahda* and had arrested 300 people, including 100 military personnel.

Protest at student deaths

THE following statement was issued by the Organization of Revolutionary Communists (Tunisian section of the Fourth International), in response to the killing in early May of two students during the regime's crackdown on opposition activity on the campuses:

In Algeria, in the countries of Black Africa, in the countries of Eastern Europe, the peoples have won press freedom and multipartyism, free elections becoming the rule.

In Tunisia, we have been proved right about the democratic masquerade of November 7. The Destourian party remains, de facto, the single party, monopolizes the regime, muzzles the press, and represses the opposition, including the legal opposition. For almost a year now, Ben Ali's men have tried, with the utmost brutality, to destroy or bring to heel the fundamentalist opposition; some hundreds of political prisoners, systematic torture, police deployment throughout the country, which recalls, indeed goes beyond, all that we saw in the worst days of Bourguibism.

Immediately after the Gulf War, hoping to profit from the favourable circumstances, the regime decided to reaffirm its authority in the universities, to forcibly stifle the only area of relative political liberty, the reserve from which the opposition, of whatever tendency, draws a great deal of its militant support. In the name of the liberty of study and the struggle against fundamentalism, Charfi, the Ministry of the Interior's representative at the university, forbade any political activity in the faculties and authorized their occupation by the B.O.P. and the anti-gang brigades. The cycle of violence began; hunting down of students, arrests en bloc, systematic beatings. All students are the victims of it; fundamentalist, left or apolitical.

The murdered students had no political label!

Above all, and it is not by chance, the police deployment and the appeal to consensus around the president for a common front against fundamentalism, come when the regime is accentuating its policy of austerity and imposing on the workers an obligatory five days work.

This is why:

- (i) We put the entire responsibility for the recent events on the regime which, once again, has shown that it can rule only by repression and violence.
- (ii) The regime having accustomed us to false and mendacious press campaigns against its enemies of the moment (recall the accusations made against the UGTT trade union federation before each offensive against it), it is necessary to approach with the greatest circumspection all information concerning the "Islamic plot", which seeks to create a climate of insecurity and fear to rally the population around Ben Ali and to justify the intensification of the repression. While we can only denounce acts of violence committed against simple citizens we denounce also the acts of violence of a regime which does not hesitate, for its part, to use any means to eliminate the opposition.
- (iii) The reactionary and anti-national character of the fundamentalist current, thrown into relief during the Gulf war, gives no legitimacy to the repressive offensive against it by the regime which bears primary responsibility for the extension of fundamentalist influence, in encouraging it directly during the 1970s then in breaking all democratic and progressive opposition, in particular the UGTT. The repression practiced by the Destour cannot eliminate the Islamic danger; in closing their eyes or supporting this repression, the democrats become accomplices of the reinforcement of the police apparatus of the regime to the detriment of political liberties.

It is, on the contrary, on the terrain of struggle for democratic liberties without restriction and on the social terrain, that it will be possible to counteract the influence of the fundamentalists, that is, on the terrain of struggle against the regime of November 7 and its economic and political policies.

Rather than once again supporting Ben Ali, as certain would-be democratic parties do, in the hope of gaining a little more democratic space in return, it is urgent to launch a united mobilization of all democratic forces to impose political democracy and in the first place:

— the freeing of all political prisoners;

— freedom of the press and of organization without restriction or condition;

To these demands, it is necessary to add the demand that all possible light is shed on the killing of the students, that those responsible are judged and that the victims' families are compensated. ★

was much more measured and indeed could hardly hide its pro-Saudi sympathies. Mourou went so far as to disown Ghannouchi and denied him the right to speak in the name of the movement. The crisis is grave because the relationship with Saudi Arabia is not simply a matter of big money but also a decisive support which *Nahda* could lose in this crisis. The Saudi model increasingly represents a fundamental ideological component of Tunisian fundamentalism.

Unclear positions of fundamentalists on war

The fluctuating positions of *Nahda*, its absence of initiative and its passivity in the mobilization of support for Iraq largely discredited it in the eyes of Tunisian public opinion. *Nahda* organized some small and muscular demonstrations to denounce the repression against it but without arousing any sympathy; they were accused, not without reason, of wishing to distract attention from the events in the Gulf. The role of Iran in the events in the south of Iraq has also considerably discredited the Tunisian fundamentalists.

The regime has seized the occasion to step up repression of the fundamentalists, dismantle their structures and arrest most of their leaders. The Bab Souika affair, in which *Nahda* were accused of having set fire to an office of the Destourian party, leading to the death of two guards, served to justify this escalation². Provocation? Excess? "Strategy of tension"? It is difficult to say. There was even a Saudi connection!

The Bab Souika affair served as a pretext for a part of the fundamentalist leadership, led by Mourou, to make its peace with Ben Ali and announce the creation of a new party: "We consider that political action must base itself on the separation and the difference between the political and the religious. We will not take our place on the political scene with religious slogans but with a programme concerning the different domains of life. In the same way, we consider that the mosques must remain a place of worship and must not be the terrain of political confrontation. Nor do we believe ourselves to be the only Muslims in the country or the spokespersons of Islam" (A. Mourou, *Essabah*, May 16, 1991).

The split has certainly dealt a hard blow to *Nahda*, all the more in that it comes at a time when the regime seems more determined than ever to eliminate it from the scene, and when its audience is decreasing.

The war is over and the regime has recovered some important ground, but its situation remains fragile. Internally, it must knit together a government palpably shaken by the war as is witnessed by an important ministerial resignation in the middle of the conflict. It must also

implement new austerity measures which it believes necessary to counteract the repercussions of the war on the economy. Abroad, it must regain the confidence of the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia and the United States, who were not pleased by its "neutralist" position during the Gulf conflict. And all this has to be done without reviving a mass movement which has certainly been disorientated by the defeat of Iraq, but whose anti-imperialist mobilizations during the war achieved a breadth unequalled since independence.

A difficult undertaking, which must be realized rapidly to avoid provoking the mass movement and assure a broader "consensus".

Attack on most radical sectors

It is in this context that the regime decided to break the most radical and dynamic sector of the popular masses, the college and school students from which all the opposition, and in particular the fundamentalists, draw a great part of their militant forces. The "anti-gang" brigades and the B.O.P. employ truncheons, tear gas, and if necessary sub-machine guns, to crack down on all political activity at the university, until now almost the only place of virtually total liberty for the opposition. Incapable of impelling a true popular mobilization, the fundamentalists have replied to the violence of the regime with their own violence, whilst the democrats have rallied once again to Ben Ali.

It would say the least be premature in the current situation to announce the death of *Nahda*. The power of the fundamentalist current on the regional scale, in particular in neighbouring Algeria, provides encouragement for Ghannouchi's partisans. While a more moderate tendency has emerged from within *Nahda*, a still more reactionary force has also entrenched itself for some time now — the Party of Islamic Liberation, which makes *Nahda* look like a secular democratic party.

The masses are completely absent from this confrontation between the regime and the fundamentalists, and support neither side.

Economic difficulties are growing and gradually adding to the frustrations, the anger, and the successive humiliations of the imperialist aggression against Iraq. It is this which will determine the evolution of events in the months to come, particularly after the pause of the summer is over. ★

2. On May 21, a Tunisian court sentenced seven members of *Nahda* to life imprisonment for their alleged part in this attack.

A state of Fuji-shock

Interview with Hugo Blanco

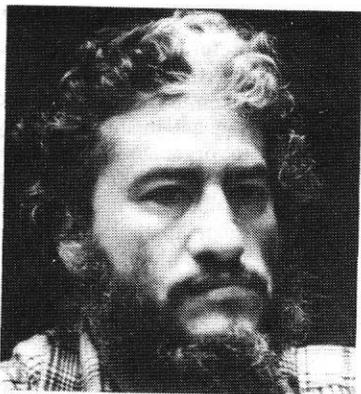
DURING a brief visit to Germany, Hugo Blanco, a leader of Peru's United Mariateguist Party (PUM) and of the CCP peasant union, talked about the situation in Peru. The following interview first appeared in *Sozialistische Zeitung*, the biweekly paper of the United Socialist Party (VSP), in its April 25, 1991 issue.

THE appearance of cholera in Peru for the first time in a hundred years coincides with the economic "Fuji-shock". Is there in fact a connection between these two events?

There is a direct connection. Cholera is an epidemic from the Middle Ages. The fact that it has reappeared in Peru now is a sign of that country's economic backwardness. Such a development would be unimaginable in Germany. In our country, the poverty is so bad that drinking water is polluted with sewage and therefore with germs. A film was produced in Sweden which showed the water drunk by a baby that died of cholera. It had been drawn from a waste dump. To kill all the germs it would have to be boiled for at least ten minutes. However, people do not have the money for the necessary fuel.

Furthermore, anyone who is well-nourished will not die of cholera. In Peru people are under-nourished and die.

Cholera is thus a disease of the poor. There is therefore a direct connection with the government's economic policies. The government's attitude has been completely cynical. They are worried about a fall in Peru's exports and have launched a campaign to combat, not the cholera, but the fear of cholera. The press and television have taken part in this campaign.



Fujimori himself, for example, has gone on the television eating the *ceviche*, a Peruvian dish of raw fish marinated in lemon, to show that it is not dangerous to eat *ceviche*.

The minister of fisheries did the same; and it seems that he got cholera — though this is not certain. In any case he would be healthy enough not to die from it. The agriculture minister went and ate unwashed grapes bought direct from the market. The head of the authority in charge of water distribution, meanwhile, could be seen drinking untreated water from a water lorry.

This campaign can only help to further the spread of cholera, since people will see these authoritative figures demonstratively not taking necessary precautions with food and drink.

This is both disgusting and stupid of the government. Peru's exports will not be increased because the country's population loses its fear of cholera. They will be improved when the population feels itself beyond the reach of the disease, and cholera itself starts to fade away.

Some 140,000 cholera cases have been admitted in Peru, with some 1,000 deaths.

■ **In last year's elections, the United Left (*Izquierda Unida*) suffered heavy losses. It called, like the PUM, which is a constituent part of it, for a vote for Fujimori against his right wing rival Vargas Llosa. What is the PUM's view now of this decision?**

The IU did not give any advice on how to vote. Such advice was given by the individual parties that make it up, including the PUM. In the light of what Fujimori has done, the PUM has criticized its support and recognized that it was a mistake.

At the time I supported the vote for Fujimori and I still believe that it was not a mistake. Vargas Llosa was calling for "shock-therapy" with the removal of one million jobs in the state sector, the privatization of nationalized industries, the drastic reduction of free schooling and so on. If Vargas Llosa had won, he would have said: the people have voted for my

programme, and I would be betraying my mandate if I didn't carry it through. The opponents of his programme would have experienced this as a defeat, the activists would have been demoralized and said that this is what the people wanted.

Now the situation is not like that. Fujimori is of course following the same programme as Vargas Llosa proposed, but in the eyes of the people this is a betrayal. Fujimori is not doing what he promised the voters.

He said that he would oppose shock therapy, but now he is implementing it. People are angry with him but without the atmosphere of demoralization that would have attended a victory by Vargas Llosa.

■ **What difference does it make for the left if the people consider Fujimori's policies as a betrayal?**

The difference is that the masses' response is not so passive in the present case.

■ **In recent years the PUM has had increasing political differences with the IU. Can you explain them?**

This has a lot to do with the so-called "worldwide defeat of socialism" which has put the socialist perspective on the retreat. The Peruvian left has not been immune from this process, and the neo-liberals have turned it to their advantage. This is part of the explanation for the build up of support for Vargas Llosa and the defeat of the IU in the elections.

But the specific situation in Peru has also to be taken into account. The IU's candidate in the preceding elections, who stood against APRA's Alan Garcia, was Alfonso Barrantes. Barrantes came in second to APRA in the first round, and there was a possibility that he would go on to win, since APRA's position was declining.

But I believe that he became aware that the imperialists and the army would not allow him to become president with his left wing programme. He therefore decided to make concessions, just at the time when the IU's congress was meeting and calling for a toughening of the programme. The IU did not support Barrantes. The latter then resigned as IU candidate and put himself forward as an independent.

The IU made the big mistake of letting Barrantes believe to the last moment that he could be its candidate. This meant that much time and standing was lost, since it seemed as if the IU was capitulating to Barrantes.

The IU, with Henry Piza at its head, has a pacifist rather than a revolutionary programme. There is nothing about nationalization of industry, something of basic signif-

icance in Peru, presumably out of fear of the huge pro-free market pressure.

When Fujimori set up his government, he did not call on anyone from his own party. He gathered together a collection of individuals behind him. In his first cabinet there were two people from Barrantes' current, the Socialist Left (IS), and even one from the IU. The vice-president of the senate [the upper chamber of the parliament] is also from the IS, as is the president of the Regional Commission. There are few people in the IS, but they are well-placed and orient above all towards the parliament.

The IU has also been taking some posts. In two regions, Inqui and Arequipa, a coalition has been formed with the right. There is a process of regionalization going on in Peru today, aimed against the domination of the capital.

The PUM has taken its distance from these developments. The PUM has withdrawn from the leading bodies of the IU but not from its base organizations, since we continue to believe that the majority of those who are for socialism in Peru still consider themselves to be part of the IU. We have also ceased to build a common parliamentary faction with the IU.

■ **The peasants have to defend themselves against both the army's repression and the attacks of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerillas.**

Unfortunately, the peasants have become the victim of bloody repression, launched by the state on the pretext of the struggle against Sendero and the MRTA (Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement). We have been trying to resist this crackdown, which now extends beyond the department of Ayacucho to Apurima, Huancavelica, Pasqua, Junin, and a part of Cuzco. We also have to fight against attacks by Sendero, which attacks peas-



ant organizations, and kills peasants and the leaders of the mass organizations.

■ Are there differences between Sendero and the MRTA?

Profound differences. Both undertake armed actions independent of the mass organizations, for which we criticize them. We are not opposed to armed struggle, but this must be decided upon, under the control of, and subordinated to the requirements of the mass organizations. Both Sendero and the MRTA are on the sidelines of the mass movement.

Nonetheless there are huge differences between the two organizations. The MRTA supports the mass organizations, if only from the outside, since it considers them reformist, but it does not attack them. Sendero physically attacks them, kills their leaders and considers other sections of the left, including the MRTA, as its worst enemies.

■ In recent weeks the government has come up with a new law on land ownership. What will this mean for the peasantry?

This law is a direct attack on the land reform undertaken by Velasco Alvarado's military government in the 1970s, and on the poor peasants. It envisages the privatization of the land. It stipulates for example that the peasants should no longer get credit from the Agrarian Bank, which was set up to provide peasants with their basic needs. Indeed, the bank is to be wound up. The peasants will thus have to resort to private banks, which means that they will only be able to get credit if they mortgage their land. This obviously threatens them with a huge risk; one bad year and they may lose their land.

The government is using force against the peasants, and at the same time overriding its own basic laws. The government simply has no right to carry out such a fundamental change without the agreement of parliament. Parliament itself is being reduced to a ghost. This new law is therefore also directed against parliament and the constitution. The latter recognizes organizations such as the peasants' communities and states they cannot be overridden. But this is precisely what the new law does.

Changes in the constitution are subject to a procedure which would normally take the length of two normal parliamentary sessions to complete. Fujimori is acting as a dictator.

The agrarian reform is not going to be done away with all at once. Rather, there will be a relentless process of erosion; a permanent assault on the small peasants and their rights. ★

The Parallel government

Interview with Lula

THE following interview with the leader of Brazil's Workers Party (PT), Luis Inacio da Silva (Lula), first appeared in the February 1991 issue of the party's review *Teoria e Debate*. The interview was conducted by Joao Machado and Paulo Vanucchi.

WHAT is the situation in Brazil after a year of Fernando Collor's government?

Brazilian society has discovered that the neo-liberal policies of President Collor don't work. Contrary to promises, nothing has been solved. Inflation is continuing — although it has fallen from 84 to 20% a month at a high social cost in unemployment, in agriculture, in wages, in health and in education.

It is thus urgently necessary to put forward an alternative which can bring economic growth to Brazil, involving the redistribution of wealth and the compensation of the workers who have suffered under this plan. The Workers Party (PT) must prove that it is possible to get inflation down while creating jobs, in the framework of another development model.

All this must go together with a serious organizational effort to build a popular movement, since if our efforts are limited to the institutional level, the PT will become very vulnerable. The possibility of our bringing an alternative to fruition largely depends on our capacity to organize the social movement and to establish political alliances with progressive parties to confront the government.

Society has many defence mechanisms. We must therefore go to the factories and call on the workers to fight and show, on the streets, that another policy is possible.

■ Was your decision not to take part in the federal parliament to which you were elected correct?

I continue to believe that I was right. As far as I am concerned, to fight a gov-

ernment such as Collor's, I prefer to be outside the congress — which would have taken up a lot of my time — and act in the street, trying to organize the population. There are 500 deputies in the parliament; nobody can tell them apart. People criticize the whole body, not the particular politicians.

My priority has therefore been the consolidation of the

PT. Despite its electoral breakthrough, it has hardly made any organizational progress. People have to regain confidence in the basic structures of the party, and this means real political participation by the working class. I hope for a lot from the "parallel government". It can show people that there are other possibilities; and expose the real intentions and contradictions of official government policy; but the parallel government will not be viable if it does not get my full attention.

■ During the second round of voting in Sao Paulo in 1990, the PT called for void ballots. However it is clear that the majority of the PT's electorate, and many of its members did not follow this advice and voted for the liberal bourgeois candidate Luiz Antonio Fleury [from the PMDB — Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement] in order to defeat Maluf [candidate for the rightist PDS — Democratic Social Party].

When I was a union leader the proposals of the leadership were not always accepted in the factories. Many, many times I came to a mass meeting to hear people saying: "No, we don't want that, we want something else." Such reactions do not undermine the leader's role. On the contrary it is strengthened, because he said what he really thought; he had the humility to present a proposal without fear of losing.

The same thing happens in the PT. The leadership and the national meeting had the courage to say: "neither of these candidates takes the interests of the workers into account. We are therefore not going to take the risk of calling for a vote for one or the other. We want to explain to the inhabitants of Sao Paulo and the other provinces that the best thing to do today is cast a blank ballot."

This was a moral decision. However, the votes are secret and no one controls them. But we think that a good proportion of the PT militants followed our advice. The fact that many supporters and sympathisers voted for Fleury does not undermine either the national conference nor the leadership.

We made only one mistake: a week after the first round, the leadership began to talk publicly about the blank vote. We

TRABALHO

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BASTA

Greve Geral como?

pg. 4/5

Projeto NÃO!

pg. 4/5

PT no Fórum?

pg. 6

should have explained that we were opening a debate on the subject and proposed a preliminary consultation in the PT.

But, in any case, the PT carries no responsibility for other parties' candidates. If this is not made clear at the top, the people will never be educated, and we will just be tail-ending.

The PT's first congress must also discuss what we mean by democracy. Many people say: "my choice is a personal question. And therefore I will vote how I want." But in that case, what is the point of the party? I believe that individual liberty ends where the collective will begins. But you have to have guarantees that collective liberty is conducted in the most democratic fashion possible, with as much debate as possible and plenty of transparency.

I think that before any national decision is taken, any member of the PT can put forward his point of view and express it publicly, but that when the party has voted and taken a position, then we are all obliged to defend it.

■ In public as well?

Obviously. If I went on saying that, despite the PT's decision, I still think that something else is better, then there is no point in the party taking a position. There would be no reason to have a party. I don't see this in terms of punishing those that do not respect decisions, but it is necessary to establish a dialogue with them, so that they come to understand what democratic internal coexistence is. I, for example, support the notion of the hold-

ing of a meeting between the national leadership and the PT's elected representatives to establish a policy for relations between the party and the executive.

■ **There remains a certain distance between union militants and party activists. Recently, the United Workers Centre (CUT) took a position different to that of the PT when the union decided to take part in what was called the "national accord" [the discussion relating to negotiations between bosses and unions]. What do you think of this?**

I think that at certain moments there are going to be differences, all the more in that the CUT and the PT are not the same. The union confederation is broader than the party; in the CUT there are comrades from the Communist Party of Brazil (Pc do B — pro-Albanian) and the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB — pro-Soviet). We want the CUT to be representative of the whole Brazilian working class.

We need to develop the practise of PT comrades involved on the CUT leadership coming to the party leadership meetings with the right to vote so that they carry our ideas into the CUT. At the moment no such relationship exists and they are hard to establish — this problem needs to be tackled at the PT congress.

The CUT attended a meeting with the employers, but when it tried to put forward its proposals it became clear what a farce the meeting was. The bosses want to see the working class capitulate

in the face of the government and the crisis. The CUT has criticized this and worked out an alternative document.

■ **You mentioned the importance of the "parallel government", but in reality this project has encountered numerous difficulties.**

I am happy to see that this initiative is beginning to awaken interest in the PT's members. People are expecting a lot from this "parallel government", which was set up on July 15, 1990, during the election campaign. But the PT, like the whole country, is going through an unprecedented economic crisis. Every week we have to go looking for loans for the party. This has had an impact on the "parallel government" which can only afford a very limited structure — there are only four full time staff and we lack the means to take up themes in a coordinated way.

We need to develop projects for each sector and more systematically follow official policy, to create a counter-weight to Collor's government. Around June 1991, the "parallel government" will have been consolidated and will become a reference point for Brazilian society.

Those taking part in it must become real political actors; they are outstanding personalities from the social and intellectual movements, but not people used to politics.

■ **What is the PT's international role? Over the past two years, your external initiatives have continually grown.**

I am not perhaps the person best placed to talk about this, because I am very immodest about this! I think that the PT was the big political novelty on the international scene in the 1980s. Before wandering off, the Polish Solidarnosc union awakened great interest at the start of the 1980s, but it cannot be compared to the

1. The proposal for the "parallel government" came from Lula himself in July 1990 after the presidential elections in 1989, with the intention of keeping together the forces that supported his candidacy for the presidency and putting forward an alternative to the policies of president Collor. It is made up of coordinators of sectors of work, corresponding more or less to the ministries. It above all involves PT militants and some others from other parties or without party affiliation. It has proved impossible to keep together all the forces involved in the election campaign.

The "parallel government" has already worked out its alternative projects for education, health, the development of the north-east, agriculture, wages and so on. It aims to be a permanent centre for all opposition to the government's projects and show that another policy is possible. However it is dependent on a somewhat reluctant media for its work becoming known.

PT. A party with the characteristics of the PT — its ability to bring together very different modes of thought, from Communists to Christians, from supporters of the Cuban model to people who support something quite else — is a rarity in history. The PT opens up a big political space: it has given us all an education in democratic coexistence, and in Europe, both East and West, there is great interest in our experiences.

But we do not know how to correctly work on our image abroad. We need to send regular information on the PT to the rest of the world, so that people can follow our evolution more closely.

At its inception in 1980 the PT knocked down the Berlin Wall. At the time many were already saying that it was impossible to create a party if it did not respect the right to union organization, the right to strike and political pluralism and which did not try to implicate society in all its debates. This conception allowed the PT to discuss the problems of the international left. Despite this we retain a certain humility with regard to parties in other countries — perhaps a relic of colonialism.

The fact that we are not tied to any international is important. The fact that we have relations with all democratic forces on all continents gives us great credibility.

The PT has not yet taken account of the need to have a department for international relations, to give it means and strengthen it. The more weight it has on the international scene, the more the PT will be able to open up an unprecedented space in Brazilian politics.

■ What is your opinion of the different currents on the Latin American left? Who are our main fellow travelers?

It is difficult to make predictions here, because there are very diverse currents in Latin America. In Argentina, for example, there are 13 left wing parties, and it is not easy to select a privileged ally. We have, for example, fraternal relations with the Broad Front in Uruguay, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the Farabundo Martí Front in El Salvador. In Argentina, Mexico and Venezuela we have decided to establish links with the largest possible number of left wing forces. This makes us more credible; we do not shut anyone out and we work in a way that makes the unity of the Latin American left and trade unions a possibility.

■ Currently, in your opinion, what are the main challenges facing the left on the international scene?

The left is perplexed. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the advent of *perestroika*, it is reflecting on its mistakes. Many find it difficult to understand that the people [in Eastern Europe] wanted

real change. In these countries, socialism had become bureaucratic and rancid; it did not meet the challenge of modernization nor of productivity nor of democracy. In that part of the world, the left has proved unable to initiate changes. The right has been able to draw succor from this and profit from changes that should have been made by a section of the left.

This has had serious implications here in Brazil as in the rest of Latin America, since many parties were really nothing more than satellites of Eastern bloc groups or the Soviet Communist Party. The left must understand that it is up to the masses to develop their own socialist project; it must learn that it is impossible to create a vanguard party if the masses do not themselves become the vanguard.

■ Are you satisfied by Lech Walesa's victory in Poland?

It is hard to have an opinion on this question without knowing the Polish context. I do not want to give a hasty opinion. Nonetheless it is quite possible that Walesa no longer has the same positions as before as a defender of the aspirations and gains of the workers. It is true that socialism did not exist in Poland and that a bureaucracy was fixed in power, but to go from there to choosing the market economy and proposing a return to capitalism as the solution to the country's problems...

I think that Walesa should get out and about a bit, and see that capitalism is not just European capitalism but also what exists in Africa, Asia or Latin America. He should take account of the fact that we do not enjoy the splendid modernity of Europe, but misery. That as it may be, Walesa is a worker who has got to where he is today; I hope that he will turn out to have enough serenity and maturity to contribute to improving the situation of the Polish people.

■ In 1991 we will hold the first congress of the PT. One of the central themes of the discussion will be the question of socialism and the strategy we need to get to it.

In my opinion, we must be a lot more pragmatic at this congress than before, for the PT has the perspective of coming to power in 1994. I think we must formulate our "utopia" on concrete foundations drawn from ten years of experience. We have to consider a socialist project which corresponds to our reality; and thus have a mature discussion that is as far reaching as possible. The time will have come for the different currents that make up the PT to stop trying to impose their particular visions of socialism and consider what type of socialism the PT wants. Our party runs important cities and may perhaps govern big provinces or even find itself winning the presidency.

The PT has to stop making proposals for the distant future and put forward

solutions for the here and now. We must have the discussion on socialism with sectors that are not in the PT, from the union and popular movement; otherwise we will simply have a "vanguardist" project — and on the whole the masses do not understand such projects.

The congress can carry through this task and I think it could constitute an exceptional event which would allow the party a very wide-ranging discussion on important topics.

■ What is your view of the present situation in the PT?

For an organization with only ten years behind it, the PT is extraordinarily mature. However we still have a sort of anti-alliance culture, against political agreements and are incapable of distinguishing the different levels of a discussion.

As far as alliances are concerned, for example, the PT must always be disposed to them; it is a tactical question depending on the situation, which does not involve the breaking of principles or the abandonment of the perspective of taking power.

While our rhetoric is "rank-and-file", in fact we have to improve the participation of the rank-and-file, both in the PT's basic units and in the social movements. In fact, the rank-and-file has hardly taken part in our decisions since our local bodies do not function well and many parts of our society live in such a way that they cannot effectively take part in the life of the PT.

We have not yet succeeded in getting the People's Councils off the ground in the town halls, when we have run some of them for two years. We have led a campaign on people's power and participation, but it all remains to a large extent up in the air.

How to draw the population in? Evidently via such councils and the PT's own structures. We have to overcome all these contradictions and difficulties: the importance of the PT is not only to be measured in electoral scores; it is above all a function of its involvement in the social movement, and its organizational and educational achievements. ★



The best laid Plans of George Bush

THE unexpected victory of the right wing UNO alliance in the Nicaraguan elections of February 1990 shows the degree of success of the policies of the Bush administration in Latin America. Its military and political offensive has allowed Washington not only to regain the initiative in Central America in the framework of its bilateral relations with the region's conservative governments, but also to turn to its advantage the peace negotiations in El Salvador and the transition period in Nicaragua.

In the rest of Latin America, the Sandinista defeat, coming after the US invasion of Panama, has led the governments there to reassess the balance of forces with the imperial power. From Mexico's Salinas de Gortari to Argentina's Carlos Menem, the Latin American presidents are falling over each other in their willingness to collaborate with Washington and to ask for aid for their countries.

However, despite all the problems facing the Latin American left, including the increasing pressure on an isolated Cuba, the imperialist plans are not having a smooth run.

G. BUSTER

BUOYED up by its own surprise success, as well as by the changes in Eastern Europe, the US offensive continued from February to August. The aim was to advance beyond a series of tactical choices to the pursuit of long-term global solutions. These solutions were to be a part of the worldwide restructuring in Washington's interests in the aftermath of the cold war.

In this new period the Bush administration pursued four main objectives in Latin America:

1. To consolidate the situation in Central America, continuing to wear down the FSLN in Nicaragua, cornering the FMLN in El Salvador and imposing a new regional order that would see an end to the autonomous efforts expressed in the Esquipulas accords¹.

2. To create a consensus in the US Congress behind the administration's Latin American policy, "de-politicizing" it in the eyes of US public opinion and restricting debates on issues such as emergency aid for the "consolidation of democracy" in Nicaragua and Panama, and especially US military aid to the government in El Salvador, to details.

3. To construct a new model of political and economic relations in the hemisphere under US hegemony which would give a

new impulse to the neo-liberal adjustments and prioritization of exports adapted to the US market set out in the Brady plan on the debt. The background to this is the world recession which is tending towards the restructuring of the world market into great blocs; thus the Monroe Doctrine is being re-floated as the US' answer to the the Europe of 1992 and Japanese hegemony in Asia.

4. To step up the pressure on Castro's Cuba and get back to the strategic situation that prevailed before the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, definitively removing Soviet influence and the example of the Cuban revolution.

This has not been an easy period for those fighting for socialism in Latin America. However, by the start of September 1990, the offensive was showing signs of exhaustion, at the same time as the opposition forces that were supposed to be out of the running began to re-emerge.

The international situation was dramatically changed by the Gulf crisis, which also marked a re-ordering of American foreign policy objectives. The economic recession became a reality, further reducing the US' capacity to deliver aid to Latin America. The inconsistencies of United States' policy in Latin America were once again subjected to criticism²;

the debate on aid to El Salvador sparked off by assassination of six Jesuits in November 1989 revived. While Bush might proclaim that the US was in control throughout the continent, that country was in no position to finance development or subsidize social stability there.

According to the *New York Times*, the US president's first Latin American tour was the occasion for a dialogue of the deaf: "while Bush talked about democracy, the Latin American presidents spoke about the debt." After attempted coup d'états in Panama and Argentina, a renewed FMLN offensive in El Salvador and the victory of the M-19 ex-guerrillas in the legislative elections in Colombia, it is easy to understand why Bush was met with a certain scepticism.

The combined effects of the invasion of Panama and the Sandinista defeat, and the enormous psychological shock it caused, led both the Latin American left and Washington to an over-hasty reading of the real balance of forces.

In Central America, the two general strikes led by the National Front of Workers (FNT — which brings together the Sandinista unions) against the neo-liberal policies of Violetta Chamorro and the revanchist actions of the most extreme sections of the UNO government coincided with the political resurgence of the FMLN. The Salvadoran revolutionaries carried through a change of strategy with respect to the negotiations, which allowed them to avoid the traps set by the imperialist strategy, while weakening the Christiani government. Furthermore, throughout Latin America, the working class has been resisting the adjustment policies via more or less important general strikes in the Dominican Republic, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina and Brazil.

This resistance has shown up the limits of Washington's policies and given new heart to the Latin American left. The Sao Paulo meeting organized by the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) is a first step in the direction of marking out a way to go from resistance to a new alternative project.³

Nicaragua in disorder

The US State Department was as surprised by the UNO victory as anyone

1. At a meeting in 1988 in Esquipulas, the Central American presidents — including Nicaragua's Sandinista government — started negotiations, without the United States (although of course the US put pressure on some of the governments present) to find a solution to the region's crisis. The negotiations led to agreements on aid to the Nicaraguan Contras and also on the Salvadoran FMLN.

2. See Georges A. Fauriol: "The Shadows of Latin America" in *Foreign Affairs and the World* 1989-1990, and William Perry in "In Search of a Latin American Policy" in *Washington Quarterly*, Spring 1990.

3. In July 1990 the PT organized a meeting of left wing organizations from the Caribbean and Latin America. A second meeting is scheduled to take place in Mexico.



else, and had no clear plan of what to do next in that country.

However Bush rapidly worked out the basic approach, which remains in force. He started from the fact that Chamorro's victory did not automatically imply the conquest of power by the right or the total rout of the FSLN. On the contrary a prolonged situation of dual power had begun. The US aim therefore has been to use the government to eat away at the FSLN's social base and its control over the army.

This "Leninist" vision has involved the use of economic aid as a way of imposing a policy of adjustments on the new government, while encouraging the far right of UNO to show its teeth. The first phase of this policy established the interdependence of the negotiation of the agreements between the UNO moderates and Humberto Ortega and the demobilization of the Contras. The FSLN leadership also rapidly recovered from the shock of defeat. Daniel Ortega promised that the FSLN would "govern from below" and that this was the foundation of all negotiations with the government.

For its part, Washington has used two forms of pressure: the demobilization of the Contras and pressure on the FSLN from the European social democratic governments, the USSR, Mexico and Venezuela to extract concessions. The agreements envisaged the demobilization of the Contras by April 30, 1990 under United Nations supervision. At the same time, the US ordered the Contras to re-enter Nicaraguan territory *en masse* even before the elections. UNO, meanwhile put forward a demobilization plan which proposed the creation of zones where the armed Contras would concentrate in the country. The Contras would only put down their arms if they thought they had won enough guarantees, that is to say after negotiations with the new government, and on the basis of making a parallel between themselves and the army.

In this way Bush and the Contras got something that they had been unable to win during ten years of war. Contra pressure led Nicaragua to the brink of civil war. The FSLN had to give up its control of the interior ministry, while the Contras kept their own police forces in the zones

where their fighters had gathered. The EPS, headed by Humberto Ortega, remained the main Sandinista element in the new state, while being reduced in number by three quarters.

In the parliament, UNO's majority was not enough to start amending major basic articles of the constitution.⁵

During the street mobilizations and the clashes between FSLN and Contra supporters, whatever was left of the country's economic structure collapsed like a pack of cards. The need to replace Soviet oil deliveries required \$500m in 1990, and wages in the nationalized sector and the maintenance of a minimal infrastructure have to be added on.

The International Development Agency (AID) supported the economic plan put forward by the economy minister Francisco Lacayo. The government announced 15,000 redundancies and the demobilization of 10,000 EPS soldiers. The land promised to the demobilized Contras never materialized, and, finding themselves without resources, they began to attack the Sandinista cooperatives.

While the FSLN leadership found itself divided and tried at all costs to maintain the structures of the EPS, the FNT unions took the initiative and launched two general strikes that paralyzed the country in July and September 1990.

Parliamentary harassment and economic pressure

The State Department understood that these strikes had established a balance of forces that meant that an offensive by the extreme right would only lead to the isolation of the government, divide UNO and make the FSLN the only national alternative. The process of parliamentary harassment would continue, along with economic pressure and pressure for the reduction in the EPS in the framework of negotiations on disarmament in Central America. The mobilization of the far right was re-centred in the countryside, where the town halls controlled by supporters of Virgilio Godoy, with the support of the church, tried to exploit the unfulfilled promises to the Contras made by the government.

For the FSLN, the strikes have played

an important role in the debate before the congress to be held on July 19, 1991. After months of retreat by an FSLN reeling from the shock of its electoral defeat and the malaise among many of its cadres, the reappearance of a mass movement opened a new stage. Sandinism now faces the task of combining two apparently contradictory elements: to encourage an independent mass mobilization against both sectors of UNO, while maintaining the country's governability through pacts with the moderate wing of UNO, against Godoy's faction and the constant pressure from the US.

El Salvador: war and negotiations

The FMLN's military offensive had five main objectives: to improve the military balance of forces; show that the FMLN is an alternative power in El Salvador and force the Cristiani government to accept it as a partner in the regional peace process; restrain the repression against the urban popular movement; exacerbate the contradictions between the most right wing sectors of the army, *La Tandon*⁴, the majority of the ruling ARENA party and the president, on the one hand, and the four bourgeois parties, above all the Christian Democrats, on the other; and underline the failure of the US' counter-insurgency policies and bring back to life the debate in Congress over aid to the El Salvadoran army.

The 1989 offensive achieved all these objectives, above all that of the defence of the mass movement in the cities, where the wave of atrocities of 1989 has not been repeated. The military balance and the regional dynamic of the peace process have obliged Cristiani and his backers in Washington to open negotiations with the FMLN.

The defeat of the Sandinistas and the crisis of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, together with the effects of this in Cuba, led the Bush administration to believe that the moment had come to impose capitulation on the FMLN. The thinking was that, in the new context, the FMLN's logistical capacities would be significantly weakened, while the political projects of the revolutionaries would be thrown into question. Using the analogy of the Nicaraguan Contras, Bush hoped to impose elections under international control in which the Salvadoran left would be defeated, after being disarmed. It is clear that the Sandinista defeat provoked an intense debate among the Salvadoran left, notably over the question of the aims of negotiations.

The Caracas and Geneva accords set September 15, 1990 as the date for a ceasefire, given that preliminary political

4. The Tandon is the name given to the military class from which many of the current leaders of the Salvadoran army emerged.

agreement had been reached. In the meantime the FMLN reserved the right to continue to carry out military operations and thereby put pressure on the government. The accords also recognized the UN's role as mediator, contrary to the wishes of the United States.

After the killing of the Jesuits, the US Congress decided to send a mission to El Salvador to investigate human rights. The State Department accepted this idea, but did its best to neutralize it, at the same time trying to soothe the Salvadoran far right — lest the latter should decide to launch total war on the Guatemalan model. A 30% reduction in military aid, tied to the search for an agreement between the government and the FMLN in three months, and a promise from Cristiani to look into the murder of the Jesuits, was to assist Bush in this plan.

However the whole thing came apart owing to the incapacity of the Salvadoran president and the actions of certain army officers who, during the negotiations, went round making ferocious declarations and rejecting any reform of the army. Furthermore a new campaign of repression began in spring 1990, along with a military offensive.

At the meeting between the government and the FMLN in Costa Rica in July 1990, agreements on respect for human rights were reached, and a UN commission was set up to oversee the ceasefire. Meanwhile, the army had again resorted to death squads.

It became clear that there would be no accords on the reform of the army before September 15, 1990, and it also became clear that the US was not going to put pressure on the army, their last instrument of domination in El Salvador, nor permit any concession to the FMLN from whom they demanded unconditional surrender.

In August 1990, the Salvadoran revolutionaries revised their analysis of the situation and changed their public attitude to the negotiations. The main plank in the new position is the demilitarization of the country and the parallel reduction of the two armies, leading up to the abolition of the two forces. Only on these terms would the FMLN accept a ceasefire. The failure of the negotiations to advance further as soon as the issue of army reform was raised led to the resumption of hostilities. The army stepped up its efforts in the north. The FMLN, aware that the army's control of the air had been limited by the March 1990 votes in Congress, launched attacks on the military airbases.

However, in November 1990, a new

change began. The UN delegate brought in a new mechanism that strengthened the UN's role and stepped up the pressure on the army. The FMLN launched a new offensive and was able to challenge the army's control of the air by using SAM missiles.

Bush's policy had clearly failed. If he went to Congress to ask for more aid, this would be recognition that Cristiani was in danger. Washington therefore decided to limit itself to exercising indirect pressure on the FMLN via Mexico, Venezuela and the EEC, at the same time giving the government the \$48m agreed for reconstruction in 1991. Hopes for a recomposition on the Salvadoran right also evaporated. Cristiani remained weak and the most fascistic sectors of ARENA, around Major D'Aubuisson, became stronger. While it is impossible to predict what will

put pressure on the Sandinista army, which is now the smallest of the region's armies, leaving aside Costa Rica — have been going nowhere. The Salvadoran, Guatemalan and Honduran armies had too much business on their hands fighting the FMLN or the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) to take such negotiations very seriously.

Emergency aid "to consolidate democracy" — \$320m and \$400m to Nicaragua and Panama respectively — was approved by Congress at the end of March 1990⁵. Nine months later, Nicaragua's Vice-President Godoy was complaining that the aid hadn't arrived in his country, while in Panama it was swallowed up by the refinancing of banks and businesses; in the areas destroyed during the invasion, Panamanians are still living in tents.

There has been little sign of the democratic stability that was supposed to see the light of day along the canal: President Endara has vainly sought officers not caught up in the former regime's corruption to head a new police force; a coup d'état was announced by one sector of the government and then denied by another; and meanwhile the legal proceedings against

former dictator Noriega have gone their tortuous way in Florida.

While Panama has faced growing misery and social tension, Washington has been mainly preoccupied with imposing a treaty on the Panamanian government that would oblige that country's banks to allow their accounts to be inspected by the US authorities.

In Guatemala, the development of the negotiations between the guerillas, the coordination of the political parties and the employers' associations has led to the army intervening before the meeting between the URNG and the government. The new regional context has encouraged the army to decide who was going to win the elections, resuming its favoured "scorched earth" policies. In 1990 Guatemala received \$115.9m in civilian aid, mainly for police training programmes financed by AID. But the American aid is peanuts compared to the money coming in from the drug traffic. Guatemala has become the staging post for cocaine on its way to the US, while some 2,000 hectares are given over to the cultivation of opium.

5. During a trip to the US, the Nicaraguan presidential adviser, Antonio Lacayo, and the economy minister, Francisco Mayorga, requested \$300m aid for 1990 and \$200 more in 1991. Congress voted through \$40m for the demobilization of the Contras, but emergency aid for Nicaragua and Panama was only agreed to on March 28, 1990.



happen in the coming months, it is clear enough that 1990 ended with the failure of Washington's attempts to politically and militarily cut off the FMLN. The guerillas had regained the initiative in all fields.

The summit of the Central American presidents in Antigua in June 1990 was supposed to set the seal on the peace process and the restoration of US hegemony. The latter, facing economic problems, stated its incapacity, in the future, to increase aid; instead it offered to "coordinate" Japanese and EC aid.

Japan and Europe: unwilling partners

Five months later, an "Association for Democracy and Development in Central America" was created, but at its first conference this body had to admit that the EC and Japan seemed rather unwilling to see their aid "coordinated" by the US. Meanwhile the US Congress had not only refused to increase aid, but had declined even to keep it at existing levels.

In December 1990, the Central American presidents were told by the US that, not only were they not going to get any more aid, but that US priorities had changed.

The negotiations for regional disarmament — dreamt up chiefly as a means to

The US' third objective for the sub-continent, and its most ambitious, is the attempt to coordinate and redefine a new overall framework for relations with the Latin American countries, with the aim of assuring control of the region as Japanese influence grows in the Pacific and Europe approaches the introduction of the single market in 1993.

The Initiative for the Americas

Bush's project is based on five elements:

1. The need to re-negotiate the Latin American foreign debt to the commercial banks, in the framework of the Brady Plan. The need to provide US or World Bank standby credits to sustain debt service payments, according to the importance of the particular national economies for the US.

2. The defence of a neo-liberal adjustment policy, giving priority to the agro-export sector, in order to maintain debt repayments. The privatization of the state sector — nationalized under populist and protectionist policies in the 1960s and 70s in the interests of stimulating the growth of domestic markets — is part of this logic, supposing as it does the sale of such property to foreign investors. Thus, under the guise of seeking new investments, wealth is exported.

3. The struggle against the drugs traffic, which, at the Cartagena summit, was used to justify, in the name of the "common good", the US military presence in South America, in coordination with local armies. While the Latin American governments have sought to replace the cultivation of narcotics with other products, the US is attempting to use systematic repression to control the supply of drugs on the market.

4. The protection of the environment, with the use of so-called debt for nature swaps. These nicely dovetail pandering to American public opinion with the needs of the administration.

5. The recoupment of aspirations to Latin American integration, which reappeared during the Malvinas War, in a form that serves US interests. The Organization of American States (OAS) is to be reinvigorated, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is to be re-financed and so on. On June 27, 1990, in the presence of the Latin American ambassadors, Bush launched his "initiative for the Americas" involving three axes:

● Trade: The US undertook to take the lead in the last meeting of the GATT negotiations in putting forward the protests of the Latin Americans over the EC's agricultural policies. The US is, furthermore, ready to make temporary agreements for special quotas for countries that want to join the Initiative, even if they do not want to go so far as to accept the free trade agreements as Mexi-

co has done.

● Investment: The IDB foresees a technological development fund of \$300m, with equal contributions from the US, Japan, and the EC. The aid will be conditional on the application of neo-liberal policies.

● The foreign debt: The possible cancellation of some of that owed to the US is envisaged via bilateral negotiations; the creation of a system of swaps of debt for environmental investments; the release of IMF and World Bank funds for standby credits if the countries concerned fulfil those institutions' demands. The openly "ideological" aspect of the Bush Plan has not prevented the Latin American governments from applauding it. The fear of seeing the recession lead to even greater shrinkage of their US markets has weighed here, as well as the chronic problem of debt repayment and the increasing exasperation of the population over the social costs of the adjustment policies.

For many among the Latin American oligarchies, the Bush Plan has become the last hope in the face of chaos.

The Gulf crisis has reduced the real importance of the Initiative. At the same time, while a wave of mass strikes against the adjustment policies and their effects has swept the continent — breaking out in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Peru, Brazil and Argentina — the IDB has stuck to its guns. In its annual report on "Economic and Social Progress in Latin America", the IDB affirms that only this new orientation can permit the region's economies to win back ground lost in the "lost decade" and, furthermore, achieve a growth rate of 5.5% per year, thanks to the private sector and regional coordination in the framework of the Initiative.

During the 2nd Conference on Poverty in Quito, it was revealed that the past ten years have seen half the continent's population fall below the poverty line; according to one authority \$228bn — 70% of the debt — would be needed to provide housing and basic services to all the "new poor".

The struggle against the drug traffic, another of Bush' favourite themes, does not seem to have achieved its goals. The

Colombian government of Cesar Gaviria, failing to receive the satisfaction of its demands for aid and trade quotas from the US, has ceased extraditions of drugs' traffickers to the US, and has opened de facto negotiations with the drug cartels.

The Peruvian army, preoccupied by the danger of the Shining Path guerillas gaining increased support in the Huallaga region, has vetoed the signing by President Fujimori of an agreement on anti-drug collaboration. In Bolivia, similarly, the government has had to give into army demands to participate in the suppression of the crop to obtain the \$33.3m of promised US aid.

Finally, the Bush administration maintains its intention to destroy the Cuban revolution. After 30 years of blockade, the crisis of Stalinism has opened up the possibility of starving Castro out. But relations with the USSR and the absence of significant opposition on the island itself have led Washington to maintain its traditional policy and wait, hoping that the Cuban regime will collapse under the weight of its own economic and social crisis.

Blockade of Cuba stepped up

The US is putting pressure on the USSR to cut off supplies to Cuba and thus tighten the blockade; meanwhile, the Florida-based Radio Marti is trying to encourage discontent.

The Cuban-American Foundation, led by Jorge Mas Canosa, who wants to be the new president of Cuba, exercises the decisive influence on US Cuban policy both in the White House and Congress. The president's son supports this association with implications for the funding of the Republican Party in Florida.

The crisis of the embassies in July 1990 showed the limits of US policy — with the fear of the arrival of thousands of new immigrants, which would provoke a crisis.

The US has tried to exploit Cuba's line in the Gulf crisis — where it abstained in the Security Council vote on sanctions against Iraq and voted against the January 15 ultimatum — to try to reinforce the isolation of Havana and justify the blockade. ★



Restoration tragedy in eastern Europe

AT THE initiative of the Hungarian review *Eszmelet*, a meeting was held in Budapest from April 10-12 of left intellectuals from central and eastern Europe, as well as western Europe and the Americas. Discussions centered on the viability of the socialist alternative to capitalism following the collapse of the old Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe. The following contribution was presented by the French revolutionary Marxist journal *Critique Communiste*.

HENRI WILNO

THE collapse of the neo-Stalinist systems in central and eastern Europe has revived and amplified the debate on the validity of the socialist option, and even the viability of any global alternative to the capitalist system, whatever its reference point. The theoretical and practical work necessary for a re-foundation of the legitimacy of an alternative must be done.

If the possibility of building something different has yet to be demonstrated, it should not be forgotten that capitalism is far from having shown its capacity to resolve the fundamental problems of humanity.

The question is a particularly burning one for central and eastern Europe; it is commonly claimed that, now that the old system has collapsed, only "the market economy" (in the favoured phrase of the international organizations, who hardly ever speak of capitalism) can take its place¹. What type of capitalism?

Capitalism "with a human face"

For the optimists, there is no problem, at least in the medium term; we are in "Europe", this will therefore naturally be a capitalism "with a human face" of the type which exists in western Europe. Others concede the risks attached to an uncontrolled neo-liberal drift.

This article is structured around three ideas:

- The transition towards capitalism will be complex and difficult;

- The capitalism which will install itself in the countries of central and eastern Europe will very likely present an "inhuman face";

- This process underlies the necessity and the possibility of alternative forces developing.

The process underway is certainly that

of a "transition towards capitalism" (at least in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia).

As we have said earlier, the term is rarely employed; thus the international organizations (OECD, IMF, and so on) in all their myriad missions, reports and colloquiums, never use the word "capitalism", speaking always of the "market economy".

Conflictual character of system minimized

Bernard Chavance² has underlined that these different terms conceal different approaches; he notes correctly that the free market economists who characterize the existing system in western Europe by the expression "market economy" minimize "the conflictual character of the system", and, so far as the transition in eastern Europe is concerned, imply that once a radical deregulation and a greatly increased flexibility is introduced, "a new equilibrium will rapidly be achieved after an intermediate period".

The "hard" liberal approach is typified by the Czechoslovak minister of finance, Vaclav Klaus, who explains that his "conception of freedom and prosperity is founded on a universal system of free exchange and not on institutions fabricated by man"³. Behind such a remark lies an ahistorical conception of capitalism

which does not take account of the fact that this latter reposes not only on automatic mechanisms, but on an increasingly complex system of rules and institutions. It is necessary moreover to point out that these rules and institutions are the product of social relations.

The Hungarian economist Janos Kornai, who situates himself within an optic of capitalist restoration⁴, is right to underline that this implies an "embourgeoisement" of society.

How then is this "embourgeoisement" to be carried out in central and eastern Europe? The remodelling of the working class is an institutional and social affair, involving above all the establishment of a political balance of forces that permits the practical implementation of dismissals and rising unemployment.

But the recreation of a bourgeois class (composed of genuine "entrepreneurs" reinvesting a significant part of their profits in production, and not a simple group of parasitic intermediaries) poses more complex problems, as the experience of the Third World indicates.

Privatization debate illustrates difficulties

The debate on the privatization of the public enterprises, as it appears to be taking place in several countries of central and eastern Europe and notably in Hungary⁵, illustrates these difficulties.

Several important points are taken up in this debate: the place of foreign capital; the place of enterprise directors currently in place and linked to the nomenklatura; [former ruling bureaucracy] restitution of the former dispossessed proprietors; and the distribution of property.

The controversies around the first point have led to a virtually universal recognition of the inevitability of a certain proportion of privatizations taking place through purchase by foreign capital. Such support is in any case necessary (above all if a rapid privatization is desired) to the extent that national savings are considered as amounting to a mere one tenth of the value of public property.

But popular acceptance of a subordination of the the most modern sectors of the economic apparatus to foreign capital cannot be taken for granted. Even in Hungarian government circles, the debate is a live one; some talk of the definition of a "strategic" sector where foreign ownership will

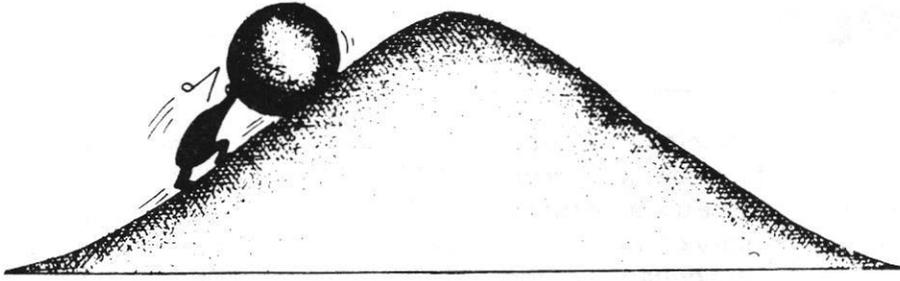
1. We will return later in the text to the reasons why we prefer the term "capitalism" to "market economy". Moreover, the expression "return to capitalism" employed here signifies our belief that the process currently underway constitutes a systematic rupture with something which was not capitalism. Whatever the numerous similarities — correctly stressed, in the past, in arguing against apologists for the system or certain vulgarizations of the theory of the degenerate workers' state — between the bureaucratic system and certain capitalist mechanisms or institutions, the fact remains that never in history have class societies collapsed so easily before mobilizations approximately comparable in their breadth to May 1968 in France (the case of the USSR remains undecided).

2. "Quelle transition vers quelle économie de marché pour les pays de l'Est?", *Revue française d'économie*, volume V, 4, Autumn 1990.

3. Conference in London on March 25, 1991, organized by the Institute of Economic Affairs. Quotation from the *Financial Times*, March 26, 1991.

4. "Du socialisme au capitalisme; l'exemple de la Hongrie", Gallimard, 1990.

5. "La Privatisation en Hongrie; du plan au marché ou du plan au clan?", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 85, November 1990.



be limited⁶.

The second series of problems centre on the role of the ex-nomenklatura. In Hungary there has been much controversy about "spontaneous privatizations", that is privatization at the initiative of the enterprise directors.

The first privatizations of this type seem to have been characterized by an undervaluation of the assets of the enterprises concerned and by the concern of the existing directors to carve out the best possible deal for themselves. Protests at this led to the creation in March 1990 of a state property agency with the job of controlling the process of privatization.

The debate on this theme has an essential political dimension; the opponents of spontaneous privatizations denounce them as a way of perpetuating the positions of the privileged of the old regime.

The problem of the survival of the former nomenklatura, and its ability to find a place in the sun of the capitalism under construction has also appeared in Poland where, in the name of pragmatism, some political leaders are ready to accommodate themselves to the trend. Most of the businessmen who appear on a list of the hundred richest Poles have had close links with the former regime and some even occupied ministerial functions⁷.

Problem of sidelining nomenklatura

But how can the nomenklatura be sidelined? This is especially problematic in that it would run against the desire of a part of the new political leadership for a rapid dismantling of the state sector. To deal with the problem, some have proposed the introduction of a system of increasing participation; the shares floated by the state enterprises, at the time of their transformation into companies, are to be bought by the banks, the insurance companies, or other enterprises.

The partisans of this solution see it as the way towards the rapid privatization of the big enterprises, utilizing the competence of the more dynamic sectors of current management and, finally, establishing a

system of integration between enterprises and the financial system analogous to that existing in the countries of the OECD. Naturally this also goes for the establishment of a financial market.

The opponents of this method point to the risk of maintaining the essential core of the old management, as well as the fact that property will remain impersonal and the directors responsible to no one.

Janos Kornai has added a far more fundamental criticism; there is no capitalism without genuine private entrepreneurs, and the development of such a social layer cannot be done by decree, but can result only from an "organic" process ("embourgeoisement is a long historic process") that can be hastened by specific measures but not jumped over.

It is better then, in his view, to privatize by extension of the existing private sector, freed from all barriers to its development. It is also necessary, moreover, to reinforce political control over the directors of the public sector in order to struggle against any tendency to irresponsibility and waste (so long as the logic of the market is not really anchored in the economy).

Bring back the old bourgeoisie?

There is another way to approach the problem; why not recreate a bourgeoisie by bringing back the old one?

This is one dimension of the discussion over the rights of former proprietors of the property nationalized by the preceding regime. This question, which has been raised in Hungary notably in relation to agricultural land, has three aspects, equally profound in their implications.

Should the right to such reparations concern all the old proprietors or just individuals (the churches could constitute a particular case)? Should this right have

limits? Should it take the form of restitution, or of compensation? We will deal here only with the problem of restitution.

The supporters of restitution stress the fact that it is the most simple form of reparation for the wrong suffered, and that it would allow the rapid recreation of a social layer interested in the development of the "market economy".

Apart from the arguments about the incapacity of the former proprietors (or their heirs) to manage property expropriated several decades ago (whether it is enterprises or agricultural lands) the opponents of this idea emphasize that it would deprive the state budget of the resources which could be derived from the sale of the property concerned.

Moreover, they underline that, if the right of restitution is not strictly limited in terms of the timescale covered, there is a possibility of disputes which would weigh on the future of economic units. This latent menace would, according to some, be enough to discourage the claimants.

The case of the GDR seems to show that such a risk exists; the treaty of unification affirmed the principle of restitution, and the responsible offices have registered 1.2 million demands for restitution, of which 10-12,000 concern enterprises. An eventual successful claimant to one of these enterprises might then not be sure for a long time of the validity of his/her rights.

This situation has led the Christian Democratic-Liberal government to take some liberties with the principle of absolute respect of the right of the proprietor, and a law, which came into force on March 29, has given precedence until the end of 1992 to the biggest investor over the presumed proprietor.

Another debate centres on the distribution of property. Two main methods have been proposed by the partisans of wide property ownership through privatizations; the distribution of shares to the wage earners and the "generalized social endowment".

The partisans of the first option envisage the availability of loans permitting the workers to rebuy the shares in their firm at preferential rates. Supporters of this solution can in fact have different ideas about the type of society and economic organization they desire. For some, it is an affirmation of the rights of the workers, and thus in practice of the legitimacy of another force than that of the firm's owners.

Legitimizing the process of privatization

For others, the objective is to legitimize the process of privatization in the eyes of

6. *Financial Times*, March 30-31, 1991.

7. *The Economist*, March 30, 1991.

8. We will not analyze here the gulf between the tough neo-liberalism of the Czechoslovak minister's speeches and his somewhat pragmatic practice.

9. "A propos de l'"économie socialiste de marché", *le Débat*, no. 62, November-December, 1990.

10. *Handelsblatt*, March 28, 1991.

the workers (who were, after all, theoretically the masters of the entire productive apparatus under the old regime) by assuring them a minority share of capital, and thus guarantee the stability of the new economic system.

The opponents of this programme reply that workers shareholdings could be a break on the mobility of capital and the establishment of a genuine labour market — Kornai stresses the risk of weakening the discipline of the workforce. They add that, in fact, inequality between the wage earners will be reinforced depending on the viability of the enterprise where they are employed.

Unlike the partisans of workers' shareholdings, supporters of the "generalized social endowment" are not ambiguous on the return of capitalism; they propose implementing privatization by distributing to every citizen titles representing their right to a fraction of state property. These titles could then be converted into shares in different companies. The advantage would be twofold; it would give political legitimacy to privatization by appearing egalitarian, and would create the beginnings of a capital market.

Besides doubts about the feasibility of such a scheme, its critics also argue that it would result in a wide dispersal of property which could in fact result in the consolidation of control by the current directors and their methods of management.

Finally, given that privatization will take time, the problem of the management and restructuring of those enterprises not yet privatized but judged potentially viable, has to be addressed.

This brings up the controversies on the best way to manage state participation (should it be confined to a holding?), and the criteria to use to decide whether an enterprise is viable.

Slow progress in east Germany

In the ex-GDR a management organ, the *Treuhandanstalt*, has been created to control the state's holdings in the enterprises. This body has been subjected to much criticism from West German leaders owing to the slow progress of privatization (a thousand enterprises out of eight thousand have been privatized). More recently, things have taken another turn and the workers of the ex-GDR have begun to denounce the *Treuhand* as an organ of liquidation and of the development of unemployment.

Meanwhile, Vaclav Klaus has denounced the very principle of introducing such a body in Czechoslovakia as risking the development of a new interventionist state⁸. Similar problems may appear in other forms in the other states of the region when the process of transfer of the public enterprises is really set in motion.

The true test for the privatization of

eastern Europe's economies will not be the speed with which the state sector is dismantled — we will return below to the hypothesis of the introduction of a "state capitalism" — but the growth of private activities, not only in services, as is principally the case today, but in the production of goods, and, in the last analysis, the reversal of the form of economic regulation.

All the elements summarized above show that, even leaving aside the reaction of the workers, this process will not be free of contradictions.

One of the fundamental factors in the discontent which has brought the current regimes in central and eastern Europe to power is the feeling of growing poverty compared to the rest of the continent. Things could certainly be nuanced; after the Second World War, Bulgaria and Poland did not figure amongst the richer European countries, but a comparison between Austria and Czechoslovakia shows the reality behind the feeling.

This argument is used by the Polish minister Leszek Balcerowicz⁹ to reject any non-capitalist reform of the economies of the East; although he recognizes the "social cost" of the capitalist economy, particularly in terms of unemployment.

"Social cost" in countries of west also

It is clear that this "social cost" exists even in the countries of western Europe, where the balance of forces between the classes immediately after the war permitted the establishment of developed systems of social protection which have softened the impact of unemployment, sickness and old age.

In the European countries in the OECD, the rate of unemployment was 8.5% of the active population in 1989, or 15.2 million persons, and the slowdown in the growth of the capitalist economies since the second quarter of 1990 will lead to a worsening of these figures. Moreover, inequalities, and urban and ecological problems are tending to grow.

However this fact is hardly a deterrent for the peoples of eastern Europe. Knowledge of racism and exploitation does not stop many north Africans from coming to seek work in France, just as consciousness of western realities hardly shakes the conviction of Poles or Hungarians that it is more worthwhile to follow this model than to go through some new experiment. Given the past it is hard to tell them they are wrong.

The real problem concerns the future, however; whether the adoption of a capitalist road will result in a way of life similar to that of the EC. And the answer to this is no.

Firstly, the transition will be very costly, both socially and economically. All western economists make this quite clear, saying that the adjustment will mean in the first place a degradation of the living conditions of large sectors of the population whilst the productive fabric is taken to bits.

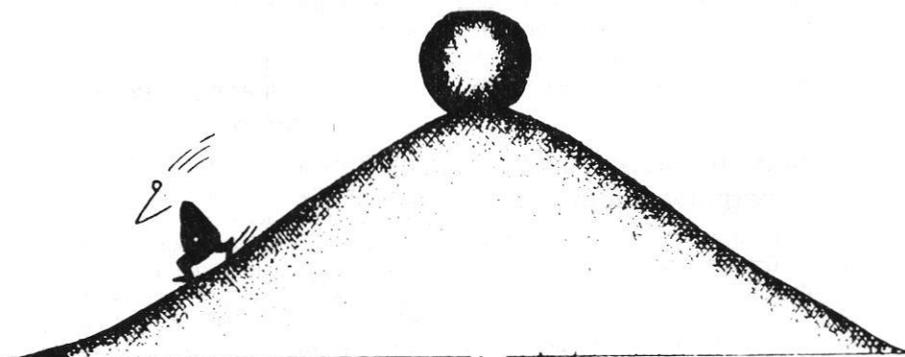
But many think that this will only be an unpleasant short term experience. Is this really the case? The world economy is not an empty or infinitely flexible space, which, like the ideal "market" of neo-classical theory, will open itself up each time there are new actors who want to enter it.

Moreover, the countries of central and eastern Europe (with the exception of Bulgaria) were already inserted into the world market through foreign trade; one could even advance the idea that their real involvement was greater than that shown by official figures, given that these were calculated on the basis of an overvaluation of the transferable rouble (the unit of measurement used to calculate inter-Comecon exchanges).

This participation in the world economy was (and is) of the kind proper to economies specializing in the production of goods at a low or limited technological intensity.

Old bureaucratic mechanisms softened impact

The essential difference between the



past and what is to come is that the old mechanisms of bureaucratic planning softened the domestic impact of this subordinate role.

It will be difficult for the countries of central and eastern Europe to significantly increase their exports of low grade agricultural or industrial products. Indeed, it is significant that the issue of the opening up of the EC to such products has been the main problem in the negotiations over association between Poland and the EC, with the latter demanding a greater access to the Polish market, although the average custom tariff is only 8%.

The question then is whether the central and eastern European countries are capable of entering into world exchange at a more sophisticated technical level. For a number of reasons this seems highly unlikely.

First, the mechanisms of privatization, largely based on an appeal to foreign capital, and the lack of resources (or of the will of states to provide such resources) to promote the means for a (partial) technological independence will mean that the centres of industrial decision and research in the most up-to-date branches will be located abroad.

Moreover, observation shows that foreign industrial investment takes place for three reasons; lower labour costs, access to raw materials and the objective of penetrating a market which is protected from direct imports from abroad. It is the third determinant which generates the most fruitful investments from the point of view of the host country. A myriad of examples show this.

Thus, it was the almost total closing of the Spanish market by the Franco regime to imports of foreign cars which explained the development of production capacity in that country by the main US and European car manufacturers. The desire of US firms to profit fully from the European Community market has often been the reason behind the implantation of units of partially autonomous production (such as IBM in France or Ford and General Motors in Germany).

Finally, a recent survey (March 1991) of Japanese enterprises with productive — and in some cases research and design — capacities in western Europe (EC and the European Association of Free Exchange) shows that one of their main motivations is the fear of protective measures¹⁰.

Neo-liberal zeal risks negative effects

Inversely, if a market is not protected, only the first two reasons apply and the technological level of investments tends to be limited. The neo-liberal zeal which certain eastern European governments are showing in bringing down customs barriers thus risks having a strong negative effect on industrial development.



One could infer from the foregoing that the "solution" resides in the emergence of "national" capitalisms with voluntarist economic policies impelled by the state and capable, in the style of Taiwan or South Korea, of "forcing the door" of the world market.

A "state capitalist" solution would, moreover, be a logical response to a situation where private national capital is weak and foreign capital cautious in the face of an uncertain outlook for profitability, and where foreign capital's input is, in any case, not enough to meet the needs of the productive sector — a good proportion of the mixed companies are involved in the hotel or service sectors.

"State capitalist" projects thus suggest themselves as the form of transition to capitalism¹¹. But is success assured?

A study shows that the growth of the newly industrialized countries of Asia¹² has initially depended on considerable outside support; in 1956-57, foreign aid, almost totally from the United States, financed 70% of investment in South Korea and Taiwan.

There followed a largely state-directed export-orientated economic policy relying on low unitary wage costs. This allowed the initiation of sustained growth with strong gains in productivity permitting the maintenance of price competitiveness but also a limited raising of wages. The process of development was fuelled at the same time by external and internal demand, with profits remaining high.

Cold War context for economic growth

This dynamic of growth depended on the political context of the Cold War where, in the face of the Soviet (and Chinese) adversary, the United States felt obliged to support the growth of the "good Korea" and the "good China". Moreover, the regimes in these countries were far from being democratic, repression of the trade union movement being an essential part of their economic strategy.

In concluding their study, the economists of the CEPII considered the possibility that this model could be copied in eastern Europe; their response was rather negative mainly because they considered wages there too high in relation to productivity.

To summarize in a somewhat simplified fashion, this model can work only if the Hungarian or Polish worker agrees to live and work like a Taiwanese or South Korean worker! To illustrate what this implies; in 1987 the annual duration of work in industry was 2,802 hours in South Korea and 2,508 in Taiwan, against 1,586 in France¹³.

Everything seems to indicate then that capitalism "with a human face" is not on the order of the day in central and eastern Europe. But does an alternative exist; is there a place for a left (in the sense in which the term is used in western Europe) in the east? Very many people doubt it and advance arguments against it.

Efficiency is one of the first arguments used by the proponents of the "market economy". As Vaclav Klaus says, "the third road is the shortest road to the Third World"¹⁴.

The reality of many countries of the "South", like the Ivory Coast, Zaire, Brazil or the Philippines show that the "Third World" — with all the negative connotations attached to that term — and capitalism, are not substantially separate categories and, as we have just seen, nothing guarantees that the countries of central and eastern Europe will be integrated into the capitalist world market on terms which would guarantee their inhabitants in the medium or even long term the standard of living of West Germany or France.

But in view of the situation of the economies of the East, Klaus' comment cannot be lightly dismissed; indeed he does not hesitate to explicitly designate "the reformers of 1968" as "the most dangerous enemies".

Jacek Kuron, founder of the KOR [Workers' Defence Committee] and Minister of Labour under Mazowiecki — and who has the merit of having genuinely fought against Stalinism — uses another

argument to reject the feasibility of any left perspective: "I would be of the left, the moderate left, in a capitalist system. First, however, I am going to build this capitalist system"¹⁴.

Challenging capitalism

In other words, there is a time for everything and one can only challenge the capitalist system when it exists. The underlying assumption here is that this passage to capitalism will result overall in the best possible outcome in these countries, and that any global obstruction or questioning could jeopardize such an outcome. Others refuse to take seriously an alternative which has no support except in limited circles in the west as much as the east. That is for the moment incontestable.

David Lipton and Jeffrey Sachs, whose role in the elaboration of the Balcerowicz plan is well known, note with reason that the degree of support in eastern Europe for the introduction of a "market economy" of the western type exceeds the level of consensus existing in Latin America¹⁵.

In fact, however, none of these arguments prove that there is no basis for opposing what is happening, and will happen, in central and eastern Europe. It is indeed already possible to affirm the contrary.

On the basis of the reality summarized above, one can be sure not only that movements of revolt will appear (as is already the case in the ex-GDR) but that a political recomposition will follow. Central and eastern Europe will sooner or later see the development of a "new left" radically critical of Stalinism, while the Stalinist parties, if they survive, will try to profit from the first signs of disillusionment.

There is then the possibility of alternative forces developing; but this is also a necessity, for, even if there is no living example of another economic model, the evolution of western Europe shows that an unchallenged capitalism and a capitalism subject to the pressure of popular movements are two different things.

Social protection result of social struggles

Thus, even if the system has been able to integrate the mechanisms of workers' social protection developed after the war into a mode of regulation which has permitted a long period of expansion, these mechanisms are nonetheless essentially the result of social struggles. If they had not taken place, more retrograde solutions

would undoubtedly have been found.

Such a left will be necessary to give a perspective back to people who, in view of the concrete results of the transition back towards capitalism, may oscillate between the idea that in the end they were better off under the old regime, and pure and simple disillusionment leading to apathy or to support for populist or nationalist adventures.

One could add that the appearance of critical currents in the east would have a major impact in the west, changing a situation where Stalinism has discredited the idea of radical change.

What do we want to build? Beyond the terms used to characterize it, we want an *efficient society based on solidarity*.

These two words, efficiency and solidarity, are amongst the most misused in the west; the one (solidarity) being employed by Pharisaic preachers of austerity to the workers, the other (efficiency) by the "managers" who wish to appear modern. The first however was rehabilitated by Solidarnosc in 1981 — whatever the ultimate destiny of that organization — and well characterizes a state of affairs where "the development of each" is a precondition for "the development of all".

The second is also fundamental; the economical use of labour time to give people the time to live is a characteristic of a truly free society.

Capitalist efficiency in service of profit

The neo-Stalinist societies waste the time of workers and consumers, but everybody also knows that capitalist efficiency works unilaterally in the service of the growth of profits.

Neo-liberal theoreticians explain that optimal solutions are thus arrived at, but concrete experience — of the growth of inequalities, high unemployment, degradation of the environment, the situation in the third world — shows this argument to be fallacious. It is necessary to begin to work, and if possible work in common in east and west, to flesh out the content of a global alternative to existing capitalism. This alternative will flow from the examination of the reality of different forms of democracy, the role of the market, and so on.

In the definition of such a project, the contribution of the east, which has been through the concrete experience of Stalinism in power, and of the west, which has been through that of existing capitalism, can be brought together. ★

French unions face shake-up

PLURALIST¹ and traditionally characterized by a low membership level, the French trade union movement finds itself today weakened and near exhaustion. Its militancy, and the unity that it achieved notably between 1966 and 1978, gave it considerable fighting strength. However, since the end of united action between the two main confederations, the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) and the Democratic French Confederation of Labour (CFDT) 12 years ago, the organized union movement has lost half of its support. Only some 5% of engineering workers are today union members, a return to the situation before the big struggles under the Popular Front government in June 1936.

PIERRE REME

COMPLICITY with the governments since 1981 — with the CGT serving the interests of the French Communist Party (PCF), and the National Education Federation (FEN) and the CFDT lining up behind a faction of the Socialist Party (PS) — has not helped matters. While 80% of workers express their belief that union organization is needed in the workplaces or to pursue class-wide demands, at the same time there is an enormous suspicion of the existing national union leaderships.

Such a situation would lead even the most block-headed and narrow minded

19

11. "L'écroulement de l'Europe de l'Est; du stalinisme au capitalisme", Hans-Jürgen Schulz, *Quatrième Internationale*, no. 37-38, August-October 1990.

12. "Pacifique; le recentrage asiatique", CEPII (M. Fouquin, E. Dourille-Feer, J. Oliveira-Martins), *Economica*, 1991.

13. *Wirtschaftswoche*, no. 43, October 19, 1990.

14. *La Nouvelle Alternative*, no. 19, September 1990.

15. "Creating a market economy in Eastern Europe; the case of Poland", *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 1, 1990.

bureaucracy to consider the problem of long-term survival. And the leaders of FEN and the CFDT have indeed come up with a project known as "union recomposition".

Obviously inspired by contemporary social democratic projects, they hope to gain from the decline of the PCF, the low level of struggles and the loss of direction of many union militants to make a historic change in the nature of unionism, starting with an attempt to unite FEN and the CFDT.

In their view, it would be possible to find a broader area of agreement with the employers and the government, if the union movement could put itself forward as being "realistic and responsible from an economic point of view". They hope to act as go betweens for the "modernist" sectors of the multinationals and one or another Socialist or centrist minister.

If the "partners" (the employers) were to know that the unionists would approach issues in more or less the same frame of mind as theirs, rather than as militants searching for any opportunity to gain ground for their side, they would, it is argued, be more understanding. This, at least, is what those engaged in the "recomposition" project are hoping.

Turning the page of the class struggle

Thus for the FEN and CFDT leaderships, it is time to turn the page on class-struggle unionism in France. The "good" elements must be brought together and the "bad" (Communist or other, who do not want to knuckle under) isolated. They do not recoil before the fact that this process means splits.

Thus, following the nurses and post and telecommunications' (PTT) workers' struggles in 1988, the CFDT leadership expelled local or regional union officials and organizations that supported the demands for democratic control by the strikers.²

Certainly "wildcat strikes" continue to break out, stimulated by the rank-and-file coordinations, but, according to the CFDT and FEN leaders, organizations "able to negotiate" will win. They hope, furthermore, that a change in their financing structure will be compensation for loyal militants.

Everything that gets the unions away from voluntary dues payments seems to them good, since voluntary unionism also implies a demand for independence and involvement. On the other hand, a union that is more or less dependent for its financial resources on the employers and the government will appear simply as a specialized agency for conducting negotiations.

The two leaderships are already dealing with a whole series of problems jointly. In 1989, during the five-month long strike of the public finance officers, the

CFDT and FEN avoided the slightest gesture in the direction of spreading the movement in the rest of the public sector³. In Spring 1990 they signed a "re-evaluation and re-grading" agreement which was far from meeting the employees demands, but refused to consult their members. The Gulf war led them to state their willingness to moderate their demands "if necessary". However, the recomposition operation faces a number of problems.

The FEN and CFDT leaderships were counting on the support of another union, the Force Ouvrière (FO), for their plans. However, the conference of FO in 1989 resulted in a victory for a team hostile to the idea. Furthermore the recomposition involved hardening out the intermediary cadre on an ideological basis of "putting an end to the Leninist and revolutionary detour". This however found little echo. The CFDT found itself reduced to initiating a debate on "adaptation of structures".

However, at the October 1990 meeting of the National Confederal Council (CFC)⁴, the majority of speakers opposed the leadership on the decisive issue, that of a reduction in the role of the local coordinating bodies of the union's supporters in different branches to the benefit of the national leaderships.

At present, if the CFDT leadership forges ahead with the scheme concocted with the FEN, it will find itself in the minority. Despite the strenuous efforts of the leaderships since the 1970s, the confederation remains attached to a certain way of working and retains an interest in intervening in the problems of different categories and professional branches, in a way which is effective in building unions in small workplaces.

The FEN leadership, meanwhile, is charged, in the tactical agreement signed between the two leaderships, with the job of "creating a new situation" by proposing the regroupment project to its forthcoming conference.

Teachers union debates recomposition

In the FEN itself, which functions on

the basis of tendencies to which individuals adhere, the recomposition project was launched in January 1990 by the Unity, Independence and Democracy (UID) current, which is close to the PS, and enthusiastically taken up by the secretary of the National Institute of Teachers at its congress in June 1990.⁵

Subsequently things became complicated. Rather than following the leadership into the trap, the Unity and Action (U & A) tendency, in which there are many PCF militants, made it clear that it wanted to maintain the unity of the FEN. The same position was taken by another current, The Ecole Emancipée ("Free School"). Furthermore there were reservations from many of the officials in the *oeuvres* (parallel organizations) — some 50,000 are employed in various parts of the "social economy"⁶ — who fear that a break-up of the FEN would weaken their position. Nor do they see why the empire of the *oeuvres* should be offered to the CFDT leadership as a wedding gift.

Accusations of undemocratic procedures

In the UID tendency itself, the leadership's project has been strongly criticized. A dissident UID list, "Autrement" (Otherwise), gave the green light for setting up a new tendency at the February 1991 congress of the Federation. Most of the promoters of this split off from the FEN's biggest tendency accuse the leadership of undemocratic procedures, and take up some of the ideological undercurrents.

For example, the FEN leadership has declared its support for organizing professional training of technical teachers under employers' control; the leaders and militants in this sector have broken with the leadership over this.

At the end of 1990 the school students movement⁷ showed those PS leaders who are supporting the CFDT-FEN operation the lie of the land. The unions led by Unity and Action, the National Union of Higher Education (SNES), supported the movement against the Socialist government's plans for education. It became clear that the recomposition project

1. People outside France tend to find the existence of five confederations and a separate teachers' federation hard to understand. The five are the General Confederation of Labour (CGT); Force Ouvrière (FO); the National Education Federation (FEN); the Democratic French Confederation of Labour (CFDT); and the French Confederation of Christian Workers (CFTC). There are also some autonomous unions, often of a left or left-centre orientation (see box).

2. The expulsions led to the creation of the SUD-PIT (Solidarity, Unity, Democracy) and the CRC-Santé (Build, Assemble, Coordinate).

3. In a break with tradition in this sector, the strike of the finance officers lasted five months with well-attended and frequent mass meetings. A union united front was maintained throughout. The demands in the strike were often applicable to the whole of the public sector and the government refused to give way because of the danger of an example being set.

4. The National Confederal Council (CNC), the CFDT's parliament, brings together representatives of the federations and regions. It meets three times a year.

5. UID leads many small national unions and above all the FEN's largest union, the SNI (teachers). Some 60% of the delegates at the last federal congress were from the UID.

6. Unity and Action (U & A) brings together many Socialist militants alongside a current close to the PCF. It leads six national unions and some 30 of the FEN's departmental sections.

7. Finally the revolutionary syndicalist Ecole Emancipée makes up about 5% of the FEN.

8. These organizations ("Oeuvres") bring together bodies such as the Mutuelle générale de l'Education nationale (MGEN), a purchasing cooperative (MAIF) and a range of cultural activities (Fédération des oeuvres laïques, Jeunesses en plein air, and so on).

9. See *International Viewpoint*, no. 207, May 27, 1991.

The French trade union movement

THE General Confederation of Labour (CGT) was a united body from 1895 to 1919-1921. There were attempts at reunification in 1935, which lasted until 1939; then from 1943 to 1947. Force Ouvrière (FO) was born out of a split in the CGT in 1947/1948. French Communist Party officials have a big influence on the CGT, while most of FO's officials are Socialists. There is also within FO a network influenced by the Lambertiste current of Trotskyism and a number of members and supporters of the right wing Gaullist Assembly for the Republic (RPR).

* The French Confederation of Christian Workers (CFTC) was set up in 1919 to transmit the Vatican's social policies. It underwent changes under the pressure of struggles and in 1964 it became the Democratic French Confederation of Labour (CFDT), which expressed support for "democratic socialism" and subsequently "self-managed socialism". Formerly a direct action organization drawing on pre-1914 syndicalist traditions, it became, as a result of the three-decade long leadership of Eduard Maire, a transmission belt for the projects of leading Socialist Party politicians such as Michel Rocard and Jacques Delors. This change was accompanied by increasing bureaucratization.

* The present CFTC, which supports the "social morality of the Church", derives from a minority that split away when the old CFTC became the CFDT in 1964.

* The FEN originated at the time of the split in the CGT in 1947. A majority of unionized teachers wanted to remain in a united organization. Tendencies were organized in it, on the basis of political and union affinities. The CGT and FO agreed not to attempt to recruit among teachers.

* The periods of advance for unionism in France are 1918-1920, 1935-1938, 1944-1947 and 1966-1978.

* In 1978, the CGT's 40th Congress adopted a firmly unitary resolution. The PCF apparatus buried it, with the effective aid of the CFDT leader Eduard Maire, who believed that the CFDT needed a break in relations in order to pursue agreements with the bosses.

* Formal membership in French unions involves a higher degree of commitment than in many other countries. In 1989 memberships were: CGT, 520,000; CFDT, 330,000; and FO, 270,000. ★

offered no tool for changing the leadership of that union, and the FEN leadership had to take the realistic road of seeking an accommodation with the SNES.

A short while before the congress, the FEN leadership spread a rumour that, in place of a scheme for a forced march towards a highly centralized union, a looser arrangement was being considered, which would avoid a split between the unions led by U & A and the FEN. In the event, after much re-voting and manipulation on the leadership's part, the FEN Conference still voted 53 to 47% against the reorganization — with the Ecole Emancipée, "Autrement" and U & A voting en bloc against. In the next 18 months a special rules revision congress is scheduled, but the events at the February 1991 conference show that the leadership cannot predict the outcome.

However, the real future of French trade unionism depends above all on two things: what happens in the CGT and the abilities of those unionists who support a united front approach, and who are trying to reorganize themselves.

We may well be on the eve of decisive events in the CGT. The faction close to Communist Party general secretary

Georges Marchais, who is trying to control the union, wants to get rid of the CGT's long time leader Henri Krasucki, who has become too independent. Things are not going well for the CGT at the moment. In 1990 it lost a further 10% of its members; 15 regional unions are to lose their full-time officials; federations are no longer paying for the use of the local offices and the Confederation is having a hard time meeting its immediate needs.

Development of debate in largest union

Certainly the tendency is for many of the militants, who have lost faith in the line pursued for decades and its results, to become inactive. But at the same time the issues of pluralism, the respect of minority viewpoints in the CGT, a genuinely unitary tactic towards the other unions, the raising of strategic demands and the issue of Europe-1992 are all becoming live. The militants and officials raising these questions are from several political traditions: left Socialists, critical Communists⁸ or even the far left. There may

therefore be a battle over the whole orientation of the CGT in the offing, and even a change in its attitude to struggles and relations to militants in other confederations. Such a development would also put further obstacles in the way of the FEN/CFDT merger.

For the past few months, the whole union movement has been in turmoil. Unionists from the CGT, the CFDT, the FEN and some independent unions have decided to meet and develop common conceptions and proposals. The unionists expelled from the CFDT in the PTT and the health sector are taking part. It is not easy to quantify the weight of this network however.

These activists and officials say that they do not want "to be the core of a future united confederation" but "a material force that can push aside the existing blocks."⁹

An initial national meeting on June 23, 1990 showed that there was sufficient agreement for further such meetings to take place. A collective has been set up to centralize information, support the holding of inter-union meetings at a local level, and prepare new national meetings and in particular a new meeting of a thousand unionists to take place on June 15, 1991.¹⁰

The collective responded unanimously to the CFDT and FEN leaderships when, after the latter's February 1991 congress, they put forward their latest idea, that of an "Italian-style" cartel — the new jargon for the "recomposition" — saying that this project was not acceptable unless it included everyone. The collective also insisted that it must be carried through in a democratic way at every level rather than just being an agreement between the confederation bureaucracies.

It would be naive to imagine that the FEN and CFDT leaders have abandoned their project for refashioning the union movement in their own way. However the problems they have already encountered give opportunities to currents with a genuine unity project. The task today is to build joint actions of all who want to end the divisions in French trade unionism.

This requires first of all rebuilding the confidence of the workers in their organizations; democratic development of demands and in the conduct of actions. Such a process could build on the experience of the struggles organized by the coordinations and strike committees, which have seen democratic methods in use such as regular reports to general meetings. ★

8. The state of the French Communist Party creates a new situation in the CGT. The PCF has seen a whole series of critical currents emerge, and these have in turn meant that forces have built up in the CGT ready to criticize its subordination to the PCF leadership's interests.

9. From the *Lettre de collectif* no. 2, November 1990.

10. No. 12 of the *Collectif* publishes the texts to be discussed at the June 15 meeting. The collective can be contacted at BP. 74, 75960-Paris Cedex 20.

Towards a European union federation?

CREATED in 1973, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)¹ held its seventh congress in Luxembourg from May 13-17. This meeting was the occasion to launch an organizational reform aimed at reinforcing the weight of the organization at the European level. Clearly, the ETUC wishes to carve out a better place for itself in the framework of the European unification process, where the trade unions are currently considered as no more than simple observers.

JOAQUIN NIETO

A CONGRESS of the ETUC is a meeting of the big trade union bureaucrats (the congress was attended by 270 delegates who represented fifty trade union federations). Vague declarations of principle take precedence over real debates; the decisions are stitched up beforehand in the back rooms. The politicians of the European Economic Community (EEC), the presidents of the different commissions and of the Strasbourg parliament were almost as numerous as the trade unionists.

However, this congress of the ETUC had a very precise objective; the launch of an organizational reform aimed at adapting the body to the new European reality.

Since its birth 18 years ago the ETUC has been a simple coordination of trade unions. Since the EEC committed itself to the establishment of the single European market, some trade unions have argued that the ETUC should become a genuine European federation. The 7th congress has begun this process, unleashing a seemingly irreversible dynamic towards a continental federation — even if it maintains a confederal character because of the historical, political, social and economic differences between the different countries, as well as their different trade union practices.

The German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB)², the Italian union federations (the General Confederation of Labour — CGIL — and the Italian Confederation of Free Trade Unions — CISL), and the federations of the Spanish state, the General Union of Workers

(UGT) and the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) which, unlike the French CGT, have been admitted into the ECTU, with the support of the majority of the trade unions of the EEC member states, all supported the project. The Scandinavian unions, on the contrary, were very unenthusiastic about the decision, for they perceived it as strictly related to the context of the European Community, to which they do not belong; the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) also opposed it.

Despite the skill of the bureaucrats, who managed to prevent these two positions coming into open conflict at the congress, there were two different candidates for the post of secretary general. Finally, the Christian Democrat trade unionist Emilio Babaglio, of the CISL (supported

by the Germans, the French and the Spanish in particular) was elected to the post; Norman Willis, of the British TUC, was named president of the ETUC, representing the sectors hostile to the current turn.

Strengthening the centre

What does the current reorganization consist of? In the first place, the executive power of what was previously called the Finance and General Management Committee is to be increased and the role of the secretary general, who becomes the true "number one" of the Confederation, is to be strengthened. Also, the trade union committees (that is, the coordination of the different branch federations — of which there are currently 15) will be reinforced — they will be represented with full rights in the executive committee of the ETUC.

These changes might appear anodyne, but they seek to reinforce the role of the Confederation so as to make it a trade union organization on the European scale, able to exert influence in the areas

that the ETUC leaders consider the most important; dialogue and negotiation with the EEC organizations, the European employers' confederation and the multinationals.

On the other hand, the ETUC bureaucrats are not at all concerned with the problems of ensuring participation by trade union militants of the confederated organizations in the European trade union supposedly being constructed, and still less with common mobilizations and actions. For example, the ETUC Congress will henceforth be held every four years (and not every three years as was the case until now) and the number of delegates will be no more than 400 (for 47 million affiliates).

Any appeal to Europe-wide strikes is excluded, at any rate for the moment, under the pretext of not infringing existing legislation (which does not authorize such calls in different countries at the same time) — even if the congress, while admitting the necessity of a severe "self-regulation" in the matter, has decided to fight to change the existing legislation on this question.

The ETUC has been pushed to such changes as a result of the growing tendency of the European bodies to ignore the trade union leaderships.

Social Charter runs aground

The misadventures of the European Social Charter³, a project which is going nowhere, illustrate the problems which will confront the ETUC. Despite the participation of the trade unions in dozens of commissions and community organizations, the decisions are taken elsewhere, without their opinions being taken into account. This fact, together with the deep crisis of traditional negotiation procedures throughout Europe because of the economic crisis, has forced the trade union leaderships to seek a space for dialogue at the European level which has been up until now refused to them.

But the trade unions have also been unable to recoup their lost strength through mobilizations based on setting common objectives for European workers — overcoming this problem is the last thing on the mind of the ETUC. The election of the leader of the ultra moderate Italian federation, the CISL, as secretary general of the ECTU is proof of this; the

1. Set up by anti-Communist trade unions who wished to create a counterweight to the Stalinist-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the ETUC groups trade unions from 21 western European countries.

It includes 35 branch federations and claims 47 million members (40% of European workers). As far as France is concerned, the Democratic French Confederation of Labour (CFDT) and Force Ouvrière (FO) participate in the ETUC — the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) has still not been admitted.

On the other hand, in Italy both the federation linked to Christian Democracy (the Italian Trade Union Federation of Labour, CISL) and that largely influenced

by the Communist Party (the Italian General Confederation of Labour, CGIL) participate in the ETUC. The General Union of Workers (UGT) of the Spanish state participates along with the Workers' Commissions (CCOO, historically linked with the leadership of the Spanish Communist Party), who were recently admitted.

2. The DGB (formerly West German) today includes all the workers of the former eastern and western parts of Germany, following the dissolution of the official eastern federation, the Free German Confederation of Trade Unions (FDGB). The DGB represents 90% of German trade unions.

3. See IV 171.

fact that federations like the UGT and the Spanish CCOO — which had very accommodating positions at the congress — are seen as the left wing of the European trade union movement is also enlightening.

Yet, despite all these limits, the Luxembourg congress has inaugurated a process that seems irreversible; the formation, albeit slowly, of a European trade union confederation.

Moreover, common European trade union initiatives will sooner or later become inevitable, and the trade union

bureaucrats cannot remain simply passive observers of the process of unification.

In this context, class struggle union militants must first grasp the new situation; and take it into account by encouraging meetings and coordinations between different left trade union currents across Europe. They will have to be capable of proposing common initiatives for mobilization which take as their centre of gravity the new phase of the organized European workers' movement. ★

to call for repression against these youth and their expulsion from Belgium.

The district authorities have never bothered to listen to the complaints of their inhabitants, be they immigrants or Belgians. The response to the recent events shows that this is not about to change.

The first response of the president of the Brussels' region, Piqué (francophone social democrat), and the national interior minister, Tobbacq, (Flemish social democrat) has been to increase the forces of order. Sixty auxiliary police officers are to be taken on. The identity checks are to continue. The national justice minister, Wathélet (social Christian), has demanded that vandalism cases get top priority in the courts. Of course, there will probably be legislative elections this autumn and election fever is on the rise.

These events represent several kinds of failure. After the 1988 legislative elections, the new government installed a royal commissariat for immigrants, headed by Paula D'Hondt (social Christian — a former minister who had just lost her position). Her series of reports were hardly looked at by the government, on its own admission. The commissariat is an advisory body unable to make policy. The integration policy that it is fighting for (and which includes a number of sensible

Youth rebel in Brussels

AN IDENTITY CHECK set off an explosion of anger by youth from immigrant (mainly Moroccan) families on Friday May 10 in the Forest precinct of Brussels. Several hundred youth fought with the police and attacked symbols of luxury and elitism.

VINCENT SCHELTENS

The racism of the Brussels police force is particularly striking. Underpaid and working in appalling conditions, the communal police "take it out" on the young immigrants — a fact described in a recently-published book by an former Brussels cop. Extreme right groups have infiltrated the police. According to several inhabitants of the district, fascist militants gave the young immigrants "logistic support" with the aim of being better able

And also in France

ON THE night of Saturday, May 25, 1991, a hundred youth clashed with police in the Val Fourré district of Mantes, some 40 kms from Paris, looting and burning the town centre shops. Six young people were arrested during the night; one of them died on May 27 in detention, victim, according to the police story, of "heart failure following a serious asthma attack." This death recalls another, that of Malik Ousseki, who died as a result of a police charge during the student movement of November-December 1986.

Over the past eight months, the French suburban housing estates have been the scene of repeated explosions of violence on the part of desperate young people who live in these human dumping grounds where unemployment, insecurity and racism are concentrated.

The story begins in October 1990 in Vaulx-en-Velin, a working class district near Lyons, where some 20% of the 50,000 inhabitants are unemployed. The "accidental" death of a local youth at the hands of a police patrol led to violent clashes between hundreds of youth and the forces of order. There was looting and buildings were set on fire. The scenario is the same everywhere: police and private security guard provocations; racist insults hurled at young "beurs" (young people of immigrant background) and repression of the "wreckers".

As in Sartrouville and Argenteuil — where the same outbursts of anger have been seen — Val-Fourré is a part a region of big public suburban housing estates built in the 1960s to accommodate immigrant labour employed in the big factories. These today have been hard hit by the economic crisis. Nearly 20,000 jobs disappeared in this region between 1982 and 1990, above all in the automobile and chemical industries. The unemployment rate is 10.5%, reaching more than 20% in some districts, and educational levels are low.

The authorities are becoming increasingly concerned about the deteriorating social and economic situation in such places, and attempts are being made to set up rehabilitation programmes and programmes to encourage youth employment. But it is not clear how the joblessness of young people is to be dealt with when nearly 30% of those seeking work are under 25 years old.

In the coming months such explosions will occur again and again, in confrontations in which increasingly desperate people, left on the sidelines of our "modern" society, will come up against a system unable to offer any perspective of meeting their basic needs. ★

OVER the next few days further clashes took place in other parts of Brussels, including Saint-Gilles, Molenbeek, Saint-Josse and Schaerbeek. This explosion of anger is born of a social situation which is to be found in all the big cities and housing estates of Belgium, where the authorities, whether at national or local level, have nothing to offer young people in general, and the immigrant youth in particular. Some 22% of the inhabitants of these quarters of Brussels, and one child in two, live below the poverty line, as defined by international standards.

About 50% of Brussels' youth are from immigrant backgrounds — about 27% of the whole population. The immigrant population is concentrated in nine of the city's 19 communes. This layer of the population is subjected to systematic discrimination. This applies in education: which is not adapted to their needs and where no acknowledgement of their different cultural background is made; employment: where many small firms refuse to employ immigrants; police hostility: with identity checks several times a day, often by the same cops; and with regard to recreation: no playing fields for the children — in Forest the swimming pool has been turned into an expensive dance hall, which refuses entry to immigrants.

measures) has been largely ignored by the authorities, despite the fact that it meets the needs of Belgian big business, which has economic reasons for opposing the expulsion of immigrants.

Another failure is that of the social democrats. Nothing has changed despite the fact that they are in the majority in Brussels and have recently re-entered the national government.

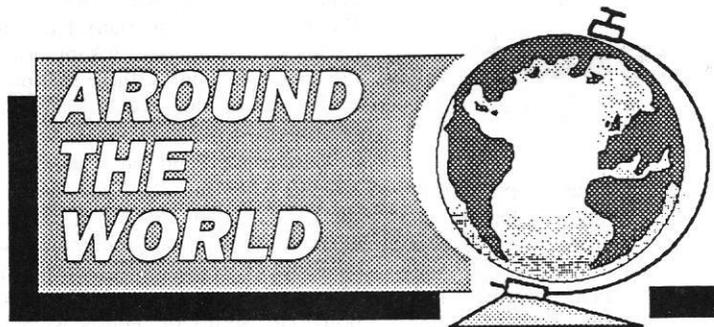
Only a few months ago, a book entitled "On people and dreams", by the president of the Flemish social democrats, came out. Now the young immigrants, who

have little to dream about, have woken him up. Finally there is also a failure at the level of public life. There is a political failure: the demand for the right to vote for immigrants in local elections has not been taken up by the ruling parties, who, indeed, explicitly ruled it out of their 1982 election programme. And a failure also on the level of daily life: the planned total budget for the Brussels region is only 350m Belgian francs. On the other hand 8 billion such francs are to be spent on refurbishing the European Community buildings. ★

the French army. In fact he returned less than a year ago from a further training programme in France. Nobody should be taken in by his current populist-democratic rhetoric.

The Transitional Committee for the Salvation of the People (CTSP) includes civilians, among them figures who were very prominent in the mass movement, to give the impression of a fully-realized "national union". With the intention of getting into the good books of the school pupils and students, the new government has raised their grants, although not by the 200% demanded, and ordered the reopening of the boarding schools closed on IMF and World Bank orders in 1982. However nothing has yet been done to meet the demands of the low paid, nor to raise the minimum guaranteed income.

The prime minister, 41-year old Soumanou Sako, called back from Bangui where he was working for the United Nations Development Programme, has been seen before. "Honest to his fingertips", when minister of finance under Moussa Traoré in 1987 he held a Belgian plane at Bamako airport because Traoré's wife had put gold on it to take to Belgium. This action sent



MALI

Dictator falls

"I WILL NOT resign. I have been elected by the people and not by the opposition. The army is loyal." Thus did one of francophone Africa's last dictator/generals express his fatal misunderstanding of contemporary trends.

In fact, a year-long popular movement culminated in the fall, on March 25, 1991, of Mali's president Moussa Traoré, who had ruled the country since 1968.

Categorized as one of the "least advanced countries", Mali came into being with the break up of the Federation of Mali in 1958. The per capita GNP is \$230, and with debts of some 900bn cfa francs (1cfa is worth 0.02 French francs), the country's economy is on its last legs. The minimum wage is 15,000 cfa francs.

In backward countries with an unarticulated social structure and a monolithic political regime, the workers movement is feeble. In most cases, social protest movements can be strong but with a marked predominance of lumpen elements. Ignored for most of the time, the discontent explodes violently in periods of crisis, with hunger being the primary motive. This is the explanation for the "looting" deplored by the leaders and the media.

In the present movement, however, the unorganized rioters were joined by the trade unions traditionally tied to the single party, such as the National Union of Malian Workers (UNTM) and students and school students organizations.

Moussa Traoré's nemesis, 43-year old Lieutenant Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré, the commander of a unit of "red beret" paratroopers, is a pure product of

Write to a political prisoner!

MAHMOUD Ahmad Massarwa is an Arab Palestinian and a citizen of the state of Israel. His home is in the village of Baka al-Gharbiyya, near Hadera. He is the husband of Wafa and the father of Zaatour (age 7) and Majdalene (age 4). He is a political prisoner.

Before his arrest in July 1988 on trumped-up espionage charges, he worked in Tel Aviv. He held a job as a carpenter by day, and as a factory guard at night. His employers were satisfied with him. He had good relations with his co-workers, Jews as well as Arabs.

Mahmoud did not engage in violent actions, nor does he advocate violence. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Mahmoud is opposed to racism. He wants freedom for the Palestinian people. He is convinced that freedom from national oppression is a fundamental right. Mahmoud believes in the possibility of peaceful co-existence between Arabs and Jews. He advocates unified struggle of Arabs and Jews, and participates regularly in joint organizations and joint activities. He looks forward to a democratic, secular Palestine, in which Jews and Arabs can live in peace and security.

Mahmoud is a socialist. His goal is for workers to re-organize society in the interests of the majority. His efforts are directed to the political organization and political education of workers.

Mahmoud Massarwa was arrested on the day before he was due to leave for England to attend a conference of European socialists. He was held incommunicado for 15 days, during which time his lawyer was denied access to him. While in police custody, Mahmoud was systematically denied sleep, he was beaten in the course of interrogation, and his life was threatened.

All charges against him stem from his public political activity; his commitment to the cause of Palestinian freedom, and his loyalty to the international workers movement. Following a trial, he was convicted by an Israeli court and sentenced to ten years imprisonment.

The state of Israel makes great efforts to present itself as "the only democracy in the Middle East". In the state of Israel, Mahmoud Massarwa is denied basic democratic rights. He is denied the right of freedom of expression, and the right to engage in peaceful political activity. He is being persecuted for his consistent advocacy of democratic principles. He is a political prisoner.

Please write to Mahmoud at the following address;

Mahmoud Ahmad Massarwa, Ayalon Prison, P.O. Box 16, Ramleh, Israel. ★

shock waves through the circles of the parasitic bureaucracy, and Sako lost his job. His first act in his new one has been to carry out a purge of the administration. Thus almost all the ministerial permanent secretaries, and many heads of national services, as well as regional governors, have been pensioned off.

All the presidents of the administrative councils and the directors of nationalized industries have also been fired. While they were certainly corrupt, it is not clear whether this is more than simply a cost

cutting measure. Meanwhile, in order to attempt to burnish the image of the army, which was not enhanced by the bloodshed this March, all the army generals have also collected their cards.

Over the past two years, National Conferences have become the miracle cure for the ruined continent. To some extent these are the results of popular mobilizations and forums where the balance sheet of discarded regimes can be drawn, and they should not be rejected, although it would be a mistake to imagine that they can solve

the problems.

On the one hand they allow imperialism to create favourable conditions for exploitation with the provisional support of the population. By allowing a reshuffle of the political cards, and the entry into government of "new" people, they offer security to their sponsors. On the other hand, by recognizing democratic rights and multi-partyism they create the conditions in which independent mass organizations and popular revolutionary parties can emerge. — **Amadou Guiro** ★

ALGERIA

PST Congress

SOME 700 people attended the first legal congress of the Algerian Socialist Workers Party (PST), an organization in sympathy with the Fourth International.

Three quarters of the delegates were under 30, 54% were wage-earners, 30% students or school students, 3% unemployed and 1% farmers. Some 70 women were present. The national press, radio and television attended and gave extensive reports of the congress.

This was the Algerian Trotskyist organization's tenth congress, but the first held legally. The original nucleus, the Groupe communiste révolutionnaire, was founded in clandestinity in 1974 by a group of students.

Despite its small size it took an active part in all the democratic battles, many of its militants heading struggles by students, women and the Berber cultural movement. Several of the group's leaders suffered arrest and torture at the hands of the FLN dictatorship. The last clandestine congress in 1989 adopted the name PST.

With the "democratic opening" that started in October 1988, the PST developed rapidly, including in some branches of industry, such as rail and chemicals. It now has several hundred activists and some 3000 supporters holding a party card. More than half of its organization is to be found in the Kabylia [the Berber area], and in particular in the city of Bejaia, where the PST has several hundred organized supporters and led the last general strike.

The first part of the congress heard speeches from guests, among them almost all the country's women's organizations, the SNEAD student union, the FFS, the former revolutionary leader Zahouane, the PLO, the Polisario Front, the PRT (Mexico), Democrazia Proletaria (Italy), the OCR (Tunisia), the OST (Senegal) and the Illal Aman (Morocco).

The second part dealt with preparations for the legislative elections of June 27. There was unanimous support for approaching other anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist forces for a joint list for the first round, the Popular Workers' Front (FOP), with the aim of presenting an alternative to the ruling FLN and the funda-

mentalists of the FIS. Trade unionists and some members of the PAGS (Communist Party) have supported this idea, despite the opposition of their organization, which is putting forward its own slate.

What line to take in the second round, however, aroused debate. Outside the Kabylia, there will probably be a straight choice between the FLN and the FIS. Many delegates wanted abstention: "why choose between the devil and the deep blue sea? Fear is not a useful political

response to the rise of the FIS..."

But many delegates, and a majority of the women, opposed this line: "Yes, I am afraid, and I admit it" said one. "A victory for the FIS would threaten our existence and that of the organization itself."

Finally the delegates decided to hold a national conference between the two rounds to decide on how to proceed. A leadership of 29 people, including six women, was elected and new statutes adopted. ★

Sri Lanka — Trotskyist local election campaign

LOCAL government elections were held in Sri Lanka on May 11, 1991, for the first time since 1982. The Northern and Eastern provinces, where there is a war going on, were excluded from the elections.

Of the 236 municipal, urban and regional councils that saw elections, the ruling UNP party won in 198, while the "alternative" bourgeois party, the SLFP, captured 38. Another petty bourgeois coalition won 68 seats.

The Trotskyist Nava Samasamaja Party (NSSP) contested 44 councils and won 22 seats, with some 5.2% of the votes cast in the areas contested.

According to the NSSP's Niel Wijetilake:

ALL the measures adopted by the government at the dictate of the World Bank and the IMF have gone into serious crisis. The government has had to retreat from its proposal to privatize the banking sector following strong protests from the bank workers. In similar circumstances, the scheme to reorganize the plantation has also been abandoned. The garment industry has been the worst hit by IMF dictated policies. This industry, hitherto financed by the central bank, has proved to be a failure. As a result of constant industrial disputes most industrialists have dropped their projects.

The banks have thus been compelled to take over some industries. This has emerged as one of the most profound contradictions of the Premadasa regime's strict adherence to IMF dictates. The Premadasa regime decided to strengthen its hand by holding elections and proving its democratic credentials.

The election has posed problems for the left parties in the SFLP-led coalition, with the SFLP limiting their independent presence on coalition slates; the rank-and-file of the Communist Party and the LSSP (ex-Trotskyists) are deeply frustrated.

Without building up an independent mass movement the left cannot exert pressure on the SFLP and simply becomes a tool in that party's hands.

The NSSP refused to accept the SFLP's proposals for a no contest agreement. The party was able to attract many disillusioned with the old left. Significantly the candidates fielded by the NSSP in the rural areas are mostly erstwhile sympathizers of the Sinhala-chauvinist terrorist organization, the JVP, or are from families which have fallen victim to the government repression. Of the party's 1050 candidates, 79 were Tamils and 76 were women.

The NSSP campaign was essentially directed against the government. Our campaign was mainly based on the right of self-determination of the Tamil speaking people and the need to put forward a solution to the national question on this basis. We appealed to the people to vote for our candidates in areas contested by us, and in the other areas to vote to defeat the government. These elections have provided us with an opportunity to strengthen our organization throughout the country. We face the challenge of building up a revolutionary popular movement and defeating popular front tendencies. ★

UN report states:

Iraq may face epidemic and famine

WE publish below substantial extracts from the report prepared by a United Nations mission, led by Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari, which visited Iraq between March 10-17, 1991, to assess humanitarian needs in the country after the Gulf war. The report gives a graphic picture of the devastation caused in Iraq by the imperialist onslaught. The "civilized world" meanwhile is continuing the embargo and demanding that Iraq pay reparations.

DOCUMENT

AND the members of my mission were fully conversant with media reports regarding the situation in Iraq and, of course, with the recent WHO/UNICEF report on water, sanitary and health conditions in the Greater Baghdad area. It should, however, be said at once that nothing that we had seen or read had quite prepared us for the particular form of devastation which has now befallen the country.

The recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society. Now, most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq, has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology.... as a result of war, virtually all viable sources of fuel and power (apart from a limited number of mobile generators) and modern means of communication are now, essentially, defunct. The far-reaching implications of this energy and communications vacuum as regards urgent humanitarian support are of crucial significance for the nature and effectiveness of the international response.

These conditions, together with recent civil unrest in some parts of the country, mean that the authorities are as yet scarcely able even to measure the central dimensions of the calamity, much less respond to its consequences, because they cannot obtain full and accurate data.

Additionally, there is much less than the minimum fuel required to provide the energy needed for movement or transportation, irrigation or generators for power to pump water and sewage. For instance, emergency medical supplies can be moved to health centres only with

extreme difficulty, and, usually, major delay. Information regarding local needs is slow and sparse. Most employees are simply unable to come to work. Both the authorities and the trade unions estimate that approximately 90% of industrial workers have been reduced to inactivity and will be deprived of income as at the end of March. Government departments have at present only marginal attendance.

Prior to recent events, Iraq was importing about 70% of its food needs. Now, owing to the fuel shortage, the inability to import and the virtual breakdown of the distribution system, the flow of food through the private sector has been reduced to a trickle, with costs accelerating upwards.

Many food prices are already beyond the purchasing reach of most Iraqi families. Agricultural production is highly mechanized, and much land depends on pumped-water irrigation. Should the main harvest in June 1991 be seriously affected by a lack of energy to drive machines and pump water, then an already grave situation will be further aggravated.

As shown below, prospects for the 1992 harvest could, for combined reasons, be at least as much in jeopardy. Having regard to the nature of Iraq's society and economy, the energy vacuum is an omnipresent obstacle to the success of even a short-term, massive effort to maintain life-sustaining conditions in each area of humanitarian need.

....Food is currently made available to the population through both government allocations and rations, and through the market....While the mission was unable to gauge the precise quantities still held in government warehouses, all evidence indicates that flour is now at a critically low level, and that supplies of sugar,

rice, tea, vegetable oil, powdered milk and pulses are currently at critically low levels or have been exhausted. Distribution of powdered milk, for example, is now reserved exclusively for sick children on medical prescription....

...The mission recommends that, in these circumstances, of present severe hardship and in view of the bleak prognosis, sanctions in respect of food supplies should be immediately removed, as should those relating to the import of agricultural equipment and supplies...

..With the destruction of power plants, oil refineries, main oil storage facilities and water-related chemical plants, all electrically operated installations have ceased to function. Diesel-operated generators were reduced to operating on a limited basis, their functioning affected by lack of fuel, lack of maintenance, lack of spare parts and non-attendance of workers. The supply of water in Baghdad dropped to less than 10 liters per day but has now recovered to approximately 30-40 litres in about 70% of the area (less than 10% of the overall previous use)....

..As regards the quality of water in Baghdad, untreated sewage has now to be dumped directly into the river — which is the source of the water supply — and all drinking-water plants there and throughout the rest of the country are using river water with high sewage contamination....While the water authority has warned that water must be boiled, there is little fuel to do this, and what exists is diminishing. Cool winter conditions have prevailed until recently...

All modern communications destroyed

..Only limited information is available to authorities regarding the situation in the remainder of the country because all modern communications systems have been destroyed and information is now transmitted and received (in this sector as in all others) by person-to-person contact. In those areas where there are no generators, or generators have broken down, or the fuel supply is exhausted, the population draws its water directly from polluted rivers and trenches....

....As regards sanitation, the two main concerns relate to garbage disposal and sewage treatment. In both cases rapidly rising temperatures will soon accentuate an existing crisis. Heaps of garbage are spread in the urban areas and collection is poor to non-existent. The work of collection vehicles is hampered by lack of fuel, lack of maintenance and spare parts and lack of labour, because workers are unable to come to work. Incinerators are in general not working, for these same reasons and for lack of electric power. Insecticides, much needed as the weather becomes more torrid, are virtually out of stock because of sanctions and a lack of chemical supplies. As previously stated,

Iraqi rivers are heavily polluted by raw sewage, and water levels are unusually low. All sewage treatment and pumping plants have been brought to a virtual standstill by the lack of power supply and the lack of spare parts. Pools of sewage lie in the streets and villages. Health hazards will build in the weeks to come.....

Precarious health conditions throughout country

...health conditions in Baghdad and throughout the country remain precarious. A major factor is the water and sanitation situation described above. Additionally, the total lack of telephone communication and drastically reduced transport capability pose other problems to the health system since basic information on communicable diseases cannot be collected and disseminated, and essential drugs, vaccines and medical supplies cannot be distributed efficiently to the country...

Conditions described above affect the whole population of Iraq and, most especially, low-income groups. The mission paid particular attention to the plight of especially vulnerable groups, whether Iraqi or non-Iraqi. Thus, it found that care for orphans, the elderly and the handicapped had been in many instances disrupted, with residents of institutions having had to be moved and regrouped at various locations.....

As regards the displaced and the homeless, the authorities themselves have not been able fully to assess the impact of the recent hostilities. They have, however, calculated that approximately 9,000 homes were destroyed or damaged beyond repair during the hostilities, of which 2,500 were in Baghdad and 1,900 in Basra. This has created a new homeless potential total of 72,000 persons. Official help is now hampered by the conditions described throughout this report and, especially, a virtual halt in the production of local building materials and the impossibility to import. The input of essential materials should be permitted....

...Some 64,000 Iranian nationals, protected under either the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 14 August 1949, or the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, had previously resided in three camps in Iraq. There has been substantial dislocation of some of these persons. Others have indicated their desire for repatriation. Limited relief assistance is

urgently needed for some of those who have been obliged to leave one of the camps. Additionally, some 80,000 Palestinians are resident in Iraq, including a group of 35,000 considered as refugees benefiting from the protection of the Iraqi government...

... At present, Iraq's sole available surface transport link with the outside world is via Amman to Aqaba.....Internal transportation by road is now severely affected by a lack of spare parts and tyres and, above all, by a lack of fuel. Some internal railway capability still exists on the Baghdad-Mosul line. The mission was informed that a total of 83 road bridges had been destroyed and a number were inspected.

As regards communications, the mission was informed that all internal and external telephone systems had been destroyed, with the exception of a limited local exchange in one town....Communication in Iraq is now on a person-to-person basis, as mail services have also disintegrated.

The role of energy in Iraq is especially important because of the level of its urbanization (approximately 72% of the population lives in towns) its industrialization, and its prolonged, very hot, summers.

Pre-war energy consumption consisted of oil and refined products (85%), electricity (14.8%) and other sources (0.2%). About 30% of electric power generation was hydro-power. Bombardment has paralyzed oil and electricity sectors almost entirely. Power output and refineries' production is negligible and will not be resumed until the first repair phase is complete. The limited and sporadic power supply in some residential

areas and for health facilities is provided by mobile generators. There have, officially, been virtually no sales of gasoline to private users since February.... Initial inspections are said to have shown that necessary repairs to begin power generation and oil refining at minimal levels may take anywhere from 4 to 13 months. Minimal survival levels to undertake humanitarian activities would require approximately 25% of pre-war civilian domestic fuel consumption. Its absence, given the proximate onset of hot weather conditions, may have calamitous consequences for food, water supply and for sanitation; and therefore for health conditions.....

Major aid mobilization needed

....The account given above describes as accurately as the mission has been able, using all sources, including much independent observation, to ascertain the situation, which, with the time available and the travel limitations referred to earlier, was perceived to exist in regard to urgent humanitarian needs in Iraq during the week of 10-17 March. I, together with all my colleagues, am convinced that there needs to be a major mobilization and movement of resources to deal with aspects of this deep crisis in the fields of agriculture and food, water, sanitation and health.

Yet the situation raises, in acute form, other questions. For it will be difficult, if not impossible, to remedy these immediate humanitarian needs without dealing with the underlying need for energy, on an equally urgent basis. The need for energy means, initially, emergency oil imports and the rapid patching up of a limited refining and electricity production capacity, with essential supplies from other countries.

Otherwise, food that is imported cannot be preserved and distributed; water cannot be purified; sewage cannot be pumped away and cleansed; crops cannot be irrigated; medications cannot be conveyed where they are required; needs cannot even be effectively assessed.

It is unmistakable that the Iraqi people may soon face a further imminent catastrophe, which could include epidemic and famine, if massive life-supporting needs are not rapidly met. The long summer, with its often 45 or even 50 degree temperatures (113-122 degrees Fahrenheit) is only weeks away.

Time is short. ★

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Defend US war resisters!

FOLLOWING its "triumph" in the Gulf war, the US ruling class is now trying to make an example of those GIs who refused to participate in the assault on Iraq. Jeff Mackler, coordinator of the January 26 Mobilization to Bring the Troops Home Now, the western United States coalition which organized the 250,000 strong antiwar protest in San Francisco on January 26, and now coordinator of the Tahan Jones/Erik Larsen Defense Committee, looks at the cases of the war resisters.

JEFF MACKLER

CORPORAL Tahan Jones, one of the nation's most outspoken GI resisters, turned himself in to the Marine Corps at Treasure Island, San Francisco, on May 15. This time, the handcuffs and restraining belt used the month before on his Marine comrade and fellow conscientious objector, Erik Larsen, were forsaken.

The national outcry against Larsen's treatment might have convinced the Marines to act with a modicum of restraint toward Jones — at least when the cameras were on.

Recent protests included a letter to President Bush signed by 33 Catholic bishops, which supported not only "religious" but "selective" conscientious objectors (that is, those opposed to only "unjust wars").

The Marine Corps didn't bother to inform Jones that he had been charged — that same day — with "desertion in time of war". Jones thus faces the death penalty for exercising his constitutional right to speak out against the slaughter of the people of the Middle East.

Within 24 hours of reporting to the Marines, his attorney, John Murko, appeared in court to bring a writ of habeas corpus to prevent his client from being separated from his defence supporters. It was only then that the government lawyers blithely informed him that Jones had been charged with a capital offense.

Of the 24 initial GI resisters who were sent to Camp LeJeune, 18 are now imprisoned there with plea-bargained sentences of up to two years. Most became victims of what Erik Larsen's attorney, Robert Rivkin, describes as the Marines' "three-pronged strategy of iso-

lation, intimidation and incarceration". The remainder of the Camp LeJeune detainees await court-martial trials.

Rivkin, among the nation's most prominent military legal authorities, describes the Marines' kangaroo court conduct as "unprecedented".

He says that there has never been a case before where all soldiers charged with the same offence are isolated and sent to the same military facility for trial, thus denying them reasonable access to attorneys, witnesses, financial

resources, and families.

A recent proceeding at Camp LeJeune against resister Sam Lwin shocked many in attendance. The overt prejudice of government witnesses and other excesses apparently embarrassed authorities and resulted in what is considered, under the circumstances, to be a light sentence. Lwin received a dishonourable discharge and four months in the brig. This sentence was further reduced by 36 days because of Lwin's previous illegal imprisonment.

Lwin's fight for freedom was aided by the lawyers and supporters of the New York based GI defense committee, Out Now.

His sentence was a far cry from the multi-year plea-bargained terms received by many other conscientious objectors, whose only crime was to say "no" to what is now considered by many to have been a war of genocide against a virtually defenceless population. The 1,000 to 1 kill ratio is unprecedented in modern warfare.

Amnesty International takes up cases

Amnesty International has indicated that imprisoned conscientious objectors will be considered "prisoners of conscience".

Of the estimated 2,500 GIs who resisted participation in Operation Desert Storm, only three have been threatened with the death penalty — Jones, Larsen, and Kevin Sparrock. Sparrock's "crime" is having reported for duty eight hours late!

Riding high on a government-orchestrated, media-induced patriotic fervor, the bipartisan warmakers are pro-

ceeding as if GI rights do not exist. In violation of all regulations, the Marines have held two Article 32 (preliminary) hearings in the case of Erik Larsen without Larsen's attorneys even being present.

Another hearing has been set without Larsen's agreement for June 4.

In a May 23 letter to the assigned Investigating Officer, Major J.F. Blanche, Larsen's lawyer protested the above violations, and Major Blanche's "capricious" rejection of a defence request for a continuance until June 17.

Major Blanche rejected the June 17 date because he stated he was leaving Camp LeJeune on the following day.

"What you seem to have overlooked", Rivkin wrote, "is that Pfc. Larsen is facing charges that could result in very severe consequences, even a death sentence, and that his due process rights take precedence over your convenience. If it is inconvenient for you to hear this case, the appropriate action is for convening authority to appoint a different Article 32 investigating officer".

Rivkin pointed out that Blanche proceeded to deny all 24 witnesses requested by the defense, "before having heard any arguments by the defense and even before Pfc. Larsen's civilian attorney had had a chance to appear for his client!...A non-Article 32 investigating officer might have issued such a ruling out of ignorance. For a military judge to have issued such a ruling where the accused faces a possible death sentence is an outrage almost beyond belief".

Rivkin reminded Major Blanche that Larsen had secured a Federal District Court order on May 2 holding that the Marine Corps had violated his client's procedural due process rights. The Marines were given 60 days to hold a new hearing on Larsen's application for CO status. Apparently, the Marines seek to ram through the required Article 32 hearing and the actual court martial trial before this time.

Rivkin is calling on the Marines to "relieve the current Investigating Officer of his duties and appoint someone who is fair and impartial", not to mention accessible.

Families form defence committee

The families of Tahan Jones and Erik Larsen have formed a joint defense committee which is preparing for a long and costly legal and political battle. Estimated legal expenses are \$60,000. Contributions are urgently requested.

Checks should be made payable to:

The "Jones/Larsen Defense Committee", Box 225, 1678 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709. Phone (415) 655-1201. ★